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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF CHURCH HEALTH AMONG LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS TRANSITIONING TO A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR MINISTRY

by

Ronald C. Miller, Jr.

This project explored the relationship between church health and church growth focusing on the specific characteristics of empowering leadership and transforming discipleship. The particular context was among nine Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations represented at the November 2002 Power Surge Symposium, conducted by Changing Church, a leadership training ministry of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, Minnesota. The members of the participating congregations were given a questionnaire developed by the Beeson Pastor Team of Kinder, McKee, Law, and Taylor.

The findings demonstrated a positive relationship between a learning event and church health reflected in numerical growth.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
A STUDY OF CHURCH HEALTH AMONG LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS
TRANSITIONING TO A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR MINISTRY

presented by

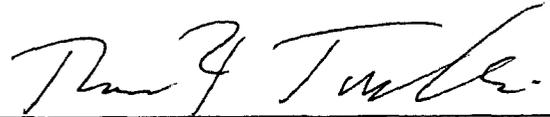
Ronald C. Miller, Jr.

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

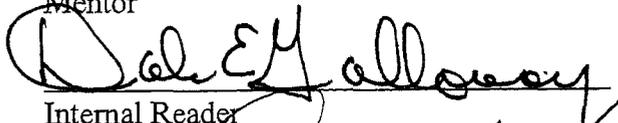
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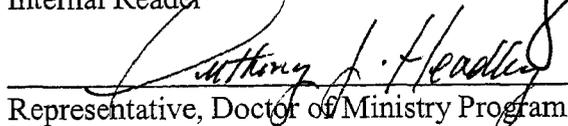
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A STUDY OF CHURCH HEALTH AMONG LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS
TRANSITIONING TO A DISICPLESHIP MODEL FOR MINISTRY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

By

Ronald C. Miller, Jr.

May 2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When one accomplishes a major task or goal in life, it is never really accomplished single-handedly. Such is the case at hand. I am in deep debt to a great number of people for I certainly have not reached this point in my life, ministry, or growth all by myself. Though woefully incomplete, I take this opportunity to offer my deepest appreciation to the following people.

First, I thank Dale and Margi Galloway and all those of the Beeson Center, Asbury Seminary, and my Beeson colleagues, past, present, and future. What an amazing program. Words cannot express my amazement and gratitude for having a year under the mentoring of such wonderful people and church leaders. Dale and Margi will always have a special place in my heart!

The Rev. Donn Abdon was really the first to get my thinking straight on church leadership versus church management. We pastors are not in parish ministry as a career but a calling. His influence through Parish Leadership Seminars is now woven into my theology and ministry, and that makes all the difference. I am grateful the church has people like Donn!

This project could not have been completed without the guidance and support of Dr. Tom Tumblin who, despite his crushing schedule, agreed to take on this hapless doctoral student. Conversations with him have been far too frequent, but each has yielded significant dividends for me and, I hope, to a degree, for him.

Had it not been for the Beeson Pastor team of James Kinder, Brian Law, Scott McKee, and Keith Taylor, this project would never have been. I deeply appreciate their willingness to share their work and the fruits of their labors allowing me to rely on their efforts for my own benefit. God bless them and their ministries.

Staff and members of Changing Church and Prince of Peace, especially Pastors Nancy Lee Gauche and Mike Foss, are truly godly people! They were extremely patient, supportive, understanding, and encouraging throughout this process. I hope my work has been of some benefit to them for they certainly have been a blessing to me, my project, and in so many ways to the ministry of Trinity Lutheran, State College, Pennsylvania.

The eight congregations that participated in this study and their pastors were very cooperative and helpful. Without them I would never have been able to complete this project. My hope and prayer is that this work is in some way helpful to them.

I serve one of the best and most rewarding congregations of the ELCA. I cannot thank the members of Trinity Lutheran Church enough for their cooperation and partnership. They supported the eleven-month sabbatical and encouraged me to complete the dissertation. Special thanks go to the members of my dissertation team: Brian Broking, Emily Broking, Phil Clauer, K. C. Kim, and Peggy McCabe.

A key person in the ministry at TLC is Marla Moberg, my ministry assistant. She went far beyond the call of duty to encourage, support, and even exhort me to complete the work, running interference with others so that I might concentrate on this work. She is a priceless member of my team!

Many, many friends, colleagues, and peers are important pieces of my support network, people God has brought into my life as gifts and blessings. A few come to mind as support people in this project. Dr. Roger Finke, Dr. Richard Carlson, the Rev. Dr. Paul Graybill, the Rev. Tom Jacobs, the Rev. David Miller, the Rev. Art Kentopp, the Rev. Wally Brandau, Beeson classmates from our residency year at Asbury, these and many others I wish to thank publicly here. My apologies to those overlooked. Their influence is not forgotten; there are just too many to name!

I would not be the person or pastor I am today were it not for the Rev. Dick and Bee Jay Tome. Dick was and always will be my main model for ministry, a true father of my faith and one I have never wanted to disappoint. May he rest in peace until we meet again in the kingdom that never ends. Bee Jay was my first schoolteacher and continues to be a dear friend. Though far away she is close in my heart!

My greatest blessings include my wife, Ann, and our daughters, Julianna and Rebekah. They suspended their own lives so we could spend the year at Asbury and have continued to be supportive of my ministry and of me personally. I thank God every day for them though fear I fail to show them the appreciation I truly feel. That they love me despite who I am is humbling beyond words! I love them deeply!

Of course, my greatest thanks goes to Jesus Christ who so graciously called me to ministry, continues still to abundantly equip me and surprisingly bless me for ministry. It is both amazing and humbling that he should call people like me entrusting to us his Church and its ministry! To him be the glory!

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was created in 1988, when three Lutheran Church bodies—the American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America—merged. Baptized membership for the newly formed denomination was 5,251,534, with a confirmed or “adult” membership of 3,931,878. The total number of congregations was 11,120 (1990 Yearbook 579). Despite this strong start, the ELCA is showing signs of decline consistent with other mainline denominations in this country.

An ELCA report 1 July 2000 revealed some disconcerting realities facing the denomination (ELCA, Ministry Needs and Resources). The number of ELCA pastors has declined to the point of a near critical shortage due in part to several factors: an increase in the number of smaller congregations with limited financial resources to support a pastor, pastors unwilling to serve small rural or urban congregations for extended periods of time, and the loss of pastors for reasons other than retirement (e.g., resignation or removal). The report provided statistical evidence highlighting these challenges:

From 1988 to 1998 the number of smaller congregations with average worship attendance of 50 or fewer increased from 2,058 to 2,329. In 1998 there were 2,329 (21.4%) congregations reporting average weekly worship attendance under 50; 4,000 (36.8%) congregations reporting 75 or fewer; and 5,453 (50%) congregations reporting 100 or fewer.... It is clear that the number of small, financially struggling congregations is increasing within the ELCA. (3, 8)

Statistics and data from other denominations suggest that the challenges facing the ELCA may soon be more widespread across the United States (Wind and Rendle 8).

While total financial support for the ELCA has steadily increased, overall

membership continues to drop while average worship attendance is virtually unchanged at 145. By 2001 the total number of congregations comprising the ELCA had decreased to 10,766; statistical patterns indicate this trend will continue. To the contrary, indicators are that the ELCA, like many denominations, is facing serious challenges to the health of Christ's Church (cf. Malphurs, Planting Growing Churches 31-46).

In contrast to the ELCA, globally the Christian Church is expanding, converting new believers at the astonishing rate of eighty thousand to one hundred thousand per day with 3,500 new churches being planted daily. In parts of the world, the people of God are being faithful in mission and effective in ministry. Sadly, the Church in the United States of America does not reflect that same level of health. The United States (US) has become a nation that, fifty years ago, every Christian denomination would have felt compelled to "missionize." With over 195 million unchurched people in the US, this country has become the third largest mission field in the world and the thirteenth receptor of missionaries in the world today. In addition, churches that plant churches tend to be not only healthy and growing but tend to grow faster. A normal healthy process for a church is that of multiplication (Logan, "Church Planting"). Numerical growth in congregations occurs in four ways:

Internal growth occurs when members mature as Christians, becoming more Christ-like, i.e., loving, obedient, servants. Expansion growth, perhaps the most readily observed growth, is reflected in numbers and happens when members have children, people join from another church, or through conversion. Sending or supporting missionaries to other cultures or countries is a third means of growth. Extension growth, planting daughter churches, has only recently been considered by the ELCA. Some years ago the ELCA did embark on starting new congregations but found that their approach was ineffective tying the new congregation to the denominational structure rather than a parent congregation. The ELCA reflects the statistics that 80% of churches are declining and of the 20% that are growing, only 1% are growing by

conversion growth. Most church leaders are in denial continuing to rearrange the proverbial chairs on the deck of the Titanic. Many others do not fully understand and see evangelism as only one part of all that the church does. Jesus is clear, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ..." (Mt. 28:20). The Lord of the Harvest" is calling us to rediscover our main business. (Hunter, "Church")

Background

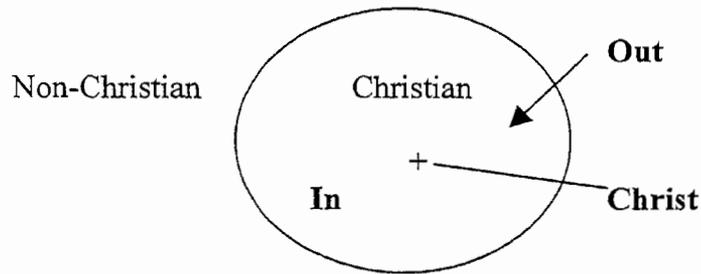
Despite the clear commission of Jesus to the Church to make disciples, many ELCA pastors and congregations work hard at maintaining the status quo or pursuing other "missions." At the risk of oversimplification, the challenge facing most ELCA congregations is maintenance versus mission, membership versus discipleship. Ministry is what the pastor does on behalf of the members. Decisions are made on the basis of what will keep the most members content. Ministry is done by a "professional" while the "laity" critique. This posture is contributing to the malaise experienced in many congregations with clergy and laity alike needing to be encouraged, as St. Paul did with the early Christian communities (Kennedy 18-19). The models of church health provide encouragement for plateaued and declining congregations.

When I was ordained, I felt adequately prepared for parish ministry. I had the advantage of a lifetime of church involvement. Seminary provided biblical and theological training for ministry and the tools for sharing the gospel. My first call was to a congregation struggling for survival. Daniel Zeluff rightly compares first call to that of skydiving for the first time (65). While I wanted the members grow spiritually so that the congregation might grow numerically, the members wanted a congregational chaplain. I did the ministry; they were to be the beneficiaries (maintenance versus mission). The congregation grew large enough to continue supporting the budget, but spiritual growth, if any, was negligible. That congregation continues the struggle for survival.

When I moved to my second parish, Trinity Lutheran Church in State College, Pennsylvania, I vaguely knew I was to involve people in ministry rather than doing it all myself. Pastoral leadership equips the laity for ministry (Eph. 4:11-13), but I did not know how to equip others. Opportunities for growth came in many forms including the Beeson three-year Advanced Church Leadership program, which led to the Beeson Pastor program.

The journey and transformational process continue. I have a better understanding of parish ministry and developing disciples for Jesus Christ as opposed to making members for the church. As a maturing disciple of Jesus, I long to see others come to experience the love and acceptance of God through Jesus Christ as I experience it through the church. As a parish pastor, I long to see the church strong and healthy in obedience to Christ's command and commission.

A membership-oriented congregation can be described as a bounded set (see Figure 1.1). Members are "in," while non-members are "out." The focus of "ministry" under such a paradigm is to make members support the congregation while entitling them to the "benefits" associated with membership. Once "inside" whether or not members grow in faith is of little consequence while the orientation of their lives is irrelevant. Ministry is oriented only to making members but offers little concern for or support of those seeking to grow spiritually in their faith. Success is defined only in numbers not in becoming more Christlike.



Source: Whiteman.

Figure 1.1. The bounded set.

A disciples-focused congregation is described as a centered set and more consistent with the New Testament (see Figure 1.2). The focus is less on where people are in relationship to the “boundary” of membership and more on what direction their lives are moving. The goal of ministry is to orient people toward Christ (the center) and empower them to grow toward him. The congregation supports, encourages, and enhances the individual in community through means appropriate to each person regardless of age, background, or ability. In short, people are taught to be a disciple of Jesus and how to live as one.

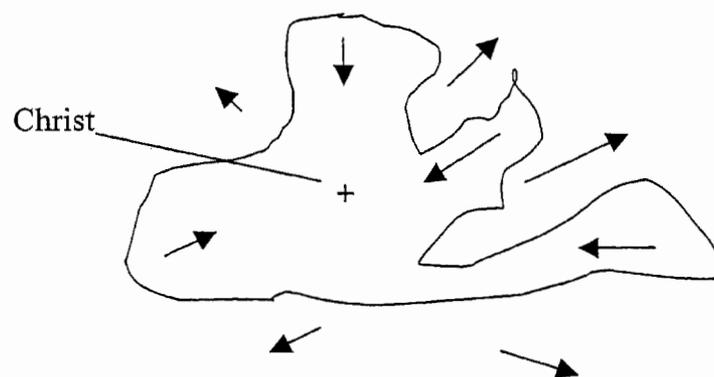


Figure 1.2. The centered set.

The pastoral task is to empower people to be disciples of Jesus whereby they are transformed into the image of Christ. The focus of ministry shifts from maintenance to mission. For a church to grow, it must be healthy. A significant contributor to this paradigm shift for me was Christian A. Schwarz's Natural Church Development. "We should not attempt to 'manufacture' church growth," he writes, "but rather release the biotic potential which God has put into every church" (10).

A healthy church is a growing church (Warren, Purpose Driven Church 17). Rather than attending to church growth, pastors would do well to focus their attention and energies on church health. "I believe the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church *health* [original emphasis], not church growth. When congregations are healthy, they grow the way God intends. Healthy churches don't need gimmicks to grow—they grow naturally" (17). Healthy churches reach out to others (mission) rather than merely caring for the present membership (maintenance).

Virtually every living entity grows when it is healthy. The Church as the body of Christ in the world is a living entity. Paul sees the Church as an organism in which Jesus is "the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God" (Col. 2:19).

While the Church requires structure, it does not function mechanically. The Church is organic; it is a living entity. Pastors can "manufacture" growth by implementing the "right" program, but numerical growth is not necessarily healthy growth. Pastors can enhance the environment to support growth, but it is never assured for numerical and spiritual growth come from God. "Where there is no faithfulness in proclaiming Christ, there is no growth" (McGavran, Understanding Church Growth 6).

Much attention has been and is being directed to the organizational aspect of congregational ministry, (e.g., Callahan, Effective Church). Though helpful, such approaches tend to foster a focus on maintenance rather than mission. Living entities require a structure. While each human being is unique unto him or herself, healthy humans all share common traits that demonstrate health. Similarly, the Bible does not provide one model or structure for the Church to be the Church. Healthy congregations all share common traits that demonstrate health regardless of differences in structure. John Driver explores a number of biblical images with the goal of aiding the Church in fulfilling its mission (12).

One New Testament (NT) concept of the Church that would appear at first glance to support this study is the Church as “the body of Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses this body imagery to discuss the role of spiritual gifts and the interdependency of the members of the church for mission. Paul S. Minear discusses the “body of Christ” imagery at length (173-220). Driver acknowledges the work of Minear but does not include this particular image in his collection. A principal metaphor for the Church in the NT is “the people of God” (16). It is the oldest and most foundational for the Church’s self-understanding, appearing in fourteen NT writings (126). For this study “the people of God” image is favored over the broader “body of Christ” image.

Parish ministry is demanding. Pastors of mainline congregations are under constant pressure to function as congregational chaplains (maintenance) rather than pastoral leaders equipping the laity for ministry (mission). Michael W. Foss maintains this distinction in his book Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship. Aspects of this discipleship model are also taught at a leadership forum by the same name.

The focus of this study was to investigate the impact the “PoWeR SuRGe” forum had on congregations represented, in terms of enhancing congregational health as reflected in patterns of growth. The event was conducted in November 2002 by Changing Church, an educational, equipping ministry of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minnesota. Michael W. Foss is the senior pastor, and his book Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship serves as the basis of the leadership forum. The title is an acronym for the marks of discipleship: Prayer, Worship, Reading the Bible, Serving, Relating to others in community, and Giving.

The study involved members of ELCA congregations represented at the Power Surge forum. This design allowed me to deal with my own denominational structure while extending the application of the Beeson Church Health model to a Lutheran population. Employing a multiple case study, insights were provided to the participating congregations as to their relative health based on the Beeson Health model. Further, this study provided information to Prince of Peace as to the impact the Power Surge forum provides to congregations in terms of enhanced church health.

Problem Formation

Jesus comes to bring life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Throughout his ministry Jesus preached, taught, healed, restored to life, freed the captives and shared riches with the poor. He called and trained twelve Jewish men, common by most standards, to whom he entrusted the ministry he had conducted, but he did not abandon them to their own devices. “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20) is a promise that the Holy Spirit is still at work among and for God’s people to bring life and salvation (i.e., health). The quality of life is contingent upon the quality or relative level

of health within the organism. Health is a dynamic, not static, condition of any living entity. The Church as the people of God is both an organization and an organism. The health of one is contingent upon the condition of the other. Richard Southern and Robert Norton utilize this paradigm for exploring the health of a congregation. Their work is beneficial to congregations seeking to grow while maintaining church health.

The concept of church health is a “natural” extension of the church growth movement. The church growth movement has been perhaps rightly criticized for focusing only on numerical growth. Church health is a more pressing issue for churches and church leaders today if the people of God are going to further the mission given by Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:16-20). Attending to church growth does not necessarily enhance church health. Attending to church health, however, provides a greater likelihood of both numerical and spiritual growth.

This project considered the impact of an educational forum in positively enhancing congregational health as reflected in statistical and programmatic church growth.

Context of the Study

The church growth movement has been suspect in many mainline denominations, including the present ELCA. Despite the fact that “evangelical” appears in the denominational name, many congregations are not poised to accomplish Christ’s mission for the Church. Across the ELCA a few congregations are growing and seem to be quite healthy. Some, such as Prince of Peace (Burnsville, Minnesota) offer assistance to churches and church leaders through resources, forums, conferences, consultations, and the like. The effectiveness of such efforts in enhancing church health within

congregations is not known. Statistics gathered by the ELCA Office of Research and Development indicate that multiday events have virtually no impact on the congregations represented at such events. People are no longer interested in only receiving knowledge but instead desire help in applying information, concepts, and insights to their own congregational setting.

As of 2002, Changing Church, the ministry branch of Prince of Peace that provides educational opportunities for other congregations, shifted their conference format to a 1½ day event for a smaller group with at least two from any given congregation. The change provided opportunities for participants to explore practical application to their own ministry. This pedagogical shift from “teaching” (the sharing of information) to “equipping” (assisting participants in application) is consistent with the ministry design reflected in the Power Surge paradigm.

The Power Surge Forum

The specific event for this project was the 14-15 November 2002 Power Surge forum. A total of sixty-two attended the event, representing three different denominations: ELCA, United Methodist, and Presbyterian. Of the total attendees, fifteen were members of Trinity Lutheran, State College.

The conference began on Thursday night with welcome, introductions, and the first session, “Power Surge: Experiencing a Discipleship Community.” In this opening session, Michael W. Foss presented statistics raising concern regarding church leadership: decline in clergy numbers, negative impact of parish ministry on pastors, leadership versus management, cultural shifts, and the need for a new church paradigm for effective ministry. Prince of Peace has begun making that shift using the marks of

discipleship represented in the title Power Surge. “The call of the church is to keep discipleship happening!” (Power Surge: Forum Manual 8). Members of Prince of Peace are expected to commit to discipleship:

I will strive to be a passionate follower of Jesus Christ who ...

- Prays daily
- Worships weekly
- Reads the Bible daily
- Serves at and beyond Prince of Peace
- Relates with others to encourage spiritual growth
- Gives a tithe (10%) and beyond. (9)

In the second session, “Leading and Organizing a Discipleship Community,” Foss covered the general concepts related to church structure, not to suggest any one structural format but to argue for a rethinking of the purpose of church structures. Distinctions between “secular” and “sacred” are no longer appropriate (Acts 10:9-23). Referring to human DNA as a model, Foss demonstrated that reasoning must be “looping” rather than “straight line thinking.” Thoughts are multidimensional rather than sequential. Bill Easum explores this same concept in Leadership on the Other Side (46). Rather than relying upon their own credentials, which have less value than ever before, clergy need to think in terms of calling forth the giftedness of others in sharing the gospel. “Looping moves from credentials to gifts to effectiveness: effective ministry is not efficient it is highly relational” (Foss, Power Surge: Forum Manual 4). Pastoral leadership has less to do with exercising authority as it has to do with sharing authority. “This looping of life has confused us in the organizing of our ministries” (6). Foss does not provide a “blueprint” for how ELCA congregations “ought” to be structured as in council, committees, or by-laws. Rather, he shares principles and guidelines to be considered by congregations faithfully and obediently organizing for ministry as the people of God.

Each discipling community will be unique but will share similarities with other healthy congregations.

The final session addressed practical concerns for making the transition to discipleship: the relationship between leadership and management, producing useful change, building a work force with soul, conflicts due to values, empowering lay leadership, the importance of community to discipleship, accountability and trust, financial tracking, and developing strategic alliances.

Participants were encouraged to use Foss's book, Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship, as a guide for shifting from the membership to the discipleship model. Five "building blocks" are discussed (111-36; see Hanson 9-19). The core beliefs are foundational and establish the identity of the congregation. Core values set the parameters for what the congregation will and will not tolerate in terms of attitudes and behaviors. A congregation's understanding of its mission is directly related to how it will take both beliefs and values into the world. The mission may drive the life of a church, but it is led by vision. The vision statement reflects what the congregation would like to become and is normally so grand as to require God's help. Finally, the outcomes are the six marks of discipleship.

The forum ended with a time for questions and a review of resources. Prince of Peace seeks to assist congregations in transitioning to the discipleship model by providing a wide range of materials in both print and electronic formats. Participants were encouraged to stay the weekend and attend any of the various worship opportunities.

Theological Foundations

A vast array of biblical images describes the Church. Simply using the term “Church” is not sufficient given the diversity of the concept and the associated difficulties (Royce 77-78). Minear has identified nearly one hundred biblical images for the Church. In this study the principle metaphor being used is “the people of God” (Driver 16). Images function in several beneficial ways. First, an image conveys an impression about something already well-known to provide a new perspective (Minear 22). Images also provide a means for perceiving reality that is difficult to measure or quantify objectively (23). Finally, images advance the self-understanding of a person or a society (24). “The people of God” metaphor relates “the contemporary Christian generation to that historic community whose origin stemmed from God’s covenant promises and whose pilgrimage had been sustained by God’s call” (67). This image can be helpful as the Church faces ministry challenges in the twenty-first Century.

“The people of God” image is rooted in the Old Testament (OT), appearing more than two thousand times in the Septuagint. The OT itself “is essentially a salvation history of a people chosen by God as object and channel of divine blessing” (Driver 127). Beginning with Abram and Sarai, God chose Israel to be in relationship with him, to bless them and through them to bless “all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:1-3). Israel understood itself to be the people of God. Israel “does not own itself, it is the property of Yahweh, a people set apart and hence holy, belonging to the Lord” (Kung 117). When Israel failed to keep covenant and abandoned God, this image became eschatological: “Yahweh *will* [original emphasis] once again be Israel’s God, Israel *will* [original emphasis] once again be Yahweh’s people” (119). The holiness of the people does not

depend upon their abilities to please God or make themselves holy; rather, “the source of the holiness of God’s people is God Himself, to whom they owe their very being as well as the possibility of doing” (Driver 129).

As a sect within Judaism, the early Christian community referred to itself as the *ekklesia* of God where *ekklesia* means a public gathering or assembly. “The Septuagint used *ekklesia* to translate *qahal*, the assembly of Yahweh’s covenant people in His presence” (Nelson 133). The early Christian community connected the concept of “the saints” with *ekklesia* creating an eschatological dimension to the people of God image:

This community realized more and more clearly that through faith in Jesus as the Messiah it was the *true* [original emphasis] Israel, the *true* [original emphasis] people of God. And as a consequence of the rejection of their message by the Jews and the acceptance in faith of their message by the Gentiles, the disciples of Jesus realized more and more clearly that they were at the same time the new Israel, the new people of God: the eschatological people of God. (Kung 119)

In the NT the understanding of this image ($\lambda\alpha\omicron\sigma$, “people”) moves beyond that of the Septuagint where $\lambda\alpha\omicron\sigma$ simply means “nation” to that of messianic community. NT writers came to see the Christian community as called out of its Jewish roots to be set apart as part of God’s plan and promise:

He has called [us], not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles. As indeed He says in Hosea, “Those who were not My people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they shall be called children of the living God.” (Rom. 9:24-26)

Peter supports this view of the early Christian community:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

These terms, like many that refer to the Church, are corporate. The Church is not a collection of individuals. It is not “merely a gathering of people by the will and election of human beings to achieve community” (Stevens 54). To be a Christian is to be a member of the people of God. “There are no individual Christians” (55).

The Priesthood of All Believers

The Church is *in* the world but is not to become *of* the world. Four approaches have been advanced to resolve this enduring problem for the Church (Niebuhr 1). The first approach separates the believer from the world by affirming sole loyalty to Christ while rejecting any of the claims of culture (45). The opposite approach is accommodation to the world, seen in forms of Gnosticism (83). A third attempt at resolution focuses on one’s relationship with God, “Christ above culture,” distinguishing the “insiders” from the “outsiders” (116). A fourth way is to synthesize Christ and culture attempting to keep the “both-and” tension without resolving the apparent paradox (149). This fourth perspective, Christ as the transformer of culture, may be most helpful today: believers partner with Christ in faithful living as a means by which the world is changed (190). God blesses his people to be a blessing to others, thereby transforming the world.

Though the people of God are in the world, they are not left alone in the world: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20b). The people of God are in the world to glorify God (cf. Malphurs, Developing a Vision 32). Each person is uniquely gifted for ministry (cf. Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). The function of leadership, particularly the ordained, is to equip the members to do the work of ministry and thereby help them mature into Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). The ministry of the Church was originally entrusted to the entire people of God. Since AD 150, however, the term *λαοσ*

has been used to refer to the congregation assembled for worship as distinct from the leaders, “contributing to an unbiblical division of labor in the church—laity (*laos*) and the clergy” (Driver 138).

This doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was one of the three main principles at issue between the Protestant Reformers and Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. This concept is rooted in the OT understanding of the priesthood as those who intercede before God for the people (cf. Eastwood). All believers share a common dignity (God’s grace is offered to all), a common calling (Christians are called to serve), and a common privilege (serving is done by the ordained and lay alike) as reflected in this principle (12-14).

From approximately AD 200 to 1500, house churches began to disappear with the ministry being done by the “professional,” the parish priest. Luther and the Reformers understood the priesthood of all believers to include three factors. First, every believer could have direct access to God. Christ is the mediator; one does not need a parish priest to intercede. This aspect was realized in Luther’s lifetime. Second, each believer should have access to the Word of God, and with the invention of the printing press the Word became available to all people. Able to read the Word for themselves, parishioners were no longer dependent on a priest to interpret the Bible for them. The Church has never fully realized this aspect. Finally, every believer, baptized to be a priest to others, is called to be a little Christ to all others. From the Reformation through 1975, the main ministry paradigm is the Protestant pastor. English Methodism of the eighteenth century attempted to realize this last aspect by involving laypeople in some of the most significant ministry (Hunter, “Church”).

