

## ABSTRACT

### THE IMPACT OF VERBAL FAITH SHARING WITHIN THE EVANGELISM CURRICULUM

#### ON ALUMNI/AE SERVING IN FULL-TIME PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

by

Julia D'Andrea Crim

This project focused upon the verbal witness of the believers called into pastoral leadership within The United Methodist Church. Of special interest was the impact evangelism curriculum had on the comfort and frequency levels of verbal faith sharing. A researcher-designed questionnaire was created and mailed to 2002 graduates from four theological institutions.

Findings revealed that experiences and courses taken prior to seminary had as much impact upon the alumni/ae's commitment to verbal faith sharing as required evangelism courses during seminary. Secondary findings reflected a diverse understanding of evangelistic visitation. While requiring an evangelism course in seminary helps equip pastors for verbal faith sharing, the pastor tends to share more easily and more frequently with those he or she already had a relationship rather than with strangers.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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ON ALUMNI/AE SERVING IN FULL-TIME PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

presented by

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THE IMPACT OF VERBAL FAITH SHARING  
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A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE PROBLEM**

#### **Personal Concern**

As a young law school student who saw little need for a church relationship or a personal God, I found myself facing a decision that would forever change my life. Having just completed a class on legal contracts, I struggled with the reality of worldly contracts that were easily broken versus a God-given covenant that would be eternally binding. The struggle with this issue led to an encounter with the living God that would forever transform my life and my career choice. I made a decision to invest my life in my relationship with the One who offers an unbreakable covenant rather than investing my life in battling the world of broken contracts.

Shortly thereafter I found a church home and was asked to take leadership responsibilities within the singles and youth ministries. Those invitations for leadership occurred without anyone inquiring as to my personal faith story. The local church had identified my high energy and desire to serve. The leadership immediately put me to work as a volunteer. Quickly placing a new member into a volunteer role seemed to fulfill the church's assimilation principles of every member involvement. Within a few months, I became eager to tell someone about this transformation that was happening within my spirit; however, when the subject of sharing my testimony in worship was raised, I was immediately discouraged.

Over the next couple of years, numerous obstacles emerged within the local church that squelched my natural yearning to share my faith story publicly. Church leadership, inclusive of the pastoral staff, made statements such as, "We do not do things

like give testimonies here at this church”; “Testimonials are nothing more than expressions of self-centered religion, and that is not what our church is about”; and, “One’s faith is very personal and you do not need to ‘lord’ what you have over others.” This was a congregation of over two thousand people and one of the most influential churches in that particular annual conference of The United Methodist Church. Over those crucial early years of Christian faith development, layers of discouragement were placed upon my voice box until I became mute. The desire and ability to share what was once natural and personal was now foreign and awkward.

A few years later, I became involved with the World Methodist Evangelism Institute of the World Methodist Council and met men and women from across the globe who were unapologetically in love with Jesus Christ and were free and eager to share their personal stories with others in an invitational way. As I witnessed those passionate verbal testimonies, I began to peel back the layers of discouragement that led to a redevelopment of my vocal cords and passion for Christ. Conversations with other pastors have revealed that an unprecedented number of *trained* ministerial leaders have also experienced a conscious or unconscious squelching of their verbal testimony of faith.

Now, twenty-six years after entering into that life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ I have become involved in a new dimension of church growth that heightens the need for pastoral leaders who exhibit a commitment to overcome cultural barriers and more intentionally seek opportunities for personal verbal faith sharing. As a church planter who was sent into an area without a core group of people and without a building or land, I am particularly interested in how new pastoral leaders would respond to such a challenge. For pastors to start new churches by going into areas with only their personal

stories of faith and the Word of God upon which to stand and grow requires some level of door-to-door visitation. I believe this challenge is in keeping with the biblical model for growing healthy churches.

### **Church-Wide Concern**

In their book Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So, H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris note that the context for preaching and testifying has changed. No longer does the proclaimed message hold a central position in the life of the church (25). Because of this lesser role personal testimonials hold, there is no expectation for new converts to verbally attest to their newfound faith. Busy schedules and programming more often than not get in the way of encouraging new converts to express their faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a faith that yielded a transformed life from the time of their spiritual birth. One possible cause of this obstruction to natural, verbal faith sharing could be the substantial increase in cultural demands for more entertainment and multisensory modes of communicating.

In addition, too many Christians become muted because of conscious and unconscious barriers the local church often places before them in the corporate worship setting as well as in small group gatherings. These barriers often present themselves as busy work in the local church which creates more opportunities for the people to do the deeds of the church while leaving less time and creating fewer opportunities for the church to speak the message of its purpose and mission as lived out in individual and corporate faith stories. The decline in membership within a majority of United Methodist local churches could indicate that the people are becoming restless. They are seeking something more. They seem to be crying out for someone to care enough about them to

listen to the story of their encounters with the living God. The local church needs to be intentional about raising leaders who will create a climate within their church that frees the laity to share their faith stories.

Ben Campbell Johnson endeavored to learn why so many laity had difficulty verbally sharing their faith with others. In his research, he learned that the clergy were not encouraging the laity to become witness bearers and, in fact, many members of the clergy had genuine difficulty themselves talking with others about their personal faith. Based upon Johnson's findings, clergy preferred standing in the pulpit each week and proclaiming the message of the Gospel more than to personalizing that same Gospel message outside the preaching context.

B. Johnson's research has brought to light a crisis facing the local church:

The lack of art and passion in God-speech has reached a crisis of major proportions in many mainline congregations. God-speech contrasts with God-talk, which makes references to God in every conversation. God-talk becomes empty, monotonous and boring. God-speech, on the other hand, is candid, spontaneous, natural conversation about the presence and activity of the Creator. (11)

God-talk can easily become mechanical while God-speech is fueled by a personal relationship that naturally flows into and affects all other relationships. While theological institutions may equip church leaders to talk about God objectively, a void remains within the congregation for pastoral leaders who are willing to share personal faith stories in an invitational way.

Because of this presumed discomfort experienced by clergy, laity have received little encouragement from pastoral leadership to share their faith verbally beyond acts of faith. They may "do" acts of faith yet fail to "say" the words of faith. B. Johnson goes on to state that "if ordained clergy have a reluctance to speak personally of God, helping



laity to speak freely about God will be extremely difficult” (13). The challenge is for church leadership to explore the causes of this strange period of silence “even avoidance of the most basic task of ministry” (16).

Bishop Richard B. Wilke explores this point in his book, And Are We Yet Alive:

Once we were a Wesleyan revival, full of enthusiasm, fired by the Spirit, running the race set before us like a sprinter trying to win the prize.... Our Wesley-inspired dream and directive was to ‘spread Scriptural holiness’ across the continent.... Now we are tired, listless, fueled only by the nostalgia of former days, walking with a droop, eyes on the ground, discouraged. (9)

Wilke attributes this turn in the disposition of The United Methodist Church to its over-imposing structure. He stresses that the structure of the church has become an end in itself (29).

In order to alter the course of this silence among the leadership of local churches, a new paradigm must be created and supported within the body of the church through corporate worship and small group fellowship. This paradigm calls for an intentionality among the clergy to model the telling and retelling of personal faith stories outside the formal preaching setting. This need was identified during a meeting of the Foundation on Evangelism of The United Methodist Church in response to a question dealing with the numerical decline of people coming into The United Methodist Church on profession of faith (Peabody). At the time of their meeting in 1998, only one-half of the seminaries graduating men and women into pastoral leadership within The United Methodist Church had professors of evangelism on their faculty.

As a result of these discussions, legislation was submitted to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church which mandated all ministerial candidates for elders’ orders within The United Methodist Church successfully complete and receive

credit for one conference-approved course in the area of evangelism. Those working with the Foundation on Evangelism believed this legislation would be a big step forward in addressing the issue of declining church membership (Peabody). The legislation was unanimously passed.

Assuming this course would take place within the theological institutions' curriculum, a document outlining a set of guidelines for proposed evangelism syllabi was created and submitted to each seminary (see Appendix K). This set of guidelines, formulated by professors of evangelism in United Methodist-related schools and Asbury Theological Seminary, was presented to assist theological institutions in creating course requirements deemed by the drafters as important in fulfilling the intent of the General Conference legislation.

Ron Crandall, one of the drafters of the guidelines, puts forth a challenge to look deeper into the means by which the Gospel, the good news, the *euangelion*, is carried into the world. To carry the message of good news and to deliver it in a contagious way leading to life transformation is significantly related to the telling, which is more than the activity most commonly associated with preaching. The telling has a greater impact as it finds verbal expression through a person's personal faith experience. "For this reason most leaders in the field over the last thirty years have moved away from training Christian witnesses as 'parrots' who memorize a standard presentation of the Gospel or as 'sales personnel' who are trained to close a deal" (138).

Since the power of the Holy Spirit gives expression to God's saving grace in a person's life, the importance of word, deed, and sign cannot be separated any more than the Person of God can be separated. In other words, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are

intrinsically connected and inseparable. Nevertheless, relating to God as Father or God as Son may be easier for some than relating to God as Spirit. In the same way, sharing the gospel through deeds and signs may be easier for some than sharing the gospel through word (i.e., verbal faith sharing).

Sharing the gospel can be defined as a purely cognitive exercise and, therefore, can be potentially empty of passion if the accompanying witness of one's personal story is absent from the conversation. This project does not assert students should be "taught" how to tell their story; rather, students should be set free and encouraged to tell of a natural relationship that is a part of who they are. Most married people do not have to be taught how to introduce people to their spouses or their children. The bragging rights and the pride in sharing the relationship in story form is a natural expression of that relationship. To withhold the stories of those relationships would create a disconnect between the relationships that mold and shape that person and the person's surrounding community.

Crandall places evangelism within the larger context of Christian witness that involves both personal identity and involvement in works as means for experiencing the living God. Evangelism invites others to "join us in the Christian experience. One without the other, no matter which comes first, usually is inadequate to produce fully functioning Christian disciples" (139).

Word, deed, and sign are all important in delivering the message of faith through a person's experience with the living God; however, for this project, emphasis was placed upon the faith sharer's commitment to share personal faith in Christ through the spoken word. This project further explored that commitment by identifying a correlation between

the students' in-class experiences and the level of emphasis placed upon verbal faith sharing once the students entered full-time pastoral ministry. While the seminary experience may provide other influences upon the students' commitment to share faith in a personal and intentional way, this project focused on one such influence, namely, exposure to the required evangelism curriculum created in response to the General Conference legislation.

While serving as adjunct professor of evangelism at one of the seminaries selected for this project, I quickly became aware of the students' discomfort in being "required" to seek opportunities to "tell" another person of their faith in the living God. This assignment was to be over the course of three months in the case of the Masters of Divinity program and over the course of two weeks in the summer Course of Study program. The resistance was apparent even when the assignment was put into the context of simply being intentional about finding opportunities to let others know of their faith in the living God, what B. Johnson calls "God-speech" (11). Nevertheless, many of the same students who resisted the assignment early in the course were grateful for having been required to push through their discomfort and make themselves available to God's Spirit in sharing their personal faith story with another in one-on-one dialogue. Conversations with other evangelism professors have confirmed they, too, have received this type of response from their students who were originally resistant to the challenge of faith sharing.

Understanding why these students express discomfort in "telling" about their relationship with God, a relationship that informs their experiences of life in the present and provides hope for their life in the future, is important in developing the means by

which these same students can be encouraged and freed to attest to their personal faith stories in a verbal way. The discomfort felt by these students could be connected to the students' past rejection, from being in a culture where such expressions of faith are not acceptable, from personality traits of shyness, or from the students' own sense of insecurity about faith. Observing people in that state of discomfort, I have witnessed many occasions when God's Spirit would be released to break down those human barriers once the person began to tell their personal story of faith. For that reason, I believe seminaries have an opportunity to challenge students preparing for pastoral ministry to step out of their comfort zones and verbally share their faith stories. In support of this belief, this project looks at such opportunities within the evangelism classes as the students learn to appropriate their seminary training in light of their personal witness.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

While a distinction exists between an individual's personal story and the biblical narrative, discussed further in Chapter 2, the premise of this project identifies the transformational impact the biblical narrative has upon an individual's personal story. The depth of this impact has its transforming roots within the soul of the individual. On the other hand the cultural influence upon a person's story is more quickly and easily identified because of its outward expression. Consequently, the stories being told are multilayered. People more easily share from the surface layers created by their culture rather than the layers that touch the core of their being. To share at that level can make people feel vulnerable and exposed. The resistance to share faith stories, the stories of the soul, keep people from sharing and hearing the stories of creation. Failing to engage in

dialogue about the personal stories of creation leaves a void within the culture and within the individual lives of people.

To look at the origin of the soul necessitates a relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the Creator of the soul. To enter into that relationship calls for the individual to become a witness. Jesus identified his disciples, those who follow him and claim a relationship with him, as “witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48, NIV). The “things” of which his disciples are witnesses are the transforming words, acts, and signs of Jesus Christ. These things are life transforming as they draw people into a deeper relationship with the God of creation. To enter into that relationship is to be redeemed, and to experience the fullness of life thereafter is to apply that redemptive act of God to words, deeds, and thoughts. Hence, transformation begins.

The psalmist calls upon the people of God to speak up and speak out in his declaration to “let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Ps. 107:2, NIV). The redeemed are called to speak out in order to glorify God’s sovereign name. When individuals encounter God, this encounter is naturally experienced within those persons’ histories (i.e., life stories) and within those persons’ communities. From an individual perspective, direction in the streams of life are navigated in light of personal experiences with God as they find expression within the larger community. The messages of individuals’ stories are messages for the community, messages that God is continuing to create and re-create. If those messages are absent in the life of the community, it fails to experience God’s creative power, thus yielding decline and death. The community needs to hear the message of God, the Creator, the One who gives new life. Those who know the message of God share it in a way that is personal and living.

Mortimer Arias challenges believers to tell their stories to their generation just as Peter spoke to his own generation in Jerusalem: “You know the message [God] sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36, NIV ). Peter affirmed the people knew the message that needed sharing. In the same way, believers today know the story that needs telling and, as Arias challenges, “we need to tell it, to pass it on, to make it real and accessible for every person in this world. The church becomes an instrument as well as part of the story. Christians become living letters and new chapters of the story” (70). Making the faith story accessible comes from personalizing the faith story and personalizing the faith story necessitates dialogue.

This dialogue is modeled through Jesus as he engaged in transforming moments with men and women whose paths he crossed during his ministry. Two such moments are revealed through Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus who sought Jesus during the cover of night (John 3:1-21) and with the Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus during the cover of midday (John 4:1-26). Nicodemus had questions to ask Jesus, and Jesus’ response required Nicodemus to examine his own faith story as created by his religious culture. He approached Jesus at a time when few people would see him. The Samaritan woman entered into dialogue with Jesus during the time of day no one else would be at the well. Her purpose was not to have dialogue with Jesus but to fulfill her responsibility in getting water to satisfy the fleshly need. Like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman had a faith: “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us’” (John 4:25, NIV). Jesus revealed his identity to her and allowed her to claim the origin of her soul as a child of God. Once that layer of her story

was pulled back, the woman was free to cross cultural barriers that called her an outcast and tell all the people about this new revelation that was now a transforming force within her life.

George W. Stroup talks about this transformation as a “collision” that occurs between a person’s story and God’s story. As with any collision, a part of the two substances coming together must give way to the force of the crash. Since God’s story is eternal and unchanging the collision would cause the personal story to be transformed by the power of God’s eternal story.

For John Wesley, theology is intimately related to the joint relationship between Christian living and the proclamation of Christian faith. In fact, “theology is actualized in authentic living and true proclamation” (Maddox 35). God is experientially related in the reality of a person’s story. That story is a significant part of the person’s culture. Culture is defined by the culmination of the stories of its people. The thread connecting those stories identifies the One who created the plot of history in the first place, the God of life, the God of creation. To discuss and experience the reality of God necessitates hearing God’s story as it unfolds in the individual lives of God’s people.

### **The Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of evangelism curriculum on the alumni/ae’s commitment to verbal faith sharing within their local church appointments. Local church appointment refers to the alumni/ae’s ministry within the local church as well as within the surrounding community. Specific attention was placed on whether a significant change occurred within a person’s commitment to share their faith story as a result of being exposed to evangelism studies.



While the focus of this project was on the influence of specific evangelism courses upon the pastors' commitment to verbal faith sharing, everyone who was questioned did not have their evangelism training within the context of a theological institution. The original intent of the General Conference legislation was to require the successful completion of the evangelism course through a United Methodist University Senate-approved theological institution; however, the satisfaction of this requirement and to whom it applies are ultimately determined by each annual conference. This project includes everyone who graduated from one of the seminaries included in this project who currently serves in a full-time local church appointment within the continental United States. The majority of respondents satisfied this requirement through seminary course offerings though some satisfied the requirement through workshops and conferences as well as other seminary courses not designated as a basic course in evangelism.

In addition, while the legislation was intended to take effect as of 1 January 2001, some conferences required only those students who became a certified candidate after 1 January 2001 to take an evangelism course. Other conferences are requiring immediate fulfillment of this evangelism requirement by all candidates pursuing elders' orders. In addition, the legislation was accepted as "guidelines" for the creation of evangelism syllabi. Professors are able to interpret the guidelines in a way that fits their agenda.

These factors make measuring the impact of evangelism curriculum upon local church pastors with any degree of consistency very difficult. Nevertheless, the data collected will at least strengthen the dialogue between the local church, the pastor, the annual conference, and the theological institution with regard to how pastoral candidates can be challenged to personalize their faith stories in a way that is naturally, intentionally,

and invitationally shared with others. Any dialogue that occurs for the purpose of strengthening the pastors' verbal witness will be healthy for the church as a whole.

### **Research Questions**

To accomplish the above-referenced purpose, the following four questions guided this project.

#### **Research Question #1**

What percent of seminary graduates currently serving in full-time pastoral appointments believe that their personal relationship with God impacts their daily life and their surrounding community life?

#### **Research Question #2**

Does having some level of biblical and/or theological courses in college or at the local church level prior to seminary affect the comfort level and sharing level individuals have in verbally sharing their personal faith stories?

#### **Research Question #3**

Does a correlation exist between the amount of verbal faith-sharing instruction in evangelism courses and the number of verbal faith-sharing opportunities experienced by pastors serving in full-time local church appointments?

#### **Research Question #4**

What other variables might impact seminary students' decisions to be intentional about verbally sharing their faith with others?

### **Definition of Terms**

One of the struggles experienced by many administrators, students, and professors of theological institutions is the diversity with which terms within the evangelism

curriculum are defined and experienced. For the purposes of this project, the following definitions are used.

### **Evangelism**

Some understand evangelism in church growth terms (i.e., they determine the impact of one's witness to the gospel by measuring the number of converts to Christianity). Others understand evangelism in terms of one's spirituality and how the Gospel is expressed in life profession. Fox and Morris define evangelism as "the process of spreading the Gospel of the kingdom of God by word, deed, and sign in various contexts, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and then waiting and watching in respectful humility and working with expectant hope" (Faith-Sharing 55). In evaluating the research for this project, specific emphasis was placed upon the spreading of the gospel of the kingdom of God by "word."

