

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MODEL TO MOTIVATE AND TEACH NEW MEMBERS TO DO RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

Joseph R. MacLaren, Jr.

The purpose of this study was to implement a researcher designed model that motivates and teaches new members to practice relational evangelism and to assess the corresponding changes in new members' behavior. The model developed includes training for two hours in relational evangelism for all new members joining Aloma United Methodist Church during a three and a half period. Also included in the model is a month long evangelism event called "One by One" that consists of praying for their unchurched friends and giving an invitation to the church held event. This "One by One" event was a seeker friendly worship (such as a Easter drama/musical or Sunday morning worship) that occurred once a quarter.

Forty-one of the new members were evaluated as to the value of the relational evangelism-training model and the corresponding change in their attempts at evangelism. The factual results were: seventy-eight percent of the new members invited a friend to a One by One event or a worship service. Sixty-one percent of the new members surveyed shared their faith with an unchurched friend.

Five significant findings emerged from the results of the questionnaire and interview. The first finding is that it is possible to build a self-replicating cycle of visitors through new members once they are trained and are motivated to reach their unchurched friends. For pastors who wish to grow their church, they must find a way to generate

visitors. This model is one way. The second finding is that the relational evangelism-
training model helps new members to evangelize their unchurched friends. The third
finding is that there are major roadblocks to faith sharing, such as the fear of rejection
and the belief that evangelism is the responsibility of professionals, that must be
addressed in the training. The fourth finding is that new members can reach their friends
for Jesus. The last finding is that teaching and motivating new members to do relational
evangelism produces evangelists.

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by

Joseph R. MacLaren, Jr.

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Study

In 1972 I lost my way in life. I was enmeshed in the values of the late 60s and early 70s. Because I left the moral compass my parents had set for me, my heart was in turmoil. I shared this anxiety with my grandfather, Pop, who lived with my parents during the winter in Florida. He was a wonderful person. I respected him as much as any person I had ever known. On many occasions Pop would give me counsel and direction for my life. The most influential counsel he ever imparted was his faith in Jesus. I can remember his statement, “Joe, Jesus is as real to me as you are standing in front of me. I talk with him all day long.”

What my grandfather did at that moment was practice relational evangelism with his grandson. Although I am sure that Pop would not be familiar with this term, nor with the techniques of witnessing, he did an excellent job on me! If Pop had not been an influence in my life, I may never have become a pastor and possibly not a Christian.

Biblical View

I believe that a Christian’s witness to the world in word and deed is central to who we are as the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul states this central mission of the church, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20). If this witness would stop, the church would cease to exist. In most mainline churches, this witness to the world no longer impacts our secular society. It is one of the main reasons the United Methodist Church’s membership is declining, and the average age is becoming older.

The Problem

As I was soon to learn as chair of Operation Evangelization, most of the approximately seven hundred United Methodist churches in our Annual Conference have no focused, comprehensive plan to evangelize the unchurched people in their community. The United Methodist Church (UMC), as well as other mainline denominations, continues to lose members every year. Our annual conference has stories of successful renewal and of impressive new church starts, but these are the unusual exceptions to the general trends taking place. Almost without exception in every church where growth is taking place, the church is located in an area where new neighborhoods are being built. The opposite is also true: where the surrounding community has stopped growing, the church in that area begins to stagnate then starts to decline.

The Florida Annual Conference has tried to change this outgoing tide. The only successful strategy by the hierarchy so far has been to accelerate the number of new church starts. These new churches are almost always located in rapidly growing areas. Established churches that are fortunate enough to be located in neighborhoods that are building new houses will continue to grow if they are friendly, have good preaching and worship, and have places where the new visitor can be assimilated into the life of the church. Most of these congregations have no evangelism strategy in place. Another successful strategy used by individual churches of the Florida Conference to attract new people into their churches was the starting of contemporary services during the Sunday morning worship hour (usually the 9:30 Sunday school hour). From a survey of our Florida UM churches over the last five years, 158 of our seven hundred plus churches have started new worship services to reach unchurched and/or a different age group.

These new services had a combined attendance of 13,943 people (MacLaren 23). For many of these churches, the increase in the new service has barely matched the outflow from their traditional service.

As a senior pastor I tried to change the norm of a church being in decline when located in a stable neighborhood. To accomplish this goal, I planned to institute an intentional evangelism program that focuses on helping my congregation reach unchurched people in their sphere of influence. In determining how I would approach teaching and motivating my congregation to evangelize, I incorporated some experiential knowledge that I learned in my last church. During my pastorate at Community United Methodist Church in Fruitland Park, Florida, I decided to teach my church how to share their faith to the unchurched. I used a book on relational evangelism, Faith-sharing by Fox and Morris, as my resource. I used my Wednesday night Bible study time as the place where I taught this class. To their embarrassment most of my Wednesday night saints could not name any unchurched friends in their circle of influence. I discovered by the time they were in the inner circle of the church (Wednesday night Bible study attendees) almost all their friends were Christians. Because of this insight, I realized this group of Christians was not the ideal group to teach relational evangelism. They would have to start from the beginning, making new friends with secular people, if they hoped to reach the lost (not an impossible task, but difficult); therefore, I have chosen new members, not the congregation as a whole, to be the focus of the study.

The Context of the Study

This study took place at Aloma United Methodist Church in Winter Park, Florida, a suburb of the city of Orlando. Orlando is a city that has experienced tremendous

growth since Disney World moved into the area in the late 60s. Most of the residents have moved to Orlando from other regions of the country. Its economy is tourist-driven, and most of the jobs are service-oriented. The eastern Orlando area, where Aloma is located, has experienced rapid growth in the last thirty years. The housing surrounding the church is primarily middle class. The apartments that surround the church are lower-middle class. Within a three-mile radius around the church, 92,000 people live. The area near the church has been stable over the last ten years with no new housing in the immediate area.

In June 1996, I became senior pastor of Aloma United Methodist Church. The church had been in slow decline for about ten years (from about seven hundred in attendance to five hundred when I arrived). The immediate area within a three-mile radius had stopped growing. My challenge was to reverse this trend by instituting an intentional evangelism plan. This study attempts to institute, measure, and evaluate a plan to encourage our newest members to evangelize the undisciplined people in their sphere of influence where the church resides—the eastern metropolitan Orlando area—using the principles of relational evangelism.

My Background and Vision

While in seminary working on my Master of Divinity, I was privileged to take several courses from George Hunter and Ron Crandall in the area of church growth. Before arriving I had nine years experience as a pastor. For the first three years, I was associate pastor at First United Methodist Church of St. Petersburg. For six years, I was senior pastor of Community United Methodist Church in Fruitland Park, a rural town of 2900 people. At Community UMC I was able to put into practice my church growth

knowledge. During the six years there, the church grew from 350 members to eight hundred, members and average attendance went from 150 to 450 people. My vision at that time was simply to grow the church. From July 1995 to June 1996, I was a Beeson Scholar where I was exposed to experts (both practitioners and academic) who have deepened my understanding of how to be an effective leader of a church and communicator of the gospel in today's culture. We were able to visit churches and talk with senior pastors of some of the fastest growing churches in America. My mission as I left the doctoral program at Asbury Theological Seminary and reentered the pastorate was: How can I fulfill Jesus' Great Commission at Aloma United Methodist Church? My vision changed during the Beeson year from simply growing my church to reaching undisciplined people and connecting them to Jesus and his church. As my vision matured, God placed in my heart a desire to help Christians see the world as Jesus and the early disciples did (i.e., our neighborhoods, work place, families) as the mission field ripe for harvest. My dissertation subject deals with helping the newest members of Aloma UMC to have eyes for those in their sphere of influence who are not yet disciplined. My perspective was not only as a pastor of a local church. I had the privilege of helping the seven hundred churches of our annual conference to evangelize their local communities.

I felt called by God to help Aloma UMC, where I was senior pastor, to reach undisciplined people in the surrounding community. Aloma UMC's church vision statement, put into place during my first year as senior pastor, was "Witnessing, one by one, in word and deed to make disciples for Jesus Christ." The model evaluated in this dissertation was a way to help fulfill this vision.

During the first year of my pastorate at Aloma UMC, our bishop, Cornelius

Henderson, asked me to chair Operation Evangelization. The Bishop's vision was to have 400,000 disciples (members) by May 2000 (up from 362,000 members in 1996). Our committee's job was to institute a plan that would turn around the stagnation and slow decline in membership the Florida Conference has experienced over the last ten years. We were given a budget of \$100,000 and great authority. As I studied the current practices and success of the evangelism efforts of our local churches and put into place our recommendations, I was better able to understand the state of the Florida Annual Conference church's approach to evangelism. Out of this research came a book I edited and helped write called, The Bishop's Fishing Guide to Florida. This book was based on a bottom up approach showcasing the churches with the best available model of evangelism practices. One of the chapters lays out the basic relational evangelism plan I have instituted at Aloma UMC and described in this dissertation (MacLaren 33-34).