For Luther this principle is related to the “mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren” as a means of grace equal to the ministry of Word and sacrament (Gerrish 4). Though minimized by Philip Melanchthon at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 as “unessential,” the principle relates ministry and priesthood. Luther applied the principle in varying ways. He used it as a polemical instrument against Rome and papal interference in 1520. It formed the basis for advising a congregation in 1523 to call their own minister when the congregation elected to become Lutheran. Conversely, in 1532, Luther applied the priesthood of all believers concept to check the growing number of self-acclaimed preachers. (92). “The notions of priesthood and ministry in Luther’s theology are directly related to his fundamental understanding of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins or justification by faith” (95). Faith comes by hearing God’s Word. God’s Word is “efficacious or powerful, so that it evokes, awakens, or creates the faith that it demands” (95). Faith is the work of God. God is the author of salvation. Faith once planted must be nurtured through repeated proclamation of the gospel:

This proclamation therefore becomes the most urgent task of the Christian community, and is indeed the first ‘mark’ of the church’s presence at any given time or place. This does not mean that the church controls the Word; the church is constituted by the Word, not the Word by the church. (Gerrish 95)

This proclamation occurs in worship, to be sure, but also in other settings where people interact and communicate. “All who are united with Christ by baptism and faith share in this one priesthood” (Gerrish 96). The distinction between clergy and laity is not of rank but of function within the Christian community for the sake of good order. Pastors are called to public ministry while all believers by virtue of faith and baptism are called to the office of ministry. “Every Christian is under the obligation to witness to

God's Word in the private sphere" (102). The "un-ordained" can exercise the priesthood publicly in an emergency, that is, when no ordained person is available. The only exception for Luther was presiding over the Lord's Supper, an understanding that is being questioned in the ELCA today due a shortage of ordained pastors.

The Christian church is not without both hope as it faces the urgency of present challenges while seeking to be faithful to the mission of Christ:

In fact, the true idea of the Church has not been forsaken; it is, in a very real sense, still to be found, or rather, to be created. We have to do, in this case, not so much with apostasy as with evolution. To be sure, at the very outset, the ideal of the Church was seen afar off through a glass, darkly. The well-known apocalyptic vision revealed the true Church as the New Jerusalem that was yet to come down from heaven. The expression of the idea was left, by the early Church, as a task for the ages. The spirit of that idea was felt rather than ever adequately formulated, and the vision still remains one of the principal grounds and sources of hope of humanity. (Royce 79)

Here is the call and the challenge for the people of God to recommit to being and becoming the Church of Jesus Christ by recognizing the value of each person as a member of the priesthood of all believers. These two images together provide a foundation for considering what the Church is to be and to do. This project sought to involve congregations and parish leaders who are willing to step out in faith and courage to be truly the *λαοσ* of God, the holy ones for whom Christ died.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to apply the Beeson Church Health model to a group of (ELCA) Lutheran congregations recruited from a leadership training event offered through a Lutheran congregation. Using a multiple case study design, the Beeson Church Health model was selected to provide a snapshot of the relative health of the participating congregations as reflected in the model. Statistical findings were then used

as means of comparison between this study and previous studies where the Beeson Church Health model was used. Statistical data were also collected from the participating Lutheran congregations in terms of general trends of growth as reflected in figures included in the annual congregational report to the denominational offices. These data were used to draw conclusions based on comparisons with overall ELCA congregational trends. Finally, general sociological data were collected by way of personal interviews with the participating pastors as part of on-site visits and through printed materials such as monthly newsletters, annual reports, and Web sites where available. This study involved nine congregations from across the United States, all of whom were represented at the same Power Surge forum.

Research Questions

In order to conduct this study, three primary research questions were designed.

Research Question 1

How do the ELCA congregations represented among the participants of the Power Surge forum rate on each of the Beeson church health characteristics?

Research Question 2

In what ways did participants use or apply the intended outcomes of the Power Surge symposium particularly in terms of empowered leadership and transforming discipleship to enhance the congregations' health?

Research Question 3

What impact did the Power Surge forum have on enhancing the health of participating congregations twelve months after the event as evidenced in signs of congregational growth?

Definition of Terms

This project was designed in part to advance the previous work of a Beeson study in church health, specifically that of James Kinder, Brian Law, Scott McKee, and Keith C. Taylor. Definitions in this study are similar to, and even identical with, theirs. For example, “*Natural Church Development (NCD)* [original emphasis] is an approach to Church growth based on the premise that God causes the growth and that all human endeavors should be focused on releasing the ‘divine growth automatism’ by which God grows his Church” (Kinder 7).

The *Beeson church health characteristics* were those identified by Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor. These eight characteristics provide a framework for evaluating the general health of a congregation. The characteristics include empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community, functional structures, transforming discipleship, engaging worship, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity. These factors are considered from a systems approach to maintain the balance of health within the functions of the congregation.

Power Surge is the concept developed and advanced by the Rev. Michael W. Foss and the congregation at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, Minnesota. This paradigm seeks to shift ministry focus from “making members” to “developing disciples” by identifying six marks of discipleship. Ministry and programming are designed to assist people in developing these marks in their own lives. As people grow in faith and practice, the health of the congregation is enhanced and numerical growth often results. These marks of discipleship are explored in Foss’s *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship*. The marks of discipleship are daily prayer, weekly worship, Bible reading, service,

spiritual friendships, and giving. The forum bore the same name as the book upon which it is based, both seeking to assist participants in more effectively leading their congregations to fulfill the mission of the Church. Of the eight Beeson church health characteristics, the Power Surge forum focused mainly upon empowered leadership and transforming discipleship, while the other characteristics were included but less significantly.

Growth was used to refer primarily to numerical increases within the congregations. Evidence of growth was considered in several areas including worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, financial support of members, persons involved in ministry and service, and small groups, as well as the number of groups and the number participating in small groups.

Health was defined positively as the presence of each of the eight characteristics especially with regard to the balance or interplay of the quality characteristics. Negatively, health was defined as “the lack of sickness or disease” (Kinder 8). Assessment of congregational health among participating congregations was limited to the parameters of the Beeson inventory itself.

Methodology

My interest in exploring church health led me to the Beeson Church Health model. This project sought, in part, to advance that work by utilizing the model in a Lutheran context. This project was an evaluative study utilizing a questionnaire originally created by the team of Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor. Unlike previous studies, this project was designed as a multiple case study involving nine congregations recruited from the participants at the same Power Surge forum.

The first step was to ascertain the openness of the staff at Prince of Peace to participate in this project. Working primarily with Pastor Nancy Lee Gauche, responsible for the Changing Church ministry, I explained to her my project design and how Prince of Peace might benefit from my findings. She discussed the request with Mike Foss the senior pastor who was eager to participate. They were extremely helpful, cooperative, and supportive.

I included a letter in one of the initial Changing Church mailings to Power Surge registrants. The letter explained the project and invited participation. At the forum itself, I was given time to make an oral presentation further explaining the project and its benefits to their congregations, to Prince of Peace, and to myself. At that time, additional printed materials were distributed along with a commitment form asking the pastors to commit their congregations to this study. I telephoned the pastors to verify willingness to participate in the study. Sixteen congregations were represented at the forum, two of which were non-Lutheran. Based on the telephone conversations, thirteen Lutheran pastors agreed to participate; one declined to participate due to a conflicted staff departure.

I made arrangements with each pastor to mail sets of surveys to the congregation based on average worship attendance. I asked the pastors to complete a separate survey providing statistical information consistent with figures included in the annual congregational report to the denomination. In addition to the surveys, I made on-site visits to each congregation at which time the pastors were interviewed to gather information about them, their vision for ministry, opportunities and challenges for ministry, and how they were planning to implement the Power Surge materials. I also

took photographs as a means of keeping information organized.

Population Sample

The population for this study was selected from among the participants of the Power Surge forum held 14-15 November 2002, at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. The Beeson Church Health surveys were available for congregational members on one or multiple Sundays. Lay participation was on a voluntary basis depending on the extent to which the pastor supported the effort. All the participating congregations were ELCA.

The pastors of the participating congregations were key to the success of this event. The study depended upon their support and willingness to encourage their members to complete the health survey. I also asked the pastors asked to provide statistical information about the congregation. Further, I asked the pastors to submit to an interview where I gathered additional information. At the time of each on-site visit, I collected materials available to members and visitors pertaining to the congregation and its ministry. I also asked to be added to their mailing list so as to receive the congregation's monthly newsletter and other mailings.

Variables

The dependent variable of the study was church health and church growth as reflected in the responses participants at the Power Surge forum, 14-15 November 2002, provided through the Beeson Church Health survey.

The independent variable of the study was information shared at the Power Surge forum.

Instrumentation

The Beeson Church Health survey, developed by the team of Kinder, Law,

McKee, and Taylor, was the key instrument in collecting data (see Appendix A). The instrument included fifty-five questions answered on a five-point Likert scale (Brewerton and Millward 102) and included twelve demographic questions for each respondent to complete (Kinder 9).

The pastors were asked to provide statistical data including worship attendance, membership figures, and the like (see Appendix B). Updated statistics in those same categories were collected approximately one year later (see Appendix C).

In addition, I made on-site visits of each congregation, which included an interview with each pastor (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

I collected data in several ways. The pastors at the Power Surge Forum completed a form indicating interest in the project (see Appendix F). Of the fourteen Lutheran congregations represented at the Power Surge forum, nine participated in the study. Data from the Beeson Health survey provided a “snapshot” of the congregation’s general health (see Appendix A). The pastors provided statistical information about the congregation in terms of worship attendance, baptisms, new members, and financial information for the past five years (see Appendix B). On-site visits of each participating congregation included an interview of the pastors (see Appendix D).

I made arrangements with each congregation to complete the surveys. I provided sufficient copies to the congregations based on average worship attendance. Pastors invited members voluntarily to complete a survey on a Sunday determined by the pastor in January 2003. The pastors returned the completed surveys to me in self-addressed, stamped envelopes provided to each congregation. I collected newsletters, mailings, e-

mails, and other items throughout the course of the project to provide data regarding the growth and health of the congregations. Approximately one year after the initial surveys were returned, I asked the pastors to provide an updated set of congregational statistics.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The study measured the church health indicators of the Beeson quality characteristics of church health along with the discipleship factors presented at the 14-15 November 2002 Power Surge forum at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, Minnesota. The study was limited to congregations represented at that event; therefore, the findings have direct application and generalization only to those persons and congregations participating in the study. Generalizations to other congregations are based on the similarities those congregations might have to the congregations represented among the participants of the Power Surge forum event.

Correlations were found between qualitative church health and quantitative church growth, though extenuating circumstances or other factors beyond the control of this study could have influenced (positively or negatively) the health or growth of the congregations.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 reviews selected literature and research pertinent to the study in terms of church growth and church health. Theological concepts along with related images are also explored. Chapter 3 details the design of the project along with research methods as well as methods for data analysis. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 reports on the major findings with practical applications that follow from these findings. Suggestions for further study and research are also offered.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The church health paradigm is an outgrowth of the church growth movement. A myriad of books, periodicals, resources, even Web sites now address the issue of church health. The many and various biblical images of the Church underscore the reality that it is a living, dynamic organism. Should a congregation become a static, inert organization, it is no longer the Church. The health of any living being is not a constant condition but a matter of perpetual adjustment within the systems of the organism.

This project involved matters related to both church health and church growth among Lutheran congregations transitioning to a discipleship model for ministry. These aspects are explored. A brief overview of the literature pertaining to the history of the church growth movement is presented followed by a consideration of the church growth materials. Along with these matters, attention is also given to the specific qualities of church health according to the Beeson Church Health model, giving particular attention to empowering leadership and transforming discipleship. The other six characteristics are also described.

Limits to the Literature Review

The number of biblical images regarding the Church in both the Old and New Testaments is extensive. For this study, the review is limited to biblical material that deals with the Church as the “People of God,” a helpful image in today’s cultural climate. This image, as opposed to “the body of Christ,” lends itself to focusing on the communal rather than individualistic aspect of the Church. The theological doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is also explored.

Due to the legacy of the Church growth movement and the vast amount of materials produced both for and against it, the review herein is limited. Given my relatively new, yet limited exposure to church growth, the review may be more extensive than might otherwise be expected. It is offered to demonstrate an understanding of the depth and breadth of the church growth movement as an appropriate foundation for consideration of church health.

Delineations of aspects of church health are still relatively new with constant growth and refinement both in theory and practice. While the church growth movement considers the differences between growing churches and declining or “plateauing” ones, the goal was to identify the dynamics that might assist all churches to grow. Growth without health, however, can be problematic. Natural Church Development was one of the first organized, intentional studies of church health. Since that study, however, other models have been developed to describe or explain dynamics for church health. The review is limited to the scope and depth necessary to demonstrate both an understanding of the church health field and to provide the basis for understanding the Beeson quality church health characteristics.

Biblical Images of the Church as the People of God

The “people of God” is an image that, while important, is not as pervasive as other images used to refer to the Church. In 1 Peter 2:4-10 the apostle includes several images:

Come to Him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,”
and
“A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.”
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.
But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own
people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called
you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
Once you were not a people,
but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

This image of the Church as “the people of God” is rooted in the God revealed through
Jesus Christ.

From the beginning God created people to be in relationship with him. Sin has
broken that relationship with God, as well as relationships between people, and between
humankind and the rest of created order. Salvation history, God’s plan to redeem
humankind, begins in Genesis 12 with the calling of Abraham. Neither Abraham nor
Sarah were special that should cause God to choose them. They found favor in his eyes.
Such is the nature of God. God made promises to Abraham and Sarah, which God then
proceeded to keep. They became a great nation, God’s chosen people. Though Israel
failed to keep covenant with God as established at Sinai, God did not abandon his chosen
people. Through the prophets God calls his people to return to him. For example, Hosea
named one of his children “Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God”
(Hos. 1:9). Such brokenness would not last, however, for God immediately promises,
“Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be
neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not

my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God'" (Hos. 1:10).

Finally, God sent Jesus "who did not count equality with God something to be grasped but emptied Himself" becoming human to die for sin on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus reveals the nature of God. Just as Moses could not look upon the face of God and live (Exod. 33:17-23), so too, without Jesus, human beings would not be able to appear before the Almighty God due to the corruption of sin. God chose, and still chooses, people for his purposes: "You are not your own. You were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). While the church's mission is evangelism, the Church's purpose is doxological (Malphurs, Developing a Vision 32).

Humans were created to be a community with each other and with God (Bilezikian 19). One finds identity in community. The Church is the earthly manifestation of that community that connects believers to the community to come. In the third article of the Apostles' Creed, the phrase "I believe in the communion of saints" (Lutheran Book of Worship 65), conveys an understanding of the Church as an entity transcending time and place. The Lutheran Reformers argued this in the sixteenth century:

It is also taught among us that the one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.... It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. (Tappert 32)

The Reformers recognized a distinction between what is crucial for the Church and what is not. Unity does not require uniformity. Health is not the same for all entities.

While the focus here has been on the term "people of God" with regard to the Church a clarification of the term "Church" is in order. The New Bible Dictionary provides an appropriate description:

The English word “church” is derived from the Gk. adjective *kyrialos* as used in some such phrase as *kyriakon dōma* or *kyriakē oikia*, meaning “the Lord’s house,” *i.e.* a Christian place of worship. “Church” in the NT, however, renders Gk. *ekklēsia*, which mostly designates a local congregation of Christians and never a building. Although we often speak of these congregations collectively as the NT church or the early church, no NT writer uses *ekklēsia* in this collective way. An *ekklēsia* was a meeting or assembly. Its commonest use was for the public assembly of citizens duly summoned, which was a feature of all the cities outside Judaea where the gospel was planted (*e.g.* Acts 19:39); *ekklēsia* was also used among the Jews (LXX) for the “congregation” of Israel which was constituted at Sinai and assembled before the Lord at the annual feasts in the persons of its representative males (Acts 7:38). (200)

In the NT “church” can refer to the local congregation (*e.g.*, Acts, James, 3 John, Revelation and the earlier Pauline letters), or, as in Colossians and Ephesians, “to indicate, not an ecumenical church, but the spiritual and heavenly significance of each and every local ‘body,’ which has Christ as its ‘head’” (Douglas, Hillyer, and Bruce 200). In this project the term “Church” is equated with “the people of God,” referring either to the local congregation or the universal Church depending on the context. Donald J. MacNair has developed an excellent definition of church:

[A] body of believers brought together by the Holy Spirit as a visible part of the body of Christ, who faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God, properly administer the sacraments and humbly submit themselves to discipline, all for the glory of God. (5)

The nature of the Church is reflected in what the Church does (see Malphurs, Doing Church).

Literally the term *ekklesia* means “called-out ones.” Ecclesiology is a significant matter regarding church growth and church health (Rainer 145). “The Church rightly manifests its nature through its mission in the world.... [It] is part of the ‘esse’ of the Church’s nature and relationship to its King to be a missionary church—meaning that its purpose for being is focused on what God intends for the world” (Van Engen 403). The

people of God have been called out to evangelize. The mission of the Church is evangelism. “All other aspects of the church life and activity should support that task and interrelate with it” (Abdon 3). These various activities of church life are to be accomplished by all the members of the Church, not just the ordained or “professional” staff.

The Priesthood of All Believers

A discussion of the nature of the Church leads logically to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers:

The Church is the people of God... [T]his means that the Church is never merely a particular class or caste within the fellowship of the faithful. On the contrary, all believers, in fundamental equality, are the Church, are members of the people of God. They are all “elect,” “saints,” “disciples,” “brethren.” And hence they are precisely a royal priesthood. In God’s revelation to His chosen people on Sinai, they were told: “you shall be to Me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6). The whole people is to be a priesthood, belonging to the God-king and sharing in His dignity: “a people holy to the Lord your God” (Deut. 7:6). (Kung 370).

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers refers to the concept that all Christ followers are to be involved in ministry. Church leadership is a gift from God to empower the people of God for ministry in ways that enhance the Church while also maturing the membership:

The gifts he [i.e., God] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. (Eph. 4:11-16)

From among God's chosen people, Aaron and his sons were the first priests (Exod. 28), set apart to intercede between God and God's people by offering the various prescribed sacrifices for sin (Exod. 29). Levites were closely related tracing their lineage back to Aaron. "The Levites were assistants to the priests. They took care of the tabernacle and the Temple and performed other menial tasks, such as providing music, serving as doorkeepers, and preparing sacrifices for offering by the priests" (New Bible Dictionary 763). The priesthood was inextricably linked with holiness, though corrupted by sin. Jesus fulfilled the old covenant through his death on the cross, making a permanent sacrifice for sin. Priests are no longer needed to offer sacrifices to atone for sin; all of God's people offer the sacrifice of praise as followers of Jesus (Heb. 13:15).

The priesthood of all believers was stressed by the Reformers of the sixteenth century in response to the elevation of the ordained to a higher authority within the Roman papacy. This corruption led to a wide variety of abuses throughout the Church. While a relatively minor point then, today this doctrine has become significant for many differing Protestant traditions. All the baptized are called to do ministry, each according to the gift(s) given for the good of the people of God, the health of the Church (1 Cor. 12:7). Pastors are to empower the laity for ministry. Misunderstanding and misuse of this doctrine is creating a crisis across the Church (Harrisville 11). Healthy congregations have a clear understanding of this doctrine as part of their overall paradigm for ministry.

Effectiveness versus efficiency is not only an issue for individuals but also for the Church, which involves dealing with people (Covey, Seven Habits 161-62.). Healthy congregations seek to be effective by relying on God's guidance and provision for efficiency. Unhealthy congregations, which are often neither effective nor efficient in

doing the work of Christ, risk not being the Church even if they grow numerically. A brief review of the church growth movement is explored next.

Church Growth Movement

In the preface to Thom S. Rainer's book, The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles, C. Peter Wagner identifies Rainer as one among the third generation of the church growth movement. Donald McGavran remains the pioneer in this field having established the basic paradigm. Second generation church growth leaders who studied under McGavran worked on specific areas of church growth allowing the movement to mature (Preface).

Rainer identifies three tenets of church growth that are included in a rather wordy definition of the concept in the Constitution of the North American Society for Church Growth. First, it is a discipline; it is a field of study accepted around the world with enough published materials to fill a small library. Second, the focus is on discipling, making followers for Jesus Christ and developing them in mature Christ followers. Finally, it is founded on God's Word with a high view of Scripture among the writings of the Church growth movement (20). Rainer defines the church growth movement to include "all the resources of people, institutions, and publications dedicated to expounding the concepts and practicing the principles of church growth beginning with the foundational work of Donald McGavran" (21-22). It recognizes three sources for growth, biological, transfer, and conversion (22) and four types of growth, internal, expansion, extension, and bridging (23).

Donald McGavran is credited with establishing the Church growth movement in 1955 with his work, The Bridges of God, based on his missionary work in India.

“Evangelism, or an emphasis on converting non-Christians to Christ, is a major concern of mission that influenced McGavran’s approach to his calling in India” (Rainer 27). Influenced by the work of Roland Allen and J. Waskom Pickett, McGavran seeks to discover the differences between growing churches in India and those that were not growing. His work is both well received and severely criticized (Rainer 34), not unlike reactions to church growth concepts today. Nonetheless, the movement became an institution in 1960 when McGavran was asked to establish his Institute for Church Growth on the campus of Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon (36). In 1965, McGavran reestablished the Institute at Fuller Seminary and became the founding dean of Fuller’s School of World Mission (37). His influence began to wane after 1970, but he still contributed to the church growth movement until his death in 1991 (38). His successor was C. Peter Wagner (49).

At first, based on reading The Bridges of God, Wagner considered McGavran a “quack.” His views changed while attending a course taught by McGavran. The two became friends and coworkers, with McGavran as something of a mentor for Wagner (Rainer 53-54). Wagner’s tenure, too, was not without conflict and critics, but Rainer sees evidence “that the Church growth movement will continue to grow well into the twenty-first century” (61).

The hermeneutic of church growth tends to be very pragmatic using sociology, demography, and marketing as means of reaching the lost following St. Paul’s approach in 1 Corinthians 9:22b (Rainer 90). The challenge for the church growth movement is the same as that to which liberalism succumbed earlier this century: “The ‘tools’ of culture are not inherently evil, but a hermeneutic that flirts with the enticements of modernity

must always be cautious that the gospel essence is never compromised” (91). Liberalism reduced Christianity to a social gospel. The Church growth movement must be careful not to wind up with merely a sociological gospel.

The goal of the church growth movement is for men and women to receive and enjoy all the benefits of God granted through Jesus Christ. McGavran wanted the people of India to receive God’s benefits and was bewildered that so few churches were making converts. In seeking the reasons for this reality, McGavran integrated the doctrines of soteriology and ecclesiology. “McGavran wanted *evidence* [original emphasis] that salvation was taking place, that people were coming to Christ” (Rainer 142). In other words, “[h]ow can we *know* [original emphasis] that we are reaching people for Christ? How can we determine if an internal decision of the heart has been made?” (142). In Matthew 7:16 Jesus declares, “By their fruit you will recognize them,” and Paul identifies the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. The challenge is in quantifying these categories:

Hence the Church growth movement arose when salvation became *quantifiable*, [original emphasis] and churches became accountable for their numbers—in terms of membership, attendance, baptisms, and so forth. It must be admitted that this church growth approach is subject to error. However, it creates a level of accountability, and that accountability keeps the church focused on its primary task: reaching people for Christ. (142-43)

Where McGavran holds that the primary purpose of the church is evangelism (i.e., churches are to multiply themselves) and everything else is subordinate to evangelism, Wagner broadens that understanding: “Today, Wagner’s theology, which is representative of the church growth ecclesiology, has departed from this narrow concept of the purpose [mission] of the church, although evangelism remains the priority

purpose” (Rainer 149). Wagner sees evangelism as one aspect of the mission of the Church, though evangelism is primary.

Wagner’s concept of mission must be understood in the context of the kingdom of God (see Strategies 96-99). In that context, mission for Wagner is understood in a holistic way, that mission “aims for the good of the whole person” (99). This view, however, has come by way of criticism of the more narrow view of equating mission with evangelism even though concepts such as mission, evangelism, witness, service, and salvation have changed and been developed (Rainer 150). At first the “classical” view of mission was maintained in the face of the more liberal social gospel ideologies. In time, Wagner, influenced by the likes of John R. W. Stott, recognized the value of some of the tenets of the social gospel as important to the mission of the Church (152).

Wagner and the Church growth movement shifted their view of mission from a classical position where evangelism was of primary importance to a more holistic position that included the cultural mandate as well as the evangelistic mandate (Rainer 153). By 1981 Wagner made this change in his thinking as well calling Christians to be involved in social ministries, whereby the Church growth movement became more than just a numbers-oriented ministry. Social justice issues were also to be included in the understanding of mission. The cultural mandate could be of two types, social action or social service (154), though the evangelistic mandate remained the top priority for the church growth movement for Wagner (155).

Not all in the evangelical camp share this position, however. Some argue that holistic evangelism could not separate the cultural mandate from the evangelism mandate. Wagner, on the other hand, argues that the two mandates could and should be

separated with evangelism being primary. Some accuse Wagner of polarization, but he argues that limited resources force a pragmatic approach to selecting priorities, hence evangelism over social ministry. Theologically, evangelism is also most important citing Matthew 10:28 (Rainer 156). Reversing the two could lead to the collapse of the church growth movement, as has been the case in other Christian movements where evangelism was made secondary to some other purpose (158).

Across the country and even around the world the Church suffers when the mission of discipling is replaced with some other goal (e.g., congregational survival, fundraising, social justice issues, social clubs, and the like). The Church does not exist to change the world or to establish a “Christian culture.” The Church exists to make Christ-followers as per Jesus command. Many Lutheran congregations, similar to other churches, have forgotten that Christ’s followers are all part of the priesthood of all believers for the sake of the world. While some disagree with Wagner’s priorities, evangelism is the means by which the church is to reach others and thus to make an impact on the world (Rainer 158).

Opponents raise concerns that the church growth movement relies too heavily upon numbers. C. Wayne Zunkel argues from an international vantage point: “*We must again restore the unity of the gospel* [original emphasis]. The Christian faith cares about individuals and their sin *and* [original emphasis] about the gross sin and brokenness, which individuals visit upon each other. Christ would free us from both” (9-13). His book explores the dangers inherent in the church growth movement when God’s costly grace is exchanged for cheap grace (14-20). Rodney E. Zwonitzer also challenges the claims of church growth based on Lutheran confessional writings in his book, Testing the Claims

of Church Growth (though his arguments are less than convincing).

In Plain Talk about Church Growth, Steve Clapp provides grounds for critics of church growth by presenting strategies for evangelism that tend more toward making members for the church than disciples of Jesus Christ. His later work, Overcoming Barriers to Church Growth addresses issues that pertain to healthy church growth rather than mechanical techniques for increasing attendance figures:

On a personal level, I have not generally viewed evangelism and church growth as being in conflict with one another. While evangelism is traditionally more focused on the individual Christian than on the church as an institution, it is difficult for anyone to remain an effective, growing Christian in isolation from the church. I would be the first to argue that the body of Christ is not in every way identical with the church as an institution. Some of our local churches have compromised the faith, excluded others from Christian community, and treated people in ways completely inconsistent with the Gospel. For all the faults of the local church, however, it remains the most visible manifestation we have of the body of Christ. (11)

Clapp is correct, of course, and argues convincingly that leaders in the Church today, across denominational lines, need to attend not only to church growth in fulfillment of the mission but also to church health for the sake of that mission assigned by Jesus to his body, the Church.

