

ABSTRACT

ALIGNMENT AROUND A MISSIONAL VISION:

REACHING OUT IN RELATIONSHIPS

AT GRANDVIEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH

by

Aaron J. Wymer

The limited purpose of this project was to measure the changes in awareness, attitudes, and behavior as result of a ministry intervention that included two series of sermons, an outwardly focused midweek intergenerational program, and a call to participate in reaching out to the community in identifiable ways for members and attendees of Grandview Christian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee. Participants in this study were consulted at every stage of its development, from the inception and research phases through its execution.

This project demonstrated the power of intentional alignment around a missional vision to motivate Christians to serve the surrounding community in manners consistent with the kingdom of God. The ministry intervention produced mixed results, showing significant increases in awareness and attitudes, but only marginal changes in behavior.

Other findings included the risk that consistent communication of goals and strategies can cause fatigue in the hearers, thus threatening to undermine the goals of the ministry intervention. Also, when partnering with outside organizations, church administrative responsibilities increase considerably.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
ALIGNMENT AROUND A MISSIONAL VISION:
REACHING OUT IN RELATIONSHIPS AT GRANDVIEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH

presented by

Aaron J. Wymer

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| _____ | _____ April 21, 2009 _____ |
| Mentor | Date |
| _____ | _____ April 21, 2009 _____ |
| Internal Reader | Date |
| _____ | _____ April 21, 2009 _____ |
| Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program | Date |
| _____ | _____ April 21, 2009 _____ |
| Executive Director | Date |

ALIGNMENT AROUND A MISSIONAL VISION:
REACHING OUT IN RELATIONSHIPS AT GRANDVIEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

by
Aaron J. Wymer

May 2009

© 2009

Aaron James Wymer

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-----------------------------|------|
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ix |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | x |
| CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM..... | 1 |
| An Anecdote | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Purpose..... | 7 |
| Research Questions..... | 8 |
| Research Question 1 | 8 |
| Research Question 2 | 8 |
| Research Question 3 | 8 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 8 |
| Ministry Intervention | 9 |
| Context..... | 11 |
| Methodology..... | 13 |
| Participants..... | 14 |
| Instrumentation | 14 |
| Variables | 15 |
| Data Collection | 15 |
| Data Analysis | 16 |
| Generalizability..... | 16 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Theological Foundation | 17 |
| Overview | 23 |
| CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE..... | 24 |
| Introduction..... | 24 |
| Theological Foundation | 27 |
| The Trinity | 27 |
| The Trinity and Suffering | 29 |
| The Life and Ministry of Jesus | 32 |
| The Beginning of the Ministry of Jesus..... | 32 |
| Jesus Called Others..... | 34 |
| Reaching Out in Relationships: A Case Study in Luke | 34 |
| The Calling of Levi: Luke 5:27-31 | 35 |
| The Mission of the Twelve: Luke 9:1-6 | 39 |
| The Mission of the Seventy: Luke 10:1-12..... | 41 |
| Reaching Out in Relationships: The Literature | 42 |
| The Meaning of Reaching Out in Relationships..... | 50 |
| The Look of Reaching Out in Relationships..... | 52 |
| Reaching Out in Relationships: The Kingdom of God..... | 60 |
| Churches with Alignment | 66 |
| Reaching Out in Relationships: Grandview..... | 69 |
| Reaching Out in Relationships: Conclusions..... | 73 |
| CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY | 77 |
| Research Questions..... | 77 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Research Question 1 | 77 |
| Research Question 2 | 78 |
| Research Question 3 | 78 |
| Population and Participants..... | 78 |
| Design of the Study..... | 80 |
| Instrumentation | 80 |
| Variables | 81 |
| Validity and Reliability..... | 81 |
| Data Collection | 82 |
| Data Analysis | 83 |
| Ethics..... | 85 |
| CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS | 86 |
| Participants..... | 86 |
| Age..... | 87 |
| Marital Status | 87 |
| Educational Level | 87 |
| Level of Church Involvement | 88 |
| Years Attended..... | 88 |
| Paid Ministerial Experience | 88 |
| Race and Socioeconomic Factors | 88 |
| Research Question One: Pretest Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior | 88 |
| Awareness: Pretest | 89 |
| Attitudes: Pretest..... | 93 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Behaviors: Pretest | 95 |
| Summary for Research Question 1 | 99 |
| Research Question Two: Posttest Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior | 99 |
| Awareness: Posttest | 100 |
| Attitudes: Posttest | 103 |
| Behaviors: Posttest..... | 105 |
| Overall Scores | 107 |
| Leader Scores..... | 108 |
| Non-Leader Scores..... | 110 |
| Research Question Three: Impact on Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior | 113 |
| Sermons..... | 115 |
| Restructuring Wednesday Evening Programming..... | 116 |
| Promotion of Identifiable Strategies | 118 |
| Summary of Major Findings..... | 121 |
| CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION | 123 |
| Overview..... | 123 |
| Major Findings..... | 126 |
| Increase of Awareness of Relational and Missional Strategies | 126 |
| Behavior Separated from Awareness and Attitudes | 128 |
| Risks of Consistent Communication..... | 130 |
| Partnering and Administration | 132 |
| Implications..... | 135 |
| Limitations | 136 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Unexpected Observations | 138 |
| Recommendations..... | 139 |
| Postscript..... | 140 |
| APPENDIXES | |
| A. Grandview’s Vision Statement, Concise Version..... | 143 |
| B. Sermon Samples..... | 144 |
| C. Grandview’s Vision Statement, Long Version | 173 |
| D. Grandview’s Vision Statement, Clarification Document | 174 |
| E. Test Instrument..... | 176 |
| F. Pretest Results..... | 179 |
| G. Posttest Results | 203 |
| Works Cited | 228 |
| Works Consulted | 233 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 4.1. Number and Gender of Participants..... | 87 |
| Table 4.2. Codified Responses to Question 1.1 in Pretest Phase..... | 91 |
| Table 4.3. Awareness Pretest Average Responses..... | 91 |
| Table 4.4. Attitudes Pretest Average Responses | 93 |
| Table 4.5. Behaviors Pretest Average Responses..... | 95 |
| Table 4.6. Codified Responses to Question 4.3, Pretest Phase..... | 99 |
| Table 4.7. Codified Responses to Question 1.1 in Pretest and Posttest Phases | 101 |
| Table 4.8. Awareness Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest..... | 101 |
| Table 4.9. Attitudes Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest..... | 103 |
| Table 4.10. Behaviors Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest | 105 |
| Table 4.11. Group Statistics for All Scores | 107 |
| Table 4.12. Independent Samples Test: All Scores | 108 |
| Table 4.13. Group Statistics for Leader Scores | 109 |
| Table 4.14. Independent Samples Tests for Leaders | 110 |
| Table 4.15. Group Statistics for Non-Leaders | 111 |
| Table 4.16. Independent Samples Tests for Non-Leaders | 112 |
| Table 4.17 Codified Responses to Question 4.3, Pretest and Posttest Phases | 113 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1.1. The Reaching Out in Relationships Diagram..... | 11 |
|--|----|

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Grandview Christian Church of Johnson City, Tennessee for allowing me to take a Sabbatical to pursue my Doctor of Ministry degree. Special thanks go to Dr. David Roberts for volunteering to carry the majority of the preaching duties during that year. Special thanks also go to the staff of Grandview, Ryan Bader, Theresa Garbe, Carla McKinney, Dana Miller, John Marr, and Isaac Schade for the extra load they carried during that year. I would also like to thank Dr. Don Good for his help interpreting results.

I would also like to thank my daughters, Meghan, Anna, and Cora, for their willingness to move away from home for a year; for embracing the challenge, and for giving me so many reasons to be thankful for God's kindness.

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Cindy, for being supportive, loving, and kind throughout the dissertation process. Without her attention to detail, her insight into my life and thought, and her inspiration, I would never have started this dissertation—much less completed it.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

An Anecdote

While I was in seminary (1992-95), I discerned a call to share my faith with a woman named Iona. The circumstances of the call were such that I could only stand in awe of God's ability to move. Iona was the granddaughter of A. E. Whitham, the man who served as the subject of my thesis for the completion of my Master of Divinity degree at Emmanuel School of Religion.

I became familiar with Whitham after purchasing a musty, secondhand copy of one of his books in a used bookstore in Johnson City, Tennessee. I liked what I read so much that he became the focus of my study. Through the course of my research, I met Iona when she was visiting from England. Iona and I had a short dialogue regarding her grandfather, even touching upon the topic of faith, but our relationship was not protracted enough for a deeper, more meaningful conversation. I found that reaching out to Iona was difficult because we were separated by our ages, our cultures, our genders, and the Atlantic Ocean.

A decade later, when Iona informed me that she had liver cancer, my wife and I traveled to England to visit her one more time and to share our faith with her. Because I was the author of the thesis on her grandfather, I assumed that I, not my wife, would be the one to take the lead in any discussions we were to have. What I discovered, though, was that I became the listener when the conversation began in earnest. My wife was the one God had prepared to lead the discussion.

My wife and I did our best to encourage Iona to become a follower of Christ, but she never gave us any indication that she was convinced. At the end of our visit, she drove my wife and me back to our hotel in Salisbury. Standing in the parking lot, Iona and I said our final goodbyes and we hugged. My wife and I then walked from Iona's car to the door of the bed and breakfast where I turned to wave one last time. As she returned my wave something in her eyes caused me to realize that throughout our time together she was paying very close attention, not just to our words but to the way my wife and I were relating to one another. I suddenly wondered if my body language and the subtlety of my demeanor around my wife had proclaimed the gospel as well as it should have. I found myself wondering if the gospel, if the kingdom of God, was evident to her through the medium of my relationship with my wife.

My experience with Iona challenged my understanding of how the church can and should reach out to people who are in need of a vital, life-giving, relationship with God and the people of God. The joint nature of the reaching out that my wife and I unthinkingly employed is not what immediately comes to mind when I consider sharing my (too much emphasis on "my") faith with others. I began noticing that the default setting for the sharing of faith is, for many Christians, an individualized effort.

Later, when the leaders of the church I serve took time to stop and contemplate the big picture of the church's role in the kingdom of God and how best to be faithful to God's calling, we confessed to feeling frustrated by the amount of time spent in the church building in meetings and functions that we believed were designed to meet the needs of the congregation. We also suspected that because people in our congregation tend to be shy, they either feel unwilling or ill-equipped to share their faith with non-

Christians. That same shyness might even be undercutting the formation of meaningful relationships within the congregation.

We began wondering what the church could do to motivate and train its people to reach out to others inside and outside the church as teams, as co-laborers, and as friends. As our church leaders pondered the direction the church should go, I reexamined our vision statement and found that the experience my wife and I had when trying to reach out to Iona was impossible to ignore when I came to the portion of the statement that called us to “reach out in relationships.”

Introduction

I serve as senior minister to Grandview Christian Church in Johnson City, Tennessee. Grandview is an active, growing, and theologically sophisticated congregation. Our proximity to a graduate seminary and a Christian liberal arts college gives the church the benefit of a core of members who are well educated and highly committed to Christian principles. Because both of these educational institutions serve the Christian church/churches of Christ, our core leaders tend to share versions of the Christian faith traced to the Campbell-Stone movement of the early nineteenth century.

Grandview’s association with these schools and its theological sophistication gives the church certain advantages. Key among those advantages is that Grandview has a reliable core of leaders and members who take seriously the importance of considering the theological foundations for anything we intentionally do. Because we are careful to weigh the implications of our decisions and to examine problems by using sound biblical and theological doctrine, our goals tend to be well conceived.

Grandview's vision statement reflects the congregation's thoughtfulness. The statement was in place when I arrived approximately nine years ago. The statement is as follows:

Extending God's kingdom to all people by *reaching out* [original emphasis] in relationships, *building up* [original emphasis] others in fellowship, *servicing* [original emphasis] Christ-like compassion, *engaging* [original emphasis] life issues in discipleship, *praising* [original emphasis] God in whole-life worship, all by the guidance and for the glory of God! (see Appendix A)

Theologically speaking, the statement covers foundational issues with appropriate precision; it even has strategies, of sorts, built into the statement itself. The strength of the vision statement is that it focuses more on the kingdom of God than on Grandview Christian Church. The church is neither the starting nor the ending point of this vision. The vision points to the belief that the church is a God-ordained means to an end and, as such, subordinate to the kingdom of God. This understanding is firmly set in the opening statement, which is, "Extending God's kingdom to all people."

The unfortunate weakness of the opening line of the statement is that the concept of the kingdom of God is notoriously difficult to define and impossible to measure accurately. The practical application toward which the statement aims is mostly lost. I perceived that because we had not carefully explained and communicated what we mean when we say "kingdom of God," the congregation tends to question whether or not they are living according to the statement. Further, my suspicion is that most of the people who consider themselves a part of Grandview pay little, if any, attention to the vision statement in practice.

Some of the blame for this neglect belongs to the leadership. I have preached a sermon series or two on the statement. I have placed elements of the vision statement on

all of our printed material. I refer to the statement with only moderate frequency, however, and my references are vague and poorly defined. In my time at Grandview neither I nor the leadership of Grandview have examined or taught the vision statement in any systematic, thorough, or well-defined manner.

People associated with Grandview should be able to know, with precision, whether or not they are participating in the vision of the church. Without this clarity, a church has difficulty achieving alignment. “As long as a congregation’s mission is vague or undefined, people can get along pretty well by pretending that the church is what they believe it is” (Harnish 47). For too long the vision has been nebulous and unattainable. Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins encourage clarity by asserting that the church should “write down the new kingdom vision in specific *be* [original emphasis] language” (62). With specific language comes the ability of the congregation to know what the church is asking them to do in response to the gospel.

My hope was that by attaching identifiable strategies to the vision statement, the leadership of Grandview would teach the congregation, bring alignment to its ministries, and help the congregation more fully live the vision that the leaders had determined to be God’s will for Grandview.

My suspicion at the beginning of this study was that a member or regular attendee of Grandview was unlikely to discern how, exactly, the leadership of Grandview might define what *reaching out in relationships* means. In effect, Grandview asked each person to decide for him or herself how (or if) he or she would fulfill the vision statement. “It is essential that we clarify our reason for being and our vision. If we hope to be effective, we must communicate these guiding factors and get the powers that be on board at the

same time” (Sjogren 33). Without specific actions to communicate, alignment was unlikely.

The challenges to defining and communicating what *reaching out in relationships* means are not unique to Grandview. Relationships are an area of notorious difficulty in today’s culture. As with most churches in America, the default pattern of thought is individualistic, as mine was when I perceived that I would be the one to share faith with Iona, never considering that God might use me *in conjunction* with my wife. Individualism finds its way into the typical American expression of the gospel. As William A. Dyrness states, “Not surprisingly ... the gospel is often presented in America in terms of ‘finding oneself’ and discovering ‘real peace’ in the midst of our busyness” (138). Many of the people who make up the core of Grandview were aware of this problem at one level or another. Simple awareness, however, was not enough to overcome the problem.

For Grandview another challenge to *reaching out in relationships* came from the difficulties presented by our close association with two religious institutions of higher education. Some core members and leaders live, work, and worship almost entirely within a Christian context. This group was by no means the entirety of the church, but having a solid core of people from religious institutions occupying leadership positions provides a residual impact on the *ethos* of the congregation.

In many ways, we mirrored the situation described by Lewis as he and the elders of the church he served in Arkansas examined their congregation: “If we continued on our present path we would likely create a style of ministry that we would one day regret. We would eventually function as a refuge from the world, a sort of Christian ‘club’ that

exhausted itself trying to keep its members happy” (Lewis and Wilkins 29). Creating, or sustaining, a Christian ghetto at Grandview was unacceptable as a long-term strategy or outcome.

A word of caution is in order here. Painting Grandview with too broad a brush would be inappropriate. Grandview was not an awkward, inward-facing, church. The avenues of outreach at Grandview were many, and the desire to be faithful permeated the leadership and church core. The congregation gave approximately 20 percent of its annual funds received to missionaries, parachurch organizations, and local community outreach programs. The reach of this congregation extended to Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, and South America—and not simply as a financial commitment of the church. Of the seven cross-cultural missionaries Grandview supported, all were, at one time or another, members of Grandview (counting husbands and wives as a single unit).

Grandview had also been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the Johnson City chapter of the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN), which was a consortium of churches and faith communities that worked together to alleviate the plight of homeless families. As part of this network, Grandview provided shelter for homeless families in the church building for at least four weeks out of the year, as well as providing financial resources that contributed to the salaries of permanent IHN staff.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to measure the changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors of reaching out in relationships as a result of a ministry intervention that included two series of sermons, to restructure Grandview Christian Church’s Wednesday

evening programming, and to identify practical ways to encourage the people of Grandview to partner with one another to serve people outside the church.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study, I identified the following questions.

Research Question 1

What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* prior to the study?

Research Question 2

What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* after the study?

Research Question 3

How did the series of sermons, the restructuring of Grandview's Wednesday evening programming, and the promotion of identifiable ways of putting the message into practice impact the change in *reaching out in relationships*?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the phrase *reaching out in relationships* was the intentional act of testifying to the reality of the kingdom of God by inviting others into existing relationships for the purposes of fellowship, service, discipleship, and worship.

Awareness is the degree to which the congregation considers itself informed of, or cognizant of, the church's goals as it regards reaching out in relationships.

Attitudes toward is the degree to which the congregation has a positive, negative, or ambivalent disposition toward reaching out in relationships.

Behavior is the actual practice of inviting others into kingdom relationships for the purposes of service, fellowship, discipleship, or worship.

Ministry Intervention

This ministry intervention was an attempt to shift the culture of the congregation into a more missional stance in terms of their awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors regarding reaching out in relationships. A series of four sermons in September 2007 served as the introduction to the identifiable strategies to become a part of the life of Grandview Christian Church. These sermons were designed to motivate the congregation to place kingdom goals above church goals, church goals above individual goals, and to do all these things in community with one another (see Appendix B).

A second series of sermons during the seasons of Epiphany and Lent 2008 served to keep the message front and center in the mind of the congregation. The majority of the series made use of the Gospel texts suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary. In the sermons I focused on the effect that a relationship with Jesus had on various biblical characters.

The church redesigned the Wednesday evening programming (named Two 4 Two) to focus children, youth, and adults on reaching out in relationships. The program ran for ten weeks in the fall of 2007 and for ten weeks in the spring of 2008. The program *previously* included approximately forty minutes of fellowship for youth and children, approximately forty minutes in which children and youth focused on worship skills, thirty minutes together in a common meal, and another thirty minutes in age-graded Bible studies or small groups. The adults participated only in the common meal and in various small groups. For the purposes of the ministry intervention, an intergenerational worship

time replaced the worship skills activities for the children and youth in an attempt to bring together the various age groups and to emphasize the missional theme. I shared aspects of reaching out in relationships each Wednesday night through short messages and videos.

In order to encourage the practice of reaching out in relationships (and to provide teachable moments such as the one recounted at the beginning of this chapter), I cultivated relationships with community organizations and mission partners to explore ways in which church members could volunteer, in pairs (or more), to serve organizations outside the church. Leaders encouraged members to volunteer to become tutors in the Johnson City Schools Adult Education program, to join together to help residents at the Appalachian Christian Village Pine Oaks Assisted Living Facility in order to assist residents in making scrapbooks, and to partner with other people from the congregation to serve as family mentors for the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The leadership also invited the congregation to imagine other ways they might be able to use the team (relational) approach to service outside the borders of the church.

During the announcement times following the worship services in September 2007 and Epiphany 2008, and during the twenty Wednesday night worship times, I presented the ministry model using the diagram in Figure 1.1 to make the intent clear. When using multimedia slides, the bottom left figure appeared first as I explained that God does not call people to be Christians in isolation. As the bottom right figure appeared, the arrow between the two bottom figures appeared as well. I then explained that God calls Christians to have meaningful relationships with other Christians. Finally,

the top figure appeared along with the two angled arrows as the minister explained that God calls Christians to use the strength of their relationships to focus outward.

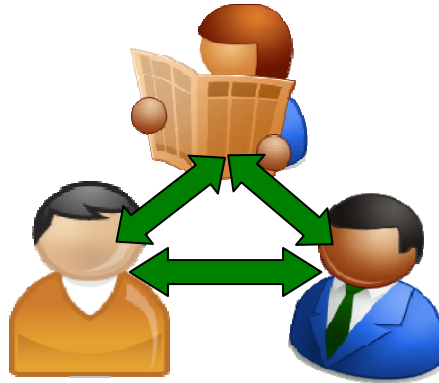


Figure 1.1. The reaching out in relationship diagram.

Context

Grandview affiliates with the Christian churches/churches of Christ, which is a nondenominational fellowship of churches that traces its roots to the (so-called) Restoration Movement of the American frontier in the early nineteenth century. The best-known founders of this movement are Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, and his father, Thomas Campbell.

Planted by First Christian Church of Johnson City, Tennessee, Grandview Christian Church began meeting in 1927 with the charter to serve the southside of Johnson City. Originally named Fourth Christian Church, they met in a house on Cedar Place until they built a church building on Virginia Street and renamed themselves Virginia Street Church of Christ. On 3 April 1967, the members of Virginia Street Church of Christ changed the name to Grandview Christian Church. In 1975, because the

city of Johnson City built a new road that swallowed a large piece of Grandview's land (and a fellowship building), Grandview sold their original building and built a new one on a different plot of ground with frontage on the new road, giving them excellent visibility in the community. In 2003 Grandview expanded the church building by adding a 280-seat worship space, new foyer, and a children's ministry wing. This project doubled the size of the building.

When I came to Grandview as senior minister in 1998, the church had experienced a sustained period of slow growth. Their worship services consisted of a 9:30 a.m. service with a blended musical format and an 11:00 a.m. service with a more traditional format.

The average number of adults in Sunday morning worship services for the twelve months (August 2006-July 2007) preceding the beginning of the ministry intervention was 262. This number includes the summer months, which have typically lower attendance. The average attendance of adults in worship during the nine pre-intervention months that correspond with the nine intervention months is 274. The average number of adults in Sunday morning worship services during the nine-month intervention (August 2007-April 2008) was 315.

Two nearby institutions influence the makeup of Grandview Christian Church. Milligan College is a Christian liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately nine hundred students. Emmanuel School of Religion is a graduate seminary with approximately 160 students, located adjacent to Milligan College. Both of these schools affiliate with the Christian church/churches of Christ. Much of Grandview's leadership came from people who either worked at Milligan or Emmanuel or were educated there.

As a result of Grandview's connection with these institutions, attendance was higher when the schools were in session than during the summer and major holidays. Some of the variation in attendance was due to the seasonal inflow and outflow of the student population as well as faculty and administration who called Grandview home.

While the self-understanding of the church was often that of an "Emmanuel/Milligan" church, that perception was being challenged by a recent influx of people from the community with little, or no, connection to these institutions. Grandview's population was predominately white and middle class and the educational level skewed higher than the surrounding community.

Methodology

The research model for this study consisted of the use of qualitative questionnaires distributed to the leaders and people of the congregation in order to determine their awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors relating to the *reaching out in relationship* portion of the Grandview vision statement (see Appendix E). This data was compiled and interpreted. The level of awareness and understanding of the congregational *leaders* was tabulated separately from the patterns of the non-leader population (see Appendix F).

Following the ministry intervention, I distributed the same instrument to the congregational leaders and participants in the life of the church. The results were compiled, tabulated, and compared with the pretest questionnaire results (see Appendix G for posttest results).

In order to answer research question three, I assembled focus groups and facilitator queried them regarding the effect of the various elements of the ministry

intervention upon their awareness of, attitudes toward, and their behaviors in regard to reaching out in relationships.

Participants

Members and regular attendees of Grandview Christian Church in Johnson City, Tennessee, comprised the population for this study. This group consisted of two distinct categories of leaders and non-leaders. The leaders were staff, anyone who served Grandview in an elected position (as an elder or ministry team leader), anyone who led a Sunday school class, and anyone who led a small group. The sample of leaders and general population was self-selecting, as the invitation was open to all who were willing to participate.

The goal was to sample the mind of the leadership as a whole and of the congregation as whole, not to determine individual changes in the identified areas. Because the sample was self-selecting, neither the leadership nor the non-leadership pre- and posttest groups were identical.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire asked participants about their awareness, attitudes, and behaviors regarding *reaching out in relationships*. The questionnaire consisted of thirty-one Likert-style questions and four open-ended questions. The open-ended questions reflected the effort to determine the actual patterns of *reaching out in relationships* that existed before the ministry intervention (see Appendix E).

The same questionnaire, distributed after the ministry intervention, determined the congregational awareness, attitude, and behavior regarding *reaching out in relationships*. After the posttest phase, two focus groups attempted to uncover how the sermon series,

restructure of the Wednesday night programming, and identifiable strategies of reaching out in relationships affected their patterns.

Variables

The independent variables in this study include the two series of sermons, the reorganization of the Wednesday night program known as Two 4 Two, and the partnerships Grandview initiated with the three outside organizations (Interfaith Hospitality Network, Pine Oaks Assisted Living facility, and the Johnson City Adult Education program).

The dependent variables include the changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors.

Data Collection

A population consisting of leaders of Grandview Christian Church and people who claimed Grandview as their church home completed a pretest survey. The leaders completed the pretest survey at a called meeting; and returned their surveys immediately. The rest of the population received and completed the surveys at a carry-in supper at the church. They returned their surveys immediately. Others, who were unable to attend these functions, completed surveys and return them to the office during the following week.

Leaders and non-leaders, following the intervention, completed and returned posttest surveys at a church-wide function. People who wished to participate but were unable to attend this function completed their surveys and return them to the office during the following week.

Following the ministry intervention, Grandview member, Dr. Robbie Anderson, conducted two focus groups. The first group consisted of the elders of Grandview. The second group consisted of randomly chosen non-leaders. A third party transcribed audio recordings of the small group discussion and then destroyed the tapes.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data yielded average mean scores for each question and then for each section, including awareness, attitude, and behavior. The mean scores for each section, pretest and posttest, were submitted to independent sample t-tests in order to determine whether or not the changes were significant.

The qualitative data yielded trends that provided insight into the mind-set of the congregation, as did the quantitative data from the focus groups.

Generalizability

One limitation of this study is that every congregation has unique strengths and weaknesses. This study examined a single congregation and made use of a single vision statement that arose out of the life and thought of that particular group.

The difficulty in partnering with parachurch and secular agencies as places for church members' service became apparent as another limitation early in the process. While the agencies were genuinely pleased with the offer of assistance, a lag developed between the signing of volunteers and the ability of the agencies to utilize them. The varying abilities of the agencies to conceive appropriate goals and to make use of volunteers limits the generalizability of this study as well.

The principle of *reaching out in relationship*, however, is reasonably generalizable. The fundamental need for relationships and community extends far beyond Grandview Christian Church, in particular, and the broader Christian faith, in general.

An additional limitation of the study is the turnover of leaders and people who call Grandview their home church. This population is always in flux, though it remained relatively stable throughout this project. Some leaders and members were less willing to participate than others.

Theological Foundation

Even as a seminary-trained minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I held the unexamined position of evangelism as primarily an individualistic exercise that focused on the sharing of information. When I visited Iona to share my faith with her, my default model of evangelism was individualistic. I gave no forethought to what I would do if Iona accepted the message of the gospel. I did no research into the local faith communities in her area that might have been helpful partners with me in reaching out to Iona.

The more attention I paid to the individual versus communal understanding of the Christian faith, the more I realized that individualism was the rule, not the exception. Somewhere along the way, the dominant model of evangelism in Christian America became that of sharing information without any real push to sharing a meaningful relationship. Jin S. Kim uses the accepted language of evangelicals and the modern church when he writes that the “meaning of evangelism is the proclamation of good news to the world” (45). Much of the church has come to believe that if a Christian person can teach, coax, or speak another person into believing (i.e., intellectually assenting to) a gospel message, then the church has finished the truly important work of participating

with God in imparting salvation. Discipleship, or leading a person into an alternative world in which that person more fully experiences the reign of God, became a footnote to the church's calling because imparting salvific knowledge emerged as the more important, and somehow disconnected, work.

Discipleship became the less important work. As Dallas Willard warns, "[T]here is absolutely nothing in what Jesus himself or his early followers taught that suggests you can *decide* [original emphasis] just to enjoy forgiveness at Jesus's expense and have nothing more to do with him" (*Great Omission* 13). When churches teach that salvation is merely intellectual assent to certain truths, they tend to produce Christians who are only slightly connected to one another and to the one who proclaims the gospel message. The church truncates the fullness of the gospel if it abandons the new convert to the hope that he or she will somehow stumble upon ways to deepen, grow, and become a full member in the body of Christ.

The understanding of imparting salvation as information *only* and the as the real goal of the church is flawed and inadequate at best; counterproductive at worst. The reason for this inadequacy is that it allows a person's actions to remain completely undisciplined, unchanged, and separated from one's intellectual life and from the community of followers of Christ. If the church is to be countercultural enough to have a voice in the postmodern world, it will have to witness to a reality that is not broken into public and private realms. The church that refuses to separate *attitude* and *awareness* from *behavior* will best testify to the action of Christ. If the church is going to reach out to others, it will be most effective when word and deed are integrated. The church will need to *reach out in relationships* by welcoming others into existing relationships where

the gospel is not merely information, information that is too easily divorced from action and response, but is the bond of kinship. One test of the truth of the gospel is the building of oneness between previously disconnected or hostile people.

Harkening back to the opening story, if I proclaim with words that I love my wife, but everything about the interaction between my wife and me undercuts my proclamation, then my words become hollow. I must reach out to my wife with word and deed.

If Mortimer Arias is correct, the method one uses to reach out to others will play an important role in the nature of the communication of the gospel:

A crisis is occurring ... in the area of *methods* and *means* [original emphasis] of communication, in which the limitations of some favorite methods of the recent past have become manifest. At the same time, the dangers of contemporary media—with their distortion of the content of the gospel and their depersonalizing and alienating effects upon a mass of hungry electronic consumers—have also been revealed. (xii)

If converts believe they can fulfill their Christian commitment by watching television or dabbling on the Internet, then the church needs to rethink its models for evangelism and divorce these models from ones that are exclusively or overly reliant upon the simple sharing of information.

Stephen Seamands proposes that the church use the Trinity as the model of reaching out in relationships because the Trinity best integrates faith, life, and missions:

The church is an instrument of God's mission, but God's mission precedes, initiates, defines and sustains the church in mission. Consequently, there is not mission because there is church; there is church because there is mission already—the mission of the triune God. (161)

If God reveals his nature to humanity through the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—eternally reaching out to and including not only each other but

incorporating others into that relationship—then the model of the church as a missional group of people needs to be deeper than the simple sharing of information. The church must share relationships and life as part of the knowledge of the love, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

God gives the church the model of *reaching out in relationships* not only through God's *being* but through the example of the Son while on earth. The Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus carried out his mission within the nexus of relationships from the very start. God's choice of Jesus' earthly mother in Luke 1:26-38 has in it the ring of relationship. The angel announced to Mary that God was *with* her. God then carried the Incarnation to fruition only *after* Mary gave God her permission, thus laying the foundation for the Incarnation upon a mutual relationship marked by permission freely granted to use her entire life (body and soul), not simply a Gnostic-style impartation of information.

Jesus made the practice of community and relationships a central theme of his life and his ministry. A close examination of Luke's account of Jesus' life reveals that Jesus began his ministry from within the context of community. One of Jesus' first actions was to reconstitute the ancient community of Israel and call it to be a witness of God's faithfulness to a broad range of communities, be they communities beyond the borders of Israel (Luke 7) or interior communities of the infirm, possessed (Luke 8:26-39), or disenfranchised (Luke 7:36-8:3).

Jesus came with a message that could not be limited to the sharing of information alone. When Jesus found Levi the tax collector, he did not say, "Believe that I am the Christ." Instead, Jesus invited Levi to *follow* him into a new way of life (Luke 5:27). For

Levi and for other would-be disciples, Jesus links the believing of the message to the physical act of following him into a way of being.

Jesus' way of living included the call to Levi to be willing to go out into the world with eleven other disciples on a missionary journey to *tell* people about the kingdom of God even as they *healed* the sick (Luke 9:2). Again, this missionary journey was no mere information dump. Information, action, and community went together seamlessly in the life and call of Jesus.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus followed his first commission to the disciples with yet another missionary journey. For this second missionary journey Jesus sent the disciples in pairs. The disciples traveled together but without Jesus. They relied upon the hospitality of anyone who would offer it. They proclaimed that the kingdom of God was near, and they healed the sick (Luke 10:2).

According to the book of Acts, the early Church attempted to live in continuity with these same methods and message of Jesus, delivered to the disciples through three years of living a common life (Acts 2:40-43). The early Church's reasons for *reaching out in relationships* were implicit in their lives together, not just something they were supposed to do because they were Christians. "The church did not begin its evangelistic activity because it was terrified about the prospects that faced those who died without hearing about Christ" (Abraham 38). Instead, "evangelism was rooted in a corporate experience of the rule of God that provided not only the psychological strength and support that was clearly needed in a hostile environment but also signified the active presence of God in their midst" (38). For the early Church, the *active presence* of God

was something they were anxious to share, not just the information about the influence of God in their lives.

For the modern church to be faithful to methods Jesus passed to the disciples, and the disciples passed to the early Church, the church needs a shared understanding of the kingdom of God as an active presence within the relationships in the church. As William J. Abraham states, these relationships within the kingdom of God are of primary importance:

Any vision of evangelism that ignores the kingdom of God, or relegates it to a position of secondary importance, or fails to wrestle thoroughly with its content is destined at the outset to fail. This is so because the kingdom of God is absolutely central to the ministry of Jesus and to the mission of the disciples that launched the Christian movement into history. (17)

The version of the kingdom of God the church chooses to embrace will go a long way toward determining the methods the church will decide are the most important for evangelism.

If a person gains entrance into the kingdom simply by the receiving of information alone, then verbal proclamation will be primary. If the receiving of information is unimportant, then the church will reach out in many physical and social ways but without bothering to share information about Jesus, the story of God, or the history of salvation. To be certain, different wings of the church have traveled the entire length of the spectrum from the importance of *deeds* versus *word*. Some churches cling to the informational model of salvation; others leave off sharing information altogether.

Both extremes have their pitfalls:

[W]e need to emphasize that by “proclamation of the gospel” we mean the *verbal* [original emphasis] proclamation, in order to prevent evangelism from sliding into a thoroughly vague notion that stands for everything and anything that the church does in witness and service. (Abraham 44)

Reaching out in relationships as a way of celebrating the kingdom of God will be an integrated and holistic exercise in trusting God to act in the church's sharing of life, relationships, and information. Relationships will provide the most fertile soil possible for the sharing of the fullness of the gospel, allowing the gospel to bear fruit at the deepest and broadest levels. Because God's Spirit is active in Christian relationships, the church must learn, like E. Stanley Jones, to ask how it can apply the kingdom of God to all relationships (300-01).

Overview

Chapter 2 reviews selected literature and pertinent biblical texts, examining Trinitarian doctrine as well as Luke's treatment of Jesus' methods of *reaching out in relationships*, beginning with the call of Levi and continuing through the sending of the seventy into the mission field.

Chapter 2 also considers the various methods of *reaching out in relationships* that have recently been successful in various churches and compares that list of methods to methods that are currently in use at Grandview Christian Church. Finally, Chapter 2 focuses on the need for a shared understanding of what the church means when it says, "the kingdom of God."

Chapter 3 presents a detailed explanation of the project's design, the research methods, and the methods of data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 discusses the results of this multifaceted ministry intervention.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

When the leadership of Grandview Christian Church penned their current vision statement, they determined that the first strategy should be to extend the kingdom of God to all people by *reaching out in relationships*.

The longer, more complete version of the vision statement defines *reaching out in relationships* as follows: “personal involvement and selfless investment to make disciples of Jesus in our community and the world” (see Appendix C). In an attempt to clarify this statement further, the leadership released the following statement:

We are each commissioned by Christ to do the work of evangelism. We will express this through inviting people to commit their lives to Jesus and become a part of the fellowship here (or elsewhere) and through sending and supporting missionaries to all the world.

Genuinely seeking to make disciples is neither haphazard nor always convenient. Therefore we each must make intentional efforts constantly to bring others to follow Jesus, daring to give of our selves (through our time, money, and influence in relationships) to help others know Him. As a church, we are devoted to developing more and more points of contact, entry, and involvement. Our nature as a church is to look outward, seeking always to include others in what we do. (see Appendix D)

In other words, they envisioned a process whereby members of the congregation reached out to unbelievers by means of significant investment of time and energy in the lives of unbelievers. While the language lends itself to a communal understanding of reaching out (“seeking always to include others in what *we* [emphasis mine] do”), the language is not clear enough to counteract the individualistic *ethos* that dominates the culture.

The leaders of Grandview appear to have imagined evangelistic relationships between one Christian (singular) and one nonbeliever (singular). One presumes that the

relational aspect of this part of the vision statement is roughly equivalent to the relationship I tried to build between myself and Iona. The one-to-one model of evangelism is a highly individualistic view and the image most American Christians embrace by default, one that often intimidates Christians into a fearful and reluctant silence regarding the sharing of faith. To share one's faith is, in some ways, to challenge the autonomy and individuality of the other person. American culture frowns on such challenges to autonomy. In response to this challenge the church is tempted to present a gospel that perpetuates individuality, keeping the other person's autonomy front and center. According to Dennis N. Voskuil, a hermeneutic of individualism is exactly what the church has propagated.

If there has been a failure of evangelism in America it has been an inability to call into question the ideology of individualism. As a result ... the Christian faith in America has born some unhealthy fruit.

First, *redemption is personalized* [emphasis original]. Evangelism in America has placed such a premium on a personal relationship to Jesus Christ that the very process of salvation tends to become dissociated from the church, the nurturing body of Christ. (21)

Rather than presenting a gospel that calls for a person to become a part of a network of relationships, Christians present a model of faith that amounts to accepting intellectual precepts, something that can be done in almost complete isolation from other Christians. Salvation becomes a matter of thinking the right things. When the typical American Christian conjures images of evangelism, the images are that of one person *talking* to another—and that conversation will most likely focus on *that* person's future eternal destiny while ignoring the call to become a part of the kingdom of God as a participation in a present reality. The belief that Christian faith is merely the assent to intellectual precepts is not new. John Wesley argued against such an understanding:

Concerning the nature of this faith, beware that you do not deceive yourselves. Faith is not, as some have understood, a mere assent to the truth of the Bible, the articles of our Creed, or everything that is contained in the Old and New Testaments. Demons believe these things as well as you or I! Yet they remain demons. (qtd. in Kinghorn 1:#135)

If the reception of the gospel is something that happens entirely in the mind, then the door is open for a person's faith to become an entirely private affair. Wesley was not willing to settle for private faith. Despite some of his critics' claims that he added works to salvation, he persisted in his claim that justification and sanctification were both the activity of faith. "Just as we are justified by faith, so we are sanctified by faith" (qtd in Kinghorn 3:#197). This activity of faith, however, did not negate communal or public expression of that faith. Wesley preaches that "our works of piety should include public, family, and private prayer; receiving the Lord's Supper; searching the Scripture by hearing, reading, and meditating; and fasting or abstinence as our health permits" (199). He adds that "our works of mercy should include ministering to people's bodies and souls (including) feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, showing hospitality to the stranger, and visiting imprisoned, sick, and suffering people" (199). For Wesley, works of mercy are not something separate from the kingdom of God but an expression of it. They are communal expressions of the reign and presence of God.

While Scripture does provide examples of one-on-one evangelism, those examples are part of a broader, communal context. Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well is an individualized account in John 4; however, even this text is communal in nature. The woman at the well expresses surprise at Jesus' request for water, not because she is a woman but because she is Samaritan with Samaritan drinking utensils. The scandal is that Jesus and the woman belonged to separate communities. Jews

scrupulously avoided foreign utensils for eating and drinking (Morris 229). The text moves from the belief of an individual woman to the belief of the broader community of Samaritans—a movement from one type of community to another.

While the episode between Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 fits into an individualized account of the sharing of the gospel, it also represents the inclusion of an entire group of previously excluded people into the kingdom of God. This time the group that is included in God's kingdom is not a race of people but a group of disenfranchised people. "If we understand the word *eunuch* [original emphasis] literally, then we see Christianity removing the barriers that Judaism had erected" (Kistemaker 312). A close look at these and other Scriptures reveals that *reaching out in relationships* more often than not operates at a deeper, more foundational level than the individualistic model that so easily comes to mind. The scriptural vision of reaching out *begins* in community and *precedes* the act of reaching out. Relationship and community are more than methods of reaching out; they are the foundation of, and motivation for, reaching out. The biblical foundation for *reaching out in relationships* begins even before Scripture itself. Though Scripture testifies to it, its foundation begins with the very nature of God.

Theological Foundation

The theological foundation for this study comes from the nature of God, the nature and example of Jesus' ministry, and the ways in which Jesus called and sent the disciples.

The Trinity

Christianity teaches that the nature of God is at the heart of creation and contains the relationship that exists among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The "joyful,

intimate love [of God] for us is rooted and grounded in the love the persons of the Trinity have for one another” (Seamands 72). If love is at the center of God’s nature, then God intends for loving relationships to be a part of human thought and activity.

Love is, fundamentally, a relationship. “If God is love he is at once the lover, the beloved and the love itself” (Moltmann 57). If a church commits to reaching out in relationships, that church can properly embrace the primary Trinitarian relationship that is at the heart of creation and use that self-giving, relational, communal reaching out as the motivation and method for doing so. “According to the New Testament, this [relationship in the church] is the primary arena where we are called to live out the triune model of relationality. In our fellowship, our *koinonia*,... we not only share ourselves with one another but also share together in the triune life” (Seamands 38-39). The nature of God is the fundamental pattern of and motivation for this strategy.

This model does not deny human individuality. The church can be a fundamental example of the ways in which God affirms both the individual and the community. The “experience of the self has to be integrated into the experience of God, and that experience of God has to be integrated into the trinitarian history of God with the world” (Moltmann 5). With the example of the Trinity as the model, a church can ask God to form individuals into a true community.

The example of the Trinity, however, should not inspire a select few to view themselves as insiders. If a community closes itself to outsiders, becoming an inward-facing circle, then that community no longer bases its relationship upon the nature and character of God:

The Father is the first missionary, who goes out of himself in creating the world and sending the Son for our salvation. The Son is the second

missionary, who redeems humanity and all creation through his life, death, resurrection and exaltations. The Holy Spirit is the third missionary, to go into the world. (Seamands 161)

In this way, God is continually seeking to include others in the relationship Christians experience as the Trinity.

Reaching out is a continual and collaborative effort. Scripture indicates that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work in unison, not in isolation, together expanding the relationship of God into the lives of people in the world. For the church, collaboration with God means that even if an individual *evangelizes* another individual, that person calls another person to participate as part of the community of God. “To be sure, the church is an instrument of God’s mission, but God’s mission precedes, initiates, defines and sustains the church in mission” (Seamands 161). The church is the visible sign and expression of that community, not the end unto itself.