### **Curriculum**

When used within the context of this project, curriculum refers to the evangelism courses offered by seminaries to fulfill the requirement mandated by the 2000 General Conference for a basic course in evangelism. Inclusive in that reference are the students' perceptions of course content as related to verbal faith sharing and the existence of a verbal faith-sharing experience if included in the requirements.

### **Verbal Faith Sharing**

Faith is understood in this project as an individual's belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:1 states, "[F]aith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." While a person can have faith "in" another person, no one can have faith "for" another person. Sharing that faith necessitates the believers' expression

of the reality of their relationship with Jesus Christ and how that relationship informs every aspect of their lives. The author of Hebrews continues the definition of faith by introducing the reader to numerous faith stories where individuals are highlighted in terms of their expressions of faith. A community can be a faith community in its ministry purpose and vision, but only through telling and hearing the faith stories of the individuals can the community can find expression of identity and purpose.

The terms “verbal faith sharing,” “faith sharing,” and “witnessing” are used interchangeably throughout this project. Those alumni/ae who have the ability to speak and live in cultures where the language is common among the people they serve responded to the questionnaire based upon their verbal testimony. The responses to the questionnaire by alumni/ae who are unable to speak for physical reasons or who find themselves in cultures of unfamiliar languages responded to the questionnaire based upon their accepted means of communication (i.e., sign language, written testimony, or drawings). For purposes of minimizing the variables, only those responses based upon verbal sharing were used. Another study could be done to look at the various means by which personal faith stories are communicated.

Verbal faith sharing is defined in this project as *the act of articulating one’s personal relationship with the God of the biblical narrative as expressed within the faith sharer’s community narrative for the purpose of celebrating the great story of faith in Jesus Christ, of which all believers are participants, for the purpose of drawing all people to God.* This definition was formulated as a result of the literature review in Chapter 2 and was included on each copy of the questionnaire.

## **Overview of the Project**

This project utilized the resources at the Foundation on Evangelism of The United Methodist Church, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church, and the Board of Ordained Ministry of the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Seminaries who were invited to participate in this project were identified by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry based upon their influence within the larger United Methodist Church clergy training. The Foundation on Evangelism was given the results of the research.

## **Methodology**

This project explored the impact exposure to evangelism curriculum had upon alumni/ae's full-time ministry within the local church. Of specific note was the correlation between the comfort and frequency levels of engaging in verbal faith-sharing opportunities prior to taking evangelism courses and the comfort and frequency levels of engaging in verbal faith-sharing opportunities following successful completion of the evangelism course. A researcher-designed questionnaire was created that included quantitative research through closed-ended questions and qualitative research through handwritten responses further explaining closed-ended question responses. The research scope, description, and implementation was created based on William Wiersma's survey research model, specifically geared toward educational research (169-206).

## **Instrumentation**

A closed-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A) was mailed to 2002 alumni/ae of the following seminaries: Candler School of Theology, Asbury Theological Seminary, Perkins School of Theology, and Wesley Theological Seminary. The results of the

questionnaires provided data for evaluating the correlation between the curriculum content relating to verbal faith sharing and the comfort level and sharing frequency experienced by the alumni/ae in their position as full-time pastors of local congregations.

To assist in the design of the questionnaire, a pretest group was established. This group completed the questionnaire without any instruction. They were handed an envelope containing the same material and instructions each alumni/ae would receive. After the pretest group completed the questionnaire, discussion was held regarding the packet for each mailing, clarity of written instructions, wording on the questionnaire, and overall evaluation of the process. Input from this group was incorporated into the final design of the testing instrument.

### **Population**

The population of this study consisted of graduates from four selected seminaries—Asbury Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, and Wesley Theological Seminary. The participating seminaries were approved by the University Senate and selected from a list of seminaries graduating a high number of United Methodist ministerial students into full-time local church ministry. Duke was originally included in this list of seminaries; however, it was removed from the project after Dr. Lacey Warner, Assistant Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies at Duke, expressed concern about the lack of importance evangelism plays in the core curriculum at Duke. Though this attitude at Duke is changing, for purposes of this project Dr. Warner recommended Perkins be included since they have a more developed evangelism program.

The targeted population were 2002 graduates who lived within the continental

United States at the time the questionnaires were mailed and were serving local church appointments in full-time pastoral roles. All responses by alumni/ae serving in full-time local church pastorates were used in this project despite denominational ties.

### **Correlation Analysis**

An effort was made to obtain each of the syllabi presented by the professors of evangelism for the courses listed on the questionnaire. Three of the schools indicated an inability to produce the syllabi for their courses. Contact would need to be made with individual faculty who taught the course. Making those contacts was difficult in light of the time period being covered by this questionnaire since many of the faculty teaching the courses had either moved or were no longer on faculty. With this limitation establishing an independent variable was not possible.

To establish a common theme connecting the syllabi, the mission statement for each school was identified and key leaders from the schools were contacted to explore the role of verbal faith sharing within the overall mission of the school. The assumption was made that all faculty members designed their syllabi in compliance with the mission statement of the school where the course was taught. To clarify further the common theme of the mission statements and how that theme was included within the teaching of the designated courses, questions about the course content were also included in the instrument.

Based on that common theme, a correlation coefficient was established between two variables. The variables noted the responses by students before exposure to the evangelism course and the responses post-seminary. Specifically, this project analyzed the students' comfort level and frequency with which personal faith stories were shared

verbally based upon the variables. The coefficient was given numerical values with an average taken from all responses used in this project. An analysis was made of those values inclusive of other factors affecting the alumni/ae's responses, specifically the influence of pre-seminary theological and biblical studies and the influence of other courses and relationships during seminary (Wiersma 345).

### **Data Collection**

The questionnaires were sent to selected spring 2002 graduates of Asbury Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, and Wesley Theological Seminary. Since one of the seminaries was unable to pull only M.Div. graduates from their 2002 alumni/ae, all 2002 graduates received the questionnaire. If they were currently serving in full-time local church appointments, they were included in the project. The questionnaires were mailed 17 December 2004, with a two-week return time. Included with the questionnaire was a cover letter (see Appendix C) and a one dollar bill as incentive for completing and returning the questionnaire. The purpose of the incentive was to encourage the alumni/ae to complete the questionnaire in order to help strengthen the evangelism offerings within the selected theological training institutions, specifically with regard to sharing the personal truth of the God in whom the country trusts, as noted on the dollar bill. A green postcard (see Appendix E) was also included to indicate the return of the questionnaires under separate cover for anonymity purposes. Receiving the green postcards with the respondents' names allowed the removal of those alumni/ae from the second mailing list. The second mailing with a new cover letter (see Appendix D) and an additional incentive (see Appendix F) was mailed 31 December 2004.



## **Importance of Study**

The 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church noted the importance of this topic with the unanimous passing of legislation identifying the need to require all ministerial students who anticipate serving as an elder in ministry within The United Methodist Church to successfully complete a course in basic evangelism. The intent of the legislation was to respond to the continued decline in church membership within the denomination, much of which is attributed to a lack of personal faith sharing on the part of both the clergy and those who are touched by their ministry (Peabody). To assist in addressing this need at the seminary level, a group of professors composed a set of guidelines to assist professors in creating courses that would fulfill the intent of the legislation.

## **General Overview**

The following chapters explore the necessity of a verbal faith-sharing-based curriculum in evangelism for local church pastors. More specifically, Chapter 2 sets forth a broad sweep of literature that helps define verbal faith sharing and clarify its place within the life of the church and community.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the methods used to gather the necessary data for this project. A description is given of the instrument used, the population targeted, the variables considered in evaluating the research data, and the process for maximizing the response rate.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. The results give specific data gleaned from the alumni/ae questionnaires. Summaries of qualitative data given by alumni/ae and current students who participated in the pretesting of the questionnaire will

be also be documented.

Chapter 5 provides a summary and conclusion of the research findings. This chapter also details how the information will be distributed to various agencies within the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Foundation on Evangelism, and Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry in order to create a forum for evaluating needs of ministerial students that will strengthen their impact in telling their stories of faith.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

George G. Hunter, III, charges that 80 percent of the 360,000 churches in America are stagnant or declining and much of the remaining 20 percent find their primary growth by passing believers from one congregation to another. He further charges that most congregations have misinterpreted the biblical mandate for believers to become fishers of men and women by supporting ministries that wait for the fish to find the church. Hunter estimates that “less than 1 percent of our churches are apostolic churches in that they grow substantially by conversion growth as people come to Christ out of the unbelieving majority” (Radical Outreach 9-10). With this charge comes a need to hear a response by the institutions committed to training pastoral leadership who in turn are sent out into these congregations. While the “unbelieving majority” may be reached with the gospel in other ways, this project explores verbal faith sharing as one significant way.

A review was made of the following three areas of literature: the missional views held by the theological institutions who are part of this project, the reason for articulating a person’s story within the context of the community narrative and the biblical narrative (also referred hereafter to as Christian narrative), and the role of theological education in equipping ministers to reach the “unbelieving majority” in a transformational, converting way through verbal faith sharing.

#### **Purpose of Theological Education**

Whether or not seminaries are enabling the students to tell their stories as part of the larger story of faith is important to the life of the local church to which the student

may be assigned as pastor. Without a heightened awareness of the role of one's faith story within the larger context of community, students leave their training ground with stories left untold, with a memorized story of faith that is not personalized in a daily transformational frame, and with a general story that leaves the larger community void.

### **Missional Views**

No benefit is gained by identifying the differences between the schools participating in this project. In an effort to keep the focus upon the common thread that runs through the mission statements for the four theological institutions, key leaders at each school (i.e., deans, presidents, professors) were contacted and asked to highlight central ways the mission statement of their school addresses the role of verbal faith sharing in their commitment to equip students for impacting their community.

**Candler School of Theology.** Dean Russell E. Richey states that verbal faith sharing is a critical part of their mission statement as it finds expression within the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concern:

The Candler School of Theology at Emory University is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concern. Its mission is to educate—through scholarship, teaching, and service—faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world. ("Candler School of Theology Missions Statement")

Richey acknowledges that the challenge for any institution is to recognize the diversity in the students' transformational backgrounds that affects how they respond to being asked to articulate their faith. If students do not feel ready to articulate their faith because they have not been able to root it in the traditions and doctrines of the church, they will be more resistant to verbal faith sharing requirements included in the course. Richey believes this resistance is caused by the reality that some students are functioning out of a

limited understanding of their faith story.

If students come to seminary having grounded themselves biblically and theologically from their college courses, they will have more confidence in verbally sharing their faith stories with others. With greater exposure to Old and New Testament scholarship, students are able to ground their experience more clearly within the story of faith, which then gives them more confidence to speak that faith from a personal perspective. Richey observes that too many students are still leaving seminary with the struggle between having some understanding of the basics of the faith and the necessity to internalize that faith. Addressing this struggle is a key for Candler.

**Asbury Theological Seminary.** Steve Harper, Vice President of the Florida Campus, believes mission statements for all higher education institutions are broadly designed in order to embrace all disciplines of the school. Consequently, these mission statements contain multiple layers, as is the case with Asbury's:

Asbury Seminary was founded in 1923 to prepare and send forth a well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry to spread scriptural holiness around the world. Over eighty years later, Asbury has continued to hold to our intended goal upon which we were founded and provide holistic ministerial preparation as an interdenominational institution. ("Introduction")

To spread scriptural holiness in the Wesleyan spirit necessitates a commitment to share one's faith at a personal level. Harper goes on to state that he does not believe everyone is ready to attest to their personal faith in Jesus Christ at the same point in their journey.

Theological institutions are challenged to recognize the various stages of their students' spiritual growth in grace, stages that could affect the students' ability to articulate their faith stories. Realizing this diversity in students' stages of faith could

make requiring verbal faith sharing within the curriculum difficult. Harper believes the theological institutions have a responsibility to stretch the students into areas that are biblically and theologically grounded where they have yet found a place to stand.

Asbury's mission to spread scriptural holiness in the Wesleyan tradition is the thread that connects all its courses to the importance of challenging the students to grow in their comfort level and to become confident in their call to share their faith story in the community to which they are appointed to serve.

**Perkins School of Theology.** Dr. Marjorie Proctor-Smith, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Perkins affirms that the mission statement of Perkins is designed to provide a place for men and women to engage in theological reflection. The primary mission of Perkins School of Theology, as a community devoted to theological study and teaching in the service of the church of Jesus Christ, is to prepare women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry ("Perkins School of Theology Missions Statement").

Dr. Proctor-Smith states that beyond this mission statement the course syllabi are not evaluated by any creed or code. The school commits to prepare women and men for faithful leadership and how "faithful leadership" is defined depends on the professor. Dr. Proctor-Smith does acknowledge that much of the conversation involving verbal faith sharing could be found within the evangelism courses as well as the pastoral care and caring congregation courses. As to what extent the courses reflected verbal faith sharing is dependent upon the professor. Previous conversations with Dr. Scott Jones, former professor of evangelism at Perkins, confirm his belief that preparing women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry necessitates the inclusion of verbal faith sharing

as a critical part of the curriculum.

**Wesley Theological Seminary.** President Dr. David McAlister-Wilson saw the need for his faculty and leadership teams to evaluate who they wanted to be as a seminary in light of their mission:

The mission of Wesley Theological Seminary is to prepare persons for Christian ministry, to foster theological scholarship, and to provide leadership on issues facing the church and the world. Our aim is to nourish a critical understanding of Christian faith, cultivate disciplined spiritual lives, and promote a just and compassionate engagement in the mission of the church to the world. (“Wesley Theological Seminary Missions Statement”)

Dr. McAlister-Wilson and his team determined that Wesley Theological Seminary should be a more church-based ministry (focusing upon the life of the church) versus a church-related ministry (connecting to church-affiliated institutions). With that in mind, they saw a need to create within students a deeper level of excitement about their faith. In response to that need, the leadership at Wesley shifted the core curriculum toward evangelism. With this overarching shift in focus, students are able to appropriate their seminary courses in a way that creates a connection between their personal faith stories and the community to which they are called to serve in ministry.

These responses highlight the commitment by each theological institute to assist students in appropriating their personal faith stories. The challenge facing the schools is to create ways for students to discover the bridge between their personal faith stories as defined by the biblical narrative and expressed within the context of their community narrative where they are appointed to serve.

### **The Challenge for Theological Education**

From the above-referenced interviews, this project accepts the position that each

school, at varying levels, sees the importance of having students/pastors verbally share their faith stories. The schools have a role in equipping students to respond to that need.

As he relayed a story occurring during one of his speaking engagements, Crandall tells of a young minister who stood before his workshop audience and confessed, “I would like to be an evangelist for Jesus, and that’s what my members think I learned in seminary. But they are wrong” (147). Through informal conversations with clergy and ministerial students within the Southeast Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, I have come to realize this young pastor echoes the sentiments expressed by many clergy about the misconception of theological training, especially with regard to evangelism curriculum.

Jeffrey R. Spiller, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Mobile, Alabama, attributes much of his church’s growth (from twenty-six to over four thousand people in attendance in twenty-four years) to the emphasis upon the telling of one’s personal experience with God. He specifically notes that one of the two people who have most impacted his life is Dr. George Morris, his evangelism professor at Candler School of Theology in 1979. Much of Dr. Morris’ curriculum dealt with one-on-one personal verbal faith sharing (3).

“History clearly illustrates that if any renewal that God brings to His Church is to be sustained, it will be sustained by the effective training of a new generation of leaders to carry it forward” (Flynn, Tjiong, and West ix). In response to this need for effective training, a sudden growth has occurred in the number of subjects being offered in theological institutions. Such growth creates a climate that allows for a wide range of study. That type of climate can be positive in exposing the student to diverse ways of



thinking. However, when pastors enter the “real world” of the local church, they are challenged to focus their ministries in a way that personalizes their study. This focus is clarified as their personal identities find their place within the Christian faith story. The pastors begin to understand who they are “in the light of and by means of the faith narratives of the Christian tradition” (Stroup 201).

### **Identity, Story, and Narrative**

Recognizing the difference between story and narrative is important for identifying the place a person’s story has within the narrative of community and how the Christian narrative affects the person’s story and the narrative of community:

Story refers to the content, the “what” or “elements” of discourse, and has to do with the identification of a series of events and characters, the “raw materials,” judged to be important. Discourse [also referred to by Green as narrative] refers to the “how,” or the way a medium is tasked with presenting the “what.” (Green 29)

In that context, Joel B. Green confirms that the Christian narrative “constitutes a theological claim about the coherence of the Genesis-to-revelation story” (30).

In his article “Narrative Theology from an Evangelical Perspective,” Gabriel Fackre also provides an important distinction between the personal story and the biblical narrative. “Biblical narrative has an integrity of its own and cannot be absorbed into human experience as such. While Christian faith and personal journey are inseparable, they are also distinguishable. One is redemption accomplished and the other is redemption applied” (195). The application finds expression in the personal stories as experienced and expressed within the larger story of community. Hidden in these personal stories told within the community is a larger story:

The tale of creation, the fall, the covenant with Noah, God’s election of Israel, the coming and redemptive deed of Jesus Christ, the birth of the

church, the salvation of souls and sometimes society, the open for the final resolution in the End—all this is the Big Story. (192-93)

The bridge between the “Big Story” and the believer’s story is the evangelical narrative:

The narrative is composed of three dimensions, my story (life story), biblical stories (canonical stories), the Great Story (community story). Understood in this way, the evangelical narrative theology urges the telling of personal and social tales, but also probes autobiography and biography for their revelatory significance. (194)

With this understanding, the “story” of the individual is not seen as a separate event from the narrative of community but a critical part thereof.

The narrative of the community is realized in as much as the personal stories reveal the impact of the Christian narrative on individuals. At the center of the Christian narrative is a set of community narratives that serve as common denominators for the whole of Scripture. These narratives vary in form and content, but each of them reveals an explanation for what Israel and the church believe and why they live the way they do (Stroup 136). “Narrative embodies the shared memory and communal history which binds individuals together in community” (146).

### **Individual Identity/Personal Story**

As Stroup points out, “It is no accident that when they are asked to identify themselves most people recite a narrative or story. People tell stories about themselves in order to identify themselves to other people” (111). Telling stories are a natural part of our identity and culture. The crisis facing the church deals with the inability of people to experience their identity within the context of Christian faith. “Personal identity of many Christians is no longer shaped by Christian faith and the narratives that articulate that faith but by other communities and other narratives, narratives which have no necessary relation to the Christian community” (36).