Principles of church growth number in the hundreds (Rainer 171). Still a few can be identified as among the most important ones for the church growth movement. Not surprisingly, as circumstances change and needs arise, some principles will fade away as new ones are created. After all, a movement by definition is subject to change and transition. In reflecting on the value of identifying the key principles for church growth, Rainer tends toward that of church health:

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of Hadaway's research is his conclusion that today's fast-growing churches tend to be leaders in other

ministries as well. “Recent research into the correlates of ‘growth in mature faith’ and ‘effective Christian education’ has shown that adults in growing churches tend to indicate more growth in faith on average than do adults in churches which are not growing.” Hadaway further discovered that virtually all phases of the growing churches’ ministries were enhanced. “Growing churches also were found to exhibit greater overall levels of strength and effectiveness in other areas of church life, such as worship, congregational warmth, quality of the Christian education program, spiritual development, congregational loyalty, and social-service orientation.” (174)

The church growth movement has existed for several decades as a recognized movement. More importantly, the church growth movement is the basis for investigations into church health. According to McGavran, “Church growth has always been characteristic of healthy churches and basic to the power of the Christian movement” (Understanding Church Growth 14). The goal is to understand the dynamics that contribute to the growth of congregations so as to replicate those dynamics in other settings once the principles are identified. Though God is ultimately responsible for causing growth in and through his Church, if the factors that enhance growth can be identified while being faithful to the message of the gospel, the mission and ministry of the Church can be significantly enhanced even as people are reached with the gospel. Church growth principles are seen as techniques to aid churches in numerical growth (at least in part). They address the question, “How do churches grow?” as reflected in the subtitle of Donald McGavran and George G. Hunter’s book, Church Growth: Strategies that Work [emphasis mine].

Rick Warren has become well-known for church growth principles. In his book The Purpose Driven Church, he identifies and dispels eight myths often advanced against church growth while at the same time pointing out five dimensions by which churches grows: warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through

worship, broader through ministry, and larger through evangelism (49). These are also the five “purposes” for Saddleback Community Church:

Magnify: We celebrate God’s presence in worship
 Mission: We communicate God’s Word through evangelism
 Membership: We incorporate God’s family into our fellowship
 Maturity: We educate God’s people through discipleship
 Ministry: We demonstrate God’s love through service. (107)

Similarly, the Lutheran Church in America (one of the predecessor bodies of ELCA) identified these five purposes as worship, witness, support, learning, and service. Rainer identifies four functions: evangelism, discipleship, worship, and social ministry (148). Regardless of how a congregation organizes around these functions, the church in this country is declining. Erwin Raphael McManus pushes the concern one step further:

Even to say that churches are declining and closing their doors is not to speak of the real tragedy. This may seem strange, but the real tragedy is not that churches are dying but that churches have lost their reason to live! . . . Before we can even begin to explore how the church can really live, we must first be willing to die. We must be willing to die to our conveniences, our traditions, and our preferences. (24)

Congregations must be willing to die to themselves and become servants to the world as Jesus demonstrated to his disciples, for example, washing their feet the last night he was with them (John 13:1-20). When and where the Church is faithful in serving, we find that God often orchestrates growth (e.g., Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 6:7). While human effort can enhance church growth the results are up to the One who provides the growth (1 Cor. 6:3). The focus of a healthy church is fulfilling the mission of making healthy followers of Jesus Christ. “Never minimize the message of Christ. Never compromise the cost. Keep crystal clear who He is and what He wants. ‘Jesus Lite’ will never quench the deep thirst of hurting humanity. Come to hurting people gently, with love” (Zunkel, 45).

Church Health Movement

In 1977 Donald McGavran and Winfield C. Arn identified ten steps for church growth. Arn confesses concern over evangelistic approaches that invite a “decision” for Christ but fail to provide continued support in helping the “converted” mature in faith, which is what the ten steps address. A distinction is made between method and principle because God wants the Church to grow. Church growth focused on principle not method (21-22). The principles for church growth are taken from the Bible (the final authority) or at least do not violate biblical mandates (24). Those apart from Christ are seen as “lost.” The principles recognize that God loves all people, that Christ is the only way to salvation and eternal life, that the Holy Spirit is still at work today empowering God’s people, that God’s people should pray for God to orchestrate growth, and that the church as the body of Christ is essential to “God’s plan for the salvation and discipling of” people (26-31). These principles provide a foundation for a church health paradigm.

The Church is an organic assembly of the people of God. It functions as many other living entities, according to identifiable systems. “In a systems approach, we look at the health of a congregation as a process. Health is not a state or a thing. Health is a manifestation of processes, many hidden yet real” (Steinke 4). If the processes within a church are not functioning in a healthy, balanced way, congregational growth cannot be realized. Over time, deterioration of the health of the congregation could result in the “death” of the body. In short, “health is a dynamic balance” (15). Like the human body, when that balance is lost in the church, for whatever reason, an unhealthy condition results:

Health occurs when the body’s systems run smoothly and energy circulates freely. But the balancing act of health is temporary. Wholeness

is not achievable in an imperfect world. Health will vary over time. Nonetheless, the drive toward health is the surest tendency in life. Healing is a universal element of all creation, though there are limits to its powers. (16)

Balancing the paradigms of church growth and church health is an issue of leadership. Perhaps one of the first to study and write on church health was Wagner in Your Church Can Be Healthy. A year later, McGavran and Hunter authored a book suggesting that attention to church health arose even as the work of the church growth movement continued.

Important characteristics of creative leadership include the ability to anticipate the future, to “distinguish between symptoms and problems” (Wagner, Your Church Can Be Healthy 7), “to identify the problem by putting a name on it” (7), and “to take corrective action after a problem has been identified” (8). Using a health model, Wagner offers assistance on these four points (15), thus tying church health to evangelism. Church growth is contingent upon church health (16).

While God seems to bless faithful churches with growth (Acts 2:47), some churches today are faithful yet do not grow numerically. Wagner points out that growth is complex. “There is no way it can be reduced to a simple formula or a canned program” (Your Church Can Be Healthy 29). Church growth or decline results from the interplay of four items: (1) national trends in society (e.g., demographics, values, political, and socioeconomic factors); (2) national denominational factors such as polity and theology; (3) the local culture and community trends of the congregation’s context; and, (4) the congregation itself regarding leadership and membership (18-19).

Using a diagnostic approach to church health, Hollis Green identifies thirty-five possible causes of congregational decline. In this model church health is considered in

terms of “disease” as causative of congregational decline (9). Some of the first “ecclesiologists,” as Wagner calls them, people trained at diagnosing congregational health, were Lyle Schaller and Carl George with the ranks increasing since the mid-1970s (Your Church Can Grow 20).

Wagner identifies seven vital signs of church health (Your Church Can Grow 32-33; Your Church Can Be Healthy 21-24). These vital signs involve the pastor, laity mobilized for ministry (especially through spiritual gifts), and whether or not the congregation is big enough to meet the needs of both the community and the membership. Another sign has to do with groups on three levels: membership, fellowship, and spiritual kinship. Congregations often plateau at two hundred when they cannot separate internal fellowship groups for the sake of assimilating new members. Churches tend to attract similar people with similar values (see Malphurs, Values-Driven Leadership), though this aspect has been controversial for the church growth movement when referring to “target audience.” The sixth vital sign is the effectiveness of the evangelistic approach or method. Finally, the last sign is whether or not congregational priorities are consistent with biblical priorities. These vital signs are not inconsistent with church growth principles.

Wagner also lists four axioms that pertain to church growth but are also related to church health. “Axiom 1: The pastor must want the church to grow and be willing to pay the price” (Your Church Can Be Healthy 24). Not all pastors are comfortable with the challenges of a growing church. “Axiom 2: The people must want the church to grow and be willing to pay the price” (26). Not all members will embrace the changes associated with or caused by growth. “Axiom 3: The church must agree that the goal of evangelism

is to make disciples,” not just members for the church (27). “Axiom 4: The church must not have a terminal illness” (28). In the medical industry, diagnosis and treatment comprise one approach to medical practice while prevention, a more positive and proactive posture, is a second approach to maintaining health.

The work of Robert E. Logan focuses more on prevention than cure (Beyond Church Growth). Logan operates with three assumptions or “facts.” First, “the universal Church is God’s agent of change” (18) in this world while the local congregation serves as the means by which individuals are developed as disciples. Second, “God desires that churches grow both qualitatively and quantitatively” (18) for the gospel to reach to the ends of the world. Third, “health that produces growth is not natural in the sense that it is spontaneous or automatic” (18) even in the “best churches.” Church health “must be planned for, nurtured, worked hard for, monitored, and exploited” (18). Based on these assumptions, Logan offers ten church growth principles; the degree to which they are incorporated into a congregation enhances or diminishes church health:

- Visionizing Faith and Prayer
- Effective Pastoral Leadership
- Culturally Relevant Philosophy of Ministry
- Celebrative and Reflective Worship
- Holistic Disciple Making
- Expanding Network of Cell Groups
- Developing and Resourcing Leaders
- Mobilizing Believers According to Spiritual Gifts
- Appropriate and Productive Programming
- Starting Churches That Reproduce. (19)

The team of pastors that developed the Beeson Church Health model used five primary sources and five secondary sources in identifying the Beeson church health characteristics. A comparison of church health characteristics gathered from primary sources can be found in Table 2.1, while Table 2.2 includes secondary sources.

Table 2.1. Characteristics of Church Health Primary Sources

Hemphill	Macchia	Schwarz	Wagner	Leadership Network	Beeson Model
Servant leaders	Servant-leadership development	Gift-oriented ministry	A well-mobilized laity	Lay mobilization	Mobilized laity
Christ-exalting worship	God-exalting worship	Inspiring worship			Engaging worship
Passion for the lost	Outward focus	Need-oriented evangelism	Effective evangelistic methods	Responsible evangelism	Intentional evangelism
Kingdom family relationships	Loving and caring relationships	Loving relationships	Meeting members' needs	Authentic community	Authentic community
Maturation of believers	Learning and growing in community	Holistic small groups	A common homogeneous denominator		Transforming discipleship
God-connecting prayer	Spiritual disciplines	Passionate spirituality			Passionate spirituality
God-sized vision	Wise administration and accountability	Empowering leadership	A positive pastor	Effective leadership	Empowering leadership
Supernatural power	God's empowering presence				
	Stewardship and generosity			Celebration, congregation, and cell	
	Networking with the body of Christ	Functional structures	Biblical priorities	Cultural connectedness	Functional structures

Source: Law 37.

Table 2.2 Characteristics of Church Health Secondary Sources

Eclov	Spader & Mayers	Anderson	Singletary	Galloway	Beeson Model
Holiness in dealing with sin	Atmosphere of love	Glorifying God	Strong emphasis on prayer	Clear-cut vision	Mobilized laity
Endurance, "over-comers"	Relational ministry	Producing disciples	Obvious ministry of the Holy Spirit	Passion for the lost	Engaging worship
Confront evil and heresy	Communicate Christ clearly	Exercising spiritual gifts	Biblical balance	Shared ministry together	Intentional evangelism
Exclusive love for God	Good health image	Reproducing through evangelism	Individual and organic reproduction	Empowering leadership	Authentic community
Corporate growth ministry	Prayer	Incorporating newcomers	High level of lay mobilization	Fervent spirituality	Transforming discipleship
Love for one another	Communicate the Word	Open to change	Qualitative and quantitative growth	Flexible and functional structures	Passionate spirituality
		Trusting God	Healthy body life	Celebrative worship	Empowering leadership
		Looking good on the outside		Connecting small groups	Functional structures
				Seeker-friendly evangelism	
				Loving relationships	

Source: Law 38.

Natural Church Development

My introduction to church health was Christian A. Schwarz's Natural Church Development. He argues convincingly that leadership alone cannot build a healthy,

growing church. Some plant while others water, but God gives the growth (see 1 Cor. 3:6). “God has provided everything we’ll ever need for church growth, yet we do not always make proper use of it... Instead of using God’s means, we try to do things in our own strength—with much pulling and pushing” (7). The attitude reflective in many congregations is, “If I/we could just find the right program—the right event, the right activity, the right people—the ministry would be fine!”

Growth comes from God. The challenge is to put the right methods together with the “natural principles” of organizational growth in the proper combination for the sake of the congregation. This “biotic” model implies a rediscovery of the laws of life (in Greek, *bios*). “The goal is to let God’s growth automatisms flourish, instead of wasting energy on human-made programs” (Schwarz 7). The four building blocks of natural church development identified by Schwarz are “quality characteristics, minimum strategy, biotic principles, and new paradigm” (11). These are among the foundational pieces that many pastoral leaders seem to “know” intuitively. For those who do not seem to possess the gift of intuition, church health along with the church growth movement offers hope.

The eight health characteristics noted by Schwarz are empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationship. Of these eight, no one is key to church growth apart from the others. To the contrary, growth in churches appears to be the result of the interplay among all eight characteristics.

Interdependence is the first of six biotic principles and refers to the way the individual parts are integrated into the whole system, which is of greater importance than

the parts themselves (Schwarz 67). In creation once an organism grows in size to a certain point, then multiplication becomes the means of growth (e.g., healthy cells). This principle applies to all aspects of church life as well (68). The principle of energy transformation can be seen in how an organism fights a virus or a congregation handles problems. The multi-usage principle was modeled by Jesus himself with his disciples, training them even as he had the involved them in ministry. “This on-the-job experience yields higher-quality training with a smaller investment of energy” (73). Differences among the members of the church are to be seen as complementary not competitive, which is the principle of symbiosis. Finally, the principle of functionality refers to the production of fruit as the function of living entities. “Since fruit—according to both biology and the Bible—is visible, we are able to check on the quality of an organism [or church] by examining its fruit” (76).

These principles keep the eight characteristics from becoming programs for efficiency rather than means of developing an effective church (i.e., for growing Christ followers rather than pursuing some other missional goal). Nevertheless, “the value of the six biotic principles for everyday church life is that they tell not only how to act but also how to *react* [original emphasis] creatively in a way that supports growth” (Schwarz 80). The issue is simple: “How can we create an environment that will allow God’s growth automatisms—with which He Himself builds the church—ever-increasing influence?” (81). Certain aspects of church growth can be “caused” by human effort, but that growth is neither sustainable nor healthy in the long run if not affected by God through the Holy Spirit. Many pastors and church leaders seek to operate the church like a machine rather than an organism. Schwarz and others call the leadership in the local church to look

toward health and growth in favor of methods or programs designed to enhance congregational efficiency, whatever that might be.

Clapp discusses congregational issues that frustrate church growth and church health. Community demographics, for example, are beyond congregational control (Overcoming Barriers 13-18) while problems related to the physical plant of a church lie within a congregation's circle of influence to make positive changes (89-100). Congregational characteristics such as low self-esteem among some members or the congregation as a whole (19-40), as well as negative attitudes (41-44), are issues that tend to pertain to church health and that inhibit church growth.

Warren argues that the health of a congregation is determined by the foundation of that church, i.e., the purpose. A clear understanding of the purpose of the congregation provides healthy characteristics: builds morale (Purpose Driven Church 86 ff.), reduces frustration (87 ff.), allows for the concentration of time and effort (88-90), attracts cooperation (91-93), and aids in evaluation (93 ff.). Not all growth is good, as Zunkel and others point out. Growth in the church can be cancerous when it is disconnected from the Head, Jesus the Christ (24-26). At the same time, healthy growth cannot be rushed but must be pursued systematically (39-40). Stephen R. Covey refers to the systematic nature of growth as the Law of the Farm (Principle-Centered 161-62). On the farm one must abide by certain principles if the farm is to produce. If the harvest is to be realized the fields must be plowed and the seed sown in a timely manner. Procrastination of any individual task can result in disaster for the farmer. For the follower of Jesus, spiritual growth is more than just "coming to Jesus" (Zunkel 37). Congregational systems must be provided not only to make converts but also to sustain discipleship development unto

maturity in Christ.

The Church does not exist to serve only or primarily the membership. To the contrary, the church exists to give itself away in service like Jesus who came “not to be served but to serve and give his life” (Matt. 20:28). Membership and discipleship are not identical:

If it is my church or your church, even our church, it is not a church. It is simply a social club. And the world has more than enough of those already. If it is to be *the* [original emphasis] church, it must be Christ’s church. And if it is Christ’s church, then it is to be for all people. Then it carries within it a passion for those outside. Never can it be said by a member, “We are too large already.” The question is not how cozy “our” fellowship is but how well we are completing the mission to which we have been called. The “movement and the magnificence” are not ours but His. (Warren, Purpose Driven Church 173)

Attention to church health is necessary in congregations where members think of the church as “theirs” so that they might have “their needs” met. Church health, perhaps more effectively than church growth, focuses on discipleship in favor of membership.

Encountering the Church Health Movement

Southern and Norton compare the Church to the human body image in discussing church health. Just as the body functions via systems such as circulatory and respiratory so, too, the body of Christ operates by way of several functions or systems: “the welcoming system, the nurturing system, the empowering system, and the serving system. Four interrelated, interdependent, interactive systems that work together to maintain the health and wellness of the congregation.” The systems form the basis for congregational renewal, growth and transformation (x).

Today people are seeking to meet two major needs: God in their lives and a place where they belong (i.e., community). Healthy congregations provide both though most

mainline congregations fail to offer either. “True renewal and growth are only possible if a congregation begins seeing itself as a living organism secure in its identity, capable of knowing where it is headed and how best to get there” (Southern and Norton xxiii). The congregation will not reach its full potential so long as the focus is on running programs. A shift must be made in understanding a congregation. First, it “is an organism rather than an organization” (xxiv). Second, “the primary task of a congregation is to create opportunities for individuals to grow spiritually in community with others” (xxiv). That the Church is an organism more than an organization is a paradigm shift that can only aid congregations in enhancing their health:

Congregations don’t grow because they fail to take into account the most essential ingredient of good health and growth: their spiritual DNA, those intrinsic characteristics and traits that give each congregation its unique identity. But simply going through a process of discovery isn’t enough. This DNA, like that in your body, must be delivered throughout the organism—the body of Christ—your congregation. (x)

Like the human body, genetic information, the DNA, resides in the cells and provides for growth, development, and reproduction. The DNA is expressed throughout the organism by way of specialized functions. In a congregation the DNA is comprised of mission and vision as the double helix both connect by the congregation’s values (Southern and Norton 5). These dynamics explain why two similar congregations in similar circumstances may develop in very different ways. The DNA of a congregation reflects its core values. These set the parameter for both understanding the mission and formulating the vision for that mission. Historically speaking, church health is directly proportional to the clarity of the core values with an understanding of the surrounding yet changing environment. Church decline results when the core values are compromised (Finke and Stark 237-75).

Beeson Health Characteristics

The Beeson Team of Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor developed the Beeson Church Health model. The Beeson model involves eight different yet mutually interrelated characteristics of church health. The eight characteristics include: authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, passionate spirituality, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, and transforming discipleship. While all eight were considered in this project, two were of particular interest: empowering leadership and transforming discipleship. The Power Surge paradigm of discipleship development tended to emphasize these two. Beginning first with these, a brief review of literature for each of the eight characteristics follows.

Empowering Leadership

God blesses the Church with leaders to empower the membership for ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). “Churches grow in every way when they are guided by strong, spiritual leaders with the touch of the supernatural radiating in their service. The church sinks into confusion and malaise without such leadership” (Sanders, Spiritual Leadership 18). “The local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders” (Hybels 27). “An opportunity of leadership in the church is not for a leader’s personal benefit, but for the good of the Body of Christ” (Galloway et al. 65). The need for empowering church leadership is pervasive.

Definitions of leadership are legion. No one definition may fit every person or context. Styles and abilities differ, each effective in their own way (see Oswald and Kroeger 4-9). A retired pastor doing interim ministry in congregations discovered this truth at a conference on church leadership. In response to a presentation I made, he

realized his style of leadership was similar to that of Moses. He had led the congregation through the struggle of reorientation but was not gifted to lead them through the next phase. He found great relief knowing he could lead through the “wilderness” and could step aside for a “Joshua” to lead into the proverbial “promised land.”

Church leaders must themselves be disciples of Jesus Christ. To lead effectively a pastor must also be a growing follower. “Human leaders must lead to please the Leader” (Galloway et al. 56). Motivation for leading is grounded in a willingness to follow; leading and following go hand in hand. To care for God’s people, church leaders must also care for themselves. In this matter, double standards have no place; pastors can only teach what they are willing to do themselves. The ultimate test of leadership is the willingness of the leader to be changed. “If you want to continue leading, you must continue changing” (Maxwell, Developing the Leader 51). A willingness to change is even more crucial for leaders today given the rate of change in the culture. “I’m certain a good deal of ministry could radically improve if point leaders simply became lifelong learners and developed the value in their teams” (Martoia 88).

Bill Hybels has written extensively on leadership, particularly church leadership. In Courageous Leadership, Hybels discusses the different styles of leadership exemplified in the Bible: David, Jonathan, Joshua, Esther, and Paul, to name a few. He offers this leader’s prayer: “God, mold and shape me to my full leadership potential” (199). Without God’s help leaders can easily become trapped in the “box” of self-deception, which undermines leadership (Arbinger Institute viii). Self-deception blinds a person to reality by misleading one into behaving based on one’s perception of the world. Due to these blind spots growing leaders must review their perceptions: “You don’t know

what you don't know" (McCartney 9). Pastors and lay leaders must continue to grow and change for the sake of the Church in this rapidly changing world.

The Church does not adjust quickly to a changing environment. Because the Church resists change, it is increasingly seen as irrelevant to the challenges most people face in this postmodern world (Slaughter 16). George Barna compares the church to a frog placed in a pot of water. If the water is hot, the frog will leap from the deadly environment. If the water is cool, however, the frog will remain in the water even when heat is applied to the water. As the temperature gradually increases, the frog will remain in the water and perish (Frog in the Kettle 21). The cultural context of the Church is "fluid," which requires leadership to adjust and change for the sake of the God's people. Pastors and churches that refuse to change perish in the boiling waters of cultural change. For the church to thrive (as opposed to merely survive), empowering leadership must shift paradigms from reliance on "maps" to using a compass (Covey, Principle-Centered Leadership 96-7). A compass enables one to find direction based on an orientation to the North Pole. For church leaders true "north" is Jesus Christ (Sweet 39).

Changes within congregations can be problematic as people attempt to work through the time of transition. Everett M. Rogers refers to this process as diffusion. "We define *diffusion* [original emphasis] as the process by which an *innovation* [original emphasis] is *communicated* [original emphasis] through certain *channels* [original emphasis] over *time* [original emphasis] among the members of a *social system* [original emphasis]. The four main elements are the innovation, communication channels, time and the social system (10). Leadership in a social organism such as a congregation requires an understanding of that social system (values, beliefs, trust, etc.) along with creative effort

at communicating frequently for an innovation to be accepted. How the congregation has handled change in the past is also important (Anderson, Dying for Change 160).

Obviously change is both required and possible for a church and its leaders. John P. Kotter has developed an eight-stage process of creating major change: (1) establish a sense of urgency, (2) create the guiding coalition, (3) develop a vision and strategy, (4) communicate the change vision, (5) empower broad-based action, (6) generate short-term wins, (7) consolidate gains and produce more change, and (8) anchor new approaches in the culture (21). This process can be used in organizations or all types, including churches.

As a church grows, the organizational dynamics change. The role and function of the pastor is contingent upon many factors including the size of the congregation. This transitional process is reflected in what Alice Mann calls an “N-curve” (p. 56; see Figure 2.1). As the congregation grows, the relationship between the pastor and the congregations changes. Groups and lay leadership are more central to family and program-sized congregations while the pastor is more significant in a pastoral or corporate-sized congregation (12).

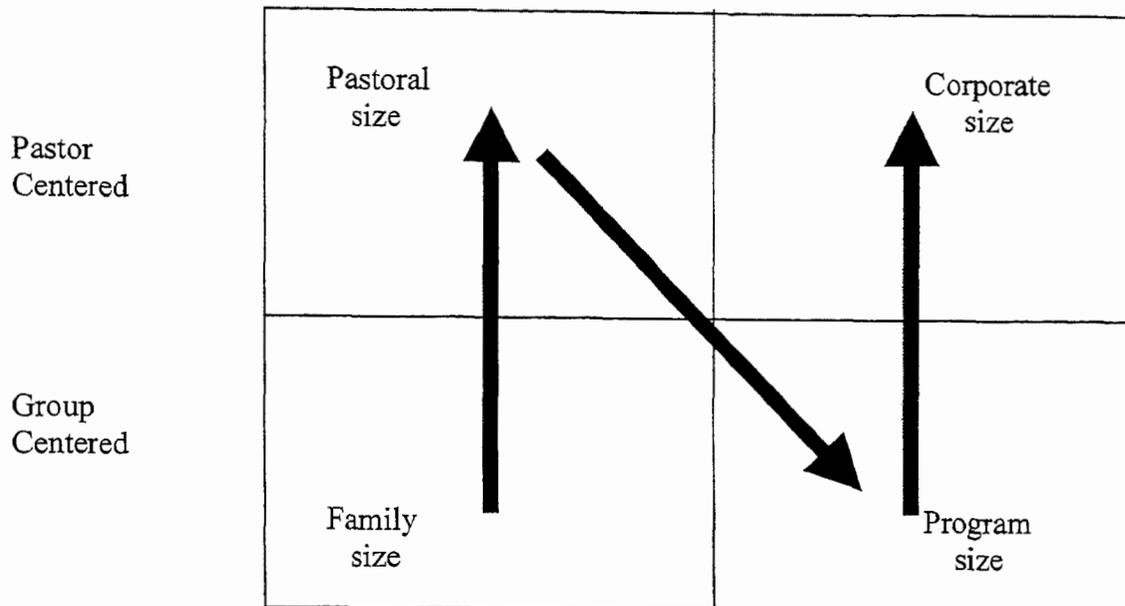


Figure 2.1. Size transition “N-curve.”

Pastors are change agents and must coach change. “The postmodern church is a gathering of good people who want to work together to be a blessing to humankind. These teams do not need a guardian, a CEO, or a caregiver. They need a coach” (Bandy 47). Empowering leadership is crucial for churches today since resistance to change is to be expected. A definition of leadership includes this reality: “the art of mobilizing others to want to *struggle* [emphasis mine] for shared aspirations” (Kouzes and Posner 30). In the church “shared aspirations” imply servanthood, a necessary ingredient to understanding empowering leadership. “If contemporary Christian leaders want to be like Christ, we must take servanthood seriously” (Dale 52). In response to the request of James and John for positions of authority and power, Jesus teaches the disciples about servant leadership:

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and

their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

The world needs empowered leadership, which is empowered servanthood. This style of leadership is nurtured through the Spirit by following Jesus. “Servant leaders generally are created not in commanding others but in obeying their Commander... The yielded leader is always an incarnation of Christ, the real leader of His church” (Miller 18).