The Trinity and Suffering

A word of caution is appropriate here, a word that is too often ignored in current American expressions of the church. To say that God calls Christians to participate in a community implies many things. An aspect of this call that the church has tended to neglect, however, is the implication that if one member of a community suffers, the other members suffer as well. If the word “community” leads a person to imagine a cozy situation, he or she will soon discover that real costs are associated with true community.

Jürgen Moltmann points the reader to the role of suffering and community:

If God were incapable of suffering in every respect, then he would also be incapable of love. He would at most be capable of loving himself, but not of loving another as himself, as Aristotle puts it. But if he is capable of loving something else, then he lays himself open to the suffering which love for another brings him; and yet, by virtue of his love, he remains master of the pain that love causes him to suffer. God does not suffer out

of deficiency of being, like created beings.... [H]e suffers from the love which is the superabundance and overflowing of his being. (23)

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:26 that if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. The act of living in community requires concrete forms of participation, even when participation is neither pleasant nor easy. To participate in someone else's suffering "is to make another's pain one's own—perhaps by subjecting oneself to similar treatment, or empathizing with another to the greatest possible degree" (Cunningham 166). Human pain has proven to be one of the greatest entry points for God's influence to be made manifest.

If Christians are to embrace the heart of the primal relationship embodied in Trinitarian thought, the church will embrace something deeper and more painful than a nice chat over a cup of coffee while sprightly music plays in the background. As Paul S. Fiddes writes, the suffering of God operates at a deep level:

If, to begin with, we take the theodicy of consolation, the affirmation that God is "alongside us" in our suffering may be understood as our involvement in currents of relational love that are already there before us. God is present because we are present in God. We are not simply accompanied by another individual who suffers, but embraced by movements of suffering love—like those, for instance, between a father who has lost a beloved son and a son who has been forsaken and abandoned by all whom he loves. (162)

If one objects that the relationship the church calls the Trinity is exclusive to God's person and, therefore, unable to serve as a foundation and motivation for Christians and the church's reaching out in relationships, then the Christian will point back to the missional nature of the Trinity. "God suffers not only 'with' but 'as' and 'in' us in the interweaving relationship of the divine dance" (186). The nature of the Trinity allows God to be fully present with humanity:

Because God is triune, God can bless us. Because God blesses the other in God, God can bless the other without. Because God reaches out to another already within, God is not contained by the Trinity's inner life, but can reach also to us. (Rogers 271)

The nature of the Trinity is inclusive enough to suffer with those who come into that relationship.

If reaching out to others is at the heart of eternity and of God, the church would be foolish to look past the power of that reaching out. "When we are resonating with the eternal love frequencies of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there is also an enormous release of energy, and we are thrust forth in mission" (Seamands 164). With this understanding, suffering with one another is not a chore or something the Christian will have to remember to include; it is simply the natural overflow of mission and relationship.

The link between suffering and mission should not go unnoticed. The potential for shared suffering provides important opportunities for reaching out to those who are not in the community. Joining with others in their pain may be the greatest opening the church has to share the gospel in modern culture:

We often ourselves feel the tensions of strained or broken relationships. As we become sensitive to these needs, they may become for all of us metaphors of our great need for the grace of God, and the means by which we will understand something more of that central transaction between humanity and God on the cross.

Here are materials for discovering the point in our culture which may provide an understanding of Christ's death on the cross. Underlying our surface optimism, there is an abyss of emotional hunger and suffering in our culture. (Dyrness 148)

The ability to suffer with one another is a powerful entry point into today's culture, into mission. The entry point is consistent with Trinitarian thought:

In the incarnation of the Son, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), God's desire and intention to pour himself into us and draw us into himself is fully revealed. Through this act of self-giving, divinity flowed into humanity and humanity was drawn into divinity. (Seamands 145)

The ability to suffer with others, though, is too rarely the focal point of preaching or a strategy for responding faithfully to the nature of God.

Because Jesus is eternally a part of the Trinity, then to invite a person to accept Jesus is to invite a person to accept the God who reveals God's self in and through the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The very nature of the mission of Jesus serves as evidence of this truth, and the church dare not separate suffering from the mission of Jesus. One indication of the depth of a relationship will be whether or not the participants in that relationship are able to suffer with one another. If a relationship is trinitarian in nature, then people agonize together as well as celebrate together. The burden of suffering on behalf of another can be so overwhelming that it points to the need for Christians to reach out as part of a broader community (in pairs, at least, preferably more) in order to share the burden of the weight of that suffering.

The Life and Ministry of Jesus

The life of Jesus reveals that he began his ministry in community and that he called and sent his followers in community.

The Beginning of the Ministry of Jesus

The traditional view of the mission of Jesus is that he began his public ministry alone and then, after beginning his ministry, called the twelve apostles into relationship with him. Any concept of Jesus as a loner in ministry is a misunderstanding of the nature of his public ministry. Imagining Jesus as a lonely, itinerate preacher who was baptized

by a distant relative before deciding to start a community is to imagine a him through an individualistic lens.

Jesus began his mission and ministry in community. “For the synoptic gospels the messianic call of Jesus begins with his baptism in the Spirit of God” (Moltmann 71). Because baptism is more than a mere dipping of the body in water but includes incorporation into an eschatological community, the public ministry of Jesus began in relationship to John the Baptizer as the Godhead proclaimed the fullness of the Son’s relationship to the Father through the bond of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the ministry of Jesus did not begin in isolation; it began in the proclamation of and formation of a community, of a relationship. It began before Jesus uttered a single word of preaching insight or healed the first sick person. It began as the Father uttered a word over the Son through the Spirit—in the presence of a fourth person, John the Baptizer, who came proclaiming the kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Luke includes all persons of the Trinity in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21b-22, NIV)

When God’s Spirit proclaimed the relationship between the Father and the Son, the earthly mission of Jesus had properly begun. Love, relationship, and the bond between a father and a son were the true marks of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. These preceded and provided for his relational ministry.

Jesus Called Others

With the Trinity as the bedrock for mission, one readily finds examples in Scripture of Jesus *reaching out in relationships* for the purpose of celebrating the presence of the kingdom of God. The relationships are sometimes limited in scope, as in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Sometimes the relationships are significantly protracted, as when Jesus calls and nurtures the disciples. In at least one example from the New Testament, the relationship between two Christians becomes the basis for including a third person, as in the letter from the Apostle Paul to Philemon, pleading on behalf of Onesimus. Whether in the home of Mary and Martha or in the befriending of Zacchaeus, Jesus appears to have used relationships as the seedbed for bearing the fruit of the kingdom of God.

Alternatively, the rejection of a relationship signifies the rejection of the kingdom of God. One remembers the difficulty Jesus had in his hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) and the many instances in which certain Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes are said to have dismissed Jesus and, as a result, missed seeing the kingdom of God.

Reaching Out in Relationship: A Case Study in Luke

The relationship between Levi and Jesus is indicative of the manner in which Jesus reached out in relationship. Assuming continuity between the events within the Gospel of Luke, Jesus used the occasion of eating with Levi to solidify a relationship that would lead Levi into the kingdom. Later, Jesus sent Levi, as one of the twelve, on a mission into the villages where they relied upon new relationships as a basis for declaring, one supposes, the nearness of the kingdom of God. Still later, Jesus sent the seventy (or seventy-two) disciples on a mission to the villages of Galilee. This time Luke

tells the reader that Jesus sent them two-by-two (in relationship) to go into villages. He told them to develop relationships with their hosts and to declare the nearness of the kingdom of God with word and deed.

Luke does not specifically mention Levi, or any other disciple, by name in the sending of the twelve or the seventy. The reader is safe, though, in assuming that Levi was one of the sent ones. The mission of the twelve, and then the mission of the seventy, was to proclaim the presence of and the nearness of the kingdom of God on the basis of their relationship with Jesus, whose principal message was that the kingdom of God was at hand. At no point does Luke tell the reader that Jesus sent these disciples to proclaim this message as individuals.

As already stated, the temptation for American readers of these texts is to interpret them through an overly individualistic lens, a lens not informed by the nature of God's self-giving and relationship. Perhaps a fresh look at the picture Luke paints for Levi, the tax collector whom Jesus turned into a disciple, will be helpful.

The Calling of Levi: Luke 5:27-31

Commentators on and interpreters of Scripture tend to regret the lack of background provided by the gospel writers when recording the call of the disciples. The typical questions are whether or not Simon had a relationship with Jesus before Jesus lifted his voice above the waters of the Lake of Gennesaret and told him to put his nets into the deep water (Luke 5:1-5) or if Jesus knew Levi before he called him to become a follower (Luke 5:27). Interpreters ask these questions and ones like them because they intuit that without some kind of relationship already in place Jesus' requests would have been unlikely to succeed.

Though the scriptural witness is not explicit, the existence of a preceding relationship is likely. Simon's first recorded word to Jesus in Luke is "Master" (Luke 5:5). With two simple words Jesus motivated Levi. Levi "got up, left everything and followed him" (Luke 5:28). In Luke's Gospel, these are the only two individualized accounts of the calling of disciples. When referring to the remainder of the group often labeled as "the Disciples," Luke (6:12-16) simply tells the reader that Jesus called together his disciples and chose the twelve from among them. In these cases relationships already existed.

Although Scripture leaves the reader to speculate regarding how well Jesus' followers may have known him before he called them to follow him, the reader need not speculate as to the first actions of at least *one* of the disciples. Levi, upon becoming a follower of Jesus, threw a party. Levi's was no private party:

He wanted all his former vocational associates to meet his new Master. He wished his colleagues to learn from his newly found Teacher; to know the thrill of being accepted by a true peer. The first mission field for a new idea, cause, project or person is one's immediate family and friends. The community of publicans was numerous in the province. And "others" of like repute were in the city. (O. Crouch 67)

The invitation to the dinner was *from* Levi *to* Jesus. Jesus was not the host of the party. Jesus did not invite Levi to his own house, nor did Jesus rent a banquet facility and throw a party in Levi's honor. Instead, together and in community, Levi and Jesus began celebrating the arrival of the kingdom of God with those who were closest to Levi. "Jesus is being honored, and at table with a large gathering of Levi's old associates, tax collectors, and 'others.' These 'others' will be identified by critics among the Pharisees and scribes as 'sinners'" (Craddock 30). The careful reader quickly discerns that as a team, Jesus and Levi were reaching out to people who were a mixture of "sameness" and

“otherness.” In keeping with the nature of the Trinity, Jesus’ ability to interact with people who were marked by otherness was the key to his reaching out in relationship..

The otherness of the partygoers became the point at issue with people who wanted to define relationship entirely in terms of sameness. For many in that culture, sameness was a requirement for relationship. Crossing lines into otherness was religiously and culturally forbidden. While lines between groups of people continue today to operate as ones that people should be careful about crossing, Greco-Roman and Hebraic cultures defined those lines even more carefully than contemporary culture does. Any crossing of those lines in the Greco-Roman and Hebraic cultures met with severe criticism:

Levi’s response—in Luke only—is to hold a *big* [original emphasis] feast for Jesus *in his house* [original emphasis] to which *a large party of tax-collectors and others* [original emphasis] were invited. This combines two characteristic themes of Luke’s: he regularly portrays Jesus as a guest at meals which become the opportunity for teaching (7.36; 10.38; 11.37; 14.1, 7, 12, 15), something that may reflect the setting of Luke and his readers in cities of the Empire where both in practice and in literature meals were occasions for philosophical debate; but he also develops the charge against Jesus, already found in Mark, that he both associated and ate with *tax-collectors and sinners* [original emphasis] (5.30; 7.34; 15.1-2; 19.6). (Lieu 44)

The modern reader of Luke should guard against underestimating the nature of this offense. Modern culture may uphold certain taboos regarding with whom people should and should not eat, but the lines between modern categories are fairly fluid and open to violation.

The lines of separation were much more formal and unbending in the ancient world, as they were both religious and cultural in nature:

In this the first of several meal scenes in Luke, the narrator blends together two deeply rooted traditions, table fellowship as it was practiced in the Second Temple period, especially by the Pharisees, on the one hand, and the practice and representation of the Greco-Roman symposium on the

other. Jesus' *practices* [original emphasis] at the table, manifest in this scene primarily in his choice of eating companions but also in the depiction of this as a festive occasion, are joined with his *teaching* [original emphasis] at the table. Both communicate, via deed and word, the nature of his ministry and the concomitant enlargement of the boundaries of God's people. This expansion does not come by the rejection of one people and the embracing of another, but through Jesus' dispensing with all varieties of credentials for membership other than repentance.... Jesus is being cited for a break of convention, when it is the Pharisees and their scribes whose behavior—raiding an unseemly point of discussion—is out of bounds. (Green, *Gospel of Luke* 244)

Despite the unbending lines of separation, the ideal of relationship was so central to the mission of Jesus that he was willing to break with convention in order to pursue that goal.

Bringing the outsiders into the Trinitarian relationship was a primary function of the ministry of Jesus. As Joel B. Green states, "Sinners are excluded from the company of the faithful by their sin, but in Jesus' ministry they are forgiven (5:17-26) and invited into a community of discipleship" (*Theology of Luke* 63). The missional inclusion of others into an existing relationship was more than the message of Jesus; it was his practice. Jesus' means of inclusion matched his message.

Perhaps table fellowship and the sharing of meals is where community expresses itself to its fullest, and so the table became the place where Jesus took his relational stand with Levi. One can imagine a very different message if Levi's first action had been to thank Jesus for inviting him into relationship and then to go away by himself proclaiming the goodness of God. Such an account would be far less scandalous for the critics of Jesus, as Green notes in his reading of the Gospel of Luke:

Luke's report of the encounters of Levi and Zacchaeus with Jesus brings to the foreground a persistent theme in the Third Gospel—namely, table fellowship. In Luke's account, not only is Jesus repeatedly at the table with the wrong people, but he also continues to attract opposition from the Jewish leadership and populace for his troublesome table companions (e.g., 5:29-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:1-10). (*Theology of Luke* 86-87)

For Luke, Jesus' encounter with Levi was scandalous precisely because Jesus was willing to be in full relationship with the tax collector and then use that relationship as a celebrative occasion for further mission. Relationship was not just the *result* of the call of Jesus. For Levi, relationship *was* the call of Jesus. Relationship precedes the call of sinners, incorporates sinners, and calls the converted to do the same for others.

The Mission of the Twelve: Luke 9:1-6

If mission and relationship are necessary companions, then Jesus must have observed this principle when he sent the disciples on mission trips. Luke is not immediately clear regarding the manner in which Jesus sent the twelve on their first mission. Mark 6:7 reports that Jesus sent the twelve in groups of two. Luke omits this detail regarding pairing. If Jesus sent the disciples in pairs, then Luke neglects to mention that point in 9:16, despite being intentional about the pairing of disciples when he reports the sending of the seventy. One could conflate the Lukan account with the Markan account and assume continuity; however, such a conflation would be unfaithful to the narrative whole as Luke presents it. To assume continuity would be a mistake. As Fred Craddock states, "They do not go two by two;... Luke reserves that for the Seventy" (121). While Craddock is clear that they did not go two by two, he does not suggest how Jesus did send them.

Because Luke will be intentional about the pairing of the seventy, Luke did not want the reader to assume that Jesus paired disciples when sending them on their first mission. The inability, within the narrative framework of Luke, to commit to the idea of the twelve being sent in pairs leaves the reader with two options.

The first possibility is that Jesus sent the twelve as individuals, but this option is unlikely. If Luke is careful to mention the pairing of disciples he would probably be just as careful to mention the individualization of them. Any preference for this option would likely reflect a modern, Western prejudice for seeing events in terms of the individual.

The second possibility, and the preferred one, is that Jesus sent the twelve as a single group. Semantically, this option is best. Luke refers to the twelve as a single unit. Luke records no individual stories of triumph or defeat for the reader. The twelve appear to leave and to return at the same time (Luke 9:10). Green points to Luke 10:10-17 (the feeding of the five thousand) as evidence that the twelve appear to be acting in unison following the missionary journey (E-mail). Their time together in mission seems to have solidified the relationships that already existed for the twelve.

The very fact that Luke intercalates this episode with Herod's concern over the mission points to the probability that the twelve were operating as a unit. Rulers tend not to fear isolated, itinerate preachers. King Herod would likely see a single band of twelve itinerate preachers, however, as a symbolic move toward the Jewish desire for self-rule. "The meaning of an action of this sort must at the time have been so evident that the early Christian witnesses did not find it necessary to explain: the twelve disciples could refer only to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lohfink 10). Clearly, the scenario that best fits the biblical accounts is that the twelve attempted the first missionary journey as a unit:

This actually makes good sense from a socio-historical vantage point. Even had Herod heard of the work of Jesus, the Galilean focus of one person's activity might have appeared relatively localized and nonthreatening to a Roman ruler. Luke narrates the dissemination of Jesus' message (in word and deed) by means of those acting on his behalf, however, and this is an altogether different matter that might merit closer scrutiny. (Green, *Gospel of Luke* 356)

The fact that when the twelve travel they represent more than their number, the whole of a reconstituted Israel, points the reader away from an individualized reading of this account.

The Mission of the Seventy: Luke 10:1-12

Jesus began his commissioning of the seventy (or seventy-two) with the pronouncement that “[t]he harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2). With so much harvesting to accomplish, one might suspect that Jesus would send them each to a different place, spreading the too few laborers as far as possible. On the contrary, the abundance of work and the relative scarcity of workers do not override the need for mission from within the nexus of relationship:

But the “harvest was great” and he had limited time and few workers. So he planned another sweeping preaching mission, this time he “appointed and sent them two by two before his face unto every city and place where he was about to go.”

Two is better than twice one! In life’s tasks men working alone inevitably fall into periods of deep depression, dark discouragement and defeat. But working in twos the gifts of one support and sustain the other. This is especially true in the teaching of truth in a world darkened by falsehood. At creation God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” So it is that Jesus strengthened the message of the kingdom by deputizing the heralds “two by two.” Indeed “two” is more than twice one! (O. Crouch 165-66)

While Owen Crouch believes the need for *support* is the reason for the pairing of the disciples, more is at work in this text.

Some evidence suggests that Jesus sent them in pairs for their own safety. “This change of circumstances, with the hostility that comes with it, gives rise to the sending of these others ‘in pairs’” (Green, *Gospel of Luke* 413). In his book *The Gospel of Luke*, Green is silent on the lack of pairing when he addresses the first mission, but his

comment on the sending of the seventy seems to indicate the possibility that Jesus had previously sent them as individuals. If, however, the original twelve traveled as a single unit, then traveling as pairs could be *more* dangerous than the first mission. If safety is Jesus' concern, Luke does a poor job of communicating that concern.

One can see a pattern in the ministry of Jesus for mission within the context of relationship. Far from being revolutionary, though, this concept of mission in relationship is standard for the ancient world:

Did not also John the Baptist send two of his disciples to Jesus with an important question (Luke 7:19)? At a later time we notice that Peter and John bring their united testimony (Acts 3:1; 4:1, 13, 19); that Barnabas and Saul are sent out together on their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3); and that afterward Paul and Silas are together "commended by the brothers to the grace of God" (15:40). And let us not forget Barnabas and Mark (15:39), Judas and Silas (15:27), Timothy and Silas (17:14), and Timothy and Erastus (19:22). (Hendriksen 571-72)

Somehow, through the passing of time and the changing of cultures, the modern Western Christian tends unwittingly to assume that the work of mission is essentially an individual enterprise. The assumption of the primacy of the individual runs counter to Scripture and to the mission of God. God's mission begins in a Trinitarian relationship while sending the Son and the Spirit in order to engraft humanity into that relationship.

Reaching Out in Relationships: The Literature

The literature reveals that the dominant view of evangelism is, for much of the church, a speaking/hearing event between individuals. The language of *showing* or *demonstrating* versus *telling* one's faith is somewhat foreign to the overtly evangelical wing of the church.

The focus on speech/word is not the case across the board, however. When James F. Engle and H. Wilbur Norton define evangelism, they do not limit the process to correct

thought or the sharing of information alone. They carefully include the physical and communal realm of the life of Christ in their definition:

True evangelism is the overflow of a God-enriched life, and the entire body engages, to one degree or another, in sharing the Good News through lifestyle, deeds, and words. In addition, there is healthy recognition that Christ was concerned also for the physical and other nonspiritual needs of man. Thus the Church is characterized by a full-orbed ministry following the example of Christ, and its presence will be felt in a community. (143)

Despite their care to include the “physical and the nonspiritual needs of man” in their definition of evangelism, they label the path one travels in becoming a follower of Christ as “[t]he *Spiritual* [emphasis mine]-Decision Process” (45). In fact, their well-known “scale of conversion” does not introduce the physical elements of conversion until *after* conversion has taken place. The scale itself utilizes the language of having “awareness,” “grasping implications,” having “positive attitudes toward,” and making “decisions.” Clearly their bias toward a speaking/hearing model of evangelism becomes the central focus (45).

The speaking/hearing model of evangelism tends to lead toward an overly individualistic understanding of the communication of the gospel. Even if the communication happens within the context of a community or crowd, the hearer of the gospel will have a sense that the speaker intended his or her words for each person, individually. In this manner the church focuses the evangelistic event on the individual and on conveying information that leads to salvation. As a result this wing of Christianity will see evangelism primarily in terms of convincing people who have not declared their belief in Christ to *hear* the truth of the gospel, *assent* to its fundamental truth, and then *respond*. Usually the response is verbal so as to avoid any implication that one has

accomplished any physical works in an effort to earn his or her salvation, further separating knowledge from action.

The emphasis on the individual leads to a skewing of the methods of evangelism toward self-interest. Quoted by Andy Crouch, Brian McLaren states his objections:

This has been evangelicalism's model.... Fundamentally it's about getting yourself "saved"—in old style evangelicalism—or improving your life in the new style. Either way, the Christian life is really about you and your needs. Once your needs are met, then we think about how you can serve the church. And then, if there's anything left over, we ask how the church might serve the world. (The Emergent Mystique 39)

More and more Christians are questioning both the validity and usefulness of this model because it focuses too narrowly on what happens in one's mind and what happens after one dies. The model tends to confine the acceptance of the kingdom of God to one's thoughts or feelings or heart, to the notable exclusion of one's actions.

A necessary correction to this model can be found in the voice of McLaren:

For McLaren, the gospel is not primarily informational but relational/missional. That is, imparting information about how to be individually saved is secondary to inviting people into relationship with a king and with members of a kingdom whose foremost concern is wholeness for a broken world, rather than an insurance policy for eternal destiny. (A. Crouch, Emergent Evangelism 42)

For McLaren, and for an emerging church movement, the church must shift the lens of the camera from the *bad news* of hell and of God's consigning the world to damnation, to the *good news* of God's willingness to include all people in God's kingdom for the purposes of bringing holistic healing to the earth and all that is in the earth—the good news of relationship and integration during this life as well as in the life to come.

For the relational version of the kingdom to be celebrated, proclaimed, and lived, God will more likely use a community, a group that seeks first the kingdom of God and,

while serving the kingdom, both ushers in and awaits the conversion of non-kingdom people into God's economy.

The pursuit of this kind of kingdom precludes any assertion that the religious experience can be an individualistic or private one, contained almost entirely in the heart or mind or soul of the hearer. As Lesslie Newbigin writes, the early Church never intended the message of Jesus to be lived in theory or alone:

[T]he earliest church never availed itself of the protection it could have had under Roman law as a *cultus privatus* dedicated to the pursuit of a purely personal and spiritual salvation for its members. Such private religion flourished as vigorously in the world of the Eastern Mediterranean as it does in North America today. (*Foolishness* 99)

For Newbigin a privatized faith becomes only too probable within the context of modern Western civilization and is a by-product of the “public world of what our culture calls facts, in distinction from the private world of beliefs, opinions, and values. This is the operative plausibility structure of our modern world” (14). The dominant Christian mindset has unwittingly played into the Enlightenment distinctions between facts and beliefs, between public and private worlds, by proclaiming people can somehow hear, receive, and practice the gospel in isolation.

Gerhard Lohfink and others like him see the flaw in the kind of thinking that allows for the public/private, physical/spiritual distinction:

Jesus did not envision the people of God which he sought to gather as a purely spiritual, purely religious community—as a society in human hearts.... Theses of this sort ... fail to do justice to his intentions. The discipleship to which Jesus called was not invisible discipleship; his eating with sinners was not invisible eating; his cures of the sick were not invisible cures—no more than his bloody death on the cross was an invisible event. (28)

If the church takes its cues from the perspective of the kingdom of God breaking into spiritual and physical reality, then its efforts to celebrate the kingdom of God will need to focus the message of Christ on earth-life as well as on the afterlife. Such a move will require the church to embrace models of evangelism that unite word and deed as an integrated whole.

The church is already discovering what happens when the message is primarily focalized on one's eventual escape into the heavenly realms. Increasingly, the world views the message of the church as otherworldly, as little more than an insurance policy against going to hell. Such models are efficient at bringing people to the point of decision when used within a culture that agrees upon the concept of a wrathful God and a literal hell, but the models fall apart in cultures that dismiss these concepts as power plays by the church to gain converts. In a culture that believes in a permissive, nonjudgmental deity, and the absence of wrath as one of God's options, the church loses the ability to bring people to the feet of God through appeals to justice and judgment.

In response to the challenge of testifying to the nature of God in a new culture, Steve and Janie Sjogren call for a more balanced view of the church and the message of the gospel:

Most of the time, we've been too binary in our view of the church's mission. We're either the proclaiming church *or* [original emphasis] the healing church. But we're supposed to be doing both of these. If we aren't a "both-and" church, we're simply living in word but not in deed. That sort of love is not genuine according to Jesus. (13)

The church, in order to witness to the nature of Christ within the context of this culture, needs to model participation in God's salvation in *this* life, the physical, relational world.

The actions of the church in the physical world become a part of the message of the gospel and, therefore, a part of the evangelistic activity of the community of God. Recent generations of American Christianity have stressed that right belief precedes right action, but some disagree with this pattern. Brett P. Webb-Mitchell writes that, “In the early days of the church, the emphasis in catechetical instruction was on virtuous actions or gestures followed by belonging and believing” (163). Gestures *and* belief are integral ingredients of the message of God. Webb-Mitchell goes so far as to assert that a “gesture does not need to be accompanied by words: it is itself a statement” (199). His assertion does not imply that words are *never* needed, only that on occasion the activities or the gestures (the liturgies) of the kingdom of God can speak without the need for verbal interpretation.

The gestures are effective because they connect with an entire community of belief and practice. The gestures only make sense in a network of relationships that centered around the kingdom of God. According to Arias, though, the church has too often failed to focus on this kingdom:

[T]he kingdom-of-God theme has practically disappeared from evangelistic preaching and has been ignored by traditional “evangelicalism.” The evangelistic message has been centered in personal salvation, individual conversion, and incorporation into the church. The kingdom of God as a parameter or perspective or as content of the proclamation has been virtually absent. (xv)

The church can only model this aspect of salvation by committing to meaningful, God-honoring relationships with a kingdom perspective and an understanding that within this reign of God, God brings the message to its fullest flowering. The model will have to do just that, *model* the relationships to which God is calling the unbeliever. As long as Christians conceive of evangelism as a one-on-one enterprise, the kingdom relationship

aspect of conversion will remain hidden from view, at least during most of the initial contact.

The ushering in of the kingdom of God, and the relationships that consist therein, is not something the church can control, so it remains a project that is larger than the church:

We cannot bring good news on our own. We are called to proclaim the Gospel together, in community. There is divine wisdom here. “If two of you on earth agree to anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:19-20). (Nouwen 58)

The scope of the kingdom and the inability of the church to organize, manage, and administrate the kingdom should make the church more than willing to work with others. Instead, because the unmanageability has proven too much, the church is often tempted to reduce its goals to something more measurable—such as attendance in worship, the number of people who raise their hands in response to a message, or the number of people who participate in a church-sponsored program.

Because kingdom goals tend to be nebulous, the church sometimes reduces evangelism to self-perpetuation and self-service. This confusion has corrupted good intentions while the church has gone about the business of saving souls. Even when the church attempts to serve the world, many people who are unchurched question the church’s motivation for that service. Unchurched people become suspicious of the church’s intentions, and too often the church’s critics are on solid footing in their suspicions. The culture is savvy to the motives behind the assertion of Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg when they state that investing in friendships is “paying the relational rent—in order to gain the person’s trust and respect, as well as to earn the right to talk to

them about spiritual issues” (98). In this scenario the building of relationship is merely an obligation and a means to an end, not an overflow of the nature of God in the lives of God’s followers. The church segregates the relationship itself from the news of the in-breaking kingdom of God, as a mere prelude not as part of the thing itself.

Others have seen the danger in using relationships as nothing more than a ploy to gain a hearing of the gospel. As Joseph C. Aldrich states, “Cultivation is an appeal to the heart through the building of a relationship. Cultivation isn’t a relationship with a hook. Quite frankly, I don’t want to be your project. You probably don’t want to be mine, either” (59). The church must constantly be alert to the pitfalls of “service-as-a-hook” to the gospel because Christians can, unwittingly or not, use service improperly. As Lohfink states, “Even service can subtly be transformed into domination. The bearer of authority can avoid this most abysmal of all temptations only by grasping failures and defeats as a co-dying with Christ” (120). The gospel foundation for building a relationship is one that flows through the church as an outpouring of the nature of God. Relationships are not advertisements; they are an essential part of the kingdom and the King.

Wesley warns individual Christians to have pure intentions when serving others and engaging in acts of piety; impure intentions include using such acts in order to be seen by others. “What Jesus forbids is our doing good works for the *sole purpose* [original emphasis] of being seen by others” (qtd in Kinghorn 2:#153). The warning is equally valid for the church as a whole. The church that sounds the trumpet when providing for the poor benefits from the same warning. Wesley’s warning does not mean that all is to be accomplished in secret: “Do not conceal your good works if you are fully persuaded in your own mind that in doing them publicly you yourself or others will be

enabled ... to do still more good works” (154). His words point to the need for integration of word and deed and intention, of ministering in a holistic fashion. “[O]ur works of mercy should include ministering to people’s bodies and souls” (3:#199).

The church will be wise to promote identifiable *ways of being* in the world as an outpouring of the relational nature of God. Leaders will need to challenge the people of the church to risk establishing relationships. Then, in the messiness, joy, and suffering that accompanies these relationships, Christians will find themselves caught up in the realization that the messiness is actually the power of God moving in the lives around them. Relationships are not a controlled activity; rather a risky one.

The Meaning of Reaching Out in Relationships

In practice, the phrase *reaching out in relationships* can mean almost anything. The possibilities are endless. When a vision statement allows for too many potential meanings, it will fail to communicate identifiable strategies.

A very real option is to allow the statement to mean whatever each individual in a congregation decides it means, which effectively is the current state of things at Grandview. The ambiguity leads, however, to a too diffuse manner of serving. Ambiguity leads to confusion regarding what one could or should be doing, or at least where one might start. This uncertainty also fuels an overly individualistic practice of the kingdom of God.

For people to minister together, they need to be ministering with common goals and methods. The task of determining the common goals and methods for Grandview’s *reaching out in relationships* is incumbent upon church leadership. Andy Stanley, Reggie

Joiner, and Lane Jones identify such alignment in mission as life-giving for a congregation:

Every one of us has a God-given itch to belong to something that is bigger than ourselves. Volunteers need to know that their investment of time is going to make a difference. They will work hard and make incredible sacrifices as long as they know what the goal is and that what they're doing actually counts; they simply desire to find meaning and significance in their work. No one likes to go through the motions just doing menial tasks. Everyone needs to clearly understand what they are accomplishing. (72-73)

A commonly understood goal is part of the power of a proper vision statement. The work of the leadership is not finished, however, once they have adopted a mission statement with clearly defined objectives. "The end here is not the mission statement itself. It's aligning people behind key goals" (Brown 4). The leadership must set forth common goals for the congregation to have alignment and focus.

The alignment and focus must not be self-centered. As Newbiggin states, "The Church is not an end in itself. The growth and prosperity of the Church is not the goal of history. The Church is not the kingdom of God" (*Gospel* 133). A church that focuses on its own numeric growth, emotional health, or fiscal needs suddenly becomes distracted from a kingdom vision.

Recognizing that the establishment of the kingdom of God is not the same thing as the growth of a church, recognizing that the kingdom of God is bigger than the church, frees the church to serve God and the world by utilizing resources that God offers beyond the boundaries of the church itself. Jesus was particularly adept at working beyond the traditional borders of his faith community:

The Church is not authorized to represent the reign of God, his justice and his peace, in any other way than that in which Jesus represented it, namely

by being partners with him in challenging the powers of evil and bearing in its own life the cost of the challenge. (Newbigin, *Gospel* 134)

By adopting this perspective, the church finds God has given more resources to the church than might have been previously acknowledged.

God frees, indeed, *calls* the church to take cues from the life of Jesus and to cultivate servant relationships with people outside its religious circles. Despite this call, the church has often been guilty of activity that insulates Christians from non-Christians. “Studies show that most Christians don’t have very many—if any—friendships with non-Christians. The majority of church members can no longer quote the words in John 3:16 about God’s great love for the world, much less articulate a clear gospel illustration” (Mittelberg 20). Clearly, the church needs to train Christians to cultivate kingdom relationships, not just for the sake of evangelism, but for the sake of the church’s self-understanding and role. Nothing presses a person to contemplate his or her own purpose like the challenge of the *otherness* of the person he or she serves.

The Look of Reaching Out in Relationships

The practices of reaching out in service to others run the gamut from the extraordinarily common to the outlandish, sometimes bordering on the bizarre. Some of the leaders in experimenting with methods of reaching out to a community are Sjogren and Sjogren. They list strategies for becoming a serving congregation in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. They open with the following caveat, one that cannot be overemphasized:

The needy are streetwise. They can read through motives behind your actions more quickly than the average person. If they perceive that you’re seeing them as a potential notch in your salvation belt, they may play the game overtly, but their hearts will be offended. Don’t use acts of mercy and generosity as a means only to “close the deal” or “pray the prayer” or

“save” each person you touch. Focus on demonstrating God’s love and your own love for them. (16)

Steve Sjogren gained notoriety in Cincinnati for his willingness to clean public toilets. His practice is to carry toilet-cleaning supplies with him and simply offer to clean the facilities in gas stations, restaurants, or some other such public environment much to the surprise and relief of the employees of these establishments. As one can easily discern from Sjogren and Sjogren’s book, they provide a long list of ideas for this kind of service. One such ministry involved going from door-to-door in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and offering toilet paper and prayer. He recounts a story from two women who did just that. Betsy and Sally offered “Christian toilet paper” as they traveled from door-to-door. They also offered to pray with each person. Most refused the offer; however, one woman who had recently suffered through an abortion broke down crying and asking for help (Sjogren 58-59).

Sjogren and Sjogren include in the servant approach everything from manicuring peoples’ nails in a public place to developing “free stores” for the economically disadvantaged (30, 98). If a church does serves in the community for long enough and with enough regularity, it will develop a personality of service in the community. Sjogren explains that a church’s identity is one of the keys to its ability to speak:

What’s your outreach identity? It’s your primary credibility-gainer. Your outreach identity is more important than your worship identity. My primary approach to servant evangelism is cleaning toilets at gas stations and restaurants. I know others who rake leaves. Others give away sodas to show Christ’s love. (67)

With such offers of service, Sjogren’s church has made itself known to the greater Cincinnati community.

While this kind of service represents an improvement over the idea that evangelization is merely the imparting of information, it continues to have the subtle ring of self-interest, of an attempt to hook unsuspecting unchurched people by the use of service. Beyond the question of whether or not sufficient authenticity stands behind his push for service is the question of whether genuine relationships can actually grow from the brief encounters involving the distribution of various staples and items such as toilet paper. Deeper relationships do not appear to be the goal during these episodes of servant evangelism. Also, quick encounters are doubtfully sufficient venues for inviting people into an existing relationship, even if those serving and proclaiming the presence of the kingdom of God do so in community. Many of these methods also fail the test of whether or not they allow Christians to develop a relationship with the potential to include mutuality in suffering, which was one of the key elements of the Trinitarian relationships previously discussed.

Not all of Sjogren and Sjogren's methods produce such brief encounters. In particular, their methods include such promising long-term acts of service as developing literacy among immigrants and nonreaders (92-93). They report that their church developed a servant relationship with people in nursing homes, where one would hardly expect the recipients of these relationships to be marked for the church rolls (82-83). Other areas of prolonged service include creating a relationship with the local Ronald McDonald's House, mentoring children and using carpentry skills to help neighborhoods (58, 93, 98-99). These methods have the potential for developing kingdom relationships, especially if Christians serve in community as pairs, triads, or more.

Sjogren and Sjogren identify four basic levels of reaching out that require increasingly higher commitments of financing and time. The progression begins with level one (relief—meeting an immediate need), continues to level two (reconciliation—seeing people get right with God and one another), level three (reconstruction—creating new economic and life opportunities), and finally to level four (relocation—becoming world changers).

Hybels and Mittelberg advocate a shift away from a concept of evangelism centered on brief verbal encounters. They advocate the use of *events* to serve as possible seedbeds for the sharing of the gospel. They call for Christians to consider throwing holiday parties, pie parties, or parties for children in the neighborhood. They remind readers that baptism receptions are opportunities for developing new relationships, as are the acts of sharing meals with acquaintances, watching a game with a friend, or participating in sporting activities together. Hybels and Mittelberg also tell readers to invite friends to join them in exercising, babysitting, planning and participating in children's activities, and planning strategic community workdays (110-12).

He popularized the use of what he calls “Matthew Parties,” which are “social events strategically designed to mix selected members of the ‘religious ranks’ and the ‘renegade ranks’” (Hybels and Mittelberg 109). They do not limit the form of these parties. He invites the Christian to use his or her imagination.

Hybel's paradigm represents a step forward from the “evangelism as information only” model. The problem with his model, though, is that it falls short of being an authentic attempt at relationship building. If, as Sjogren and Aldrich warn, people can

sense when they are someone's religious project, these events run the risk of being sniffed out by the unchurched and received as disingenuous.

Recalling Luke's account of the party Levi threw for Jesus and his friends, one wonders whether Levi invited Jesus to his banquet as a strategic, primarily evangelistic, ploy or as a way of celebrating the kingdom into which Jesus had invited him (Luke 5:27-31). When Jesus responded to the criticism that the Pharisees levied against him for eating with "tax collectors and sinners," he proclaimed that doctors are for the sick and that he came to call sinners to repentance. The dinner party appears to be a holistic, integrated event that would have combined word and deed, genuine celebration as well as proclamation.

Bridging the gap between the sometimes hit-and-run tactics of Sjogren's church and the relational evangelism approach of Hybels is Lewis. Lewis and Wilkins recount the development of what they call "Common Cause Groups." These are groups intentionally focused outside the church. Besides being opportunities for service, some have the potential for sustainable relationship building. Another advantage of these groups is that they tackle tasks that are simply too large for one person to attempt in isolation from other members of the kingdom of God.

Lewis' church, Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock, Arkansas, is celebrating the reign of God by going out into the community where almost anyone can join the dance. Lewis and Wilkins' list of Common Cause Groups includes adoptions services, assistance to a local Christian school, crisis pregnancy support, Crown Financial Ministry, deaf ministry, disaster follow-up, divorce care, divorce prevention, Habitat for Humanity, a Honduras missions support group, a service to match people with jobs,

community development groups, ministry to inner-city children, newly-wed and newlywed mentors, nursing home support, one-to-one evangelism groups, single parent support, public school mentoring, sporting groups, an Upward Bound basketball league, and another group that simply attempts to match community needs with the formation of new common cause groups (Lewis and Wilkins, 82-85).

In their various forms, these service and relational strategies are the methods garnering the most attention. Aldrich does not list specific activities, preferring instead to list the areas (or personal kingdoms) where one has influence and can be used by God as an in-breaking of the kingdom of God. He includes in his list fraternal clubs, service organizations, churches, athletic groups, political action groups, hobby-centered groups, business and professional associations, recreational/sporting groups, health clubs, symphony guilds, unions, supper clubs, gourmet groups, volunteer activities, and babysitting co-ops (Lewis and Wilkins 139-40). Even though he does not list specific activities, his arenas of influence include much overlap with the service activities that Sjogren, Hybels and Mittelberg, and Lewis and Wilkin's list.

The service and relational strategies have all been effective in their own ways. The progression away from the individualistic model of evangelism that focused almost entirely on the individualized sharing of information is traceable through Sjogren, Hybels and Mittelberg, and Lewis and Wilkins and begins to come into its own in a new way with Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson. While these authors do not offer a simple list, their methods are versions of servant evangelism. All of the churches represented by these leaders have impressive accomplishments, tangible ways in which the church has become a servant of God in the community.

These churches stop short, however, of connecting the actions of servant evangelism fully to the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. In most cases these authors perpetuate, at one level or another, the belief that doing the right thing gives the Christian the relational right to gain a hearing for the gospel, which is the end goal for developing relationships and offering service. While these opportunities for service and relationship can gain the Christian a hearing, one still must be careful not to allow that hearing of the gospel to become the isolated motivation for the relationship and service, forgetting that the relationship itself is a part of the gospel event. Rusaw and Swanson are aware of the importance of combining both:

Serving others puts us automatically into relationships with those we are serving and those with whom we are serving. Pastor Chip Sweney of Perimeter Church in Atlanta says, “As we serve those in need, it opens the door to share about the hope we have. People’s hearts are open when they see that you really care about them and their needs. Just the fact that you are serving will provoke questions for which you must have answers.” (122)

When I personally asked Rusaw how he avoids the trap of seeing service as little more than a relational hook, he spoke bluntly:

Don’t take this the wrong way, but we don’t do the “rah-rah” Jesus thing. We don’t wear church logos when we serve. We develop genuine relationships and wait for the moment when that relationship becomes a safe place to in which to speak.

In such models good deeds are ways genuinely to benefit others, to glorify God, to testify to the good news, ways to move people toward Christ, and a means of creating goodwill.

These authors appear to be less aware, however, that their good deeds *are* the actual gift of the kingdom of God itself, the in-breaking of God’s great gift of the kingdom. When the kingdom is physical and public, the service itself is not a hook; it is a sign. When the kingdom is found only in the heart and the mind of the believer, then the

in-breaking of the kingdom only becomes good news *after* the good news is believed by the person being served. Everything before that moment is somehow less than the kingdom of God. Even servant evangelism models represent a subtle but continued bifurcation of the kingdom of God as information versus formation. If the *real* desire is to share information helpful for salvation in the afterlife, then the church unwittingly separates the activity of God into physical and spiritual camps—with the spiritual camp being the one that *really* matters.

For the church to recognize the integration of *service* and *gospel*, it will have to reclaim the truth that the medium and the message are one. The question is not one of combining good deeds *with* the gospel. The two are not separate. Jesus did not heal people as a marketing strategy. His miracles and signs were not hooks. They were the actual thing he was preaching. The medium and the message were one. For Jesus the kingdom of God was near; it was arriving. He saw the kingdom when the lame walked, the blind saw, the oppressed were free, and the people realized that God is, indeed, king. The kingdom is both realized and eschatological in the healing, in the feeding, and in the verbal sharing of the good news of the life of Jesus. He proclaimed the kingdom of God seamlessly, with words and works.