Michael Pasquarello, III, supports this concern:

Rather than participating in and being shaped by the biblical story, it has become fashionable to construe ecclesial identity in an abstract manner, thereby rendering the shape of its life vulnerable to images and identities provided by powerful stories told by democratic capitalism, civil religion, pop psychology, or something we cannot define but persist in calling “postmodernism.” (“Whose Story?” 69)

While he agrees that the term postmodern means different things to different people, Henry H. Knight, III, does identify some postmodern tendencies that are helpful in this conversation about how a person understands changes in the way culture is communicated and experienced. One such theme is the move from individualism to community. Knight identifies an increase in the holistic vision of humanity that emphasizes “relationality and cooperation” and through this context of holistic community the individual discovers the truth through language as the language is used in creating the stories of the community (53-54).

According to Pasquarello, these stories are important for individual identity:

We are the stories we inhabit, tell, perform, and celebrate. The purpose of our narrative reading and preaching is the formation of Christian identity and mission, of a people who indwell a real, substantial, living world in accordance with the scope of sense of Scripture’s commands and promises, its will and wisdom. (“Narrative Reading” 193)

Stroup carries this thought a step further as he discusses the impact of claiming one’s personal identity in the context of community:

In Christian faith it is not just that the individual discovers his or her personal identity in the narrative history of the community. In Christian faith both the individual and the community look to the narrative history of Jesus of Nazareth in order to discover the true meaning of their respective identities. It is Jesus of Nazareth in the uniqueness of his personal identity who reveals the meaning of Christian faith and in so doing establishes the identity of those communities who witness to him. (168)

## **Community Identity**

“It is the stories of the community which educate the members of the community as to the virtues necessary for the realization of telos, which is the essence or goal of humanity” (MacIntyre 38). A person seeks to discover the essence of life in the telling and retelling of stories as a way of validating the experiences realized within the community. “[We] become who we are through the cultivation of those virtues which enable us to engage in the practices of a community. Our characters are formed and shaped by the stories and tradition of our community” (64).

When an individual encounters God, this encounter is naturally experienced within that person’s history and context (i.e., his or her life story). That history is part of the story within the person’s culture. An individual’s culture is a culmination of stories being lived out—told and retold. A person’s life is a collection of stories. The stories serve as markers along the road of life. People may gather with friends and hear the words, “Remember when we,” or, at the family reunion, people sit around with others whom they may only see once a year and recall the stories that seem to set their families apart from the rest of the world. These stories define and redefine who people are, where they have been, and where they are going. They define people through their community, and they redefine people as they mature and make choices.

The community’s common narrative is the glue that binds its members together. To be a true participant in a community is to share in that community’s narratives, to recite the same stories as the other members of the community, and to allow one’s identity to be shaped by them. If people have only a casual acquaintance with the community’s stories and life, they are limited as to the level of participation they can

have within that community. They can easily move into the position of spectator as they watch and listen to the stories as they unfold around them without claiming their identity within the midst of those stories. Unless the community's narrative becomes the context for the interpretation of personal identity, a person has not really become a member of that community. At issue is the fundamental question of whether redemption is primarily a private or a corporate reality (Stroup 133-34). Lesslie Newbigin puts forth the argument that all religious beliefs have implications for culture. The most fundamental element in culture is language. "When people are forbidden to use their traditional language,... then they feel that the very foundations of their common life have been destroyed" (185). Craig Storti uses a helpful image in describing the importance of communicating the beliefs that define a person's culture. He shows how culture is analogous to an iceberg with two dimensions: one dimension is partly visible (behaviors) and one dimension is substantially invisible (assumptions, values, and beliefs). He notes that a causal relationship exists between the part under the surface and the more visible things people do and say (5). The mechanism by which the two dimensions are connected is the story that is told as a revelation of the unseen. Without the reality of faith stories expressed within community, faith begins to take shape based upon the stories of others who are verbally expressing their narratives. Each person needs to name and claim his or her story of faith and to share that story unapologetically within the community as a part of the life of that community. The culture determines which stories it will encourage and which ones will be filed away in the archives of history, possibly to never to be heard from again. For example, life-changing events like the Great Depression and World War II greatly influenced a generation of men and women, many of whom have responded with

a deeper conviction of being good stewards of one's possessions. Many of those whose life span encompassed the riots and horrors of racism and clan activity have a deeper appreciation for differences between cultures and healthy and unhealthy ways to respond to those differences. In the same way, everyone will be influenced by a new day marked in history with the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Years later the stories are still being told, and how they are told and how they are heard greatly influence how the teller and the hearer respond.

Telling one's faith story, or talking about the lack thereof, gives people the opportunity to validate the experience as real and life transforming within the context of their communities:

Communities, like persons, have identities and the phrase "communal identity" has the same range of diverse meanings as does "personal identity." A community is a group of people who have come to share a common past, who understand particular events in the past to be of decisive importance for interpreting the present, who anticipate the future by means of a shared hope, and who express their identity by means of a common narrative. (Stroup 132-33)

If individuals are turned away or discouraged in the process of their sharing, they will feel alone, out of place, and foolish enough to place the life-changing experience in the closet of their memories, sometimes never to be spoken of again. The void within the individuals' lives and within the community that is created by these muted believers breaks the important line of communication that has been passed down through the ages of time by way of stories. Something is lost for each generation when life transforming stories are withheld from public arenas. "This is all to say that we are meant to take hold of the truth by means of story. Our minds are story-shaped" (Lischer 37).

Stroup discusses the importance of people publicly confessing their faith stories

within the context of their community's narrative in order to integrate their faith into their whole lives:

Unless faith is confessed publicly, before all people, what is acknowledged and recognized in faith can be isolated and separated from their aspects of the believer's existence. A private faith is something that can be compartmentalized and is vulnerable to distortion and manipulation by the believer. Confession is that final moment in the act of faith when what has been acknowledged and recognized is publicly proclaimed in the context of the community's faith and life. (192)

These verbally confessed stories emerge from people's community and faith experiences.

Walter Brueggemann notes that people do not encounter the message of faith "story-less." Rather, they come with their "imagination already saturated with other stories to which they have already made trusting commitment. These other stories may be derived from various ideologies that reflect dominant values in our culture" (11).

Matthew 16 records an encounter between Jesus and those in his community that called for the establishment of his identity within the context of that community. The religious leaders who found themselves on the periphery of Jesus' community identified Jesus within the context of their religious history. On the other hand, Jesus' closest friends identified him within the context of their personal relationship with him:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:13-16, NIV)

### **Collision of Narratives**

To accept their personal story within the new narrative, people experience a conversion that gets expressed within that community. This expression comes from the reading and hearing of the narratives of faith as they are presented within the personal

context of community. At the moment a person's story is articulated his or her worldview becomes realized within the context of that community. Until that moment, there are only assumptions made about the person's worldview based on what is seen rather than what is spoken.

Within the narrative is found the "possibility and power of participation. The narrative of Scripture projects itself beyond the pages of the New Testament, with the expectation of its continuing to be written as the ongoing history of God's people, 'until kingdom come'" (Green 33). With this active invitation to participate in the Christian narrative, the personal identity narrative faces the possibility of encountering the identity narrative of the Christian community and experiencing what Stroup calls a "collision of narratives" (91). When this collision occurs through revelation, the person begins to struggle through the process of redefining his or her personal identity within the context of the identity of the larger Christian community:

Revelation becomes an experienced reality at that juncture where the narrative identity of an individual collides with the narrative identity of the Christian community. This "collision" may be experienced by a stranger to the Christian community, someone who is unfamiliar with its faith and life and encounters it for the first time. Or the encounter may take place between the community and a person who has lived all of his or her life in the church but who has never been able to appropriate Christian faith or use it for the interpretation of personal identity. In the latter case a person may live in the community but not be of it. When either the stranger or the native comes up against the narrative identity of the community, a collision takes place and decisions must be made. In this collision we learn something about the nature of revelation and the meaning of what Christians call conversion. (170)

This experienced reality will inevitably cause that person to view the world differently. Anthropologist Darrell Whiteman defines worldview as the central set of concepts and presuppositions that provide people with their basic assumptions about



reality. This set of presuppositions are held either consciously or subconsciously and create the basic makeup of people's world. At the point when a person's worldview changes, the personal identity of that person begins to be defined by the identities of the Christian community. This new identity leads to the new view of one's world and a new way to identify oneself.

This new identity, claiming its place within the Christian community, affects both the individual as well as the community. G. Hunter identifies conversation as that mechanism by which a person's worldview is open to adopting another worldview (Radical Outreach 179). The language engaged in those conversations within the community "is rooted in history and functions as an interpretation of the past and an anticipation of the future" (Stroup 133). As the individual converses within the context of the community, confirming events of the past, exploring events of the present, and envisioning events of the future based upon this new view grounded in the Christian narrative, the story of God continues to unfold:

The story of God is still being written. Our present is given meaning by the past work of God, and God's future casts its beacon backward so as to remind us how our present life and witness have consequences into eternity. (Green 33)

Within this new worldview, we are challenged to "write ourselves, to inscribe ourselves into the biblical narrative, so that our sense of past, present, and future is congruous with the story of the universe found in Scripture" (33).

### **Some Responses by the Early Church**

G. Hunter points out that the way Jesus called his first disciples to follow him was through the "ministry of conversation" (Radical Outreach 178). These conversations were influenced by Scripture, community, and personal experiences. As John the Baptist's

disciples encountered Jesus, they engaged in one-on-one dialogue: “What do you seek?” “Rabbi, where are you staying?” (178). The responses led to a conversation of faith that drew the disciples into faithful fellowship with the Messiah. “[W]hat they experienced with Jesus was not the brief one-way presentation that so many models of evangelism presuppose, but an honest, open-ended, two-way conversation” (179). Hunter reflects upon the period in the Church’s history when growth was unprecedented:

The Christian movement’s first three centuries were driven by four objectives: informing people of the story of Jesus, winning friends and influencing people toward the movement, convincing people of Christianity’s truth, and inviting people to adopt this faith and join the messianic community and follow Jesus as Lord. (How to Reach Secular People 35)

The accomplishment of these objectives is credited to the early Church’s commitment to “inform people by creatively communicating and interpreting their gospel in conversations, synagogue presentations, and open-air speaking” (35-36).

Drawing from this early Church emphasis that led to such explosive growth in the Christian movement, G. Hunter provides a list of strategies, admittedly not exhaustive, for reaching secular people today. Inclusive in his list is the call upon the Church to “engage secular people in dialogue. The most proven approach for engaging secular people at the point of their doubts is dialogue” (How to Reach Secular People 57-58).

While Jesus did engage in public testimonies of faith, public teaching, and ministry within the context of larger crowds, other examples of life transformation occurred within one-on-one conversations between Jesus and those seeking direction, two of such examples are Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-26). Reuel L. Howe refers to what happened to these people resulting from their conversations with Jesus, as “the miracle of dialogue” (43). These examples

demonstrate the significance of intentionally seeking out or participating in opportunities to share, explain, and personalize the story of faith as it intersects with the stories of community, possibly yielding a change in worldviews. In each of these encounters, the dialogue centered around Jesus' identity. Exploring these biblical examples will help underscore the importance of Jesus' one-on-one model. A brief look at some of this stories within the narrative of Scripture is helpful.

### **Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)**

As a Pharisee, Nicodemus served within the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. As a man of such stature, Nicodemus possibly had at his disposal scribes and other assistants. A meeting between a man of such stature and Jesus, whose teachings challenged much of what Nicodemus represented as noted in Matthew 23:13-36, could have been detrimental to Nicodemus' reputation with his peers. He, thus, had the option of sending one of his assistants to seek out the answers to his questions. Instead, Nicodemus chose to approach Jesus himself during the night. Whatever the reason for the timing, this visit began a personal conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus.

Within this dialogue with Nicodemus is found a familiar feature of the Apostle John's description of conversations between Jesus and those around him. "Jesus speaks, his words are misunderstood, and no revelation or instruction takes place. Those he speaks to remain uncomprehending, failing to understand what he says" (Achte-meier, Green, and Thompson 189). This incident is a clear illustration of the collision of worldviews. Nicodemus' worldview could not comprehend Jesus' teaching of being born again, which for Nicodemus meant reentering the mother's womb. The Greek word, *anōthen*, used in this dialogue is further discussed by Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green,

and Marianne Meye Thompson:

*Anothen* can be translated “again” or “from above.” Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born “from above,” by the power of the Spirit of God, but Nicodemus hears Jesus say that he must be born “again.” Nicodemus’ inability to grasp Jesus’ words betrays his failure to recognize that Jesus himself comes *from above* [original emphasis] and so can speak authoritatively with respect to the birth from above. (189)

At that point in the dialogue Jesus’ teaching collides with Nicodemus’ worldview. In the dialogue movement occurs from misunderstanding, to explanation, to collision and may or may not thereafter lead to conversion. The miracle of dialogue.

### **Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-26)**

As in the case of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman was someone who would not necessarily approach Jesus individually and openly due to her cultural status. This Samaritan woman was from a race viewed by the Jews as outcasts. Jesus was able to personalize the gospel by noting the woman’s need to draw water, by noting her lifestyle with multiple men, by noting her worship practices as a Samaritan, and then challenging her to consider accepting the life-giving, eternal water he offered. Once again a collision of worldviews occurred as Jesus offered the new living water, a phrase in their dialogue that was incomprehensible in its meaning to the Samaritan woman whose only understanding of water was for physical need.

An important part of the collision of worldviews is Jesus’ willingness to enter into a dialogue that brings an understanding that may lead to conversion:

Jesus corrects each miscomprehension, thus graphically illustrating the point that those who misunderstand must be “taught by God” in order to “hear and learn” what Jesus has to say (6:45). Unless they are taught by God, born from above, illumined by the Light, and instructed by the Word who comes from above, they will remain ignorant and uncomprehending, repeatedly failing to understand the words of Jesus, and so unable to come to faith in him. (Achte-meier, Green, and Thompson 189-90)

In this case, the collision of worldviews that occurred during the dialogue led to a conversion experience that motivated her to go back to those who knew her and tell them what she had heard. She became the initiator of the dialogue as she announced the Good News that the Messiah had come. She personalized the experience by repeating the points where the conversation she had with Jesus connected with her personal story. In that personal connection, her worldview changed; thus, the miracle of dialogue occurred and continued as she became the proclaimer.

### **Peter's Call to Defend the Faith (1 Peter 3:15)**

The apostle Peter's teachings are helpful in understanding how to follow Jesus' example in one-on-one verbal faith sharing. For Peter a person must first set Christ apart in his or her heart. Without that commitment the faith sharer is pulling from his or her own resources. A personal collision with the Christian narrative yields an internal change that can only come from above and is referred to as new birth or conversion. That change then finds expression in the voice. In 1 Peter 3:15 the apostle makes a specific call upon all disciples of Jesus Christ:

In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But to do this with gentleness and respect. (NIV)

To give an answer is to testify to the faith that comes from the reality of Christ in the believer's heart. The defense of the hope would include "the main facts about Christ, the few great truths which prove themselves to all religious people, and the personal testimony of the answerer" (A. Hunter 129). This challenge issued by Peter to be prepared is more than an invitation to be available to seekers. It is a command to be ready:

This command to be ready with an account of one's Christian life for anyone who might ask at any time is counter to the kind of attitude held by many esoteric groups in the Greco-Roman world at that time, for whom such divulgence would have been tantamount to betrayal of the community and their god(s). Such open explanation of the Christian "hope," far from something to avoid, is here added to the requirements expressed by our author such as to do good, not to recompense evil or defamation in kind, and to suffer if necessary for one's faith. In this context, not even fear of further persecution is to deter the Christians from giving a full account of their "hope." Cultural isolation is not to be the route taken by the Christian community. It is to live its life openly in the midst of the unbelieving world, and just as openly to be prepared to explain the reasons for it. (Achte-meier 234)

Exploring the background of the text helps the reader understand that Peter was challenging the follower of Jesus Christ to become fortified as a believer so as to stand fast in loyalty to the Christian faith. The believers needed to be encouraged to stand firm in the face of adversity. If the passage had begun at this point, Peter's words "to defend" could have been interpreted as presenting a theological discourse in explanation and support of the Christian faith; however, his challenge to "set apart Christ as Lord" qualifies the defense as one that comes from the heart, a heart explanation.

Edmund Clowney clarifies the natural relationship between the believer's hope and the believer's witness:

Our hope is in our risen Lord. We sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts; there is the end of fear. We sanctify the Lord Christ in our words; there is the start of witness. In the Greek, Peter does not begin a new sentence when he tells us to always be ready to give a reason for our hope. Rather, he says, "Set apart the Lord, the Christ, ready always for answer." (148)

Earl J. Richard identifies Peter's words in the context of responding to the fear caused by persecution with which many believers in Peter's lifetime lived. Peter encouraged them to separate themselves from the culture and be prepared to give the reason for their hope in the midst of their circumstances. This attitude of fear could be a

significant reason why many people today are not prepared to give the reason for their hope in Christ Jesus, whether the fear is literally a fear for one's life, a fear of losing one's place in society, a fear of rejection, or a fear of failure.

In this passage Peter refers back to the words of the prophet Isaiah that reiterate God's "warning not to follow the way of [the people of that culture]" (Isa. 8:11, NIV). The Lord calls Isaiah to tell the people not to fear or dread what the people of the surrounding culture fear. "The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, He is the one you are to fear, He is the one you are to dread" (Isa. 8:13, NIV). Using Isaiah, Peter is also reminding the people in whom they should place their fear.

Richard helps the reader understand that the phrase "do not fear what they fear" can be interpreted in two ways, either as a subjective genitive ("do not fear what they fear") or as an objective genitive ("do not be afraid of them"):

While both are possible grammatically, the latter seems preferable in contextual terms because the object of fear is not seemingly pagan religion and customs but rather pagan opponents themselves who malign or demand a response. Inherent in this interpretation is the role of intimidation within the context of the culture. (148)

While still engaging the passage from Isaiah, Peter gives encouragement in the context of the fear. He does so with the transitional particle *de* or "but." He notes that by setting apart Christ as Lord the fears instilled by the pagan culture are overcome by the heart knowledge of the eternal hope. Therefore, "the first element of the discussion of proper Christian response to adverse treatment by the pagan population is to insist on the believers faith commitment in Christological, personal terms" (Richard 149).

Peter's letter issues a call for believers to follow Christ's example and be holy, because Christ is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). Being holy necessitates inward sanctification of

the heart and outward transformation of one's life in word and deed. No definitive evidence exists as to whether the questioning referred to in this passage was by private citizens or public officials. Yet the call to be ready, to be prepared, to not be caught off guard, to be alert is clear.

In response to this call to be prepared, "creedal formulations arose early in the life of the church" to help believers articulate their new faith (Craddock 59). Articulating their defense, having confidence in their words of faith, holding true to the challenge to be ready to explain the hope they have found in Christ Jesus created stumbling blocks for many within the believing community as they yielded to their fear and dread of engaging in dialogue with the nonbelieving community. These creedal formulas were one way for the organized church to build faith and confidence in people so that they could stand firm in their faith as they professed the hope and truth of the transforming power of the gospel.