Characteristics of Aloma UMC

In the beginning of 1996, the Staff Parish Committee of Aloma UMC asked our bishop for these traits in a senior pastor: one who has an emphasis in evangelism, who was a visionary leader, and one who could preach. My district superintendent told me that Aloma UMC was a church in decline (ten years of decline in attendance), and I may be its last hope (an exaggeration from my view point since five hundred in attendance is far from death). When I entered as senior pastor in June 1996, I was forty-four years old.

Aloma United Methodist Church has a history of being one of the more theologically conservative of our United Methodist churches in Florida. When I arrived in June 1996, Aloma UMC was an 1,800 member church with an average attendance of five hundred spread through three Sunday morning services. The Sunday school program

averaged 430 in attendance. The church has a highly visible location on a major intersection in the larger metro-Orlando area. Over 100,000 people drive by the church each day. The congregation was composed primarily of white, middle class people. However, a mixture of Caribbean islanders, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians give Aloma UMC the flavor of different cultures.

Even in the ideal location at the corner of a busy intersection, during the last ten years, the church declined in attendance. In 1997 the church removed over 130 members from its roles. The church cannot locate the majority of these people. This was an indication of the transient nature of the population and the church's inability to assimilate new members. The sanctuary and the parking lot were half full when I first arrived. The staff had not been given raises over the previous three years, due to the lack of growth and its effect on giving. During my first year at Aloma UMC, tensions were exhibited in committee meetings where money was needed to fund a project or ministry. Negative dynamics seemed to revolve around, "If I get my project funded, then you must lose in getting your funding." This could be surmised to be typical human dynamics surrounding a shrinking financial base. Needless to say, morale in the staff and the congregation was low.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to implement a researcher-designed model that motivates and teaches new members to practice relational evangelism and to assess the corresponding changes in new members' behavior. Restating this problem, how do you teach the newest members, who are the least involved in your congregation, to share their faith and to invite their friends and relatives to church so their friends may become

disciples of Jesus?

Statement of Research Questions

Below are the research questions that will be investigated.

Research Question #1

What parts of the model used for training and motivating the new members were most important and helpful to the new members?

Research Question #2

What have been the results in persons won to Christ and invited to church by members participating in this study?"

Research Question #3

What changes have occurred in new members' own self-reported spiritual growth in regards to evangelism?

Definitions of Terms

"Disciple" is the term used for a person who has accepted Jesus as his/her Lord and is actively involved in a church.

"New member" is the term for a person who has just joined the church.

"Profession of Faith" is a term that describes a person who comes to join the church without a previous, church membership. They may have never joined a church or may have had a membership at some time in their lives, but currently they are not on the roll as a member in any church.

"Relational evangelism" is a way to communicate the gospel using relationships, such as family, friends, coworkers, etc., as a bridge to communicate the reality of the gospel. The hope is that within this relationship mutual trust and respect exists between

the two people. This relationship helps an evangelist to discover the person's need and then to show how Jesus can meet that need. When Jesus meets that need in that person's life, he becomes their savior, which leads to their salvation. A second meaning to this term is when a Christian brings his/her unchurched friend to church to be exposed to the gospel. This behavior is much like the gospel account of the person who brings his sick friend to be healed by Jesus.

“Unchurched” and “undisciplined” are people who are not involved in a church; therefore, by my definition, they are not a disciple. They may believe in Jesus, they may be atheists, or they may be somewhere in between. I do not use the term “lost” in this paper. According to Barna 56 percent of the unchurched would find the term offensive if labeled this way (Re-churching 82).

Methodology of the Study

Aloma United Methodist Church located in Winter Park, Florida, where I became senior pastor in June 1996, was the church where this model was evaluated.

The initial study was done during the space of 3 1/2 years (July 1996 to December 1999) during which seventeen, six-week-long new member classes were held. Follow up data from the questionnaire was gathered five months (May 2000) after the last new member class. Interviews of the subjects took place by phone during August 2000. The questionnaire and interview questions can be found in Appendixes A and B.

Subjects

The subjects for this study have been chosen on the basis of criteria rather than being chosen by random selection. The subjects of this study were the new adult members of Aloma UMC who joined between July 1996 and December 1999 (362

people), who attended the Inquiry Class, and who were still attending regularly (two Sundays per month) between 1 January and 1 May 2000 (ninety-six of the 362 people). When I arrived at Aloma UMC, I established a new member class that was required of adults for joining. The new member class ran for six weeks (six one-hour sessions) on Sunday mornings or Sunday after lunch. It restarted every two months. The normal sequence of classes were: (1) The meaning of Christianity, (2) The theological distinctives of the United Methodist Church, (3) Relational evangelism part one, (4) Relational evangelism part two, (5) Connecting to Aloma UMC through personal ministry (gift and passion assessment then related to a ministry opportunity) and through small group attendance such as adult Sunday school, and (6) Meeting the leaders of the church at the parsonage. The vast majority of United Methodist Churches do not require people who wish to join the church to attend a relational evangelism course. Inquiry classes are usually for assimilation and making sure people are instructed in the faith (both Christian faith and denominational distinctives). When I first came I experienced some rebellion in requiring attendance in the Inquiry Class to join (the new members were not yet used to me). The primary reason for structuring the class this way was to fulfill the vision God had given me. The reason I could get away with requiring attendance in the Inquiry Class is that new members have to go along with what the senior pastor requires of membership. New members have no power base to get rid of you or force you to change in this area. Their options were either to attend or not join. Some visitors chose not to join. Occasionally new members join the church in ways other than going through the Inquiry class. I have made exceptions for shut-ins, for former members returning to Aloma UMC, and for a husband who would not attend the class

with his wife. Some of the new members were not able to attend both the sessions on how to share your faith. If they missed both training sessions, they were left out of the evaluation. If they attended one of the sessions, they were included. Subjects must have an average Sunday attendance of two times per month between 1 January and 1 May. Of the 362 people that joined during the 3 1/2 year study, ninety-six fit the requirement of regular attendance. Many more than the ninety-six people probably fit this criteria, but they or we have not recorded their attendance. The last qualification to be a subject in this study was that they must have returned their questionnaire (forty-one people out of the ninety-six).

Out of the sample population of forty-one, seventeen new members attended the relational evangelism training, filled out the questionnaire, signed their name, and volunteered for a follow up interview. The interview was conducted to get a deeper understanding of the research questions.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used. First, a researcher-designed questionnaire was mailed to the ninety-six subjects (see Appendix A). Second, a researcher-designed semi-structured interview protocol of eleven questions was used (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

Data collection started with narrowing down the population to ninety-six new members who attended an average of two times per month during January 2000 through April 2000. Each person was sent a stamped self-addressed envelope along with the questionnaire. Forty-one of the ninety-six regularly attending new members sent back their questionnaires. The questionnaires were statistically analyzed. Participants were

given the option of remaining anonymous. This was to allow them to freely criticize the training. If they choose to sign their name, they were able to check a box where they might participate in a follow up interview. Only twenty signed their names. Of the twenty only seventeen were willing to give time to an interview. The follow up interview was conducted by phone. The interview was transcribed during the conversation and edited following the call.

Delimitation and Generalizability of the Study

Even though the “One by One” event was offered to the whole church, I only tested the new members rather than the members who were here before I arrived. Although other evangelism opportunities were offered to the church in which to participate (such as the Alpha Course), only the Inquiry Class’s relational evangelism training and the One by One event were evaluated by the questionnaire. I believe effective evangelism in a congregation cannot be isolated from the rest of what takes place in a church’s body. All healthy aspects of a church’s corporate life exert a synergistic effect on the success of any evangelism practices. The influence of these other events in the life of a new member was beyond the scope of this dissertation unless it surfaced during the interview process.

I am hopeful that other pastors interested in helping their churches become more evangelistic might find this model, or a variation of it, useful in helping their church to reach unchurched people through relational networks of their congregation. As our culture becomes more secular, churches that wish to turn the tide of their attendance decline will need to find models of evangelism that will fit their church and style of ministry. The model presented in this paper is an approach that applies current research

on how people normally become Christians (through relational networks). Almost any church can implement this model since it was a low-cost method with low risk for participants compared to other evangelistic models.

Overview

Chapter 2 will explore the literature in order to explain the rationale for the model chosen. The first subject covered in Chapter 2 is the current lack of evangelism taking place in our denomination, reasons for this deficiency, and the way to overcome this problem in a local church setting through a pastor's leadership. The second subject covered is the reasons why relational evangelism is an effective method of evangelism for our culture. The third subject focuses on using new members as a way to reach the unchurched in the community surrounding our church. The fourth subject matter is the approach taken to teaching relational evangelism. The last subject is the practical application of how I went about teaching, preaching, and motivating new members to do relational evangelism.

Chapter 3 will give the design and methodology of the study. This will include the research and operational questions that will be answered, the population to be measured, the instrument used to collect the data, and how this data will be collected and analyzed.