As Brad J. Kallenberg points out that when Stephen preached in Acts 7, he was careful to make his methods fit the message. “While Stephen’s energetic, in-your-face tenor clearly placed him in the line of the Old Testament prophets, he stopped short of coercive tactics.... He neither retaliated against nor imprecated his persecutors” (49). Had Stephen decided that the message of Jesus required or justified the use of coercive tactics, the message itself would have immediately changed in its fundamental nature.

In Luke 10:9, when Jesus sent the seventy on their mission, he told them to eat with the people, to heal the people, and to tell the people that the kingdom of God was near. The healing *was* the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. To view the actions of Jesus and his disciples, the actions of *eating with* and *healing* the people as a strategic campaign to earn the right to gain a hearing would be a mistake. Eating in community and serving in God's name are both things that happen when God's kingdom arrives—not primarily ways to convince people to listen to Christians. The service *is* the kingdom; the relationship *is* the kingdom, the word proclaimed *is* the kingdom.

If Voskuil is right, the arrival of the kingdom of God is the key to countercultural evangelism in America. “The ideology of individualism, so deeply rooted in the religious traditions of America, must be countered with a proclamation of the gospel which stresses community and kingdom” (27). For a church to understand relationships the church must embrace a concept of the kingdom of God that does not divorce the physical from the spiritual dimensions of the gospel.

Reaching Out in Relationships: The Kingdom of God

For the purposes of clarity and alignment, Grandview will need a shared vision of the kingdom of God, a shared understanding of the kingdom's borders, and a shared means of focusing upon it. Perhaps because Jesus never defined the kingdom in clear-cut terms, ambiguity about the kingdom of God exists in the church.

Generations of the church have imagined the kingdom of God in very certain terms, confident about who was, and was not, in the kingdom. For Alexander Campbell, one of the founders of the fellowship of churches with which Grandview is affiliated, the distinction was clear—a person was either wholly in or wholly out of the kingdom:

Into every kingdom, human or divine, there is a legal door of admission.... Water is the element in which this burial and resurrection is performed, according to the constitutional laws of the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence Jesus connects the water and the Spirit when speaking of entering this Kingdom of God. (171-72)

Campbell, and his like, were making their way through the religious landscape in a very different day, a day with less religious pluralism in the culture. The church's tendency to minimize kingdom language has changed, according to Newbigin, due largely to the efforts of Jones: "At the time of the Tambaram Conference the veteran Indian missionary E. Stanely Jones carried on a vigorous argument that missions were taking the wrong road, that their proper concern was not the Church but the Kingdom of God" (*Sign* 9). Newbigin goes on to say that Jones was out of step with many religious leaders of his day (10). Jones was ahead of, not behind, the times.

George Eldon Ladd places the kingdom of God at the center of Jesus' teaching and life. "[T]he burden of Jesus' message was the Kingdom of God.... The same message was entrusted to the twelve disciples ... and to a band of seventy on a later mission.... The critical problem arises from the fact that Jesus nowhere defined what he meant by the phrase" (122). Though Ladd stops short of defining the kingdom, Nicholas Thomas Wright defines Jesus' version of the kingdom of God as follows:

[Jesus'] invitation to people to "enter" the kingdom was a way of summoning them to allegiance to himself and his programme, seen as the start of God's long-awaited saving reign. For Jesus, the kingdom was coming not in a single move, but in stages, of which his own public career was one, his death and resurrection another, and a still future consummation another one.... It does not refer to a place ("heaven"), but to the fact of God's becoming king in and through Jesus and his achievement. Paul speaks of Jesus, as Messiah, already in possession of his kingdom, waiting to hand it over finally to the Father. (310)

Wright's answer is good, as far as it goes, but like all well-conceived definitions of the kingdom of God, it does not give the reader an exact list of who is and who is not in the kingdom. His definition is more conceptual than concrete.

Jones appears to have felt the same tension when attempting to define the kingdom of God:

Jesus didn't define the Kingdom in precise terms, perhaps because he was the definition. We may define the Kingdom since he has shown us what it is—shown us in his own person, as: The Kingdom of God is God's total order, expressed as realm and reign, in the individual and in society; and which is to replace the present unworkable order with God's order in the individual and in society; and while the nature of the Kingdom is social, the entrance into it is by personal new birth now; the character of the Kingdom is seen in the character of Jesus—the Kingdom is Christlikeness universalized. (75)

Theoretical definitions abound when theologians attempt to discern and define the kingdom of God.

Many attempt to define the nature or the essence of the kingdom, but few are willing—and rightly so—to say whether *this* person or *these* people are in or out of the kingdom of God. This unwillingness to label people is theologically sound. In this case, however, being theologically sound potentially leads to a nebulous understanding of how to practice ministry. The imprecision makes attaching strategies to Grandview's vision statement difficult.

R. Paul Stevens comes closer to positing a recognizable definition of the kingdom by, at least, labeling spheres of kingdom activity:

The church is the principal agency for the Kingdom on earth. The purpose of the church is not to “bring in” the church, but to “bring in” the Kingdom of God. We do this through the mission of the church.... We also do this in all the fields of service in the world: home, neighbourhood, civil society, politics and the environment, grappling with the powers, proclaiming the gospel, participating creatively in the structures of society

and in parachurch mission structures, witnessing through suffering powerlessness, working to change evil systems and in extreme situations by laying down our lives in martyrdom. (185-86)

Stevens emphasizes that suffering and powerlessness are part of the work of the church. Suffering is one of the arenas where God uses the church to usher the kingdom into the realities of this life.

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. opens his discussion by stating that the “kingdom of God is the sphere of God’s sovereignty—namely the whole universe” (105). He continues with a more practical definition of the kingdom of God:

A Christian’s main vocation is to become a prime citizen of the kingdom of God—and this is true of every Christian, of artists and engineers as well as ministers and evangelists. All are called to mesh their kingdoms with those of other citizens in order to work together inside the kingdom of God. (108)

Plantinga’s language tips his hand. He does not equate kingdom with church.

Plantinga describes some of the ways people can work together for the kingdom of God. He is careful not to identify the kingdom exclusively with the church, but he is just as careful to label the church as the starting point. “The first way is to belong to an active Christian church. In order to administer the kingdom, God has covenanted with particular people ... to lead the way in saying and showing that God reigns” (108). He goes on to state that even “if the Christian church is a primary instrument of the kingdom on earth, God also uses an array of other organizations to help the cause of the kingdom, each in its own sphere of influence” (109). He includes the possibility of God’s using governments, industries, hospitals, schools, recreational clubs, and organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity. “When we open our eyes, we’ll find faithful Christians seeking to extend God’s sovereignty in every country, in every precinct of life, including such tough

precincts as advertising, journalism, university education, and the military” (109-10).
Such are the borders of the kingdom.

When Willard defines the kingdom of God, he refuses to provide a tidy list of who is and who is not in the kingdom, but his definition is important nonetheless. For Willard, God’s kingdom is the “range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom, but everything that obeys those principles, whether by nature or by choice is *within* [original emphasis] his kingdom” (*Divine Conspiracy* 25). According to Willard’s definition, some people are participating in the kingdom without choosing to do so.

Here, then, is one of the keys to defining the kingdom. A person can be performing a kingdom function without being aware that he or she is, in fact, doing the will of God. With this understanding, then, a person may be in the kingdom, but not of the kingdom:

Many people who would never attach the label “Christian” to themselves are actually in the process of moving through the crowd closer to Jesus. The Church may have huge difficulty in even recognizing that this process is taking place, but all the same, God is slowly and surely transforming their lives. Therefore, the Church’s task is to pick up on this process and work with it rather than ignore it—to offer acceptance rather than rejection. (Chalke and Mann 144-45)

Steve Chalke is careful to present the work of God in kingdom terms. “I ask friends who aren’t believers the following question: ‘Look, if you knew what God was doing to make life better here on earth, would you want to join in?’ I have never been told no.” Defining the boarders of the kingdom is less important than inviting people to participate in kingdom activity (as well as kingdom thought).

If, as Ladd asserts, “*Before the eschatological appearing of God’s Kingdom at the end of the age, God’s Kingdom has become dynamically active among men in Jesus’ person and mission [original emphasis]*” (139), then the kingdom is, at some level, defined by the presence of Christ himself. To paraphrase Newbigin, the kingdom now has a face and the name of that face is Jesus. If Christians preach Jesus, they preach the kingdom as it truly is (*Sign* 18). The kingdom is the presence of a person, Jesus, and so is fundamentally the presence of *a relationship* with the Trinity.

In defining the kingdom of God, the church dare not separate the words of Jesus from the actions of Jesus. “When the message of the Kingdom is divorced from the Person of Jesus, it becomes a programme or an ideology, but not a gospel” (Newbigin, *Sign* 18-19). In the church’s attempt to celebrate the in-breaking of the kingdom of God, the church needs to look for ways to identify with the work of God even as the church shares the salvific message of God’s reign upon the earth. These two aspects of the kingdom not only go hand-in-hand, but they form and inform each other.

Holding fast to God’s realities requires the church to be intentional and steadfast in attempts to speak of God’s reality even as the church lives God’s reality. The task is too big for words or actions alone. The message of God, the reign of God, and the activity of God require an integrated life:

The kingdom of God, announced by Jesus, is multidimensional and all-encompassing. It is both a present and a future reality. It has to do with each individual creature and with the whole of society.... It embraces all dimensions of human life: physical, spiritual, personal and interpersonal, communal and societal, historical and eternal. And it encompasses all human relationships—with the neighbor, with nature, and with God. It implies a total offer and a total demand. (Arias xv)

If Grandview is to celebrate the kingdom of God by *reaching out in relationships*, then the church must constantly be aware of the need to be knit together as one in service and word while focusing on the continuing in-breaking of God's reign. The possibility exists, though, that the church can partner with groups that are not intentionally part of the kingdom of God.

Churches with Alignment

Jack Lynn asks leaders if they are able to articulate the mission, vision, and values that drive their churches. He goes on to ask if the people and staff energetically support the vision, with a clear picture of the leadership's call to service and mission (32-33). Using examples from a moderate selection of effective churches, Lynn highlights the release of church vitality that follows alignment and shared mission. He includes a list of the fruit that was born within his own congregation when they were careful to work together to bring alignment to their vision and mission (172).

In an effort to learn from the experience of a lead minister who stresses the power of shared vision *and* has the experience of being the lead minister at Grandview Christian Church, I traveled to Joppa, Maryland (north of Baltimore), to study Mountain Christian Church. What follows is a case study on a church that has, in four years, grown from approximately 1,800 in worship to over 3,500—all while commissioning four key staff and three hundred members of the congregation to plant another church in the area.

In 1998 Mountain Christian Church called Ben Cachiaras to be their minister. When he arrived he immediately saw the need to focus the congregation. The church offered such a conglomeration of services and ministries that no one thing stood out as the mission of the church.

Cachiaras made his point with the elders of his church through the use of a simple exercise. He produced a childish picture of a barnyard, replete with pigs, cows, chickens, horses, barns, pitchforks, straw, and numerous other possible objects on which a viewer could focus. After giving the leaders a brief view of the picture, he put it away and asked them to recount what they saw. The leaders agreed that too many things cluttered the picture. Cachiaras followed the exercise by asking the leaders to describe what themes they supposed emerged for visitors to, and members of, Mountain Christian Church.

After this process the leadership began to deselect clutter from their church picture. The project was painful, according to Cachiaras. The things the leadership could not bring themselves to kill, they let dwindle from benign neglect. Among the more sacred things left to dwindle were several women's circles and Sunday school classes. As these programs saw their demise, small groups became the focus. With the arrival of small groups, the church began its next stage of growth.

The key to Mountain's success appears to be simplicity, focus, and repetition. Soon after arriving, Cachiaras led the church to adopt a simple vision statement: "Making disciples. Making More and Better Disciples." The leadership has written this statement on the wall in various places. They also make the vision clear in their literature, programming, and staffing.

In addition, on church walls they have written the five elements of discipleship: Connect, Grow, Reach, Give, and Serve. These five things are memorable after only one teaching because of a five finger exercise that connects each concept to each finger. "Everybody here knows this," Cachiaras says, "I mean, if you've been at Mountain a month, then you know this."

Visitors and those interested in learning more about Mountain Christian Church learn these fundamentals of the vision of the church through the preaching and the worship experiences, and in a monthly class called *Welcome to Mountain*.

The staff, especially, goes to great lengths to funnel every new person to this three-hour class taught by Cachiaras. During this time he espouses the fundamentals of being a part of Mountain and points them toward the need to be in a small group because small groups are *the* identified method for making more and better disciples. The staff has determined that 67 percent of those who attend *Welcome to Mountain* eventually join the church; thus, getting people to the course is critical.

One of the more creative methods of teaching visitors at Mountain is M-I-5. Short for *Mountain in Five Minutes*, M-I-5 provides a brief explanation at the end of every service regarding who Mountain is and how a person might join into the mission of the church. First-time visitors simply go to the front of the worship center where a staff member keeps his or her comments informational, brief, and pointed toward the welcome class and toward the need to be in small groups. Here again, one sees the importance of focus and alignment.

Mountain keeps its programs and values focused on small groups and outreach. From the time a visitor walks through the door, he or she is pushed toward small groups and becoming a part of the family. Simultaneously, the church has continued to trumpet evangelism. Cachiaras believes that becoming deeper as a Christian is as essential to making a full disciple as evangelism but says that churches too easily become complacent when focusing only on depth. “You have to hit evangelism,” he says, “or it fails.”

Other signs that the church has been able to stay focused are the streamlined offerings for children and youth. The only children's programming offered on a regular basis is on Sunday morning. Middle school youth meet on Sunday night at approximately 4:30, with the high school youth meeting at 6:00. Other than occasional trips or concerts, the church provides no other youth events.

Cachiaras believes that one of the reasons for their growth has been their ability to bring alignment to the life of the church. "We get everybody on the same page for a period of time and there's great power in that," he says.

When asked how he would lead Grandview if he could go back in time and give his former self instruction, Cachiaras mentioned that he would give more attention to leading the staff and that he would be more insistent on requiring periods of alignment.

Reaching Out in Relationships: Grandview

When the leadership of Grandview Christian Church examined the ways Grandview reaches out in relationships, they produced a list that intersects with the lists previously mentioned. The discussion revealed, however, that ambiguity regarding the meaning of reaching out in relationships existed at the highest levels of church leadership. Despite that ambiguity the church embodies portions of the vision statement quite well.

One of the ways of reaching out in relationships that leaders most appreciated was the Christian Action Team (commonly referred to as the CAT Team), a group of people who take weeklong vacations to travel with Mennonite Disaster Services to areas of the country that have suffered through natural disasters. The CAT Team takes one trip in the summer and another in the fall of each year. In addition to the trips to distant places, they

tackle local projects several times a year, such as providing the labor to replace the roof on the house of someone in the congregation who is in need of help.

Grandview's Wednesday night programming, called Two 4 Two, attempts to model itself upon the principles of Acts 2:42 (i.e., "They dedicated themselves to the apostle's teaching, the breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer"). Running for ten weeks in the fall and ten more weeks in the spring, it includes a time of eating together, playing together, learning worship skills, and studying a biblically based lesson. Children are the target audience, but their parents come to the church building to complete well-defined jobs or to mill around. The program has grown each year and continues to be one of Grandview's best ways of reaching beyond congregational borders. The question of how to get these parents to move from the margins to a Christian commitment is a more problematic issue, as is the question of how to be more welcoming to others.

Small groups are alive and well at Grandview but have yet to become a part of the *ethos* of the church. Some groups, such as the Calling Ladies, have been together for many years. The Calling Ladies simply gather on Tuesday mornings for a short devotional before visiting shut-ins and the sick. Many other groups function under the heading of "small group" at Grandview. The women's Bible study on Wednesday night has been well attended for a long time. Grandview has been moderately successful at starting and maintaining an odd assortment of "Gospitality Gatherings," which are affinity groups that range from knitting, to computer gaming, to Greek reading groups. The affinity groups have been more successful at developing relationships within the church but less successful at becoming an entry point for sharing life with outsiders.

Grandview has recently added a men's group and a *GriefShare* support group. These groups are early in their lifecycles.

As one of the founding churches of the Johnson City Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, Grandview continues to be a leader in this ministry to homeless families. The network allows the families to stay together while they find housing and employment through the help of a social worker/director who assembles volunteers to assist the families in gaining life skills. Grandview supports IHN by volunteering time and finances and by providing a share of the director's salary. The church provides personnel for the ministry as well. The homeless families stay in Grandview's building for approximately four weeks out of the year. When the homeless are Grandview's guests, the church provides meals, evening hosts, overnight hosts, and transportation to and from the day center where the director is more involved with the families on a daily basis.

Each Sunday morning Grandview provides a worship service for the residents at Pine Oaks Assisted Living Facility, which is across the street from the church building. This ministry has been somewhat limited but is appreciated by the residents who are able to attend. Aside from that weekly contact, Grandview's children's choir usually sings at Pine Oaks about twice a year.

Another area garnering attention from the leadership is an event led by Grandview youth minister Ryan Bader, called *Koinonia*. This interdenominational youth gathering meets regularly and brings together youth ministers and youth from approximately twenty-four local Christian, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches.

Few leaders mentioned Sunday school as a relational instrument, despite a relatively high level of participation. While some may perceive Sunday school as

antiquated, it remains strong at Grandview. Perhaps Sunday school was overlooked as a relational tool for reasons identified by Thom Rainer, who reports that many Christians have difficulty “distinguishing between Sunday School and relationship building as methodologies for evangelism, because so much of the relationship building takes place in Sunday School classes” (17). Rainer reports, in fact, that “Sunday School was the third highest response” when he asked evangelistically effective churches about the reason for their success (17).

The leaders of Grandview gave a number of other answers to the question of how Grandview reaches out, including the food pantry for the economically disadvantaged, taking food to grieving families, a tradition of emphasizing missions, and greeting in the foyer.

The leaders generated a list that provided the seedbed for determining where Grandview’s gifts and passions lie. The list is broad, which has been part of the reason for Grandview’s lack of focus:

All of the literature warns churches against trying to focus on too many opportunities for service. There is a limit to what a church can do well.

You can’t do everything, nor should you try. Your opportunities should be broad enough to engage the passions of all of your church members but focused enough to be achievable. Remember that the magnitude and type of service opportunities will be different in every community. Ask the people in your church what they are passionate about. What common thread runs through all of your current ministries? It might be “youth” or “the poor” or “single moms.” Focus on what you do well. Whatever your focus, aim for the double benefit of changing the lives of those who are serving as well as of those who are being served. (Rusaw and Swanson 167)

Congregations such as Grandview, with many people who earnestly seek to serve, often wind up with so many areas of service that none stand out as a way to serve in conjunction with one another.

One opportunity for *reaching out* surfaced when the elders of Grandview began discussing the potential areas in which the church could focus. In 2003 the church acquired the services of Percept, a demographics research company, to gain a better understanding of Grandview and the community surrounding the church. The surveys and studies they provided to the church revealed that while 33 percent of the adult residents of South Johnson City had failed to graduate from high school, approximately 78 percent of Grandview adults who responded to the survey had achieved a degree at the college level or above. The findings indicated a passion for education at Grandview and a need for education in the surrounding community.

Reaching Out in Relationships: Conclusions

Faithful attempts at evangelism, at mission, *at reaching out in relationships* require close attention to the relationships God has already granted. The nature of God, the nature of the kingdom of God, and the nature of the people being reached require the church to take seriously the bonds of love as the *motivation* for reaching out and the *means* of reaching out.

Any strategies that Grandview Christian Church attaches to the vision statement will need to call its people together for the sake of reaching out as a means of celebrating the nearness and in-breaking of the kingdom of God. One does not celebrate in order to accomplish more, though much more may be accomplished. One simply celebrates in response to good news. *Reaching out in relationships* is merely one of the ways in which the church celebrates what God has done and is doing in and through Jesus Christ and his church.

Many excellent ways to celebrate the kingdom of God by *reaching out in relationships* exist; in fact, the ways are too numerous to mention. Because alignment is one of the goals of this project, and because alignment helps to amplify the message of the church, only four particular practices of *reaching out in relationships* will become the focus of this project. The decision to provide focus is always a difficult one because of the number of practices that must decrease in order for the agreed-upon practices to increase. I chose the following four practices because they represent the intersection of Grandview's strengths, community need, and potential for developing meaningful, long-term relationships while serving together as teams.

The ministry intervention will be an attempt to align Grandview around four strategies for *reaching out in relationship* that are faithful to the need to integrate word and works into a relational framework. The research reveals the need for that model to be easy to communicate, Trinitarian based, and kingdom focused. Because one of the goals is to provide opportunities for the people of Grandview to experience the in-breaking of the kingdom of God in relationship, the model will need incorporate easily identifiable ways to begin the process of making and maintaining relationships with those who are in the church and with those who are not.

Figure 1.1 (see p. 11) is at the center of the attempt to communicate a model whereby people of the congregation are asked to invite others from the congregation to join them in serving someone *outside* the congregation for a period of time that is long enough to sustain a meaningful relationship. The leadership identified specific avenues for this service in order to facilitate the project.

Each arrow represents attempts to build relationships based upon the Trinitarian model, relationships that provide the seedbed for the sharing of word and deed. The picture was shown each time the avenues for service were shared with the congregation throughout the ministry intervention. The goal was to increase awareness of the need to be the kingdom of God in this relational manner, to foster positive attitudes toward a relational model, and to encourage behaviors consistent with the above research.

The specific avenues for changing awareness, attitudes, and behaviors were as follows:

1. *Redesigning current Wednesday evening programming.* Two 4 Two was pushed to be intentionally relational and welcoming, being careful to instruct the leaders and participants in these events in the goals of this project.

2. *Partnering with parachurch organizations.* Grandview currently supports outside organizations. In order to provide avenues for the implementation of this model, the leadership identified two organizations through which the church could begin this process. First, the existing relationship with Pine Oaks Assisted Living Facility, a neighboring facility with church connections where Grandview already provided a weekly worship service for residents made them a natural fit. Second, we sought to expand upon our existing relationship with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a homeless ministry that already utilized Grandview's building as an overnight facility for approximately four weeks every year. IHN provided the church with the opportunity to implement this model.

3. *Partnering with nonchurch identities.* The results of Grandview's previous research of the community revealed that the largest gap between the congregation and the

surrounding community was educational levels. Because education provided the greatest opportunity for service, the Johnson City Adult Education program, which shepherds students through the GED/high school diploma equivalency exam, provided the church a meaningful opportunity to serve the community.

4. *Encouraging the congregation to use creativity in applying the model.* In a congregation of diverse gifts and interests, the leadership wanted to release the members for ministry in this model and to support those who identified other avenues of application.

By encouraging people to venture into service together, I was hoping to help recreate that moment of realization I had when I saw that Iona was not just listening to my words but watching the relationship I shared with my wife. Such moments have the power to deepen the church as well as broaden it. When the church grasps the magnificently communal nature of God, and therefore, the Christian's calling, the body of Christ becomes the witness God intended when he called the church together as a sign of the in-breaking of God's reign.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to measure the changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors of reaching out in relationships as a result of a ministry intervention that included two series of sermons, restructure Grandview Christian Church's Wednesday evening programming, and the identification of practical ways to encourage the people of Grandview to partner with one another to serve people outside the church.

At the time of this study, Grandview's vision statement, including the strategy of reaching out in relationships, was over a decade old but had yet to become a unifying or guiding document with identifiable strategies and, as such, had gone somewhat unnoticed in the life of the church.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions guided the development and implementation of this study.

Research Question 1

What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* prior to the study?

After more than a decade of embracing the strategy of *reaching out in relationships*, what are the ways in which people from Grandview have been attempting to make relationships with others that begin to communicate the gospel of the kingdom of God? Were the people of Grandview even aware of this strategy?

Research attempted to uncover the practices that the people of Grandview perceived to be a part of the work of evangelism and to determine whether any of the

methods of *reaching out in relationships* that were a part of their lives were intentional responses to the vision statement.

The leaders of the congregation addressed the research question by completing the test instrument before the beginning of the ministry intervention. The leaders then helped administer the same test instruments to the congregation in the pretest phase.

Research Question 2

What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* after the study?

This question addresses what change, if any, could be discerned in participants' ability to identify what *reaching out in relationships* means and whether or not they attempted to act on the identified church-wide strategies. Leaders and non-leaders addressed this question by completing the test instrument following the ministry intervention.

Research Question 3

How did the series of sermons, the restructuring of Grandview's Wednesday evening programming, and the promotion of identifiable ways of putting the message into practice impact the change in *reaching out in relationships*?

Two focus groups, one involving the congregational leaders and the other involving a random sample of participants from the broader congregation, addressed this question.

Population and Participants

Grandview Christian Church typically had a Sunday morning attendance that ranged from 250 people during the lowest attended summer months to as high as four

hundred during peak months. I anticipated that approximately fifty leaders would participate in the ministry intervention surveys, with approximately fifty non-leaders participating. Because this sample would account for nearly one-third of the population of Grandview, these numbers would represent a more than adequate sampling of the mind of the congregation.

I chose not to query the population regarding average yearly salary out of concerns that this question would reduce the number of participants. The congregation was small enough that I could determine participant identity by matching age, marital status, educational level, membership status, roles in the church, and whether or not the participant had ever served in a paid ministerial position (all questions that were included in the survey).

The study consisted of two populations. The first population included the elders, staff, ministry team leaders, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders of Grandview Christian Church. The second population was a sample of people who considered Grandview their home church. This sample was self-selecting.

The leaders completed the researcher-designed questionnaire before the ministry intervention. They attended a meeting with dessert and refreshments. They knew in advance that the purpose of the meeting was to assist me in my attempts to examine their understanding of the church's vision statement and mission. In the posttest phase, the leaders responded to the questionnaires at the same event in which the non-leaders responded. Leaders and non-leaders placed their completed test instruments in separate stacks.

The second population completed the researcher-designed questionnaire before and after the ministry intervention. In the pretest phase, they completed the questionnaires as part of a church-wide carry-in supper. In the posttest phase, the participants attended a church-wide talent show and completed the questionnaires during the event. In each case I stated the reasons for the events in advance.

Design of the Study

The project used a researcher-designed questionnaire to gauge the mind of the congregation before and after the period of the ministry intervention. Because the study centered on the congregation's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors as they regarded a vision statement that was unique to Grandview, the instrument had to be unique to the congregation as well.

Instrumentation

The project utilized a pretest and posttest questionnaire. I used Scantron Corporation's Class Climate faculty evaluation feedback system to generate the questionnaire format (see Appendix E).

This study was an assessment in the descriptive mode that utilized a researcher-designed questionnaire to measure congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships*. The questionnaire included thirty-one Likert-type scale questions and four open-ended questions.

The Likert-type questions tested participant *awareness, attitude, and behavior* in regard to reaching out in relationships. The open-ended questions tested participant unaided awareness and their ability to attach specific practices to their understanding of the vision statement.

Variables

The independent variables in this study include the two series of sermons, the reorganization of the Wednesday night program known as Two 4 Two, and the partnerships Grandview initiated with the three outside organizations (Interfaith Hospitality Network, Pine Oaks Assisted Living facility, and the Johnson City Adult Education program). The dependent variables include the changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors.

The uncontrollable intervening variables were the financial difficulties and the construction delays that surfaced during the period of the ministry intervention. These variables caused congregation attention to shift away from the intervention for brief interludes.

Validity and Reliability

Grandview was a small enough congregation that pretesting the survey within the congregation would compromise the population sample. Because I designed the instrument specifically to Grandview and Grandview's vision statement, it could not effectively be tested in another congregation, either. In lieu of pretesting the questionnaire, I submitted the test instrument for expert review to Sue Skidmore, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Milligan College, and Dr. Bertram Allen, Jr., professor of psychology, Milligan College. After incorporating their changes resubmitted the instrument for their review, at which time they suggested further revisions. I then incorporated their secondary revisions.

Data Collection

I distributed the questionnaires on three separate occasions, including two prior to the ministry intervention (separate occasions to segment the leader population from the non-leader population) and one combined event following the ministry intervention. In both the pretest and posttest phases of the project, the leader questionnaires were kept separate from the non-leader questionnaires. Both populations were self-selecting.

I sent written invitations to the leaders asking them to attend a coffee and dessert function at the church building on Sunday, 12 August 2007. I distributed the questionnaires at the beginning of the meeting and instructed the leaders to complete and return the surveys.

The church then sponsored a carry-in supper on Sunday, 26 August 2007 for the purposes of administering the questionnaires and beginning the process of teaching the congregation about the vision of *reaching out in relationships* according to the purpose of this project. The church advertised the supper in the monthly newsletter in the July and August editions, in the Sunday morning bulletins beginning 5 August 2007, and in each Sunday morning worship service in August.

The leaders distributed the questionnaires to the congregation before the supper began. Once the congregation completed the questionnaires, they ate supper while a member of the church provided entertainment. After the entertainment, I provided a time of teaching in order to introduce the congregation to the focus on *reaching out in relationships*.

For posttest data collection, I planned a congregational gathering for Sunday evening, 13 April 2008. I placed announcements in the March and April editions of the

newsletter. Also, beginning on Sunday, 16 March 2008 and continuing on each Sunday through the date of the event, I made announcements at the end of each worship service.

The congregational event included a church-wide talent show, food, and a time to complete the questionnaires. Participants completed and returned the questionnaires immediately.

Because the goal of this ministry intervention was to weigh the mind of the congregation, I made no attempt to keep the pretest and posttest populations identical.

In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the separate elements of the ministry intervention, Dr. Robbie Anderson (a member and leader of the congregation) led two focus groups during the posttest phase. One focus group consisted of the elders of the congregation. The other focus group consisted of non-leaders. The sample of the general population was selected at random from the church directory (using numbers created from a randomizer Web site), which lists members and nonmembers who consider Grandview their church home. If the random number chose a leader or someone who was unable to attend, the next person in the directory was contacted and invited to attend.

Data Analysis

The instrument's three Likert-type sections addressed Research Questions 1 and 2. The awareness section (nine questions), attitude section (nine questions), and behavior section (thirteen questions) yielded separate scores. I assigned each option in the Likert-type question an integer between -2 and +2. I tabulated a mean response for each question. I then added together the means for each question by section, giving each survey a number for *awareness*, another number for *attitude*, and a third number for *behavior*. I compiled those results and submitted them to an independent samples t-test to

evaluate the combined mean for each section. A decision rule requiring a mean probability score less than .05 determined the effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, of the ministry intervention to increase *awareness*, *attitude*, and *behavior* regarding reaching out in relationships.

Because the goal of the ministry intervention was to plumb the mind of the congregation as a whole, not to identify improvement on an individual basis, I used independent samples t-tests to determine the significance, or insignificance of changes.

Themes emerging from the open-ended questions on the pretest and posttest instruments provided further triangulation. I codified answers for the first open-ended question and separated the answers into four categories of responses, (1) somewhat aware, (2) aware but *without* action items, (3) aware *with* action items, and (4) unaware. The goal was to discern whether or not participants knew what actions to take regarding the vision statement.

Answers to the final open-ended question yielded five separate categories: (1) individual reaching out with little initiative, (2) corporate reaching out with little initiative, (3) individual reaching out with initiative, (4) corporate reaching out with initiative, and (5) lack of evidence of reaching out. The goal was to discern whether or not participants were thinking corporately and/or missionally.

In order to answer Research Question 3, supplemental data from the two focus groups yielded information on which elements of the ministry were more or less helpful. A third party recorded and transcribed the sessions. Themes emerged that accounted for the change, or lack of change, in pretest and posttest behavior.

Ethics

Regarding the completion of questionnaires, all participants were volunteers and were anonymous. After the completion of the project, I destroyed all surveys and erased all recordings from the focus groups in which the leaders shared their opinions on the effectiveness of the various elements of the ministry.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This ministry intervention was an attempt to shift the culture of the congregation into a more missional stance in terms of awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors as they regarded reaching out in relationships. Through two sermon series, the restructuring of Grandview's Wednesday night program (known as Two 4 Two), and encouraging people to take the initiative to invite someone from within the church to participate in regular service outside of the church (see Figure 1.1, p. 11), the leadership challenged members and attendees of Grandview Christian Church to identify specific ways to be faithful to the portion of the Grandview's vision statement that calls people to "reach out in relationships."

Participants

The population was self-selected but I divided them into leaders and non-leaders. Each test instrument yielded basic demographic data. The demographic information included gender, age group, marital status, and highest level of education completed. The population marked all listed areas of church involvement that applied. Questions regarding participant level of involvement asked people to self-report their participation in various programs, including Bible studies, mission opportunities, and current or past leadership. The survey asked if they were members and provided categories to report how long they had attended Grandview. They also reported whether or not they had ever served any church in a paid ministerial role.

The entire pretest sample population (leader and non-leader together) was 109, while the entire posttest sample population (leader and non-leader together) was 95. The gender difference within the four samples can be seen in Table 4.1

Table 4.1. Number and Gender of Participants

| | Leaders: Pre | Leaders: Post | Non-lead: Pre | Non-lead: Post |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Population size | 47 | 39 | 62 | 56 |
| % Male | 56.82 | 42.89 | 35 | 38.57 |
| % Female | 43.18 | 57.14 | 65 | 61.43 |

Age

The sample population ranged, in age, from 18 to 80+ years of age. The majority of leader participants occupied the 51-60 and the 26-40 age range. The non-leader population was fairly evenly spread across all age groups (see Appendixes F and G).

Marital Status

The leadership population consisted heavily of married people (pretest: 97.87 percent; posttest: 86.49 percent), with very few divorced people and even fewer people who were never married. The non-leader population was also skewed toward married people (pretest: 70.49 percent; posttest: 59:15 percent).

Educational Level

The educational level of the leadership sample revealed that nearly half of the population had achieved a master's degree or above. In the pretest leader population, 21.74 percent had achieved doctoral degrees. That number rose to 25.64 percent in the posttest leadership population. Over half of the non-leader population had achieved college, master's, or doctoral degrees.

Level of Church Involvement

In terms of involvement in the church, the areas cited most often by participants were Sunday school and the Wednesday evening program, known as Two 4 Two. The next strongest category of involvement was that of being a member of a ministry team.

Years Attended

Approximately half of the *leader* population had attended Grandview for fifteen or more years. The next largest category for the leadership population, however, was two to five years, followed by six to nine years. In the *non-leader* population the largest categories were zero to one year and two to five years.

Paid Ministerial Experience

Nearly one-third of the participants reported that they had, at one time, been paid ministerial staff at a church (30 percent of pretest leaders, 28 percent of posttest non-leaders).

Race and Socioeconomic Factors

The test instrument included no questions about race or ethnicity. The congregation is largely white; minorities who participated would too easily be identifiable if this question were included. The instrument did not ask participants to identify their income level because of concerns that, if included, this question would have a negative effect on the study. The congregation tends to have a middle-class lifestyle.

Research Question One: Pretest Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior

Research Question 1 (RQ1) asked, What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* prior to the study? In order to answer RQ1, participants completed questionnaires consisting of four basic

sections (see Appendix D). Along with demographic questions, the first section contained one open-ended question designed to gauge congregational *awareness* before being given prompts (Question 1.1). The second section contained nine Likert-type questions designed to gauge congregational *awareness* of reaching out in relationships. The second section also contained nine Likert-style questions designed to gauge congregational *attitudes* toward reaching out in relationship. The third section consisted of thirteen Likert-type questions designed to gauge behavior. The fourth section contained an open-ended question asking participants to identify their actual *behavior* of reaching out in relationship.

Awareness: Pretest

The pretest responses to the open-ended question (*Write what you think 'reaching out in relationships' means according to Grandview's vision statement*) yielded three categories: (1) answers that showed awareness of the relational and evangelical goals of the church but showed no evidence of strategies to achieve that goal; (2) answers that showed awareness of the relational and evangelical goals of the church *and* showed evidence of how one might achieve those goals; and, (3) answers that showed no discernable awareness.

Answers fitting into the first category were often sophisticated, including references to the need to be proactive, the encouragement to meet tangible needs, the need to share good and bad times with those outside the church, and the demonstration of God's love in community. These answers lacked, however, elements that could be interpreted as strategies or specific ways to accomplish these tasks. The question did not ask for specifics, but neither did it preclude them. The pretest phase revealed that 73.4

percent of the entire sampled population fit into the first category. When all scores were divided according to leader and non-leader populations, data revealed that 80.9 percent of leaders and 67.7 percent non-leaders gave answers that showed awareness of church ideals but without listing specific strategies (see Table 4.2).

Answers revealing participants' understanding of the church ideals, while also including elements that could be interpreted as strategies, occupy the second category. These answers included references to building relationships while serving in outwardly focused groups such as the IHN ministry, partnering with other churches or organizations, and forming small groups around similar interests. The pretest phase revealed that 4.6 percent of the entire sampled population fit this category. When scores were divided into leader and non-leader populations, they revealed that 4.3 percent of leaders and 4.8 percent of non-leaders were able to identify actual strategies (see Table 4.2).

Answers revealing minimum discernable awareness occupy the third, and least desirable, category. These answers included blanks, questions marks, and any responses consisting only of generalized or vague references to helping people without any evidence of that help being offered in response to, or on behalf of, the love of God. The pretest phase revealed that 22.0 percent of the entire sample fit into category three. Scores divided into leader and non-leader populations revealed that 14.9 percent of *leaders* and 27.4 percent of *non-leaders* were unaware of what the church meant by reaching out in relationships (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Codified Responses to Question 1.1 in Pretest Phase

| | Aware no strategy | Aware w/strategy | Unaware |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|
| Leader: pretest (n=47) | 38 (80.9%) | 2 (4.3%) | 7 (14.9%) |
| Non-leader: pretest (n=62) | 42 (67.7%) | 3 (4.8%) | 17 (27.4%) |
| All: pretest (n=109) | 80 (73.4%) | 5 (4.6%) | 24 (22.0%) |

Quantitative data from the questionnaires provided further insight into RQ1. Part II of the questionnaire (see Appendix E) contained eighteen questions, nine of those questions dealing exclusively with the degree to which the congregation considered itself informed of, or cognizant of, the church's goals as they regard reaching out in relationships.

Respondents answered the nine *awareness* questions by marking either *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *undecided*, *agree*, or *strongly agree*. Each answer yielded a score of -2, -1, 0, 1, or 2, respectively. Each *section* (awareness, attitude, behavior) provided an average response. The section averages yielded a mean response per section.

The *awareness* section revealed that the participant responses averaged 0.54, on the scale of -2 to 2, falling midway between *undecided* and *agree* (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Awareness Pretest Average Responses

| Awareness Pretest | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| All scores | 0.54 |
| Leader | 0.57 |
| Non-leader | 0.51 |

Appendix F presents all pretest survey results, including scales indicating the mean and the standard deviation for each question on the survey instrument.

Among the strongest responses in the *awareness pretest* section were the scores for Question 2.9 (*People learn about God by participating in the work of the church*). The average response to this question was 1.0 for leaders, 0.9 for non-leaders. Responses revealed that 73.3 percent of leaders *agreed* with the statement and 17 percent *strongly agreed*. Results also revealed that 65.5 percent of non-leaders *agreed* and 17.2 percent *strongly agreed*. These results demonstrated that even in the pretest phase the participants believed that the work of the church was an important path for knowing God better.

Question 2.1 (*I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church*) was of particular importance for the awareness section. The average response for leaders was 0.7; for non-leaders it was 0.6. Results revealed that 58.7 percent of leaders *agreed* with this statement, but 21.7 percent were *unsure*. Among non-leader participants 59.3 percent *agreed*, while 18.6 percent were *unsure*. These results demonstrated a moderate lack of clarity among participants regarding the church's goals.

The results of Question 2.2 (*If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give an adequate answer*) indicate whether or not the participants felt equipped to explain the reaching out in relationships portion of the vision statement. The average response for leaders was 0.8; for non-leaders it was 0.7. For this question 71.1 percent of leaders *agreed* they were equipped while 10.9 percent *strongly agreed*. Among non-leaders the scores were lower, as 55.2 percent *agreed* and 13.8 percent *strongly agreed*. The *undecided* category was larger than most in this section

(20.7 percent). These results demonstrated a high degree of confidence among leaders, but less confidence among non-leaders, in their ability to communicate Grandview's vision.

Question 2.7 (*Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to Grandview*) had among the lowest responses in the awareness pretest. The average response for leaders was -0.1; for non-leaders it was the same. Of the leader population, 54.3 percent were *undecided* while 30.4 percent *disagreed*. For the non-leader population, 59.3 percent were *undecided* and 18.6 percent *disagreed*. These results demonstrated that participants were not confident that Grandview was communicating its vision.

This data, taken together, demonstrated a somewhat positive level of pretest *awareness* of church goals and ideals regarding the reaching out in relationships portion of the vision statement. Overall, participants appeared to believe that they, personally, had a grasp on these issues, but they were less confident that the vision was accessible to others (e.g., visitors).

Attitudes: Pretest

Turning to the *pretest attitudes* portion of the study, the average response to these nine attitude questions was 1.22, on a scale of -2 to 2 (see Table 4.4). This score places the average answer for attitude questions just above the *agree* option.

Table 4.4. Attitudes Pretest Average Responses

| Attitudes Pretest | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|--------------------------|---|
| All scores | 1.22 |
| Leader | 1.28 |
| Non-leader | 1.17 |

This section revealed that the population seemed ready to agree with the aspects of the ministry intervention that would follow. Among the strongest answers in this section were those to Question 2.10 (*The church should be helpful to people in the community*). The average response for leaders was 1.6; for non-leaders the mean was the same. The results showed that 37 percent of leaders *agreed* with this statement, while 63 percent *strongly agreed*. No leader reported disagreeing or being undecided about this issue. Likewise, 37.1 percent of non-leaders *agreed* and 62.9 percent *strongly agreed*. No participant reported disagreement or indecision on this issue. These results demonstrated that participants were highly unified in their belief that the church should be a benefit to the surrounding community.

The results for Question 2.12 (*I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in the community*), while positive, did not show the same strength and unanimity as Question 2.10. The average response for leaders was 1.3; for non-leaders the average was 1.2. The responses showed that 53.2 percent of leaders *agreed*, and 38.3 percent *strongly agreed*. For non-leaders the numbers were similar as 57.4 percent *agreed* and 32.8 percent *strongly agreed*. This data demonstrated participant belief that God was using Grandview to advance the God's agenda in the community.

Question 2.17 (*I wish the church would do more for me*) was scored on an inverted scale. This question revealed some discrepancy in attitudes when compared with the other questions in this section. The average response for leaders was 0.7; for non-leaders it was 0.2. Of the leader population, 56.5 percent *disagreed* with the statement, which appeared to be a healthy number. However, 30.4 percent were *undecided*. From the non-leader sample, 30.5 percent *disagreed*, and 44.1 percent were *undecided*. This

question, more than any other, revealed that while the overall population believed the church should be outwardly focused, they seemed also to have had a desire that the church would meet more of their needs, thus becoming more inwardly focused.