Nevertheless, as B. Johnson notes, many clergy and theologians are still unable or unwilling to give a personal account for their belief and the reason for their hope in that belief (13). This lack of ability or lack of willingness on the part of clergy and theologians will necessarily yield a generation of laypeople who will become more and more muted in the area of verbal faith sharing unless this becomes a priority for the church as a whole.

### **Philip's Faith Shared (Acts 8:26-35)**

Acts 8:26-35 provides another example of a faith sharer's response to personalizing the gospel by giving the reason for the hope they have. In this conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, which is conveyed to the reader through Luke's lenses of faith, the eunuch opens the door for a personal faith bridge to be built: "How



can I [understand] unless someone explains it to me” (Acts 8:31, NIV). Philip is prepared to respond by explaining the Scripture, and he does this by sharing with the eunuch “the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35, NIV) The good news about Jesus was not specifically mentioned in the passage from Isaiah, from which the eunuch was reading. To complete the testimony, Philip acknowledged that what had been prophesized to happen had, in fact, happened.

While Philip, a disciple of Jesus Christ, had a specific role as one set apart for a special calling as a preacher, I believe he sets an example for everyone who chooses to follow Jesus Christ. Philip avails himself to God’s Spirit and goes where he is instructed to go, even to those on the roads of life that are possibly outside the familiar setting of the faith sharer. Specifically, this passage models the fulfillment of Christ’s call upon all believers: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

In each of the above-referenced biblical examples, the person in the story realized his or her identity when that identity collided with the Christian narrative. In those stories Jesus and his disciples testified to the fulfillment of the gospel, the hearer was invited to claimed the gospel in his or her heart, and if accepted the hearer experienced a new birth and a new worldview. That identity yielded a courage to overcome fear and confess verbally to the reality of the Christian narrative in his or her life:

Confession is the necessary completion of the act of faith because it is intrinsically public and communal. To insist that faith is not finally faith unless it is issued in confession means that faith can never be understood as a private affair between believer and God. (Stroup 190)

The Apostle Paul sets forth the call to confession as he challenges the believer:

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart

that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Rom. 10:9-10, NIV)

The relationship between confession of the mouth and belief in the heart is critical in the hearer's response to the gospel. Confession and belief identifies the individual as one who has been restored into a right relationship with God:

The "right relationship" with God consists in an internal response of the human spirit, and therefore comes from "the heart." But confession with the mouth is a public and social act, and it is to this social reality that Paul now connects "salvation." (L. Johnson 171)

### **Response by The United Methodist Church**

United Methodists in North America find themselves in the same position as most other Protestant churches in that the number of unchurched Americans has grown by 92 percent in the last thirteen years (thirty-nine million unchurched Americans in 1991 compared to seventy-five million unchurched Americans in 2004). In addition, roughly ten million born-again Christian adults were unchurched in 2000 (Barna). The high number of unchurched "born-again" Christian adults echoes the concern expressed by the church regarding the decline in attendance. The increase in population and the increase in born again Christians should yield an increase in church attendance.

A person could speculate on the reason for the high number of unchurched "born-again" Christians. At some point, though, church leadership must look inward and evaluate the environment of the local church into which these new believers are being invited. If new believers do not see and hear stories of faith shared within the local church, they will have not have the opportunity to validate their stories in the context of the Christian narrative. As the local church leadership considers the place for these faith-sharing opportunities within the context of worship and fellowship, they will lean upon

their theological training for guidance.

The overall curriculum and ethos of an institution delivering theological education, in the opinion of Max L. Stackhouse, should foster multicultural awareness and have an orientation toward practice rather than just theory:

What we do in theological education is talk. We teach and we discuss; we preach and we analyze; we read and we write; we think and we criticize. Words are our medium; talk is our method; ideas are our *raison d'être*. The question is whether any of them are worth something. (3)

Probationary candidates seeking ordination as elders within The United Methodist Church are asked the following question at the time of ordination: “Will you visit from house-to-house?” (Book of Discipline 213). One would hope that an affirmative answer to that question would indicate the significant role personal home visits are in the responsibilities of the ordained pastor; however, I fear that this question has become too routinely answered without consideration for the role of the pastor in house-to-house visitation.

When I queried several pastors about the call to “visit from house-to-house,” each came up with a different explanation of what that question meant for them. Some examples include comments such as, “I don’t think it is safe to visit from house-to-house these days,” “I think this is something that reminds us of our roots but isn’t relevant today,” “I think that door-to-door means that we should be aware of where our parishioners live and visit with them as needed.” These are some of the responses given by ordained elders with whom I attended a continuing education workshop in October 2004. All pastors had been in the local church for at least five years, some as pastors of established churches and some as new church planters.

Dr. Harper asserts one reason the larger church does not spend as much time

discussing the meaning of the vows taken at ordination, specifically with regard to house-to-house visitation, is because the concept of ministry has changed to a more CEO-type paradigm. With this mind-set where the pastor has office hours rather than visiting parishioners and others in the community, the church will often push the need to visit house-to-house lower on the list of priorities. Harper further reiterates the need to identify house-to-house as being any place where the people are found, whether it is in their house, nursing homes, work places, or schools. The call put forth in the ordination vows challenges all local church pastors to meet people where they are rather than the “build it and they will come” mentality. This challenge is central in John Wesley’s teachings: “As great as this labor of private instruction is, it is absolutely necessary. For, after all our preaching, many of our people are almost as ignorant as if they had never heard the gospel” (303). The inquirer was a priority for Wesley. He called his traveling preachers to intentionally enter one-on-one dialogue because it was in that dialogue that the gospel was personalized. Wesley further reiterates, “I have found by experience, that one of these [those in the societies] has learned more from one hour's close discourse, than from ten years' public preaching” (303).

### **The Challenge for Theological Institutions**

The observations noted in this chapter create a challenge for evaluating the role of verbal faith sharing within the curriculum of theological institutions. As pastors lead their churches in response to the biblical challenge to be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks them to give the reason for the hope they have in Jesus Christ, establishing a context of worship and fellowship that is inviting of these confessionals is critically important. The challenge for local church pastors is to create an environment

where people can identify the place of their faith stories within the Christian narrative and community narrative:

Faith is indeed a human act, and confession is the final performance of that act. The meaning and structure of Christian identity is to be found in the act of confession, for Christian identity ... is not something that accrues to a person by right or by inheritance. It cannot be passively acquired, and it is not something that one possesses because of one's race, religious tradition, or family background. In the Christian community one of the things that one person cannot do for another is confession. The community is the necessary context in which confession takes place, but the reconstruction and reinterpretation of personal history which constitutes the act of confession is something that can be performed only by the individual who has lived that narrative history and whose identity is constructed from it. (Stroup 197-98)

Theological students should be challenged to articulate their faith stories in a way that is both confessional and invitational. Whether a person accepts or rejects that invitation is not the responsibility of the faith sharer:

People within the narrative may embrace or reject the divine aim. They are encouraged to listen carefully to the Scriptures of Israel, to follow the course of the ministry of Jesus and so to adopt a perspective internal to the narrative itself. (Green and Pasquarello 48)

### **Verbal Faith Sharing Defined**

Responding to the challenge facing the church, theological institutions are called to prepare those who are seeking local church pastoral appointments to confidently and boldly share their faith stories as related to the Christian narrative within the context of their community narrative. Verbal faith sharing occurs when people are able to *articulate their personal relationship with the God of the biblical narrative as expressed within the faith-sharer's community narrative for the purpose of celebrating the Great Story of faith in Jesus Christ, of which all believers are participants, for the purpose of drawing all people to God.* Creating ways for students to discover the bridge between their personal

faith stories as defined by the biblical narrative and the context of their community narrative where they are appointed to serve is imperative for impacting the local church for a ministry that is apostolic rather than maintenance-oriented. This project looked at how a student's exposure to curriculum, based on varying levels of personal verbal faith-sharing training, impacts their conscious commitment to be verbal witnesses apart from the preaching and teaching settings.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

Theological institutions are challenged to create ways students can bridge their personal faith story as defined by the biblical narrative with the context of their community narrative where they are appointed to serve. This project looks at how a student's exposure to curriculum, based on varying levels of personal, verbal faith sharing training while in seminary, affects their conscious commitment to be verbal witnesses apart from the preaching and teaching settings. While all seminaries which participated in this project have the same ultimate goal for their institutions of equipping men and women for leadership in growing the church of Jesus Christ, how that goal is accomplished differs. Attempting to be inclusive of more than one theological institution made the project more complex in nature; however, I believe the diversity of the schools, tied together by the same goal that stems from the institution's mission statement, gives this project value.

This study attempted to see the overall impact of evangelism curriculum upon theological students preparing for full-time local church pastorates. In order to accomplish this goal the research project followed Wiersma's "sequential activities of a questionnaire survey," which are described in more detail in this chapter (180).

#### **Research Questions**

In an effort to explore the personal faith of the alumni/ae and if exposure to evangelism curriculum during their seminary tenure had an impact upon relationship between the evangelism curriculum being taught at the selected seminaries and their alumni/ae's leadership within full-time local church appointments, research questions

were designed highlighting the individuals' beliefs in the importance of personal faith and the impact evangelism had upon their ministry. The following four questions guided this project.

### **Research Question #1**

What percent of seminary graduates currently serving in full-time pastoral appointments believe that their personal relationship with God impacts their daily life and their surrounding community life?

Without foundational Christian belief that God is a living God who intercedes, transforms, and impacts personal lives and the surrounding community, all other questions would be moot points. Though many may believe in a personal God, they often express doubt that they can be a vessel through which God can impact the surrounding community. Through informal interviews with colleagues currently in full-time ministry and seminary students preparing for full-time ministry, I have learned that there are very diverse beliefs in the reality of a personal God who is involved in people's lives and community. Some of the comments I received from these interviews are, "God is a personal God in that He is involved in my life but I don't have the right to tell someone else how He can be involved in their life," "It would be presumptuous of me to tell someone that God wants a personal relationship with them," "God's Spirit will convict people about their spiritual life. All I have to do is teach the Bible and then get out of the way and let God's Spirit do the rest."

While I would agree that God's Spirit is the ultimate life transformer, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles as noted in Chapter 2 would indicate that followers of Jesus Christ have a responsibility and a privilege to confess the truth of God's presence



within people's lives and within the community. This confession with the mouth, as Paul says, is an invitation to a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That is the premise upon which this project is based. This research question provided an important foundation for the questionnaire.

### **Research Question #2**

Does having some level of biblical and/or theological courses in college or at the local church level prior to seminary affect the comfort level and sharing level individuals have in verbally sharing their personal faith stories?

This question was raised by one of the seminary administrators earlier in this project as to whether individuals' academic background in biblical and theological studies makes a difference in their comfort level for verbally sharing their faith stories. The belief was that previous exposure to biblical and theological studies would provide a faith-based framework in which to hang their faith stories that would consequently create a more comfortable environment in which to share on a personal level. Without that framework, people would have no place to validate their faith stories and would treat the faith relationship as something private.

### **Research Question #3**

Does a correlation exist between the amount of verbal faith-sharing instruction in evangelism courses and the number of verbal faith-sharing opportunities experienced by pastors serving in full-time local church appointments?

Having identified the important role of personal faith stories within the context of the community narrative, and yet discovering that personal testimonials are not as high in priority within The United Methodist Church today as they were in the early Church, an

understanding of the existence of this chasm is important. This question is linked to the fact that many born again Christians are unchurched. One explanation being explored in this question is the possible correlation between the theological environment where the pastor receives training and the same pastor's commitment to share personal faith stories after graduation. If the institution does not encourage or promote the telling of personal faith stories within the curriculum of the school, it may give the message that verbal faith sharing is not as important as other courses and could be experienced in the local church with the same level of importance.

The lack of time and resource investments needed to encourage students to be intentional about sharing their faith stories verbally with others could reflect on the priorities of the theological institution and present the message that such sharing is not important. This question is designed to reveal if such emphasis is found in current evangelism curriculum and whether exposure to that curriculum impacts the comfort level and frequency level of the faith sharer after graduation.

#### **Research Question #4**

What other variables might impact seminary students' decisions to be intentional about verbally sharing their faith with others?

This project recognizes that students do not experience their course work in a vacuum. Students could experience significant relationships, events, or courses that may influence their commitment to verbal faith sharing. Information regarding these influences could be helpful in the life of the theological communities as they seek to strengthen the community life of the institution. While the evangelism courses are at the heart of this project, the objective of this question is to highlight the other factors noted

by alumni/ae as important in their commitment to verbal faith sharing in preparing for local church pastorates.

### **Population**

The population of this study consists of all alumni/ae from four selected seminaries who graduated at the end of the spring 2002 semester. The seminaries selected for this project are Asbury Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, and Wesley Theological Seminary. Each seminary is approved by the University Senate and was recommended by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church for this project.

Specifically, Asbury and Candler graduate a large number into The United Methodist ministry. Wesley was chosen because of its recent shift in the curriculum core to evangelism. Perkins was selected at the recommendation of the evangelism department of Duke Divinity School. Duke was originally included in this list of seminaries; however, it was removed from the project after speaking with Dr. Lacey Warner, Assistant Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies. Dr. Warner believed that evangelism, at that time, was not considered an important part of the core curriculum of the seminary. Though attendance in her classes has increased significantly, her recommendation was to include Perkins rather than Duke in order to get a wider response from alumni/ae. Dr. Warner also shared a concern that the majority of Duke's students who are preparing for elders orders within The United Methodist Church are encouraged by their annual conferences to participate in an approved workshop offered by the conferences to fulfill the 2000 General Conference requirement.

While the 2000 General Conference legislation was to be effective as of 1 January

2001, annual conferences have interpreted the timeline differently. Some annual conferences are placing this legislation requirement on anyone who has become a candidate for ministry after 1 January 2001. With this interpretation, those who are included in this project may not have been required to take an evangelism course. Other annual conferences require everyone in the candidacy process, no matter where in the process they may be, to take an evangelism course as part of the process for obtaining elders' orders. This variance with the interpretation of the 2000 General Conference legislation yields limitations with the interpretation of the responses to the questionnaire. Some students take evangelism courses "only" to fulfill ordination requirements while others desire to fulfill ordination requirements and to learn more about evangelism. In an effort to allow for this variance, there was a question included on the instrument that allowed respondents to note the reason they took the course.

As part of the 2002 class of graduates at their seminary, students will have been affected in some way by the General Conference legislation passed two years prior. In addition, the alumni/ae would have two years of local church experience from which to measure comfort level and frequency level of verbal faith sharing.

The registrar's office at Candler and the development office at Asbury provided their address lists on labels ready for mailing. The administration at Perkins and Wesley offered to mail the packets directly to their alumni/ae. Two sets of stuffed envelopes containing the letters (see Appendixes G, H, I, and J) questionnaire, incentive, self-addressed stamped envelope, and the return card were sent to Wesley and Perkins for their direct mailing. The only difference between the two mailings were the cover letters and incentives.

## **Instrument**

To eliminate conflicting conclusions and to meet the challenges of defining evangelism terminology and establishing a central interpretation of the General Conference guidelines, I sought input from various sources. The instrument was researcher designed with advice from current seminary students, local pastors, professors, and pastoral leaders.

### **Researcher Designed**

The primary source of input into the design of the instrument was Wiersma's text on Research Methods in Education, specifically noting the item format for survey research (176-83). Defining an independent variable would have produced data that could have been measured more objectively, as was the original plan for this project. Nevertheless, the lack of access to each course syllabus and the presence of varying teaching methods by the professors made stabilizing the variable difficult.

Therefore, the instrument was designed to glean information from the alumni that was specific enough to identify their comfort level and frequency level with verbal faith sharing opportunities and the factors impacting both before and after exposure to evangelism curriculum in seminary. Still, the instrument was designed to be general enough to allow for the variations in teaching style and interpretation of faith sharing requirements within the course, or lack thereof. The majority of the instrument consisted of questions that were "selected-response or forced-choice items for which the respondent selects from two or more options, and open-ended items for which the respondent constructs a response" (Wiersma 181).

These items were put together with the input from the following sources:

seminary professors, current seminary students, seminary alumni serving in various roles within the local church, and laypeople considering full-time ministry. In addition, the people serving on my support team, consisting of two evangelism professors from Candler and one full-time local church pastor who graduated from Candler in 2004, gave significant input into the formation of the items. The professors and students were primarily serving in the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church at the time of their input.

General input into the formation of the instrument was received from various delegates who were in attendance at the World Methodist Evangelism Institute Summit of the Americas in Cuba in January 2004. The pastors and laypeople with whom I spoke were primarily from Cuba, North America, Chili, Mexico, and Brazil. The contrast in defining evangelism among these countries help to clarify my own definition of verbal faith sharing. The international flavor of their input was not directly used in the composition of the project.

### **Questionnaire Pretest**

A pilot run was done with a limited number of individuals to test the instrument (Wiersma 176). Seven students at Candler were part of the pre-test along with one member of my support team who is currently adjunct faculty at Candler. The students just successfully completed taken EV501, basic evangelism course taught by Dr. George E. Morris, and volunteered their time for the purpose of this project. The pretest took place on the campus of Candler at 11:30 on Wednesday, 1 December 2004. I provided lunch for the test group, after which an envelope was handed out to each person. No instructions were given. The envelope was just like the one the alumni/ae would receive

for the project. Each person read the letter and then proceeded to complete the questionnaire. The first person was finished within seven minutes, and the last person was finished within eleven minutes. After everyone completed their questionnaire, I presented each of them with a five dollar gift card from Cokesbury in appreciation for their time and participation in the project. The remaining time was spent discussing the questionnaire, its strengths and weaknesses. The group was dismissed at 12:50.

Some of the test group's recommendations included (1) adding my church's logo to the envelope and letterhead to give credibility to the questionnaire as a part of a local United Methodist church rather than from an unknown person gathering information, (2) clipping the dollar bill down the side of the page rather than across the top of the page to allow for easy view of the letterhead, (3) adding instructions for boxes when more than one answer is possible, (4) adding a closing phrase to thank them for taking time to share in this project, (5) alphabetizing the list of schools to avoid showing preference, (6) adding course numbers and years offered at specific schools since most respondents will not remember the number of the course and will need that prompting, (7) giving an option for "other" in responses, (8) giving more time frames from which to choose on questions regarding frequency with which they share their faith stories, and (9) having the definition for verbal faith sharing at the top of the questionnaire.

An e-mail was sent to each pretest group participant with a copy of the notes taken during the discussion to verify accuracy in their comments. Their comments were then integrated into the final design of the instrument.