Finally, pastors must have integrity, which involves “(1) *discerning* [original emphasis] what is right and what is wrong; (2) *acting on* [original emphasis] what you have discerned, even at personal cost; and (3) *saying openly* [original emphasis] that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong” (Carter 7). That does not mean leaders are perfect and never make a mistake. Empowering leaders learn from their mistakes knowing that a failure does not make them failures (Maxwell, Failing Forward 61). Leaders must also learn from their successes to guard against success becoming a stumbling block (Anderson, Church 77).

The collection of resources for leadership, particularly servant leadership, continues to grow affording means by which pastoral leaders can truly become empowering leaders.

Transforming Discipleship

While discipleship involves following a teacher, the word “disciple” means “a learner” (Sanders, Spiritual Discipleship 8). Following Jesus is a costly endeavor:

“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers

and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-7). Jesus does not ask anything of his disciples that he has not first done himself (23). The disciple’s ambition to become the best he or she can be for God (63) and thereby reflect “the perfect humanity of [the] Son in both personal life and Christian service” (76). Such a transformation is a lifelong process through the power of the Holy Spirit.

While many in the church would agree that the mission of the church is to make disciples, few realize that transformation is necessary for one to change into the image of Jesus. Many churches do not really expect people to be transformed and make no provisions for transformation to occur. Therefore, when people do not become like Jesus, no one is surprised. To the contrary, many would be surprised if someone actually did experience transformation (Ortberg 32). Consequently, many churches settle for “pseudo-transformation” (33). Transformation cannot be measured by way of external indicators but is determined by one’s center. Are people “oriented and moving *toward* [original emphasis] the center of spiritual life (love of God and people), or are they moving *away from* [original emphasis] it?” (37).

Discipleship is not an end in itself but is the means to fulfilling God’s purposes. The approach Jesus used in calling, equipping, and sending the original group of disciples serves as a good model. Given the wide variety of processes and programs for discipleship development, the challenge is to select that which might work best in a particular and unique situation (Coppedge 15). God is honored by people in three ways: “1) a growing relationship between believers and God, 2) development of Christ-likeness in character, and 3) fruitful service for the Lord” (16). J. Oswald Sanders refers to these

same characteristics as the basis for fruitfulness in the disciple (Spiritual Discipleship 30).

Maturity in Christ is what the paradigm “Power Surge” is designed to facilitate. Foss explores the “membership model” for ministry that many pastors were taught in seminary as the only model for parish ministry. “If membership was growing and happy—and they seemed to be—then my ministry was successful” (Power Surge: Six Marks12). While growth in numbers was not primarily the goal, being a personal pastor to as many members as possible was the objective. In a numerically growing congregation, the focus on numerical growth is prescription for burnout. The change to a discipleship model for parish ministry is not easy, but it can and must be done. Leadership is crucial to making the transition from membership to discipleship. Leaders must be “committed to personal discipleship” (43), see and cast the vision (44), place the vision within the context of the congregation (45), “enroll the constituency and align the institutional structures of the congregation to the vision” (47), creatively repeat the vision to encourage embracement of it (50), and, manage the process of change (53). The Power Surge paradigm not only focuses on means by which to help people mature as disciples of Jesus Christ but also reorients the entire ministry to making disciples not just members.

In a nationwide survey by Barna, “nine out of ten adults described themselves as ‘Christian’” and “four out of ten said they were personally committed to Jesus Christ,” but not one had a goal of becoming a committed follower of Jesus or of making disciples (Growing True Disciples 7-8). Effective churches have defined discipleship and identified means by which to measure spiritual growth (110.) Barna identifies and

describes five models for effective discipleship: “competencies” (135-39), “Missional” (139-44), “neighborhood” (144-47), “worldview” (148-51), and “lecture-lab” (151-56). Each has strengths and weaknesses. Each can be used or adapted for any congregation. None identify a congregation’s core beliefs or values, exposing the model to be used as a program to gather members rather than disciples. Healthy congregations develop faithful disciples of Jesus Christ supporting them through the process of growth and transformation for without growth the entity is without life (MacArthur 67).

Authentic Community

The church is the *ekklesia*, the gathering of God’s people. Authentic community is not an option; it is crucial to the well-being of every believer and the hope of the world. “As Christ’s new community, [disciples] are bound to one another, as the foot is bound to the eye, as the eye is bound to the heart” (Willimon 70). God calls His people to a social covenant, “to build the human community on earth” (Stevens 94). For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to be Christian is to be in community:

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs other because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity. (21)

Authentic community is crucial for the church and for Christ followers. “Community is not simply shared identity. It is the result of shared labor toward common goals” (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 64). M. Scott Peck identifies several characteristics of community in his book, The Different Drum: community must be inclusive, realistic, and contemplative (61, 64-65). Authentic community is a safe place where one can cry (67):

We tend to speak of our hometowns as communities. Or of the churches in our towns as communities. Our hometowns may well be geographical collections of human beings with tax and political structures in common, but precious little else relates them to each other. Towns are not, in any meaningful sense of the word, communities. And sight unseen, on the basis of my experience with many Christian churches in this country, I can be fairly confident that each of the churches in your hometown is not likely to be much of a community either. (25)

Not all congregations practice or manifest authentic community, to the detriment of the Church and the world. The Trinity is an example of authentic community. Jesus also practiced community with his disciples. The early Church in Acts refers to how the new believers shared everything in common (2:43-47; 4:32-37) while daily attending to the apostles' teachings and prayers (2:42). Authentic community is not manifested identically in every healthy congregation. Small groups or cell groups can serve as excellent means to creating authentic community. The adventure of Christian discipleship means being in community with others if one is to be committed to faithful living. Bruce Larson and Keith Miller, in The Edge of Adventure, a small group experience in faith development, explore this aspect.

The stagnation of the Church and the ineffectiveness of the traditional Church inspired Ralph W. Neighbor to investigate the NT for a new model for church life (29). He found an effective pattern authored by the Holy Spirit, the "cell group church" (37). Cell groups or small groups are built on authentic relationships (Donahue and Robinson 57), where people gather "to know and be known" (60); "to love and be loved" (62); "to served and be served" (64); "to admonished and be admonished" (65), which is perhaps the most challenging aspect; so that people together can "celebrate and be celebrated" (68). Dale E. Galloway and Kathi Mills have also written extensively on small groups, stressing their importance to the Church. They identify three types of small group

systems: (1) the “appendage system” where a small group initiated by a layperson receives no support from the leadership leaving it to stand or fall on its own, (2) the “incorporated or department system” where small groups are organized as programs resulting in built in limits, and (3) the “totally integrated system” where the church is organized around small groups and becomes a church of small groups rather than having small groups as part of the church. Choosing the right system is crucial for the success of small group ministry (20-21).

Individualism is a hallmark of society; freedom and independence are foundational to this country, individualism claimed as divine right. Habits of the Heart explores the impact individualism has had on this country as the authors attempt “to find a moral language that will transcend ... radical individualism” (Bellah et al. 21). Unfortunately, fierce individualism undermines authentic community resulting in isolation and loneliness, leading to fear and meaninglessness. Clearly these dynamics are not in keeping with the understanding of abundant life Jesus brings (John 10:10).

Authentic community tends to occur through four stages. “Pseudo-community” is the first stage when those forming community simply try to fake it: being extremely pleasant with each other while avoiding all disagreement (Peck 86). As differences are allowed, even encouraged to surface, the group moves to the next stage, chaos. “The chaos always centers around well-intentioned but misguided attempts to heal and convert” (90). The motivation here is to make everyone “normal” (91). Chaos leads to one of two responses. Either the group collapses or it moves into emptiness, the critical stage between chaos and community. In this stage, members of the group need to empty themselves of barriers to communication (94-95). In short, the group members must be

willing to die to themselves, which is the only means to true (authentic) community:

When its death has been completed, open and empty, the group enters community. In this final stage a soft quietness descends. It is a kind of peace. The room is bathed in peace. Then, quietly, a member begins to talk about herself. She is being very vulnerable. She is speaking of the deepest part of herself. The group hangs on each word. No one realized she was capable of such eloquence. When she is finished there is a hush. It goes on a long time, but it does not seem long. There is no uneasiness in this silence. (103)

Authentic community rarely occurs since most people will settle for pseudo-community to avoid the struggles of creating authentic community.

In authentic community each member contributes to the good of the whole in a “diversity of functions that contribute to a rich social unity, like the loving unity through diversity found in the triune God in whose image the Church, the *laos tou theou*, is created” (Stevens 53). In this context, differences between clergy and laity amount to that of function for the sake of good order and health of the community.

Engaging Worship

Luther defines worship in its deepest sense as complete trust in God (Gritsch 117). In his Large Catechism with regard to the First Commandment, Luther writes, “To have God, you see, does not mean to lay hands on Him, or put Him into a purse, or shut Him up in a chest. To cling to Him with all our heart is nothing else than to entrust ourselves to Him completely” (qtd. in Tappert 366). Worship is centered on God.

In constructing a definition for worship, Sally Morgenthaler refers to John 4:24 and concludes, “Christian worship is not only offering all that we are to a Holy God (spirit). It is an intentional response of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to *The* [original emphasis] God, the One revealed in the Word, made known and accessible to us in Jesus Christ and witnessed in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (truth)” (47). The term

“worship” literally means “to attribute worth” to someone or something (46). It is both what people offer to God and what people receive from God, serving him while being served by him.

Styles of worship vary from liturgical or traditional to contemporary, from seeker driven to seeker sensitive, from formal to informal. Differences are often in the style of worship and the music used. Regardless of the style, worship is comprised of four movements: “(1) We enter into God’s presence; (2) We hear God speak; (3) We celebrate at God’s Table; and (4) We are dismissed” (Webber 43). The earliest Christian communities worshiped prior to any delineated creedal statements (Richardson 361).

Worship has priority over doctrinal formulation:

Theology must prune worship of all that is foreign to Christian truth, constantly bring it under the critique of rational judgment, and articulate its essential meaning so that those who worship with their hearts may worship with their understanding also. But the truth remains that worship is the *raison d’etre* or theology, not vice-versa. (362)

Worship is by nature and design corporate. For so called “liturgical” traditions, the church is understood as the *ekklesia* gathered around Word and Sacrament, the rite to which “the liturgy refers” (Dix 1). The liturgy, regardless of its shape or content, refers to the work of the people of God. Worship is not a passive event but is to be engaging, inviting if not enticing those present to enter into the presence of God. Regardless of the style of the worship itself, worship is engaging when it centers on God. Worship involves the *ekklesia* gathered by the Holy Spirit to thank and praise God for what he has done through Jesus Christ. If people are to mature as disciples of Jesus Christ, engaging worship is important to that growth.

Functional Structures

The organizational structure of a congregation can facilitate or frustrate the mission. Discipling congregations tend to function as “permission-giving networks” rather than bureaucracies. “Permission-giving churches require an organization that encourages each individual to use his or her spiritual gifts on behalf of the Body of Christ without going through a maze of committees to get approval” (Easum, Sacred Cows 97). The organizational structure itself is of less significance than how it functions. For example, Kennon L. Callahan’s model can become bureaucratic if the six relational and six functional characteristics are not balanced (Twelve Keys xii). Job descriptions are less important than having the right people doing the right jobs so that the church is going in the right direction (Easum, Sacred Cows 106).

The importance of flexible structures is reflected in two biblical stories. During the wilderness wanderings, Moses becomes completely responsible for all aspects of community life. Day after day, Moses sits in judgment while the people bring their problems to him. Everything focused on Moses as the sole leader. In Exodus 18, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, advises that this arrangement is not good for either the people or Moses and will wear out both of them. He instructs Moses to establish a flexible structure wherein he can serve as leader while empowering others to share the burdens of leadership:

You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they

will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace. (18:19b-23)

A similar situation is faced by the early Church in Acts 6:1-7. The Greek-speaking widows complained that the daily distribution was not being conducted fairly. Rather than abandoning their responsibilities for preaching and teaching, the twelve recommended “seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (v. 3) be selected to serve as leaders in this area. The idea was a sound and healthy one, well received by the community and when implemented resulted in continued growth of the Church.

The solution in each situation was unique to the circumstances at hand. John Ed Mathison calls this “indigenous planning” (12). In other words, the structure was designed based on the statistics, facts, and possibilities available. Churches must strive to become who and what God intends them to be, not to become like some other church. “God gives to every congregation and to every individual unique gifts and talents. God wants each congregation to discover those talents and to utilize them for work in the kingdom” (13).

For the church to be healthy and effective in fulfilling its mission, flexible structures are needed. Bureaucratic structures tend to maintain the organization through “control, power, hierarchy, career, professionalism, status, prestige, ladder climbing and resolutions” (Easum, Sacred Cows 97), resulting in stagnation and decline. The Power Surge paradigm provides a framework wherein a wide variety of congregational structures can be designed appropriate to the polity, context, and history of the congregation. This framework includes the congregation’s core beliefs, core values, a

statement of the mission, vision for the future, and the expected outcomes, which are the marks of discipleship (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 111-36; Hanson 13-18).

Intentional Evangelism

In membership churches evangelism is associated with outreach, often “knocking on doors,” with the goal of getting more people to finance the church budget. In a discipling church, evangelism is also seen as outreach but for the sake of the person to be reached and the benefits of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is more than getting them to come to the church (Wright 72-83). It involves connecting with unchurched people so as to support and equip them in becoming Christ followers (57-69).

For many years Donald A. Abdon taught, “Evangelism *is* [original emphasis] the mission of the church” (3). The word “evangelism” comes from the Greek, *euangelizomai*, which means, “to bring, announce, or proclaim good news” (2). The task of the Church is “to bring, announce, or proclaim” the Gospel to the world but also to the Church (see Figure 2.2). “All *other* [original emphasis] aspects of the church life and activity should *support* [original emphasis] that task and *interrelate* [original emphasis] with” (3) the task of evangelism.

Evangelism is the task.
All other tasks and efforts in the church are
the methods for carrying out that task.

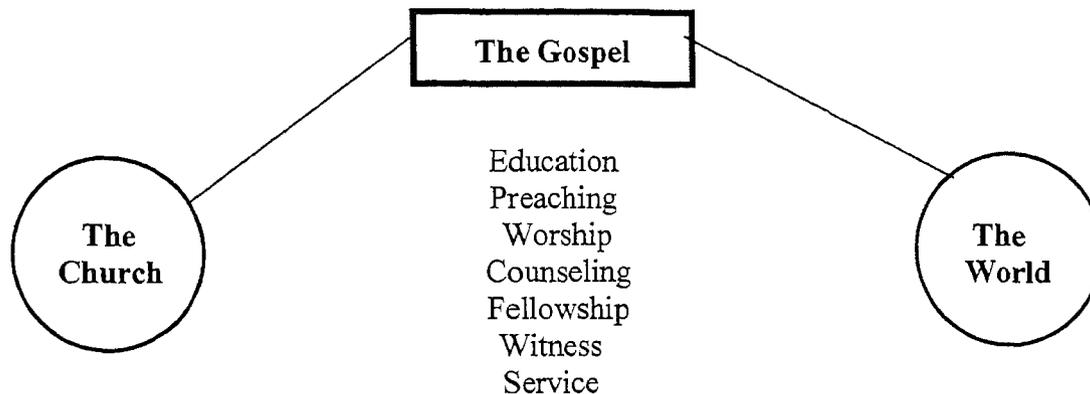


Figure 2.2. Evangelism and the mission of the Church.

Evangelism is not a program within the church relegated to a committee or team.

Evangelism is the function of the church conveyed through every program or ministry the church conducts. The gospel is presented to unbelievers for conversion but it is preached to believers for faith development.

Sharing the gospel for both conversion and discipleship is of crucial importance particularly in the United States (Barna, Evangelism That Works 20). Despite the many challenges that may cause believers to wring their hands in worry, the similarities between the present context for ministry and that of Jesus' day are many (28). The goal of evangelism must be conversion rather than a decision for Christ (131). Conversion leads to a discipleship attitude while a decision often results in membership mind-set.

Churches that effectively convert the unchurched are "apostolic congregations" (Hunter, Church 28; see also Hunter, How to Reach 144-70). These congregations seek to root people in Scripture, are earnest in prayer, have a heart for unchurched people, and

seek to obey the Great Commission (Church 29). As a result, Christians of these churches are more likely to evangelize intentionally than those of more traditional congregations (32).

Steve Sjogren explores practical aspects of evangelism in Conspiracy of Kindness where evangelistic outreach efforts need not be confrontational (high risk-low grace). Evangelistic efforts ought to be low risk-high grace. “Servant evangelism is low risk in that it doesn’t require a lot of money, time, expertise, or emotional energy to be effective. It is high grace because we carry out this ministry with simple honesty toward God” (68). Such honesty is reflected in one’s style of doing evangelism (Mittelberg, Strobel, and Hybels 19-36).

Mobilized Laity

While Luther and the Reformers can be credited with recovering the concept of the Priesthood of all Believers, the doctrine is not readily visible or implemented in many churches. NT theology does not support the contemporary distinctions between laypersons and clergy:

“Laity,” in its proper New Testament sense is *laos*—the people of God—is a term of great honor denoting the enormous privilege and mission of the whole people of God.... The word “clergy” comes from the Greek word *kleros*, which means the “appointed or endowed” ones, referring not to church leaders but to believers as a whole. (Stevens 5)

Clergy and laity coexist, each having “their place and function in a complementary way” (53). Together, clergy and laity comprise the Church, the *ekklesia* of God, called and set apart by God for the sake of the world:

The call of God is threefold. First, there is the call to *belong to God* [original emphasis]. Thus persons without identities or “names,” who are homeless waifs in the universe, become children of God and members of the family of God. “Once you were not a people, but now you are the

people of God” (1 Pet. 2:10). This is the call to discipleship. Second, there is the call to *be God’s people in life* [original emphasis], a holy people that exists for the praise of His glory in all aspects of life in the church and world. This is expressed in sanctification; it is the call to holiness. Third, there is the call to *do God’s work* [original emphasis], to enter into God’s service to fulfill His purposes in both the church and the world. This involves gifts, talents, ministries, occupations, roles, work, and mission—the call to service. (88)

God’s people are gifted for ministry. “Discipleship is a matter of calling, giftedness, and training—not title or position.” In Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship, Foss continues, “Most churches pay lip service to the Pauline imagery of the multigifted body of Christ, but it is time to do more than that. It is time to take the imagery with literal seriousness. The discipleship model of the church is gift-based” (59).

The ministry of the Church is too great for the pastors to do it alone. The laity must be equipped for ministry. Melvin J. Steinbron convincingly argues for pastors to share the ministry with the laity: “Everyone needs another who cares for him or her; the strength of caring is in the relationship; Christian love is a giving love; and, people need somebody who cares for them consistently, both when they are in need and when all is well” (Can the Pastor 39). In The Lay-Driven Church, Steinbron “furnishes the theology and methodology to prepare the people and/or a church not only to start, but also to sustain” a lay pastoral care ministry (17).

A wide variety of books and inventories concerning spiritual gifts can be found today. The business world has also recognized the benefits of helping people discover their talents. Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton have identified thirty-four strengths (83-116) based on Clifton’s work with Paula Nelson in developing the “strengths theory” (19-37). Bruce Bugbee (coauthor of the Network course materials) developed a spiritual gifts inventory to aid people in finding their best fit for ministry

(14). Using an orchestra as an image for the church, LifeKeys by Jane A. G. Kise, David Stark, Sandra Krebs Hirsh identify life gifts (what one does “naturally), spiritual gifts, personality style (Myers-Briggs), values, passions, personal priorities, and principles of servanthood. Each of these resources is beneficial in mobilizing the laity for ministry.

The goal of mobilizing the laity is not primarily for the sake of the Church but for the benefit of making disciples for Jesus Christ. Discipleship begins with the experience of unconditional grace by re-centering mission to the heart of the Church and reconnecting believers to a living, present Christ who loves unconditionally yet holds his followers accountable to his love (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 63-64). “The discipleship model expects the Christian community—through Word and Sacrament—to transform lives” (86). Transformation is the goal through intentional discipleship development utilizing six marks or practices of discipleship. These are foundational practices and not intended to be the only marks spiritual disciplines (89).

Passionate Spirituality

Spirituality can be equated with discipleship. Spirituality is not limited to church involvement but must inform all aspects of life: home, work, and play, though differently in each setting. James A. Autry discusses this in his book, The Servant Leader:

I say “the spirit of work” to distinguish your spirituality at work from the more personal spirituality that comes from your relationship with the sacred, with God, with a higher power. Certainly the spirituality you bring to work is derived from the same source—but the expression of it is in another context, which is, “How does your spirituality find expression in the workplace, in your attitude about your work, in your relationships with your employees, peers, colleagues, customers, vendors, and others?” That’s the question and the challenge, because it is in your attitude and behavior as well as in your relationships that your spirituality expresses itself at work—an expression that is most often manifest as service. (8)

In the early Church, Christian spirituality was grounded in the theology of

baptism, in which persons received forgiveness from sin and guilt. “The Early Christian consciousness was characterized by the joyous experience of freedom from sin and death by communion with Christ” (Pannenburg 16-17). As the Church dealt with those who had committed serious offenses, “the institution of a ‘second’ penitence was created” and with that came the introduction of guilt consciousness. Despite the Reformation message of liberation from sin, Protestant piety would “focus increasingly on the awareness of sin and guilt as a condition for genuine faith” (17). Hope for the believer came from recognizing oneself as a sinner in need of God’s grace and redemption through Jesus Christ. Such a position came under attack by philosophers such as the Nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche and the psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. “The combined impact of Nietzsche and Freud in eroding traditional moral standards is hard to overestimate” (19).

In the current cultural climate, alienation and loss of meaning are symptoms of the continual decline in community, experienced first in the family. Despite the human sinful nature and the resultant alienation, personal identity is found in Christ. Free will is not negated; to the contrary in Christ people find their true selves, the basis of Christian spirituality:

Even in relation to grace, the free will of the natural person had been given a position of importance that Luther thought incompatible with the New Testament, especially with Pauline theology. Luther rediscovered that in the event of regeneration according to Paul not only some quality of the subject but the subject itself is changed. That is the significance of Luther’s famous phrase when he says that we are justified “outside ourselves” in Christ, *extra nos in Christo*. He means outside our old “self.” It is the power of faith that it places us outside ourselves, because in the act of trust our existence is built on the One to whom we entrust ourselves, to whom we quite literally leave ourselves. (Pannenburg 99)

In Christ, “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Spirituality is a matter of the heart. “The subject of the heart is addressed in the Bible more than any

other topic” (Eldredge 39). A person’s character is reflected in motives, which are a matter of the heart. “Our deepest thoughts are held in our hearts” (45). The heart is the most precious possession for without it one cannot have God, love, faith, or even life (52). Passionate spirituality is a matter of the heart more than the head.

Allan H. Sager seeks to root spirituality in the gospel and returning it to a communal context (10). He has developed an inventory that identifies four different spirituality types (see Figure 2.3). The “north-south” axis reflects the preferences regarding illumination of God either “knowing God” through the mind or “sensing God” through the heart. The “east-west” axis refers to “preferred ways and means of going about the spiritual life” (35). Kataphatic (from the Greek *kataphatikos* meaning “affirmative”), utilizes the five senses and “the use of concepts, images, and symbols as a way of meditating with a God who is revealed and knowable” (36). Conversely, through the apophatic approach (from the Greek *apophatikos* meaning “negative”), denies that God can be known through use of the five senses in favor of what might be called “intuition.” “Only dark, silent love can comprehend the ever-greater God. God is mystery and can be experienced only through the way of infused contemplation” (37). No one approach to spirituality in this model is best; each have their strengths and weaknesses. The benefit of this model is in helping people understand differences and their preferred approach to passionate spirituality.

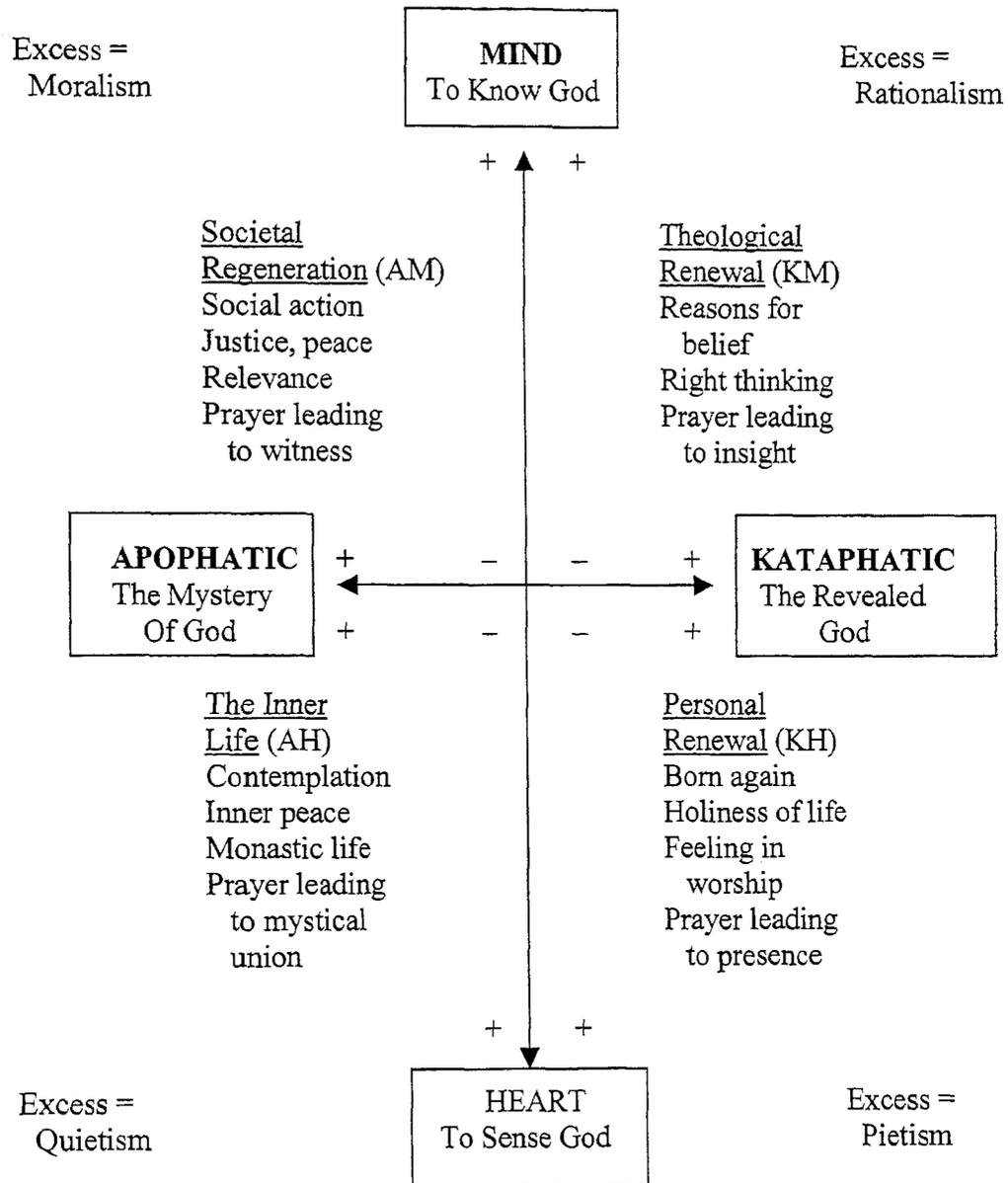


Figure 2.3. Types of Christian spirituality.