Behaviors: Pretest

Of the three areas tested, *behavior* yielded the lowest average response. In this section, participants responded to statements by marking one of the following five categories: *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *continually*. These categories yielded numbers on a scale of -2 to 2, respectively. The average response to questions in Part III was 0.39 (see Table 4.5). This answer lies between *sometimes* and *often*.

Table 4.5. Behaviors Pretest Average Responses

| Behaviors Pretest | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|--------------------------|---|
| All scores | .39 |
| Leader | .41 |
| Non-leader | .38 |

Among the strongest responses in Part III were the responses to Question 3.3 (*I maintain relationships with Christians who don't attend Grandview*) and to Question 3.7 (*I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life*). These two questions may have been strong because they are least likely to be seen as risky behaviors. The mean response for Question 3.3 for leaders was 1.3; for non-leaders the average was 1.2. The mean response for Question 3.7 for leaders was 1.1; for non-leaders it was 1.1.

Question 3.1 (*I look for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know or accept the message of Jesus*) did not yield the same favorable results as

Questions 3.3 and 3.7. The average response for leaders was 0.0, the same as the average response for non-leaders. Results revealed that of the leader population, 20 percent marked *rarely*, 60 percent marked *sometimes*, and 20 percent marked *often*. From the sample of non-leaders, 21 percent marked *rarely*, 61.3 percent marked *sometimes*, and 12.9 percent marked *often*. These responses indicated that the participants were not especially motivated to look for ways to develop relationships with non-Christians.

Responses to Question 3.10 (*I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function*) were consistent with the findings from Question 3.1. The average response for leaders was -0.2; for non-leaders it was -0.3. Of the leader population, 36.4 percent marked *rarely* while 52.3 percent marked *sometimes*. These responses were the logical consequences of having a population that maintains Christian friendships without purposely cultivating non-Christian relationships.

Responses to Question 3.12 (*I engage people in conversations regarding faith*) may indicate the same problem highlighted in Question 3.10. The average response for leaders was 0.1; for non-leaders the same. Of the leadership population, 22 percent marked that they engaged people in conversations on faith *rarely* while 53.3 percent marked *sometimes*. Of the non-leader population, 22.6 percent marked *rarely*, and 43.5 percent marked *sometimes*. These results may indicate that when a person surrounds him or herself with like-minded people, the urgency for conversations on faith diminishes.

Question 3.11 (*I invite people to help me serve people in need*) was of particular interest to this study. This question prefigured one of the key components that the ministry intervention would suggest for breaking out of Christian cloisters. The average response for leaders was -0.2, the same as it was for non-leaders. From the leadership

population, 40 percent marked that they *rarely* invite others to help them serve, while 44.4 percent of respondents marked *sometimes*. The non-leader sample revealed similar results, with 37.7 percent marking *rarely* and 41 percent marking *sometimes*.

In Part IV of the questionnaire participants were presented with an open-ended question asking them to list their *behaviors* that they consider to be reaching out in relationships. The responses to this question were codified according to five emerging themes: (1) answers that indicated *individualistic* and *reactive* (as opposed to taking the initiative to reaching out) behavior; (2) answers that indicated *corporate* and *reactive* behaviors; (3) answers that indicated *individualistic* behavior and that showed *initiative*; (4) answers that indicated *corporate* behavior that showed *initiative*; and, (5) answers that lacked evidence of reaching out.

Answers revealing the *individualistic* and *reactive* behavior of category one included such behaviors as building friendships whenever possible, spending time one-on-one, just being at work, being a support person, listening, praying for them, having fun, smiling and listening. Answers fitting into this category accounted for 42.20 percent of the responses (see Table 4.6).

Answers revealing *corporate* and *reactive* behavior were rare, perhaps because when people come together their behavior tends to be more purposeful and proactive. The two answers in this category included encouraging guests who are already in the foyer to visit Sunday school classes and befriending people who visit small groups. In each case the mind-set was corporate, but very little initiative seemed present. This category accounted for only 1.83 percent of the responses (see Table 4.6).

Answers revealing *individualistic* mind-sets, but with strong personal *initiative*, included such behaviors as offering to help with meals and errands, visiting shut-ins, offering skills to help others maintain their homes, writing notes of encouragement, working in the public school system for at risk kids, and initiating conversations in public. These answers accounted for 33.94 percent of all responses (see Table 4.6).

Answers revealing a *corporate* mind-set with *initiative* comprised category four. This category included participants who referred to themselves in the plural or mentioned working with organizations that reached out. Answers revealing a corporate proactive reaching out mentality included such behaviors as inviting others to eat with *us*, taking people out to eat together, working with IHN and seniors' ministry, working with marriage ministry, and working with others on the Christian Action Team (CAT Team). These answers accounted for 12.84 percent of all responses (see Table 4.6).

People who showed a lack of evidence of reaching out in relationships comprised category five. If participants left Question 4.3 blank or listed no identifiable behaviors, they were included in this category, which accounted for 12.84 percent of all responses (see Table 4.6).

Open-ended Question 4.3 demonstrated that participants tended to think individualistically regarding ways of reaching out in relationships. The two individualistic categories, taken together, accounted for 86 (76.14 percent) of all responses.

Table 4.6. Codified Responses to Question 4.3, Pretest Phase

| | Individual (reactive) | Corporate (reactive) | Individual (initiative) | Corporate (initiative) | Lack of Evidence |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Leader, pretest: n=47 | 19 (40.43%) | 2 (4.26%) | 20 (42.55%) | 5 (10.64%) | 1 (2.13%) |
| Non-leader, pretest: n=62 | 27 (43.55%) | 0 (0%) | 17 (27.42%) | 5 (8.06%) | 13 (20.97%) |
| All responses, pretest: n=109 | 46 (42.20%) | 2 (1.83%) | 37 (33.94%) | 10 (9.17%) | 14 (12.84%) |

Summary for Research Question 1

The pretest data demonstrated that prior to the ministry intervention the participants had a healthy *awareness* of the church's aims and goals but may have felt at a loss to communicate that awareness to others. The participants were strongly positive in their *attitudes* toward the specific goals of reaching out in relationships, though they appeared to feel somewhat unsure of how to act on those goals. Participant *behavior* scored the lowest of the three areas measured. The reasons for the lag in *behavior* appeared to be twofold: the lack of clear agreed-upon and communicated strategies offered by the church and a certain level of isolation from the unchurched community. The data also demonstrated that participants largely thought of reaching out in relationships as an individual, not corporate, enterprise.

Research Question 2: Posttest Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior

Research Question Two (RQ2) asked, What are the congregational awareness of, attitudes toward, and behaviors of *reaching out in relationships* after the study? In order to answer RQ2, participants completed the posttest questionnaire (see Appendix D). I

collected the data from the posttest instruments and analyzed it according to the same methodology as the pretest data.

Awareness: Posttest

Open-ended Question 1.1 (*Write what you think “reaching out in relationships” means according to Grandview’s mission statement*) gauged participant level of *awareness*. The posttest responses yielded the same three categories as the pretest data, including (1) answers that showed awareness of the relational and evangelical goals of the church but that showed no evidence of strategies to achieve those goals, (2) answers that showed awareness of the relational and evangelical goals of the church *and* showed evidence of how one might achieve those goals, and (3) answers that showed no discernable awareness.

As in the pretest, the first category yielded well stated and thoughtful responses that lacked identifiable strategies. These answers referenced such things as sharing blessings and talents with those outside the church, needing to bring Christ to people, allowing Christian lives to intersect with non-Christians, and providing care, prayer, and encouragement to others in the name of Christ. In the posttest phase, the percentage of people placed into this category fell from 73.4 percent to 67.4 percent.

Answers that revealed an awareness of church goals along with identifiable strategies were placed in category two. These answers included such things as references to participation in the mission of Jesus as recorded in Luke 4 (by going out two by two), serving the community with another person and getting together with one other person to serve a third. Three participants referenced the *reaching out in relationship* diagram (see

Figure 1.1, p. 11). This category showed marked improvement over the pretest phase, rising from 4.6 percent to 22.1 percent (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Codified Responses to Question 1.1 in Pretest and Posttest Phases

| | Aware no strategy | Aware w/ strategy | Unaware |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Leader: pretest: n=47 | 38 (80.9%) | 2 (4.3%) | 7 (14.9%) |
| Posttest: n=39 | 31 (79.5%) | 6 (15.3%) | 2 (5.1%) |
| Non-leader: pretest: n=62 | 42 (67.7%) | 3 (4.8%) | 17 (27.4%) |
| Posttest: n=56 | 33 (58.9%) | 15 (26.8%) | 8 (14.3%) |
| All: pretest: n=109 | 80 (73.4%) | 5 (4.6%) | 24 (22.0%) |
| Posttest: n=95 | 64 (67.4%) | 21 (22.1%) | 10 (10.5%) |

To provide further insight into RQ2, qualitative data from the questionnaires yielded the same three sections/categories that marked the pretest phase. The first nine questions of Part II measured the population's *awareness* of the church's vision to reach out in relationships. The average response of all participants rose from the pretest phase (0.54) to a posttest average of 0.87 (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Awareness Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest

| Awareness Tests | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| All Scores: Pretest | .54 |
| Posttest | .87 |
| Leader: Pretest | .57 |
| Posttest | .89 |
| Non-leader: Pretest | .51 |
| Posttest | .86 |

Appendix G provides all survey posttest results, including scales revealing the mean and the standard deviations for each question on the survey instrument.

The pretest data revealed a solid positive response to Question 2.9 (*People learn about God by participating in the work of the church*). The posttest responses showed little change. The average response of leaders rose (1.0 to 1.1) as did the non-leader responses (0.9 to 1.3). From the leader population those who marked *strongly agree* rose from 17 percent to 23.1 percent. From the non-leader population the *strongly agree* category jumped from 17.2 percent to 37 percent. The ministry intervention appears to have reinforced the belief that service to others, as part of the church, is a helpful way to know more about God.

The awareness pretest phase revealed weak responses to Question 2.1 (*I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church*). In the posttest phase, the average response of the leaders rose (0.7 to 1.3), as did the average response of non-leaders (0.6 to 1.1). The pretest concern was that 21.7 percent of the leaders marked *unsure*. In the posttest phase the *unsure* category for leaders dropped to 7.7 percent. All other respondents answered that they either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they clearly understood what Grandview wanted to accomplish as a church.

In the pretest phase Question 2.2 (*If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give an adequate answer*) demonstrated that the population, as a whole, was fairly confident. The average response of the leaders rose (0.8 to 1.3), as did the average response of non-leaders (0.7 to 1.1). Leader data revealed that 61.5 percent *agreed* and 33.3 percent *strongly agreed*. Non-leader data revealed that

57 percent *agreed* and 29 percent *strongly agreed*. These responses demonstrated an increasing confidence that the participants understood the mission of the church.

Question 2.7 (*Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to Grandview*) was among the lowest of the pretest awareness scores. In the posttest phase, the average response of the leaders rose (-0.1 to 0.7), as did the average response of non-leaders (-.01 to 0.6). Leaders who marked *disagree* dropped from 30.4 percent to 5.3 percent, while leaders who marked *undecided* dropped from 54.3 percent to 28.9 percent. Similarly, non-leaders who marked *disagree* fell from 18.6 percent to 4 percent, and those who marked *undecided* fell from 59.3 percent to 45 percent.

This questionnaire posttest data demonstrated a positive shift in the level of *awareness* of the vision statement and of reaching out in relationships according to the goals of Grandview.

Attitudes: Posttest

The *attitudes* portion of the posttest phase revealed that the average response to the nine questions designed to measure attitude rose from 1.22 to 1.38, on a scale of -2 to 2 (see Table 4.9). This score placed the average answer between *agree* and *strongly agree*.

Table 4.9. Attitudes Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest

| Attitude Tests | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| All scores: pretest | 1.22 |
| Posttest | 1.38 |
| Leader: pretest | 1.28 |
| Posttest | 1.44 |
| Non-leader: pretest | 1.17 |
| Posttest | 1.34 |

Question 2.10 (*The church should be helpful to people in the community*) received a strong response in the pretest phase and grew even stronger in the posttest phase. The average response of the leaders rose (1.6 to 1.8), as did the average response of non-leaders (1.6 to 1.8). Leaders who marked *strongly agree* rose from 63 percent to 84.6 percent. Non-leaders who marked *strongly agree* rose from 62.9 percent to 80 percent.

Question 2.12 (*I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in the community*) showed a positive shift. The average response of the leaders rose (1.3 to 1.6), as did the average response of non-leaders (1.2 to 1.4). Leaders in the posttest phase marked *agree* 38.5 percent of the time and *strongly agree* 59 percent of the time. The shift mainly represented movement from *agree* to *strongly agree*. Non-leader scores increased as well, as 47 percent marked *agree* and 47 percent marked *strongly agree* (up from 57.4 percent and 32.8 percent respectively).

In the pretest phase, Question 2.17 (*I wish the church would do more for me*) revealed discrepancies in attitudes, as 30.4 percent of the leaders were *undecided* on that issue. The posttest phase yielded better results. The average response of the leaders rose (0.7 to 0.9), as did the average response of non-leaders (0.2 to 0.5). The *undecided* leaders dropped to 20.5 percent. The number of leaders who *disagreed* with the statement showed improvement as well, rising from 56.5 percent to 64.1 percent. The non-leader population showed similar improvement. The shift was a positive sign but still revealed mixed feelings on the part of the population regarding whether or not they wanted a more outward focus.

Behaviors: Posttest

In the pretests phase, *behavior* yielded the lowest average responses of all three areas tested. Part III of the questionnaire, which tests *behavior*, asked respondents to mark one of five separate responses to listed statements. The potential responses were *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *continually*. The average response to questions in Part III rose from a pretest average of 0.39 to a posttest average of 0.53, which means it remained in the position between *sometimes* and *often* (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Behaviors Average Responses for Pretest and Posttest

| Behavior Tests | Average Response on Scale of -2 to 2 |
|-----------------------|---|
| All scores: pretest | .39 |
| Posttest | .53 |
| Leader: pretest | .41 |
| Posttest | .50 |
| Non-leader: pretest | .38 |
| Posttest | .54 |

Among the poorest responses in the pretest was Question 3.1 (*I look for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know or accept the message of Jesus*). The posttest numbers rose slightly over the pretest. The average response of the leaders rose (0.0 to 0.1), as did the average response of non-leaders (0.0 to 0.3). Leader results showed slight improvement, with the *often* category rising from 20 percent to 24.3 percent. Non-leader data showed improvement, too, with the *often* category rising from 12.9 percent to 27 percent. Despite the rise, the results of this question demonstrate a continued weakness in the willingness of the participants to take the initiative in making relationships with non-Christians.

The poor pretest responses to Question 3.10 (*I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function*) remained poor in the posttest phase. The average response of the leaders rose (-0.2 to -0.1), as did the average response of all non-leaders (-0.3 to -0.2). Leaders marked *often* only 13.5 percent of the time (up from a pretest level of 11.4 percent). As mentioned in the pretest phase, these results may be a by-product of a limited number of relationships with non-Christians.

The results of Question 3.12 (*I engage people in conversations regarding faith*) improved but remained mixed. The average response of the leaders rose (0.1 to 0.3). The average response of non-leaders showed no change (0.1). The leader population marked *rarely* 10.8 percent of the time (down from a pretest 36.4 percent), while those who marked *often* increased to 29 percent (up from a pretest 20 percent); however, the majority still hovered in the *sometimes* category. Again, these results may be a by-product of a limited number of relationships with non-Christians.

Results from Question 3.11 (*I invite people to help me serve people in need*) improved, but only slightly. The average response of the leaders rose (-0.2 to -0.1), while the non-leader population showed no change (-0.2). The leader population showed improvement as the *rarely* category dropped to 33.3 percent (down from a pretest 40 percent). The non-leader population that marked *rarely* dropped to 34.7 percent (down from a pretest 37.7 percent).

The data suggests that *behavior* did change during the ministry intervention, but not at the same level, nor with the same confidence as *awareness* and *attitudes*. The independent samples t-tests of the mean averages revealed the degree to which these changes are statistically significant. The independent samples t-tests analyzed *all* scores,

pretest and posttest. The tests also analyzed *leader* scores, pretest and posttest, and all *non-leader* scores, pretest and posttest.

Overall Scores

When comparing all pretest and posttest scores (both leader and non-leader), the three areas of query (awareness, attitude, and behavior) showed a significant change. The weakest of those changes, however, occurred in the behavior scores, which showed significant increases when all data (leader and non-leader) was submitted to the independent samples t-test. Leader data and non-leader data, as separate categories yielded changes that did not meet the criteria for significant change. The pooled data outperformed the non-pooled data.

In each area surveyed, the mean scores increased from pretest to posttest. The *awareness* mean (the sum of the nine awareness scores on each questionnaire) increased from 4.81 to 7.84. The *attitude* mean (the sum of the nine attitude scores on each questionnaire) increased from 11.01 to 12.49. The *behavior* mean (the sum of the thirteen behavior scores on each questionnaire) increased from 5.07 to 6.82 (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Group Statistics for All Scores

| | | N | Section Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|-----------|------|----------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Awareness | Pre | 109 | 4.8073 | 2.87865 | .27572 |
| | Post | 95 | 7.8421 | 3.13971 | .32213 |
| Attitude | Pre | 109 | 11.0092 | 2.99535 | .28690 |
| | Post | 95 | 12.4947 | 2.85789 | .29321 |
| Behavior | Pre | 109 | 5.0734 | 5.73441 | .54926 |
| | Post | 95 | 6.8211 | 6.17300 | .63334 |

The independent samples t-test revealed a significant change in each case when considering all data, leader and non-leader. The scores reveal a probability (p) below the

standard level of .05 for *awareness* ($p < .001$), *attitude* ($p < .001$), and *behavior* ($p = .037$), as seen in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Independent Samples Test: All Scores

| | Levene Test for Equality of Variance | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2- tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Err. Difference |
| Awareness: | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .336 | .563 | -7.200 | 202 | .000 | -3.03477 | .42149 |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -7.157 | 192.336 | .000 | -3.03477 | .42402 |
| Attitude: | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .026 | .872 | -3.610 | 202 | .000 | -1.48556 | .41156 |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -3.621 | 200.331 | .000 | -1.48556 | .41023 |
| Behavior: | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .647 | .422 | -2.095 | 202 | .037 | -1.74766 | .83409 |
| E.V. not assumed | | | | 193.367 | .038 | -1.74766 | .83833 |

These scores indicate that the entire sample population showed improvement from the pretest period to the posttest period. While the positive change in *awareness* and *attitude* were apparent, the positive change in *behavior* appears to have lagged behind the other two categories, though still statistically significant.

Leader Scores

The analysis of pretest versus posttest scores for leaders was not as favorable. Tests demonstrated a statistically significant increase for *awareness* and *attitude* but not

for *behavior*. The mean *awareness* score increased from 11.51 to 13.05, while the mean *attitude* score increased from 5.19 to 8.00. The mean *behavior* score, however, only increased from 5.28 to 6.56, which was not a significant increase (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Group Statistics for Leader Scores

| | | n | Section Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|-----------|------|----------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Awareness | Pre | 47 | 11.5106 | 3.24956 | .47400 |
| | Post | 39 | 13.0513 | 2.74292 | .43922 |
| Attitude | Pre | 47 | 5.1915 | 2.87144 | .41884 |
| | Post | 39 | 8.0000 | 3.28473 | .52598 |
| Behavior | Pre | 47 | 5.2766 | 5.18653 | .75653 |
| | Post | 39 | 6.5641 | 6.19335 | .99173 |

As seen in Table 4.14, the independent samples t-tests confirm that while results showed a significant change in leadership *awareness* ($p=.021$) and *attitude* ($p<.001$), they did not reveal a significant change in leadership *behavior* ($p=.297$).

Table 4.14: Independent Samples Tests for Leaders

| | Levene Test for | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| | E.V. (Equality of | | | | | | | |
| | Variance) | | | | | | | |
| | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Err. Difference | |
| Awareness: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | 2.050 | .156 | -2.347 | 84 | .021 | -1.54064 | .656650 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -2.384 | 83.969 | .091 | -1.54064 | .64621 | |
| Attitude: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .411 | .523 | -4.230 | 84 | .000 | -2.80851 | .66396 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -4.177 | 76.171 | .000 | -2.80851 | .67237 | |
| Behavior: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | 2.242 | .138 | -1.049 | 84 | .297 | -1.28751 | 1.22689 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -1.032 | 74.308 | .305 | -1.28751 | 1.24735 | |

Because results showed a significantly positive change in mean *behavior* scores, but not in leader scores, one might expect that the remaining non-leader *behavior* mean scores would show significant improvement where leader scores did not. The results do not, however, confirm these expectations.

Non-Leader Scores

As seen in Table 4.15, pretest and posttest non-leader scores revealed that the non-leader *awareness* mean scores rose from 10.6290 to 12.1071. The non-leader *attitudes* mean scores rose, as well, from 5.1915 to 7.7321. The non-leader *behavior* mean scores also rose (4.9194 to 7.0000), but the change did not prove to be significant.

Table 4.15. Group Statistics for Non-Leaders

| | | n | Section Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|-----------|------|----------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Awareness | Pre | 62 | 10.6290 | 2.75344 | .34969 |
| | Post | 56 | 12.1071 | 2.89626 | .38703 |
| Attitude | Pre | 62 | 5.1915 | 2.87144 | .41884 |
| | Post | 56 | 7.7321 | 3.05995 | .40890 |
| Behavior | Pre | 62 | 4.9194 | 6.15456 | .78163 |
| | Post | 56 | 7.0000 | 6.20850 | .82965 |

As seen in Table 4.16, the independent samples t-tests confirm that while results show a significant change in non-leader *awareness* ($p=.005$) and *attitude* ($p<.001$), they do not reveal a significant change in leadership *behavior* ($p=.07$). Thus, the quantitative data reveals that *awareness* and *attitudes* regarding reaching out in relationships showed positive change from pretest to posttest. *Behavior* showed positive change, as well, but without the same strength as *awareness* and *attitudes*. The marginal *behavior* mean change did not rise to meet the statistically significant criteria in non-leader pretest and posttest data comparisons.

Table 4.16. Independent Samples Tests for Non-Leaders

| | Levene Test for | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| | E.V. (Equality of | | | | | | | |
| | Variance) | | | | | | | |
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Err. Difference | |
| Awareness: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .579 | .448 | -2.841 | 116 | .005 | -1.27811 | .52026 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -2.834 | 113.345 | .005 | -1.47811 | .52161 | |
| Attitude: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .000 | .993 | -4.316 | 101 | .000 | -2.54065 | .58864 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -4.340 | 99.714 | .000 | -2.54065 | .59535 | |
| Behavior: | | | | | | | | |
| E.V. assumed | .080 | .777 | -1.826 | 116 | .070 | -2.08065 | 1.13934 | |
| E.V. not assumed | | | -1.825 | 114.578 | .071 | -2.08065 | 1.13985 | |

To help triangulate these findings, open-ended Question 4.3 on the survey asked the participants to list their *behaviors* in reaching out in relationships. The goal of the ministry intervention was to push this *behavior* toward a more missional and communal understanding of the reaching out in relationships portion of Grandview's vision statement. Answers to this question yielded five emerging themes: (1) those indicating *individualistic* and *reactive* behavior, (2) those indicating *corporate* and *reactive* behaviors, (3) those indicating *individualistic* behavior that also showed *initiative*, (4) those indicating *corporate* behavior that also showed *initiative*, and (5) those lacking evidence of reaching out.

The behaviors listed were largely the same in the posttest as they were in the pretest. The percentage of participants falling into each category showed no discernable movement (see Table 4.17). Thus, the qualitative data corroborates the quantitative findings for RQ 2.

Table 4.17. Codified Responses to Question 4.3, Pretest and Posttest Phases

| | Individual (reactive) | Corporate (reactive) | Individual (initiative) | Corporate (initiative) | Lack of Evidence |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Leader, Pretest: n=47 | 19 (40.43%) | 2 (4.26%) | 20 (42.55%) | 5 (10.64%) | 1 (2.13%) |
| Leader, Posttest: N=39 | 14 (35.90%) | 2 (5.13%) | 15 (38.46%) | 6 (15.38%) | 2 (5.13%) |
| Non-leader, Pretest: n=62 | 27 (43.55%) | 0 (0%) | 17 (27.42%) | 5 (8.06%) | 13 (20.97%) |
| Non-leader, Posttest: n=56 | 26 (46.43%) | 5 (8.93%) | 7 (12.50%) | 4 (7.14%) | 14 (25.00%) |
| All Responses, Pretest: n=109 | 46 (42.20%) | 2 (1.83%) | 37 (33.94%) | 10 (9.17%) | 14 (12.84%) |
| All Responses, Posttest: n=95 | 40 (42.11%) | 7 (7.37%) | 22 (23.16%) | 10 (10.53%) | 16 (16.84%) |

Research Question Three: Impact on Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior

Research Question Three (RQ3) asked, How did the series of sermons, the restructuring of Grandview's Wednesday evening programming, and the promotion of identifiable ways of putting the message into practice impact the change in *reaching out in relationships*? In order to answer RQ3, two focus groups discussed the various elements of the project following the ministry intervention. The first focus group

consisted of Grandview elders. The second focus group consisted of non-leaders chosen randomly from the congregation. A third party recorded and transcribed the sessions.

As the answers to RQ1 and RQ2 have shown, the ministry intervention made a significant impact on *awareness* and *attitude* but a marginal impact on *behavior*. The focus group data corroborated the findings of RQ1 and RQ2 and provided insight into the reasons for change or lack of change.

Awareness of Grandview's vision statement was fairly high before the ministry intervention began. One participant said, "I'd say [I] was very aware [of it] before [the] project began because it was posted and it was referred to from time to time before the project." Participants in the focus groups commented on a banner that used to display the vision statement in the original sanctuary. That banner has been gone since Grandview moved into its newer sanctuary in 2005, so any memory of it precedes the ministry intervention by at least two years.

Several participants commented on the appropriateness of the vision statement. One said it is "the best I've seen or heard. I think it is comprehensive and yet fairly simple and direct." Another participant said that when he first started visiting Grandview (pre-ministry intervention), the vision statement was one of the things that made him feel comfortable.

The ministry intervention, though, did not focus on the entire vision statement, only on the *reaching out in relationships* portion of it. When the focus group facilitator asked the elders to talk about the portion of the vision statement that was the focus of the intervention, someone quipped, "Would that be reaching out in relationships?" Laughter

immediately followed, indicating that while awareness of the project was strong, some fatigue may have set in.

Sermons

I preached two series of sermons. The first was four weeks long and focused heavily on reaching out in relationships as a strategy of the vision of Grandview. The texts and themes for the four sermons grew out of research done for Chapter 2 (see Appendix B for sermon manuscripts). The second series followed three months later and utilized the gospel texts from the Revised Common Lectionary, viewing those texts through the lens of the impact a relationship with Jesus had on those around him. These sermon series appear to have built on awareness of the vision of Grandview that already existed. Participants commented that sermons did a “good job of trying to clarify that [reaching out in relationships] is not a vague concept ... that you need to find some specific areas to focus that effort if you’re going to do something meaningful.”

Many of the sermons included a call to consider volunteering, along with a friend, to become mentors in the IHN mentoring program, tutors for the Johnson City Adult Education GED program, or to join together to help residents of Pine Oaks Assisted Living facility make scrapbooks of their activities.

While focus group participants commented that the sermons were well received, they also mentioned some resistance. Some participants resented the repeated and specific calls to action. One participant couched a complaint in a compliment:

I thought it was a good series. People were talking about reaching out, but a lot of people were feeling that they didn’t want to be hemmed into the two or three areas that Aaron was really,... pushing is really not the right word,... but really encouraging people to get involved in.

The language of this comment revealed what appeared to be an attempt to be polite to the preacher, but it also revealed frustration.

That frustration may have run fairly deep. Another participant commented on it:

One of the effects of [the first] sermon series [was that] after about the third sermon highlighting those three things that we were supposed to do, it provoked a deep sense of guilt in me because I wasn't doing all three of these things all the time.

Someone responded to this comment, saying, "I heard other people express that same opinion and I think the three things that he kept bringing up, those three things were because [they] were part of his dissertation." These comments showed a desire to be helpful, but some dissatisfaction with the means and methods of the intervention.

Not everyone felt the fatigue. One participant commented that she had been away from Grandview for a number of years because of a family issue, and when she returned she noticed that it "was very apparent that we had a mission statement."

One participant commented that he appreciated that the sermons series put actual strategies to the vision statement:

What does it really mean to extend God's kingdom by reaching out in relationships? I mean that sounds great, but then to actually add some activities that embody that. I thought it was good to carry that thought process on to the next step.

When the focus group facilitator asked if the sermons series changed people's thinking on the importance of reaching out, one participant said, "It didn't just change thinking. It changed acting."

Restructuring Wednesday Evening Programming

Approximately eight years ago, Grandview began a Wednesday night program called "Two 4 Two." The name and the format came from Acts 2:42 ("*They devoted*

themselves to the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer"). The volunteer-intensive program runs ten weeks in the spring and ten weeks in the fall. Hoping to make Two 4 Two more accessible to visitors, and hoping to build upon intergenerational opportunities, the ministry intervention prompted an added worship service called Rendezvous. During the period of the ministry intervention, Rendezvous opened with two or three contemporary style worship songs, a short video that was connected with a short devotional, then ended with about five minutes of teaching people (mostly youth) how to sing four-part harmony. The videos and devotionals focused on different aspects of reaching out in relationships.

Initially, adults seemed to view Rendezvous as a time for children and youth to worship, while adults lingered in the foyer, or cleaned up the dining area after the meal. Slowly, though, the service began to gain some traction, becoming increasingly intergenerational.

When focus group participants commented on Two 4 Two and the effect that program had on *reaching out in relationships*, several commented that the volunteering they do in this program has been a way to get to know fellow members and attendees. One said, "I know all the children, but I don't know all the parents. But, I have gotten to learn who they [the children and youth] are and what they do. It's been enlightening. They're a bunch of good kids."

Another participant commented that Two 4 Two facilitates inviting children and youth to church, adding that it is a "program that works really well for us." Another participant said that working alongside other adults at Two 4 Two has been a "vehicle within the church to move out of my usual circles."

Regarding Rendezvous, one participant said it had “a good feel in the opening session in the sanctuary after [the] meal.” She then added, “It was ... an opportunity to see the wealth of youth this church has and to see some of the older ones interacting. I think it’s a really neat service to the church to have this intergenerational [worship].” Rendezvous was well regarded by adults, though not well attended.

When the focus group facilitator asked the group if they would be comfortable inviting somebody to Two 4 Two, one participant said, “Absolutely.” Another immediately followed by adding, “I can’t say I did it, though.” One observer then commented that she sees lots of new faces at Grandview from “people who first began bringing their children to Two 4 Two.”

No participant said anything negative about Two 4 Two or Rendezvous in either focus group. The participants obviously appreciated the ministry and the opportunities that the program afforded. At the same time, the focus group demonstrated that the behavior of inviting others into the church building continued to lag, even though they liked the program. Nobody mentioned inviting anyone to Two 4 Two. The redesign of Wednesday night program appears to have had a marginal effect on *awareness* and *attitudes*, with *behaviors* continuing to lag behind.

Promotion of Identifiable Strategies

The part of the ministry intervention that appears to have evoked the most responses, both positive and negative, was the promotion of ways for people to team with one another to serve in the community. Prior to the intervention three specific strategies were identified. The first consisted of partnering with IHN to provide mentors for people who were formerly homeless but who had successfully transitioned into a stable housing

situation. The second consisted of partnering with Johnson City's Adult Education program to provide teams of tutors for literacy training and GED programs. The third consisted of providing teams of people to make scrapbooks with residents of the Pine Oak's Assisted Living facility.

The partnerships with outside organizations experienced glitches from the start, and these glitches were apparent in the focus group discussion. Also becoming apparent was the positive impact it had on some of the participants.

One of the biggest problems with the implementation of identifiable strategies was that while the partner organizations were happy to receive volunteer help, *the partner organizations* were new to this idea as well. Their inexperience with assimilating volunteers often led to a lag time between volunteer sign-up and start-up.

In the worst cases, it failed completely. Focus group participants made numerous comments such as, "I don't know how well this worked." One participant mentioned that she eventually plugged into something else because things were moving so slowly. Another participant mentioned that he signed up but was never contacted. These themes were fully present in both focus groups.

One of the participants who identified himself as someone who helped coordinate the tutoring program commented on the difficulty involved in working with outside organizations. As the rollout of the specific strategies was taking place at Grandview, a leadership change in the Johnson City Adult Education department occurred. "It has been in a constant state of flux ... because they've lost two or three administrative assistants and they've change phones. The new guy that did come in was interim at first and then he

sort of stayed on. Now they've just gone through a lot of budget cuts, so they've changed it all again." Some problems were beyond the ability of the church to manage.

Similar difficulties emerged from the attempt to help make scrapbooks at Pine Oaks Assisted Living. One participant commented that "Pine Oaks just totally died." A participant familiar with the situation added that a "large part of that was due to a turnover in personnel at Pine Oaks." Another added that "we came into that with a very specific project, which was suggested by Pine Oaks, only to find that the new person that came in didn't want to do that."

IHN received higher marks for their ability to incorporate volunteers. One participant, however, commented that he volunteered to be a mentor but IHN social workers never found suitable family for mentoring. Another said that he volunteered but IHN never called him back.

Another issue that caused difficulty was that participants wanted to know time slots for service in advance before volunteering. Time slots became important because participants mentioned personal schedules and overall busyness as barriers to volunteering. One participant commented on his attempt to plug into a specific strategy:

Mine was a terrible failure.... I got paired up with someone for this task, and we were looking forward to it, but there were a lot of hurdles involved in it, not just working out my schedule and the other person's schedule, but also the schedule of the program involved. It turned out that it ... simply wasn't going to work.

The theme of busyness as a barrier was present in both focus groups. "My schedule is crazy," one participant said. "Time is like gas, you use all you have," another said.

Comments on the implementation of these strategies were not all negative. One participant who was able to partner with someone in tutoring students for their GED

commented on how well he wound up getting to know his partner. She eventually got a new job, which interfered with her ability to participate. “Even though [the tutoring] with her was over,” he said, “we continue to be friends.” This comment, despite being positive, reveals the scheduling difficulty.

Another participant who had a good experience in the tutoring program shrugged off the lag time. Difficulties called for persistence. “It’s very purposeful and I think that’s worked well all around.” She commented that the service she provided was worth the persistence and announced to the other participants the increased need for tutors because of budget cuts.

Despite the frustration that the participants felt, they continued to express how well they liked the *idea* of being more involved in the community. Emerging from both focus groups was appreciation that the church was attempting to focus with greater intentionality on developing relationships with people in the community.

The mood of the groups was positive. Participants picked up on the nature of the intervention saying that with the growth the church has experienced, the church has to find ways to develop meaningful relationships both inside and outside the boundaries of the church.

Summary of Major Findings

This ministry intervention produced four significant findings:

1. Awareness, attitudes, and behaviors are continually in formation, allowing for significant change even in sophisticated congregations.
2. Missional behavior changes more slowly than missional awareness and attitudes.

3. Consistent communication risks fatigue in the hearers.
4. Partnering with outside organizations requires administrative acumen.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to encourage alignment around a missional understanding of Grandview Christian Church's vision statement, in particular, the portion of the statement that calls people to reach out in relationships. I chose this theme in response to discussions with Grandview leaders that took place at an elders' retreat before I began pursuing my studies at Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS). As a part of that retreat, we held phone interviews with church-planting missionaries in England. The interviews became a reminder to the leadership of Grandview that the mission field is right outside our doors. We began asking each other such questions as, "If we were to hire a missionary to come to Johnson City, Tennessee, what would we want that missionary to do?" While anticipating the answering of that question, the next logical question was, "Why don't *we* do those things as a church?"

Soon after asking these questions, Grandview granted me an eleven-month sabbatical in order to pursue my Doctor of Ministry degree at ATS. As I entered into my course of study, missional questions were already churning in my mind and in the minds of some of the leaders of Grandview. Because Grandview takes missions seriously, leadership did not question *if* we should be more missional, just *how* we could be so.

I began this project hoping to bring missional theory *and* practice together in the context of Grandview Christian Church, hoping to put identifiable strategies of reaching out in relationships into action, and then attempting to align the church around these goals.

Chapter 2 highlights the relational nature of God's self-revelation as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The nature of the Trinity is that God reaches out *to* God eternally while also seeking to bring others into that relationship. According to Fiddes 'God suffers not only 'with' but 'as' and 'in' us in the interweaving relationship of the divine dance" (186). The willingness of God to reach out and to suffer for humanity is apparent in the life and ministry of Jesus, the Son. He practiced the kingdom of God in relationship, making the first moves of his public ministry by calling the disciples to follow him, not just to hear him. The disciples, in turn, ministered to others in community. Jesus never sent them out as individuals. He sent them out together, either in pairs or as a group.

While examining the Trinitarian call to mission and the actual practices of Jesus and the disciples, I connected those ideals to a missional moment from my own life. I recalled the insight I gained from the almost accidental way in which my wife and I reached out in relationship to a woman named Iona. After traveling to England to see her while she struggled with a cancer diagnosis, I realized that in addition to listening to the words we shared with her, she was paying close attention to the relationship my wife and I shared while in her presence.

This ministry intervention sought to encourage such moments in the lives of people at Grandview, moments when interior relationships deepen and invite, moments when those who do not experience a relationship with God get to taste and see that God is good.

The challenge was twofold, however. Identifiable strategies are one thing; getting a congregation to align around those strategies is another. Newbiggin anticipates the

problem of communal alignment when he reminds that the “earliest church never availed itself of the protection it could have had under Roman law as a *cultus privatus*” (*Foolishness* 99). The United States is in an individualistic culture; people tend to think in terms of what something means to them, personally. Likewise, when seeking to respond to the gospel, people with a Western cultural mind-set tend to imagine acting in isolation from others, as a default position. The qualitative findings of this study corroborated the literature on this point.

Making individualistic concerns worse, for Grandview, was the nature of the movement that formed the Christian churches. As part of a frontier movement in the early nineteenth century, these churches maintain a strong independent streak that is even reflected in the name that some of these churches embrace (i.e., the independent Christian churches/churches of Christ).

If American and church culture were not enough, I have also noted that the more theologically educated a congregation is, the more resistant to alignment it can become. Higher education, while helpful to the congregation in ways too many to list, also tends to produce well-reasoned and specific visions of what the church should and should not be, visions that are sometimes at odds with one another. The variety of visions became apparent to me when I first became the minister at Grandview, over a decade ago. One of the leaders of the congregation took me to lunch and told me stories of Hungarian cowboys he had seen in his travels. “They could ride, standing across the backs of three horses all at once; going full speed.” He said, pausing for effect as his story turned into warning, “Being the minister at Grandview is like that, like trying to ride three different horses in one direction at full speed.”

His warning confirms Harnish, who writes, “As long as a congregation’s mission is vague or undefined, people can get along pretty well by pretending that the church is what they believe it is” (47). Thus, the challenge is to forge a meaningful unity.

Major Findings

Four major insights into attempts to encourage a missional shift in the *ethos* and practice of a congregation arose out of this study. These insights will be incorporated into continued attempts to align Grandview around the missional vision that has long been a part of this congregation’s life and thought.

Increase of Awareness of Relational and Missional Strategies

I have already noted that Grandview is a sophisticated congregation theologically and ecclesiology. Grandview’s education level is high, as is the number of people who have served as paid staff at some point in their lives. When preaching to a sophisticated congregation I sometimes get a creeping sense that most of the people to whom I am preaching have already decided who they will be. I often, perhaps unthinkingly, assume that the core of the church is somewhat calcified, for better or worse. The fear that the congregation is already formed can lead to the sense that what the preacher says from the pulpit does not effectively, or ultimately, change minds or hearts.

Preaching still works. This study demonstrated that even religiously educated and committed Christians are in the formation process, reexamining the methods and means of their faith. Grandview had long believed that reaching out in relationships was important. The vision statement had been in place for over a decade and was the result of a careful process of examining Scripture and church tradition. When asked questions to

determine their awareness of this aspect of the vision statement, their answers indicated that they were aware. Even with a healthy awareness in place, though, the sermons served to increase that awareness, bringing the issue to the forefront.

The emphasis in other areas of church life served to reinforce the sermons, but the focus groups demonstrated that the sermons were more effective, and controversial, than other avenues of communication. When asked to discuss the role of a redesigned Two 4 Two (the Wednesday evening program), participants said positive things but did not relate the redesign of the program to the attempt to bring alignment around missional strategies. No focus group participant related the addition of an intergenerational worship time to the focus on reaching out in relationships. Even when the focus group facilitator provided gentle prompts, conversation moved quickly from how the program helps people get to know each other to the more controversial elements of the ministry intervention. If the redesign of the Wednesday evening programming changed awareness and attitudes, it did so subtly.

The call to partner with someone in the church in order to serve someone outside the church proved to be the most difficult aspect of the intervention and appears to have had an uneven effect. That Grandview communicated an identifiable strategy appears to have been appreciated by participants, in theory, but was difficult for many to embrace in practice. The difficulty involved in establishing these practices was a barrier to action but not to awareness. The very process of attempting to encourage identifiable strategies increased awareness and attitudes, even when the attempt failed to change behavior.

The ministry intervention demonstrated the importance of realizing that congregations are not perfected and complete yet, regardless of how resistant to change

they may seem. In Grandview's case, I have unthinkingly assumed that high levels of education make attempting change somewhat futile. Leaders of churches such as these can either capitalize on the malleability, attempting to move congregations into increasingly faithful responses to the gospel, or they can fail to recognize that the congregations they serve are constantly changing, allowing them to drift. Unfortunately congregations that drift tend to drift toward cultural norms, not gospel fidelity.

Behavior Separated from Awareness and Attitudes

Lohfink says, "Jesus did not envision the people of God ... as a purely spiritual, purely religious community." (28). Lohfink, and others, emphasize the need for the church to avoid Gnostic-style fissures between knowledge and practice, between word and deed. My results corroborated the literature. The results of the ministry intervention demonstrated that the bifurcation between attitude and action continues to be a difficult barrier to overcome. The chasm between thinking and acting became apparent by the fact that even with overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Two 4 Two, no focus group participant reported inviting anyone to visit.

The pretest and posttest survey results demonstrated that participant awareness and attitudes toward greater intentionality in reaching out to the community were fairly good in the pretest phase and increased significantly during the intervention. Behavior, though, showed marginal, if any, improvement. The focus group results supported those findings. The participants reported being pleased that the leadership emphasized identifiable strategies, while expressing some frustration with the call to align on so *few* strategies. These same participants reported resenting the feeling of being "hemmed in" by the narrow number of choices. They expressed wanting to do something different.