### **Data Collection**

The first mailing to each person (a total of 307 alumni/ae) included the following:

a stamped, self-addressed envelope, the questionnaire, a cover letter, a one dollar bill, and a stamped, self-addressed postcard. The postcard had a place for the person to sign his or her name and indicate the date the questionnaire was returned under separate cover. This postcard provided a way to track the responses made while maintaining the anonymity of the alumni/ae. On each dollar bill the words "In God We Trust" was circled to draw attention to that phrase and connect its purpose for being included to the explanation in the letter. As well as using the dollar bill to thank them for their time in completing the questionnaire, it was used as a reminder that part of the story of faith Christians are called to share is that through Christ, God will provide the way. The Christian message is an eternal story to tell that is lifted up every time United States currency is used. The letter further explained that one purpose of this project was to learn more about how pastors personalize and verbally testify to that story and their help was needed in completing the questionnaires. Another incentive mentioned in the letter was that their participation would make a difference in strengthening future designs of seminary curriculum since all results would be given to the Foundation on Evangelism of The United Methodist Church.

A follow-up letter, another questionnaire, another stamped, self-addressed envelope, and another postcard was sent to those who had not returned their questionnaires within two weeks of their mailing. In this second mailing, the incentive used was a coupon for a free Chick-fil-A sandwich. These coupons were donated by the Chick-fil-A home office (see Appendix F).

Questionnaires returned due to incorrect addresses were also collected. The address information was given to each institution to assist them in updating their records.



## **Correlation Coefficient**

According to Wiersma, “correlation coefficient is a measure of the relationship between two variables” (345). For the purpose of this project, the two variables of special note are the comfort level and frequency with which personal faith stories were shared verbally by students prior to seminary and the comfort level and frequency with which personal faith stories were shared verbally by those same people two years after seminary while serving in full-time pastoral appointments. The coefficient was given numerical values with an average taken from all responses used in this project. An analysis was made of those values inclusive of other factors affecting the alumni/ae’s responses, specifically the influence of pre-seminary theological and biblical studies and the influence of other courses and relationships during seminary.

To establish a baseline from which to begin the analysis of the data, the overall missions as explained by key leaders at each school was established. The assumption is made, at the recommendation of these key leaders, that each professor designed his or her syllabus in keeping with that mission statement. The catalogue description of each course and the mission statement for the school provide a common thread that ties the various courses in all four seminaries together. Specifically, the courses identified for this project are listed below.

### **Asbury Theological Seminary**

Three courses were identified by the evangelism department at Asbury for which successful completion provided credit toward the requirement as proposed by the 2000 General Conference legislation. These courses were identified as ME501 (also listed as YM501) (1998-2001) “The Servant as Evangelist,” MS610 (2001-2003) “The Ministry of

Evangelism” and IS501 “Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World.” Each course earns three hours credit. IS501 is a pre-requisite for all other evangelism courses. Upon successful completion of that course, students are expected to take another evangelism course to fulfill the 2000 General Conference legislation. Two such courses are ME501 and MS610.

“The Servant as Evangelist” is described in the 1998-2000 Asbury Catalogue as follows:

Students [will be equipped] with perennial and contemporary models and strategies of personal, congregational and world evangelization based on biblical, historical and cultural foundations. Attention will be given to recognizing the social and personal needs of people and relating the gospel to such needs. A basic course for all students seeking to advance the Christian faith with a global consciousness and a local effectiveness. (“Course Description” 108)

“The Ministry of Evangelism” is described in the 2001-2003 Asbury Catalogue as follows:

Drawing on biblical, historical, and cultural foundations, this course enables students to clarify their understanding of and strengthen their commitment to the ministry of evangelism. Contemporary models and resources help students formulate a wholistic plan for personal, congregational, and world evangelization. (“Course Description” 109)

“Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World” is described in the 2001-2003 Asbury Catalogue as follows:

What is the mission of the church? Behind this question is a cluster of related questions, the most important focuses on the nature of God’s creative and redemptive purpose (as this is expressed in the biblical story), its ongoing expression in the world, and its consummation in the eschaton. Participants in this course will explore how the church might discern, embrace, and participate in God’s own mission. (“Course Description” 73)

### **Candler School of Theology**

One course is identified by the evangelism department at Candler for which

successful completion provides credit toward the requirement as proposed by the 2000 General Conference legislation. This course changed classification number in 2001 and is identified as EV301 (1998-1999), EV501 (1999-2002). The course title is “Enabling an Evangelizing Church” and earns three hours credit for successful completion. The course is described in the 1998-1999 Candler School of Theology Catalog as follows:

This introductory course equips the student to understand and accept the challenge of intentionally communicating the gospel, by word and deed, to the uncommitted, within and without the local church. Special attention is given to defining evangelism theologically for practice in a plural society. (“Course Descriptions” 76)

### **Perkins School of Theology**

One course is identified by the evangelism department at Perkins the successful completion of which provides credit toward the requirement as proposed by the 2000 General Conference legislation. This course changed classification number in 1999 and is identified as EV7301 (1998-1999) and EV7307 (1999-2002). The course title is “Theory and Practice of Evangelism” and provides three hours credit with successful completion. The course is described on the school’s Web page as follows: “A study of the theological foundations of evangelism with a view to developing appropriate principles and strategies of evangelism in the local church” (“Perkins School of Theology Course Descriptions”).

### **Wesley Theological Seminary**

One course is identified by the evangelism department at Wesley the successful completion of which provides credit toward the requirement as proposed by the 2000 General Conference legislation. This course is identified as CM112 (1999-2002). The course title is “Evangelism in the Contemporary Church and World” and gives three hours credit with successful completion. The course description was found on the

school's Web page as follows: "Theological foundations of Christian evangelism. Various models of theological praxis from the early to the contemporary church. Particular emphasis on contemporary strategies for evangelism and theological criteria for critical evaluation" ("Wesley Theological Seminary Course Descriptions"). The common thread tying these course descriptions together, along with the mission statements for each institution as described in Chapter 2, is the commitment to equip students to draw upon personal, congregational, and world evangelization strategies based on biblical, historical, and cultural foundations in accepting the challenge of intentionally communicating the gospel by word and deed to the uncommitted inside and outside the local church. The administrators who were identified in Chapter 2 further confirmed this common thread running through the theological institutions' mission statements in noting that each of the schools were committed to strategies in the Wesleyan spirit that necessitated verbal faith sharing within the context of community.

### **Data Analysis**

The intent of this project was to evaluate the impact evangelism curriculum in general had upon students who plan to serve in full-time local church pastoral appointments. The intent was not to evaluate each academic institution. Therefore, references to each seminary will be as follows: Seminary #1 (S-1), Seminary #2 (S-2), Seminary #3 (S-3), and Seminary #4 (S-4). The specific seminary names as connected to the recorded data are available on request.

As questionnaires were returned, the responses were coded and entered onto a spreadsheet (see Appendix B). The format was taken from Corrine Glesne's discussion of reporting qualitative research data on spreadsheets (148). As each questionnaire was

returned, it was assigned a numerical value from one to ninety-one. The numbers on the spreadsheet in the horizontal column across the top correspond to the number given the completed questionnaire. Ninety-one questionnaires were returned by the closing date for accepting data.

The numbers below each questionnaire number on the spreadsheet represent the coded responses to the questions for that respondent (see Appendix B). For example, the words “daily,” “weekly,” “monthly,” “once a year,” and “never” appeared on the questionnaire. For the data analysis, these phrases were coded 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The numbers for all respondents fitting the criteria for the data analysis group were added and an average taken. For each table created in Chapter 4, an explanation of the coded responses is given followed by the table presenting the data. Discussion of the observations made about the data follow each table.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of evangelism curriculum on the alumni/ae's commitment to verbal faith sharing within their local church appointments. The target group was identified as 2002 Masters of Divinity graduates from the selected theological institutions. From the data received, only the responses from graduates who lived inside the continental United States, served in full-time pastoral appointments, and successfully completed one of the evangelism courses identified as part of this project were considered in evaluating the findings.

Table 4.1 identifies the number of surveys mailed out, the number received, and the number that met the criteria for this project. Some of the respondents noted that they took another course to fulfill the 2000 General Conference mandate for elders' orders than the ones listed on the questionnaire. Anonymity of the respondents created difficulty identifying the seminary from which the student graduated and took the other courses. Therefore, if the respondents otherwise met the criteria for the project yet noted that they did not take one of the evangelism courses noted on the questionnaire, their data was still used as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 indicates that of the 269 questionnaires that were assumed delivered to alumni/ae, 34 percent were returned completed. Of the questionnaires actually delivered, 22 percent were returned by respondents who fit the criteria for evaluating the data (i.e., currently serving in full-time pastoral appointments within the continental United States). The first mailing was sent 17 December 2004 followed by the second mailing on 3 January 2004. The deadline set for receiving completed questionnaires was 15 January

2005. Though more completed questionnaires were returned after the deadline, only ones received by that date were included in the analysis. A review of the data that arrived after the deadline reflected the same responses as had been received with no new data.

Table 4.1 also indicates that more than 52 percent of the responses came from alumni/ae of S-1. The results indicate that more than half of the respondents were influenced by the evangelism curriculum taught within the same seminary setting, though possibly offered by different faculty.

**Table 4.1. Data Collection**

<b>Seminary</b>	<b>Total Mailed</b>	<b>Rt'd Addressee Unknown</b>	<b>Assumed Delivered</b>	<b>Returned Completed</b>	<b>Responses Used in Project</b>
S-1	92	2	90	42	31
S-2	104	35	69	11	7
S-3	67	1	66	12	7
S-4	45	1	44	9	5
No indication of seminary attended via course taken				17	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>60</b>

The use of the postcards to indicate the return of questionnaires while protecting the identify of the respondents was considered successful. Of the ninety-one returned questionnaires, eighty-six signed postcards were completed and returned under separate cover. This high rate of return for the postcards enabled the removal of respondents from second mailings where possible. Though the purpose of the postcard was for anonymity

of the respondent, sixteen of the cards were attached to the questionnaire when it was returned.

Appendix B is a summary of the responses given on each completed questionnaire, inclusive of each question. That summary provides the data from which the tables in this chapter were taken in discussing the findings. Primary findings in response to the research questions as well as secondary findings that emerged from the completed questionnaires are discussed in this chapter.

### **Research Question Findings**

Some of the findings for this project were taken from responses to individual questions on the instrument as well as cumulative responses to several questions. To indicate which question on the instrument was used in gathering data for a particular research question, an asterisk followed by the number of the question is included in the tables. Other findings were taken from interviews and pretest group discussions. These findings will be discussed later in this chapter as secondary findings.

#### **Research Question #1**

What percent of seminary graduates currently serving in full-time pastoral appointments believe that their personal relationship with God impacts their daily life and their surrounding community life?

All of the respondents indicated that they believe in the God of the Bible as known through Jesus Christ. Equally important for this project is that each of those respondents believe their personal relationship with God impacts their personal lives and 87 percent of the respondents indicated that they believe their personal relationship with God impacts their community. Of the 13 percent who noted that they do not believe the



community is influenced by the verbal sharing of faith stories, one person wrote “not entirely” as part of their response, which would indicate a belief that their faith story influences their community at some level. Another respondent marked that he or she does not believe the community is influenced by verbal sharing of faith stories and that he or she had been encouraged to concentrate seminary studies in other areas. Consequently, the person did not take any evangelism classes. The handwritten note on that person’s questionnaire stated, “[I] really miss that area [of study] and would take any class as continued education every time.” This note would indicate that once graduates are appointed to a full-time local church pastorate, they experience the need for verbal faith sharing training. The response to this research question is taken from cumulative answers to three questions on the instrument: 8, 9, and 10 (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2. Level and Impact of Faith—Questions #8, #9, #10 (N=60)**

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#8) Do you personally believe in the God of the Bible as known through Jesus Christ?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
N	60	0	60
%	100	-	100

---

#9) Does that relationship impact your daily life?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
N	60	0	60
%	100	-	100

---

#10) Do you believe the community around your church is influenced by the verbal sharing of faith stories?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
N	52	8	60
%	87	13	100

---

Establishing the information reported in Table 4.2 as a foundation upon which to base all other responses was important to the analysis made in this project. Without a firm commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ and a belief that a relationship with Christ impacts a person's life, exploring the influence of evangelism curriculum on verbal faith sharing would have been less relevant.

### **Research Question #2**

Does having some level of biblical and/or theological courses in college or at the local church level prior to seminary affect the comfort level and sharing level individuals have in verbally sharing their personal faith stories?

The response to research question #2 was taken from four questions (13, 14, 17, and 18) on the instrument. To evaluate the various facets of this question, the comfort level of verbal faith sharing and the frequency with which personal faith stories were shared prior to entering seminary were compared with the comfort and frequency levels after seminary. The responses further reflected whether having biblical and theological courses in college or at the local church level prior to seminary impacted the comfort and frequency levels of sharing (questions 3 and 4).

A numerical value was assigned to each response regarding comfort and frequency levels of sharing. Comfort level 1 represented "extremely uncomfortable/would avoid sharing," 2 represented "uncomfortable/would share if asked," 3 represented "uncomfortable/would share/yet not lead someone to Christ," 4 represented "comfortable only within the context of the local church," 5 represented "very comfortable," and 6 represented "other." Frequency level of sharing 1 represented "daily," 2 represented "weekly," 3 represented "monthly," 4 represented "once a year,"

and 5 represented “never.” The responses by each person fitting the criteria were tallied for each question and an average taken to reflect the overall responses (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 indicates that those who took no faith-sharing courses prior to seminary were not comfortable in sharing their faith story but would share within the context of the local church while not leading a person to Christ. Such sharing would occur on a monthly basis prior to attending seminary. After taking an evangelism course, this same group increased their comfort level in that they became very comfortable with a slight increase in frequency of sharing being less often than weekly but more often than monthly.

Table 4.3 further indicates that those who did take faith-sharing courses prior to seminary were primarily comfortable in sharing their faith story within the context of the local church but would share in other contexts with less comfort. This sharing occurred a little less often than monthly. After exposure to evangelism courses in seminary, these same respondents were mostly comfortable in sharing their faith stories anytime, and their frequency level increased slightly as they shared less often than weekly but more often than monthly.

**Table 4.3. Previous Educational Impacts Upon Faith Sharing—Questions #3, #4, #13, #14, #17, #18**

	#3) & #4) Were courses taken prior to seminary	
	No	Yes
Prior to Seminary		
#13) Comfort level in sharing faith	3.9	4.2
#17) Frequency in sharing faith	3.0	2.9
After Seminary		
#14) Comfort level in sharing faith	5.0	4.9
#18) Frequency in sharing faith	2.6	2.5

The findings indicate a slight variation based on pre-academic courses. Having had faith-sharing courses prior to seminary does not appear to have had significant impact upon a person's comfort and frequency levels after seminary. Nevertheless, the level of comfort in sharing increases significantly after the pastors have had an evangelism course in spite of their pre-seminary academic career. The fact that the frequency with which these pastors verbally share their faith is not affected by pre-seminary faith-sharing courses will be explored more in Chapter 5.

### **Research Question #3**

Does a correlation exist between the amount of verbal faith-sharing instruction in evangelism courses and the number of verbal faith-sharing opportunities experienced by pastors serving in full-time local church appointments?

The response to research question #3 is taken from four questions (i.e., 15, 16, 17, and 18) on the instrument. To evaluate the various facets of this question, the percent of course content that involved verbal faith sharing and whether or not assignments were given outside of the class meeting requiring the verbal sharing of the students' faith were taken into consideration. Another facet of the question related to how exposure to the course content impacted the students' frequency and comfort level of verbal faith sharing.

A numerical value was assigned to each response for frequency levels of sharing. Frequency level of sharing 1 represented "daily," 2 represented "weekly," 3 represented "monthly," 4 represented "once a year," and 5 represented "never." The responses by each person fitting the criteria were tallied for each question and an average taken to reflect the overall responses. Regarding course content 1 represented "less than 5%," 2 represented "6%-10%," 3 represented "11%-20%," and 4 represented "more than 20%."

The findings show that 48 percent of the courses included assignments requiring verbal faith sharing outside the classroom setting, 42 percent did not and 10 percent of the respondents did not answer the question. These responses indicate that slightly more of the courses did include an assignment requiring the students to participate in some form of verbal faith sharing outside of the classroom context (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4. Course Assignment for Faith Sharing—Question #16 (N=60)**

#16) Was there an assignment requiring verbal faith sharing outside the classroom setting?		
	N	%
Yes	29	48
No	25	42
No Answer	6	10

Table 4.5 looks at the correlation between the amount of verbal faith sharing content in the course and the frequency of faith sharing by the respondent. More than 40 percent of the respondents indicated that more than 20 percent of their course content involved verbal faith sharing.

**Table 4.5. Impact of Course Content on Frequency of Sharing—Questions #15, #17, #18 (N=60)**

#15) Content related to Verbal Faith Sharing			Frequency of Sharing	
%	N	%	#17) Pre-Seminary	#18) Post-Seminary
0–5	8	13	3.0	2.5
6–10	7	12	3.3	3.0
11–20	13	22	3.1	2.5
>20	24	40	2.6	2.5
No Answer	8	13		

These findings draw the conclusion that the amount of course content did not make a significant difference for the student in terms of the impact the instruction had upon the frequency with which they verbally shared their faith stories. For the 13 percent who attended courses containing 5 percent or less of verbal faith sharing content, the same level of impact was experienced by those who attended classes during which more than 20 percent of the course content involved sharing.

The results indicate that those who are more active in sharing their faith stories prior to seminary (2.6 = more frequently than monthly but less frequently than weekly) tended to take the class with more verbal faith sharing content. This finding may not be credible since the students may not have had an option on course selection.

**Research Question #4**

What other variables might impact seminary students’ decisions to be intentional about verbally sharing their faith with others?

Table 4.6 notes whether the respondents took other evangelism courses while in seminary. More than half (68 percent) indicated they did not take any other evangelism courses while in seminary other than the ones noted on the questionnaire.

**Table 4.6. Other Evangelism Courses—Question #21 (N=60)**

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#21) Did you take other evangelism courses while in seminary that had an impact upon your commitment to verbally share your faith?

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	N	%
Yes	22	37
No	38	63

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Table 4.7 reflects whether the other courses taken by the twenty-two students who said yes to question 21 were more influential in the respondents' commitment to verbal faith sharing than the required course (as noted in question 6 of the instrument). A little more than half of the twenty-two students who took other courses in evangelism indicated that those other courses were more helpful to their commitment to verbal faith sharing.

**Table 4.7. Influence of Other Evangelism Courses—Question #22 (N=22)**

#22) Was that (those) course(s) more influential in your commitment to verbal faith sharing than the required course?		
	N	%
Yes	12	55
No	10	45

Alumni/ae were asked if they had significant relationships during their seminary career that were more influential to them in their commitment to verbal faith sharing than the courses identified in this project. Table 4.8 shows that sixty-seven of the respondents affirmed the existence of such relationships.