Reginald Johnson applies the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Theory to spirituality. When a person understands his or her personality type, they “can appreciate our God-given attributes, identify some of our special areas of vulnerability and

weakness, and discover the kinds of resources which might be most conducive for nurturing our relationship with Christ” (20). Serving in ways consistent with one’s personality generates passion.

“A passion is necessary in the performance of the Christ faith” (MacDonald 18). It empowers people to cling to the faith in face of persecution, danger, or risk. Passion comes in different forms, however:

Some of us experience another form of passion when we first make a decision to cross a decision line and commit to Jesus Christ. Most of us have seen the new believer who—like the healed man in the temple of Jerusalem—leaps for joy and cares little about what anyone thinks because he is so excited about a new life. So strong is that initial passion that is almost embarrassing to those who have had more experience in matters of faith, who have a larger perspective. (19)

The negative manifestation of passion can lead to conflict. Mels Carbonell provides resources for helping people understand what excites them and what upsets them, “why people do what they do” (11). This approach utilizes the Four Temperament Model of Human Behavior (53) or the DISC model first developed by William Marston (55). This theory of human behavior is very helpful in working with people in conflict.

One of the challenges facing the Church is providing ways by which passionate spirituality can be sustained and nurtured for a lifetime. Power Surge addresses that challenge by providing the framework for lifelong spiritual growth appropriate to individual disciples that can be uniquely adapted to differing congregations.

The Marks of Discipleship: Power Surge

A discipleship versus membership approach is that of Mike Foss (Power Surge: Six Marks), pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, Minnesota. In transitioning that congregation into a healthy one effective in making disciples, the

congregation has attempted to assist other congregations and church leaders to learn from them. In his books, Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship and A Servant's Manual, Foss discusses issues related to shifting a congregation from maintaining the status quo for the sake of the members to equipping the members for the sake of ministry. Not only does he identify six marks of discipleship for Christ followers today, he also points out that for disciples to be equipped effective leadership must serve to empower the body of Christ. While leadership can take a wide variety of forms based on the personality and giftedness of the leader, six critical elements of leadership are nonetheless required: pastors and lay leaders must be persons of faith committed to personal discipleship (Power Surge: Six Marks 43); leaders must be able to see and cast the vision (44); churches need leaders who can place the vision within the context of the congregation (45); church leaders need to be able to enroll the members and align the congregational structures to the vision (47); further church leadership involves creative repetition of the vision so as to inspire the followers to embrace it (50); and, finally empowering, effective church leadership needs to be able to manage change and the process of transition (53).

In light of Ephesians 4:12, the marks of discipleship are summarized in a statement built on the term Power Surge as something of an acronym: "I will strive to pray daily, worship weekly, read the Bible, serve at and beyond Prince of Peace, be in relationship to encourage spiritual growth in others, and give of my time, talents and resources" (Power Surge: Six Marks 89). This list is foundational not exhaustive. In short, Foss explores the importance of empowering leadership in relation to mobilizing laity (i.e., discipleship development) for the sake of church health and growth.

The consonants in the words Power Surge stand for the six marks of discipleship.

The first mark of a disciple is daily prayer. The word “pray” appears 155 times in the NRSV, in 153 different verses. In the first letter to the Thessalonians Paul writes, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (5:16-18). Jesus instructs his disciples to pray (Matt. 6:6-15; Luke 11:2-4). The parable of the widow and the unjust judge” (Luke 18:1-8) stresses the importance of persistent prayer, not to get what one wants but to be transformed through calling upon God. Jesus himself often withdrew alone to be in prayer (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12), prayed for children (Matt. 19:13) and prayed throughout the night of his arrest (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). Jesus prays for his disciples in John chapter 17, a passage that is cited to support efforts in building bridges across denominational lines.

Medical studies have demonstrated that prayer makes a difference in the life and health of a person. “Duke University researchers found that healthy senior citizens who said they rarely or never prayed ran about a 50% greater risk of dying during the study that seniors who prayed or meditated once a month or more” (Fackelmann 7D). Dianne Hales confirms these findings:

Dozens of studies have shown that individuals who pray regularly and attend religious services stay healthier and live longer than those who rarely or never do—even when age, health, habits, demographics and other factors are considered. A six-year Duke University study of 4000 men and women of various faiths, all over 64, found that the relative risk of dying was 46% lower for those who frequently attended religious services. Prayer—whether for oneself (petitionary prayer) or others (intercessory prayer)—affects the quality if not the quantity, of life. (4)

Transformation in the life of a disciple is empowered by the Holy Spirit through prayer (Fee 146). Clearly, prayer is both important and powerful for Christ followers.

The second mark of a disciple, weekly worship, “is the linchpin of a discipleship

church. It is in the gathering of God's people around Word and Sacrament that the community of faith affirms its calling, receives the gifts of grace, is nourished and strengthened, and sent back into the world to love as God loves" (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 94). Both OT and NT provide instruction for worship offered by those who recognize the worthiness of God to receive the praises of his people. In worship people enter into the presence of God (96). The culture of a congregation is shaped through worship. "Worship is God-focused and people-active" (Hanson 22).

Bible reading is the third mark of discipleship. In a membership model, the Bible is a tool used primarily by the pastor, but in a discipleship congregation the Bible is part of everyone's tool kit (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 97). Pastors are to equip disciples to read and understand the Bible. The role of the pastor to preach and teach is the reason the twelve refused to "neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables" (Acts 6:2b). The task of pastoral leaders is to preach and teach the Word of God.

In this model of discipleship, service is the fourth spiritual discipline. Serving is key to discipleship. From the prophet Micah one learns what God requires: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). God loved the world so much that he sent his Son Jesus (John 3:16), and God continues to love the world through us, God's beloved disciples of Jesus (John 13:34-35). Justice, love, and service are not options for God's people (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 99). Pastors often assume people know ways by which they can serve, but in a discipling church programs and strategies are designed to assist people in serving, both the congregation and the world.

The fifth mark of a disciple is spiritual friendships:

The Protestant church has failed to create an environment in which spiritual growth is both expected and nurtured. Where growth is not

expected, it rarely happens. At Prince of Peace, we expect people to grow spiritually and we believe that such growth is best nurtured through spiritual friendships and mutual accountability around our common commitment to the marks of discipleship. (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 102)

Christians are called to be in relationship with other disciples. Jesus models relationships by calling the twelve and instructing them for three years. “There are no individual Christians” (Stevens 55). Healthy congregations find value in small groups or cell groups, not as a program of the church, but as a way to be the Church.

The sixth spiritual discipline is giving. The most obvious form of giving is monetary. In a membership church, belonging is seen as paying dues or fees for services. “In a discipleship church, the offering is symbolic of the giving of one’s self to the God who loves us with an everlasting love” (Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks 103). Giving a tithe is not the goal for “offering” begins after the tithe is given (105). God is the One who gives to people. People give to model God. Having material possessions is not inherently wrong, but the love of those possessions is problematic (1 Tim. 6:10). One cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:24). Material possessions can interfere with faith and obedience when one relies upon them rather than upon God, as was the painful discovery of the rich young man (Matt. 19:16-30; Mark 10.17-31; Luke 18.18-30). God is a God of abundance. Jesus comes that human beings might have life, “and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), yet, many people live in a world where the prevailing view is limited resources. For one person to gain another must lose though no world religion teaches that competition for possessions is God’s intention or design (Pilzer 33). Disciples are not to horde God’s resources; they are to be conduits blessed to be a blessing to others.

Conclusions

Church health and church growth are related issues for effective congregational ministry. “Effective churches are healthy churches; healthy churches are growing churches—they make more and better disciples” (Logan, Beyond Church Growth 17). The nature of church health is systemic, an interdependent network of systems, much like the human body. Making healthy disciples contributes to the health of the congregation, which is further manifest in spiritual and numerical growth. The issue for most churches in terms of ministry is discipleship development rather than membership making. Discipling paradigms such as Power Surge maintain such a distinction.

Just as broad similarities can be identified among bodies that are healthy, similarities among congregations as they manifest health can also be identified. Conversely, illness (or the lack of health) can be manifest in a wide variety of ways even though “symptoms” may be similar among differing ailments. Much work has been done in investigating dysfunction among congregations (e.g., Steinke 41-53) but is a matter only to be mentioned in a study such as this. Congregational illness or dysfunction is not the primary concern of this study. Though clearly a related matter, illness by definition is the absence of health. Rather than being concerned with “curing” congregational ills, church health attends more to the prevention of illness by enhancing church health.

The scope and wealth of information available today as well as the studies, approaches, programs, and materials available to pastors and lay congregational leaders, provide great hope for churches to fulfill effectively and proactively the Great Commission and the Great Commandment with great commitment. Church health is not a goal to be reached but a state of being for a congregation to be maintained, much like that

of health in a human body. Pastors may not be as thoroughly trained in congregational health as medical doctors are in human physiology, but this review of literature highlights the growing body of knowledge available for church leaders today in enhancing the health of the congregations they serve. This review serves as a basis for this study into church health with regard to the eight Beeson church health characteristics. The next chapter considers the study in greater detail.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Reviewing the Problem and Purpose

The Church is an organization and an organism; therefore, principles related to physiological health in the human body may provide insight into the health of the church as the body of Christ. “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).

Church growth has been a recognized field of study for many years. More recently, the focus of this study was on church health, with a particular interest in identifying principles that enhance church life resulting in church growth.

This study, which follows a similar church health study conducted by a team of four Beeson pastors, focused upon the area of church health. Specifically, this project investigated the impact a symposium offered by an ELCA congregation for other ELCA church leaders had on assisting participants enhance the health of the congregations to which they belong. That impact was quantified in specific areas of numerical growth.

The Problem Revisited

By and large, most seminary training prepares people for management rather than leadership. Few ELCA pastors who attended an ELCA-related seminary find themselves adequately prepared to lead a congregation much less assist it to grow in a healthy, sustainable way. Any growth that may occur is often the result of an unhealthy codependent relationship between the pastor and the congregation.

Church health results in growth for the sake of the congregation and its ministry to the glory of God, not to the honor of the pastor or the members. If the Church is to

fulfill its God-given mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ, then the Church as Christ's body must find ways to become as healthy and strong as possible from an organic and then from an organizational perspective.

Of the eight Beeson health characteristics, the Power Surge symposium primarily addressed empowering leadership and transforming discipleship. Given the fact that most large churches, leadership conferences tend to have little, if any, impact on the local congregations, the Power Surge symposium was designed to provide a practical approach for assisting participants in applying the presented material in their own parish setting. Rather than offering a "talking head" event, the Power Surge symposium was designed to assist participants make a difference "back home." In short, the symposium was designed to equip leadership to empower the laity for transforming discipleship.

Accordingly, this project considered the results or changes within parishes represented at the Power Surge event with congregations not represented at the event. The relative health of congregations was compared to statistical growth one year following the event. While congregational growth occurs both spiritually and numerically (spiritual growth being perhaps more significant to church health than numerical growth), the study was designed to consider growth reflected primarily in numbers. Spiritual growth is more difficult to quantify.

The Purpose Revisited

In light of the problem as described above, the purpose of this study was to survey the congregations represented among the participants at the Power Surge symposium offered through Changing Church, a ministry of Prince of Peace, Burnsville, Minnesota, on 14-15 November 2002. Arrangements were made at the event to survey as many

members of each congregation as would volunteer. Additionally, participants themselves were interviewed as to their plans for use of the symposium materials. Follow up surveys, e-mails, and printed materials were sent to the congregations initially surveyed a year after the event in order to determine what, if any, changes resulted from the symposium itself. The purpose of this multiple case study was to see what impact a leadership event might have on the health of participating congregations as reflected in specific areas of growth after one year.

Research Questions

Three research questions were designed for this study.

Research Question #1

How do the ELCA congregations represented among the participants of the Power Surge forum rate on each of the Beeson church health characteristics? This question provided the basis for comparing the findings of this study to the previous projects utilizing the Beeson Church Health model. The data also provided insights into the health of the participating congregations for the sake of those ministries.

Research Question #2

In what ways did participants use or apply the intended outcomes of the Power Surge symposium particularly in terms of empowering leadership and transforming discipleship to enhance the congregations' health? Since the study population was gathered at a specific event offered by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, the project provided information as to how the Power Surge discipleship model was being used by the participating congregations.

Research Question #3

What impact did the Power Surge forum have on enhancing the health of participating congregations twelve months after the event as evidenced in signs of congregational growth? Pastor Mike Foss and the staff of Changing Church were very interested in these findings with regard to the effectiveness of the Power Surge forum on participating congregations. An assumption from the outset was the twelve-month timeframe was too short to reveal any significant impact but was necessary for the sake of completing the study in a timely fashion. Therefore, any insights within the first year would be helpful.

Population and Sample

The population for this study depended upon the congregations and pastors who elected to attend the Power Surge symposium in November 2002. The Changing Church staff handled publicity, registration, and other details related to organizing this event with no alterations done to that process for the sake of this study. The potential population for this study was limited to those who would have “normally” registered for the event regardless of the study. Only those congregations who agreed to participate in this study at the Power Surge symposium received surveys. Of those participating congregations, only members who voluntarily completed a survey were included in the population sample.

Of the congregations represented at the symposium, thirteen agreed to participate in the survey. The congregations varied in size but were all located in growing suburban or small-town areas. Cross and Crown, King of Glory, and St. James are located in communities surrounding Indianapolis, Indiana. The other churches are spread across the

United States. Olivet is situated in the bustling community of Sylvania, Ohio, while Faith is located in the quiet town of South Beloit, Illinois. New Life can be found in a growing community outside of Des Moines, Iowa, and Shalom is one of three Lutheran congregations in Alexandria, Minnesota. Sammamish Hills is a rapidly growing area situated east of Seattle, Washington, and home to Sammamish Hills Lutheran Church. Finally, Trinity is located in State College, Pennsylvania.

A summary report of the results of this study was made available to both the participating congregations and the staff of Changing Church.

Instrumentation

Two main instruments were utilized as part of this multiple case study following a holistic design (Yin 41-44). The first was a survey based on the Beeson Church Health instrument designed by the team of Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor. This instrument was used within the congregations represented at the November 2002 Power Surge symposium. The project utilized a cross-sectional design for data collection through use of the surveys (Wiersma 163).

In addition to the Beeson Church Health surveys, subjective data were collected through site visits and interviews with the pastor or senior pastor of each congregation. Printed materials were also collected. At the time of the visit, I asked to be placed on the congregations' mailing lists to receive newsletters and other mailings.

Beeson Church Health Characteristics

Based on the work of Kinder, McKee, Law, and Taylor, this study operated with the same church health characteristics. Consistent with their work and study, eight categories were identified as being crucial to church health and, thus, to church growth.

The eight church health characteristics are as follows: (1) Empowering leadership, (2) Passionate spirituality, (3) Transforming discipleship, (4) Engaging worship (5) Functional structures, (6) Authentic community, (7) Mobilized laity, and (8) Intentional evangelism.

With regard to the previous study, each of the four members of the team selected two of the eight characteristics to consider within the scope of each individual project. Since each study focused primarily on two church health characteristics, all eight characteristics were studied. In each study, however, the other six characteristics were included, at least tangentially in the specific study.

Similarly, this study focused on two of the eight Beeson church health Characteristics for the purpose of this project. Given my interest and the unique design of the Power Surge symposium, the two primary health characteristics on which this project focused were empowered leadership and transforming discipleship, though the other six church health characteristics were not excluded. All eight characteristics are included in the Beeson Health instrument, but for the sake of data analysis only two were of primary interest and consideration.

Congregational Questionnaire

Since one of the goals of this project was to build upon the previous work of the team of Beeson pastors, the Beeson Church Health questionnaire developed by that team was utilized. The format of the instrument was adjusted for this project, but no major or fundamental changes were made to the instrument itself. Furthermore, validity of the construct was neither questioned nor tested; rather, it was assumed, given the fact that two of the four from that team completed their particular studies by May 2002. In any

event, the same seventy-one-item questionnaire was used here to measure church health (see Appendix A).

Pastoral Questionnaire

As with the previous work by the four-member Beeson pastor team, the same questionnaire was used in this study with the pastors of the participating congregations. Consistent with an annual report ELCA pastors submit to the Churchwide Denominational Offices, the questionnaire was designed to reflect changes in church growth specifically with regard to baptisms, membership numbers, annual congregational budget, and specific contextual factors for the pastor (see Appendix B). One year after the Power Surge symposium, each pastor was contacted for a telephone interview to discuss any demographic changes within the congregation with regard to the intended outcomes of the Power Surge symposium. The conversation revolved around changes in worship and Sunday school attendance, small groups (both numbers of groups and overall participation in those groups), financial support, baptisms, and the like.

Validity and Reliability

The team of researchers from the previous study tested the validity of the Beeson Church Health questionnaire; no further reliability tests were pursued in this study. I did, however, utilize the questionnaire within my own ELCA congregation where I served as pastor for fourteen years, having taken an eleven-month sabbatical as part of the Beeson Pastor residency program.

The validity of the Beeson Church Health instrument was established by the Beeson team of pastors who created the instrument. Law, a representative of the team, explains how the validity was determined:

Construct validity was determined as each question was checked against the literature review to verify its representation in Chapter 2. The surveys were pretested in two separate churches in the Lexington, Kentucky, area in order to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. The pretest was administered in a classroom setting with the researchers present. The length of time to complete the survey was about 15-20 minutes. The results of the survey were processed, and the reliability coefficients were measured. Reliability was determined with “split-half” reliability analysis and factor analysis. (78)

Data Collection

Since this project utilized the Beeson Church Health model developed by Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor, they were contacted to request support in using the Beeson model (see Appendix A) and to provide permission to compare my findings to theirs, as appropriate. The Rev. Nancy Lee Gauche, Director of the Changing Church ministry was also contacted to explore the possibility of including the Power Surge forum as a setting for recruiting congregational participants for this study. Results of this study would provide statistical data and insight into the effectiveness of the Power Surge forum and congregational health.

A three-phase approach was used to recruit participants. First, in cooperation with the staff of Changing Church, a letter from Pastor Nancy Lee Gauche about my project and a letter from me introducing the study were both included in a confirmation mailing to each registrant for the forum. Second, I made a brief presentation at the Power Surge forum inviting participation at the study. Pastor Mike Foss introduced me to the group and shared with them how beneficial this study would be to Changing Church and the ministry of Prince of Peace. Sample materials were shared with the Power Surge participants. Pastors were asked to complete a form indicating interest and willingness to participate (see Appendix C). Finally, I followed up with all of the November Power

Surge participants, beginning with an e-mail message to the pastor or lead pastor of each congregation indicating that I would be phoning them within the week to discuss the project. Based on those telephone conversations, fourteen of the fifteen pastors agreed to participate in this project. Once I had clarified the participating congregations, I arranged with each as to the number of surveys needed, approximately when the members would be asked to complete the surveys, and how the surveys would be returned to me. I made available to each congregation a self-addressed, stamped mailing envelope for return mail.

Data was also collected using a separate survey completed by the pastors (see Appendix B). This set of data provided statistical information about the congregations. A second similar survey was administered a year after the first to provide a means for comparing statistical growth based on numerical changes.

On-site interviews were conducted with each pastor (see Appendix D). These conversations lasted a minimum of ninety minutes, often as long as two hours, following a semi-structured format (Brewerton and Millward 70). The data collected were analyzed to determine the relative health of each of the participating congregations relative to the Beeson model. The statistical data were also analyzed in terms of the health of the congregations in order to establish a correlation between the impact of attending the Power Surge forum and church numerical growth. Additional conclusions were drawn regarding the overall impressions based on the statistical data along with the “softer” data provided by the interviews and the printed materials of the congregation.

Variables

The dependent variable in the study was church growth as reflected in the

numerical changes of average worship attendance, baptisms, baptized and confirmed membership, and congregational income and expenditures. Such changes were reflected in statistics from 1997 to 2002 and compared to statistics gathered over the course of the year following the Power Surge symposium. The independent variable of the study was information shared at the Power Surge forum.

Data Analysis

The completed surveys were returned to me for statistical analysis. The data from the Beeson health characteristics questionnaires were processed using the data processing software of Minitab 13. The data from the surveys were summarized with frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, and the use of Pearson's product moment correlation, consistent with the study of Kinder, Law, McKee, and Taylor.

One person voluntarily entered all of the data and was key in data processing. Of the 2,150 total surveys mailed to the participating congregations, over 596 surveys were returned. Nine surveys were completed by members of other congregations according to their responses on the survey. Those surveys were inadvertently included in the data processing as part of the overall impressions of church health as perceived in the congregation itself.

Data collected through the interviews and printed materials from the congregations were processed primarily by way of "pattern matching" and "explanation building" (Yin 106-13). Interview data were also analyzed using a "life histories" approach (Musson 10-27), combined with "conversation analysis" (Samra-Fredericks 161-89).

Generalizability

This study, following a multiple case study design, was applied only to the congregations registered for the November 2002 Power Surge symposium who agreed to participate in this study. While all were ELCA congregations, findings of this study can only properly be applied to the congregations that participated with limited applications to other ELCA congregations. Findings may, with some limits, be applied to other congregations similar in size and cultural context to the participating congregations, whether ELCA or not. The purpose of this study was to determine the co-relationship between church health and church growth as influenced by a congregational training event. Findings may be applied to similar training events involving similar congregations and pastors as participated in this study. Results of the study are reviewed and discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Many Lutheran pastors and congregations resist equating success with numbers (worship attendance or financial giving). In this success-oriented culture and with an absence of other quantitative measures to define success in ministry, church leaders often rely on such statistics as markers of success (Rima 48). The Beeson Health model, like other health models, attempts to identify quantitative and qualitative measures without ignoring the sovereignty of God (52). The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between church health and church growth among congregations participating in a leadership training event offered through a Lutheran congregation.

In order to conduct this study, three primary research questions were designed. How do the ELCA congregations represented among the participants of the Power Surge forum rate on each of the Beeson church health characteristics? In what ways did participants use or apply the intended outcomes of the Power Surge symposium particularly in terms of empowered leadership and transforming discipleship to enhance the congregations' health? What impact did the Power Surge forum have on enhancing the health of participating congregations twelve months after the event as evidenced in signs of congregational growth?

Profile of the Subjects

The project began with thirteen ELCA congregations interested in participating, to which a total of 3,250 surveys were distributed. Surveys were mailed to the pastors with instructions to invite confirmed members to complete and return a survey (see Appendix A). Pastors submitted statistical information via a separate questionnaire (see

Appendix B). Four congregations dropped out of the study: one withdrew for unknown reasons; two congregations became too busy to complete the surveys; the surveys of the fourth congregation were apparently lost in the mail. Ultimately 596 questionnaires were returned from nine congregations that fully participated. The overall response rate of the nine participating congregations was 27.7 percent (596 returns out of 2,150 mailed to those congregations; see Table 4.1). While the number of returns was relatively high the return rate was relatively low (Wiersma 176).

The data was tainted by the results of nine surveys, which were completed by members of congregations not involved in the study. Not realizing this fact I allow the volunteer working with the data entry and processing to proceed with all the questionnaires. By the time it came to my attention data processing and analysis had reach the point of no return. To eliminate these data would mean a virtual repeating of all the data work. Since the error was mine and, given the fact that the person was volunteering her time and expertise, I was reluctant to ask for the work be repeated. This situation resulted in a permanent flaw in the data, since there was no practical way of removing the responses of those nine surveys from the process.

Of the nine congregations fully participating, the weakest response rate was less than ten percent for two congregations. The rest were very strong (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Response Rate of Individual Participating Congregations

Church Name	Sent	Returned	
	N	n	%
Cross and Crown	150	40	26.7
Faith Lutheran	150	14*	9.3
King of Glory	350	32	9.1
New Life	200	34	17.0
Olivet	250	125	50.0
St. James	200	61	30.5
Sammamish Hills	500	141	28.2
Shalom	150	44	29.3
Trinity	200	96	48.0
Total	2150	596	27.7

*Reflects second set of survey responses; the first set of surveys were lost in return mail.

The data collected via the Beeson Church Health Surveys were otherwise processed for the congregations as a whole. Of the spiritual disciplines, less than half of all respondents include Bible study, devotional times, and sharing their faith as regular practices (see Table 4.2). More than 80 percent practice some sort of family devotions regularly while almost 90 percent regularly pray. Nearly two-thirds are involved in a ministry, but less than one in ten respondents pursue other spiritual disciplines (e.g., fasting).

Table 4.2 Spiritual Disciplines of Subjects (N=594)

Personal Spiritual Disciplines	n	%
Bible study is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	286	48.31
No	306	51.69
Devotional times are a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	259	43.60
No	335	56.40
Family devotional time is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	502	84.51
No	92	15.49
Involvement in ministry is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	372	62.63
No	222	37.37
Prayer is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	523	88.05
No	71	11.95
Sharing my faith is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	281	47.31
No	313	52.69
Other spiritual disciplines are a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	54	9.09
No	540	90.91

Church Health Characteristics

Eight indicators of health were measured via the Beeson Church Health survey: authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship. Scoring was done in reverse order so that the lower the mean score the stronger the perceptions of that trait (see Appendix G). Subjects tended to see engaging worship and passionate spirituality as the two strongest health characteristics, while empowering leadership and transforming discipleship were perceived as the two weakest

characteristics. The difference between the means of the two strongest traits was less than 0.13, with a difference of 0.7783 between the strongest (empowering leadership) and the weakest (transforming discipleship) with similar variations (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Church Health Characteristics for the Participating ELCA Churches (N=594)

Beeson Health Characteristic	M	SD
Engaging worship	1.9633	0.8543
Passionate spirituality	2.0924	0.8772
Functional structures	2.2792	0.9996
Authentic community	2.3059	0.9777
Mobilized laity	2.4477	1.0476
Intentional evangelism	2.5301	1.1290
Empowering leadership	2.7019	1.1156
Transforming discipleship	2.7416	1.0998

The data was also processed to reflect perspectives of the health characteristics within the individual congregations. Cross and Crown reflected the strongest perceptions in authentic community, mobilized laity, functioning structures, and passionate spirituality. Faith was strongest in empowering leadership and intentional evangelism. Shalom was strongest in engaging worship and nearly identical with New Life for transforming discipleship (see Table 4.4). N reflects the number of returns for each congregation.