None of the participants went on, however, to share strategies they may have conceived or the names of people they considered asking to join them. These circumstances revealed that the gaps the ministry intervention sought to address (individuality versus community and the difficulty of joining theory with practice) continued to exist. Those who resented the specific calls to action did not report resentment of the theory behind those strategies. On the contrary, they reported being supportive of it.

The difficulty of matching missional behavior to missional awareness and attitudes runs deep, and its biggest enemy appears to be the dominant cultural norms of individualism and a lifestyle of busyness. Some of the busyness barrier stems from hectic work and family schedules, but some of participant busyness is rooted in the church itself. Participants talked about the difficulty of attempting to be welcoming to visitors on Sunday morning while needing to attend to teaching duties, worship duties, and other activities that are necessary for Sunday morning services to run smoothly.

The busyness of Sunday morning was not the only culprit. Hectic professional schedules were part of the lives of those who worked in Christian institutions. The busyness that these employees experienced at work was less about the so-called *American dream* and more about giving themselves to the work of the church in an educational setting. The effect of busy Christian employee lifestyles was to insulate the church members from people with little or no faith. Work in religious institutions sometimes created a practice that isolated employees from non-Christians.

I can affirm the pattern of isolation from my own experience as well. One of the reasons I entered the ministry was because I wanted to be a part of proclaiming the love of God to people who did not know God. The result has been, however, that I have

difficulty breaking out of my Christian duties and circles in order to have meaningful relationships with the very people God calls the church to serve. Too often my awareness and attitudes become divorced from my behavior.

Insularity of the church can become a downward spiral of ever-tightening circles of friendships. Church leaders are especially susceptible to this phenomenon that leads to a lack of integration between the message of the gospel that the church portends to proclaim and the lives of those seeking to proclaim that message.

I had hoped that by encouraging the very specific behavior of inviting another Christian from the church to serve in tandem outside the church that people would experience the integration of ideals and actions. Some did experience this integration, but the results, while hopeful, were ultimately disappointing. I continue to believe the model has potential.

Risks of Consistent Communication

My mother used to say, “You tell some people twice and some people not at all.” That was her response when one of her children complained that she forgot to tell them something. After telling a child something, however, she was just as likely to hear, “You already told me that.” Communication in any organization, if it is going to be consistent, risks fatigue in the hearers.

At the beginning of the ministry intervention, I told the leaders that I would need them to be patient because they were about to hear the phrase “reaching out in relationships” more than they might want to hear it. I repeated the warning in numerous meetings. I gave the same warning to the congregation, but only once. Unfortunately, saying something only once, in a church, is similar to saying nothing at all.

When attempting to convey a consistent message to a large group of people, the preacher risks wearing down those who are the most responsible and the most receptive in the audience because they receive the message more quickly. For people of marginal involvement to get the message, the people in the center will have to endure the repetition. Some will listen to repetition gladly; others will not. In the worst cases, core members of leadership may feel resentful and insulted. Sometimes, when I was making announcements or preaching, I sensed a collective, “We get it. Move on.” This sentiment was present in, but did not dominate, the focus group sessions in the posttest phase.

In the light of that fatigue, I was tempted to move on to another focus. The desire to be faithful to the approved ministry intervention plan was the only thing that kept me from altering course. Perhaps because Grandview does not have a history of attempting alignment, the intervention cut against the grain of the core participants in the church.

Fatigue may be partially responsible for the fact that fewer participants completed questionnaires in the posttest phase than in the pretest phase. I observed that the weariness appeared to be limited to those who thought they could not, or would not, participate in the identified strategies. Those who were able to participate in service outside the church actually appeared to be energized by the project. The failure of the Pine Oaks project and the glitches in the tutoring project added to the fatigue because people who were willing to be involved were never fully incorporated.

Whether or not weariness played a role in the number of posttest participants, the weariness was one side effect of the intervention. The temptation is to regret focusing on something that causes a strong reaction, but the goal of missional alignment and the goal of encouraging a less individualistic mind-set should be worth the risk. The

communicator walks a fine line between communicating and overcommunicating because challenging deeply held biases will always cause backlash.

The fatigue could be lessened, though, by taking more time than the nine months that made up this ministry intervention, focusing on the themes for shorter bursts of time but over a longer period. Also, the fatigue could have been lessened if I had been more intentional to communicate that people in the congregation were free to innovate and did not have to limit their choices to the three particular strategies offered. I did indicate that option but not with enough regularity. As the program moves forward I plan to communicate the option to innovate with the same frequency as identified avenues.

Partnering and Administration

The most enjoyable phase of this ministry intervention was when I met with the various leaders of the organizations we identified as partners. I explained that I wanted people from Grandview to serve, in pairs, in the community. I also asked the directors of these organizations if they had any available areas of service that would fit the model. I was well received. Leaders from each of the three organizations (IHN, Pine Oaks Assisted Living, and Johnson City Adult Education) presented ideas almost immediately. I then asked them to walk me through the process volunteers would need to follow in order to participate. The path seemed clear enough and the leaders anxious enough that I assumed volunteers would fairly easily integrate into each organization. My assumption proved to be simplistic.

The Pine Oaks project received the most volunteers from Grandview, with thirty-six people offering their services to help make scrapbooks. When the process of pairing Grandview volunteers with residents at Pine Oaks began, the Pine Oaks staff appeared to

be unaware of the project. I arranged a meeting with the director of Pine Oaks to discuss ways to encourage the making of scrapbooks. She assured me that she had met with her activities director and had made her aware of the process. We proceeded to restart the program only to meet with more resistance. By this time the project had lost momentum and the number of volunteers had dropped. The Pine Oaks activities director then left the organization and the project lost too much momentum to recover. Grandview continues to do other things to serve the Pine Oaks Assisted Living community, but volunteers only made one scrapbook as a result of this intervention. The director of the facility later told me that the other problem was that she realized too late that the residents were not interested in making scrapbooks.

The tutoring program with the Johnson City Adult Education department endured a similar process, though with a more positive outcome. I originally met with a representative of the program who mentioned how helpful this program would be. We designed the entry points and the process. A week before the launch of the ministry intervention, however, she left the program and her boss took a leave of absence. When we launched the emphasis on reaching out in relationships, the program was without a leader. The school system then chose an interim director. I met with him at his first convenience. He liked the idea of utilizing Grandview volunteers and agreed to the project, but because he was new to the position and trying to help the program recover from difficulties, he needed to address more pressing issues than assimilating volunteers. A lag ensued. Grandview supplied twenty names of volunteers to the Adult Education program, but due to the slowness of the process, only six actually became tutors during the period of the ministry intervention. The tutors reported having positive experiences

with students and with each other. The infusion of help and the momentum that came with it pleased the director of the program. He asked me to join the Volunteer Adult Literacy Council. I agreed and soon became its vice president.

The IHN mentor program proved more stable but not without its problems. Fewer people volunteered for this program than for the other two options. Ten people applied to become mentors. The IHN program did not have enough initial mentoree candidates. Only six people were initially matched with a person or family to be mentored. IHN needed the volunteers, they just did not need them all at once.

All of these difficulties were failures to administrate the program effectively. Anticipating problems, having alternative plans, communicating effectively with those who were in the partner organizations and working with the volunteers, and communicating the pace of the process with church members were all matters that required better administration.

If I imagined the missional church, with missional strategies, as an organic model that required less administration than the programmed or attractional model of church, this ministry intervention disabused me of the perception. The need to plan, organize, communicate, and update people inside *and* outside the church actually makes this model administratively intensive.

As the program moves forward, I plan to introduce the service opportunities in smaller, better defined avenues of service. For instance, when IHN has the need for a mentor, they will contact a program administrator from Grandview who will then communicate that specific need. The program will have less of a broad call aspect. A more intimate approach will help with the administrative difficulties that produced the lag

between volunteering and actually beginning. This method should also help with the guilt that some participants reported feeling because the announced need will be more limited in scope.

Implications

Good theory becomes good practice through hard work, intentionality, and persistence. When the prevailing cultural context surrounding the church is one of inward-facing individuality, the church's desire to be communal and missional will not necessarily translate itself into action. Busyness of life, unexamined attitudes, and the default activities of members and attendees will become the norm in church life if the leadership is not determined to encourage another path.

This ministry intervention amounted to an attempt to fight the prevailing culture and its ability to steer the church. Such a fight is, obviously, a long-term endeavor and beyond the scope of a project that lasts only nine months. The marginal change in behavior, though lagging behind awareness and attitudes, encourages me to continue honing the process of calling people to team with one another in order to participate in identifiable strategies of reaching out to the community.

When people in the congregation are able to name (1) the person *with* whom they are reaching and (2) the person *to* whom they are reaching, theory has become practice. Nouwen reminds, "We cannot bring good news on our own. We are called to proclaim the Gospel together, in community" (58). When people work in tandem, the work tends to become more identifiable. To paraphrase an aphorism, *all mission is local*. No matter how much money a church sends to missionaries, no matter how lofty its missiology and ecclesiology, if people cannot provide the names of the people with whom they serve or

the names of the people they are attempting to reach then the church is more ethereal and less practical than God calls it to be.

Especially for people who tend to live in predominantly Christian circles, the chance to become an important part of the life of a person with little or no faith can be an invigorating reminder of just how much difference the gospel makes in peoples' lives and of the potential it has to make a positive difference. Christians hear the gospel differently when they are standing next to an unbeliever.

Limitations

The limitations of this ministry intervention presented themselves early in the process. I have already noted the difficulty involved with partnering with outside institutions. Our slowness to navigate that difficulty was the single biggest failure of this project. When I talked with people who participated in the identified strategies, they all reported feeling energized by the work and the relationships they formed. The ones who volunteered but were not utilized reported feeling disappointed and guilty.

The instrument I used was helpful but may have relied too heavily on self-reporting. Self-reporting has some validity but the human memory can be tricky. David G. Myers reports that "preconceptions strongly influence how we interpret and remember events" (83). Also, the section of the instrument that measured behavior had two categories that, in retrospect, were absolutes and may have squeezed the behavior scores toward the center of the scale, muting results. When measuring behaviors of participants categories labeled *never* or *continually* are not always helpful. Very few voluntary activities/behaviors realistically fall into those categories.

The total number of participants who completed surveys dropped from the pretest to the posttest phase (105 to 96). While the decrease in number was regrettable, the sample was still sufficiently large to gauge the mind of the congregation, accounting for nearly one-third of the number of people who attended Sunday morning worship, but I had hoped for a sense of momentum at that point. That momentum was missing. The posttest event for completing the surveys was not ideal for the event due to space constraints. Those constraints may have been a contributing factor to the drop in participants who completed surveys.

Other limitations were unique to the setting and beyond the control or anticipation of the project. The church experienced financial pressure during the intervention as the capital campaign that funded the construction in 2004 drew to a close. The leadership decided against beginning another capital campaign but did ask that the focus of the congregation shift for four Sundays to financial concerns.

The need to begin a third service further complicated matters. The 9:30 a.m. service reached capacity during the intervention, so we began making plans to add a service that would relieve overcrowding. Plans included hiring a new part-time staff member and holding meetings regarding the time, place, and style of the service. Then we needed to communicate the resulting decisions and plans to the congregation.

During the time of the intervention, we were also trying to complete the construction of a new kitchen while remodeling the old sanctuary, turning it into a fellowship/gathering area. We needed to communicate the construction updates and plans during this time. While these were good problems to have, they interfered with the focus on reaching out in relationships.

The posttest data collection process suffered a setback because of the construction/remodeling delays. We had planned on using the fellowship hall for the program and for the questionnaire completion time. Because the fellowship hall was not finished, the event was moved into a large unsuitable foyer area with no space for tables. This change shifted the questionnaire completion time to a different location in the building and appears to have played a role in the drop in participants who completed the posttest survey.

Unexpected Observations

The literature review and the theology of the intervention established correctly identified the major barriers, including individualistic mind-sets, busy schedules, and inward-facing tendencies. I was pleased to observe, however, that the people of Grandview wanted me to be successful despite the natural reluctance that the barriers may have inspired. At no point in the ministry intervention did I feel that the fatigue or dissatisfaction that was sometimes present made the participants angry or resentful toward me.

I presume their grace is the by-product of the overall Christian maturity of the congregation and of the length and stability of the ministry we have shared. I was humbled by their kindness and thankful for it. Ministers often report frustration with the congregations they serve, especially during times when they are calling for change. While this intervention had difficult moments, an atmosphere of support and cooperation was present throughout.

Recommendations

I plan to continue attempting to align Grandview around missional strategies, but I will do so at a slower pace and with more calls for people to be creative in their own attempts to reach out in relationships. I have seen that the model suggested by this intervention has potential. When it works well, relationships within the church are strengthened, new relationships with people who do not know the love of God are forged, and the light of the gospel better escapes the walls of the church building.

I recommend thoughtful planning and gentle, but consistent, communication of this strategy. I also recommend that when people experience the joy of being present when the light of the kingdom of God dawns on someone that those servants be invited to share their stories in front of the whole congregation. The value and importance of intentionally responding to the call of the gospel become apparent when we add names, faces, and stories to the strategies.

I recommend developing clear lines of responsibility for planning and implementing partnerships with outside organizations. The responsibilities will include developing communication with the people in the partner institutions who may be working with church volunteers, reporting any problems that arise to the directors of the partner institutions, reporting successes to those same directors, encouraging the volunteers to recognize the value of the kingdom service they offer, making opportunities that become available known to the congregation, evaluating whether or not the specific strategies appear to bearing kingdom fruit, and exploring new opportunities for service.

I recommend avoiding large calls to service in favor of well-defined opportunities with times and places of service attached whenever possible. People need to have a clear understanding of how much time and energy each specific strategy involves.

Postscript

During the period of the intervention, my wife and I became mentors for Maria and Kevin (not their real names) who had transitioned from homelessness to a stable housing situation. After we had been meeting with them weekly for about two months, their rocky relationship ended. Maria's oldest son had been adopted by Kevin's parents, but she was still the guardian of their youngest son, John.

I chose to partner with my wife in this endeavor because we often serve in different corners of the church and I wanted to find ways to spend more time with her, even while we developed new relationships with people of little or no faith. The time we spent with Maria was a sometimes painful reminder to me of just how broken lives can be. Maria's choices surprised me by their shortsightedness. She seemed unable to make healthy decisions with her money, friendships, or romantic relationships. When Kevin took their son to live with him, her only comment to us was, "Now he's going to find out how hard it is to take care of him all by his self." She was right. Kevin returned John to her three weeks later.

Maria came to Sunday morning worship at Grandview four or five times but seemed unsure of how to *be* in that situation. On Sunday mornings she made very little eye contact with people until they approached her. She seemed awkward about being in a place of worship. My daughter was surprised one Sunday morning when she saw that Maria was sending a text message during the prayer. In many ways Maria was the exact

opposite of the people I have grown accustomed to serving at Grandview. Her presence in the congregation thrilled and challenged me.

She fit more naturally into the Two 4 Two program on Wednesday nights, but the awkwardness was still there. She helped in the kitchen and with clean-up duties. She ate with people from the congregation, and she attended Rendezvous (when John was not so tired that he was making a scene). My wife and I prayed that she would witness healthy relationships when she was participating in the meal or when she was with us.

I wish I could report a great and obvious transformation in Maria's life, but I cannot. She still comes to Two 4 Two when she can, but she rarely attends Sunday morning worship. When her son needed to go to the emergency room at the local hospital, she called us while they were treating him. She seems genuinely to appreciate our presence in her life. My wife and I get discouraged, though, because nothing in her life seems to change.

She sends us text messages two or three times a week. Those text messages have been a reminder to us of what is important to her. The signature line in each of her messages, until recently, has been "sexy\$back." We have never been sure what it means, but in the light of how she lives her life we have always found it a little bit discouraging. After meeting with her for over a year we had seen nothing in her personal life that indicated a move toward healthier circumstances.

As I was preparing to write this chapter, Maria sent me a text message. The message was similar to others she had sent us. It just said hello and asked us when we were getting together with again. This time, though, she had changed the signature to "MariaandJohn." I chose to believe it was the first sign of change I had seen. Maybe she

is beginning to think of herself in relationship to her son instead of in relationship to the odd assortment of men who are appearing and disappearing in her life.

When my wife and I are with Maria, I sometimes remind myself of the experience that we had in England with Iona when I realized that she was paying very close attention to who we were as a couple. The experience of reaching out to Maria has become for us a common bond, a common matter for prayer and time spent together—a time for integration.

APPENDIX A

Grandview's Vision Statement, Concise Version

Extending God's kingdom

to all people by

Reaching out in relationships,

Building up others in fellowship,

Serving in Christ-like compassion,

Engaging life issues in discipleship,

Praising God in whole-life worship,

all by the guidance

and for the glory of God!

APPENDIX B

Sermon Samples

Sermon One: Preached on 2 September 2007

Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Sermon Title: Reaching Out in Relationships: The Trinity

Theme: Relationship is part of the nature and character of God. For us to ignore it would be for us to ignore something that is meant to be fundamental to our own nature and character.

I'm using the word imprecisely when I tell you I was existential as a kid—but *existential* is the word that seems to come closest to describing how I felt when I would stop and stare into a mirror. Initially, I would be looking into the mirror in order to help me decide if I was hideous or handsome (there seemed to be nothing in-between). Then, slowly and mysteriously, my mind seemed to escape me, occupying the mind of the reflection almost. I pondered the image I was seeing. I asked myself questions.

Is this what people think of when they think of me; do think of this image staring at me? But is that really me? Aren't I more than this image? Is this really who I am? This is a backwards reflection, is my own image of my own face the opposite of how others think I look?

Then the experience would kind of blow my mind. I did this exercise occasionally because I liked the feeling of my mind getting set to explode.

That's the same reason I sometimes contemplated God—even as a kid. Whenever I sat down (and this wasn't as often) and began thinking about the origin of life I would

get caught in this great and expansive loop. If you've contemplated God and been caught in that same loop, you know the feeling I describe. If not, I highly recommend it.

Contemplate how anything exists—and I mean *anything*. I was tempted to ask questions like, “How in the world does anything exist?” But that question, about the “world,” is too small. The question is bigger than this world and all worlds. The question is even bigger than the universe because for the universe to exist something had to make it, but what? For *the maker of the universe* to exist, something had to make the maker of the universe. Logic will settle for nothing else. Which is why logic simply isn't enough—at least our human logic isn't enough—to grasp the nature of existence.

Christians sometimes get uptight about the Big Bang Theory. It never bothered me as an explanation of existence because of the obvious question—how is there a Big Bang if nothing exists? I loved contemplating this until it did what my reflection in the mirror used to do—caused a big bang in the synapses of my brain that were responsible for thinking logical thoughts.

When I was a young boy, I remember telling my mom that when I get to heaven (yes, I was presumptuous) the first question I'm going to ask God is, “How did *you* get here?” I later decided that God's retort would probably be something like, “I was about to ask you the same thing.” So I think I will shy away from that question.

The problem is, as I remember Fred Norris saying in class back in seminary, “If you try to get God in your brain, your head explodes.” Hear the warning: Our logic will only take us so far in today's sermon. We're contemplating the nature of God. That means we are in danger of having our minds blown apart. We're going to need some help from outside the box of our own reasoning.

So we turn to the baptism scene of Jesus of Nazareth, a scene rich with clues to the nature of God and what that means for us as followers of God. This scene, so familiar to many of us, represented a mind bending problem for the early church. The early church is absolutely committed to her Jewish heritage and the belief that there is only One God *and* that God is One. Christians have no interest believing that there is more than one God. There is one God. There are not two gods. There are not three gods. And yet, here in the unimpressive waters of the Jordan River stands Jesus—who the church believes is the Word of God, the character of God, the nature of God, the substance of God, in the flesh.

Jesus—God in the flesh—comes up out of the waters and the heavens split in two, and a voice from heaven says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

What? If this is God in the flesh who’s voice is that claiming to be Jesus’ father? What’s more is that the Holy Spirit descends bird-like, from heaven, and lands on the Son. The Holy Spirit? Who are you? What are you doing down here in the Jordan River with God, the Son?

Suddenly this little scene has more characters than a Russian novel. Characters are coming at us from every side. God the Father? God the Son? God The Holy Spirit? Not only that, we can’t forget that in the middle of this pivotal scene is a rough-cut lumber of a man we call John, the Guy Who Gets to Immerse Jesus.

Jesus’ baptism is in all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus’ birth isn’t in all four (it only makes the cut in two of the four Gospels). That’s how important this event is for our understanding of who God is. This is God’s declaration of the new thing he is doing, this is Jesus’ commitment to God’s cause, even if it means a cross and

death. This is the Holy Spirit's commitment to carry Jesus through all of these events. This is, for John the Baptist, the most beautiful moment of his life. With all of the difficulty of his calling, he has the joy of standing smack dab in the middle of God's presentation party—the moment when it becomes clear to humans that God is more fantastic than we ever before imagined.

God is One, but that Oneness unfolds in a way that allows God to be the Father in heaven, the Son on Earth, and the Spirit in all places. By being thus, we get to see how God relates to God. This is important.

What, you might ask, is the important part? It's the relationship part. We know God by examining the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit: one God. If you were standing on the banks of the Jordan trying to keep your eye on God, you would do best to keep an eye on the relationship that is being exposed among God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To see only the man in the water would be to see God, but to see only Jesus, in isolation from the Father and the Spirit, would be to miss important clues to the nature and character of God.

A MAN IN ISOLATION IS UNKNOWABLE

In Tom Hank's movie, *Cast Away*, Chuck Noland is marooned on a tiny island in the south Pacific. All alone, he tries to get a handle on survival. His early days on the island, though, are tedious to watch (at least they were for me). They are tedious to watch because there is no dialogue. There are just shots of him trying to figure things out. Sometimes he yells out in frustration. Sometimes he says things for the audience's benefit, but there is no real receiver of those words in this part of the movie. When I first saw the movie, I thought, "Wow. This is boring."

Looking back, though, I think it is brilliant for being boring. Because, and if you've seen the movie you know this, the makers of the movie finally introduce a new character to the island. The new character is not a beautiful native who falls in love him (this isn't Robison Caruso and his girl, Friday). The new character is a volleyball named "Wilson."

For the rest of his time on the island, Chuck treats this volleyball like a friend. And what happens is that we come to know Chuck better by the way in which he interacts with a volleyball.

There is no question that forming a friendship with a volleyball is bizarre, but the point of the movie is clear. Alone on an island, without relationship, a person is not quite a full person. Through the movie we, along with Tom Hanks, become so attached to the volleyball that when the pathetic, deflated, straw-stuffed, blood stained ball floats irretrievably from his raft, we feel positively crushed by his loss. We won't really miss the volleyball. We will miss the relationship the Hanks character shared with it.

That's because we know how powerful relationships are in our own lives. They are so powerful that we somehow feel bad for Tom Hanks as the volleyball floats off into the big, blue ocean and as he yells. "Willllllssooooonn!!! I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

I watched it and thought, "That poor man! He lost his volleyball."

A GOD IN ISOLATION IS UNKNOWABLE

When we see Jesus in the water of the Jordan, when we hear God the Father speaking his pleasure upon his Son, when we see the Holy Spirit lovingly and playfully descending toward and resting upon the Son, we get a chance to see into the very heart of God. Seeing God in relationship, we see that the Father and the Son and the Spirit

acquiesce to one another—not for their own sake alone, but for the sake of those who might be included in that mystery and beauty, for the sake of a man like John the Baptist whom Herod will soon kill for boldly being faithful to God.

Don't you see? If God didn't reveal God's self to us through the interaction of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, then our picture of God would be incomplete. And, if our picture of God is incomplete, then we who are made in God's image suffer the same incompleteness.

AARON AND CINDY AND IONA

While I was in seminary, I discerned a call to share my faith with a woman named Iona. Iona was the granddaughter of the man who served as the subject of my thesis.

Through the course of my research on this man, I met Iona when she was visiting from England. Iona and I had a short dialogue on her grandfather and even on faith, but our relationship was not protracted enough for a deeper, more meaningful conversation. I found that reaching out to Iona was difficult because we were separated by our ages, our cultures, and the Atlantic Ocean.

A decade later, when Iona informed me that she had liver cancer, my wife (Cindy) and I traveled to England to visit her one more time and to share our faith with her. Because I was the author of the thesis on her grandfather, I assumed that I, not Cindy, would be the one to take the lead in any discussions we were to have. What I discovered, though, was that I became the listener when the conversation began in earnest. My wife was the one God had prepared to lead the discussion. She was amazingly bold. I sat back and watched, amazed. I learned things about my wife that I never knew, even after over a decade of marriage.

My wife and I did our best to encourage Iona to become a follower of Christ, but she never gave us any indication that she was convinced. At the end of our visit, Iona drove my wife and me back to our hotel in Salisbury. Standing in the parking lot, Iona and I said our final goodbyes and we hugged. Cindy and I then walked from Iona's car to the door of the bed and breakfast where I turned to wave one last time. As she returned my wave, something in her eyes caused me to realize that throughout our time together she was paying very close attention, not just to our words but to the way my wife and I were relating to one another. I suddenly wondered if my body language and the subtlety of my demeanor around my wife had proclaimed the gospel as well as it should have. I found myself wondering if the gospel, if the kingdom of God, was evident to her through the medium of my relationship with my wife. If you're married you might know the feeling of the shiver that went up and down my spine.

CONCLUSION: A CHURCH IN ISOLATION IS UNKNOWABLE

People drive past our church building every day. Most of them see a building on an island (if they see us at all). If we isolate ourselves from the community, then we aren't being faithful to the nature of a God who refused to hang out in some remote corner of the universe, preferring to come to us, to live among us, to reach out to us, to teach us, to heal us, and to include us in the most powerful moments in history.

In my year away from Grandview, this was what was on my heart and mind. It began before I left, it began over a year and a half ago when the elders sat down and asked the big questions. "What are we doing as a church? Have we become so busy inside this building with meetings and chores that we've overlooked the call of the church to bless the community, to be missionaries to Johnson City?" We asked questions like, "If

we were going to hire a missionary to come to Johnson City (instead of overseas), what would we want that missionary to do? And then, why wouldn't we start doing that?"

We asked the question that a lot of churches are asking these days. If our church closed up shop and no longer existed, would people in the community know or care? If not, then we have become a church in isolation.

Here's what I want us to consider: I want us to think about ways to model the nature and character of the God we serve. If we are able to go out into the world around in relationship to one another, with genuine love that reflects the love of God, and if we invite others into that relationship, how much more powerful would the witness of God be in our community? If we are able to serve the community in tangible ways, building the relationships we have between one another, offering to include others, then we will be faithful to the calling of the church.

You will hear more in the coming weeks about ways to do this, just in case you're not sure how to start. You will be asked to consider going out as teams to tutor people who are trying to get pass their GED/high school equivalency test. You'll will be asked to consider mentoring someone who has stayed in our building for weeks at a time because they were formerly homeless. You will be asked to consider just sitting down, in teams, with people at Pine Oaks Assisted Living across the street and helping them make a scrapbook of memories to keep their minds sharp and to have something to share with their families when they visit. Consider how we, as a church, as a community, can be in relationship with the world around us.

If we don't, if as a church we become too focused on our own reflection, then all we're going to do is stare at ourselves until we weird ourselves out. They won't know who God is and we won't know who we are.

Sermon Two: Preached on 9 September 2007

Sermon Text: Luke 4:40-44, Matthew 11:1-6

Sermon Title: Reaching Out in Relationships: The Kingdom of God

Theme: The kingdom of God as the goal and focus of the life of the church.

Back when Michael Jordan was at his zenith of popularity, I found myself on a basketball court in an apartment complex in Indianapolis. I had just wandered over there while visiting a graduation reception of some kind. I was in my graduation reception clothes and there was a young man dribbling around on the court by himself. He was probably in fourth or fifth grade. He was wearing red and black. I noticed that when he dribbled toward the hoop his tongue would hang out (that's just how kids drove to the hoop when Jordan was king). I started chatting with this kid while rebounding for him. He had a buoyant face and not a bad shot for a fifth grader.

“Who is your favorite player?” I asked him. Sometimes it's good to ask a question even if you know the answer.

“Michael Jordan!” He said with eyes growing large. “Who's yours?” He asked.

“Hmmm.” I said, having never contemplated the question. My hesitation went on for long enough that he decided to help me out.

“Is it Larry Bird?”

I narrowed my eyes and angled my face, “Did you say that because I’m white?”

“Nooo, nooo. I didn’t mean *that*.” He protested. When I laughed he knew it was okay to laugh, too.

The truth is that Jordan was my favorite. With Jordan’s ties to North Carolina and then to the Chicago Bulls, it’s hard for someone from Indiana to say it, but he was just the best I’ve seen play the game. I used to watch basketball players everywhere of all races, good dribblers and bad dribblers, jumpers and non-jumpers, quick and slow—they all wanted to be like Mike.

It kind of makes me wonder, though. If the playgrounds and practice courts across the nation were filled for fifteen years with kids who focused on being like Mike, why aren’t more players like him today? It seems like there should be Michael Jordans everywhere.

Is it simply that Jordan had great talent? Could be, but I don’t think that’s the whole story. He was cut from his high school basketball team either his freshman or sophomore year. Also, it wasn’t obvious that he was going to be among the greatest ever. He wasn’t even the first player drafted the year he came out of college. The Portland Trailblazers kicked themselves for years after passing on the opportunity to draft him.

No, Jordan’s greatness was more than raw talent. I suspect that we have so few like him because so many young players focused on *him*, dressing like him, hanging their tongues out like him, and shooting layups on the court while in their minds and imaginations seeing themselves as that logo of him flying toward a dunk. I think the problem may be that when they were practicing they were thinking of Jordan.

Here's the thing: Michael Jordan didn't become a great basketball player by focusing on Michael Jordan. He focused on playing basketball (shooting, quickness drills, etc.). If a talented basketball player wants to become like Mike, he will need to focus on the things Mike focused on, not on Mike. I suspect that Jordan's tongue was hanging out because he focused on the hoop, not because he was focused on letting his tongue hang out. The instant a player is thinking about his tongue when he's driving to the hoop, he has taken his focus off the hoop and put it on Michael Jordan. The result? He won't become like Mike.

THE CAUTION FOR THE CHURCH

Christians don't want to be like Mike, of course, we want to be like Christ. Because we want to be like Jesus, we study Jesus. We focus on Jesus. But what does that really mean? Does it mean we speak in the same language as Jesus? Does it mean we have to be nice all of the time? Does it mean wearing his jersey? Is that why some (especially in the 1960s) who wanted to be like Jesus started wearing sandals and growing beards. But isn't that the messianic equivalent of letting your tongue hang out on the way to the hoop?

If we want to be like Jesus, it won't hurt us to look at Jesus. But even more important than focusing on Jesus is learning to focus where Jesus focused.

What did Jesus say? How did Jesus spend his time? Instead of asking what Jesus would do, we can ask ourselves what Jesus actually did—and then we can try to incorporate the focus of Jesus into our own lives. As we focus where Jesus focused, then, won't we naturally become more like Jesus?

We get a glimpse of Jesus' focus in today's texts. In Luke we see the Galilean countryside and we find that Jesus is healing people of diseases, laying his hands on them he heals them. Not only that, Jesus is casting demons out of people, and he isn't doing it for an hour on Sunday afternoon. He's doing it until sundown.

Do you still want to be like Jesus? Because, he appears to be surrounded by people in need, desperate for healing. If we're going to focus where Jesus focused, then we're going to have spend time ministering to these needy people that are all around, but that's not all.

At daybreak, before all the people wake up and find him, Jesus is up early and running away to a desolate place in the wilderness—probably to pray, though Luke doesn't tell us that here.

When the crowds awake they panic. Where's Jesus? He is supposed to be here healing us, doing what we ask him to do. They wander around until they find him. They beg him to stay and to be a part of their community, but he won't stay. Jesus, after serving these needy people, tells them “no.” This may seem like a surprising side of Jesus, but he is surrounded by people in need and he tells them, “No. I can't stay and help you. I have to go proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities—this is my purpose.”

Two things to notice about this. First, Jesus said “no” to some things—to some good things—in order to be faithful to his purpose. Second, his primary purpose was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

What in the world does Jesus mean by “proclaim the Good News of the kingdom”? What is the good news of the kingdom? Is this the good news that people can

go to heaven by accepting the grace God offers through the life of Jesus? Well, that is a part of the message of the kingdom of God, but when we find Jesus he isn't just talking to the people. He's healing and casting out demons; he's healing them as part of his message.

Some have looked at Jesus' healing and exorcising as the marketing wing of Jesus' mission, as though he did spectacular things in order to get people to listen to this message of grace and faith. But that interpretation is flawed, with the concept of Jesus we wind up focusing on Jesus and not on the things that were his focus.

The healing and the casting out of demons wasn't the thing Jesus did to get people to listen to the kingdom message—they *were* an essential part of the kingdom message. The kingdom message is that God has entered into life in a new and powerful way. God's favor has arrived and is going to have physical, now-life, implications.

The message isn't always an easy one to believe because of people just like the ones Jesus left behind in that town—unhealed, unexorcised. If God's kingdom is here, why are there still so many sick people? That's why John the Baptist in prison becomes worried that he's made a mistake in assuming that Jesus is the promised one that God was going to send. The reason he doubts may have something to do with the fact that he is locked away in prison getting ready to be killed for speaking the truth. So John sends his disciples to Jesus to ask Jesus if he's the one.

Jesus' answer is revelatory because we again get a glimpse of his focus. Jesus doesn't say, "Go tell John that lots of people are believing in me and going to heaven. Jesus says, "Go tell John what you're seeing and hearing out here. The blind see, the

lepers are cured, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them.”

Jesus, with his relative (his relative!) in prison, says, “I’m focusing on healing people, raising people from the dead, and bringing good news to the poor.” And as he does so, he is, in very real ways, saying “No” to John. “No, you aren’t getting out of prison, but judge for yourself by what you are seeing and hearing as to whether or not the kingdom is finally arriving.”

THE FOCUS OF THE CHURCH

The proof that Jesus was who John said he was came in the form of lives being transformed, physically, socially, and spiritually. If we are to take our cues from Jesus, as followers of Jesus, if we want to be like Jesus, we need to be focused on proclaiming good news to the poor, on healing the sick, the blind, and the deaf—and, yes, casting out demons and raising the dead.

If this is good news for the world, then it’s important to note that there is some bad news here for ministers like me: Jesus never focused on getting people to worship once a week for an hour. Jesus didn’t focus on the institution that we call the church, on anything that we would call “Grandview Christian Church.”

One of the great strengths of our vision statement at Grandview is that from the beginning it focuses the church on the kingdom of God, not on the church. If we are going to be a church after Jesus’ own heart, if we are going to be people who are becoming more and more like Jesus, we don’t focus on the church, and especially, we don’t focus on Grandview.

Like Jesus, we work tirelessly in the transforming of lives around us. We focus on the message and work of the kingdom over the other things that might compete for our attention. We pray for those around us. We place our hands on people and ask God to heal. We proclaim that God's love and favor are here—now. They have arrived.

The danger of the church is that we wind up obsessed with perpetuating the church, or, worse yet, perpetuating our own individual lives and well-being. Jesus taught us that to seek to perpetuate ourselves is to lose ourselves. To lose ourselves is to find the kingdom of God.

If you want to be like Jesus, throw your life in with the kingdom of God. Make the kingdom of God your focus. Call others into relationship with you and serve the kingdom. Be the church that serves the kingdom of God. This is the call of Christ.

We want to be intentional about this. We want to be clear about ways to do this. We invite you to join with someone from the church and develop a deeper, kingdom, relationship with that person by taking that relationship out into the world around us and losing your time and energy healing others through tutoring those who want to change their family for generations to come, through mentoring people who have experienced what it means to have no place to call home and who need tools for understanding how God blesses marriages and families and communities, and through taking the time to enrich the life of someone who is restricted to living in at Pine Oaks and would benefit from life-giving interaction with unselfish people who love God and each other.

This is the kingdom: focusing on others as a testimony to the nature and character of God.

Sermon Three: Preached on September 16, 2007

Sermon Text: Luke 5:27-31

Sermon Title: Reaching Out in Relationships: Celebrating the Kingdom

Theme: Celebrating God's reign on earth is one of the highest callings of the church.

We hear this story and it makes so much sense to those of us who grew up in the church. Of course Jesus reached out to all sorts of people! Of course Jesus was pleased to bring a tax collector into the fold. Jesus is just that way! Nobody is especially inclined to like tax collectors, but most of us realize that tax collectors are people too. Even tax collectors have to earn a living, after all. Feed the family! The story of Jesus welcoming a tax collector is no surprise to us. Ho hum.

Familiarity with Scripture can have its pitfalls. We read and hear the same things over and over and it can breed indifference. It's a bit like singers. I feel bad for singers whose songs become popular and who then they have to sing the same thing over and over and over. That must get old. How many times can a person sing the same song? Even the psalmist, writing thousands of years ago, yearns to "sing a new song."

Before I go further, I confess that I'm a little afraid of the backlash I will get after the service when I admit this to you that I went to a John Denver concert once, as a young man. Some guy behind me at that concert in the now torn-down Market Square Arena in Indianapolis, Indiana, wanted to hear just one song. I'll never forget which one. It was a song called Calypso. The reason I remember the name of the song is because the guy yelled, "Calypso," after *every* song. Unfortunately, Calypso was the encore song. I

wonder if John Denver walked around with people always saying, “Calypso! Calypso!” Awful.

When we hear the same thing over and over we tend to get numb to it. Jesus ate with sinners. Jesus ate with sinners. Jesus ate with sinners. So what if Jesus went to dinner with a tax collector? I grew up singing, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man.” Zack was just another in a long line of tax collectors that Jesus reached. Tell me something I don’t know.

CLICHÉ

In order to get you to hear this story afresh, this is where the preacher (played today by Aaron Wymer) tells the congregation (played by you) how hated the tax collector was. How he cooperated with the Romans. The Romans of all people! That occupying force in Israel’s homeland! This is where I tell you that tax collectors cheated people in order to get their money.

But you’ve heard that before, too, haven’t you? It’s not scandalous to our ears anymore, and once the scandal is gone it’s hard to recover it. I want us to remember, though, that there was a collective revulsion toward these characters. Pharisees believed that the reason God was letting the Romans reign in Israel was that Israel wasn’t holy enough; there was too much sin in their nation. Tax collectors, by their sin and their cooperation with the Romans, were a huge part of the reason for Israel’s trouble (at least according to the Pharisees and their like). There was a gut-level revulsion to this. After all, even the tax collector’s name, Levi, has religious implications in Israel. If this man is from the tribe of Levi, then he has, historically, been set apart to help care for the priestly

class of Israel. How unfortunate that he is closer to *undermining* the priests than to supporting them.

I can't know for sure, but I'll bet the people reacted to tax collectors with the kind of disdain our own Dr. Fife felt when he entered Dachau as a chaplain with the forces that liberated the death camp there. Dr. Fife used to tell of looking across the street where the respectable Germans lived in nice little houses, ignoring the slaughter of innocents across the street. His first reaction to these people was one of revulsion for having cooperated by their silence.

Or maybe the revulsion Jews felt toward tax collectors was akin to the feeling we get when we see a picture like this: [Projected slide of Christian priests saluting Adolph Hitler]

Nazi priests? Is that possible? Can a person really follow Hitler and Jesus? Aren't those two things mutually exclusive? Maybe if we replace "Nazi" with "Roman Tax Collector" and "Priest" with "Jew" then we'll start to recover the scandal in today's text.

I am not suggesting that we're comparing apples to apples, here, just that the feeling in the pit of the stomach may be about the same. There is a feeling of, "Wait, wait, wait—that's completely incompatible and very, very wrong."

STILL JESUS INVITES

And, yet, Jesus comes up to this tax collector who inspires such angst in the people around him and Jesus says, "Follow me." And the guy gets up and leaves behind this incompatible lifestyle, this way of living that doesn't mesh with the kingdom of God, leaves it all behind (that's important), and follows Jesus.

It's worth noting that Jesus didn't say, "Believe in me." He said, "Follow me." I suspect that Levi could have believed in Jesus without actually following him, but following Jesus means changing his priorities. It means not following someone or something else; it means focusing on something different. Leaving behind a way of life that mistreats others is part and parcel with "Follow me" in a way that "Believe in me" only begins to address.

THE INVITOR MATTERS

I realized something about this text this week that I suppose should have dawned on me long ago. I wondered why Levi was so excited that Jesus would call him. It isn't like Levi didn't have friends. We'll see in a little bit that he has enough friends for throwing a party.

Is Levi excited about the invitation because there is this buzz around Jesus? Jesus is healing people. Jesus is teaching people. Crowds are flocking to him as a Rabbi and a healer for whom miracles are common place, not the exception. People around Jesus are excited. They believe God is up to something big. People can walk, see, and hear who previously could not.

This is something new, this Jesus. I know, I know, I know! We've been hearing about Jesus for a long time. Jesus is this cultural and historical figure and people have bumper stickers and t-shirts and Bibles and billboards and soup kitchens and hospitals and schools and church buildings and preachers and teachers and missionaries and ... and ... and it's not new anymore.

With the loss of the scandal of the tax collector, we've lost the surprising joy of Jesus and this new thing. As a preacher who gets the privilege of being paid to study

Scripture every week, who gets the certain advantage of a vocation in which my waking hours are consumed by trying to spot God's grace in peoples' lives, sometimes I feel like a singer who has been singing the same song night after night. It isn't that I don't recognize the song's importance. It isn't that I don't love the song. It's just that I've heard it so much that the kingdom of God sometimes loses its original thrill.

Well, the original thrill of the kingdom wasn't lost on Levi. When this Jesus, this exciting new holy man whose name was on everybody's lips walked past *his* booth and says, "Follow me!" Levi is pumped. He is pumped because his stigma had grown common place to him and he decided that he would just live outside the gate, so to speak, when it came to good, decent, company. He was the enemy of his own people. He had come to terms with it as best he could and then Jesus came to him and said, "Your stigma, your curse, doesn't have to be that way. Follow me."

And in the strength of that joy, he left his stigma behind. He threw caution to the wind of God; he followed Jesus. His first act of following Jesus was not to stare at his navel and consider what a rotten fellow he had been. His first act was simply to leave that behind and THEN to throw a party. He threw a party because that's what you do when you get excited. He threw a party because the kingdom of God had come into his life. He threw a party because someone as exciting and amazing as Jesus had looked at him in his awful condition and STILL invited him to follow.

WITH WHOM SHALL I EAT?

The party is a story in its own right. There were very strict rules in that day regarding with whom one would eat. You see some vestiges of rules around table fellowship even today, but nothing as socially and religiously strict as in that day. But

this is a party a tax collector is throwing, a tax collector who has found that his life can be redefined.

The party is a meal, a table, a man hated by his neighbors, and a man through whom God is doing something totally, shockingly new. When somebody accepts the invitation to turn from a life of undermining God's purposes for this world to being a part of the sacrificial solution to evil, then there is a celebration. That's the correct response.