**Table 4.8. Influence of Relationships—Question #23 (N=60)**

#23) Were there significant relationships during your seminary years that were more influential in your commitment to one-on-one verbal faith sharing than the required course?		
	N	%
Yes	40	67
No	20	33

This information places the community life and the building of relationships during seminary as more important to verbal faith sharing experiences than exposure to particular evangelism curriculum in the life of the students' faith journey. Identifying those relationships was helpful in this project (see Table 4.9). The findings indicate that classmates and faculty played a key role in the life of students' commitment to verbal faith sharing with 28 percent identifying classmates and 14 percent identifying faculty members. Twenty of the respondents indicated that they had significant relationships that influenced them yet failed to identify those relationships in the follow-up question.

**Table 4.9. Specific Relationship of Influence—Question #24 (N=60)**

#24) If so, who?		
	N	%
Faculty	14	23
Classmate	17	28
Family	0	0
Guest Speaker	0	0
Advisor	1	2
Other	6	10
More than one selection made	2	4
No selection made	20	33

None of the respondents marked family as a significant influence in this area of faith sharing. Only one of the respondents indicated that his or her advisor played an important part in commitment to verbal faith sharing.

### **Secondary Findings**

Data collected for this project revealed some secondary findings that were helpful in understanding the impact evangelism courses taken while in seminary had upon the



respondents. The data came in the form of responses on the instrument as well as interviews and informal discussions with students, alumni/ae, professors, and seminary administrators.

During the pretest group discussion students expressed need for the evangelism requirement to be fulfilled within the first year of seminary. One student voiced her desire to have had the evangelism course during her first year rather than her third year. She believed it would have helped her “appropriate the other courses at seminary if there had been a framework of evangelism in which to place them.” After hearing that comment I asked for a voice vote with comments from the other students. All of the students unanimously agreed with that student. Even those students who were reluctant to take the evangelism course were in agreement that it was helpful in putting the rest of their seminary education into a perspective that related to practical application within the local church context. Their evangelism course helped move the biblical and theological classes away from maintaining the congregation to growing the congregation. They believed that having the faith-sharing material early in their training would have provided better understanding in applying their other course requirements to church growth, pastoral care, and discipleship aspects necessary in the local church ministry.

These students indicated that the registrar of their seminary was responsible for creating first semester class schedules for new students. I recommended that each student share the results of our conversation with their advisor and academic dean. As shown by Table 4.10, more than half of the respondents in this project agreed with the students in the pretest group indicating that evangelism should be required of all first-year Masters of Divinity students.

**Table 4.10. Requirement of Evangelism in First Year of Seminary—Question #20  
(N=60)**

#20) Do you believe an evangelism course should be required of all <u>first year</u> M.Div. students?		
	N	%
Yes	39	65
No	20	33
No Selection Made	1	2

The respondents were asked to identify the most common group with which they verbally share their faith story. While 38 percent indicated they most often share their faith stories with friends, 20 percent admitted to sharing with strangers. As pointed out by one of the respondents, whether the person with whom these faith stories are being shared are family, friends, or strangers, they could all fall into the category of unchurched. Identifying the friends as the number one group these pastors seek out to share their faith stories exemplifies the importance of building relationships with people as part of the faith-sharing process. Noteworthy in the results is the fact that the group who were second lowest in priority as ones for whom opportunities were found to share faith stories were family members. Considering the fact that most significant relationships are built over time with family members, logic would hold that family members should be the easiest group with whom to share faith stories. The results in this project, as noted in Table 4.11, would indicate otherwise.

**Table 4.11. Frequency Level of Faith Sharing Specific Group—Question #19 (N=60)**

#19) With what group do you <u>most often</u> find opportunities to verbally share your faith story?		
	N	%
Family	5	8
Friends	23	38
Work Colleagues	4	7
Neighbors	5	8
Strangers	12	20
More than one choice made	6	10
No selections made	5	8

Having identified the group with whom most pastors found opportunities to share their faith story verbally, they were then asked whether they would be willing to visit from house-to-house. An integral part of that question is clarification of the phrase for United Methodists. Table 4.12 sets forth the question and the responses with regard to house-to-house visitation as taken from the instrument and respondents' answers. Each person was asked to number in order of priority (with 1 being highest in priority and 3 being least in priority) which group is being referenced when he or she is asked if they will visit house-to-house.

**Table 4.12. House-to-House Visitation—Question #25 (N=60)**

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#25) Probationary candidates seeking ordination as elders within The United Methodist Church are asked the following question at the time of ordination: Will you visit from house-to-house? Number in order of priority which group that question is referencing.

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	Priority	N	%
Parishioners	#1	14	23
	#2	22	37
	#3	16	27
	Other Responses	8	13
Homebound and Nursing Home	#1	24	40
	#2	17	28
	#3	11	18
	Other Responses	8	13
Unchurched	#1	17	28
	#2	13	22
	#3	23	38
	Other Responses	8	12

---

For every person seeking ordination within The United Methodist Church, the question regarding house-to-house visitation is asked. While all ordinands are asked the question and all ordinands are expected to give the same affirmative response, of special note in this project is the diversity with which the respondents interpreted that phrase in light of their own ministry. Some thought that visiting from house-to-house is ineffective; others believed that house-to-house is defined by visiting church members, the homebound, and those in nursing homes. Still others indicated their commitment to visit all homes in the community. A copy of their written responses is found in Appendix L.

Their responses summarize some of the struggle the church is currently having as to the priority of verbal faith sharing within the life of the pastorate.

### **Summary of Findings**

The original concern that led to this study indicated a perceived void in the area of verbal faith sharing within the evangelism curriculum in some theological institutions. This void was assumed to be the cause of silencing voices among many clergy in the area of personal faith stories. Response to the void was, in part, the reason for passing General Conference legislation to require evangelism courses for all seminary students seeking ordination within The United Methodist Church. Much of the data collected would indicate otherwise. While the focus of the questions was upon evangelism curriculum, the data in this project also highlighted the importance of students' relationships during seminary as being at least as important to faith sharing as required courses.

This project was initially driven by a personal passion to respond to the challenge for the church to raise up and mobilize leaders to share their own faith stories outside the preaching and teaching context. Specific attention was placed upon whether a significant change in individuals' commitment to share their faith stories personally occurred as a result of being exposed to evangelism studies. The findings confirm that the majority of those serving in full-time pastoral appointments already believe in the importance of verbally sharing their faith stories, though the recipients of their sharing vastly differed.

Many of the respondents experienced a higher frequency level of sharing their personal faith stories with those people with whom they already had a relationship. The highest percent of respondents (61 percent) most commonly shared their faith stories with family, friends, work colleagues, and neighbors while only 20 percent shared with

strangers. While verbally sharing faith stories with personally known people is critically important, a significant need in the growth of the church, which includes the start up of new churches, still calls for cold calling and house-to-house visitation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Responses by the alumni/ae were helpful in beginning the feedback process between what happens in the classroom and the impact that classroom instruction has on pastors in their call as faith sharers within their pastorates. To train pastors, graduate them from theological institutions, and then fail to receive ongoing feedback as to the impact they are having within their local church would be a failing in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church. James T. Flynn, Wie L. Tjiong, and Russell West claim that renewal in God's Church will only be sustained by effective training of a new generation of leaders (ix). The central way to know if leaders are effectively being trained is to create forums for ongoing dialogue between local pastors and the institutions of theological training at the local church level.

#### **Response to Mandated Legislation**

The findings indicate that two of the respondents who entered full-time pastoral ministry took the evangelism course "only to fulfill the requirement for ordination." The other fifty-eight took the course to fulfill the requirement but were also interested in the topic and would have taken the course even if it had not been required. Thus, only 3 percent of the respondents were directly affected in their course selection by the legislation. This percent was higher for the test group where 14 percent of the participants stated that they only took the evangelism course to fulfill ordination requirements.

This finding showed that the majority of those men and women who had accepted the call into full-time local church pastorates already had a commitment to learn more about evangelism and personal faith sharing. The responses indicated that the key issue is

not the importance of actually sharing a person's faith story with others; the majority accepted that fact. The diverse responses came in seeking to identify the group with whom those stories should be shared. The ultimate question may not be "if" clergy are verbally sharing their faith stories. The question may need to be "with whom" they are sharing and how their comfort level is increased in sharing their faith stories with strangers. As one respondent stated, the unchurched could include family, friends, or strangers. Thus, to share personal faith stories with those with whom a relationship has already been established does not negate the reality that the faith sharer is communicating with unchurched people.

Nevertheless, verbally sharing personal faith stories with the strangers in our midst seems to be less important. Accepting Stroup's thesis that the community's common narrative is the glue that binds its members together and to be a true participant in the community is to connect individual stories to the community narrative, pastors are challenged to reflect upon the place the stranger, the newcomer, to the community holds (133-34). Without reaching out to that newcomer who is initially a stranger to the community, that person may never be drawn into the life of the community narrative. Using Storti's image of the iceberg to depict the dimensions of culture, with one being the visible parts (behaviors) and one being the invisible parts (assumptions, values, and beliefs), the stranger does not see the fullness of his or her community without others who are willing to share in a personal way the values and beliefs of the community. This level of sharing could happen after the stranger begins to befriend people in the community; however, the introvert, the broken and wounded, the one who is isolated may still have difficulty sharing with others. Further study could research the point at which



personal faith sharing prayerfully breaks down relational walls and seeks the stranger with the gospel before a relationship is formed.

The legislation mandating all ordinands within The United Methodist Church successfully complete an evangelism course prior to ordination addresses the importance of sharing the personal gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the legislation may have a stronger impact if the “Guidelines for Courses in Evangelism” (see Appendix K) set forth the need to include training for invitational faith sharing with strangers within the community around the church.

### **Responsibility of Theological Education**

The findings further highlighted the relatively little correlation between the amount of verbal faith-sharing instruction in evangelism courses and the number of verbal faith-sharing opportunities experienced by pastors serving in full-time local church appointments after graduation. Whether the course content related to verbal faith sharing was less than 5 percent or more than 20 percent, the average response was to share personal faith stories on an average of once a month.

At every percentage level of faith-sharing content within the courses, the post-seminary frequency of sharing increased from an average of monthly to an average of more frequently than monthly but less frequently than weekly. Included in these questions was the role of specific requirements within the course for verbal faith sharing. A slightly higher percent (48) of the people confirmed the existence of a verbal faith-sharing requirement in their evangelism course while 42 percent did not have such requirement. Requiring an experience of verbal faith sharing or the completion of a project where one describes a program for verbal faith sharing does not have a significant

affect upon the person's frequency of personal faith sharing after seminary.

Though his research is now almost twenty years old, Wilke's premise that much of The United Methodist Church's decline in membership is due to "its over-imposing structure" (29) is still relevant. One could argue that the small increase in frequency level of pastors seeking opportunities to tell personal faith stories outside the pulpit and teaching context is due to the consuming administrative tasks of the church to which new pastors are drawn upon graduation from seminary. Annual conferences have a responsibility to evaluate the time spent by its pastors in personal faith-sharing dialogue in relation to the time spent completing reports and annual conference forms and serving on district and conference level committees and boards. As Wilke attests, the "over-imposing structure" of The United Methodist Church may establish more expectation for programming and paperwork than in visiting the community and committing to one-on-one dialogue that involves personal faith sharing on the part of the pastor.

Wesley affirms the need for preachers to prioritize their mission as being that which only focuses upon the condition of a person's soul. For Wesley, spending one-on-one time with individuals who were inquiring about the faith, seekers or nonbelievers, was more important than administrative work or instruction. He addresses an objection that some people had to spending personal time with people at the expense of studying:

[G]aining knowledge is a good thing; but saving souls is a better. By this very thing you will gain the most excellent knowledge, that of God and eternity. You will have time for gaining other knowledge too, if you spend all your mornings therein. Only sleep not more than you need; and never be idle, or triflingly employed. But, if you can do but one, let your studies alone. I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul.... It is objected, "The people will not submit to it." If some will not, others will. And the success with them will repay all your labor. (304)

## **Responsibility of The United Methodist Church**

An accountability structure exists within the connectional system of The United Methodist Church that lends itself to developing and encouraging more pastors to make a commitment to verbal faith sharing as an intentional part of their responsibilities. The level of accountability and to what pastors are accountable differs from conference to conference. Quarterly reports and year-end reports are required of every local church with specific attention to numbers of members on roll and in active attendance. These reports break down the numbers between those who come to the church on transfer of letter, rededication of faith, or profession of faith.

In response to the discussion in this project, adding a place in the annual reports for the pastoral leadership to account for his or her activity in verbal faith sharing would be helpful, though challenging for most pastors. I would challenge the denomination to create a way for every church to keep in the forefront of their pastor and conference the challenge rooted in Methodist heritage to have nothing to do but save souls. To create an expectation by The United Methodist leadership that all pastors commit the majority of their ministry time engaging in the “ministry of dialogue” (Howe 43) is a critical step forward in establishing verbal faith sharing as a priority.

Another response to the need for prioritizing the pastor’s time in one-on-one faith sharing dialogue would be for local churches to eliminate having pastoral office space located within their worship facility. Counseling rooms could be set up in the church for parishioners to meet with their pastors. Otherwise, the pastor’s office could be his or her car, bike, sidewalk along the neighborhoods, or other means of visibly accessing the life of the community around the church. Local churches fall into the trap of creating space

for their pastors and setting an expectation that the pastor will be in the office ready to receive anyone who enters. The pastor is expected to be in the office and yet visiting in the community. This response highlights the biblical example given in Chapter 2 where discussion centered on God's call for Philip to travel the roads of life in an effort to engage in one-on-one dialogue with the stranger. Response to such call often takes the person outside his or her familiar church setting.

I lift this conversation to the local churches and denomination to evaluate where the priority of a pastor's time is expected to be and if that expectation is in keeping with biblical teaching modeled by Christ and witnessed to by Wesley. Accepting the broad understanding of house-to-house visitation to include, but not be limited to, parishioners, the homebound, nursing home residents, as well as strangers, I propose that The United Methodist Church and theological institutions find ways to pursue equipping pastors for visitation that includes sharing personal faith stories in one-on-one dialogue in whatever context they find themselves with the unchurched.

### **Limitations of Study**

Evaluating the impact of evangelism courses necessitates including the syllabi and the professors' intent in their design of the syllabi. That information would clarify the variable and allow for less variance in the study; however, the assumptions made by faculty in keeping with the overall mission of the institution and the assumptions made as to the intent of the course curriculum as set forth in the course description found on the schools' Web sites or in their catalogues left much room for interpretation. In responding to this limitation, discussions were held with key administrators of each institution and a connection was made between the schools' mission statements and the expectations of

each course being offered as cited in this project. Nevertheless, without direct input from each professor, I was unable to establish an independent variable.

### **Timing of Questionnaire Mailings**

Considering the reality that one week prior to and the week of Christmas are two of the busiest weeks in the year for the postal service, mailing the questionnaires during that time was unfortunate. The first mailing was sent 17 December 2004, and the second mailing was sent 3 January 2005. Out of the 269 addresses that were assumed valid and deliverable, ninety-one were returned before the data collection deadline of 15 January 2005. That number represents a 34 percent response rate. Though the data was not used because they were received after the deadline and calculations had been made, twelve more questionnaires were received during the two weeks following the deadline. That return rate of 38 percent during an especially busy time of year indicates an eagerness on the part of alumni/ae to be in dialogue with their institutions regarding the impact of their theological education upon their pastoral ministry.

### **Population Too Broad**

Securing the mailing information and working with the schedules of four seminaries located in four different states made this project more expensive and time consuming than was originally expected. While a need exists for such dialogue and covering a diverse group of theological institutions helps to widen the spectrum of responses, this project quickly became too massive to establish the independent variable. One of the seminaries maintained its alumni/ae mailing as part of the larger university-wide database. Consequently, the administrators of the seminary were not able to produce the addresses for Master of Divinity students or students on a particular class roster. In

addition, they were not able to pull only United Methodists from their database.

Therefore, the mailings were sent to all 2002 graduates of all four seminaries. An assumption can be made that many of those who did not return their questionnaires were either non-Methodists or non-Master of Divinity program alumni/ae. A stronger response is more likely if two additional questions had been added: Are you a graduate of the Master of Divinity program, and are you serving under appointment by The United Methodist Church? Though the comments by all alumni/ae were helpful, these two questions were important in light of the discussion about “house-to-house” visitation, which is only asked of United Methodist ordinands.

### **Contribution to Theological Education and Evangelism**

In the process of conducting this study, I received numerous letters from pastors as well as encouragement from administrators within the theological institutions. Each one expressed interest in getting the feedback from the project. Five of the questionnaires included statements such as, “Thank you for asking the questions.” I believe a critical need exists for more dialogue between seminaries and the pastors serving in local church appointments. This dialogue helps the seminaries respond to the needs of local church leadership. One of the respondents indicated that he or she missed the area of study in evangelism because of comments from the advisor stating that evangelism would be a waste of time. Once that individual graduated and accepted the responsibility as a local church pastor, he or she experienced a void in being equipped to share his or her faith story with others.

A step in addressing this void is being made by several theological institutions as they seek to provide continuing education opportunities for in-career pastors as part of

annual requirements made of those serving in full-time pastoral appointments. Within The United Methodist Church, fulfillment of this requirement is reported every year as part of the pastor's annual report to the district superintendent. While the requirement for the successful completion of an approved evangelism course prior to ordination is a start, increased benefit could come from offering a continuing education course in evangelism after two years of service as ordained elders within the local church. This in-field experience would afford the pastors a realistic setting in which to learn about verbally sharing their faith stories for the purpose of growing God's church. Equally important is the need to pass along that learning to their laity.

The administration of Wesley Theological Seminary has endeavored to address this need for stronger bridges between the local church and the pastor being trained by their institution to pastor that local church. Wesley has positively begun building these bridges with its effort to move the mission of the school to a more church-based ministry (focusing upon the life of the church) versus a church-related ministry (connecting to church-affiliated institutions). With that in mind, they saw a need to create within students a deeper level of excitement about their faith.

I would propose that this study challenges local churches, pastors, annual conferences, and theological institutions to consider a paradigm shift in educating those seeking to serve in full-time pastorates. One proposal would be for every person seeking to enter into full-time pastoral ministry to begin his or her ministry with a three-year commitment to building a house church. That commitment would require intentional effort to visit within the community, to enter into faith dialogue with believers as well as nonbelievers, and to recapture the vision of the first generation church in reaching the

unchurched, whether they are unchurched believers or unchurched nonbelievers. A discussion of that paradigm and the consequences of it for the life of the church necessitates further study.

### **Further Studies**

As this project unfolded, several other issues emerged that could provide a catalyst for further study.

### **Alternative Means of “Verbal” Faith Sharing**

For purposes of minimizing the variables, only those responses based upon verbal sharing were used. Another study could be done to look at the various means of communicating personal faith stories, such as drawing, writing, and sign language. The use of language as written and spoken art forms opens many doors for styles of communication that go beyond the spoken word. The use of art in communicating the gospel in a way that is personal and transformational could have an impact upon the format evangelism courses take in a culture that is sensitive to the need for inclusiveness and handicap accessibility within the context of worship and fellowship.