Chapter 4 will give the findings of the study while chapter five will be a discussion of the findings, the summary, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of Selected Literature

In this chapter I will explore the literature in order to explain the rationale for the model chosen. The first subject covered in Chapter 2 is the membership decline taking place in our denomination, reasons for a lack of evangelism, and the way to overcome this problem in the local church through the leadership of the pastor. The second subject covered is the reasons why relational evangelism is an effective method of outreach to our secular culture. The third subject deals with using new members as a method to reach the unchurched in the community surrounding our church. The fourth subject matter is the methodology taken to communicating relational evangelism. The final subject is the practical application of how I will go about teaching, preaching, and motivating new members to do relational evangelism.

Leading a Church to Be Intentional about Evangelism

One of the constraints I felt as I began my pastorate in Fruitland Park was that United Methodists do not evangelize. When the subject of evangelism would come up at annual conference, in conversations with district superintendents or fellow pastors, their idea of evangelism was to pursue the northern United Methodist transfers that were moving into Florida back to join our churches. This was not my understanding of evangelism. Rev. Terry Hill, Jacksonville district superintendent, confided in me before I was to speak to the ministers of her district about evangelism. She stated, “Most of the ministers here have never been trained, nor have they ever had a course in seminary on evangelism.”

Johnson in his book, How Will They Hear If We Don't Listen? gives the three

ways a church can experience numerical growth. The first is *biological growth*, which means church members have children that join the church. In a stable Christian society, like the Amish, the church can grow in this way. Biological growth is not fulfilling the true sense of the Great Commission. This option is not viable for the United Methodists in Florida, due to the large number of retirees in our churches and due to the transient nature of our society where our grown children take jobs and move away from their neighborhood.

The second type of growth is *transfer growth*. Many United Methodists are moving to Florida. For many years the United Methodist churches in our state simply opened their doors to the influx of transfers from up north. This, too, is no longer a viable option to sustain our memberships. People generally no longer look for a denominational name when they choose a church. Doctrinal distinctives are not a drawing card for a church. Far more influential in choosing a church to the recent transfer are factors like friendliness, mission, good preaching, culturally appropriate music, well-maintained facilities, and places where a person can be assimilated into the life of the church. When I first entered the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church as a pastor in 1986, the way the ministers and district superintendents understood their evangelism task was to get the northern United Methodist transfers into our churches.

The third kind of church growth is *conversion growth*. This growth results from “winning the lost.” In this category would be people who were agnostics, atheists, new age believers, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and other non-Christian religions (Johnson 43), but now profess Christ as their Lord.

To Johnson's list I would add a fourth category *reaching nominal Christians*, who may believe in Jesus as the Son of God but do not currently attend church. They may consider themselves Christians, but I would not consider them disciples. Those in Johnson's third category coupled with those who are nominal Christians are the target group of people I wish to reach to fulfill Jesus' mandate to go and make disciples of all people. These in the third and fourth category are called *unchurched*.

The effect of a congregation having a lack of any focus on evangelism is a church that will continually lose members to death, transfer, and inactivity. Churches in decline are not losing members due to inactivity. Most churches are busy about many things. According to the mandate given by Jesus as the mission of the church (Matt. 28), evangelism must have a part in the ongoing life of the church. A church can be so focused on social concerns that the proclamation of the gospel is lost. Conversely, a strong focus on evangelism should never push out Christianity's quest for justice. Many of our fastest growing churches in the United Methodist Church, which emphasize evangelism, often accomplish a great amount of social ministry. Two good examples of this type of church would be Frazier Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama and Ben Hill United Methodist Church in Atlanta. Two examples from the Florida United Methodist Conference are Christ Church of Ft. Lauderdale and Pine Castle UMC of Orlando. All four of these churches have effective outreaches to the homeless. I have visited the two Florida churches. They not only feed the homeless; they also assimilate them into their church body. They couple evangelism with social justice.

An even greater problem than the decline in membership for many of our churches is the problem of the church not fulfilling its purpose for existence. Jesus Christ

gives this purpose in his Great Commission (Matt. 28). Thomas Oden states this about the church ignoring Jesus' charge to his disciples in Matthew chapter 28, "Take away the Lord's command, and the living presence to which it witnesses, and we have little upon which to build any significant idea of Christian ministry" (62). Oden also says, "In ordinary pastoral practice it has been assumed that all pastors are already evangelists, or at least that they would pray for that gift" (77). Robinson says the pastor's responsibility for evangelism is modeling evangelism in their own life, teaching and preaching evangelism, and mobilizing the laity (142). The pastors of many United Methodist churches have neglected this foundational part of our church's life. In general, the churches of my denomination contrast sharply with the dynamic churches profiled in Elmer Towns' book, An Inside Look at 10 of Today's Most Innovative Churches. Towns summarizes that in spite of these ten churches' great diversity, in both theological distinctiveness and in polity, they have this common bond: "They agree on the goal of reaching people for Christ" (18).

I felt the challenge to evangelize the community, even when few of my peers were practicing evangelism, when I was appointed to Community United Methodist Church in Fruitland Park. The challenge I undertook at Aloma United Methodist Church can be thought of as a leadership issue as well as a theological one. Thomas Oden had a great metaphor for the task before me: "Therefore, every step the pastor takes in guiding the flock should be purposeful, with long range intent, astutely sensing where the green pastures are, how long it takes to get there, and the logistics of how to go from here to there" (16). Robinson states a simple truth, "Unless the pastor's teaching-preaching sounds forth the gospel and creates the atmosphere of evangelism in the church, it is

unlikely that the church will become mobilized for effective outreach” (146). In other words, evangelism does not just happen. The pastor must lead the church in this direction. One exception to this rule is when the church happens to be in a fast growing area where many people are looking for a church (a highly receptive population). The church will grow almost by just opening the door. This is especially true in locations where the relocated population is northern retirees. Because Florida is a fast growing state, this has given many pastors and leaders of our annual conference a false idea that churches can grow without leading the congregation to do evangelism. Many of our churches, which were once fast growing due to location, are in areas that are no longer growing. Most of these churches are now losing members and decreasing in attendance, since they neither practice evangelism nor have evangelism as part of their vision.

Knowing the task that I set before myself, I realized that the most important obstacle to refocusing Aloma UMC for evangelistic outreach was the barrier within myself. Aloma UMC had no intentional evangelism program when I arrived. For me to be able to facilitate this change (focusing on the unchurched people around us rather than focusing on ourselves or transfers) required that I function as a transformational leader. The first question I must ask myself is, “Am I willing to do the right things, the main things, which Jesus commissioned his disciples to follow?” This required a change in my own priorities and time management, as well as our church’s agenda. Schaller states that pastors who are best able to guide a church through major changes “are predominately person-centered, entrepreneurial, extroverted, high energy, hardworking, and ambitious individuals with a high level of skill as agents of intentional change” (Activating 32). This profile does fit my personality as an ENFP on the Meyers Briggs personality

indicator as described by Keirse and Bates in their book Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types. Tichy and Devanna in The Transformational Leader, state one of the most important functions of a leader: “The transformational leader must constantly remind people (our congregation) why they are doing things” (84). I have found at my last two churches, Community UMC and Aloma UMC, convincing new members of my vision was easier versus longtime members. When I first came to Aloma UMC, I told my vision to the staff about my desire to transform Aloma by reaching unchurched people. My associate pastor said, “You will never do that through the people at Aloma. Other senior pastors have tried and failed.” I told him, “You are right. I don’t intend to accomplish it through them. I will accomplish my vision through the new people who will come.”

One of the primary reasons for the church’s existence is to reach those lost to God. This was one of the primary focuses of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Tichy and Devanna state the challenge for a leader is to create a vision of the organization (the church) that is in some way better than the old one and to encourage others to share that dream. They must provide people with an image of what can be and motivate them to move ahead into the future (122). The first part of my task was theological. I used my preaching and leadership influence to help people realize reaching the lost is an essential area of ministry if we are to be the church that Jesus intended us to be. The second part of my task was to help them visualize what our church will look like when we are accomplishing that task. The third part of my task was to put in place systems that help the congregation to share their faith (by word, deed, and invitation to church) with their

unchurched friends.

In personal conversations Dr. Robert Tuttle, professor of evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, stated that teaching evangelism alone would never work. People must be motivated before they will step out and use this knowledge. Bennis and Nanus, in their book Leaders, state two strategies that gave me insight into how a leader motivates. The first strategy is this principle: “The truth is we trust people who are predictable, whose positions are known and keep at it; leaders who are trusted make themselves known, make their positions clear” (27-68). Dr. George Hunter first helped me understand the importance of articulating both your vision, with its core values, and the importance of making every activity of the church focus on fulfilling your vision. Dale Galloway and other large church leaders we heard speak during the Beeson doctoral program reinforced this principle. This leadership principle applied to pastoral ministry might be stated as: When people begin to know your character as senior pastor (by seeing you perform your job in a capable manner), they understand you as someone who is consistent. If you can convince them of your position, and they see you working hard to make your dream a reality, they begin to trust you. People are willing to follow someone they trust. I believe most people will follow you when they see your vision start to become a positive reality.