Jesus attends Levi's party. Never mind that there are more of these characters who are undermining the people of Israel by cooperating with the Roman government. This is a festival of forgiveness. Jesus isn't condoning their way of life by eating with them. He's celebrating that one of their own has found his way from the kingdom of self into the kingdom of God.

CONVERSION FROM KINGDOM OF SELF: DOES IT GET OLD FOR GOD?

I wonder if it ever gets old for God. You know, when a person realizes that they don't have to be stuck in their kingdoms of self, that God is constantly and lovingly inviting us out of our various versions of our own kingdoms and into the way of life that leads us to become a part of God's great solution to a fallen world.

I suspect that if we're eating around the same table each week in our worship services, if we're failing to discern that we're the unlikely gatherers here, then the celebration fades into common place. As the celebration fades, we continue to lose the scandal of our own presence here. Of course we belong. Right? We've been coming for a good long time. It isn't that we think we deserve to be here; it's that the tune has grown familiar and, like an old Elvis Presley song, has lost its scandal.

If we become like the Pharisees, who attacked Jesus for eating with sinners, then we fall so far into our complacency that we resent being reminded of how radical God's love is.

The thing that can keep worship and the table and the celebration fresh is to become the ones who are inviting the tax collectors into our midst. Only when we are seeing the difference it makes in people's lives does it stay that fresh. If you gather around this table with your son or daughter or mother or father or dear friend for the time, you know celebration. Even as God invites us, we invite others.

The others won't always respond as nicely as Levi; however, if we go out and do our best to be faithful to God's call to be a light to those around us, to be a sign and a beacon of God's grace in-breaking kingdom, then maybe God will show up in ways we can't know beforehand, and maybe God will allow us to be present when people are converted from the kingdom of self into the kingdom of God.

That's when it's exciting. Following God so easily becomes mundane when we aren't out there on the edge of the kingdom having to trust in God to do what we can't, sacrificing our time and our lives in ways that best allow God to use us. If we are playing it safe with our time and with our lives, then this table, quite frankly, loses its ability to speak to us—no, change that—we lose our ability to hear.

The three things that I'm calling us to could be interpreted as something we are doing to bless the community around us. They are that, but so much more. God doesn't live on a one-way street and doesn't ask us to live there, either. What we're going to find is that the blessing will be for us and will be felt right here at this table where we celebrate God's love.

Sermon Four: Preached on 23 September 2007

Sermon Text: Luke 9:1-9

Sermon Title: Reaching Out in Relationships: The Dirty Dozen

[While projecting a slide of the Tiananmen Square protester standing in front of a column of Chinese tanks] Why was the tank man such a threat to the Chinese government? He looks like he was on his way home from the grocery store. But there he stands, blocking a column of tanks. He is no threat. He has no weapon. He has no army. He is just one man standing in front of a column of tanks.

Some of you are too young to remember the student protests in China's Tiananmen Square. There was a democratic uprising in China in 1989. The rallies were held in a number of places, but the one best known to us is the one in Tiananmen Square. The uprisings were eventually crushed with force.

As the tanks were rolling into town, this guy wanted to talk to the tank driver. The rumor, unsubstantiated, is that when this guy got to talk to the driver he asked him why he was ruining his city. This picture of the brave (naïve? is there a difference?) young man became a symbol for the Chinese people who opposed the might and military of the Chinese government.

Apparently people don't need weapons to be a threat to oppressive systems. We're seeing that right now in Myanmar (Burma) that Buddhist monks are leading a protest against an oppressive government. The monks have no army, no weapons, and yet they are a huge problem for the government. In the end either the government will be gone or the monks will be gone. It is worth praying for the people of Myanmar.

The power of these movements is largely symbolic. When I say “symbolic” it sounds like I might be dismissing the movement’s power. In our language that something is symbolic is the same as saying that it isn’t very real. Nothing could be further from the truth. Symbols have deep and abiding power. Symbols move people to do things they otherwise would not do. The power of a symbol multiplies when people “get on board.”

So we want to be careful how we view what Jesus begins here in the Gospel of Luke. We’re going to want to look at the symbols he uses. We’re going to want to pay attention to the powder keg and the fuse.

TWELVE FOR THE GIRL AND THE WOMAN AND THE LOAVES OF BREAD

Luke doesn’t want us missing the symbolism Jesus uses. Luke goes to great lengths to make sure we’re not so thick that we breeze past it. In this section of Luke Jesus has just returned from the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He comes back to a mob of people, to a movement. With people crowded around him and pressing in on every side, he is approached by an important man. Jairas, a ruler of the local synagogue, falls at the feet of Jesus and begs him to take action on behalf of his daughter, who is very sick. Perhaps moved by the love of a father for a daughter, perhaps moved by the humility it takes for the leader of a synagogue to fall at the feet of a rabbi like Jesus, Jesus agrees to go to Jairas’ house and heal his daughter. Luke wants us to hear the symbol at work. The little girl, Luke says, is about 12 years old.

That’s nice. We have a little biographical information for the purpose of storytelling. We know we’re not dealing with an infant or an adult.

While on the way Jairas' house, Jesus has to move through a crowd, pressed on every side by people who are amazed at what is happening with this man. While he makes his way through the crowd, a woman who has been sick in ways that made her an outcast and whom doctors have been unable to help, reaches out just to touch the hem of his clothing. When she succeeds in touching the hem of Jesus' garment, she is healed. Jesus feels it. He feels the power go out from him, and he stops to find the person responsible. "Who touched me?" Jesus asks. She comes forward. Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well. By the way, Luke tells us, she had been sick for twelve years.

Do you see a pattern? Both of these things happen immediately before today's text. Immediately *after* today's text is the famous feeding of the five thousand, where Jesus transforms two fish and five loaves of bread into enough food for over five thousand people. Luke includes a little detail at the end of that story. There is food leftover. The disciples collect the food only to discover that there are an extra twelve baskets.

I mention these three examples of Luke hammering on the number twelve because in today's text Jesus gathers together twelve disciples and sends them out. By now alarms should be going off in our heads. By now literary critics are sitting in judgment on Luke for being too obvious to be believed.

There were, of course, twelve tribes of Israelites. Twelve is a political and a religious symbol in Jesus' culture. Jesus is making a statement to the crowds and to Israel when he calls twelve men together, gives them power and authority over demons and disease, and tells them to go into the country healing and proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Never mind that these twelve men are defenseless in militaristic terms. These men are like a lone man standing before a column of tanks! Never mind that they will be carrying no money, nor bags to collect money on the way. Never mind that they won't be carrying a staff for protection. Never mind that they won't be carrying anything to eat and will be totally reliant on others. Never mind that they won't have a good way of keeping warm at night. Never mind that twelve men do not an army make. Never mind any of that. When twelve men roam the countryside working miracles and proclaiming that the kingdom of God is here, is now, is happening, the kingdom of Herod takes notice immediately.

People and systems that proclaim to have earned our allegiance get very uptight when symbols appear challenging their authority. Jesus is guilty of doing just that. Jesus is no accidental revolutionary.

Does it seem odd to you that Jesus would decide to cause trouble by healing people and proclaiming the kingdom of God? That strategy strikes me as a little bit innocuous, and yet Jesus was putting a kingdom into motion that would outlast the Roman Empire—without ever drawing a sword, without ever threatening his enemy. All he had to do was give away the power to heal and to proclaim.

The twelve did just what Jesus told them to do. They went from town to town as a single group of men proclaiming and healing. I want to make sure you don't miss the importance of their traveling together as twelve men. If one person roams around doing that, he isn't much of a threat. But if twelve do it, well, then, the statement is clear. These men fancy themselves in a kingdom that is rising up to challenge worldly kingdoms.

The twelve went from town to town relying upon the kindness and hospitality of people in those towns. Jesus told them that if they weren't received by a town then they were to shake the dust off their feet in judgment on that town.

If you're wondering why a town wouldn't receive a bunch of men who could heal them, then I would point you back toward the fact that they are traveling as a group of twelve—and that traveling in twelves was an obvious political and religious threat to the powers and principalities at work in Galilee. Any town that receives them runs the risk of not being a friend of the king, not being a friend of Rome. Enemies of the king and enemies Rome have a nasty habit of finding themselves on crosses. Some towns would rather be sick and safe than hearty and hazardous. Such towns wouldn't be a part of God's solution. They wouldn't be a part of the kingdom of God—they would remain a part of the kingdom of Herod or Rome or Self rather than risk loyalty to God's kingdom.

And that's what it comes down to for them, and even for us. Where will we throw our loyalties?

There have been times when I thought I would be willing to do something spectacular for God. Who among us wouldn't be? If God demanded some great sacrifice that meant giving up our lives. We like to think that we would weigh the cost of that sacrifice against the aims and purposes of God and then choose to throw our lot in with God.

Jesus seems rarely to work that way. Jesus doesn't call us to make great sacrifice—at least not at first. Jesus calls us to give up little pieces of ourselves, and then (little by little) we learn that we haven't really been giving up little pieces of ourselves.

We've been chipping away at the things that have attached to us and have kept us from becoming our true selves.

Want to challenge Rome? You don't have to raise up a grand army of fierce men. You just go about defenseless, relying on God, and healing people, and proclaiming the kingdom of God, challenging people to trust God more than they fear Rome, challenging people to embrace "hearty and hazardous."

So, how about it? You're willing to make great sacrifices for God. Are you willing to make small ones? Are you willing to put a cap on how much you will work at your career, sacrificing some of your career advancement in order to spend time healing people? Are you willing to turn off the television, put away the hobby, reduce your time on the computer, or video games, or the television, or even curled up with a good book in order to spend time with another Christian as together you reach out to people who may or may not appreciate it?

I don't want to misrepresent what I'm asking you to do, by the way. I don't want to advertise it as a small sacrifice in order to entice you into only being willing to make small sacrifices the rest of your life. Yes, you start with a small sacrifice, but it leads to great sacrifices. Keep that in mind before you commit. Know that in these little, *symbolic*, sacrifices are born huge, life-changing sacrifices.

A guy at a coffee shop (who likes Jesus but isn't too sure about Christians) asked me what I was preaching on this week. I mentioned that I would be talking about the twelve disciples traveling, defenseless, around the countryside proclaiming that the real king of the people was God. I told him that I thought I would use that picture of the tank man at Tiananmen Square.

He chuckled. “You may not want to use that guy. I think he got killed.”

“Yeah,” I said, “so did Jesus and the disciples.”

He got it. The question is, do we?

I don’t know what I’m willing to sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom of God.

But if I won’t turn off the television and rearrange my schedule for God’s sake, then I know what I’m not willing to sacrifice.

APPENDIX C

Grandview's Vision Statement, Long Version

A VISION FOR GRANDVIEW

WE AT GRANDVIEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH, IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S GRACE SEEK GOD'S VISION OF HOW WE ARE TO BE CHRIST'S CHURCH, EMPOWERED AND GUIDED BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHIEF END OF THE CHURCH IS TO WORSHIP AND GLORIFY GOD, ESPECIALLY BY EXTENDING GOD'S KINGDOM TO ALL HUMANKIND AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

TO DO THIS WE:

- Reach out by personal involvement and selfless investment to make disciples of Jesus in our community and the world. This is evangelism;
- Nurture one another in a caring community that embraces our unity in Christ in the midst of our diversity, and that aims to bring us all to the full measure of the stature of Christ in knowledge, in spiritual maturity, and in loving service and witness. This is fellowship and education;
- Serve people by modeling Christ's compassion and concern for wholeness. This is service;
- Engage serious issues and needs through disciplined study of Scripture and conscientious action. This is active discipleship in the world;
- Exalt and magnify God corporately and individually with our whole being through diverse and balanced forms. This is worship.

AND WE DO ALL THIS TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD

APPENDIX D

Grandview's Vision Statement, Clarification Document

All that we seek to do as a church is in response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We state this vision not because we have just decided it is good, but as we see His initiative in undeserved love. It is His vision we seek for who and how we ought to be. What is stated here is our effort not to create, but to discern this vision as we are guided through Scripture and enabled by God's Holy Spirit toward our specific identity in this place.

WORSHIP

Our highest call is to love God with heart, soul, strength, and mind. So we seek a vibrant relationship with God by worshipping Him in our common life and our personal discipleship.

Just as people are made variously and come from diverse backgrounds so preferences in worship styles vary greatly. We seek to respect one another's tastes, but recognize that our ultimate purpose is to come with respect and awe before a holy God. We recognize the value and validity of many worship forms, old and new, and seek a meaningful service in which we each may sacrifice a demand for our private preferences so that all of us may worship genuinely and sincerely.

REACH OUT

We are each commissioned by Christ to do the work of evangelism. We will express this through inviting people to commit their lives to Jesus and become part of the fellowship here (or elsewhere) and through sending and supporting missionaries to all the world.

Genuinely seeking to make disciples is neither haphazard nor always convenient. Therefore we each must make intentional efforts constantly to bring others to follow Jesus, daring to give of our selves (through our time, money, and influence, and relationships) to help others know Him. As a church, we are devoted to developing more and more points of contact, entry, and involvement. Our nature as a church is to look outward, seeking always to include others in all that we do.

APPENDIX E

Test Instrument

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| Class Climate | VisionQuest | ulivid7000 Paper® <small>Powered by IntelliForm™</small> |
| Wymer | Grandview Christian Church | † |
| Demo Subunit | | |

Mark as shown: Please use a ball-point pen or a thin felt tip. This form will be processed automatically.
 Correction: Please follow the examples shown to help optimize the reading results.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you provide is anonymous and your honest answers will help with future planning at Grandview.

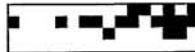
1. Part I

1.1 In the box below, please write what you think "reaching out in relationships" means according to Grandview's mission statement?

- 1.2 Gender: Male Female
- 1.3 Age: 10-17 18-25 26-40
 41-50 51-60 61-70
 71-80 81 and up
- 1.4 Marital Status: Single, never married Married Separated
 Divorced Widowed
- 1.5 Highest level of education completed: Less than high school High school or GED Some college or vocational training
 2-year or 4-year college degree Masters degree Doctoral degree
- 1.6 Are you a member of Grandview Christian Church? Yes No Not sure
- 1.7 How long have you attended Grandview? 0-1 year 2-5 years 6-9 years
 10-14 years 15-19 years 20 years or more
- 1.8 Mark ALL that apply to your involvement at Grandview within the past year:
 Member of the church Elder within past 5 years Member of band or choir
 Two 4 Two participant Current Sunday School teacher Member of a ministry team
 Participant in Christian Action Team Regular Sunday School participant Regular Bible study participant
- 1.9 Have you ever served in a paid ministerial role in a church setting? Yes No



| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2.1 I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.2 If someone asks me what it means to <i>reach out in relationships</i> , I am confident that I could give an adequate answer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.3 Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-Christian. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.4 The kingdom of God is the same thing as the church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.5 I can identify places where God's influence is growing stronger in my life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.6 I can identify places where God's influence is growing in the life of a friend or relative. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.7 Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what <i>reaching out in relationships</i> means to Grandview. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.8 Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what Grandview would like them to believe about God. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.9 People learn about God by participating in the work of the church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.10 The church should be helpful to people in the community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.11 Inviting a person to a Grandview function can be an important part of sharing the message of Jesus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.12 I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in our community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.13 I believe it is important to encourage people to serve God. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.14 I believe it is important to look for ways to work/ serve alongside non-Christians. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.15 I believe it is important to arrange my schedule to allow me time to serve God outside the church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.16 I wish the church would do more for those outside the church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.17 I wish the church would do more for me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.18 The church should focus more on the members of the church and less on those outside the church. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



3. Part III

| | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Continually |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.1 I look for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know or accept the message of Jesus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.2 I serve God outside the church building. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.3 I maintain relationships with Christians who don't attend Grandview. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.4 I maintain interaction with people of little or no faith. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.5 I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.6 I give support to people who are enduring difficult times. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.7 I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.8 I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.9 I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.10 I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.11 I invite people to help me serve people in need. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.12 I engage people in conversations regarding faith. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.13 I invite people to eat with me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Part IV

- 4.1 Please list ways in which you see people with little or no Christian faith reaching out to others.
-
- 4.2 Please list up to five of the biggest needs you see in the lives of others (be they Christians or not).
-
- 4.3 Please list ways in which you reach out to others in relationship.
-

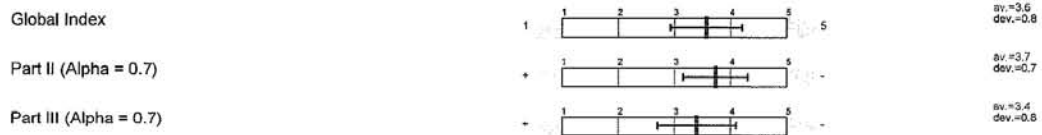


APPENDIX F

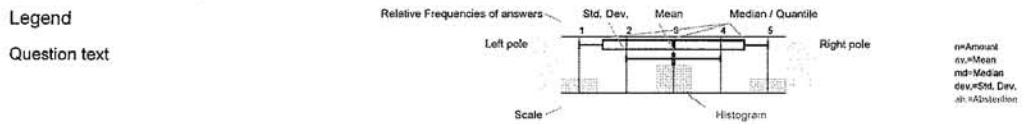
Pretest Results

Wymer
 Leaders Survey (Pre) ()
 Responses = 47 (SS07)

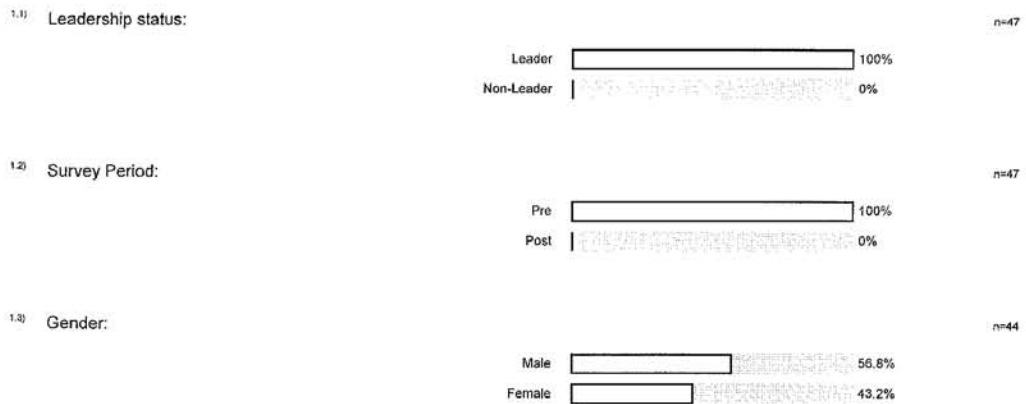
Global Values



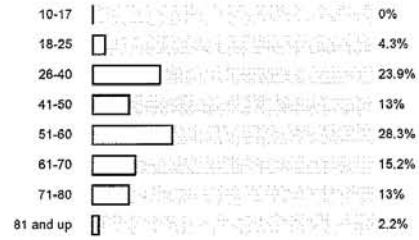
Survey Results



Part I



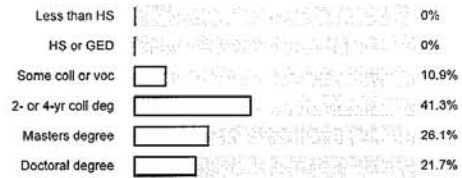
1.4) Age: n=46



1.5) Marital Status: n=47



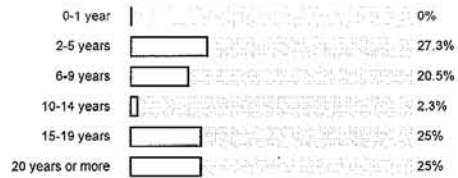
1.6) Highest level of education completed: n=46



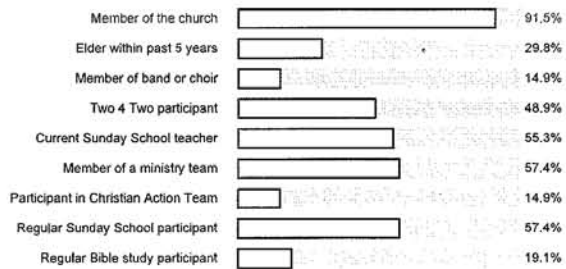
1.7) Are you a member of Grandview Christian Church? n=46



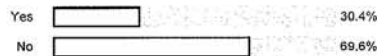
1.8) How long have you attended Grandview? n=44



1.9) Mark ALL that apply to your involvement at Grandview within the past year: n=47

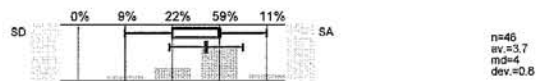


1.10) Have you ever served in a paid ministerial role in a church setting? n=46

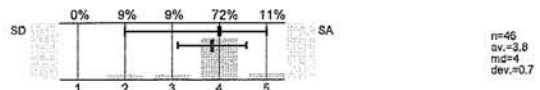


Part II

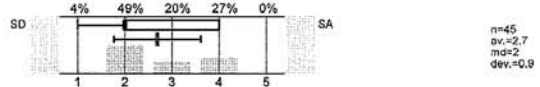
2.1) I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.

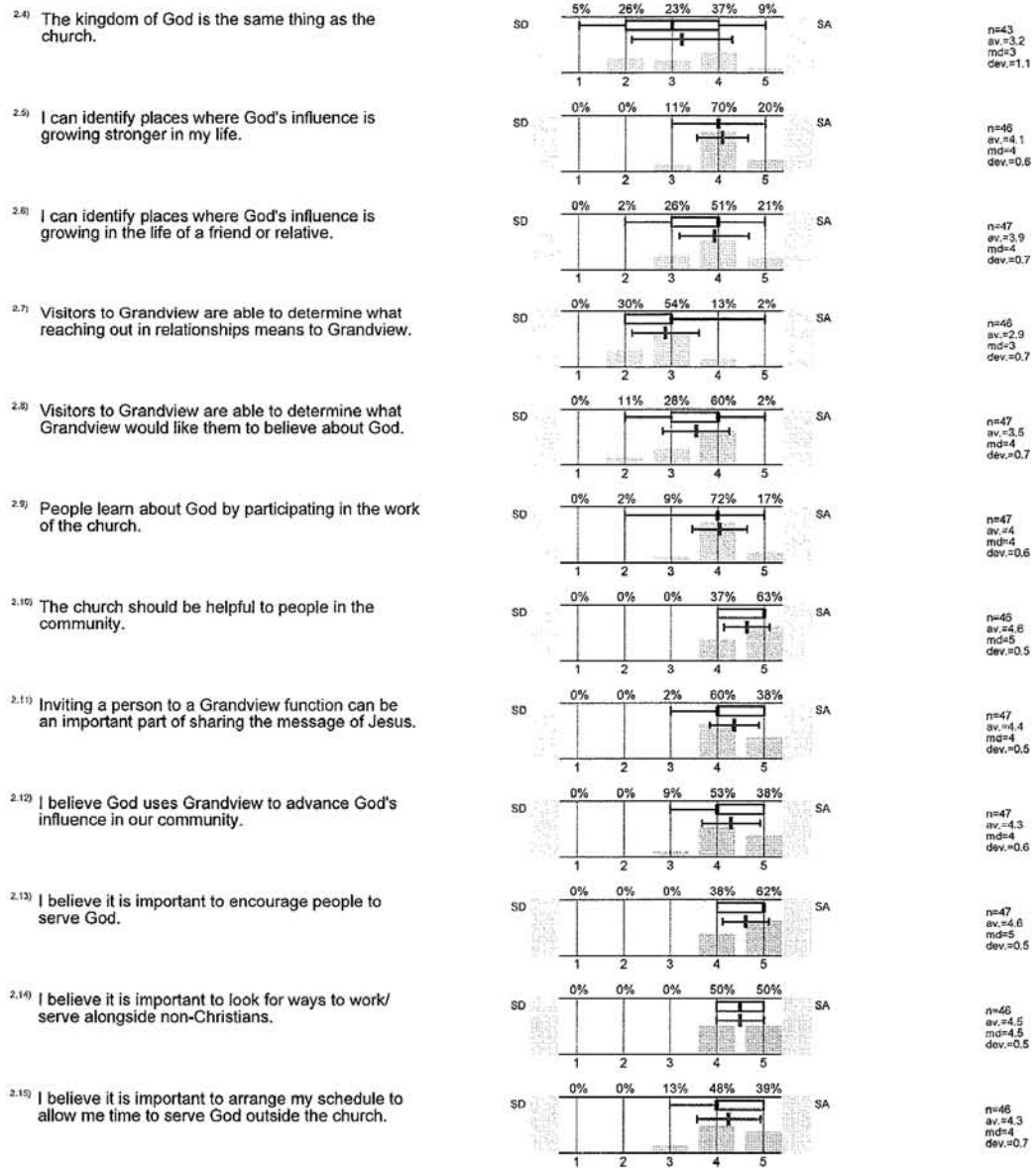


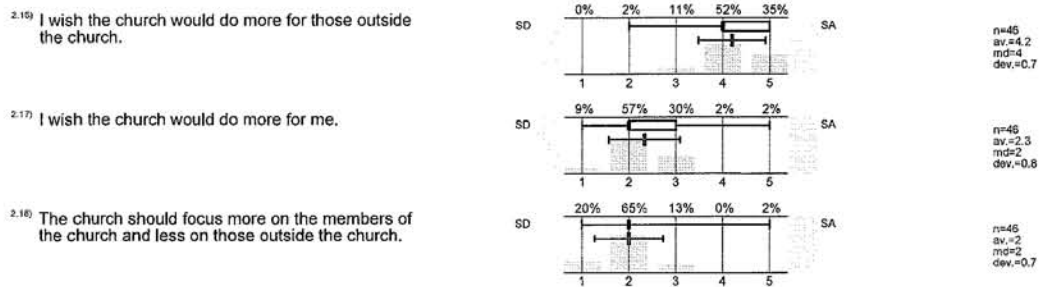
2.2) If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give an adequate answer.



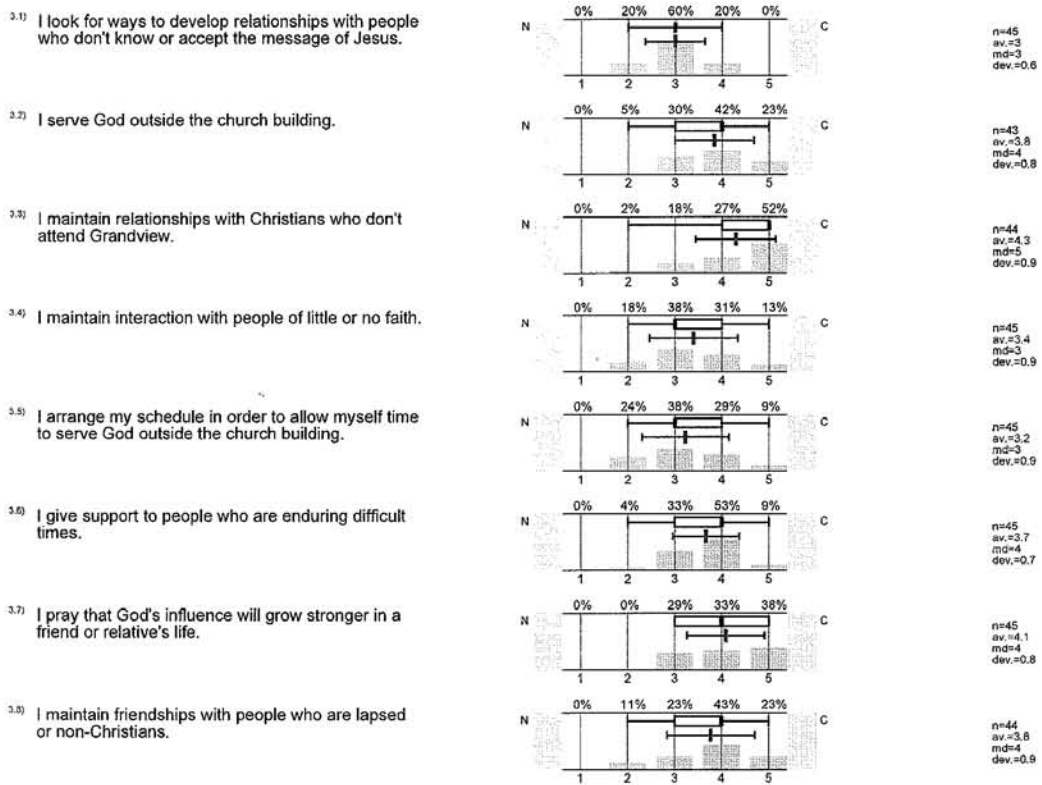
2.3) Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-Christian.



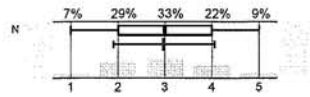




Part III

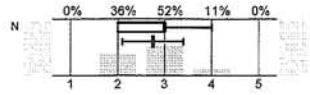


3.9) I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life.



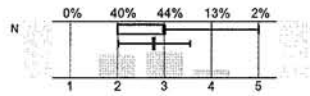
n=45
av.=3
md=3
dev.=1.1

3.10) I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function.



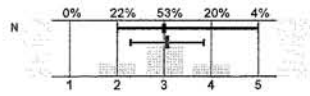
n=44
av.=2.8
md=3
dev.=0.7

3.11) I invite people to help me serve people in need.



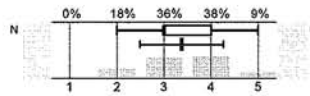
n=45
av.=2.8
md=3
dev.=0.8

3.12) I engage people in conversations regarding faith.



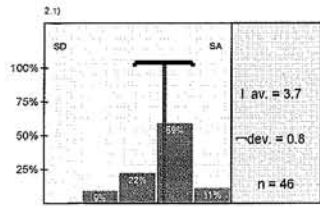
n=45
av.=3.1
md=3
dev.=0.8

3.13) I invite people to eat with me.

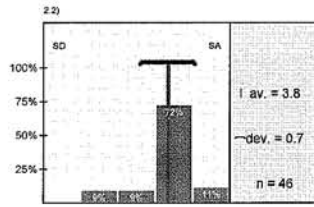


n=45
av.=3.4
md=3
dev.=0.9

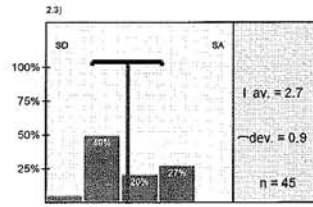
Histogram for scalar questions



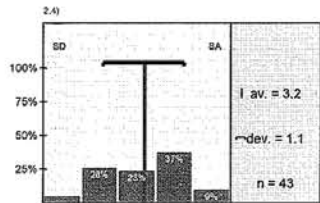
I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.



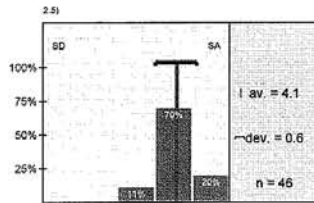
If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give



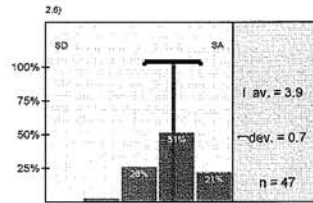
Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-



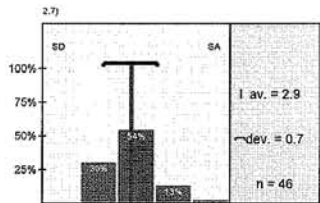
The kingdom of God is the same thing as the church.



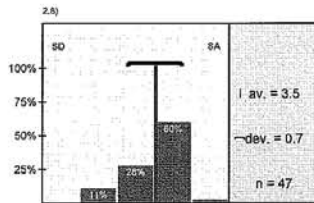
I can identify places where God's influence is growing stronger in my life.



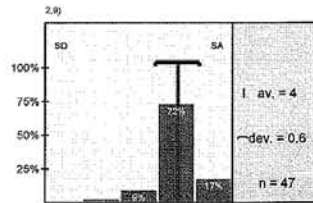
I can identify places where God's influence is growing in the life of a friend or relative.



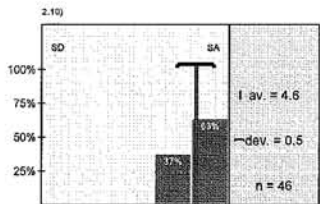
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to



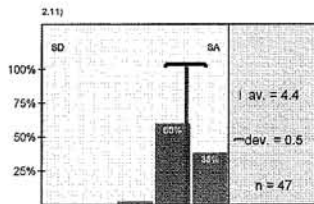
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what Grandview would like them to believe



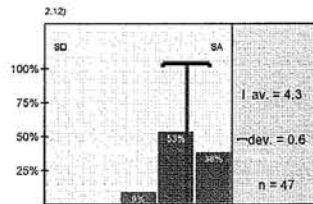
People learn about God by participating in the work of the church,



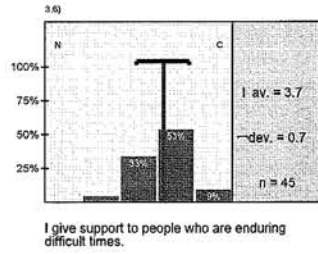
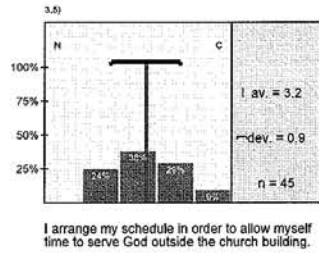
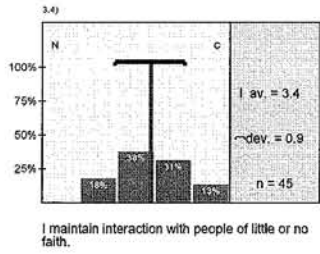
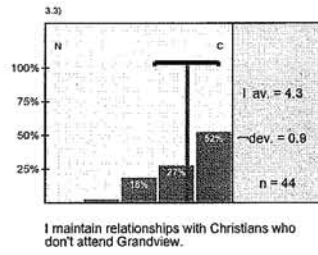
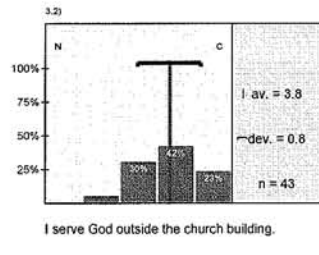
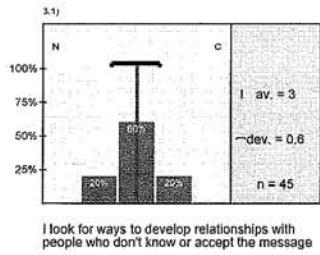
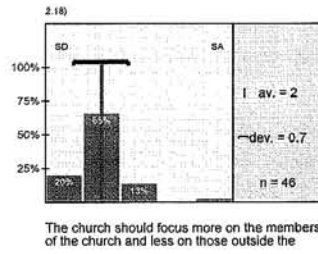
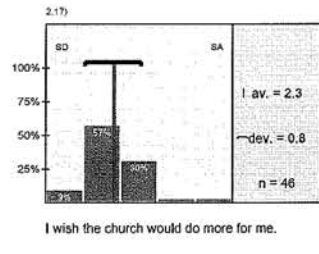
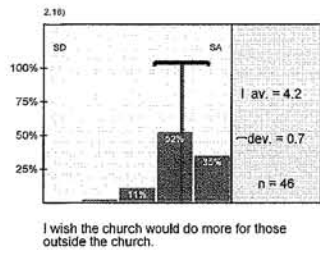
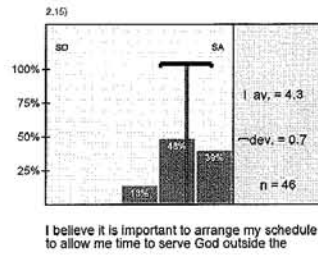
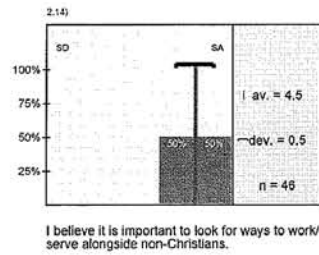
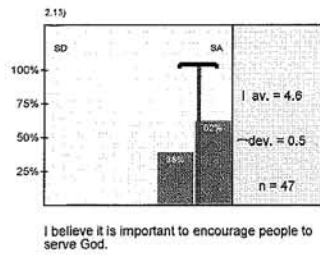
The church should be helpful to people in the community.

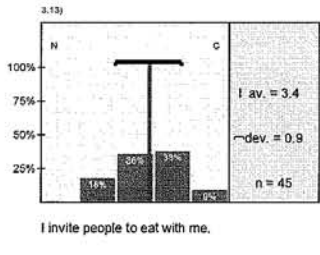
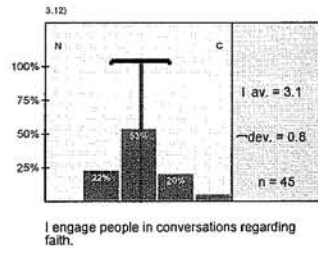
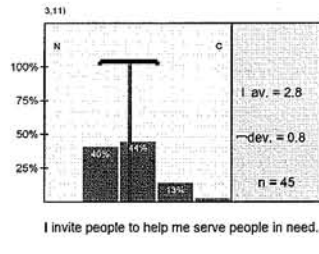
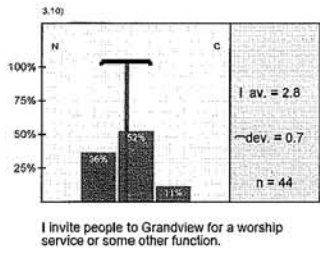
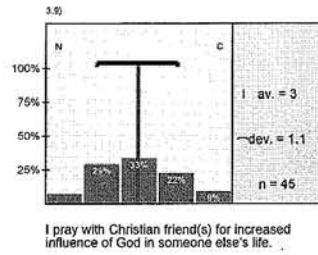
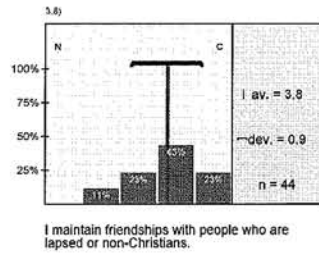
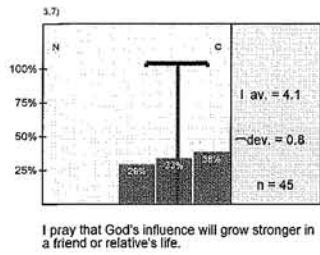


Inviting a person to a Grandview function can be an important part of sharing the message of



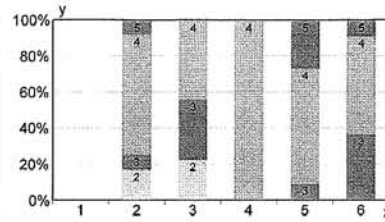
I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in our community.





Wymer, Leaders Survey (Pre)

| x | y | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| 2 | | 0% | 16.7% | 8.3% | 66.7% | 8.3% | 100% |
| 3 | | 0% | 22.2% | 33.3% | 44.4% | 0% | 100% |
| 4 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 100% |
| 5 | | 0% | 0% | 9.1% | 63.6% | 27.3% | 100% |
| 6 | | 0% | 0% | 36.4% | 54.5% | 9.1% | 100% |
| | | 0% | 9.1% | 20.5% | 59.1% | 11.4% | 100% |



x:

How long have you attended Grandview?

- 1: 0-1 year
- 2: 2-5 years
- 3: 6-9 years
- 4: 10-14 years
- 5: 15-19 years
- 6: 20 years or more

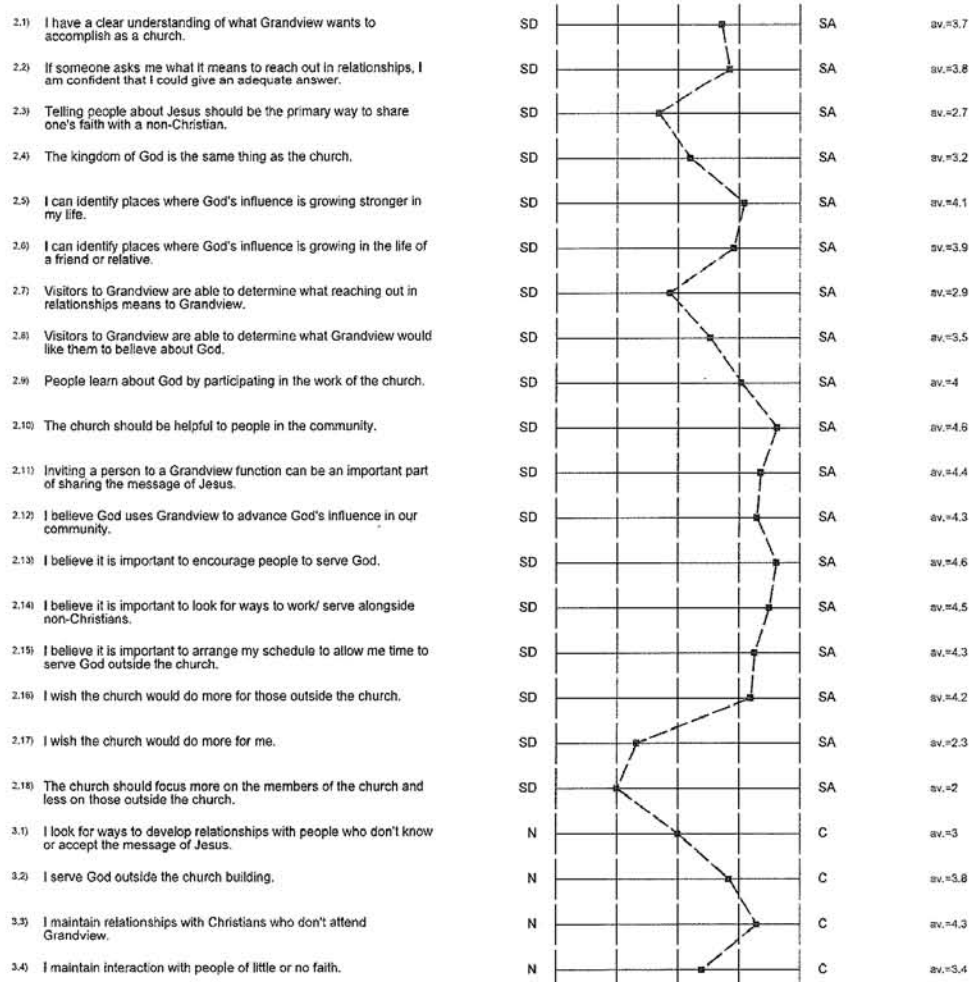
y:

I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.