Table 4.4. Descriptive Statistics for Individual Participating Congregations

Church Name	N	Authentic Community		Mobilized Laity	
		M	SD	M	SD
Cross and Crown	40	1.889	0.882	2.209	1.151
Faith Lutheran	14	2.256	1.040	2.349	1.041
King of Glory	32	2.347	0.900	2.440	1.049
New Life	34	1.945	0.846	2.222	1.088
Olivet	125	2.355	1.065	2.504	1.042
St. James	61	2.191	0.887	2.414	0.986
Sammamish Hills	141	2.533	0.964	2.583	1.053
Shalom	44	2.091	0.855	2.212	1.025
Trinity	96	2.350	0.970	2.492	0.995

Church Name	N	Empowering Leadership		Engaging Worship	
		M	SD	M	SD
Cross and Crown	40	2.598	1.166	1.740	0.760
Faith Lutheran	14	2.526	1.175	1.670	0.625
King of Glory	32	2.756	1.020	2.036	0.801
New Life	34	2.565	1.104	1.738	0.717
Olivet	125	2.693	1.147	2.103	0.923
St. James	61	2.662	1.123	2.080	0.874
Sammamish Hills	141	2.786	1.071	1.995	0.884
Shalom	44	2.565	1.178	1.640	0.679
Trinity	96	2.772	1.087	1.996	0.838

**Table 4.4. Descriptive Statistics for Individual Participating Congregations
continued**

Church Name	N	Functioning Structures		Intentional Evangelism	
		M	SD	M	SD
Cross and Crown	40	0.838	1.058	2.380	1.305
Faith Lutheran	14	2.116	1.040	2.368	1.121
King of Glory	32	2.261	1.044	2.566	1.036
New Life	34	2.196	1.043	2.431	1.127
Olivet	125	2.281	1.010	2.538	1.140
St. James	61	2.367	0.953	2.491	1.061
Sammamish Hills	141	2.369	0.965	2.604	1.070
Shalom	44	2.124	1.068	2.491	1.221
Trinity	96	2.323	0.936	2.550	1.126

Church Name	N	Passionate Spirituality		Transforming Discipleship	
		M	SD	M	SD
Cross and Crown	40	1.698	0.780	2.599	1.257
Faith Lutheran	14	1.916	0.753	2.691	1.121
King of Glory	32	2.193	0.848	2.686	1.071
New Life	34	1.958	0.780	2.514	1.028
Olivet	125	2.133	0.895	2.765	1.094
St. James	61	2.157	0.852	2.791	1.050
Sammamish Hills	141	2.257	0.914	2.840	1.128
Shalom	44	1.718	0.736	2.516	1.089
Trinity	96	2.138	0.860	2.775	1.036

Church Health Comparisons

The Beeson Church Health survey was used in similar projects involving four other subjects: the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (WDCMA), the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC), the General Associate of Baptist Churches (GAGBC), and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). A comparison of the scores from all five studies indicate similar results (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Church Health Characteristics Comparison between the ELCA, EPC, WDCMA, WOCUMC, and the GAGBC

Health Characteristic	ELCA (N=9)		EPC (N=15)		WDCMA (N=28)		WOCUMC (N=45)		GAGBC (N=9)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Engaging worship	1.96	0.85	1.88	.66	1.94	.67	1.86	.58	1.86	.58
Passionate spirituality	2.09	0.88	1.95	.60	2.07	.58	2.01	.54	1.96	.53
Functional structures	2.28	1.01	2.08	.68	2.01	.55	2.17	.56	2.29	.59
Authentic community	2.31	1.00	2.29	.48	2.39	.40	2.34	.40	2.34	.42
Mobilized laity	2.45	1.05	2.01	.58	2.14	.59	2.17	.56	2.26	.51
Intentional evangelism	2.53	1.13	2.00	.50	2.04	.49	2.11	.48	2.09	.45
Empowering leadership	2.70	1.12	2.18	.63	2.19	.54	2.29	.54	2.44	.57
Transforming discipleship	2.74	1.10	2.21	.49	2.33	.47	2.36	.50	2.33	.46

Church Growth and Church Health

All of the participating congregations reflect trends of numerical growth in worship attendance, baptisms, confirmations, and membership as well as financial support. Cross and Crown had experienced the largest percentage of growth in baptized membership, nearly keeping pace with the percent of population growth in the congregation's zip code area. Sammamish Hills and Trinity also experienced significant growth in baptized membership, with Trinity nearly pacing population growth while Sammamish Hills experienced an explosion in population growth. Shalom is the only congregation that had a larger percentage of growth in baptized membership than the percentage of population growth (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Statistical Trends for the Nine ELCA Congregations 1995-2002: Baptized Membership, Worship Attendance, Percent of Baptized Members Attending Worship, and Population Growth in the Congregation's Zip Code Area

Church Name	Baptized Membership		Worship Attendance		% of Members Attending Worship	Population Growth
	N	% Chg	N	% Chg		% Chg
Cross and Crown	657	60.6	310	40.3	-12.7	81.9
Faith	399	-8.9	146	41.7	55.6	25.7
King of Glory	1,342	6.5	414	29.8	21.9	123.8
New Life	490	0.8	164	7.2	6.3	45.3
Olivet	2,639	5.7	472	4.9	-0.8	32.2
St. James	468	22.5	203	14.7	-6.4	25.2
Sammamish Hills	1,673	46.0	453	0.7	-31.0	350.7
Shalom	300	27.7	143	74.4	36.6	23.1
Trinity	532	36.4	172	27.4	-6.6	39.9

Church Health and Spiritual Disciplines

The Beeson Church Health survey sought to indicate any intervening variables that might be associated with the perceived health of the congregation. Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they practice the following spiritual disciplines: Bible study, devotional time, family devotional time, ministry involvement prayer, sharing of one's faith, and other spiritual disciplines. The relationship between the practice of each spiritual discipline and the perceived presence of the Beeson health characteristics were analyzed using a t-test analysis (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Differences in Perceptions of Church Health Based upon Participation in Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual Disciplines	Yes		No		t	p <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Bible study						
Authentic community	2.139	0.915	2.46	1.01	-9.86	0.000
Empowering leadership	2.72	1.12	2.69	1.11	0.80	0.424
Engaging worship	1.899	0.829	2.026	0.875	-4.70	0.000
Functional structures	2.28	1.02	2.275	0.982	0.28	0.783
Intentional evangelism	2.51	1.13	2.55	1.13	-0.88	0.377
Mobilized laity	2.32	1.07	2.57	1.01	-7.06	0.000
Passionate spirituality	2.03	0.866	2.153	0.886	-4.43	0.000
Transforming discipleship	2.62	1.13	2.86	1.05	-7.01	0.000

Table 4.7. Differences in Perceptions of Church Health Based upon Participation in Spiritual Disciplines, continued

Spiritual Disciplines	Yes		No		t	p <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal Devotions						
Authentic community	2.173	0.962	2.409	0.978	-7.01	0.000
Empowering leadership	2.70	1.13	2.71	1.11	-0.28	0.780
Engaging worship	1.895	0.839	2.016	0.862	-4.46	0.000
Functional structures	2.27	1.02	2.288	0.980	-0.60	0.549
Intentional evangelism	2.47	1.13	2.57	1.12	-2.76	0.006
Mobilized laity	2.32	1.06	2.55	1.03	-6.42	0.000
Passionate spirituality	2.041	0.874	2.132	0.877	-3.26	0.001
Transforming discipleship	2.59	1.15	2.85	1.05	-7.34	0.000
Family Devotions						
Authentic community	2.238	0.896	2.318	0.992	-1.86	0.063
Empowering leadership	2.71	1.06	2.70	1.13	0.32	0.752
Engaging worship	2.014	0.845	1.954	0.856	1.64	0.101
Functional structures	2.355	0.988	2.27	1.00	2.08	0.038
Intentional evangelism	2.50	1.09	2.54	1.14	-0.79	0.429
Mobilized laity	2.38	1.05	2.46	1.05	-1.63	0.104
Passionate spirituality	2.121	0.868	2.087	0.879	0.90	0.369
Transforming discipleship	2.66	1.10	2.76	1.10	-1.95	0.052

Table 4.7. Differences in Perceptions of Church Health Based upon Participation in Spiritual Disciplines, continued

Spiritual Disciplines	Yes		No		t	p <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Ministry						
Authentic community	2.183	0.925	2.52	1.03	-9.45	0.000
Empowering leadership	2.70	1.13	2.71	1.09	-0.18	0.858
Engaging worship	1.911	0.823	2.052	0.897	-4.98	0.000
Functional structures	2.28	1.02	2.278	0.960	0.05	0.958
Intentional evangelism	2.53	1.13	2.52	1.13	0.25	0.804
Mobilized laity	2.31	1.07	2.681	0.967	-10.27	0.000
Passionate spirituality	2.076	0.874	2.121	0.882	-1.55	0.122
Transforming discipleship	2.69	1.11	2.83	1.07	-3.87	0.000
Prayer						
Authentic community	2.284	0.974	2.467	0.988	-3.48	0.001
Empowering leadership	2.70	1.12	2.70	1.09	0.06	0.950
Engaging worship	1.950	0.851	2.063	0.870	-2.67	0.008
Functional structures	2.28	1.00	2.308	0.977	-0.66	0.507
Intentional evangelism	2.52	1.13	2.60	1.10	-1.36	0.174
Mobilized laity	2.43	1.05	2.566	0.995	-2.49	0.013
Passionate spirituality	2.075	0.879	2.219	0.851	-3.42	0.001
Transforming discipleship	2.72	1.11	2.93	1.02	-4.17	0.000

Table 4.7. Differences in Perceptions of Church Health Based upon Participation in Spiritual Disciplines, continued

Spiritual Disciplines	Yes		No		t	p <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Faith sharing						
Authentic community	2.116	0.966	2.475	0.957	-10.84	0.000
Empowering leadership	2.67	1.15	2.73	1.08	-1.62	0.105
Engaging worship	1.871	0.847	2.046	0.853	-6.54	0.000
Functional structures	2.24	1.04	2.315	0.960	-2.35	0.019
Intentional evangelism	2.45	1.15	2.61	1.10	-4.38	0.000
Mobilized laity	2.34	1.10	2.545	0.991	-5.65	0.000
Passionate spirituality	2.025	0.892	2.153	0.860	-4.59	0.000
Transforming discipleship	2.62	1.18	2.85	1.01	-6.29	0.000
Other disciplines						
Authentic community	2.17	1.00	2.320	0.974	-2.50	0.013
Empowering leadership	2.65	1.07	2.71	1.12	-0.98	0.326
Engaging worship	1.941	0.847	1.966	0.855	-0.53	0.600
Functional structures	2.288	0.974	2.28	1.00	0.18	0.854
Intentional evangelism	2.49	1.11	2.53	1.13	-0.72	0.471
Mobilized laity	2.35	1.13	2.46	1.04	-1.71	0.088
Passionate spirituality	2.089	0.866	2.093	0.878	-0.09	0.931
Transforming discipleship	2.54	1.16	2.76	1.09	-3.54	0.000

* 2-tailed

Responses of subjects indicate that those who practice spiritual disciplines

perceive the church's health greater than those who do not participate in spiritual disciplines. Those involved in Bible study perceived authentic community, mobilized laity, and transforming discipleship most positively among the health characteristics. The practice of personal devotions had the most positive impact on authentic community and transforming discipleship. Those involved in ministry had a positive impact on perceptions of authentic community and mobilized laity.

Of all the spiritual practices, faith sharing had the greatest impact on authentic community, scoring higher than any other practice.

Under faith sharing all but one of the characteristics (empowering leadership) showed significant p values. All but empowering leadership and functional structures showed significant p values under personal devotions, while under family devotions only authentic community and functional structures showed significant p values. Under Bible study and prayer, the p values were significant for the same five health characteristics (authentic community, engaging worship, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality and transforming discipleship). The p values under ministry were significant for the same health characteristics as Bible study and prayer with the exception of passionate spirituality. Authentic community was the only health characteristic that showed significant p values under each spiritual discipline.

Church Health, Personal Characteristics, and Church Characteristics

Personal demographics and church contextual factors were considered as part of the Beeson Church Health survey to explore the impact on perceptions of church health. These variables included age, gender, marital status, number of children, number of years involved in the congregation, frequency of worship attendance, participation in small

groups, and percentage of money given to the church.

Church Health and Gender

One area of speculation was whether gender affects perceptions of church health. A composite was made of between the responses of male and female participants.

Gender differences were not statistically significant, though women generally perceived the church healthier than men. The only statistically significant difference was in empowering leadership (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Gender Differences in Perceptions of Church Health

Church Health Characteristic	Male		Female		t	p* <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Authentic community	2.420	0.965	2.235	0.980	5.35	0.000
Empowering leadership	2.73	1.07	2.69	1.14	1.21	0.227
Engaging worship	2.049	0.844	1.912	0.856	4.95	0.000
Functional structures	2.335	0.970	2.25	1.02	2.72	0.007
Intentional evangelism	2.61	1.09	2.48	1.15	3.35	0.001
Mobilized laity	2.53	1.02	2.40	1.06	3.67	0.000
Passionate spirituality	2.164	0.833	2.050	0.901	4.03	0.000
Transforming discipleship	2.82	1.04	2.69	1.13	3.59	0.000

*2-tailed

An additional test was run to compare the responses between men and women relative to spiritual disciplines. Responses indicate men and women have similar practices regarding spiritual disciplines (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Practice of Spiritual Disciplines by Gender

Spiritual Practices	Yes	Male (N=219)		Female (N=373)				
		%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
Prayer	180	82.2	39	17.8	341	91.4	32	8.6
Bible study*	96	44.0	122	56.0	188	50.5	184	49.5
Ministry involved	123	56.2	96	43.8	247	66.2	126	33.8
Personal devotions	80	36.5	139	63.5	178	47.7	195	52.3
Faith sharing	90	41.1	129	58.9	191	51.2	182	48.8
Family devotions	35	16.0	184	84.0	56	15.0	317	85.0
Other disciplines	19	8.7	200	91.3	35	9.4	338	90.6

*N = 218 for men and 372 for women

The rate of participation in spiritual practices is similar between men and women. A higher percentage was indicated for women in all practices except family devotions and other disciplines, where men scored slightly higher. The greatest difference between the two groups was in ministry involvement and faith sharing. The two groups were closest on family devotions and other disciplines. The rank order was similar for both men and women with prayer and ministry involvement the top two for both groups.

Church Health and Marital Status

Marital status was another personal demographic tested to determine what impact if any that might have on perceptions of church health. A test was run to compare the responses between married and singles (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Marital Status Differences in Perception of Church Health

Church Health Characteristics	Single		Married		t	p* <
	M	SD	M	SD		
Functional structures	2.17	1.04	2.318	0.989	2.95	0.003
Intentional Evangelism	2.51	1.16	2.55	1.12	0.82	0.414
Engaging Worship	1.934	0.922	1.985	0.853	1.12	0.263
Passionate spirituality	2.068	0.910	2.115	0.877	1.05	0.293
Empowering leadership	2.61	1.15	2.73	1.10	2.10	0.036
Mobilized laity	2.46	1.11	2.46	1.04	0.02	0.988
Authentic community	2.20	1.00	2.321	0.969	2.34	0.020
Transforming discipleship	2.74	1.15	2.76	1.08	0.40	0.691

*2-tailed

Single people seemed to have a more favorable perception of the church's health than married people. The two groups had similar perceptions regarding mobilized laity and transforming discipleship.

Church Health and Financial Giving

The final set of data considered involves financial giving and perceptions of church health (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Relationship between Perceptions of Church Health and Financial Giving

Church Health Characteristic	r	p* <
Empowering leadership	-0.022	0.211
Intentional evangelism	-0.034	0.054
Functional structures	-0.045	0.010
Passionate spirituality	-0.058	0.001
Authentic community	-0.077	0.000
Mobilized laity	-0.081	0.000
Engaging worship	-0.089	0.000
Transforming discipleship	-0.134	0.000

*2-tailed

Church Health and Congregational Context

Data collection was also conducted through on-site visits of each congregation during which the pastor or senior pastor was interviewed. A form was developed and used for each interview to aid in consistency and organization (see Appendix D). The form was utilized for all but one of the interviews. No two interviews were identical. Each interview lasted between ninety minutes and two hours in length. Often the visit included a tour of the church facilities, collection of printed materials such as visitor packets, bulletins, newsletters, Bulletin of Reports, and any other pertinent information. I also requested to be placed on the congregation's mailing list to monitor developments as reflected in the monthly newsletters. Information collected by way of the on-site visits that pertains to the study is highlighted below.

Demographics of the Pastors

Of the pastors participating in this study four were senior pastors (with at least one other full-time ordained person on staff) and five were solo pastors. Each of the congregations consisted of a single site. None were yoked to another congregation, and none had “branch campuses.” One of the senior pastors was female; the rest were male. The community context for each parish was similar to or identical with the hometown community of each pastor, i.e., they each felt “at home” in their parish settings.

The years of ordination ranged from six to thirty four years. None were in their first parish. The shortest tenure was one year while the longest was eleven years. Seven were born and raised Lutheran; two were raised Roman Catholic. None came to faith later in life, though some left the church for a time as young adults. They represented six different Lutheran seminaries.

Pastoral Leadership Styles

The personalities of each pastor differed, yet all saw themselves as a pastoral leader responsible for leading their congregations in mission and ministry. For each that meant discipleship development, not simply maintenance or parish survival. Vision for ministry was mentioned or implied by the perception of their leadership styles. Most worked for consensus while overseeing the progress. They were all “team players” even though conflict could be expected at times.

Role models included the pastor of their home parish while growing up, seminary professors, teaching pastors such as Bill Hybels, John Ortberg, and Mike Foss, internship supervisors, and parents. Other than Mother Teresa, no specific women were identified as role models. Biblical characters mentioned as influential included Moses, Joshua, David,

Paul, Thomas, Peter, the blind man (John 9) and (the humanness of) Jesus.

All the pastors were familiar with personality profiles, though only a few had used such an instrument in their parish.

All the pastors sought to continue personal growth through reading. Influential authors ranged from Moltmann to Maxwell and from Keikegaard to Kalstadt. Others included Mike Foss, Bill Hybels, Scott Peck, Rick Warren, Dallas Willard, and Martin Luther. Topics included biographies, leadership, small groups, theology, and popular novels like Harry Potter.

Maintenance of Health and Fitness

One of my presumptions is that the health of an organization is influenced by the health of the leadership. The interview, therefore, included exploration into various aspects of the personal health and well-being of the pastors. Most of the pastors are intentional about physical exercise such as jogging, skiing, walking the dog, strength training, and tennis. Most have a regular day off, though others have a “floating” day off depending on circumstances. One pastor schedules an annual medical physical. All are conscious of maintaining if not improving their physical health.

Financially all pastors tithe to the congregation. Several give beyond the tithe, and most maintain a family budget. Some have begun teaching tithing. Several strive to also tithe their time to both church and community.

Understandably, healthy relationships with family and friends are seen as important to these pastors. Family situations range from married with no children to “empty nesters” with grandchildren. All intentionally strive to maintain healthy relationships with spouse and family.

Not surprisingly spiritual and devotional practices differ among the pastors. Bible reading, prayer, and meditation are all practiced in some intentional way by each pastor. Several have established relationships with other pastors for accountability and support through weekly or monthly meetings and retreats. Some are part of a group with a spiritual director. Strong family ties and relationships beyond the family are valued as significant for the health of the pastors.

Highlights and Challenges Concerning the Present Ministry

Each pastor could readily identify reasons for celebration of the ministry and the parish. Some pastors were called at a time of pain and struggle within the congregation. The pastors identified the people, numerical growth, increased involvement, leadership development, and celebrations of congregational anniversaries as some of the main highlights of their ministry. The congregations were supportive of the pastors to greater or lesser extent.

Challenges faced by the pastors included struggles resulting from previous pastoral situations or conflict, concerns about growth and survival, as well as poor congregational health reflected in poor participation, attitudes, and weak financial giving. All nine pastors found themselves dealing with issues and struggles related to healthy growth.

All the pastors felt a strong call to both ministry and to their parishes with dreams and visions for congregational health and growth.

Congregational Demographics

The congregations ranged in size from middle (100-250) to large (250-500). These designations are not rigid but suggest ranges that identify organizational dynamics

(see especially Lyle Schaller, Looking in the Mirror 16; Middle-Sized Church 15; Multiple Staff 51-84). Two were situated in a small town context; the others were all in suburban settings. All nine congregations were in areas experiencing significant community growth.

The smallest staff configuration included a pastor and at least two or three part-time paid positions. The largest staff included three full-time and various part-time positions. Job descriptions and staff configurations were in flux for most of the congregations.

All of the congregations had a written mission statement though they were updating the statements. Five or six had developed or were developing a vision statement, values list, and belief list. Most, if not all, had a completed long-range plan or had begun the process to develop one. Two congregations had a written history of the church.

Summary of Findings from On-Site Visits and Interviews

Dale Galloway identifies seven habits leaders need to develop: (1) gain a clear-cut vision, (2) influence the influencers, (3) build a winning TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More), (4) be a people person, (5) maintain a winning attitude, (6) maintain a balanced life, and (7) never quit. The pastoral leaders of these congregations manifested these habits, each blending them in unique ways based on their personalities and congregational context.

The pastors were more than willing to provide time for the interview, to participate in this project. They were curious as to the findings. These were all spiritually healthy pastors, not perfect, but open to the work of God in their lives. They each have a style of leadership that is appropriate to their context, yet they do not need to “survive.”

They realize ministry is not about them but about God and discipling others. While they work hard, they enjoy parish ministry. Truly they were called, and through them God is blessing his Church and the world as these pastoral servants lead God's people to fulfill the mission of the Church.

Evidence of the Beeson Health Characteristics in Study Population

This project investigated the relationship between church health and church growth using objective categories for numerical measures such as worship attendance and financial support. Healthy growth, however, also occurs in ways that cannot be measured objectively. As a multiple case study, this project included employing subjective means for evaluating growth. Subjective means included personal interviews of the pastors as well as analyzing printed materials from the congregations such as monthly newsletters, annual congregational reports, and the like. Evidence of church health based on the eight Beeson church health characteristics was gathered from the materials provided by the participating congregations. Highlights of the findings are summarized below.

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership was evidenced through shared authority and responsibility. The congregations did not revolve around the pastor but around Jesus Christ. Ministry was oriented to making disciples. Materials for visitors or prospective members included specifics about the beliefs, values, mission, vision, and outcomes of the congregation.

Several congregations had developed a printed handbook for council members and lay leaders. In some cases, a handbook for members was also available or being developed as the congregation sought to shift to the discipleship model.

Transforming Discipleship

Mission statements reflect the goal of transforming people into disciples of Jesus Christ. For example, one congregation used the mission statement as part of the rationale for the work and recommendations of the Vision Task Force: “To know intimately Jesus Christ; to know the Body of Christ; To make Jesus Christ known to the unchurched.” Plans and goals for the future revolved about transformational discipleship, explicitly or implicitly. Several pastors used their columns for a series on the marks of discipleship, to explore them with the congregation. In many cases the six marks of discipleship, along with values and missions statements, were included in the heading of the monthly newsletter.

“Faith Comes by Hearing,” was an audio program used by one congregation to encourage members to encounter the Bible by listening daily to a recorded portion of the New Testament over the course of several months. That program was conducted both intentionally, encouraging a large number to participate fully, and informally, making the materials available to those interested in doing it on their own.

Aspects of discipleship were communicated in print, along with announcements about preaching series or study opportunities. Tithing was openly taught in nearly all of the congregations. One congregation had developed a “disciples handbook” that included mission and vision statements, the marks of discipleship, the program ministry, policies and guidelines, a brief history, and leadership information.

Newsletters were formatted around specific ministry groups and ages indicating ways by which people of all ages might become involved in ministry. Several of the congregations had worked through a process that identified specific ways and means to

mobilize the laity.

Passionate Spirituality

Prayer ministries, parish nurse, and Stephen ministries are a few of the ways these congregations foster passionate spirituality.

Ministry groups for all ages provided settings for spiritual growth through serving. Annual review of the goals and dreams of the congregation included ways by which the members would be encouraged and equipped to grow in their discipleship. In all cases the marks of discipleship model was being utilized.

Lay ministers were recruited and trained for ministries often seen as the pastor's job (e.g., taking communion to the homebound). Information about these programs were publicized through the newsletters and annual reports.

At least one congregation used Rick Warren's "40 Days of Purpose" to enhance member's spirituality; another used Warren's Purpose Driven Life.

Authentic Community

Professionally prepared pictorial directories and congregationally printed membership directories, including names, addresses, and phone numbers contributed to a sense of belonging and community. More specific forms of authentic community included Sunday school classes for all ages including adults. The pastor or senior pastor may or may not teach the class, suggesting that lay-people are qualified teachers.

Celebrations of special events such as congregational anniversaries fostered a sense of community also.

Functional Structures

These were all ELCA congregations using a council/committee structure though

some began shifting to a “team” rather than “committee” design. Printed materials to visitors and guests included a review of the administrative structure including the responsibilities for each position and the layperson filling each post.

For congregations adding staff, positions were created and designed based on the needs of the congregation and the gifts mix of the other staff. Each of the pastors was mature enough not to be threatened by adding competent staff. The process for adding staff was open and shared between the pastor and lay leaders. Rationale for the position, responsibilities, and accountability were all included in printed materials indicating how the position fit into the overall structure of the congregation.

The Annual Reports reflect an openness to involve a broad base of participation in future plans and directions. Efforts are made to meet the needs and desires of the membership, not to maintain the congregation or to please the people, but to help develop disciples and to reach out to others. Rationale for decisions is clearly communicated, regardless of the outcome.

Nearly all of the congregations were in the process of reviewing, or had completed a review of, the church’s constitution and by-laws. In each case the review was conducted in light of the discipleship paradigm of Power Surge.

Engaging Worship

The greatest evidence of engaging worship in the printed material was reference to worship times and, in some cases, pictures of the congregation at worship. Pictures did not always include the pastor or the building alone, but usually focused on the people at worship.

Worship materials were produced in a variety of formats, all designed to foster

worship participation by making the order for worship easier for visitors to follow.

Intentional Evangelism

Several of the congregations offer the Alpha program, provide intentional follow up contact with visitors done by lay volunteers, and may have a committee or team responsible for building ties between the congregation and the greater community. For several, financial support of specific missionaries or mission programs is part of the congregation's ministry.

Mobilized Laity

Training was often made available for those interested in participating in specific areas of ministry, not one congregation offered any course on spiritual gifts identification. None had developed a complete list of ministry opportunities for lay volunteers.

Two congregations offered a ministry fair, as a means by which members can discover ministry areas where they might serve. Two congregations had developed a printed booklet of discipleship opportunities.

Summary of Findings from Printed Materials

On the one hand, the materials these congregations produce are not unusual or even extraordinary. On the other hand, these materials are consistent with the health and vitality of the congregations as observed through the on-site visits. Just a few observations are in order.

These congregations do not limit discipling materials to ELCA curriculum. Printed materials are attractive, easy to read, and reflect a desire to communicate openly and clearly; secrets are not maintained. The ministry is shared; opportunities for involvement are varied; training and support are provided.

These congregations are intentionality shifting from a membership to a discipleship model using printed materials to support the process. Communication is a key to implementing change. Besides utilizing the monthly newsletter, pastors send special letters at crucial times such as Christmas and Easter or to highlight a special concern.

The pastors were clearly willing to work, to challenge, to support, and to involve the people they serve in keeping with Ephesians 4:11-13 and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

Every church had a Web site that included more than just basic information, usually with links to additional information for visitors, members, and guests. Contact could be made through the Web site. Links to other Web sites were also included, for example, to connect to the ELCA Web site.

Power Surge and Church Health

The Power Surge paradigm is built around six marks of discipleship: prayer, worship, reading the bible, serving, relating to others, and giving (a tithe). The forum was designed to equip participants in applying the Power Surge model to their congregational setting. In short, the Power Surge forum primarily addressed the health characteristics of empowering leaders and transforming discipleship.