The second strategy given by Bennis and Nanus is deployment of self through positive self-regard. This “exerts its force by creating in others a sense of confidence and high expectations” (65). There are many things that have worked together to create in my psyche a sense of confidence and self worth. Two decisions have been strong forces in the formation of my self-esteem in my ministry. The first was my quest to live a holy life.

My deepest desire was to be a man after God's own heart. The second decision was claiming the truth that God loves me and is with me through his Holy Spirit. My sense of self-esteem grew knowing that God was working through me as I attempted to accomplish God's will in my life. God's spiritual gift of encouragement helped me to believe in people. Often when a person of authority, like a pastor, believes in a person, they may be able to achieve far more than they could have dreamed. To motivate my congregation successfully by my leadership skills means I will have a church that witnesses their faith in Jesus to the unchurched.

I realize that a church that successfully practices evangelistic outreach involves almost every area of the church's life to accomplish this goal. Hunter gives six characteristics of fast growing "apostolic" congregations. These churches have members who are at least ten to fifteen times as likely to engage in witnessing and inviting than Christians in traditional congregations. I will cover most of these six areas as the paper progresses. I list these to underscore the reality that to have a church that successfully practices evangelism, a fully integrated approach in the life of a church must be undertaken.

1. Christians are more likely to witness and invite if they have a vision of what people can become that goes deeper than accepting our beliefs, obeying our rules, or conforming to our style.
2. The members of a culturally relevant church are much more likely to invite their friends to a worship service they would like their friends to experience than to a service they would dread for their friends to experience!
3. Christians who regularly discuss the gospel, and share what God is doing in their life, in a small group are much more likely to share these matters in their other relationships.
4. People who are involved in a lay ministry, for which they are gifted and in which they experience God working, are much more likely to engage in the ministry of evangelism.

5. People who are in regular spiritual conversation with a pastor or spiritual mentor are much more likely to engage in spiritual conversations with people who are not yet Christians.
6. Churches with ministries to the needs of unchurched pre-Christians thereby build more bridges to the people, have a greater credibility with them, find them to be much more receptive, and experience many more “natural” opportunities for faith sharing. (Church 33)

Barna echoes this reasoning that it takes more than a program to reach unchurched people. “Ministry to unchurched people is about developing a culture within the church, not a program. Evangelism is not an activity, but a lifestyle in these churches. [To be effective] it must change the hearts of its own people so they become passionate about reaching folks who have no connection with Christ” (Re-churching 116). This was the passion Jesus showed in his life in reaching those who were outcast, poor, and disenfranchised from organized religion of his day. Jesus taught us the heart of his mission “to seek and save the lost” through parables such as the “lost coin,” the “lost sheep,” and the “prodigal son.” Peter and Paul carried on this passion in Acts by reaching the uncircumcised Gentiles.

Relational Evangelism: An Effective Method for Reaching the Unchurched in Our Culture

Relational evangelism has been found to be one of the most effective methods for reaching non-Christians for Jesus in our culture. In one study over fourteen thousand lay people were asked this question, “What or who was most responsible for your coming to Christ and the church?” In church after church surveyed, 75 to 90 percent of people would say a friend or relative was most responsible for them becoming a disciple of Jesus. The second place answer was “a pastor was most responsible” at 5 to 6 percent. Evangelistic crusade was at 1/2 of 1 percent (Arn and Arn 43). In a poll conducted by

Barna of unchurched adults, the most preferred form of marketing by a church would be an invitation by a friend or neighbor. Sixty-three percent said the invitation would have some impact on the likelihood of them attending (Re-churching 107).

Several explanations are discussed why relational evangelism is the overwhelming way most people in our culture become disciples. One reason relational evangelism is an effective method for the communication of the gospel happens to be the person sharing his/her faith already has an existing relationship with the non-churched person or establishes a relationship with an unchurched person before spiritual subjects are broached. Hunter states that if you want to be heard, you must begin where the listener is, not where the evangelist thinks or wants them to be (How 11-12). Friendship is the great beginning advantage Christians have who seek to share their faith effectively, compared to those who seek to evangelize strangers. A trust relationship already exists or they would not be friends. The communication of ideas, the understanding of a person's worldview, the knowledge of a person's needs, their hopes and pain are all available to a friend. These insights to a person's psyche may not be apparent to a stranger who seeks to evangelize that person. Motivated by the love for their friend, relational evangelists can use their knowledge of the person's life as a bridge to spiritual truth. Another reason relational evangelism works is the fact that bringing a person to the point of committing his/her life to Jesus' lordship takes time. Hunter states this generally held truth, known by most experts in evangelism. Making new Christians necessarily involves a process, "which takes place in stages, over time" (Church 154). He goes on to say that most traditional churches assume (wrongly) that "instant" evangelism is the norm for how people become Christians (Church 154). Multiple presentations of the gospel are the

normal process that must take place before people commit themselves to Christ.

Research has indicated a person must hear the gospel presented an average of 5.8 times before they will respond (Arn and Arn 118). The more secular a person's background, the higher this ratio becomes. A friend who has continual contact with the unchurched person, is the one following through with this individual. He/she must not only share his/her faith one-on-one on multiple occasions, but often he/she must bring the friend to church several times before commitment is made. A friend is the ideal person to see this process to completion, since he/she is in a continuing relationship. Barna, in his book Re-churching the Unchurched, states,

“One perspective became very clear through our two-year study of the unchurched: their likelihood of returning to and remaining at a church largely depends upon the nature of the people who go there. [What matters most] is the friendly and caring nature of the people. About two-thirds of the unchurched told us that when they recalled the things they liked about the churches they had visited in the past, what they remember most vividly were the people” (79-80).

I have seen a world of difference in my own experience between having gone to a new church as a stranger and having gone to a new church with a friend. The third reason relational evangelism is effective in making disciples is, when done by a person connected to a local church, the new believer finds connecting to the body of Christ easier to accomplish. They can then continue to mature spiritually rooted in good soil, rather than ending as withered seedlings without root (e.g., Jesus' parable of the sower, Luke 8:5-15).

Thomas Oden states that lay persons as well as clergy have the duty of witnessing to the gospel. He states that every Christian believer has not only the capability but also the right to declare openly the meaning of the Christian faith (12). Most church growth

experts and most fast growing evangelical churches believe the most effective method in our culture today is relational evangelism. This approach means that laity witness to their friends, relatives, coworkers, etc., about their faith in Christ. An essential part of this process is the invitation by the member to the person to attend their church.

Jesus in his Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28, says, “Go and make disciples.” In New Testament times becoming a disciple of a rabbi meant following the way of life, memorizing the teaching, and absorbing the wisdom of a great man, just as the apostle Paul followed Gamaliel before following Jesus. The link between relational evangelism and the Great Commission is interesting. What better way to introduce people to a living relationship with Jesus then through a relationship with a friend! This relationship serves as the bridge to faith in Jesus Christ. The love and trust a non-Christian establishes with his/her Christian friend models the relationship they will have with Jesus.

I agree with Johnson when he says the essence of the meaning of Christian discipleship is attachment to the person of Jesus. I disagree with him when he says that this relationship is not based on Jesus’ ideas or his teachings (35). Who we understand the person of Jesus is to us, is in a large measure, based on what Jesus taught and what he said for us to do. To divorce the person of Jesus from his teaching is to open the door for heresy and will result in warped practices of discipleship. A person need not practice, nor believe, nor understand all that Jesus has taught, but those teachings cannot be separated from Jesus. Those teachings are the basis of Jesus’ lordship of a new Christian’s life.

The biblical support for a relational evangelistic approach is overwhelming. Of the forty people who suffered from some disease that Jesus cures in the New Testament,

thirty four were either brought to Jesus by a friend, or Jesus was taken to them by a friend or relative (Tan 1614). Only three references refer to those who are “evangelist” (with the special gift of evangelism), while the Scripture contains over 120 references to and exhortations for all the members to preach the gospel and make disciples (Arn and Arn 24). Over and over in the gospels and Acts the Scripture records whole families/households (*oikos*) coming to faith rather than just individuals (Mark 5:19, 2:14-15; Luke 19:9; John 1:41 and 45, 4:53; Acts 10:24 and 44, 16:15, 16 and 30-34) (Arn and Arn 39-40). The early church, during the time of the Roman persecution, was driven from the synagogues and market places to meeting secretly in homes. If the church had relied on market place evangelistic preaching to reach the pagan alone, the Christian church would have soon died out. Christian witness would have been easily spotted and imprisoned, therefore, some form of one-to-one relational evangelism must have been taking place for the church to continue growing for the 350 years until Constantine declared Christianity to be the state religion of the Roman Empire.