### **Verbal Faith Sharing in the Local Congregation**

Studying the congregations of alumni/ae serving in full-time pastoral appointments who were part of this project would provide helpful follow-up information to the findings discussed in the previous chapter. How pastors define their frequency of verbal faith sharing and how those stories are shared could be different from the perception and expectation of the laity. This project primarily included the pastors' experiences. To see how the pastors' experiences are translated in their local church settings would require further contacts with pastors in the context of their current



appointments.

Another aspect of that study would involve interviews with born-again Christians who are unchurched. These interviews would seek to reveal a better understanding about the environment of the local church that appears to be unwelcoming for these new believers. To gain a better understanding of the relationship between the personal commitment by the pastor and laity to verbal faith sharing and the environment of that church as experienced by new Christians would be helpful.

A third aspect to the study would include looking at the time management of the pastors. Of specific interest would be the amount of time that is intentionally committed to verbal faith sharing compared to administrative responsibilities.

### **Ordination Vows**

While the questions presented at ordination are clearly stated, some of the responses by the ordinands given in this project indicate that the interpretations are not as clear. Each annual conference is challenged to explore the meaning of visiting house-to-house along with the expectation set by the conference for each ordinand in his or her response. In order to raise up full-time pastors who will be intentional about engaging in personal faith sharing as an invitation to the unbelieving community, conferences need to clarify this as an expectation. Those expectations are the beginning of a critical dialogue between the annual conferences and the theological institutions as to how to equip the clergy to meet those expectations within the local church context.

Students may enter seminary with a desire to learn more about evangelism and choose to take evangelism to strengthen their witness, but how that witness plays out in the local church needs to be clarified by the expectations of the annual conferences of

The United Methodist Church. Harper says that Wesley never intended the vows to be fulfilled on an individual level or for the clergy to do ministry alone. To spread scriptural holiness draws all people together in accepting that calling. Visiting house to house creates a community base of visitation by all people in the church. Creating this kind of a paradigm moves the church away from the CEO mentality to the church of the people doing ministry together alongside the pastor.

### **Conclusion**

This project took many turns during its life span. As a new church planter, many of the questions raised as research questions and secondary questions were being redefined as I shared with colleagues, students, and my own parishioners. In asking the question about the impact of evangelism curriculum on the alumni/ae's current pastoral ministry, I found myself reflecting on that same question with regard to how my commitment has found expression within my new church.

In response to this question, the people of my church have added several opportunities for people to share their faith stories within the context of worship. For example, when new people join the church, they agree to stand in front of the congregation and share what God has done and is doing in their lives. For many people who decide to join the church, standing in front of other people is a new experience. Nevertheless, in every situation I have received positive feedback about how freeing and "energizing" the experience was even though the person was initially "scared to death." I have watched as these new members have moved into leadership where they more freely share the reality of their faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition, the church encourages anyone who attends a conference, spiritual life

retreat, or any gathering considered a source of spiritual renewal to return to the church and share about their experience. This public testimony promotes the priority that exists in the church for sharing experiences of faith in Jesus Christ in public arenas as significant ways of glorifying God.

Committing to these forms of public testimony within the context of the familiar environment of their local church allows the people an opportunity to share their stories of faith in a safe arena while they mature in their faith and seek opportunities outside of their comfort zone for such testimonies. Creating an inviting environment where people are not forced to share their faith stories, but, rather, are encouraged to celebrate these stories provides a place of acceptance and affirmation for the church and community that is contagious and welcoming.

For the life of all churches, returning to an emphasis on verbal expression of faith stories is imperative. Telling these stories of what God has done and is doing in personal lives and in the life of the community brings renewal to plateaued or declining churches and energizes new churches. Telling the stories of God's activity within the lives of believers and within the community draws others into a search for this living God and gives confidence to the believer to then share more often outside the context of the local church. My prayer is that this project will cause the local church to ask the question, "How intentional are we being as a church, locally and denominationally, in verbally telling the stories of faith?"

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for 2002 Alumni/ae

THE IMPACT OF VERBAL FAITH SHARING  
WITHIN THE EVANGELISM CURRICULUM ON  
ALUMNI/AE SERVING IN FULL-TIME PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

*Verbal Faith Sharing = articulating our personal relationship with the God of the Biblical narrative as expressed within the faith sharer's community narrative for the purpose of celebrating the Great Story of Faith in Jesus Christ, of which all believers are participants, for the purpose of drawing all people to God.*

**Demographic Information:**

- 1) Undergraduate Degree: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Area of Concentration in Undergraduate Studies: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Number of courses in biblical or theological studies  
successfully completed in a higher education  
setting prior to seminary: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Number of courses in biblical or theological studies  
successfully completed as part of a local  
church experience prior to seminary: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Appointment currently being served: (check one)
- \_\_\_ Full-time local church pastor
- \_\_\_ Part-time local church pastor
- \_\_\_ Staff position with responsibilities other than pastoral
- \_\_\_ Chaplaincy
- \_\_\_ Other: Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Information from Seminary Training:** (Check one)

- 6) Course taken to fulfill the 2000 General Conference mandate for elders' orders.
- \_\_\_ ME501 / YM501 (1998-2002) Asbury Theological Seminary
- \_\_\_ MS610 (2001-2002) Asbury Theological Seminary
- \_\_\_ IS501 (1998-2002) Asbury Theological Seminary
- \_\_\_ EV301 (1998-1999) / EV501 (1999-2002) Candler School of Theology
- \_\_\_ EV7301 (1998-1999) / V7307 (1999-2002) Perkins School of Theology
- \_\_\_ CM112 (1999-2002) Wesley Theological Seminary
- \_\_\_ Other
- 7) For what reason did you take that course?
- \_\_\_ *Only* to fulfill the ordination requirement; no interest in topic otherwise.
- \_\_\_ I was interested in the topic but also to fulfill ordination requirements.
- \_\_\_ I was interested in the topic and would have taken the course whether it was required or not.

\_\_\_ Other. Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Sharing Information:** (Check one)

- 8) Do you personally believe in the God of the Bible as known through Jesus Christ?  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- 9) Does that relationship impact your daily life?  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- 10) If yes, can you confidently articulate your faith story about that relationship?  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- 11) Do you believe the community around your church is influenced by verbal sharing of faith stories?  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- 12) Which statement most closely represents your belief:  
\_\_\_ I will tell anyone my faith story *only* if they approach me and ask  
\_\_\_ I believe I should look for opportunities to bring my faith in Jesus Christ into conversations whenever possible to open doors for sharing the Gospel  
\_\_\_ I resent feeling I need to share my faith story with others; it is very personal.  
\_\_\_ Other: Briefly explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) *Prior to* attending the class referenced in question 6, what was your comfort level in sharing your faith story in a one-on-one dialogue with another person?  
\_\_\_ Extremely uncomfortable and would avoid sharing personal aspects of faith  
\_\_\_ Uncomfortable but would share if someone asked  
\_\_\_ Uncomfortable but would share yet not pray for that person to accept Christ  
\_\_\_ Comfortable sharing only within the context of the local church  
\_\_\_ Very comfortable sharing about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ  
\_\_\_ Other
- 14) *Since successfully completing* the class referenced in question 6, what is your comfort level in sharing your faith story in a one-on-one dialogue?  
\_\_\_ Extremely uncomfortable and will avoid sharing personal aspects of faith  
\_\_\_ Uncomfortable but will share if someone asks  
\_\_\_ Uncomfortable but will share yet not pray for that person to accept Christ  
\_\_\_ Comfortable sharing only within the context of the local church  
\_\_\_ Very comfortable sharing about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ  
\_\_\_ Other
- 15) How much of that course content was related to verbal faith-sharing?  
\_\_\_ Less than 5% \_\_\_ 6% - 10% \_\_\_ 11% - 20% \_\_\_ More than 20%
- 16) Was there an assignment requiring verbal faith sharing outside the classroom?

Yes       No

- 17) Prior to seminary how often, on the average, did you verbally share your faith story with at least one other person outside of the preaching and teaching context?  
 Daily    Weekly    Monthly    Once a year    Never
- 18) Since graduation, how often, on the average, do you verbally share your faith story with at least one other person outside of the preaching and teaching context?  
 Daily    Weekly    Monthly    Once a year    Never
- 19) With what group do you most often verbally share your faith stories?  
 Family    Friends    Work colleagues    Neighbors    Strangers
- 20) Should first year M. Div. students be required to take an evangelism courses?  
 Yes       No

**Other Faith Sharing Influences:** (Check one)

- 21) Did you take other evangelism courses while in seminary?  
 Yes       No
- 22) Was that (those) course(s) more influential in your commitment to verbal faith sharing than the required course?  
 Yes       No
- 23) Were there significant relationships that were more influential in your commitment to one-on-one verbal faith sharing than the required course?  
 Yes       No
- 24) If yes, who? (Check the one who had the greatest influence)  
 Faculty    Classmate    Family    Guest speaker    Advisor    Other
- 25) Probationary candidates seeking ordination as elders within The United Methodist Church are asked "Will you visit from house-to-house?"

Number in order of priority (with 1 being highest in priority and 3 being least in priority) which group that question is referencing:

- Your parishioners' homes  
 The homebound and those in nursing homes  
 The unchurched in the community  
 Other

If checked other, briefly explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO SHARE IN THIS PROJECT!**  
**YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT!**

APPENDIX B

Summary of Data Collected

	Survey #																						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<b>Demographic Information:</b>	ans																						
1.0 Undergraduate Degree:	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Religion Degree:	1																						
Other:	2																						
2.0 Area of Concentration in Undergraduate Studies:	2	2	1	1	*	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Religion:	1																						
Other:	2																						
3.0 Number of courses in a higher education setting prior to seminary:	0	2	0	10	8	2	10	50	0	30	5	0	0	0	4	13	15	0	25	15	0	3	0
zero:	1																						
1 to 3:	2																						
4 to 6:	3																						
7 to 9:	4																						
>10:	6																						
4.0 Number of courses as part of a local church experience prior to seminary:	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
5.0 Appointment currently being served:	1	1	1	5	1	1	3	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
Full-time local church pastor:	1																						
Part-time local church pastor:	2																						
Staff position:	3																						
Chaplaincy:	4																						
Other:	5																						
<b>Academic Information from Seminary Training:</b>																							
6.0 Course taken to fulfill the 2000 General Conference mandate for elders' orders:	1	4	1	7	4	7	4	4	7	4	7	5	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ME501 / YM501 (1998-2002) Asbury:	1																						
MS610 (2001-2002) Asbury:	1																						
IS501 (1998-2002) Asbury:	1																						
EV301 (1998-1999) / EV501 (1999-2002) Covenant:	4																						
EV7301 (1995-1998) / V7307 (1999-2002) Perkins:	6																						
CM112 (1999-2002) Wesley:	6																						
Other:	7																						
7.0 For what reason did you take that course?	1	3	2	*	3	4	2	3	2	1	4	4	4	3	3	3	1	*	4	3	2	2	2
To fulfill requirement:	1																						
Interested but also to fulfill requirements:	2																						
Interested in the topic:	3																						
Other:	4																						
<b>Faith-sharing Information:</b>																							
8.0 Do you presently believe? YES/NO	yes	**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.0 Does that relationship impact your daily life? YES/NO	yes	**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0 If yes, can you articulate your story of faith? YES/NO	yes	**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11.0 Do you believe the community is influenced? YES/NO	yes	**	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
12.0 Which statement most closely represents your belief:	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	4	1	2	2	3	4	2	2	4	2	2
I will tell anyone, only if they approach:	1																						
I should look for opportunities:	2																						
I resent feeling I need to share my faith story:	3																						
Other:	4																						
13.0 Prior to attending the class, what was your comfort level in sharing faith story?	2	4	3	2	5	6	6	4	4	5	4	6	2	2	5	6	1	2	5	1	4	1	5
Extremely uncomfortable / would avoid sharing:	1																						
Uncomfortable / would share:	2																						
Uncomfortable / would share / not pray:	3																						
Comfortable sharing only within the church:	4																						
Very comfortable sharing:	5																						
Other:	6																						
14.0 Since completing the class, what is your comfort level in sharing your faith story?	5	5	5	*	5	6	9	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	6	2	5	5	4	5	5
Extremely uncomfortable / will avoid sharing:	1																						
Uncomfortable / will share if someone asks:	2																						
Uncomfortable / will share my story / not pray:	3																						
Comfortable sharing only within the church:	4																						
Very comfortable sharing:	5																						
Other:	6																						
15.0 How much of that course content was related to verbal faith-sharing?	4	3	4	*	4	*	1	4	2	1	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4
Less than 5%:	1																						
6% - 10%:	2																						
11% - 20%:	3																						
More than 20%:	4																						
16.0 Assignment requiring verbal sharing outside the class? YES/NO	yes	**	1	0	0	*	1	*	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
17.0 Prior to seminary how often did you share your faith story?	4	2	4	4	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	5	4	3	5	3	4	*
Daily:	1																						
Weekly:	2																						
Monthly:	3																						
Once a year:	4																						
Never:	5																						
18.0 Since graduation, how often do you share your faith story?	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	4	*
Daily:	1																						
Weekly:	2																						
Monthly:	3																						
Once a year:	4																						
Never:	5																						
19.0 With what group do you most often find opportunities to share your story?	5	2	1	2	5	*	2	4	6	2	6	2	4	5	1	2	5	2	5	5	2	*	8
Family:	1																						
Friends:	2																						
Work colleagues:	3																						
Neighbors:	4																						
Strangers:	5																						
More than one of the above:	6																						
20.0 Should an evangelism course be required? YES/NO	yes	**	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Other Faith Sharing Influences: (Check one)																							
21.0 Did you take other evangelism courses while in seminary? YES/NO	yes	**	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22.0 Was this more influential than the required course? YES/NO	yes	**	0	1	*	0	*	0	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	*	0	*	*	*	1
23.0 Were there significant relationships more influential? YES/NO	yes	**	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
24.0 If yes, who? (Check the one who had the greatest influence)	1	1	*	2	2	*	*	*	*	*	2	2	*	2	1	6	2	6	6	*	2	1	1
Faculty:	1																						
Classmate:	2																						
Family:	3																						
Guest speaker:	4																						
Advisor:	5																						
Other:	6																						
More than one of the above:	7																						
How do you define salvation in order of priority? 1= highest 3=lowest																							
25.0 Your parishioners' homes?	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	3												

		24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	
<b>Demographic Information:</b>		ans																							
1.0	Undergraduate Degree:	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2
	Religion Degree	1																							
	Other:	2																							
2.0	Area of Concentration in Undergraduate Studies:	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	
	Religion	1																							
	Other:	2																							
3.0	Number of courses in a higher education setting prior to seminary:	0	25	1	1	0	6	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	22	11	7	8	0	0	6	5	0
	1 to 3	1																							
	4 to 6	2																							
	7 to 9	3																							
	>10	4																							
4.0	Number of courses as part of a local church experience prior to seminary:	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
5.0	Appointment currently being served	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	5
	Full-time local church pastor	1																							
	Part-time local church pastor	2																							
	Staff position	3																							
	Chaplaincy	4																							
	Other:	5																							
<b>Academic Information from Seminary Training:</b>																									
6.0	Course taken to fulfill the 2000 General Conference mandate for elders' orders:	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
	ME501 / YM501 (1998-2002) Asbury	1																							
	MS610 (2001-2002) Asbury	1																							
	IS501 (1998-2002) Asbury	1																							
	EV301 (1998-1999) / EV501 (1999-2002) Candier	4																							
	EV7301 (1998-1999) / V7307 (1999-2002) Perkins	5																							
	CM112 (1999-2002) Wesley	6																							
	Other:	7																							
7.0	For what reason did you take that course?	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	*	3	3	2	3	3	4	
	To fulfill requirement	1																							
	Interested but also to fulfill requirements	2																							
	Interested in the topic	3																							
	Other:	4																							
<b>Faith-Sharing Information:</b>																									
8.0	Do you personally believe?	YES/NO	yes = 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.0	Does that relationship impact your daily life?	YES/NO	yes = 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	If yes, can you articulate your story of faith?	YES/NO	yes = 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11.0	Do you believe the community is influenced?	YES/NO	yes = 1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
12.0	Which statement most closely represents your belief:		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4
	I will tell anyone, only if they approach	1																							
	I should look for opportunities	2																							
	I resent feeling I need to share my faith story	3																							
	Other:	4																							
13.0	Prior to attending the class, what was your comfort level in sharing faith story?	5	2	5	5	2	2	4	2	5	5	2	5	2	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	6	
	Extremely uncomfortable / would avoid sharing	1																							
	Uncomfortable / would share	2																							
	Uncomfortable / would share / not pray	3																							
	Comfortable sharing only within the church	4																							
	Very comfortable sharing	5																							
	Other:	6																							
14.0	Since completing the class, what is your comfort level in sharing your faith story?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	6	2	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Extremely uncomfortable / would avoid sharing	1																							
	Uncomfortable / will share if someone asks	2																							
	Uncomfortable / will share my story / not pray	3																							
	Comfortable sharing only within the church	4																							
	Very comfortable sharing	5																							
	Other:	6																							
15.0	How much of that course content was related to verbal faith-sharing?	2	2	4	*	2	2	2	4	2	3	4	1	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	3	*	
	Less than 5%	1																							
	6% - 10%	2																							
	11% - 20%	3																							
	More than 20%	4																							
16.0	Assignment requiring verbal sharing outside the class? YES/NO	yes = 1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
17.0	Prior to seminary how often did you share your faith story?	2	4	2	2	4	2	3	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	4	1	4	2	2	3	*	
	Daily	1																							
	Weekly	2																							
	Monthly	3																							
	Once a year	4																							
	Never	5																							
18.0	Since graduation, how often do you share your faith story?	3	3	2	2	4	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	2	*	
	Daily	1																							
	Weekly	2																							
	Monthly	3																							
	Once a year	4																							
	Never	5																							
19.0	With what group do you most often find opportunities to share your story?	6	3	2	5	2	6	*	4	4	2	1	5	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	5	5	2	*	
	Family	1																							
	Friends	2																							
	Work colleagues	3																							