- 1: SD
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5: SA

Profile

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Subunit: | Grandview |
| Name of the instructor: | Wymer |
| Name of the course: | Leaders Survey (Pre) |
| (Name of the survey) | |



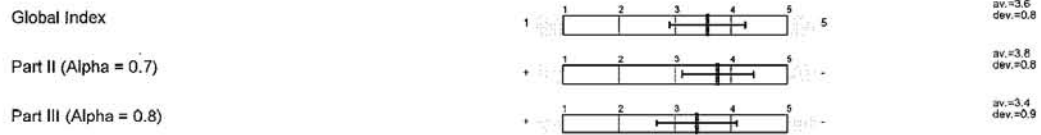
Wymer, Leaders Survey (Pre)

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|---|---------|
| 3.5) | I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building. | N | | C | av.=3.2 |
| 3.6) | I give support to people who are enduring difficult times. | N | | C | av.=3.7 |
| 3.7) | I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life. | N | | C | av.=4.1 |
| 3.8) | I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians. | N | | C | av.=3.8 |
| 3.9) | I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life. | N | | C | av.=3 |
| 3.10) | I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function. | N | | C | av.=2.8 |
| 3.11) | I invite people to help me serve people in need. | N | | C | av.=2.8 |
| 3.12) | I engage people in conversations regarding faith. | N | | C | av.=3.1 |
| 3.13) | I invite people to eat with me. | N | | C | av.=3.4 |

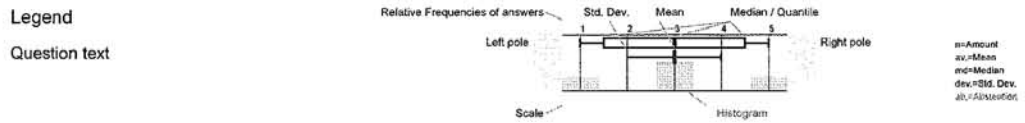
Wymer
 Non-leaders (Pre) ()
 Responses = 62 (SS07)



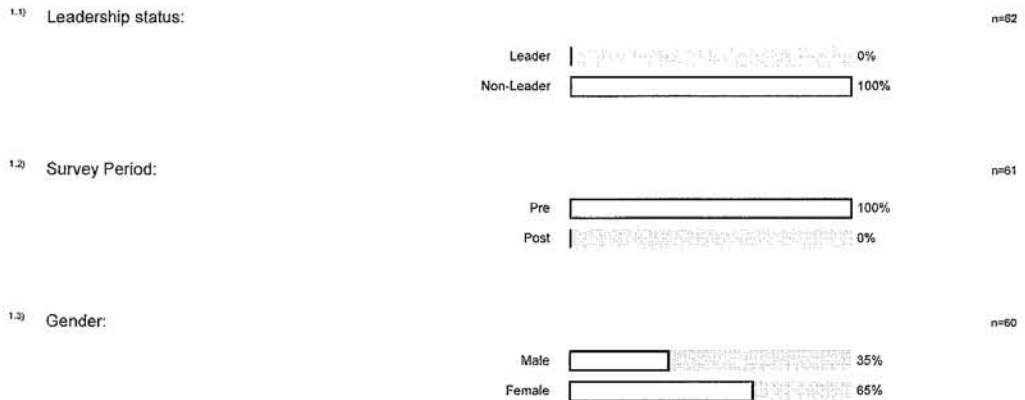
Global Values



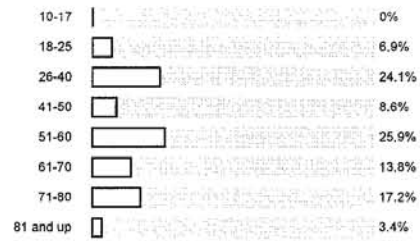
Survey Results



Part I



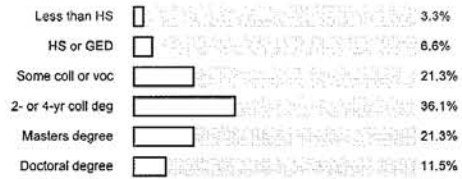
1.4) Age: n=58



1.5) Marital Status: n=61



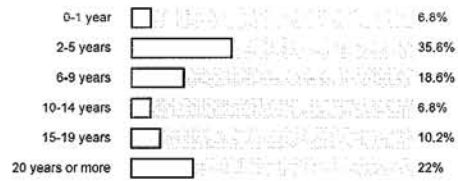
1.6) Highest level of education completed: n=61



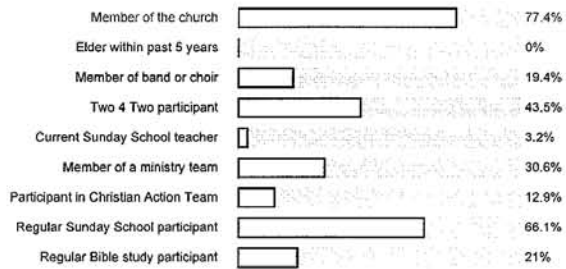
1.7) Are you a member of Grandview Christian Church? n=61



1.8) How long have you attended Grandview? n=59



1.9) Mark ALL that apply to your involvement at Grandview within the past year: n=62



1.10) Have you ever served in a paid ministerial role in a church setting? n=61

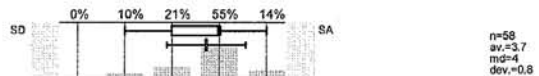


Part II

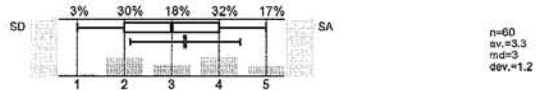
2.1) I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.

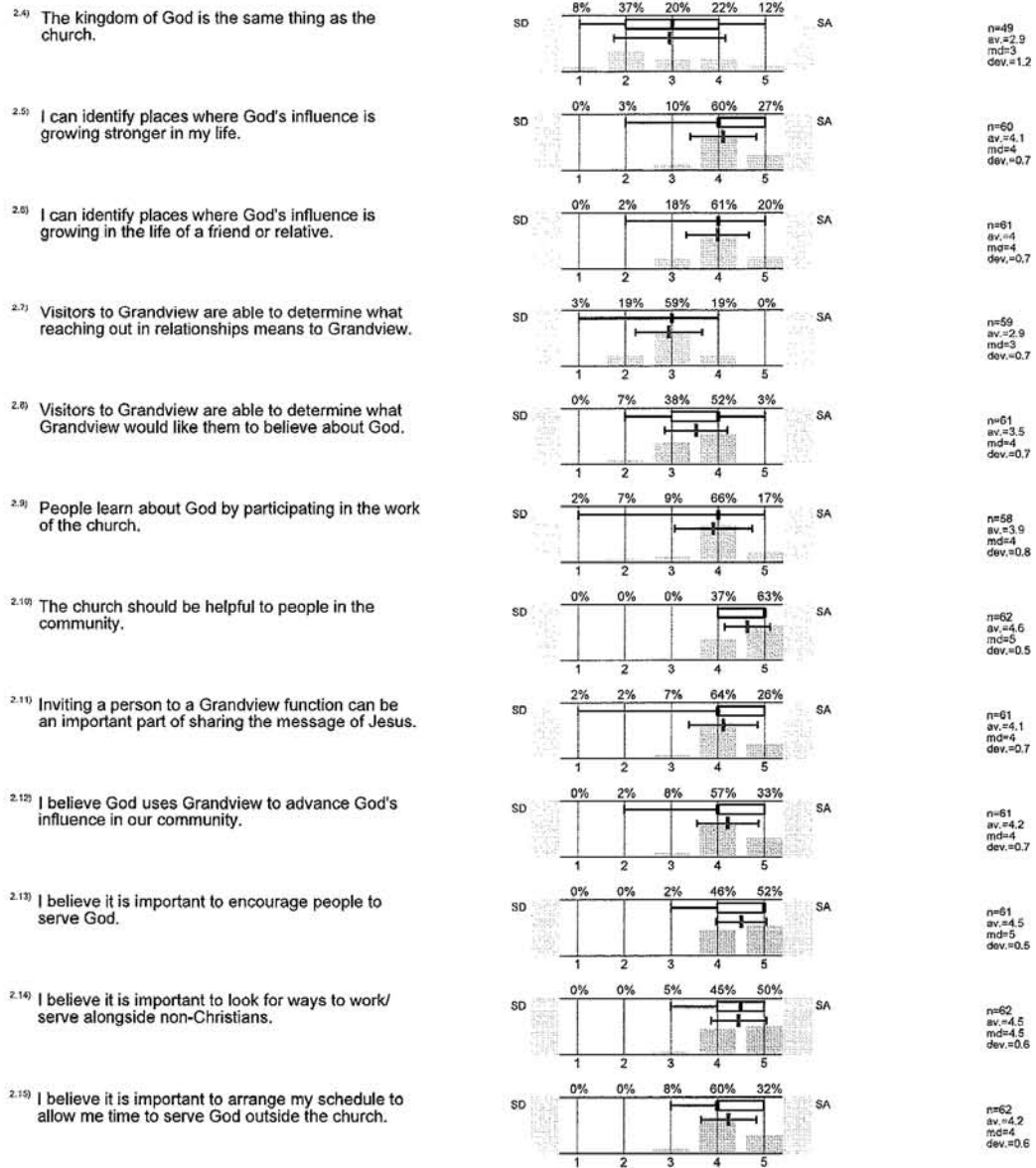


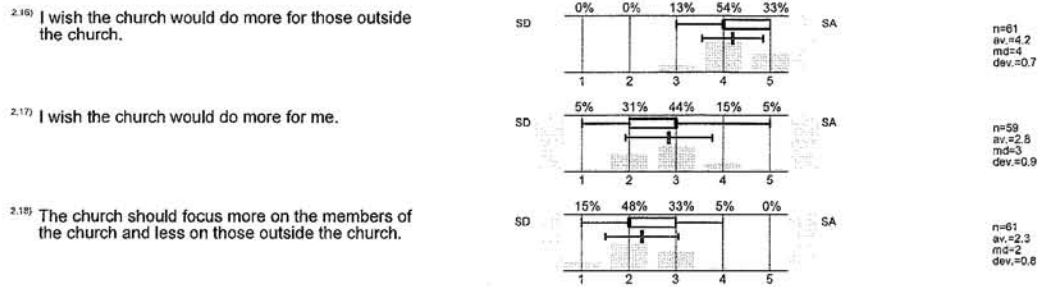
2.2) If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give an adequate answer.



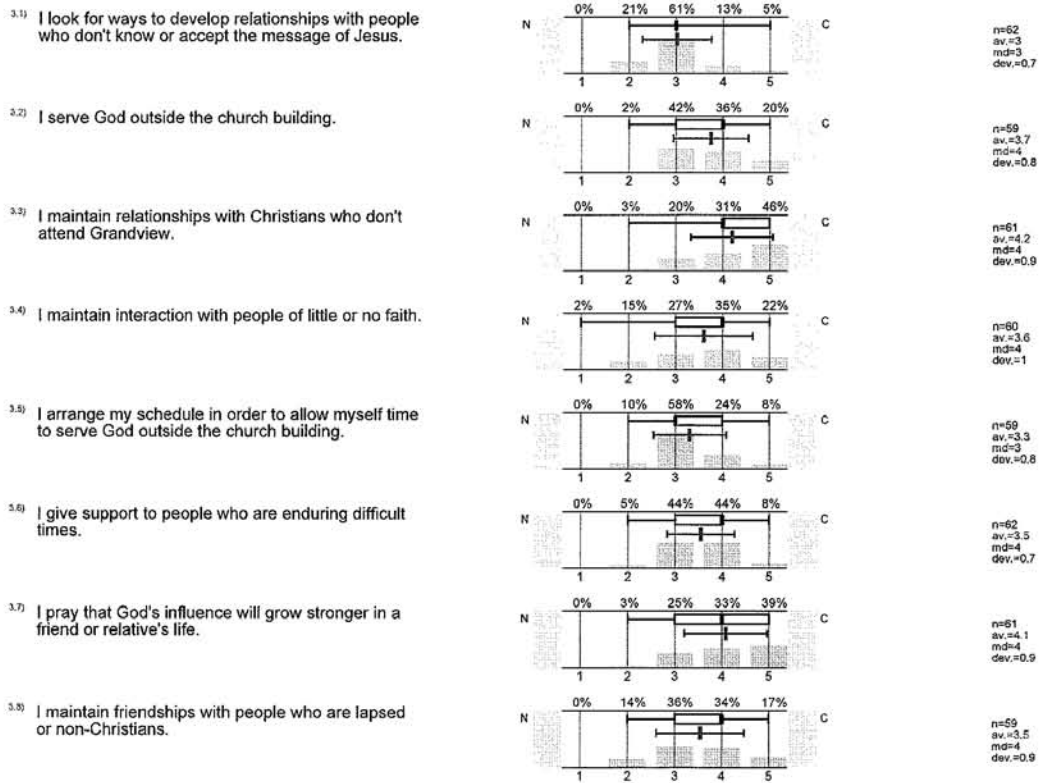
2.3) Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-Christian.



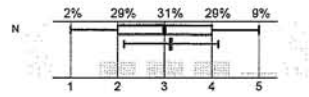




Part III

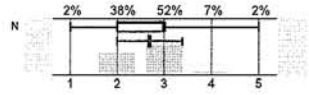


3.82 I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life.



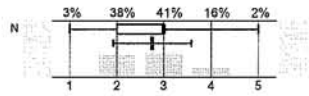
n=58
av.=3.1
md=3
dev.=1

3.100 I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function.



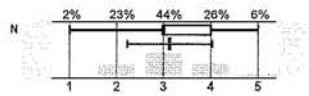
n=61
av.=2.7
md=3
dev.=0.7

3.110 I invite people to help me serve people in need.



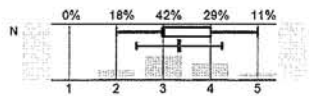
n=61
av.=2.8
md=3
dev.=0.8

3.120 I engage people in conversations regarding faith.



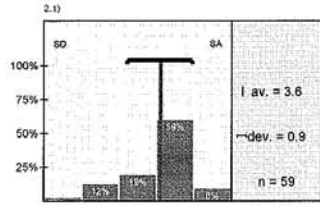
n=62
av.=3.1
md=3
dev.=0.9

3.130 I invite people to eat with me.

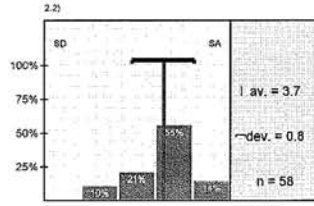


n=62
av.=3.3
md=3
dev.=0.9

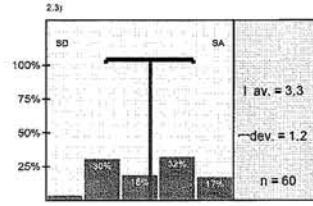
Histogram for scalar questions



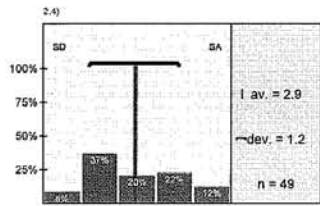
I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.



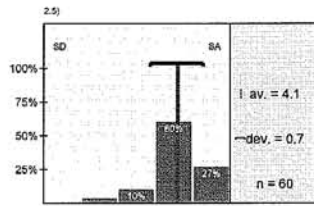
If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give



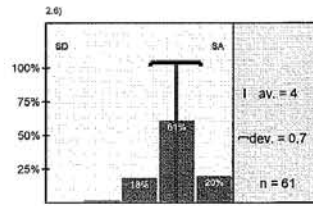
Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-



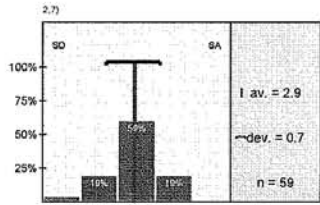
The kingdom of God is the same thing as the church.



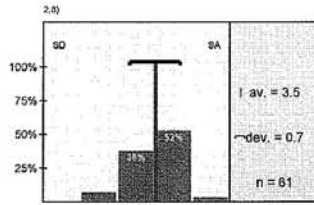
I can identify places where God's influence is growing stronger in my life.



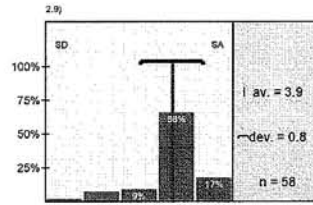
I can identify places where God's influence is growing in the life of a friend or relative.



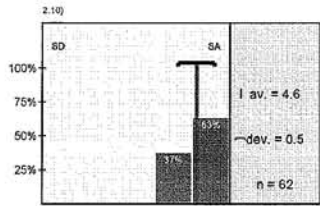
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to



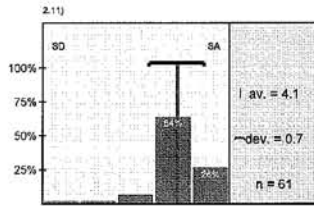
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what Grandview would like them to believe



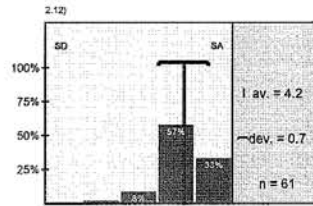
People learn about God by participating in the work of the church.



The church should be helpful to people in the community.

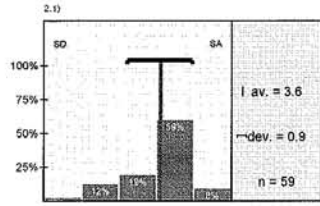


Inviting a person to a Grandview function can be an important part of sharing the message of

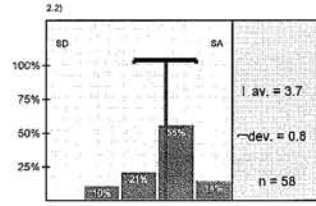


I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in our community.

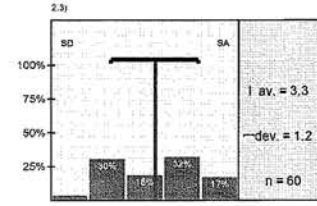
Histogram for scalar questions



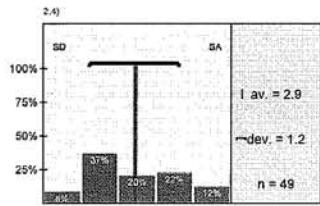
I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.



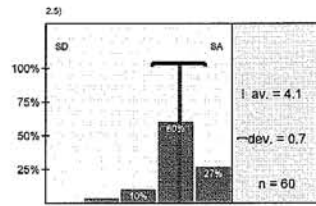
If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give



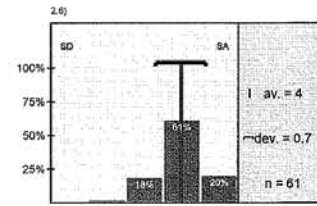
Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-



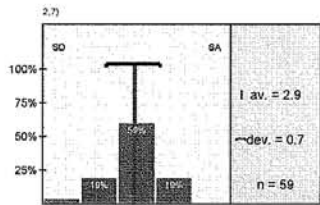
The kingdom of God is the same thing as the church.



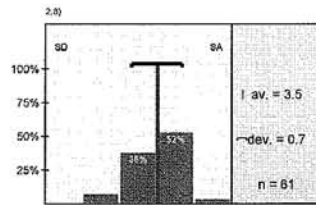
I can identify places where God's influence is growing stronger in my life.



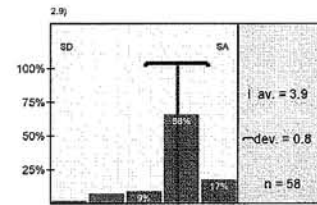
I can identify places where God's influence is growing in the life of a friend or relative.



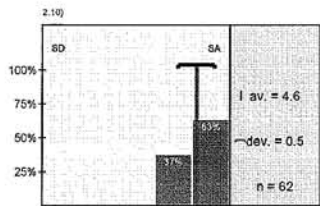
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to



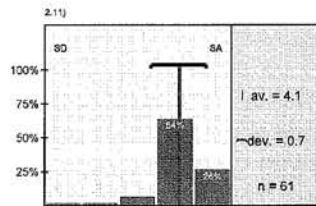
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what Grandview would like them to believe



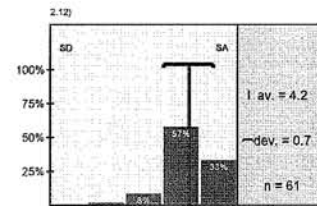
People learn about God by participating in the work of the church.



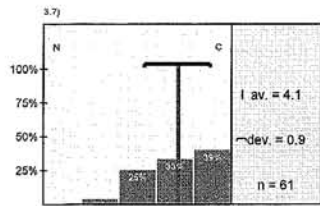
The church should be helpful to people in the community.



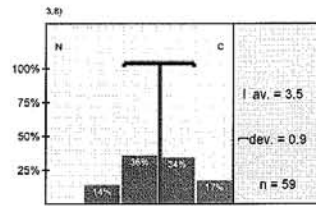
Inviting a person to a Grandview function can be an important part of sharing the message of



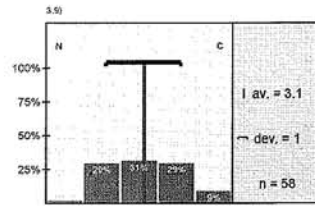
I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in our community.



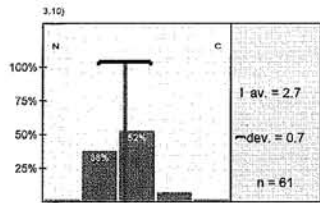
I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life.



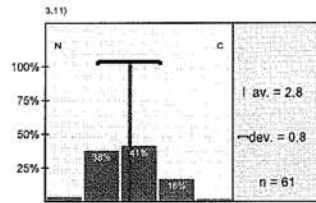
I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians.



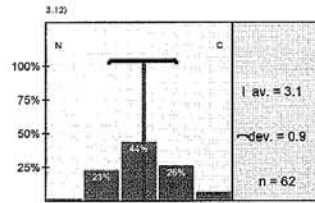
I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life.



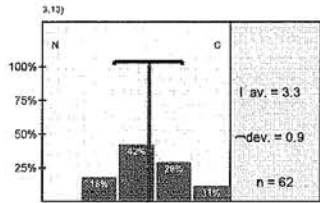
I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function.



I invite people to help me serve people in need.



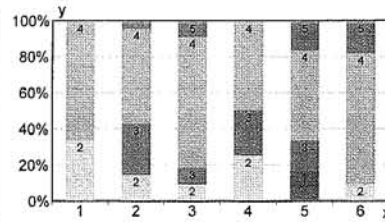
I engage people in conversations regarding faith.



I invite people to eat with me.

Wymer, Non-leaders (Pre)

| x | y | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 | | 0% | 33.3% | 0% | 66.7% | 0% | 100% |
| 2 | | 0% | 14.3% | 28.6% | 52.4% | 4.8% | 100% |
| 3 | | 0% | 9.1% | 9.1% | 72.7% | 9.1% | 100% |
| 4 | | 0% | 25% | 25% | 50% | 0% | 100% |
| 5 | | 16.7% | 0% | 16.7% | 50% | 16.7% | 100% |
| 6 | | 0% | 9.1% | 0% | 72.7% | 18.2% | 100% |
| | | 1.8% | 12.5% | 16.1% | 60.7% | 8.9% | 100% |



x:

How long have you attended Grandview?

- 1: 0-1 year
- 2: 2-5 years
- 3: 6-9 years
- 4: 10-14 years
- 5: 15-19 years
- 6: 20 years or more

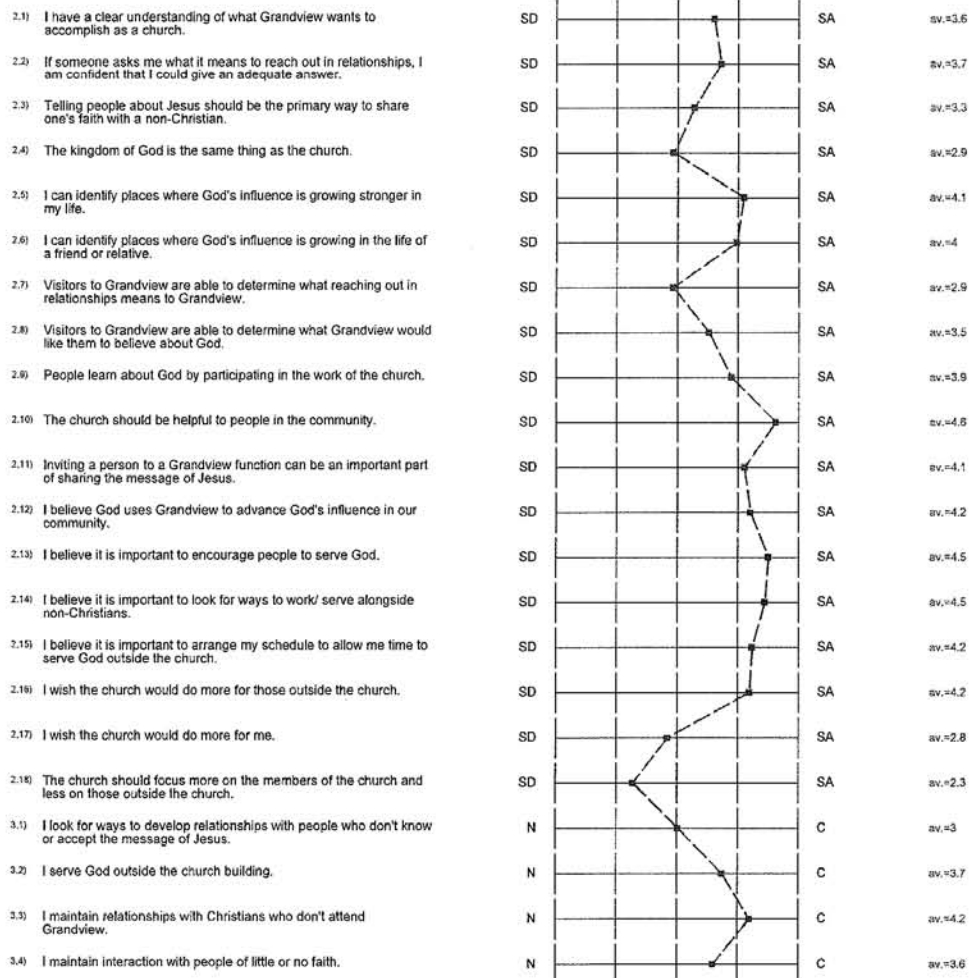
y:

I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.

- 1: SD
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5: SA

Profile

Subunit: Grandview
 Name of the instructor: Wymer
 Name of the course: Non-leaders (Pre)
 (Name of the survey)



Wymer, Non-leaders (Pre)

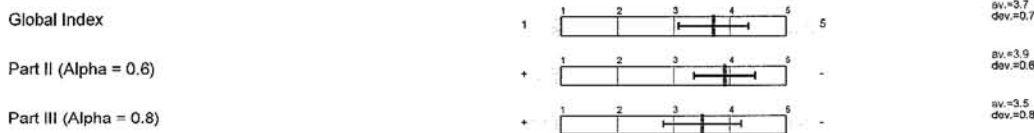
| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|---------|
| 3.5) I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.3 |
| 3.6) I give support to people who are enduring difficult times. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.5 |
| 3.7) I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life. | N | | | | | C | av.=4.1 |
| 3.8) I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.5 |
| 3.9) I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.1 |
| 3.10) I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function. | N | | | | | C | av.=2.7 |
| 3.11) I invite people to help me serve people in need. | N | | | | | C | av.=2.8 |
| 3.12) I engage people in conversations regarding faith. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.1 |
| 3.13) I invite people to eat with me. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.3 |

APPENDIX G

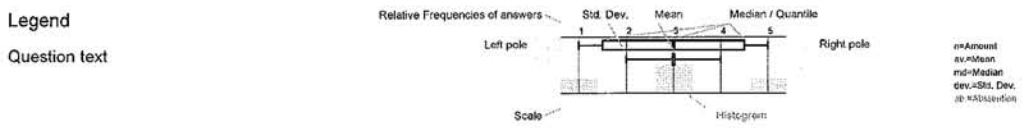
Posttest Results

Wymer
Leaders Survey (Post) ()
Responses = 39 (SS07)

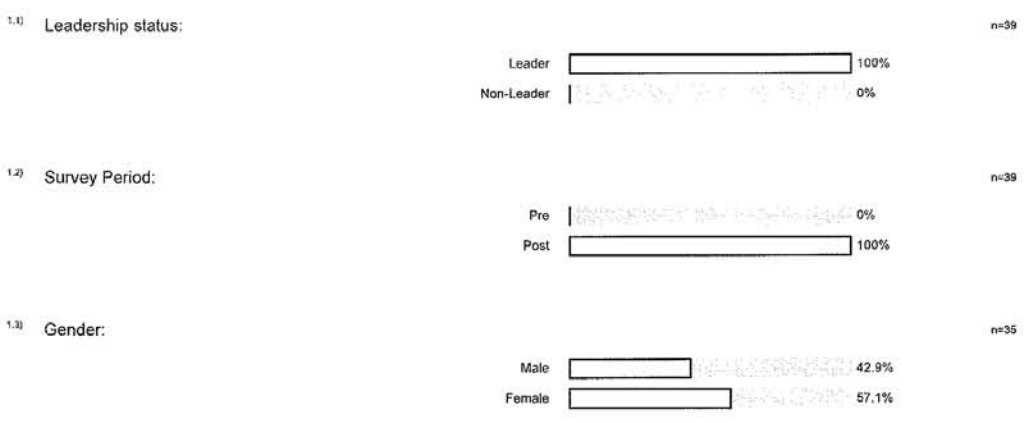
Global Values



Survey Results



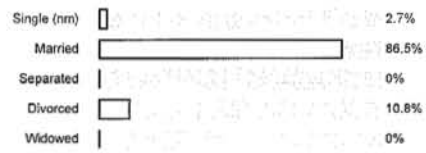
Part I



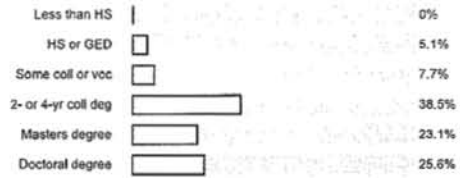
1.4) Age: n=35



1.5) Marital Status: n=37



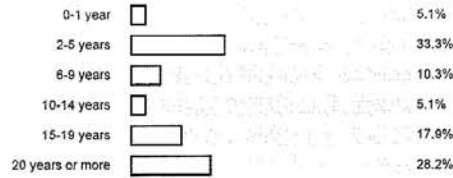
1.6) Highest level of education completed: n=38



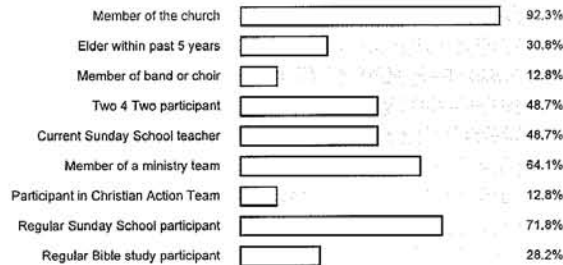
1.7) Are you a member of Grandview Christian Church? n=38



1.9) How long have you attended Grandview? n=39



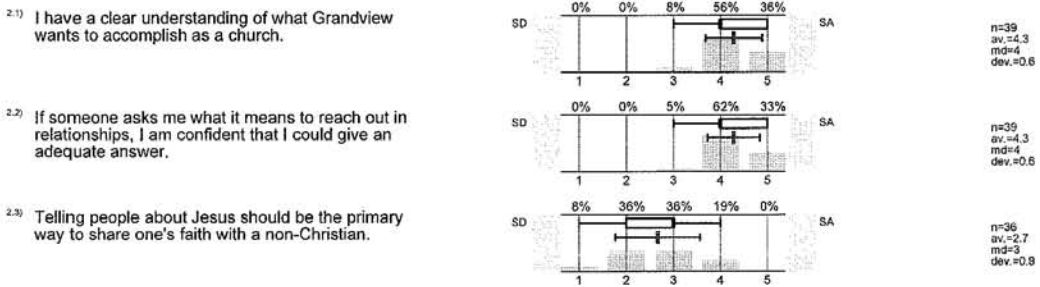
1.9) Mark ALL that apply to your involvement at Grandview within the past year: n=39

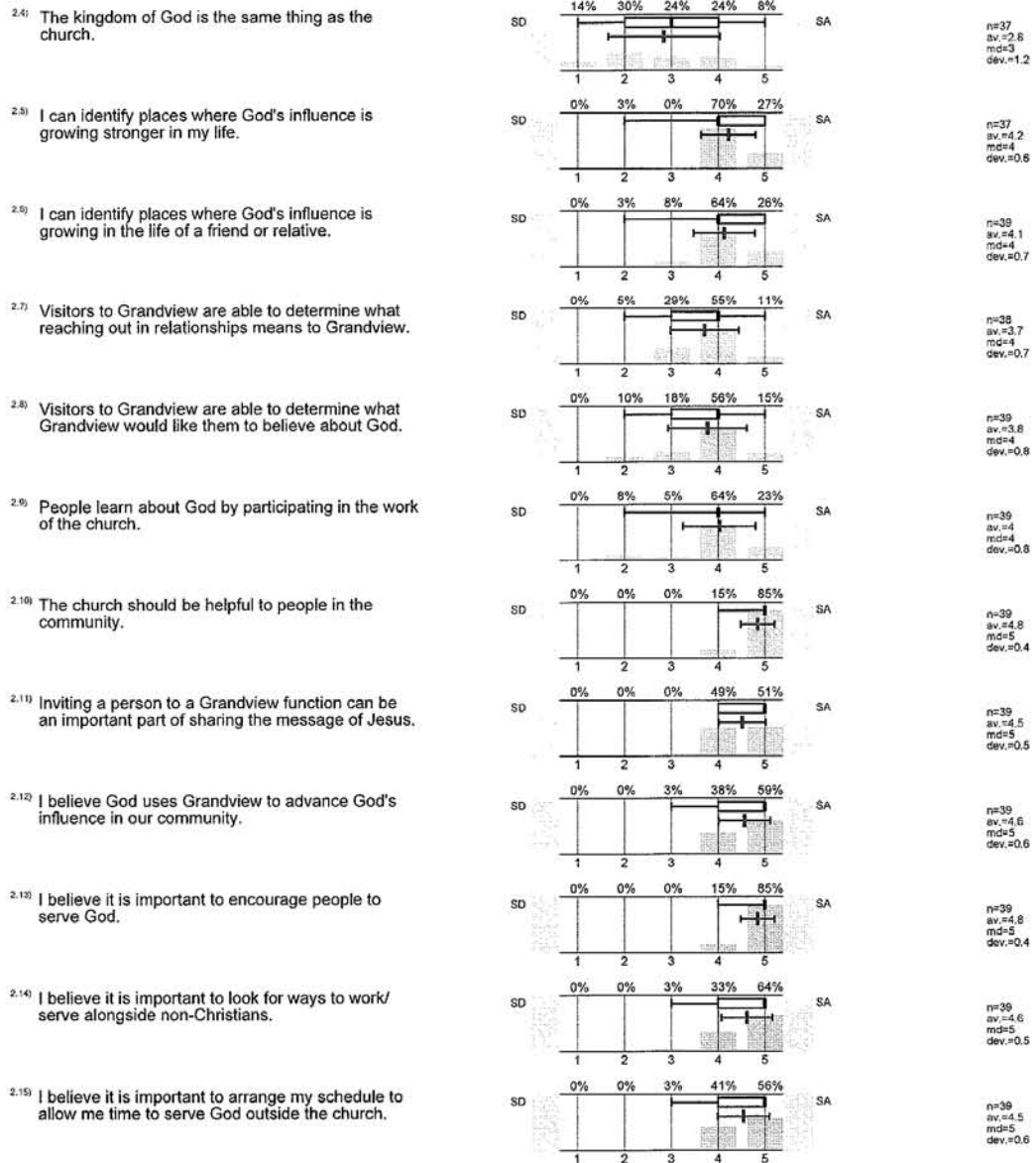


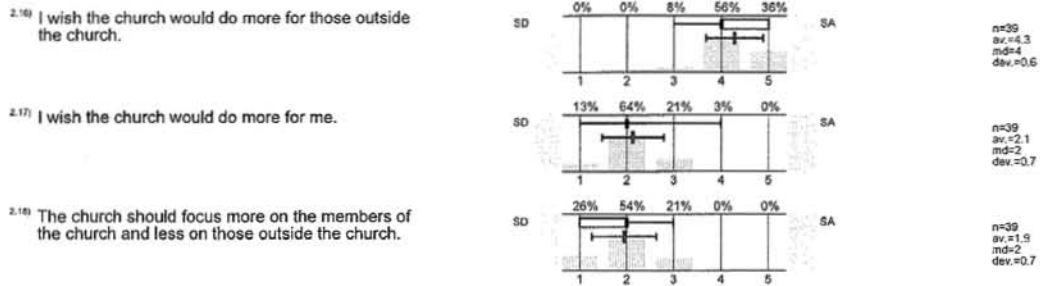
1.10) Have you ever served in a paid ministerial role in a church setting? n=39



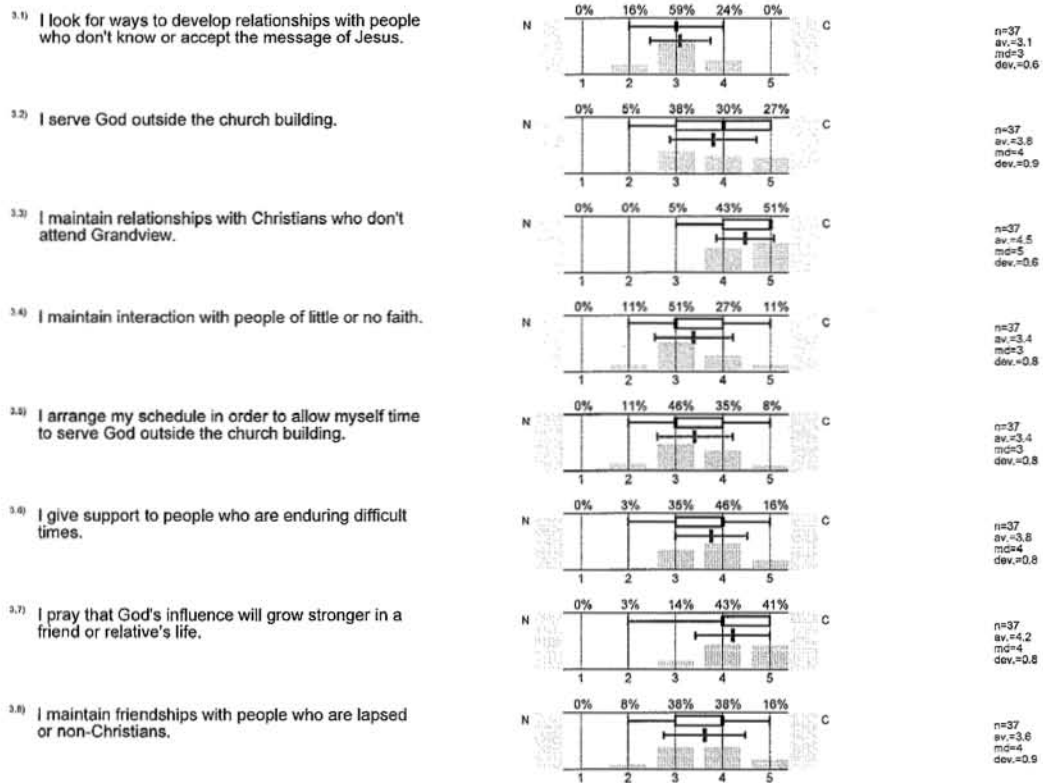
Part II

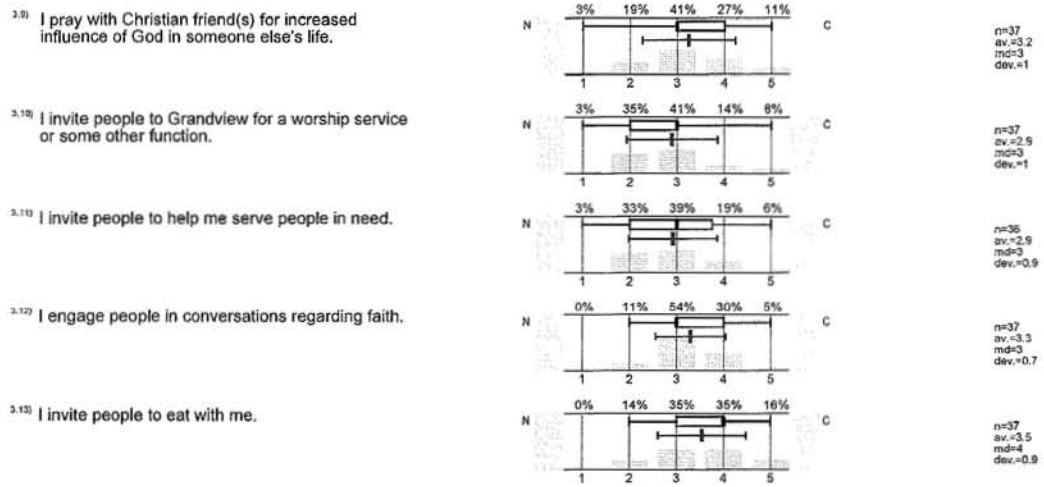




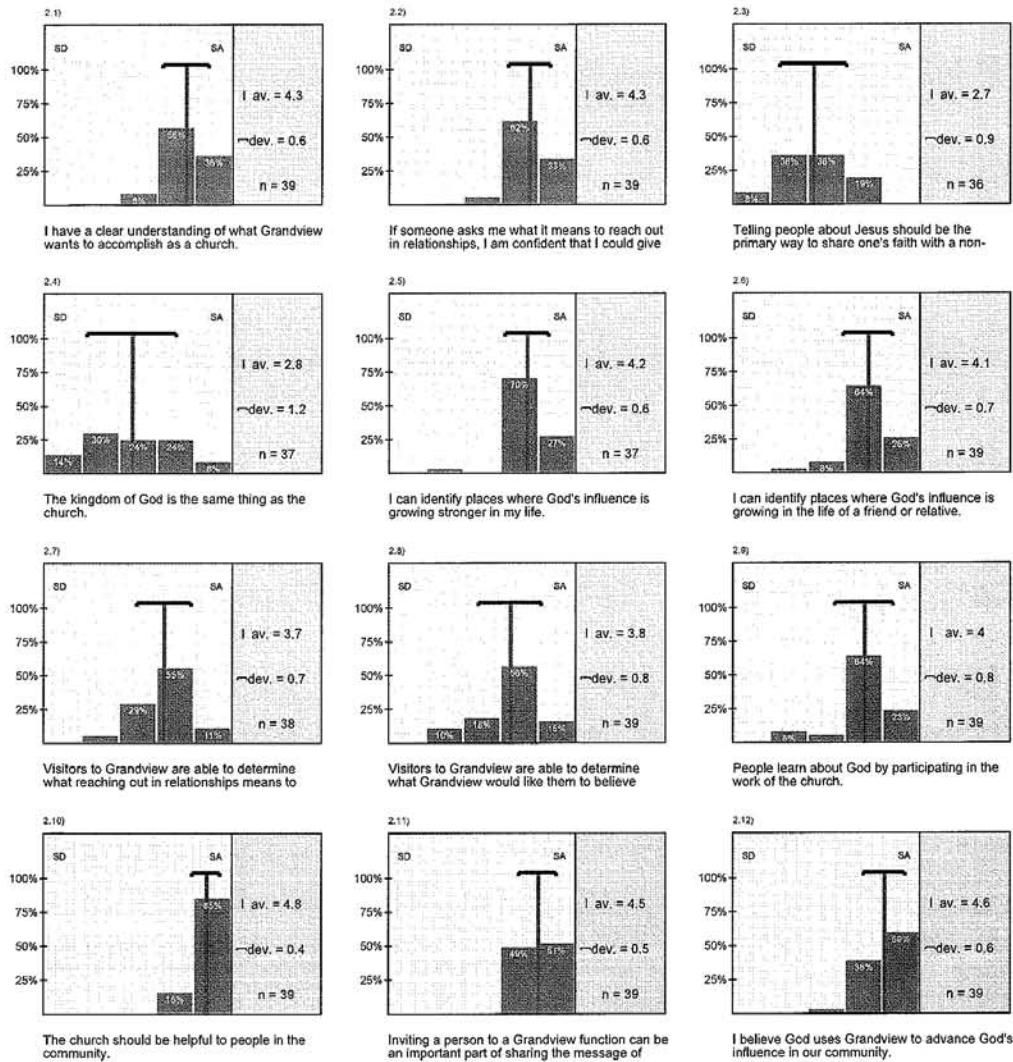


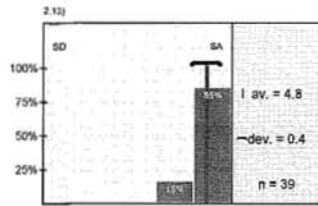
Part III



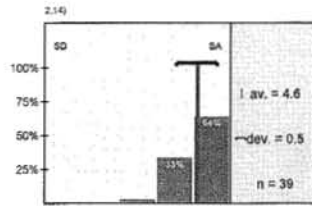


Histogram for scalar questions

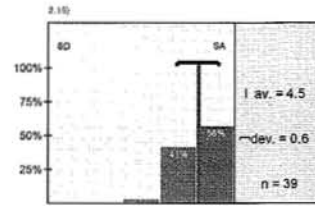




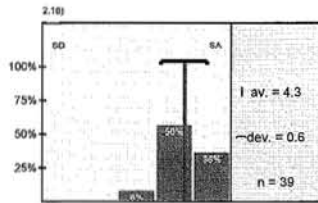
I believe it is important to encourage people to serve God.