Jesus practiced relational evangelism. In most of his encounters with receptive people he found their need and met it. He did this by dialogue, such as his encounter with Nicodemus. He often had extended conversations with people as he answered their questions and they answered his questions. An example of this was his afternoon encounter with the woman at the well. Jesus was not afraid to enter into different types of dialogue, such as his confrontation with the Pharisees or his compassionate dialogue with the widow who lost her only son. Jesus had the ability to see into a person’s heart and to know at what point of his/her life a savior was needed. To Jesus every person was unique. Everyone needs a different approach to touch the deep part of our soul, because

we are unique individuals with our own stories. Next to God, who is better to understand our stories, with our joy and pain, than someone who is a friend or a relative? Friendship is the great “beginning” advantage of Christians who seek to share their faith effectively, compared to those who evangelize strangers.

Evangelism comes from the Greek word for gospel. It can be translated as “proclaiming the good news” or bearing the good news.” One of the chief stumbling blocks today in the effective telling of the good news to our society is the common belief in most church congregations that evangelism is the responsibility of the pastor or staff. Add to this problem that many people find sharing their faith in Jesus embarrassing. Johnson sights the contrasting biblical example in Acts. On the day of Pentecost, all the 120 in the upper room, men as well as women, went out into the streets to tell the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. Ordinary laymen planted at least six house churches in Rome before Paul arrived. They were not apostles but ordinary Christians.

The effectiveness of an evangelistic appeal often relates to the person’s approach. In one study, which dealt with the method used by the person presenting the gospel, a surprising result was reported. In this study 720 people were asked to classify the person who presented the gospel to them into three categories “friend,” “salesman,” and “teacher.” For those who saw the church member as a “friend,” 94 percent were now active in their churches (they were disciples). Of those who saw their presenter as a “salesman,” 71 percent had dropped out of church. For those who viewed the church member as a “teacher,” 84 percent responded negatively to the gospel presentation (Arn and Arn 104-105). My conclusion from these studies is an evangelistic method based on friends sharing the gospel with friends is far more successful in making disciples than

cold calls, confrontational evangelism, or revivals.

Hunter cites a survey taken at the Community Church of Joy (a fast growing church in Arizona) that revealed 81 percent of the members had invited at least one person to church during the past year. Eighteen percent had invited seven or more persons (Church 33-34). The sad truth is the majority of unchurched are not being invited by anyone. Barna states that 73 percent of the unchurched are not invited during the course of a year (111). Part of the reason for the lack of evangelism is the fear of rejection. Barna says that of the unchurched polled who were invited to church, nine out of ten refused to go (112). Of course this group does not include the formerly unchurched who were invited and now attend. Jesus tells his disciples to expect rejection. In Luke Chapter 10 Jesus sends out the seventy-two to evangelize the surrounding towns. He sends them as lambs into the midst of wolves. For those towns that reject their message, he tells them to wipe off the dust of their feet in protest against them. The Apostle Paul suffered tremendous persecution at the hands of the Jews who rejected his message of Jesus. He lost his life at the hands of Roman Gentiles who rejected his message. The rejection we would face today over an invitation offered to a friend to attend a church function would at most be an angry “No.” Yet that fear of rejection stops us from fulfilling Jesus’ Great Commission.

In order to mobilize laypersons in my church to practice relational evangelism, I must teach them a model that will be effective. One of the aspects of effective evangelism comes from the evangelist’s living relationship to God’s Holy Spirit. Schaller’s research into large fast growing mega-churches, given in his book The Seven-Day a Week Church, has turned up what he calls “the real point of homogeneity” of these

diverse churches. It sheds some light on the motivation behind their relational evangelism program. Schaller also says the following scenario is the number one reason for the explosive growth of these Christian churches:

1. The people worshiping in these churches discover that their lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel.
2. That happens because the leaders (both paid and volunteer) have experienced the transformational power of the gospel in their own lives; therefore, they are convinced that they must share that experience with others.
3. Most of the members cannot help inviting others to come and experience the transformational power of the Good News about Jesus Christ.
4. As a result, these churches operate on the assumption that more people will come if invited by those whose lives have been transformed by the gospel. Thus a self-perpetuating cycle is created that generates a steady flow of visitors (Seven 14).

As Schaller makes clear, a living relationship with God, which has transformed their lives, serves as the motivating force behind their congregation's witness. The worse witness is when the person is motivated from a sense of guilt or burdensome duty. I believe this living witness to the transformational power of God is one of the main reasons for the explosive growth of the early church. The church that emphasizes this transforming relationship between Jesus and a believer and expects it to happen through the ministry of the whole church is the kind of church that experiences growth. Christian faith will be experientially verified in their own lives. A transformed life is visible to friends and relatives who know you.

Green in his book, Evangelism in the Early Church, talks about the Apostle Paul's motivation for his proclamation of the gospel. "The dynamic for his preaching, the authorization for it, the conviction about it, came not from any mere knowledge of the event, not from any recitation of the Jerusalem credo, but from an encounter with the

risen Christ himself” (64). I pray this was my motivation and became the motivation of the new members whose lives have been touched by the risen Christ.

When I attended seminary, I participated in an evangelism training course offered by my local church. We were taught to ask a series of questions with yes/no, right/wrong answers. The approach is similar to what a Jehovah’s Witnesses or what a Mormon might use. These approaches do work, as seen in the growth of these two denominations. I agree with Rob Frost, National Evangelist for the Methodist church in Great Britain.

This “approach is not true evangelism, nor is it the kind of human relationship Jesus modeled. ‘Evangelism by rote’ can cause more harm than good if we treat people this way. It can bring dishonor to the people of God and be a disservice to the work of the gospel. The most effective form of evangelism is friendship evangelism” (45).

Campus Crusade uses the popular Four Spiritual Laws in their witnessing (Campus Crusade). This approach is a logical, linear, four-part argument whose conclusion hopefully brings a nonbeliever to faith in Jesus (Johnson 54). Other denominations and para-church organizations have similar plans. Imagine with me an encounter with a non-believing person with no Christian background. Below is a possible one-way presentation using the four spiritual laws by the evangelist to a stranger. The resulting internal dialogue could be an example of what is going on in the nonbeliever’s mind. The evangelist, of course, has no way of knowing what is going on in his/her mind, since no established relationship exists between them.

Evangelist: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

Nonbeliever: (“Yeah right. Is that why my stepfather sexually and physically abused me?”) .

Evangelist: “Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore we cannot know

and experience God's love and plan for our life."

Nonbeliever: ("Me a sinner? What about all the rotten deals I've had. I've never been given a break in my life.")

Evangelist: "Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through him you

can know and experience God's love and plan for your life."

Nonbeliever: ("Jesus? You mean that baby you see at Christmas?")

Evangelist: "We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives."

Nonbeliever: ("Savior? Lord? What is he talking about?")

In this humorous short dialogue (monologue?), we witness two disconnected people. They do not hear each other because they are not communicating. The evangelist has no clue that this person is in internal pain from his upbringing. This person does not see himself/herself as a sinner, rather a victim. A nonbeliever probably does not know who Jesus is. They are unfamiliar with Christian words like Lord and Savior. To many people this type of presentation seems a lot like a memorized sales pitch, which turns them off. Only when we are in relationship with another person can we know his/her pain, understand his/her outlook on life, and communicate with language he/she will understand as we try to tell the good news.

Evangelism may be divided into two types according to Dr. Robert Tuttle (personal interview). The first type is propositional, like the Four Spiritual Laws method above, and the second type is relational evangelism where a Christian seeks to establish a relationship with a person so that their need surfaces in the context of the relationship so

the gospel can be applied to the felt need. Propositional evangelism may be used with a stranger or with a person in an already existing relationship. Propositional evangelism either seeks to create a need or assumes a person's need. For example, in the Four Spiritual Laws method (Campus Crusade), the assumed or created need is: their sinfulness, their separation from God, and a lack of plan for their life. In relational evangelism the person's need is discovered by dialog with the person. Whatever the need (loneliness, grief, addictions, etc.), it is discovered in the midst of the relationship. The need surfaces within the relationship if we trust each other. This need is then used as a bridge to tell how Jesus can meet his/her need (Jesus becomes their Savior). The drawback to relational evangelism is that a person must be intentional in connecting their friend to Jesus. Many Christians have relationships with family and coworkers where needs are known, but little evangelism is done.

Propositional evangelism (a conversation that confronts a nonbeliever with the truth) can work in some situations. This is a method Jesus used on the Pharisees and Scribes in his long discourse when he pronounced the "Woe unto you" in Matthew 23:13-36. The basic principle I would draw from Jesus is that whenever someone is incapable of hearing the truth in dialog, confrontation may be the only available method.

The propositional approach to evangelism has value. Some people in our secular culture have no friends who are Christians. Some people respond to this approach. Practicing this method is better than no evangelism being practiced in your church. The problems with the propositional approach are that it is nowhere near as effective as relational evangelism, and involves a higher risk of being rejected (the idea of rejection makes it harder to recruit evangelists). In the encounters where a stranger says "Yes!" to

the good news, many of these new Christians are left alone and never are connected to a body of believers. Dale Galloway, former senior pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland Oregon, told the story of his church's involvement in the Billy Graham Crusade in Portland, Oregon. On the response card over six hundred people checked New Hope Community Church as "their" church after Billy Graham preached his message of salvation (propositional approach) and gave the invitation. Even when the follow-up suggested by Graham organization was followed, only four of the six hundred became active members of New Hope Community Church.