The Power Surge paradigm and materials were employed extensively in these congregations. Parish leaders had been asked to read them. They preached sermon series on the six marks of discipleship. At least three congregations had already begun using Power Surge to structure ministry and programming. Most of the pastors had heard of Power Surge before attending the forum. The use of the Power Surge model and the

ministry programs offered for discipleship development were unique to each parish setting.

Summary

Some of the significant findings of this study included the following:

1. The overall response rate among the participating congregations was relatively high, nearly 30 percent;
2. The most widely practiced spiritual discipline among subjects was prayer, followed by family devotions at 85 percent;
3. Sharing one's faith had the greatest positive impact on perceptions of church health in terms of authentic community;
4. The two strongest Beeson health characteristics among the nine churches were engaging worship and passionate spirituality;
5. Responses from Cross and Crown reflected the strongest perceptions for four church health characteristics: authentic community, mobilized laity, functioning structures, and passionate spirituality. Conversely, responses from Sammamish Hills reflected the weakest perceptions for seven of the characteristics: authentic community, mobilized laity, empowering leadership, functioning structures, intentional evangelism, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship. By the time of this study, the pastor of Cross and Crown had served for eleven years with plans for implementation of the Power Surge paradigm. The pastor at Sammamish Hills had been serving for less than two years and was just at the beginning of a time of great transition for the congregation. Hence, the differences in scores are to be expected;
6. The findings of the study are very similar to the results of the previous four

studies in terms of perceptions of church health;

7. The scores of this study were all higher than any of the previous studies.

These findings are not surprising since this study included only growing congregations while each of the previous studies included plateaued and declining congregations;

8. Engaging worship scored highest among all five studies;

9. Passionate spirituality scored second highest among all five populations except the WCDMA, which had functional structures as second

10. Transforming discipleship and empowering leadership scored the lowest among the ELCA subjects, while transforming discipleship and authentic community scored the lowest among the other four populations. Authentic community ranked fourth for the ELCA study;

11. Of the nine ELCA congregations, all are situated in areas that are seeing rapid population growth. The slowest rate of increase was 23 percent. Two congregations were in areas facing triple digit growth rates of nearly 124 percent for one and over 350 percent for the other;

12. Involvement in spiritual practices had a positive impact on perceptions of church health;

13. While perceptions of church health did not significantly differ between men and women, women were generally more involved in spiritual disciplines than men;

14. In each case the pastors of these congregations understood their role as servant leaders, called to equip the people for ministry;

15. The pastors' concepts of leadership were directly related to their self-understanding as disciples of Jesus Christ;

16. The pastors were serving congregations either in a community similar to what they would describe as their “hometown” or, in fact, had returned to the area where they had grown up. This finding suggests that the pastors shared a similar set of values to that of the congregations they were called to serve;

17. Each pastor sought to implement the Power Surge paradigm in ways appropriate to their congregational context. None sought to utilize the model as a program but as a way to structure the congregation and focus it for ministry;

18. Gender did not make a difference in pastoral effectiveness, though only one of the nine lead pastors was a woman;

19. The pastors led by modeling and none expected the laity to go where the pastor was unwilling to go. For example, the pastors taught tithing while practicing it themselves;

20. None of the pastors expected the ministry to ever be completed nor was any surprised by conflict resulting from growth or a movement to health;

21. No one pastor defined success as numerical growth but sought to grow healthy disciples and, thereby, a healthy congregation;

22. None of the pastors needed to “survive” in the parish but recognized that parish ministry is not about the pastors but about Jesus Christ and making disciples. The pastors willingly gave away power to the laity without abdicating their responsibilities. They were not “career-minded”;

23. The Power Surge paradigm had re-ignited or further kindled excitement for ministry and possibilities for discipleship development; and,

24. As to making disciples, no pastor was limited to only Lutheran resources but

willingly sought programs and materials from a wide variety of sources.

Additional implications along with observations, applications, and limitations are explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This project germinated from an interest in church health and how it might be enhanced through the impact of a learning event for church leaders. A multiple case study was used involving nine ELCA congregations. Data collection included the use of the Beeson Church Health instrument, a tool originally designed, tested, and implemented by a team of four Beeson pastors to measure the health of churches. Data was also collected by way of personal interviews with the pastors, telephone conversations, and printed materials. The data from this study can be used to educate leaders regarding church health and the benefits of utilizing a discipleship model for ministry in favor of a membership model.

The call and mission of the Church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Many ELCA congregations have lost sight of this mission settling for maintenance or survival. The church is the *ekklesia* of God set apart for God's purposes. All those baptized are members of the priesthood of all believers. Pastors are to equip the people for God's work according to their individual giftedness. "Thus our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church" (Guder et al. 6). As a congregation orients itself to the God-given mission of discipling, it will become healthier, making numerical and spiritual growth more likely.

Human effort apart from God will not grow a healthy church. Programs and strategies can increase the size of a congregation numerically but are insufficient to sustain organizational health if the mission is not discipleship oriented. The role of church leaders is to partner with God. "It's not about your ministry or mine. It's about the

kingdom of God” (Foss, Power Surge: Forum Manual 4). The Power Surge paradigm assisted pastors and church leaders to partner with God in ways that nurture healthy, spiritually growing disciples.

Participants’ Profile

In contrast to models such as Natural Church Development, the Beeson Church Health survey sought to understand the people completing the survey. Other intervening variables included in the survey, not included in other church health studies, also revealed an effect on church health. Participation was completely voluntary on the part of the pastors and those who completed a survey. As expected the responses indicated a rather high level of health within the congregations. The nine churches reflect above-average worship attendance and financial support for ELCA congregations. The congregations are located in areas with significantly high population growth and face the same opportunities and changes such a cultural context offers.

Pastoral leadership styles differed widely among the pastors. Each pastor held core values similar to the congregation he or she was serving. The community context for each pastor was like their hometown or was in fact their hometown. The pastors clearly understood the objective of parish ministry is not success in numbers but faithfulness in serving. They both taught and modeled healthy discipleship. They attended the Power Surge forum in part because they were all growing, learning leaders, seeking to enhance their own influence for the benefit of Christ’s Church. The Power Surge paradigm was utilized uniquely within each congregation.

The Health of the Participating Congregations

In addressing the first research question for this project (How do the ELCA

congregations represented among the participants of the Power Surge forum rate on each of the Beeson church health characteristics?), data collected from the Beeson Health surveys indicated that the overall health of the congregations was high. The strongest health characteristics were engaging worship and passionate spirituality, which was not surprising given the significance of worship in the Lutheran tradition and the confessional role of the pastor to preach and teach the gospel primarily in worship. Lutheran seminaries historically have fallen short in preparing pastors to face the many rigors of parish ministry (see Maxwell, Four Skills) but do well at equipping pastors to preach and lead worship, particularly when the pastors of the study congregations attended seminary.

The data confirmed the associative tie between spirituality and worship among Lutherans. Across the ELCA, Lutherans tend to understand their spiritual growth and development in terms of worship. The Church is understood to be the people of God especially when they assemble for worship. The Church “is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (Tappert 32). Discipleship is spirituality: faith lived out day by day. Such daily living is grounded in worship. The service aspect of discipleship is intricately tied to the *ekklesia* of God’s people.

In keeping with perceptions of worship and spirituality, the third strongest characteristic was functional structures. The church facilities of each congregation presented a bright, warm, and inviting atmosphere, even where building design was weak. Worship space was comfortable and functional and used creatively to enhance the worship experience. The importance of worship and spirituality was manifest in the church facilities.

The two weakest health characteristics were empowering leadership and transforming discipleship. Church leadership is primarily associated with worship while discipleship is considered a personal matter for each individual. Pastors are seen as “professionals” (Willimon 32) not as “servant leaders” (Autry 8). Neither pastors nor laypersons have been taught to expect pastors to lead effectively beyond worship. Lutheran seminaries do not include leadership in the curriculum. Leadership is taught primarily through modeling: the seminarians learning through field experiences under the supervision of an ordained pastor (i.e., internship). The supervisor may or may not be adequately equipped to lead or to teach leadership.

Transforming discipleship was the weakest of the eight characteristics, which was not surprising since the concept of leadership is not clear within the ELCA. In the Power Surge forum, Mike Foss explained that leaders “develop vision and strategies, align resources/make useful change, and develop leaders.” On the other hand, to increase effectiveness “managers: plan, budget, organize, problem solve, maintain status quo” (Power Surge: Forum Manual 10). The findings of this study confirmed these distinctions. The Beeson Church Health model can quantify not only the overall health of a congregation but also, as seen here, can identify areas of weakness in need of attention to further enhance church health.

Church Health Comparisons with Other Denominations

This study was patterned after four previous studies using the Beeson Church Health instrument. The previous projects each involved a specific denomination: the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (WCDCMA), the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC), the General

Association of Baptist Churches (GAGBC), and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The perceived health of the ELCA population was similar to these four.

All five populations listed engaging worship and passionate spirituality as the two strongest health characteristics. Similarly, all five listed empowering leadership and transforming discipleship as the two weakest characteristics. One notable difference was authentic community ranked fourth for the ELCA population but ranked among the weakest characteristics for the other four denominational bodies. The differences in perception may be related to the Lutheran view of worship as the means of connection to the rest of the *ekklesia*. Active membership is defined as contributing or communing once in a calendar year. Hence, the ELCA subjects may tend to perceive authentic community through association with worship.

The extent of similarities among the five populations is remarkable in light of differences in community demographics, regional and cultural contexts, denominational polity, and theological doctrines. Church health seemingly transcends denominational differences and may be rooted more in human nature and systems theory than denominational affiliation or tradition. This project affirmed what the previous four studies discovered, namely, more research is needed to see if the trends among these five groups might extend to other congregational populations.

Power Surge and the Beeson Health Characteristics

This project investigated the relationship between church health and church growth among Lutheran congregations transitioning to a discipleship model for ministry guided by the second research question: In what ways did participants use or apply the intended outcomes of the Power Surge symposium particularly in terms of empowered

leadership and transforming discipleship to enhance the congregations' health?

The intended outcomes of the Power Surge forum were specified in the invitation letter from Mike Foss on the Changing Church Web site:

Since the book, Power Surge, was published by Augsburg Fortress, more and more congregations and judicatory bodies are adopting discipleship as their ministry goal. The questions now are strategic:

- How do I implement discipleship?
- How do I change the structure of my congregation for ministry?
- How do I build support within the lay leadership and staff?

The Power Surge forum is an opportunity to get at these specifics for implementing a discipleship strategy in your ministry. It will also provide an opportunity for networking with others who are on the same page.

The Beeson Church Health instrument was used as the objective means for evaluating health. Subjective means were also used including personal interviews of the pastors as well as analyzing printed materials from the congregations such as monthly newsletters, annual congregational reports, and the like. Findings are discussed in terms of each of the eight Beeson church health characteristics.

Empowering Leadership

These congregations were just beginning an intentional transition from membership to discipleship. The Power Surge model provided a flexible framework to make such a transition, but it starts first with the pastor as leader. Despite the low perceptions of empowering leadership, the subjective data indicated that each pastor is working in healthy ways to equip the *ekklesia* as the priesthood of all believers. Both subjective and objective data supported the contention that length of tenure is significant for pastoral leadership. The pastors saw themselves as members of a team, relying on their strengths as leaders while relying on others' giftedness where they were weak. All were experienced with church conflict, recognizing it as a normal part of church health

and growth, knowing that changing the structure of the congregation for discipleship ministry could create conflict. Nonetheless, Power Surge forum and paradigm offered exciting possibilities for ministry, renewing the energy and hope among the clergy. One pastor near retirement openly confessed he was bargaining with God to let him live to one hundred because he was having so much fun doing ministry utilizing the Power Surge framework. Such a positive attitude is contagious to others in the congregation.

Sermon series, newsletter articles, and programmatic changes indicated the pastors were used as ways to educate the congregation regarding this discipleship model, while at the same time building support for such a transition. The Power Surge model empowered the pastors and lay leaders to be change agents and guide the transition. The subjective evidence supported the contention that these congregations were applying the intended outcomes of the Power Surge forum in ways appropriate to the congregational setting consistent with empowering leadership.

Transforming Discipleship

The only health characteristic that ranked lower than empowering leadership was transforming discipleship. The Power Surge forum by design instructed participants how to implement discipleship as a ministry goal. All recognized that such a shift was needed, but none had been able fully to implement such a transition. The Power Surge model provided the rationale for the transition, the structure for equipping disciples (the marks of discipleship), and perhaps most importantly the means to shift from membership to discipleship. Each of the pastors demonstrated an openness to utilize resources and materials regardless of denominational affiliation of the publisher. The benefit of the Power Surge model for Lutheran congregations, however, is that it comes from a

Lutheran congregation, placing it in a context consistent with Lutheran faith and practice and in keeping with the Lutheran confessions, important aspects for many Lutherans.

These congregations were committed to implementing the six marks of discipleship. Communication is a key element in congregational change. Leadership teams and study groups read Power Surge. Sermon series, banners, and newsletter articles were used to communicate the marks of discipleship. The data indicated a wide range of implementation and adaptation of the Power Surge paradigm, which positively enhanced the health characteristic of transforming discipleship.

The Remaining Beeson Health Characteristics

While the study focused primarily on the Beeson health characteristics of empowering leadership and transforming discipleship, the other six characteristics were not ignored. Organizational health is systemic. The Beeson model involves eight different health characteristics that were interdependent and intertwined with regard to congregational health. The following discussion highlights findings relative to the six remaining Beeson characteristics.

Passionate spirituality. Among the nine congregations passionate spirituality was perceived relatively strong; it ranked second only to engaging worship. Subjective data collected through mailings and interviews supported those perceptions. Each congregation found ways to implement the six marks of discipleship, which are the outcomes of the Power Surge model. Newsletter articles indicated a wide variety of programs, courses, and events all designed to assist people in experiencing and living a joy-filled, passionate life. Congregational leadership did not assume a “one-size-fits-all” attitude when considering spiritual growth. Variety and risking new ways of doing

ministry marked each congregation to varying degrees. These congregations sought to have “fun” (i.e., joy) in whatever ministries or programs were conducted.

Authentic community. A specific mark of discipleship in the Power Surge paradigm, namely the “r” in “surge,” refers to relating with others to encourage spiritual growth. Ranking fourth on the list of health characteristics (see Table 4.3 p. 97), the subjective data indicated that these congregations recognized the need for maturing disciples to be part of an authentic community. Worship was, of course, a key aspect of community, but the spiritual discipline of sharing one’s faith had the greatest impact on enhancing perceptions of authentic community (see Table 4.7 pp. 102-05). Each congregation showed evidence of organizing small groups not as a program but as a way of being the Church. Most offered refreshments after Sunday worship, held various church dinners and socials, provided for groups of various types, youth, family, women’s and men’s. Some groups met continuously; others only once. Service, learning, special interest, and Bible study were among the types of groups that met. While healthy perceptions of authentic community were fostered in many ways, persons who share their faith with others tend to sense a stronger tie to the Christian community. Providing opportunities to learn how to share one’s faith and specific ways to do so would have a positive impact on the congregation’s perception of authentic community.

Functional structures. For the nine ELCA congregations functional structures ranked third among health characteristics. This characteristic refers to more than just the church facilities but includes the way the congregation is organized to conduct ministry. At the Power Surge forum (November 2002), Mike Foss stated that the “Model Constitution for ELCA Congregations” is really designed for middle-sized congregations.

The model constitution frustrates congregations growing beyond two hundred in average worship attendance. One congregation followed the lead of Prince of Peace by rewriting the congregation's constitution to define membership based on the marks of discipleship. An active member in the ELCA is one who communes and contributes once in a calendar year (Model Constitution 7), which hardly describes a growing disciple. While the ELCA may not approve such a change, the congregation was seeking to be intentional with disciple making by organizing the congregation's ministry around that task. In a membership model, static standards, inflexible structures, control, and management are more easily identified and institutionalized. In a discipleship model flexibility and freedom are crucial but often cause heightened anxiety among "traditionalists" who struggle with change.

Engaging worship. Since Lutheran worship is by design participatory, those who attend worship would experience worship as engaging. This health characteristic scored highest among the Lutheran congregations. All the congregations offer a traditional liturgy using the Lutheran Book of Worship for at least one weekend worship experience. All were considering or offering an alternative worship experience referred to as "contemporary worship." The Power Surge forum included a workshop on how Prince of Peace designs worship. Worship materials that can be used in the local congregation were made available through the Prince of Peace Web site. The data collected did not indicate if or how the study congregations were using these worship materials. The "w" in "power" stands for "worships weekly." Based on newsletter articles, these congregations were developing creative ways to enhance the engaging aspect of worship for the sake of discipleship development.

Intentional evangelism. Lutherans tend to rely upon the church facilities as sufficient public witness to their presence in the world. Like members of other denominations, Lutherans tend to assume that everyone they know is a Christian involved in a church of their own. Rarely do Lutherans invite others to join them in worship or to some other ministry function. Outreach amounts to recruiting new people for the sake of financial support so long as nothing changes. In the Power Surge paradigm, a disciple “serves at and beyond” the local congregation. Disciples intentionally serve in the world in the name of Jesus. Though this ranked sixth on the list of characteristics, subjective data indicated that in each congregation evangelism was no longer being viewed as a task relegated solely to the pastor. To the contrary, these congregations recognized that the priesthood of all believers means all disciples are to share their faith. Programs and events, including worship, were being designed to welcome guests and visitors. In fact, these congregations anticipated and expected nonmembers to be among those attending not only worship but also nearly every public gathering conducted by the congregation. Furthermore, classes were being offered to equip people to be more intentional in engaging others in conversations about faith issues.

Mobilized laity. Unlike many Lutheran congregations that refer to the priesthood of all believers, the study congregations were seeking ways to involve all disciples in ministry appropriate to their giftedness, passion, and lifestyle. This characteristic ranked fifth for the nine Lutheran congregations. The Power Surge forum referred participants to LifeKeys, a spiritual gifts assessment course. Several congregations began offering the course and organizing ministry functions around spiritual gifts. The marks of discipleship in the Power Surge paradigm provide structure and guidance for mobilizing people for

ministry. The pastors clearly (through the interviews as well as newsletter articles and congregational programs) understand that their task is primarily to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” They also understand that fulfillment of that task does not happen automatically through preaching and teaching. Intentional efforts must be made to assist people in understanding that the church is not here to serve the membership; rather, the church is the *ekklesia* called by God to serve the world. Disciples are empowered through daily prayer, weekly worship, and regular Bible reading. Godly power “surges” through them while serving, relating to others in Christian community, and giving. Serving is not a value or virtue in society today. People tend to think of serving in negative ways. Followers of Jesus, however, learn to do what he did, namely to serve (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Power Surge and Church Growth

Investigating the relationship between church health and growth was guided by a third research question: What impact did the Power Surge forum have on enhancing the health of participating congregations twelve months after the event as evidenced in signs of growth? Because of the design of the project, this question could not be definitively answered. Statistical figures one year after the Power Surge forum did not show significant changes in numerical growth; rates of growth continued as previous years.

The data collected from the Beeson Church Health model provided a “snapshot” of the health of the congregations at the time the surveys were completed, several months after the Power Surge forum. The general health of any of the congregations prior to attending the Power Surge forum was could not be determined. The subjective data, however, indicated that regardless of the level of health within the congregations at the

time of the forum, the Power Surge forum made a positive impact on the health and growth of the nine congregations.

The initial benefits of shifting a congregation from membership to discipleship as a ministry paradigm were related more to church health than to church growth. The congregation's infrastructure must be prepared or redesigned as necessary if the paradigm shift from membership to discipleship is going to be effective. Undertaking the transition process resulted in increased demands on the pastoral and lay leadership in terms of time and energy. While the Power Surge model clearly enhanced the health of the congregations, the extent of numerical growth was only beginning to be revealed at the conclusion of the data collection.

The Power Surge forum introduced participants to the Power Surge paradigm and provided an opportunity for attendees to consider how the paradigm might translate into their own congregational setting. The goal was not to make replicas of Prince of Peace but to provide a systematic focus for these churches to transition to a discipleship focus for ministry. The forum served as a catalyst by raising the need for and benefits of a discipleship orientation in favor of a membership-focused ministry. Besides providing tools, resources, and suggestions for how such a transition might be accomplished, a network of relationships formed among the forum attendees.

Forum presentations stressed the fact that the Power Surge paradigm is not a "quick fix" to congregational problems and is not a program that will resolve ministry issues. The paradigm does not focus primarily on doing church but a way of being the Church for the sake of the mission Christ gave the Church. Power Surge is a model or structure for ministry. Several years may be needed to lead a congregation through this

transition, requiring both the support and leadership of the pastor. The pastor begins by building support among key lay leaders while at the same time educating the congregation about the Power Surge paradigm.

While the Power Surge forum provided an introduction to the entire paradigm, Prince of Peace was also willing to provide resources and support to congregations utilizing the model for their own ministry. No linear process was identified for such a transition. To the contrary, forum participants were encouraged to adapt the paradigm to their own congregational setting. A key benefit to the Power Surge model is its adaptability to a wide range of congregational settings and values. It is a structure or a means by which the Church as an organism can be organized for ministry. One of the strengths of the model is virtually any worship style, educational program, or ministry resource can be utilized within the Power Surge paradigm. This model allows a congregation to develop a self-understanding in terms of beliefs, values, mission, and vision, as well as clearly defining discipleship, thus enabling a congregation as an organic system to organize for mission.

The Transition in One Church

From a struggling congregation in 1988, Trinity grew to become a middle-sized church by 1995. Average weekly worship attendance plateaued at 175, mainly because the congregation was a centered set. Focus was on making members; little was done to develop disciples. Prospective members would attend weekly worship faithfully even for a year or more, but once they joined the church their attendance at worship would often decrease in as little as six months. Ministry was equated with programs; success measured primarily in numbers. Frustration and leadership burnout were common. The

many problems were common to a maintenance approach to ministry. If the congregation was going to grow beyond two hundred, change was necessary.

By 2001 several efforts attempted to address the malaise, including the proposal of a new mission statement and a revitalization process designed to envision the ministry anew based on community needs and congregational strengths. Unfortunately, the mission statement was rejected. The “revitalization” process failed to identify a means of implementation. I decided part of the problem was a leadership issue so I attended the Beeson Advanced Church Leadership Institute, which led to my attending the Beeson Pastor Program. Serendipitously, the Power Surge forum provided a lens through which much of my leadership learning could be focused.

The transition process began when a group of fifteen members from Trinity attended the Power Surge forum. Based on their experiences, a task force called the Joel 2.28 Team was formed. The name was based on Joel 2:28: “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” Peter quotes this verse on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:17). The Joel Team is also the name used at Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, for their long-range planning group.

The Joel 2.28 Team operated with several assumptions: (1) God wants His church to grow; (2) Jesus instructs His followers to take actions (see Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) that will result in the spreading of the good news of the gospel and developing disciples; (3) As numerical growth occurs, the congregation must be intentional to maintain the health of the congregation; (4) While growth in membership

seems inevitable, growth in service and discipleship is not; (5) The congregation can passively let growth happen, or it can actively manage health and growth so that this community of believers might grow individually and corporately in faith and service; (6) The Power Surge Conference provided material for addressing the concerns of health and growth; and (7) Now is the time.

The Joel Team was assigned a specific set of responsibilities: (1) to gather information from previous transition efforts along with ideas from the standing council and committee members as opportunities and challenges for ministry, (2) to collect materials and resources from Prince of Peace, the Beeson Program, and other entities that could assist in this process, (3) to design means for congregational feedback appropriate to the process, (4) to meet twice a month so as to complete the work in six months with monthly reports submitted to the congregation council, (5) based on the findings, to develop a workable model for leadership in terms of council, committees, and paid staff, and (6) to suggest a strategy for transition to and implementation of the new congregational structure including the revisions to the constitution and by-laws.

Utilizing the Power Surge model, the Joel Team sought to identify several items for the congregation including core beliefs, congregational values, a revised mission statement, a proposed vision statement, and the Power Surge outcomes (see Figure 5.1)

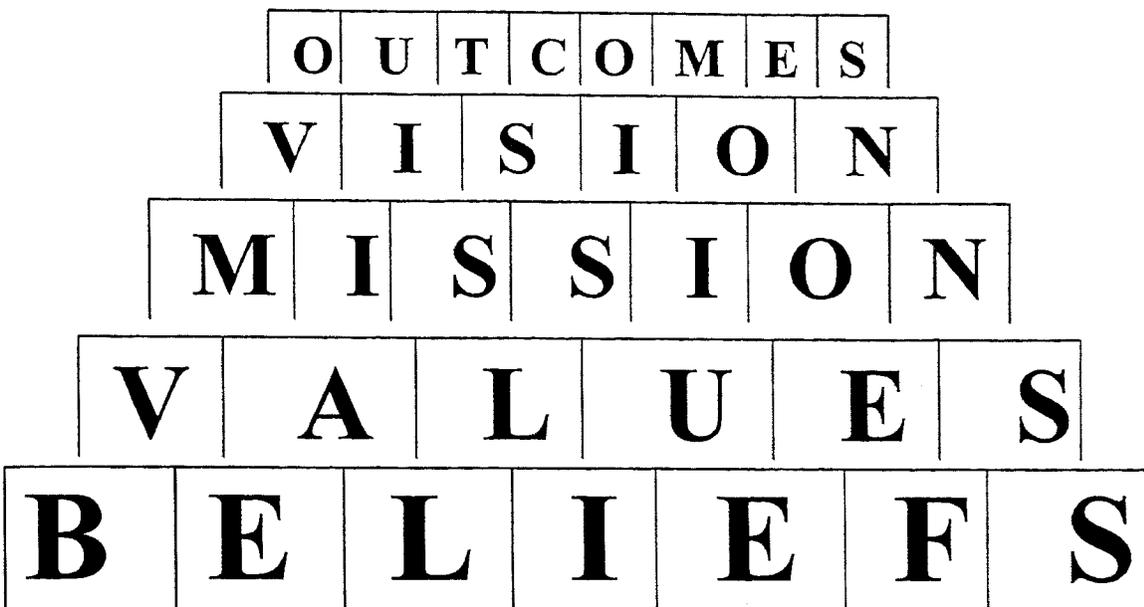


Figure 5.1. The building blocks of power surge.

The results of the Joel Team were presented to the congregation for consideration through sermons and newsletter articles, in meetings and public gatherings (see Appendix H). The congregation was asked to pray about these findings as to the propriety of these pieces for the congregation. Approval was sought by consensus of support rather than a formal vote. Feedback in both formal and informal settings validated the work of the Joel Team. The Power Surge building blocks accurately reflected the congregation and were appropriate for the congregation's life and ministry. A shift in the infrastructure of DNA of the congregation had begun.

The Power Surge model provided benefits to three different groups. For new members and visitors, the model provided a succinct, concise description of the congregation in "plain" language. For members it provided an understanding of discipleship and a means by which one can evaluate his or her own maturity in faith by

way of the marks or practices of discipleship. For paid staff and elected leaders, the paradigm provided a way to focus and prioritize ministry efforts, resources, and provided guidance for developing and evaluating new and existing ministry programs. Decision making could now be based on a shared understanding of ministry rather than personal taste or interest.

In the time allotted, the Joel Team had completed four of the six responsibilities originally assigned. The Team had redefined the remaining tasks seen as necessary for implementation of the Power Surge model: (1) to assess the needs, opportunities, challenges, and ideas influencing future ministry, (2) to continue the dreaming process, (3) to develop a workable model for leadership in terms of council, committees, and paid staff to move the dream forward, and (4) to suggest a strategy for transition to the new model.