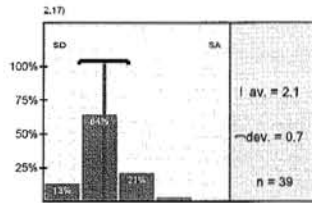
I believe it is important to look for ways to work/serve alongside non-Christians.



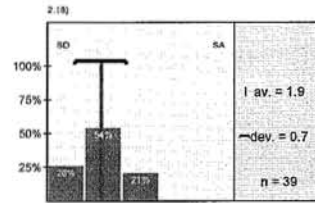
I believe it is important to arrange my schedule to allow me time to serve God outside the church.



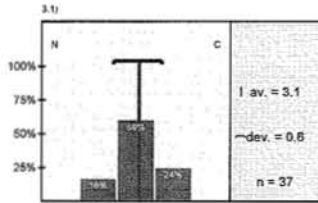
I wish the church would do more for those outside the church.



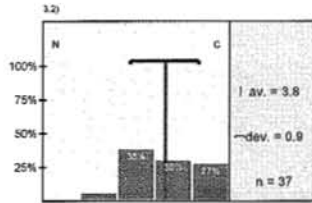
I wish the church would do more for me.



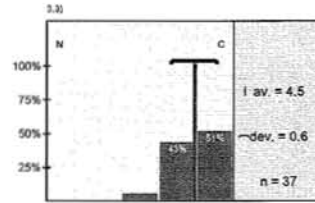
The church should focus more on the members of the church and less on those outside the church.



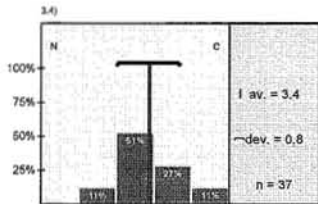
I look for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know or accept the message.



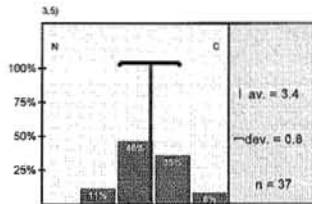
I serve God outside the church building.



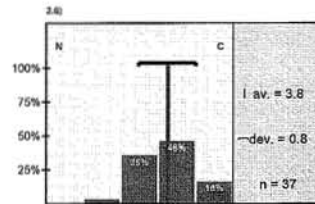
I maintain relationships with Christians who don't attend Grandview.



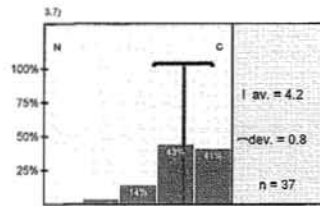
I maintain interaction with people of little or no faith.



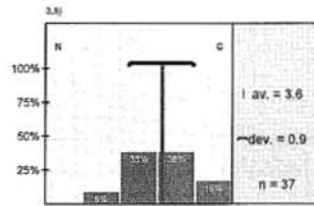
I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building.



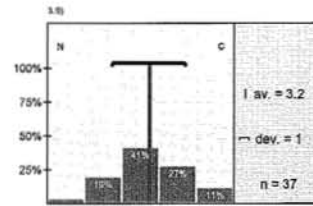
I give support to people who are enduring difficult times.



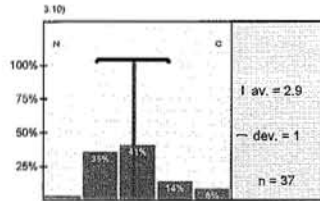
I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life.



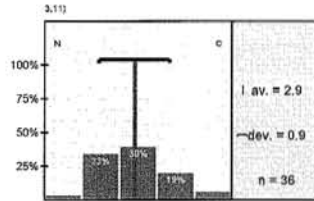
I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians.



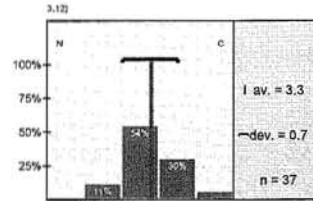
I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life.



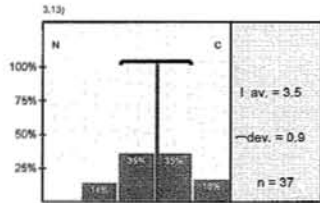
I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function.



I invite people to help me serve people in need.

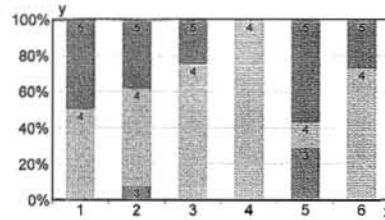


I engage people in conversations regarding faith.



I invite people to eat with me.

| x | y | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|----|----|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 2 | | 0% | 0% | 7.7% | 53.8% | 38.5% | 100% |
| 3 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 75% | 25% | 100% |
| 4 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 100% |
| 5 | | 0% | 0% | 28.6% | 14.3% | 57.1% | 100% |
| 6 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 72.7% | 27.3% | 100% |
| | | 0% | 0% | 7.7% | 56.4% | 35.9% | 100% |



x:

How long have you attended Grandview?

- 1: 0-1 year
- 2: 2-5 years
- 3: 6-9 years
- 4: 10-14 years
- 5: 15-19 years
- 6: 20 years or more

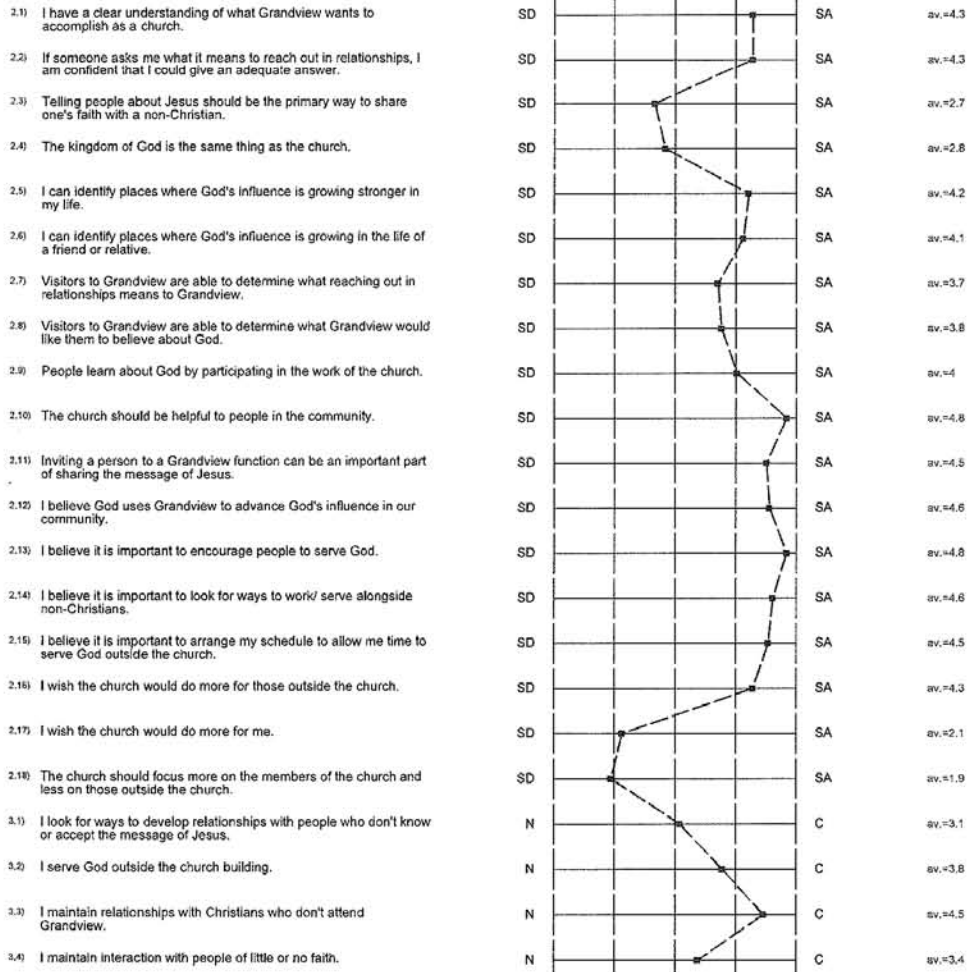
y:

I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.








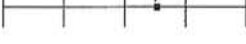

- 1: SD
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5: SA

Profile

Subunit: Grandview
 Name of the instructor: Wymer
 Name of the course: Leaders Survey (Post)
 (Name of the survey)



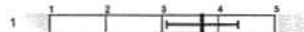
Wymer, Leaders Survey (Post)

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|---|---------|
| 3.10 | I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building. | N |  | C | av.=3.4 |
| 3.40 | I give support to people who are enduring difficult times. | N |  | C | av.=3.8 |
| 3.70 | I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life. | N |  | C | av.=4.2 |
| 3.40 | I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians. | N |  | C | av.=3.6 |
| 3.10 | I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life. | N |  | C | av.=3.2 |
| 3.10 | I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function. | N |  | C | av.=2.9 |
| 3.10 | I invite people to help me serve people in need. | N |  | C | av.=2.9 |
| 3.120 | I engage people in conversations regarding faith. | N |  | C | av.=3.3 |
| 3.130 | I invite people to eat with me. | N |  | C | av.=3.5 |

Wymer
Non-Leaders (Post 0)
Responses = 56 (SS07)

Global Values

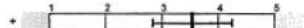
Global Index av.=3,7
dev.=0,8



Part II (Alpha = 0.7) av.=3,9
dev.=0,7



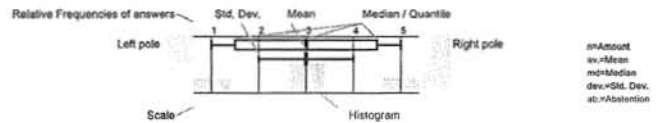
Part III (Alpha = 0.8) av.=3,5
dev.=0,8



Survey Results

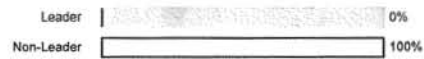
Legend

Question text

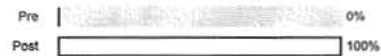


Part I

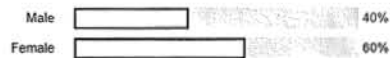
1.1) Leadership status: n=54



1.2) Survey Period: n=56



1.3) Gender: n=55

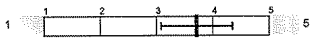


Wymer
 Non-Leaders (Post) ()
 Responses = 56 (SS07)

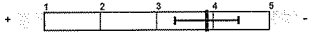


Global Values

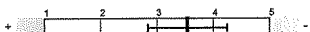
Global Index av.=3.7
dev.=0.8



Part II (Alpha = 0.7) av.=3.9
dev.=0.7



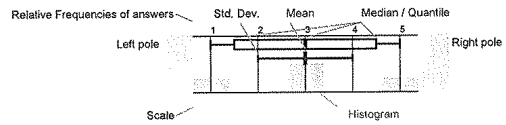
Part III (Alpha = 0.8) av.=3.5
dev.=0.8



Survey Results

Legend

Question text



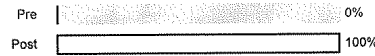
n=Amount
 av.=Mean
 md=Median
 dev.=Std. Dev.
 at.=Abstention

Part I

1.1) Leadership status: n=54



1.2) Survey Period: n=56

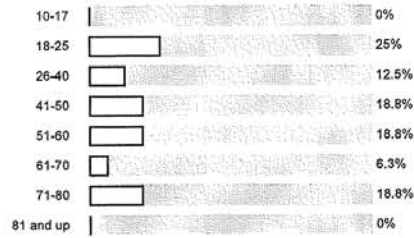


1.3) Gender: n=55

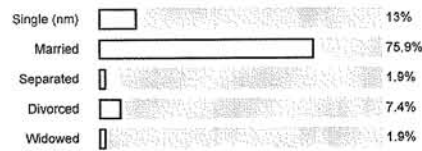


Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)

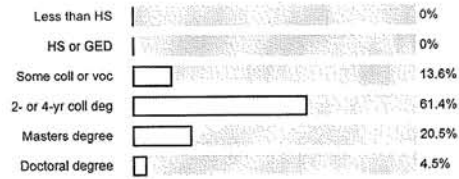
1.4) Age: n=16



1.5) Marital Status: n=54



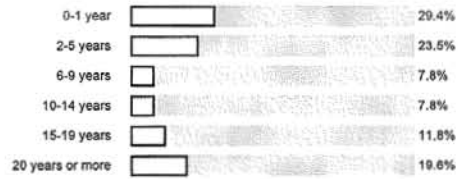
1.6) Highest level of education completed: n=44



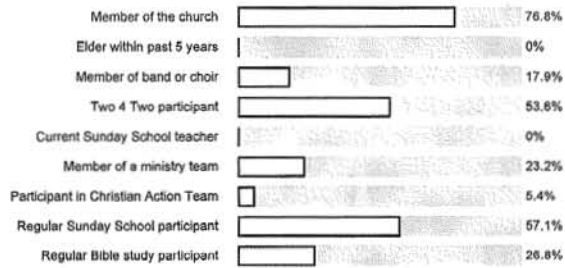
1.7) Are you a member of Grandview Christian Church? n=56



1.8) How long have you attended Grandview? n=51



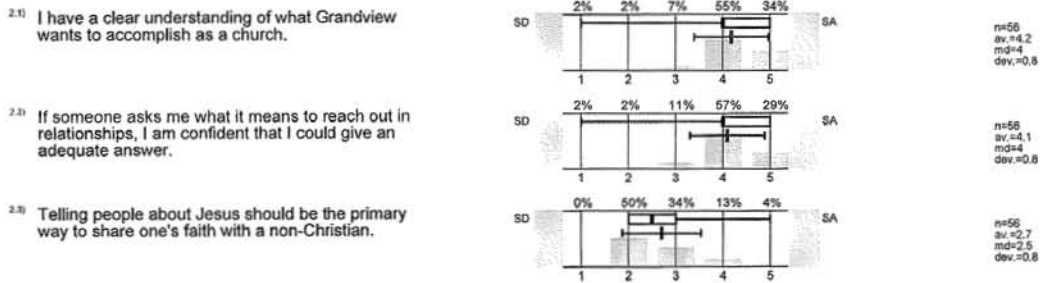
1.9) Mark ALL that apply to your involvement at Grandview within the past year: n=56

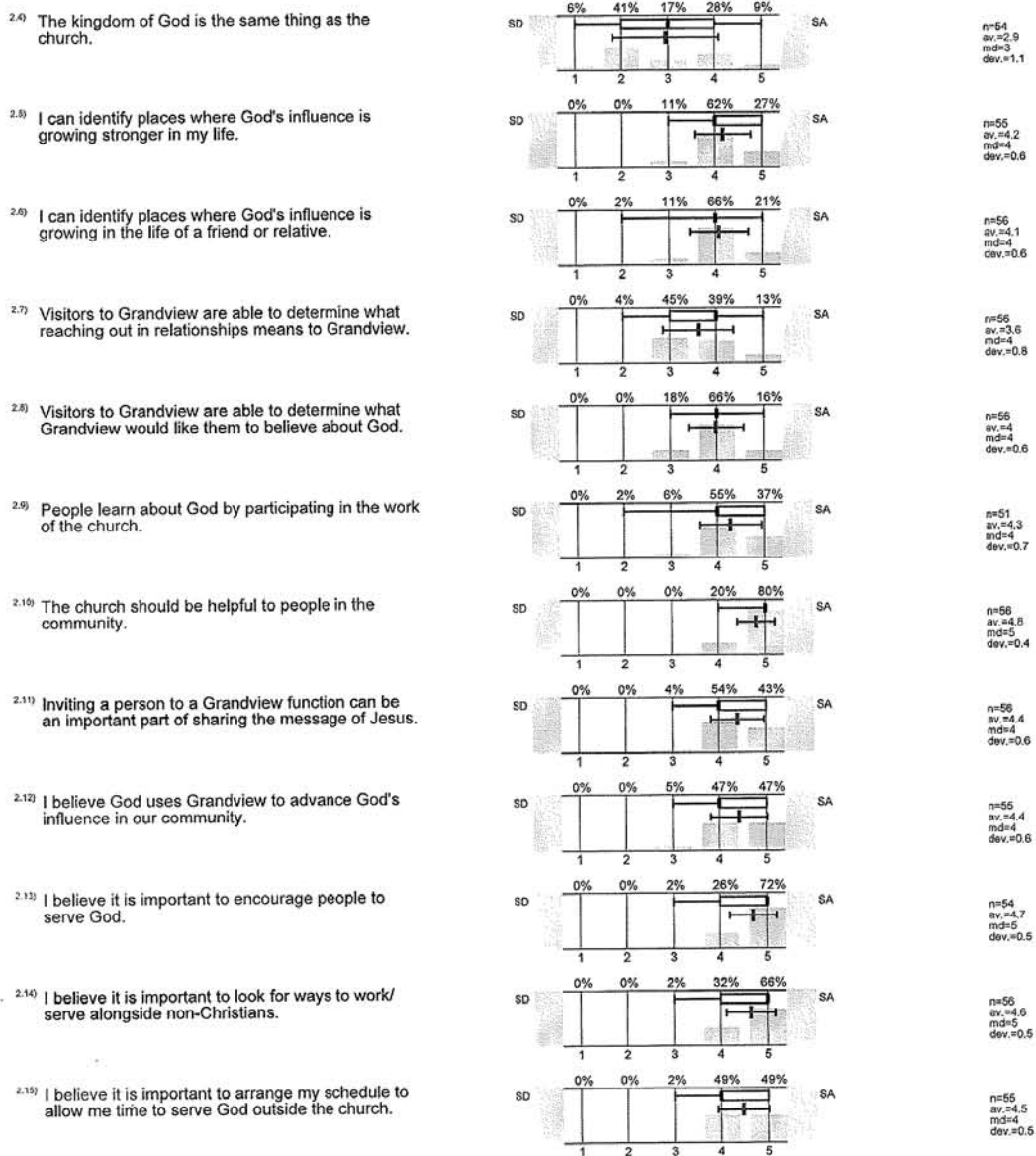


1.10) Have you ever served in a paid ministerial role in a church setting? n=55

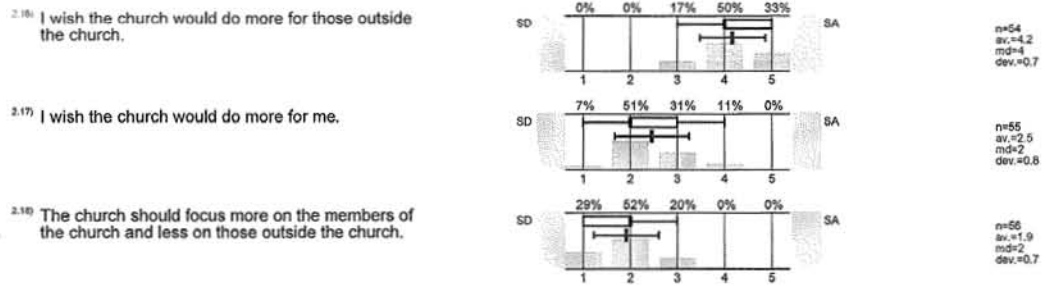


Part II

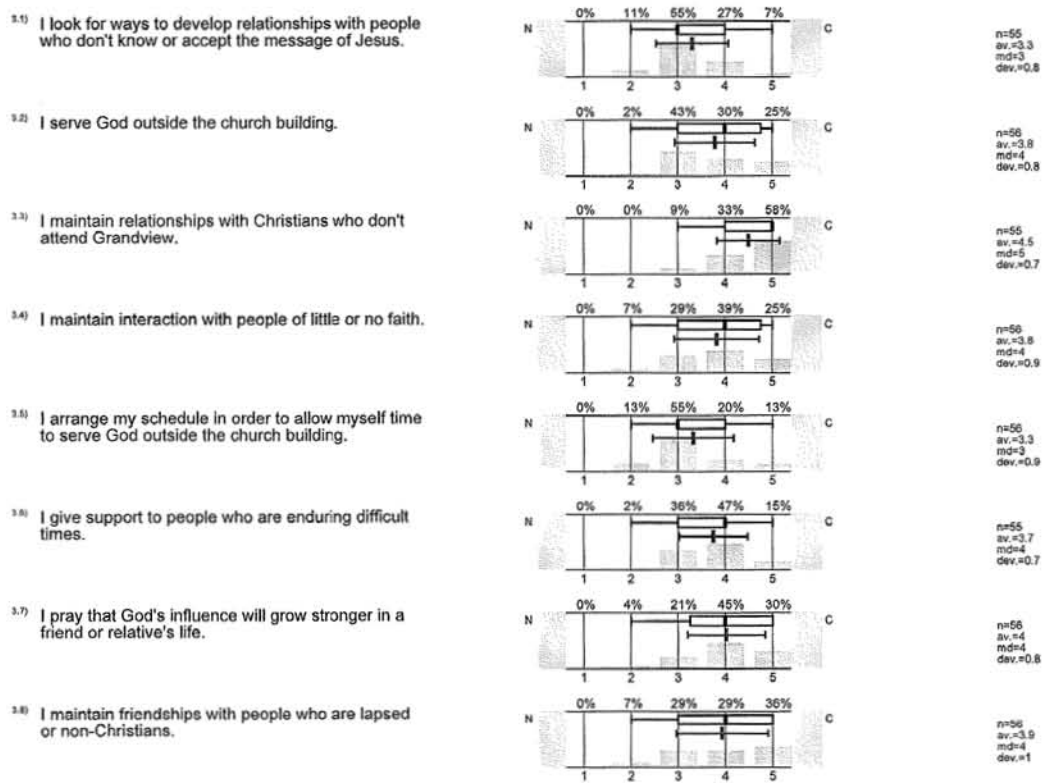


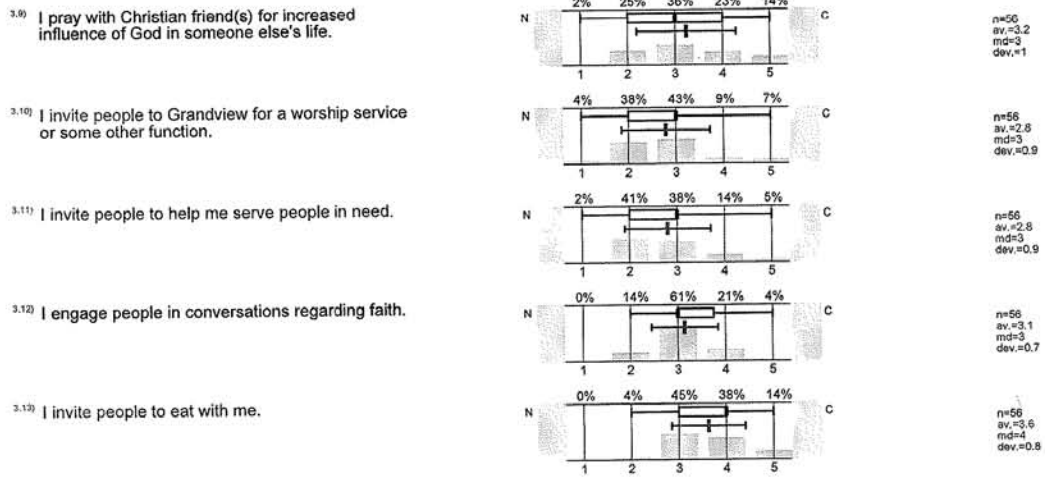


Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)

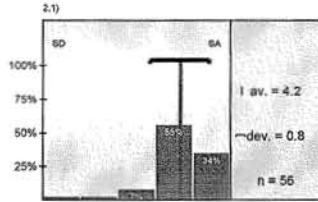


Part III

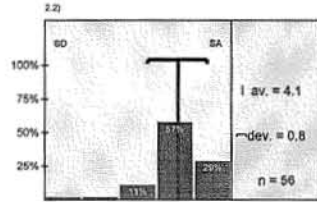




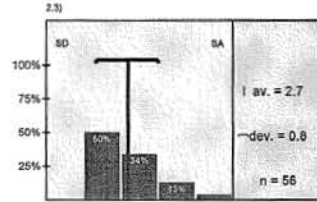
Histogram for scalar questions



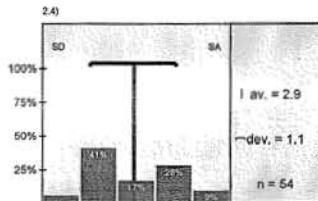
I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.



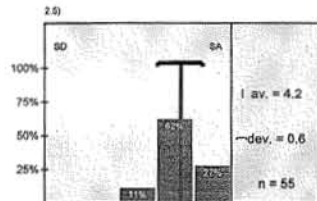
If someone asks me what it means to reach out in relationships, I am confident that I could give



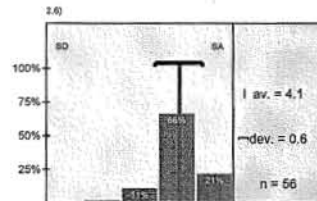
Telling people about Jesus should be the primary way to share one's faith with a non-



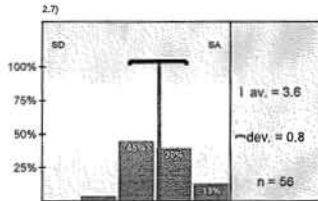
The kingdom of God is the same thing as the church.



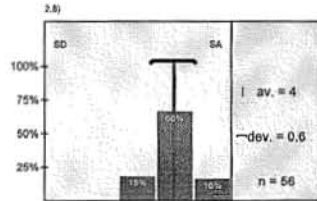
I can identify places where God's influence is growing stronger in my life.



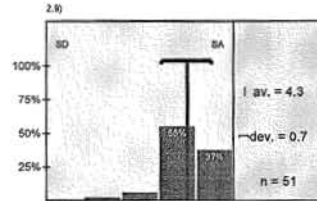
I can identify places where God's influence is growing in the life of a friend or relative.



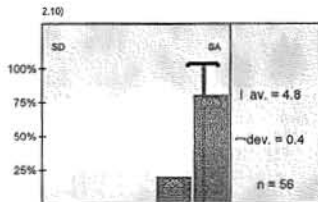
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what reaching out in relationships means to



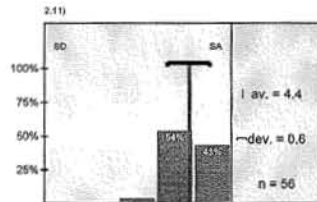
Visitors to Grandview are able to determine what Grandview would like them to believe



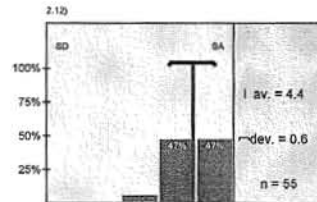
People learn about God by participating in the work of the church.



The church should be helpful to people in the community.

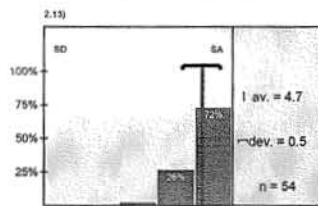


Inviting a person to a Grandview function can be an important part of sharing the message of

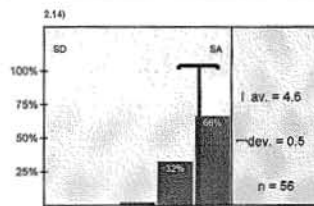


I believe God uses Grandview to advance God's influence in our community.

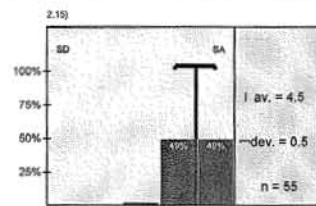
Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)



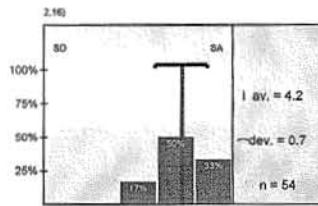
I believe it is important to encourage people to serve God.



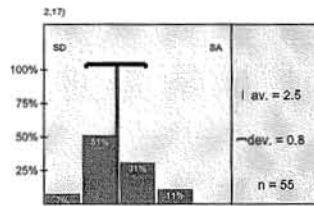
I believe it is important to look for ways to work/serve alongside non-Christians.



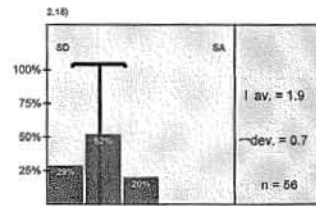
I believe it is important to arrange my schedule to allow me time to serve God outside the church.



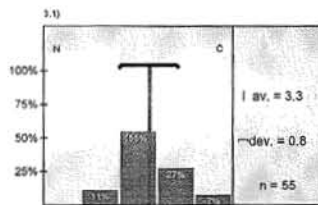
I wish the church would do more for those outside the church.



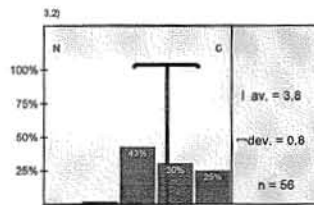
I wish the church would do more for me.



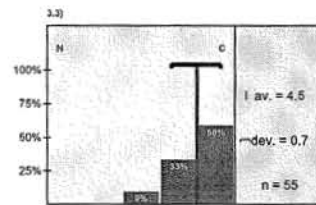
The church should focus more on the members of the church and less on those outside the church.



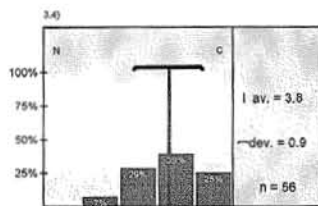
I look for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know or accept the message.



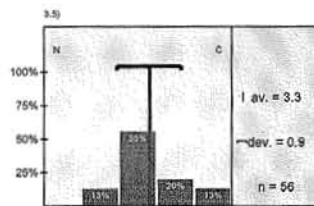
I serve God outside the church building.



I maintain relationships with Christians who don't attend Grandview.



I maintain interaction with people of little or no faith.

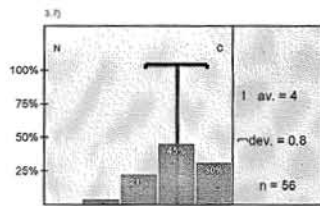


I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building.

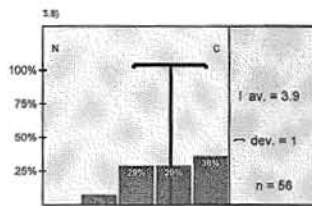


I give support to people who are enduring difficult times.

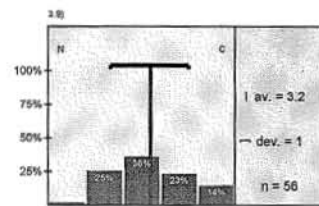
Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)



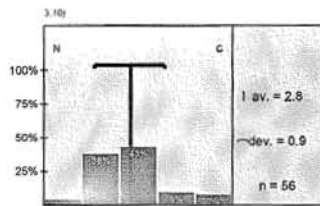
I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life.



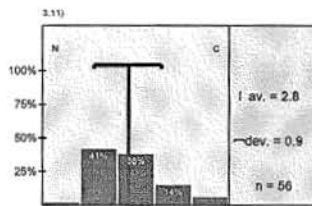
I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians.



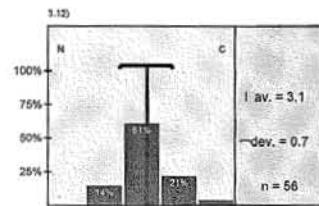
I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life.



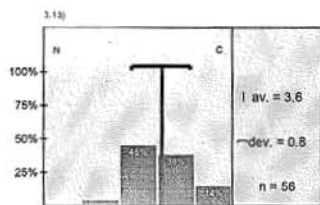
I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function.



I invite people to help me serve people in need.



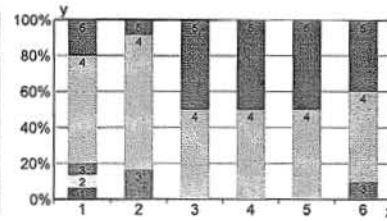
I engage people in conversations regarding faith.



I invite people to eat with me.

Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)

| x | y | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 | | 6.7% | 6.7% | 6.7% | 60% | 20% | 100% |
| 2 | | 0% | 0% | 16.7% | 75% | 8.3% | 100% |
| 3 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 4 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 5 | | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 6 | | 0% | 0% | 10% | 50% | 40% | 100% |
| | | 2% | 2% | 7.8% | 58.8% | 28.4% | 100% |



x:
How long have you attended Grandview?

- 1: 0-1 year
- 2: 2-5 years
- 3: 6-9 years
- 4: 10-14 years
- 5: 15-19 years
- 6: 20 years or more

y:
I have a clear understanding of what Grandview wants to accomplish as a church.

- 1: SD
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5: SA

Profile

Subunit: Grandview
 Name of the instructor: Wymer
 Name of the course: Non-Leaders (Post)
 (Name of the survey)



Wymer, Non-Leaders (Post)

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|---------|
| 3.5) I arrange my schedule in order to allow myself time to serve God outside the church building. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.3 |
| 3.6) I give support to people who are enduring difficult times. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.7 |
| 3.7) I pray that God's influence will grow stronger in a friend or relative's life. | N | | | | | C | av.=4 |
| 3.8) I maintain friendships with people who are lapsed or non-Christians. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.9 |
| 3.9) I pray with Christian friend(s) for increased influence of God in someone else's life. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.2 |
| 3.10) I invite people to Grandview for a worship service or some other function. | N | | | | | C | av.=2.8 |
| 3.11) I invite people to help me serve people in need. | N | | | | | C | av.=2.8 |
| 3.12) I engage people in conversations regarding faith. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.1 |
| 3.13) I invite people to eat with me. | N | | | | | C | av.=3.5 |

WORKS CITED

- Abraham, William J. *The Logic of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Aldrich, Joseph C. *Gentle Persuasion: Creative Ways to Introduce Your Friends to Christ*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1988.
- Arias, Mortimer. *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1984.
- Brown, Tom. "Turning Mission Statements into Action." *Harvard Management Update* Sept. 1997: 3-5.
- Cachiaras, Ben. Personal interview. 13 Apr. 2007.
- Campbell, Alexander. *The Christian System*. St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1890.
- Cast Away*. Dir. Robert Zemeckis. Perf. Tom Hanks. Twentieth Century Fox DreamWorks, 2000.
- Chalke, Steve. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2007.
- Chalke, Steve and Alan Mann. *The Lost Message of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Craddock, Fred. *Luke*. Interpretation. Louisville: John Knox, 1990.
- Crouch, Andy. "Emergent Evangelism: The Place of Absolute Truths in a Postmodern World—Two Views." *Christianity Today* Nov. 2004: 42-43.
- . "The Emergent Mystique." *Christianity Today* Nov. 2004: 37-41.
- Crouch, Owen. *When God Became Human: Studies In the Gospel of Luke*. Joplin, MO: College P, 1991.
- Cunningham, David S. *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

Dyrness, William A. *How Does America Hear the Gospel?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Engle, James F., and H. Wilbert Norton. *What's Wrong with the Harvest? A Communication Strategy for the Church and World Evangelism.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.

Fiddes, Paul S. *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity.* Louisville: Westminster-Knox, 2000.

Green, Joel B. E-mail to the author. 13 Nov. 2006.

---. *The Gospel of Luke.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

---. *Theology of Luke.* New Testament Theology. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Harnish, James A. *You Only Have to Die: Leading Your Congregation to New Life.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2004.

Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke: New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978.

Hybels, Bill, and Mark Mittelberg. *Becoming a Contagious Christian.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Jones, E. Stanley. *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1972.

Kallenberg, Brad J. *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age.* Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002.

Kim, Jin S. "Evangelism as Parabolic Witness." *Journal for Preachers* 29.4 (Pentecost 2006): 43-48.

Kinghorn, Kenneth Cain, ed. *The Standard Sermons in Modern English*. Nashville:

Abingdon, 2002-03. 3 vols.

Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles: New Testament*

Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.

Ladd, George Eldon. *The Presence of the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Lewis, Robert, and Rob Wilkins. *The Church of Irresistible Influence: Bridge Building*

Stories to Help Reach Your Community. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Lieu, Judith. *The Gospel of Luke*. Epworth Commentaries. London: Epworth, 1997.

Lohfink, Gerhard. *Jesus and Community*. Trans. John P. Galvin. Philadelphia: Fortress,

1984.

Lynn, Jack. *Clear Vision: How 16 Churches Harnessed the Power of Shared Vision*.

Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2005.

Mittelberg, Mark. *Building a Contagious Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. Trans. Margaret Kohl. San Francisco:

Harper, 1991.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. The New International Commentary on the

New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Myers, David G. *Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw, 2008.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand

Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

---. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

---. *Sign of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.

Nouwen, Henri. *In the Name of Jesus*. New York: Crossroads, 1989.

- Percept. *ReVision Context 2001*. Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: 2001.
- Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Rainer, Thom. *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works and What Doesn't*. Nashville: Broadman, 1996.
- Rogers, Eugene F. *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Rusaw, Rick. Personal interview. 24 Sept. 2007.
- Rusaw, Rick, and Eric Swanson. *The Externally Focused Church*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2004.
- Seamands, Stephen. *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.
- Sjogren, Steve. *The Perfectly Imperfect Church: Redefining the "Ideal" Church*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002.
- Sjogren, Steve, and Janie Sjogren. *101 Ways to Help People in Need*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.
- Stanley, Andy, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones. *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004.
- Stevens, R. Paul. *The Other Six Days*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Voskuil, Dennis N. "Individualism and Evangelism in America." *Reformed Review* 41 (1987): 21-28.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: Harper, 1998.

---. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. San Francisco: Harper, 2006.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett P. *Christly Gestures: Learning to Be Members of the Body of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Wright, Nicholas Thomas. *Luke for Everyone*. London: Westminster-John Knox, 2004.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: U of Toronto, 1994.
- Bandy, Thomas G. *Kicking Habits: Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.
- Bossidy, Larry, and Ram Charan. *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2002.
- Brownson, James V., et al. *Storm Front: The Good News of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Campolo, Anthony. *Ideas for Social Action: A Handbook on Mission and Service for Christian Young People*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.
- . *You Can Make a Difference*. Waco, TX: Word, 1978.
- Collins, Jim. *Good to Great*. New York: Harper Business, 2001.
- Cook, Jerry, with Stanley C. Baldwin. *Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness: Equipping the Church to be Truly Christian in a Non-Christian World*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1979.
- Crandall, Ron. *The Contagious Witness: Exploring Christian Conversion*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Cunningham, David S. *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*. Louisville: John Knox, 1998.
- Dreisbach, Bruce Roberts. *The Jesus Plan: Breaking through Barriers to Introduce the People You Know to the God You Love*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2002.

- Dudley, Carl S., and Nancy T. Ammerman. *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Fife, Robert Oldham. *Celebration of Heritage*. Joplin, MO: College P, 1992.
- . *Conveying the Incarnation: Reflections Concerning the Church in the World*. Joplin, MO: College P, 1993.
- Foster, Douglas A., et al. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003.
- Garrett, Leroy. *The Stone-Campbell Movement*. N.p.: College P, 1994.
- Goleman, Daniel, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School, 2004.
- Green, Joel B., and Michael Pasquarello, III, eds. *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978.
- Hunter, Harold D., and Peter D. Hocken, eds. *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference of World Evangelization*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1993.
- Husbands, Mark, and Daniel J. Treier, eds. *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.

- Kennison, Phillip D. *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999.
- Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business, 1996.
- Kouzes, James M., and Barry P. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Lewis, Robert, and Wayne Cordeiro. *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- McManus, Erwin Raphael. *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2001.
- McNeal, Reggie. *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- . *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Ortiz, Juan Carlos. *Disciple*. Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1975.
- . *Living with Jesus Today*. Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1982.
- Petersen, Jim. *Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1989.
- Poe, Harry Lee. *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Radner, Ephraim. *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Rainer, Helen Laraine. "Developing a Strategic Plan Based on a Church's Purpose Statement." Diss. Asbury Theological Seminary, 1998.

- Ramey, Robert H., Jr. *The Dynamic Congregation*. St. Louis: Chalice, 1999.
- Rogers, Eugene F. *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Rowland, Stan. *Multiplying Light & Truth through Community Health Evangelism*. Pant Nagar, Mumbai: GLS, 2001.
- Salter, Darius. *American Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Sjogren, Steve, ed. *Seeing Beyond Church Walls*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2002.
- Stewart, Edward C., and Milton J. Bennett. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Boston: Intercultural, 1991.