Hunter states the truth that is known by most people who study evangelism. Making new Christians necessarily involves a process, "which takes place in stages, over time" (Church 154). He goes on to say that most traditional churches assume that "instant" evangelism is the norm (Church 154) for how people become Christians. If the process of becoming a Christian does take time, the best way to help a person through this process is to have a friend by his/her side. In fact, common church growth wisdom says that if a visitor does not make a friend in the church that can call them by name within the first two months, the visitor will not return. I have personally seen this happen to new members of a large downtown church I served as an associate after graduating from seminary. Most people were joining as transfers (not as new Christians); within a few months they would stop coming. Knowing how important the "friendship" principle was in bonding to a church, I instituted a three-week new member class that enabled the new members to get acquainted with each other. This helped shut the back door of our church. Many of these new members continued to come to worship long after joining. If Christians who transfer to another church need to be connected to new friends in order to

continue their connection to the body of Christ, how much more will non-Christians need friends to connect them first to Jesus, then to his church?

Propositional evangelism works on the basis of percentages. The Jehovah Witness method of knocking on doors is not a tremendously effective method. But eventually someone, possibly a very lonely or hurting person will be open to their method. I believe that God will use a propositional approach if it is the only way God has to reach someone who is ready to receive him. As Johnson states, all evangelism has some confrontation in its approach. People must turn from a life of sin and repent. They must change wrong ideas about Jesus and God. They must choose God over selfishness. I have experienced this in my own life: I can accept correction from someone I love. They want the best for me. I do not know a stranger's motives. Relational evangelism can be confrontational; when it is, it is best expressed in love.

Focusing on New Members Is an Effective Strategy for Reaching Unchurched People

As stated in Chapter 1, several years ago I encountered an unexpected discovery. During my time at Fruitland Park, I decided to teach my church how to share their faith to the unchurched. I used the book Faith Sharing by Fox and Morris as my resource. I chose to use my Wednesday night Bible study time as the place where I taught this class. After teaching the class for several weeks, I realized these saints of my church had no unchurched friends in their circle of influence. I discovered by the time they were in the inner circle of the church almost all their friends were in the church. The effect of this class on the saints was the motivation to make friends with unchurched people. Because of this insight I realized this group of Christians was the wrong crowd to teach. They

would have to start from the basement level and work their way up, making new friends with worldly people if they hoped to reach unchurched friends. The wonderful difference between teaching the saints to share their faith during a Wednesday night Bible study and new members witnessing to their unchurched friends is that the relationship between the unchurched person and the new member already exists. Because an authentic relationship is in place there is no need to establish new ones because of a training package. When pastors train a new Christian to share his/her faith you are training someone who has on the average twelve unchurched friends (Arn and Arn 52). This number of unchurched friends decreases the longer they remain in the church. This number is higher when the person is from a secular background; therefore, the first reason I have chosen to teach evangelism to new members is that new members have more unchurched friends with which they can share their faith than longtime members.

Interestingly, most successful pastors who effectively reach unchurched people have chosen the opposite approach to the time line of when they train their members to share their faith. Mike Breaux, senior pastor of Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, has a heart to reach unchurched people. Mike, like so many other pastors, has patterned his discipleship program after Rick Warren's baseball diamond approach (130). The last stage, home base, or 401 is sharing Christ. I assume the rationale behind putting evangelism last is the belief that a believer will be grounded theologically before they witness. The problem with this model is it takes a while to reach all four bases (classes). By the time they are at home base and trained to share their faith, they may have lost their unchurched friends. They probably now speak "Christianeze" when they talk about their faith. Taken to the extreme, they may be teaching the Wednesday night saints in their

401 class.

When I heard Jeff Spiller, senior pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Mobile, Alabama, talk to us in one of our Beeson lectures (1996), I realized a far better model exists. Spiller got my attention by stating to the class that on an average Sunday he has sixty first-time visitors. He has about 1600 in attendance. At Community UMC I averaged about eight first-time visitors with 500 in attendance. His visitor to attendee ratio was 3.75 percent; my ratio was 1.78 percent. Jeff had twice as large a ratio of first-time visitors as I did! I soon was able to understand the reason why. Of the six-session New Member Class he taught, two of those sessions were devoted to teaching these new members relational evangelism. One of the great advantages to growing a church over time is that almost all the current attendees will be people who have joined since you came. Of the 450 in attendance when I left Community UMC, about seventy-five were present when I first arrived. I realized then, if I stayed at Aloma UMC and the growth was similar to Community UMC, over time nearly all the attendees would have received evangelism training through my new member class.

I have selected new members for training, rather than longtime members, for five reasons. First, and most significant as related above, new members have more unchurched friends than do longtime members. When you train new members (who are not transfers from another church) to share their faith, you are training someone who has on the average twelve unchurched friends (Arn and Arn 52). One of the new (at least for United Methodists) paradigms sweeping Christianity is the switch to high commitment for church membership. When I began at Community UMC, Fruitland Park, I required all new members to attend a three-session Inquiry Class. Oden states that Jesus did not

call people without detailed follow-up. Jesus taught and embodied the message he communicated to his disciples (60). A healthy church must train all new members in the doctrines of our faith, to disciple them, and to provide training and opportunity for them to be used by God as a witness, in word and deed, to a broken world. I believe that the lifelong practice of sharing your faith with nonbelievers is part of being a faithful disciple. With longtime church members, you must convince them of their responsibility for personal evangelism since this is not a common practice of most Christians in mainline churches in America. Polite people do not discuss religion, politics, or their bank account.

Second, as stated above, the reason for focusing on new members is that over time nearly all the attendees will have received evangelism training through a new member class, if the church grows at a sustained pace. To convince long time members to attend a class, if the church grows at a sustained pace. To convince longtime members to attend a faith-sharing seminar is difficult. Some longtime members will be on board with my vision. In a growing church, a pastor can make an end run around these people who will not follow your spiritual leadership. Non-churched people do not casually join a church. Hopefully, they have become aware of the presence of God in their lives. They have either accepted Jesus as their savior before they enter the new member class or they are ready to receive Jesus as Lord. This acceptance of Jesus as Lord in the new member class was not unusual at my previous church at Community UMC. Both Dr. Robert Tuttle and Dr. Dale Galloway have told me in conversation that this was a common occurrence in their new member classes. As these new members begin to experience and accept the grace of our Lord, noticeable changes will begin to take place in their lives. Their friends

and relatives will begin to ask, “What is happening to you?” The new member class will be designed to help these Christians to make sense of transformation that is happening in their lives. The class will also be structured to help them to be able to share their faith. Peter connects these two emphases in the third chapter fifteenth verse of his letter, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord [the transforming power]. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have [sharing your faith in the context of a conversation]. But do this with gentleness and respect [in a nonconfrontational way as a friend to a friend].” This training in relational evangelism will help them be prepared to share their faith when the opportunity arises.

The third reason for focusing on new members (in this context the unchurched who are not transfers) is that new members often do not have many preconceived ideas of what Christians are suppose to do. If you tell them Christians are suppose to share their faith with their unchurched friends, they will believe him/her! As the leader of the church, I set the agenda for our members’ responsibility to witness to the good news of Jesus. Green and McGrath in describing the effective evangelism program of pastor Michael Wooderson quote him, “[We sent] ...the new converts out visiting at an early stage before they realized church people generally did not do that kind of thing” (209).

The fourth reason for using new members as evangelists is that most of them (the non-transfers) are still in touch with the excitement of their new faith in Jesus. They have experienced forgiveness, they have experienced the love and acceptance of God, and the Holy Spirit is transforming their lives. This excitement is often contagious. This enthusiasm also works as an important motivator to practice relational evangelism on their lost friends.

The fifth reason for using new members to witness is new members still have one foot left in the secular world. They can communicate in the language and culture of their friends. They watch the same movies, television programs, and speak the same language as their unchurched friends. They can communicate with their secular friends far easier than “churched” Christians. Often our religious language, our lack of understanding of a person’s culture, and ignorance of what interests them (such as new trends in music) become a barrier to friendship. None of these problems yet exist for the new Christian.

The major drawback to using new Christians to witness is their lack of theological knowledge. They will not understand how to answer many of the questions of their friends. They may make one aspect of theology that is meaningful to them far more important in their witness than is needed. They may even misunderstand the message and proclaim a belief that to those theologically trained may seem like heresy (such as seeing Jesus as totally divine). I am willing to take these risks to save some. We do not need to know all the answers (I still do not!) to proclaim the good news of Jesus. If we needed to know all the answers, Jesus would have chosen more intelligent and learned people as his first disciples. The new members do, however, need to have some training in what is the core of the gospel, in how to look for felt needs to use as a bridge, in how to rely on the Holy Spirit as the real evangelist of our soul, on follow-up, on inviting their friends to church and small groups, etc. I will explain more of this in the next section.