The Relationship between Church Health and Church Growth

Church growth cannot be limited to numerical growth, yet it is one means by which growth can be measured. The average weekly worship attendance for the entire ELCA is 145. Only two congregations in the study had an average weekly attendance at that level, the other seven all have a higher or significantly higher weekly average. Even the largest, however, does not approach megachurch size. The size of a congregation based on average attendance reflects organizational dynamics indicative of systems theory. Small congregations function differently than large congregations, while middle-sized congregations have the similarity that they have nothing in common with any other congregation; middle-sized churches are awkward. Since 1995 all nine churches reflected signs of numerical growth in worship attendance, though the larger the membership size

the smaller the percentage of members attending worship. This data confirmed that healthy churches tend to be growing churches.

Implications of the Study

This study not only advances and affirms the work of the team that developed the Beeson Church Health model but also adds to the expanding body of knowledge regarding church health. This study supports the argument that church health is an important consideration for congregational ministry today, regardless of denominational affiliation. While the Beeson Church Health model has some advantages over other health models, “the Beeson Health Characteristics were compiled after extensive examination of literature and personal visits to many churches throughout the country” (McKee 111). This study justifies continued research and application of the Beeson model in particular.

The greatest strength of this study was collection of data pertaining to church health and ministry oriented toward discipleship development rather than membership making. Clearly, the evidence indicates that congregations willing to risk the transition from membership to discipleship can expect to enhance positively the overall health of the congregation.

As expected, the study supports the pedagogical shift today for leadership-training events. Multiday events that provide theoretical material primarily through lecture are less effective than short-term events where practical information can be presented in an interactive way. Prince of Peace deliberately made this change based on feedback from participants at previous Changing Church events. This study provides evidence that the shift was a prudent one. The Power Surge forum is having a positive impact on the

congregational health and ministry for those churches willing to apply the paradigm to the congregation in an existential rather than a programmatic way.

Like the Beeson Church Health model, the Power Surge paradigm is not limited to denominational affiliation. The Beeson Health model can be used in any congregation to aid leadership in discovering the general health of the congregation while the Power Surge model can be adapted and adopted to congregations based on their core beliefs and core values. Therefore, the findings of this study have implications for anyone interested in enhancing church health by focusing not on health issues per se, but on the mission of the Church, namely to make disciples. By attending to organizing the congregation's ministry in a systemic way around discipleship development, a positive impact on church health will occur. The result will be an enhanced environment for healthy church growth.

Limitations and Weaknesses

Church health is both complex and subjective. This study did not exhaustively consider all of the intertwining factors or systems that may affect the health and growth of the church. This study relied on the work of a previous team posing the potential problem that any overlooked weaknesses in their work could be operative in or have a bearing on this study. One weakness in the tool itself is the way the data must be processed, limiting it to use with congregations where data entry and data processing can be adequately handled or the congregation can afford to pay for it. Other church health instruments such as those developed by Schwarz and Rainer share this same weakness.

Both the objective and subjective methods of data collection pose potential weaknesses. First, the potential population pool of subjects was limited to the Lutheran congregations represented at one particular Power Surge event. Only the congregations of

the pastors willing to participate were included in the study. No statistical comparisons were made directly between the congregations in the study and congregations not participating. Only general comparisons were made between the general growth trends of these congregations and the ELCA as a whole.

The data collected through the Beeson Health surveys reflected the responses of those who voluntarily participated. Those who were active in their congregation took the time to complete a survey. Hence, the information is valuable in providing insight from those supportive of the ministry but leaves out any insights that might be gained from those on the fringe of congregational life. Finally, the project depended on the pastors to invite participation among their congregations. Response level was affected by the enthusiasm of the pastor for the project, whether the surveys could be completed on only one Sunday or over the course of several weeks, other events in the life of the parish at the time the project was present, among other factors. Nonetheless, overall response rate of surveys indicates the pastors were supportive of this project.

Subjective data by definition is fraught with weaknesses and vulnerable to the interpretation of the researcher. Information gathered through the interviews reflected only the perspectives of the pastors. Although the same form was used to conduct the interviews, no two interviews followed the same order. In a few instances, the on-site visits included worship attendance, giving greater insight into those congregations than the congregations where the visit occurred on a weekday. Printed materials such as newsletters are helpful if provided but may or may not accurately reflect the congregation.

A major paradigm shift such as that from membership to discipleship may take

several years to accomplish. Applying the Beeson Health survey three or four years after the initial survey would give a more accurate evaluation of the impact the Power Surge paradigm might have on church health and growth.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This study was intentionally limited to the use of the Beeson Church Health instrument and the discipleship model of Power Surge. Using the Beeson Health tool with other populations would further validate its effectiveness and help identify where refinements are needed.

As with previous studies, this project involved a group of congregations, but as part of a multiple case study design. Comparisons between the findings of this study and those are limited. Using the Beeson Church Health model with a larger population such as an entire synod would provide a greater context for denominational comparisons with the previous studies.

A study using a multiple case approach with congregations in the same geographic area, whether of the same or differing denominations, would produce data that could be compared to this study. A multiple case study of congregations from the same geographic area could allow for more detailed study of congregations. If all the congregations are using a similar discipleship model such as Power Surge, pastors and lay leaders could learn from each other providing greater insight into church health and the discipleship model. These findings could have implications for a much broader audience.

In contrast to this study, a single case study format would yield valuable information as to church health. Utilizing both the Beeson Health tool and the Power

Surge paradigm in a single congregation would provide specific information as to the process of transition from membership to discipleship. Such findings would be useful to other similar congregations or for adaptation to other congregations. This information could also assist congregations like Prince of Peace in providing leadership-training events to other congregations.

Repeating this study with a different group attending Power Surge would allow for comparisons as to both the Beeson Church Health and Power Surge models. Similarly, repeating this study with the same congregations would provide insight into the long-term ramifications of the transition to the Power Surge model for ministry on church health and church growth.

The design of this study included the Beeson Church Health tool and the Power Surge model. Studies involving congregations using the Beeson and other discipleship models would provide data that could be compared to these findings. Such comparisons could perhaps demonstrate the effectiveness of different discipleship models for differing congregations.

Personal Reflections

Since I first heard Donn Abdon talk about ministry and leadership in 1989, I began in earnest to learn more about leadership and growing as a pastoral leader. I have always believed that the Church needs pastoral leaders who will equip the saints for the work of ministry. I also agree with Dr. Galloway that pastors must not only develop themselves as leaders but also learn to develop other leaders. As a church grows, the pastors must change, but exactly how I as a pastor must change has been something of a mystery. These are a few of the reasons that motivated me to pursue this project.

When I attended the first module of the Beeson Institute for Advanced Church Leadership, I never imagined I would be a Beeson Pastor or work on a project such as this. I had the opportunity to share with and learn from many wonderful and talented people.

The Church faces many challenges today offering a cornucopia of reasons for pastors and laity alike to despair and perhaps abandon the Church. Nevertheless, Christ is still very much at work in his church here in the United States. He continues to equip those He calls and blesses the church abundantly. Principles developed by the church growth movement and concepts developed by the church health movement serve as useful tools for church leaders. Still, ministry is most effectively accomplished through partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship models such as Power Surge help pastors and congregations focus their efforts toward making disciples of Jesus Christ. Barna identifies five distinct disciple-making models: competency, missional, neighborhood, worldview, and lecture-lab (Growing True Disciples 133-60). I think the Power Surge model constitutes a sixth option for growing disciples. Because the Power Surge paradigm is flexible and adaptable, it can be effective in a wide variety of congregations regardless of denominational affiliation. Because it focuses on discipleship development, it can positively enhance the health of a congregation. Ministry becomes exciting, rewarding, and fun.

Health tools like the Beeson Model are beneficial to congregational leaders seeking a means to measure church health, much like a person benefits from a doctor conducting a physical exam. The Beeson tool contributes to the advancement of church

health research. It can be used to identify aspects of the church as an organism where attention may be needed to improve health. The health of the church is a necessary concern today so the mission and vision of Jesus might be realized.

Discipleship paradigms such as Power Surge, along with church health tools such as the Beeson model provide the means for making a healthy congregation. The transition can cause conflict since the process involves the congregation's infrastructure beginning with the fundamentals. It gets at root issues related to beliefs and values.

The key is focusing on intentionally shifting from membership-oriented ministry (bounded set) to discipleship-equipping ministry (centered set) in ways that are consistent with the congregation's beliefs and core values. Clarification of mission and vision are crucial, along with a set of anticipated outcomes. Unless the congregation has clearly defined what a disciple is and has identified the means to develop as a disciple of Jesus, the ministry will continue to flounder, and the congregation will decline or plateau. If intentional steps are taken to enhance the health of the Church, with openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church will begin to realize its full potential as the *ekklesia* of God set apart as the hope of the world.

APPENDIX A

WHAT IS YOUR CHURCH'S HEALTH QUOTIENT?

Instructions: This survey is designed to assess the general health of local congregations. The entire survey generally takes 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name and answers will remain anonymous. For best results, complete the survey quickly without pausing to consider anyone item in depth. Thank you for participating.

1. Name of your church? _____
2. Name of the town in which your church is located? _____
3. Your age? _____
4. Gender
 - 4.1 _____ Male
 - 4.2 _____ Female
5. Marital status
 - 5.1 _____ Single
 - 5.2 _____ Married
 - 5.3 _____ Widowed
 - 5.4 _____ Other: _____
6. Number of children _____
7. The following are a regular part of my spiritual life (check all that apply)
 - 7.1 _____ Bible study
 - 7.2 _____ Devotional times
 - 7.3 _____ Family devotional times
 - 7.4 _____ Involvement in ministry (Christian service)
 - 7.5 _____ Prayer
 - 7.6 _____ Sharing my faith with others
 - 7.7 _____ Other spiritual disciplines (fasting, etc.)
8. Are you a member of this church?
 - 8.1 _____ Yes
 - 8.2 _____ No

9. Which best describes your current involvement with the local church you attend most (check one)?

- 9.1 Attendee only
- 9.2 Leadership board member
- 9.3 Ministry leader/teacher
- 9.4 Pastoral staff

10. Approximately how many years have you been involved with this particular church?

11. Which of the following best describes how often you attend weekend worship services? (check one)

- 11.1 Visitor
- 11.2 Less than once a month
- 11.3 1-2 times a month
- 11.4 3 or more times a month

12. In the past year, approximately what percentage of your total income from all sources did you give to your local church _____ %

13. The current staff, for the ministries of your church, is ...? (check one)

- 13.1 Understaffed
- 13.2 Adequate
- 13.3 Overstaffed

14. I actively participate in a small group or ministry team

- 14.1 Yes
- 14.2 No

15. How would you describe the community within which your church is located? (check one)

- 15.1 Growing and thriving
- 15.2 Plateaued
- 15.3 Declining

16. I would describe my personal spiritual life as: (check one only)

- 16.1 Growing
- 16.2 Plateaued
- 16.3 Declining

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive	<input type="radio"/>				
20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging, and encouraging to my walk with God.	<input type="radio"/>				
21. My local church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.	<input type="radio"/>				
22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.	<input type="radio"/>				
23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.	<input type="radio"/>				
24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).	<input type="radio"/>				
25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.	<input type="radio"/>				
26. The leaders of our church articulate vision and achieve results.	<input type="radio"/>				
27. I find worship services spiritually inspiring.	<input type="radio"/>				
28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement.	<input type="radio"/>				
29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.	<input type="radio"/>				
30. Tithing is a priority in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				
31. I believe that interpersonal conflict is handled appropriately and in a biblical manner.	<input type="radio"/>				
32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.	<input type="radio"/>				
33. The music in the church services helps me worship God.	<input type="radio"/>				
34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.	<input type="radio"/>				
35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.	<input type="radio"/>				
36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.	<input type="radio"/>				
37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.	<input type="radio"/>				
38. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in my church.	<input type="radio"/>				
39. There are few training opportunities in our church.	<input type="radio"/>				
40. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I like to invite my friends.	<input type="radio"/>				
41. This church teaches that Jesus is the only way to heaven.	<input type="radio"/>				
42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).	<input type="radio"/>				
43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.	<input type="radio"/>				
44. This church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gifts.	<input type="radio"/>				
45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.	<input type="radio"/>				
46. The laypeople of our church receive frequent training.	<input type="radio"/>				
47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.	<input type="radio"/>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.	<input type="radio"/>				
49. I enjoy the tasks I do in church.	<input type="radio"/>				
50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.	<input type="radio"/>				
51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.	<input type="radio"/>				
52. The love and acceptance I have experienced at my church inspires me to invite other to my church.	<input type="radio"/>				
53. I look forward to attending worship services at this church.	<input type="radio"/>				
54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources.	<input type="radio"/>				
55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.	<input type="radio"/>				
56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.	<input type="radio"/>				
57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.	<input type="radio"/>				
58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.	<input type="radio"/>				
59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.	<input type="radio"/>				
60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with other worshippers.	<input type="radio"/>				
61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.	<input type="radio"/>				
62. Our church has very few programs, which appeal to non-Christians.	<input type="radio"/>				
63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.	<input type="radio"/>				
64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.	<input type="radio"/>				
65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.	<input type="radio"/>				
66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.	<input type="radio"/>				
67. When I leave a worship service, I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.	<input type="radio"/>				
68. We have an effective and efficient decision-making process in our church.	<input type="radio"/>				
69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior in our church.	<input type="radio"/>				
70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.	<input type="radio"/>				
71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				

APPENDIX B

PASTOR'S SURVEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

This survey should be completed by the pastor or designated leader. Thank you for participating. Your answers will provide valuable information about your local context. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

Note: You will be asked to provide information consistent with the ELCA's Annual Report of the Congregation submitted to your synod. Categories listed below are to be interpreted the same as those on the annual report.

1. What is the name of your church?

2. What is the name of the town your church is located in? _____

3. What is the denominational affiliation of your church (if other than ELCA)?

4. How long have you served as Senior Pastor of this church? (Circle one)

0-2 yrs. 3-6 yrs. 7-10 yrs. 10-15 yrs. Over 15 yrs.

5. What is the age of the church facility? (Circle one)

1-3 yrs. 3-5 yrs. 5-10 yrs. 10-15 yrs. Over 15 yrs.

6. How large is the population within 20 minutes of your church? (Circle one)

Under 5,000 5,000-15,000 15,000-50,000 50,000-200,000 200,000+

7. What was the average worship attendance for the following years:

2002 _____	1999 _____
2001 _____	1998 _____
2000 _____	1997 _____

8. How many baptisms occurred in the following years:

2002 _____	1999 _____
2001 _____	1998 _____
2000 _____	1997 _____

9. What was the baptized membership for the following years:

2002 _____	1999 _____
2001 _____	1998 _____
2000 _____	1997 _____

10. What was the confirmed membership for the following years:

2002 _____	1999 _____
2001 _____	1998 _____
2000 _____	1997 _____

11. What was the total annual congregational income for the following years:

2002 _____

2001 _____

2000 _____

1999 _____

1998 _____

1997 _____

12. What were the total annual congregational expenditures for the following years:

2002 _____

2001 _____

2000 _____

1999 _____

1998 _____

1997 _____

This completes the survey. Thank you very much for your assistance!

APPENDIX C

PASTOR'S FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

This survey should be completed by the pastor or designated leader. Thank you for participating. Your answers will provide valuable information about your local context. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. These questions apply only to the last 12 months and will be compared to the information submitted for this congregation one year ago.

Note: You will be asked to provide information consistent with the ELCA's Annual Report of the Congregation submitted to your synod. Categories listed below are to be interpreted the same as those on the annual report.

13. What is the name of your church?

14. What is the name of the town your church is located in? _____

15. Has the denominational affiliation of your church changed in the last twelve months? (Check one) No Yes

If yes, what is the congregation's present denominational affiliation?

16. Have there been any major changes to the church facility in the last twelve months? (Check one) No Yes

If yes, please explain: _____

17. Has the population within 20 minutes of your church changed in the last twelve months? (Check one) No Yes

If yes, please explain the changes: _____

18. What was the average worship attendance for this past year: _____

19. How many baptisms occurred in this past year: _____
20. What is the current baptized membership: _____
21. What is the current confirmed membership: _____
22. What is the anticipated total annual congregational income for this past year:

23. What are the anticipated total annual congregational expenditures for this past year:

This completes the survey. Thank you very much for your assistance!

- What do you do to keep yourself in shape/healthy:
 - Physically

 - Financially

 - Family & Relationally

 - Spiritually as a disciple of Jesus

- Who is your favorite Bible character and why?

- Who is your role model for pastoral leadership?

- Do you use the MBTI, DiSC, or other personality profiles? Do you know your personality profile? If so, what difference does that make?

- Has your church used Precept or some other agency to determine target audience for your congregation's ministry?

- Items to be collected from each congregation:
 - Constitution & By-Laws
 - New Member's Packet
 - Bulletin of Reports
 - Worship Bulletin
 - Flow chart

- How many people are on your staff?
 - Full-time:

 - Part-time:

 - Job descriptions

 - Staff configuration

 - Mission statement

 - Values listing

 - Belief listing

- Do you have a written history of the church?

- Do you have a long-range plan in place?

- How are you using Power Surge to make disciples?

- What books have most influenced your leadership/faith?

- What are the ten books you read most recently?

- Is there anything else you care to share with me regarding this congregation's present and/or future ministry?

Pictures Taken:

_____ Pastor	_____ Entrance
_____ Building	_____
_____ Offices	_____
_____ Grounds	_____
_____ Worship Area	_____

ADDITIONAL NOTES

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO POWER SURGE PARTICIPANTS

November 2002

Dear Power Surge Registrant:

Let me introduce myself in anticipation of meeting you at the Power Surge Symposium. I have been a Lutheran Pastor for 20 years, serving for the last 14 of those at Trinity Lutheran, State College, PA, an ELCA congregation. Recently, I had the unique opportunity to take an 11-month sabbatical at Asbury Seminary, Wilmore, KY, as a resident Beeson Pastor. This is one of the tracks offered for the Doctorate of Ministry degree. As you may already know, the D. Min. degree requires the completion of a dissertation based upon some sort of research project.

The general area I have selected is that of church health. My project involves surveying members of ten congregations to gain a “snap shot” of the congregation’s church health based upon the model I am using along with various demographic information about the congregation. The outcome of the study is to see where participating congregations are 12 months following the initial survey.

In conversation with Pastor Nancy Lee Gauche and the staff of Changing Church and Prince of Peace, I have gained their support for this project. I am writing you to invite you and your congregation to consider participating in this study.

At the November Power Surge Symposium, we will be learning about discipleship development and congregational transformation in ways that are exciting and engaging. That you are attending, perhaps with other members of your congregation, indicates that you and your congregation are rightly suited for my project. Your participation will not only aid me in my work, but will also provide information to the Changing Church staff as to how congregations are benefiting from events such as the Power Surge Symposium. Additionally, I would be more than happy to share the outcome of my study with participants to help you and your leaders in your ministry.

Please give this request some thought. When we gather on November 17, we will have an opportunity to explore this matter further. Any questions or concerns you may have will be considered then. In the meantime, thank you for your attention to this letter and for giving this request some thought.

I am excited about the Power Surge Symposium and meeting you there. Thank you for your partnership in ministry even though we may not have met personally. God bless you and give you safe travel. See you in Burnsville, Minnesota!

Yours in Christ,
Ronald C. Miller, Jr.

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT WILLINGNESS FORM

The Rev. Ronald C. Miller, Jr.
TLCTRevRon@Juno.com
814-238-2024

Trinity Lutheran Church
2221 North Oak Lane
State College, PA 16803

Name of Congregation _____

Pastor _____

Church Address _____

Phone Numbers:

Voice _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____

Web site _____

Please check all that apply:

Yes, our congregation will participate in this study

No, our congregation is unable to participate

Maybe, but approval from the lay leadership is needed

please contact us

we will contact you

Please send a summary report to the congregation based on this study

*Thank you so very much for your consideration.
God bless you and your ministry.*

APPENDIX G

LIST OF HEALTH QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO CHARACTERISTIC

1 - Strongly agree 2 - Moderately agree 3 - Neither agree nor disagree
 4 - Moderately disagree 5 - Strongly disagree

<p>Authentic Community</p> <p>18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events.</p> <p>25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.</p> <p>31. I believe that interpersonal conflict or misconduct is dealt with appropriately and in a biblical manner.</p> <p>38. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in our church.</p> <p>45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.</p> <p>52. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invite others to my church.</p>
<p>Empowering Leadership</p> <p>59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.</p> <p>66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.</p> <p>19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.</p> <p>26. Our church is led by individual(s) who articulate vision and achieve results.</p> <p>32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.</p> <p>39. There are few training opportunities in our church.</p> <p>46. The laypeople of our church receive frequent training.</p>
<p>Engaging Worship</p> <p>53. I look forward to attending worship services at this church.</p> <p>60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with other worshippers.</p> <p>67. When I leave a worship service, I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.</p> <p>20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging, and encouraging to my walk with God.</p> <p>27. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring.</p> <p>33. The music in the church services helps me worship God.</p> <p>40. The worship at this church is so inspiring I like to invite my friends.</p>
<p>Functional Structures</p> <p>47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.</p> <p>54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources.</p> <p>61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.</p> <p>67. We have an effective and efficient decision-making process in my church.</p> <p>21. Our church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.</p> <p>28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement.</p> <p>34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.</p>

<p>Intentional Evangelism</p> <p>41. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.</p> <p>48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.</p> <p>55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.</p> <p>62. Our church has very few programs, which appeal to non-Christians.</p> <p>69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.</p> <p>22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.</p> <p>63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.</p>
<p>Mobilized Laity</p> <p>35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.</p> <p>42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).</p> <p>49. I enjoy the tasks I do in the church.</p> <p>56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.</p> <p>23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.</p> <p>70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.</p>
<p>Passionate Spirituality</p> <p>29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.</p> <p>36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.</p> <p>43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.</p> <p>50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.</p> <p>57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.</p> <p>71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.</p>
<p>Transforming Discipleship</p> <p>24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).</p> <p>30. Tithing is a priority in my life.</p> <p>37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.</p> <p>44. Our church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s).</p> <p>51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.</p> <p>58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.</p> <p>65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.</p>

17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries—This question is a demographic question rather than a health characteristic category.

APPENDIX H

JOEL TEAM RESULTS: PHASE ONE

A. INTRODUCTION

- Joel 2.28 is quoted by Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:14 ff.)

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see vision and your old men shall dream dreams.... Then everyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.”

- Establishing the Joel Team recognized

1. God wants his Church to grow
2. Jesus instructs his followers to take actions (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) that will result in the spreading of the good news of the Gospel and developing disciples.
3. We need to be intentional in order to maintain a healthy congregation, as growth occurs:
 - a. Growth in membership is inevitable. Growth in service and discipleship is not.
 - b. We can let growth happen to us OR we can plan now to manage the growth so that we remain a healthy community of believers and grow individually and as a community in faith and service.
4. The Power Surge Conference in Burnsville, MN, provided new material for addressing the concerns of health and growth.
5. Now is the time!

B. DEFINITIONS (Hanson, Mission-Driven Worship 14-18.)

- Beliefs—Our Foundation

A church builds its vision on the beliefs that formed and shaped it. For each church these beliefs are directly related to its theology, doctrine, and practice.

- Values—Who We Are

A church builds its values on the beliefs its members have in common. Values tend to

emerge out of genuine community and are commonly held attitudes and behaviors that are accepted and appreciated.

➤ Mission—What We Do

A church's mission emerges from its beliefs and values and is a statement of what it can accomplish as the members work together. It often includes a description of how the mission will be accomplished.

➤ Vision—Where We Are Going

According to George Barna, a vision is “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants, and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.” A vision is your church's preferred future, a thing that is so large and unattainable that only God could make it happen. It's possible to confuse vision and mission. Vision paints a picture of your preferred future. Mission is a broad, general, philosophical statement that depicts the heart of the ministry and how you will do your work together to accomplish the vision.

➤ Outcomes—Our Expectations

After all is said and done (and usually more is said than done!), these are the specific behaviors, disciplines, and attitudes you are hoping will be evident in the life [sic] of those affiliated with your congregation.

C. BENEFITS

➤ New Members and Visitors

1. Our “30-second Commercial”
2. Succinct and Concise Description of Our Congregation
3. In “Plain” Language

➤ Council and Committees

1. Focuses and Prioritizes Our Efforts
2. Guidance for Developing New Programs
3. Guidance for Evaluating Existing Programs

D. BELIEFS—OUR FOUNDATION

➤ At Trinity Lutheran Church

1. We believe in the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as described in the

- Ancient Creeds (i.e., Apostles' Nicene, and Athanasian).
2. We believe the Bible, as God's Word, is authoritative for matters of faith and practice.
 3. We believe that as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to live out our faith in this world.
 4. As Lutherans, we subscribe to the Lutheran Confessional writings for instruction and guidance.

E. VALUES—WHO WE ARE

- Values for TLC Were Derived from the Congregational Values Survey

1. Developed a List of Candidate Statements
2. Surveyed the Congregation
3. Collated the Responses and Combined Similar Values Statements
4. Selected the "Top 10 or So" as the Basis for Our Common Values

- The Joel Team Proposes

Alternate 1: At Trinity Lutheran Church, we value our opportunities:

- To come together for spiritual growth and service to God,
- To be respectful and accepting of each other,
- To provide a warm and open reception to visitors,
- To educate laity for witness and service, and,
- To serve family and community through God's grace.

Alternate 2: At Trinity Lutheran Church, We Value:

- The Fellowship of Community
- Service to God
- The Education of Laity for Witness and Service
- Spiritual Growth
- Providing a Feeling of Home for Members and Visitors Alike

F. MISSION—WHAT WE DO

- The Joel Team Proposes

The Family of Trinity Lutheran Church

- Gathers** to Enrich People's Relationship with God;
- Nurtures** people in Christian Community, and
- Engages** the world [in service] in Jesus' Name.

G. VISION—WHERE WE ARE GOING

➤ The Joel Team Proposes

Trinity Lutheran Church Envisions a Vibrant Community of Devoted Followers of Jesus, Transforming Lives for Christ with God’s Message of Love and Grace.

H. OUTCOMES—OUR EXPECTATIONS

The Joel Team Proposes adopting PoWeR SuRGe as follows

At Trinity Lutheran Church, I will strive to be a devoted follower of Jesus Christ who:

PRAYS daily (1 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:16-18)

WORSHIPS weekly (Ps. 122:1; Heb. 10:23-35)

READS the Bible daily (Ps. 1:2; Ps. 119:105)

SERVES at and beyond Trinity Lutheran (1 Cor. 12:4-13; John 13:34-35)

RELATES with others to encourage spiritual growth (Rom. 15:1-6; John 1:43-46)

GIVES a tithe and beyond (Mal. 3:10; 2 Cor. 8:12)

I. CONCLUSION

A. There Is More Work to Do, but We Have Reached an Important Waypoint

We have put this proposal to a “Road Test” with overwhelming positive feedback

B. Phase 2 includes

1. Assess the needs, opportunities, challenges, and ideas influencing future ministry
2. Continue the dreaming process
3. Develop a workable model for leadership in terms of council, committees, and paid staff to move the dream forward
4. Suggest a strategy for transition to the new model

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