		70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91
<b>Demographic Information:</b>		ans																					
1.0	Undergraduate Degree:	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Religion Degree	1																					
	Other:	2																					
2.0	Area of Concentration in Undergraduate Studies:	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Religion	1																					
	Other:	2																					
3.0	Number of courses in a higher education setting prior to seminary:	0	0	0	0	12	4	4	0	0	1	0	*	6	2	0	3	*	5	32	0	0	0
	zero	1																					
	1 to 3	2																					
	4 to 6	3																					
	7 to 9	4																					
	>10	5																					
4.0	Number of courses as part of a local church experience prior to seminary:	0	0	0	15	0	2	2	0	0	2	*	0	0	2	0	*	0	16	2	1	5	0
5.0	Appointment currently being served	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	2	1	1	3	1	1	*	5	3	1	1	5	3
	Full-time local church pastor	1																					
	Part-time local church pastor	2																					
	Staff position	3																					
	Chaplaincy	4																					
	Other:	5																					
<b>Academic Information from Seminary Training:</b>																							
6.0	Course taken to fulfill the 2000 General Conference mandate for elders' orders:	5	5	5	*	6	5	5	*	*	6	1	7	*	5	7	5	7	5	5	7	7	5
	ME501 / YM501 (1998-2002) Asbury	1																					
	MS610 (2001-2002) Asbury	1																					
	IS501 (1998-2002) Asbury	1																					
	EV301 (1998-1999) / EV501 (1999-2002) Candler	4																					
	EV7301 (1998-1999) / V7307 (1999-2002) Perkins	5																					
	CM112 (1999-2002) Wesley	6																					
	Other	7																					
7.0	For what reason did you take that course?	3	3	3	*	2	4	3	*	*	2	2	2	*	2	4	3	*	3	3	*	*	2
	To fulfill requirement	1																					
	Interested but also to fulfill requirements	2																					
	Interested in the topic	3																					
	Other:	4																					
<b>Faith-Sharing Information:</b>																							
8.0	Do you personally believe?	YES	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	NO	NO																					
9.0	Does that relationship impact your daily life?	YES	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	NO	NO																					
10.0	If yes, can you articulate your story of faith?	YES	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	NO	NO																					
11.0	Do you believe the community is influenced?	YES	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
	NO	NO																					
12.0	Which statement most closely represents your belief:	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
	I will tell anyone, only if they approach	1																					
	I should look for opportunities	2																					
	I resent feeling I need to share my faith story	3																					
	Other:	4																					
13.0	Prior to attending the class, what was your comfort level in sharing faith story?	5	2	2	*	5	5	5	*	*	2	5	2	*	4	5	2	*	5	5	5	5	5
	Extremely uncomfortable/would avoid sharing	1																					
	Uncomfortable / would share	2																					
	Uncomfortable /would share / not pray	3																					
	Comfortable sharing only within the church	4																					
	Very comfortable sharing	5																					
	Other	6																					
14.0	Since completing the class, what is your comfort level in sharing your faith story?	5	2	5	*	5	5	5	*	*	5	5	2	*	5	6	5	*	6	5	5	5	5
	Extremely uncomfortable / will avoid sharing	1																					
	Uncomfortable /will share if someone asks	2																					
	Uncomfortable /will share my story / not pray	3																					
	Comfortable sharing only within the church	4																					
	Very comfortable sharing	5																					
	Other	6																					
15.0	How much of that course content was related to verbal faith-sharing?	1	2	1	*	4	1	3	*	*	1	4	1	*	3	*	3	*	1	3	*	*	4
	Less than 5%	1																					
	6% - 10%	2																					
	11% - 20%	3																					
	More than 20%	4																					
16.0	Assignment requiring verbal sharing outside the class? YES/NO	YES	0	0	0	*	0	0	1	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	NO	NO																					
17.0	Prior to seminary how often did you share your faith story?	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	*	*	3	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	1	3	4	2
	Daily	1																					
	Weekly	2																					
	Monthly	3																					
	Once a year	4																					
	Never	5																					
18.0	Since graduation, how often do you share your faith story?	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	*	*	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	3
	Daily	1																					
	Weekly	2																					
	Monthly	3																					
	Once a year	4																					
	Never	5																					
19.0	With what group do you most often find opportunities to share your story?	6	3	2	2	5	2	5	*	*	2	2	4	3	2	1	2	6	1	2	6	5	6
	Family	1																					
	Friends	2																					
	Work colleagues	3																					
	Neighbors	4																					

## APPENDIX C

### Cover Letter for First Mailing with Questionnaire

FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724

Rev. Julia D. Crim  
Founding Pastor

## ***Making a Difference in Theological Education***

Dear Colleague in Ministry:

As part of my doctoral studies and in an effort to strengthen the impact of evangelism curricula offered at our theological institutions, I have developed the attached questionnaire that is specifically designed for you as a 2002 seminary graduate. Please take a few minutes and complete the questionnaire adding any other information you believe would be helpful in this process.

This project is being supported by the Foundation on Evangelism as well as the evangelism departments of the designated seminaries, Asbury, Candler, Perkins, and Wesley. All results will be recorded in my dissertation as well as reported to each institution and the Foundation. Your responses will be helpful in the future design of seminary curriculum in the area of evangelism.

In appreciation of your time in completing the questionnaire, I have attached a one dollar bill. The dollar bill reminds us that it is "In God We Trust." As those called to share the story of faith in God through Christ, we trust God to provide the way. We have a story to tell. A story that is lifted up every time we spend our currency. Learning more about how our pastors personalize and verbally testify to that truth is why we need your help.

After completing the questionnaire, please return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. At the same time, please return the enclosed postcard with your name. This will keep your responses anonymous while letting our research department know your questionnaire was completed and returned.

Thank you for your assistance in this research. Your input will make a tremendous difference as we strive to strengthen our evangelism studies for pastoral ministry.

Your sister in Christ,  
Julia D. Crim  
Enclosures: 4

## APPENDIX D

### Cover Letter for Second Mailing with Questionnaire

*FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724*

*Rev. Julia D. Crim  
Founding Pastor*

# ***Your Input Is Important!***

Dear Colleague in Ministry:

A couple of weeks ago you received a questionnaire from me as part of my doctoral studies project. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire and response card, thank you!

That questionnaire was mailed to all 2002 alumni from Asbury Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, and Wesley Theological Seminary. The purpose of the mailing is to learn more about the impact evangelism curricula at these selected seminaries has upon pastoral leadership.

If you have not had a chance to complete the questionnaire, I hope you will take the five to ten minutes necessary to give us your input to the questions. Your participation will greatly influence ministerial education in the area of evangelism. I have enclosed a Chick-Fil-A coupon as a small token of my appreciation for your time in completing this project.

*After completing the questionnaire, please return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. At the same time, please return the enclosed postcard with your name.* This will keep your responses anonymous while letting our research department know your questionnaire was completed and returned.

Thank you for your assistance in this research. Your input will make a tremendous difference as we strive to strengthen our evangelism studies for pastoral ministry.

Your sister in Christ,

Julia D. Crim  
Enclosures: 4

**APPENDIX E**

**Return Postcard for Mailing**

Front side of return card:

<p>Crim 90F Glenda Trace; #155 Newnan, GA 30265</p> <p>Crim 90F Glenda Trace; #155 Newnan, GA 30265</p>
---

Back side of return card:

<p>*****</p> <p>I have returned my questionnaire in response to the research project entitled: “The Impact of Verbal Faith Sharing within the Evangelism Curriculum upon Alumni Serving in Full-Time Pastoral Appointments.”</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Name</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Date Questionnaire Returned</p> <p>THANK YOU!</p> <p>*****</p>
--

**APPENDIX F**

**Incentive for Second Mailing with Questionnaire**

## APPENDIX G

### Letter to Perkins with First Mailing

*FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724*

*Rev. Julia D. Crim  
Founding Pastor*

December 8, 2004

Perkins School of Theology  
c/o Roberta Cox  
Kirby Hall; 5915 Bishop Blvd.  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas 75275

Dear Roberta:

Dr. Lawrence recommended that I forward this mailing to you. Enclosed in this box are 100 sealed envelopes containing the following:

- Cover letter
- Questionnaire
- Response postcard
- Self-addressed, stamped return envelope
- One dollar bill

I have attached a copy of those items (except the dollar bill) for your reference. Dr. Lawrence was not sure of the exact number of 2002 Perkins graduates, but gave the estimated number of 100. If there are less than 100, please feel free to use the extra envelopes that are already stamped and keep the one dollar bills as a small token of my appreciation for your help. If you need more than 100, please email me as soon as possible at [jcrim@faithcreek.org](mailto:jcrim@faithcreek.org) and I will get more sent to you.

The next mailing to the same alumni will arrive in your office on or about December 27<sup>th</sup>. That will be the last one. I understand your office will be closed the week of December 20<sup>th</sup> but will re-open on December 27<sup>th</sup>. In that box, the only two items that will be different will be the cover letter and a gift coupon in place of the one dollar bill.

Please email me when the envelopes are mailed. I hope you, your family and the staff of Perkins have a blessed Christmas celebration.

Your sister in Christ,  
Julia D. Crim  
Enclosures  
Attachments: 4

## APPENDIX H

### Letter to Wesley with First Mailing

*FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724*

*Rev. Julia D. Crim  
Founding Pastor*

December 6, 2004

Wesley Theological Seminary  
ATTN: Ann Keeler  
45 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20016-5690

Dear Ann:

Thank you for your assistance with my dissertation project. I have included in this box 45 sealed envelopes containing the following:

- Cover letter
- Questionnaire
- Response postcard
- Self-addressed, stamped return envelope
- One dollar bill

I have attached hereto a copy of each of those items (except the dollar bill) for your reference.

A second box of envelopes for the next mailing will arrive in your office on December 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>. That will be the last one. If your office is scheduled to be closed that week, please email and let me know so that I can get the mailing to you sooner.

Thank you, again! I am especially grateful to you and Dr. McAllister-Wilson for your gracious spirit.

Your sister in Christ,

Julia D. Crim  
Enclosures  
Attachments: 4



**APPENDIX I**

**Letter to Perkins with Second Mailing**

***FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724***

***Rev. Julia D. Crim  
Founding Pastor***

December 22, 2004

Perkins School of Theology  
c/o Roberta Cox  
Kirby Hall; 5915 Bishop Blvd.  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas 75275

Dear Roberta:

Enclosed are the envelopes for the second mailing to the 2002 Perkins alumni. If you can mail them the week of December 27<sup>th</sup>, that would be helpful. If your office is closed that week, please place the addressed envelopes in the mail as early as possible after January 3<sup>rd</sup>. I have set January 13<sup>th</sup> as my deadline for collecting the data. Hopefully that deadline will give those who didn't respond to the first mailing time to get their questionnaire back, though it does not give too much time to lose them or forget about them.

Please greet Dr. Lawrence for me and express my appreciation for his assistance in this project. I will forward my project, inclusive of the data findings, to him after my final doctoral defense in March.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful and blessed Christmas celebration.

Merry Christmas,  
Your sister in Christ,

Julia D. Crim

Enclosures

**APPENDIX J**

**Letter to Wesley with Second Mailing**

*FaithCreek United Methodist Church  
90F Glenda Trace; #155  
Newnan, GA 30265  
770-251-2724*

**Julia D. Crim, Pastor**  
[jcrim@faithcreek.org](mailto:jcrim@faithcreek.org)

December 20, 2004

Wesley Theological Seminary  
ATTN: Ann Keeler  
45 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20016-5690

Dear Ann:

Enclosed are the envelopes for the second mailing to the 2002 Wesley alumni. As per your email, waiting until January 3<sup>rd</sup> to mail them is fine. I have set January 13<sup>th</sup> as my deadline for collecting the data. So a January 3<sup>rd</sup> mailing will give those who didn't respond to the first mailing time to get their questionnaire back, though it does not give too much time to lose them or forget about them.

Please greet Dr. McAlister-Wilson for me and express my appreciation for his assistance in this project. I will forward my project, inclusive of the data findings, to him after my final doctoral defense in March.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful and blessed Christmas celebration. And, with the extra days off I hope you gain some much needed rest.

Merry Christmas,  
Your sister in Christ,

Julia D. Crim

Enclosures

## **APPENDIX K**

### **Guidelines for Courses in Evangelism**

#### Guidelines for Courses in Evangelism to Meet the Requirement of a Course in Evangelism for Ordination in the United Methodist Church

##### Introduction

A group composed primarily of United Methodist professors of evangelism met in Nashville, Tennessee, on November 19, 2000, to discuss issues surrounding the action of the General Conference that a course in evangelism is a requirement for ordination in the UMC. From our expertise as persons already involved in training theological students in evangelism, we want to be helpful to the UMC as its various boards, conferences, and theological schools determine how to implement this new requirement. In the spirit of collegiality, we offer below a suggested list of goals and common elements that we believe should be included in any course that is deemed as meeting the requirement. It is our hope that these suggestions will be considered by seminaries that will offer an introduction to evangelism along with higher-level electives in the field of evangelism as well as by seminaries that might instead offer a variety of courses in evangelism that will meet the requirement.

##### Goals

The following items should be considered as interdependent parts of a complete course and not as a prioritized list. The course in evangelism should enable a student to achieve basic competence in the following areas:

1. articulation of a definition of evangelism, with awareness of other possible definitions;
2. articulation of the biblical basis of evangelism;
3. articulation of a theology of evangelism;
4. familiarity with practical tools for helping individuals share the gospel along with the motivation to engage personally in the ministry of evangelism; and,
5. familiarity with practical tools for leading a congregation to be evangelistically effective along with the motivation to do so.

##### Common Elements

###### A. Biblical/theological

1. The course should address the biblical and theological grounding of the ministry of evangelism, both why we do it and how our biblical and theological commitments should shape the practice of evangelism.
2. The course should represent a diversity of theological understandings, for example, Wesleyan, church growth, liberation, narrative, and revivalist.
3. The course should challenge the student to be able briefly to articulate the content of the gospel in a way that is understandable by seekers.

4. The course should enable students to articulate criteria by which ministries of evangelism can be considered to be more or less faithful and effective.
- B. Congregational Guidelines for Courses in Evangelism
1. The course should address the practice of evangelism by individuals and congregations.
  2. The course should take some account of the holistic process of discipleship, helping students make the connections between evangelism and ministries of education, preaching, worship, missions, and social justice.
  3. The course should help students lead congregations toward understanding themselves as fundamentally missional and evangelistic rather than as institutions where evangelism is a mere “program” of the church, thus proceeding from stagnant maintenance to vital mission.
- C. Contextual
1. The course should introduce the student to a variety of different contemporary contexts in which the ministry of evangelism is done, with appropriate attention to the similarities and differences between contexts. Such contexts might include different ethnic and racial communities, urban/suburban/rural locations, social class, and denominational backgrounds.
  2. The course cannot fully treat the history of evangelism, but should enable the student to have some awareness of how Christians have practiced evangelism differently at different times.
  3. The course should take into account contemporary culture, including the changing methods of communication, different manifestations of community, and generational differences.

Ron Crandall, Asbury Theological Seminary (tentative)

Stephen Gunter, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Achim Härtner, Evangelische-Methodistische Kirche Theologisches Seminar

George Hunter, Asbury Theological Seminary (tentative)

Scott J. Jones, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

Henry H. Knight, III, St. Paul School of Theology

John Kurewa, Africa University

Joon-Sik Park, Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Priscilla Pope-Levison, The Divinity School, Duke University

Bryan Stone, Boston University School of Theology

Leonard Sweet, The Divinity School, Drew University

Robert Tuttle, Asbury Theological Seminary

Lacey Warner, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

## APPENDIX L

### Written Responses to Question #25

#### Regarding House-to-House Visitation

The respondent number corresponds to the questionnaire as noted on the questionnaire response summary spreadsheet (see Appendix B). Following their response to question 25, their responses to questions 17 and 18 regarding the frequency with which these pastors share their faith is indicated. This is helpful in evaluating whether the frequency with which they share their faith is directly related to their definition of visitation.

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Respondent #3 said, “Saying ‘house to house’ sounds like a geographical designation. It could be construed to mean ‘house to house through the membership list’ but not as strongly as the geographical understanding.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary:	once a year
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary:	once a year

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Respondent # 4 indicated, “They [the unchurched in the community] need it the most—they either don’t know God, or aren’t capable of sharing in God’s love with the minister, our job as Christians is to share with all those who will listen. Bring as many to Christ as possible—that should be our main focus.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary:	once a year
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary:	monthly

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Respondent #9 wrote, “People outside church who are suffering severe illness [should be included on this list of house to house visits].”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary:	monthly
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary:	monthly

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Respondent #11 stated, “I think all are top priority and I do all three with equal commitment.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary:	monthly
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary:	weekly

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Respondent #18 wrote, “Many of these categories overlap ... some of my parishioners are homebound in nursing homes – they are my first priority in visitation. I visit the ‘unchurched’ more in community settings – restaurants, local events, etc.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: once a year  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

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Respondent #19 stated, “House to house evangelism is proven to be one of the most INEFFECTIVE methods of verbal faith sharing in the church. I have lived and tried that model many times in my younger years and would completely agree to its ineffectiveness in our culture. Verbal faith sharing is about relationships not cold-call evangelism.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: monthly  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

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Respondent #31 affirmed, “I visit all as am able but time constraints severely limit visitation.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: monthly  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

---

Respondent #39 shared, “Perhaps, each have their priority based on circumstance and need;... however, it is unfortunate that we often become so overwhelmed with the needs of parishioners that the unchurched are neglected.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: weekly  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: weekly

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Respondent #43 wrote, “I believe all visitation in homes is important, especially in a small church. I take parishioners with me.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: weekly  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: weekly

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Respondent # 46 stated, “No one [group] is more important.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: (no response)  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: (no response)

The following explanation was given in place of answering questions about frequency: “As a pastor – when talking with my congregants even outside a class setting, I consider that teaching.”

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Respondent #47 wrote, “All persons. But the standard vision/idea of evangelism needs redefining.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: never  
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: little more than once a year

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Respondent #52 explained, “All are equal in the eyes of God and so should they be in our eyes as well. One visits as one is lead by the Spirit, invited and/or welcomed.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: (no response)

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: (no response)

The following explanation was given in place of answering the about frequency:  
“Whenever it seems appropriate.”

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Respondent #53 explained, “With the homebound and those in the nursing homes as priority, followed by my parishioners’ homes, and then followed by the unchurched in the community, that is how I spend my time as pastor, covering bases and prioritizing. I feel as pastor my job is multiply my visitation efforts by training, mobilizing and empowering the laity.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: weekly

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: daily

---

Respondent #55 said, [In marking unchurched in the community as 2<sup>nd</sup> in priority, this person indicated that such group means] “guests who seek more info.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: monthly

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

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Respondent #74 indicated, “Second in priority of those visited in house to house visitation are visitors to the church.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: monthly

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: [unanswered]

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Respondent #81 wrote, “With homebound and those in nursing homes as priority, followed by parishioners’ homes second and the unchurched in the community third in priority, the respondent indicated that] this is how it works for the priority of my time.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: once a year

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

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Respondent #82 said, “[With homebound and those in nursing homes as priority followed by parishioners’ homes and other, other was defined as] those in hospital or under hospice care, that becomes their home.” Unchurched was not marked as any level of priority.

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary: once a year

Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary: monthly

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Respondent #91 indicated, “I don’t believe house to house witnessing is an effective mode of evangelism in the post modern matrix. The upcoming generations are more interested in relationships and going through a discovery process with friends than having a member of the clergy knock on their door and ask if they know Jesus or not.”

Frequency of verbally sharing faith prior to seminary:	monthly
Frequency of verbally sharing faith after seminary:	never

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