Teaching Relational Evangelism

Alexander Bruce, in his book The Training of the Twelve, gives the sequence of events that lead up to Jesus sending the twelve “as active agents in advancing the kingdom of God” (99). The sequence was: first being in Jesus’ company as part of the

crowd, witnessing his miraculous works, hearing his doctrine about the kingdom, and learning how to pray and to live. Once this happened they were sent out to evangelize the towns and villages and to heal the sick (99). This happened relatively early in Jesus' ministry—Matthew 6 and 10, Mark 6:7-13, 30-32, and Luke 9:1-11. The training/sending did not end with the twelve. Jesus sent out the seventy-two in Luke 10:1-24 and the 120 in Acts chapter one.

During my new member class, I took two of the six one-hour sessions to teach the basic fundamentals of relational evangelism. The first part of this teaching was to break down their stereotypes of evangelism/evangelists. I was first introduced to this exercise in Dr. George Hunter's church growth class. The teacher first asks the class to give words that describe how worldly people see a "stereotypical evangelist." The normal list generated always fits the profile of a pushy used car salesman. You then ask the class to give words that best describe the person most responsible for them becoming a disciple of Jesus saying, "If that person never entered your life, you may never have become a Christian." The normal list generated usually describes an honest, loving person of integrity. Through the impact of these contrasting lists, the stereotypes begin to break down about evangelism. I emphasized that these influential people they have described are actually the real evangelist for Christ. Regular normal people are the Christians God uses to be evangelists.

The next sequence in the class was to lay the imperative for Christians to share their faith. The basic flow of the imperative would be: to tell Jesus' heart for the lost, his mission to reach the lost, his Great Commission to his disciples, the growth of the church by one person sharing his/her faith in Christ to another, generation to generation, down

through the centuries to them today. I explained that at least one unchurched person in their circle of friends needs Jesus. They may be the only person Jesus has to reach them. Hopefully, this motivated them enough to learn and to practice the best way to share their faith.

The next step in the class sequence was to understand the beliefs that are essential for salvation. Green said the proclamation of the early church centered on Jesus.

“Sometimes the message was Jesus the messiah, through him the ancient prophecies were fulfilled, peace was available through Jesus, the Lordship of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, or simply Jesus. Nothing more was needed” (*Evangelism in* 60).

Tuttle, in his book *Someone Out There Needs Me*, goes into detail making the argument for a corpus of belief (21-38). The core in its simplest form is “Jesus is Lord.” Fleshing out the meaning behind this simple statement, I paraphrase Tuttle’s three-step answer:

The nature of God: The creator of all things is one God who is personal. In communicating this, we should stress the aspects of God who cares *for* and is involved *with* his creation.

The nature of human kind: At some point we must acknowledge the seriousness of our problem. We are out of harmony with our personal Creator. We are separated and can be reconciled only by God himself.

The uniqueness of the person and reconciling work of Jesus Christ: Both the person and the work of Jesus Christ are unique. Only through Jesus can we be reunited with God. God manifest in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself (38). I would add to this that our belief in Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection, are the realities that God uses for our reconciliation.

I told the class that this core should be understood and memorized.

The next part of the sequence in training was to relate the importance of prayer in witnessing. Conversion is not just a logical exercise, nor just an emotional experience, it is a spiritual experience. When someone comes to faith, God's Holy Spirit is at work. God was at work in his/her life before they were approached about Jesus. God will use a person's words as they are speaking as a vehicle for the Holy Spirit, and God will be at work long after the encounter. The way a person gets God's help in witnessing is to ASK GOD for help. God is waiting for us to admit our total dependency on God.

The next important part of relational evangelism is to recognize our sphere of influence. Tuttle says to ask these questions to discover the answer to our circle of influence:

What kind of people move toward me? Who responds to my "call." Who feels comfortable around me? With whom do I feel comfortable sharing my feelings? With whom do I feel comfortable sharing my failures as well as my successes? Is there any one with whom I can cry? Who feels free to cry with me? (Someone 61-62).

Tuttle says two determining factors are important for using this sphere of influence as a way to witness—proximity and commonality (64-65). The class was asked to write down three of their unchurched friends or relatives who fit these criteria and to begin to pray for them.

Green and McGrath, Johnson, Tuttle, and Hunter all say active listening is one of the most important parts of relational evangelism. Active listening helps us move to the next step in relational evangelism: recognizing a felt need in the person's life. Tuttle gives a short list of some of those needs: searching for meaning and reality, hurting out of some disappointing relationship, emotionally broken, lonely, separated, hypocritical,

masked, pretending, sinful, in bondage to fear, despairing, helpless, needing a touch from God, unable to believe in a good God.” He goes on to say, “Our task, therefore, is frequently to establish a relationship out of which needs can surface, and then seek to apply the gospel truth to meet those needs” (Someone 77-78). The great need we all have and that makes possible a person being able to open their heart to you is the need to be loved (85). Real love means that if it is in your power to meet their need (if naked clothe them, if hungry feed them, if in prison visit them) then you fulfill that need. Tuttle says that as felt needs surface we can apply the gospel naturally. Most people are unaware that “their deepest needs are ultimately spiritual” (86).

In a personal conversation with a young man with the gift of evangelization (through his influence three gang members became Christians during the Celebrate Jesus mission week in Deland, Florida), I was confronted with two profound truths about the importance of listening. He said, “When I approach a non-Christian, I enter a conversation with no agenda. I simply try to listen, to understand where this person is coming from.” He later told me, “I listen to find out if they know they are lost. If they know they are lost (they know they have made a total mess of their life and the solution to their problems are out of their control), then the spiritual part of the conversation can proceed. If they do not know they are lost, there is almost no chance of conversion.” As this gifted evangelist has experienced firsthand, listening to discover a person’s great need is of primary importance to evangelism.

Fox and Morris say that one way to bridge from felt needs to spiritual things is to give a witness from our own autobiography, born of personal experience (Faith-sharing 161). I asked the Inquiry Class participants to tell their friends their own story of faith.

That story may be where God has been made real to them, such as answered prayer or where they first came to faith. Part of the Inquiry Class was interactive, where members were asked to role-play to share their faith story in two minutes or less. Every person had a chance to participate.

Tuttle says that our gospel presentation should not be in the form of argument. He says that he is yet to win anyone to Jesus Christ from an argument (90). In the gospel of John 1:44-51, we read about Philip's attempt to share his witness to Nathanael that Jesus is the messiah. Nathanael responds with an argument, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Philip does not respond back with an argument. Instead he simply says, "Come and see." We are not trying to win arguments with people, rather we are trying to help people come into relationship with Jesus. Come and see for yourself! Come and meet Jesus! Another way to sidestep an argument is to say, "That's a good point. I don't know the answer to that question. I will get back to you, (or) I could get our pastor (teacher) to talk with you about that if you are serious about exploring that issue."

Tuttle gives two more points that I added to my training class. The first was do not try to convert everyone. I told them to focus on a few unchurched people. Invest your time with them (Someone 105). Second, the gospel takes time to penetrate into people's minds and souls. If people do not immediately respond, you have not failed. A person may need the gospel presented twenty-five times before they "get it." You may have been number twenty-four (131).

I ended the training with a statement of our goal. "We are not ultimately concerned with conversions. We are to make disciples. Therefore, invite your friends to

church. Bring them to worship, Sunday school, small group, or to help you in a ministry project. Get them involved. Some people must belong before they can believe.” By bringing them to various church functions, they are listening to multiple exposures to the gospel.

One by One—a Practical Way to Implement Relational Evangelism

While visiting innovative churches during the Beeson doctoral program, I witnessed a remarkable application of relational evangelism at Grace Church in Houston. They call the name of this evangelism program “Won by One.” Once a quarter everyone gets a bookmark-sized prayer card with five spaces where they are to fill in the names of five of their unchurched friends. This prayer card was to be kept in their Bible or where they pray. Every day they are to pray for these friends. At the end of a month, the church will have a special event where the gospel will be presented in a form that will be easy for a secular person to understand.

Because this model of evangelism fit my concept of a practical and effective way to do relational evangelism, I borrowed it. I changed the name to something more theologically comfortable with me, “One by One.” My prayer focus was slightly different; I asked them to pray for two things. First, I asked them to pray that God opens a door for them to share their own story of what Jesus has meant to them. Second, I asked them to pray that when they ask their friend to church, this friend will respond positively. I added another component, which was the invitation (inserted in the bulletin one week before the event) to the worship service or musical drama (our One by One event). During the next week, all our members were asked to give their invitation to someone for whom they have been praying. I used invitations successfully at Community

UMC to help members invite their friends to a seeker friendly event such as a Christmas program or Easter drama. It was a non-threatening and effective way to invite people to church. “One by One” serves as an easily understandable way our new members can put into practice their evangelism training.

Other than using the new member class to teach sharing your faith, the best teaching forum for reaching your newest members is the sermon. In starting to teach and motivate new members to do evangelism, an important question must be answered: is the worship service the proper place to teach and motivate people to share their faith? Oden, in his chapter on equipping the laity for general ministry, quotes Paul in Ephesians 4:11-12. He uses the logic of Paul where the pastor’s gifts are given for the “perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.” Oden then restates this passage, “The purpose of the whole complex of ministry: the building up or edifying of the body of Christ ... to prepare it inwardly and outwardly, to get it ready for its task, and to provide logistical support” (156). The sermon is normally used by pastors for this “building up” of the body.

Benedict and Miller, in their book Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century: Worship or Evangelism? give the early Church’s distinction between precatechesis and catechesis. Precatechesis is engaging secular people with the word of God. This can be done in a seeker service much like Bill Hybels has pioneered at Willow Creek Church in Palatine, Illinois. This type of service is not worship of God but rather presentation of the gospel. In the model instituted at Aloma UMC, precatechesis takes place when a member would share his/her faith with a friend outside of the church. This also took place in our worship service when I preached an occasional evangelistic sermon or had a One by One event, such as a Christmas Cantata. The Catechesis aims at public formation and conversion

into the reality of the gospel. Benedict and Miller say, “Formation and conversion are ongoing and public in Christian worship” (43). Part of the formation of a person’s spiritual maturity is the responsibility to be a witness for Jesus to the world.

During the One by One month-long emphasis, I often preached on relational evangelism and the importance of prayer in leading someone to Christ. This enabled me to restate the vision of our church (witnessing one by one in word and deed to make disciples for Jesus Christ) using the sermon as the vehicle for teaching and motivation.

Part of the value of the leadership courses I have taken in my doctoral studies to help me to understand that instituting a vision or a program will not, in and of itself, change a church. To change the direction of a church into one that helps its members reach the unchurched, multiple strategies must be used to achieve this end. Teaching relational evangelism was the first step in this process. Within a four-month time frame after new members join, our church has the One by One event. Preceding this event, I preach at least twice on topics where I can emphasize the importance of witnessing and praying for those who need a relationship with Jesus. The Sunday morning one week before the event, printed invitations are placed in the bulletins for everyone to give to their unchurched friends.

I am hoping this integrated approach will have synergistic results, where the parts of this model, when put together, have a greater effect than if the parts were used alone. I continued the new member training and the One by One quarterly event for the entire time I was senior pastor at Aloma UMC. I hoped this would lead our members to practice a lifestyle of witnessing and inviting people to church. If this happened, my vision for Aloma UMC would be fulfilled.

Robinson, in his book about Willow Creek, explains the secret of their growth. He states what all pastors eventually discover if they seek sustained growth for their church. Excellence in your worship service is not enough to generate a flow of new people to your church. Also, convincing a congregation about the importance of evangelism and mission alone will not result in a church's members witnessing to their friends. To solve this problem, Willow Creek has instituted a covenant with its new members to address this problem. "If the church members will invite their friends [they promise no embarrassment] ... the church will train them to do just that [share their faith]" (106-107). Amazingly, only 1/4 of 1 percent of their budget is set aside for advertising and promotion (107). Sunday after Sunday their large crowd of unchurched visitors comes from the invitation of their members due to the commitment and training of their members.

Since most non-Christians in our culture today must be exposed to the gospel on numerous occasions over time, part of the process of evangelization is for our congregation to invite their unchurched friends to worship services over several weeks or months.

One of the major hindrances to a member of your church inviting a friend to a worship service is the belief that the unchurched friend might be uncomfortable, confused, and possibly embarrassed. Bill Hybels, when setting out to plant their new church, took a survey in the northwestern suburbs of Chicago. They asked this question, "Why do you not attend church?" Here are the answers in order of frequency:

1. The church is always asking for money.
2. I am unable to relate to the music.
3. The message is irrelevant to my life.

4. The church does not meet my needs.
5. The services are predictable and boring.
6. The church makes me feel guilty. (Robinson 57)

They also asked the question, “If these factors were eliminated, would you consider going to church?” Many said yes to this question (57). I believe church members have an instinctive knowledge of how uncomfortable their unchurched friends will be in a traditional church and, therefore, are reluctant to invite them to church.

One of my tasks as senior pastor was to help make our worship as visitor-friendly as possible. I am not talking about compromising the faith but rather working to remove any cultural barriers and traditional customs (known to the members but alien to the visitor) that would keep an unchurched person from hearing the gospel. Aloma UMC has two traditional worship services on Sunday morning with a contemporary service in between. I have tried to make the two traditional worship services into what Wright calls “a believer oriented worship made visitor friendly” (57). Unfamiliar Christian terminology was changed to self-explanatory wording in the bulletin. Greeters are on the lookout for new visitors. The contemporary service will be somewhere between what Wright terms a “visitor-oriented worship and believer oriented worship made visitor friendly” (57). The target audience will be unchurched people. The service was not pure presentation. I still needed to meet the spiritual needs of the current believers. I believe that God, using culturally appropriate worship as the instrument for his spirit and using the friendship between a believer and a seeker to help them overcome their fear, will help the process of the non-Christian becoming a believer. Much of Christianity is better caught than taught. As Paul states, “But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he

is a sinner and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’” (1 Cor. 14:24-25)

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Chapter 3 will give the design and methodology of the study. This will include the research and operational questions that will be answered, the population to be measured, the instrument used to collect the data, and the how and when this data will be collected and analyzed.

Problem Addressed in the Study

I believe that a Christian's witness to the world in word and deed to be central to how we are to function as the body of Christ. Jesus sent out the twelve, then sent the seventy-two, and finally sent the 120 to be his witnesses to the world. This chain of witness has extended to us over two thousand years. If this witness would stop, the church would cease to exist. Yet in most main-line churches, this witness is a whisper to a deaf world. Main-line churches no longer seem to impact our secular society. We are church people talking to church people. This lack of being able to communicate the good news to the unchurched is, in my opinion, the main reason our church memberships are declining and the average age is becoming older in the United Methodist Church. Our mission is no longer about seeking and saving the lost; therefore, to be true to Jesus' mission, our local church's outreach must be refocused and re-energized.

Purpose of the Study

Jesus first modeled and then stated to his disciples the mission the church is to fulfill, "go and make disciples of all people" (Matthew 28:19). In Acts 1:8 where Jesus restated the church's mission to the 120 disciples he said, "You shall be my witnesses to Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." If this is our mission

and if our first responsibility is the town in which our church is located (Jerusalem is the town where the 120 were located), then our primary mission as a church is the neighborhood, work place, school—the places where our members live, work, and play. The already existing relational networks between the members of our church and the secular population are the logical place for evangelism to begin.

The purpose of this study was to develop and evaluate a model that motivates and teaches new members to share their faith in Jesus with their unchurched friends and relatives. Restating this as a problem, how do you teach the newest members, who are the least involved and least knowledgeable of biblical theology yet have the greatest number of secular friends, to share their faith and invite their friends to church so those friends, too, may become disciples of Jesus?

Statement of Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study.

Research Question #1: What parts of the model used for training and motivating the new members were most important and helpful to the new members?

One of the most important aspects of starting something new is to evaluate the venture. Each part of the evangelism training was evaluated in the questionnaire. Because this training was a first attempt this data will help me design a better relational evangelism-training course.

Research Question #2: What have been the results in persons won to Christ and invited to church by members participating in this study?"

This was the raw data of the final result I wish to see happen at Aloma UMC. If a new member did not invite someone to church nor share their faith with an unchurched

friend, then the model was not effective.

Operational Question #1: Will Aloma UMC have a larger number of professions of faith the years following the institution of this model compared with the average number of professions of faith during the previous five years?

Part of the process in helping new members share their faith and invite their unchurched friends to church was our One by One event. This was a church wide emphasis. The data was compared to the standard reporting required by a United Methodist church at the end of the year.

Research Question #3: What changes have occurred in new members' own self-reported spiritual growth in regards to evangelism?

One of the most difficult tasks I have ever undertaken was intentionally to help lead someone to a relationship with Jesus. It has not yet become comfortable or easy for me. Yet when I follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, I experience the presence of God in a profound way. I want to listen to my new members who have faced their own fear and inadequacy in becoming a witness for Jesus and those who were unable to do this. I desire this not for data's sake but as their pastor and spiritual guide. I know this will help me preach better as I help lead them to do God's will in this matter.

Operational Question #2: Will a new member invited to our church by a friend be more likely to invite his/her unchurched friends?

One of the questions I am interested in pursuing is, "Will this be a self-generating cycle over the long run? Will new members invite their friends, who in turn become members who invite their friends?"

Methodology

Below is the methodology for the study.

Population and Sample

The subjects for this study have been chosen on the basis of criteria rather than being chosen by random selection. The population was the adults who joined Aloma UMC since 17 June 1996 through 31 December 1999 (362 people) and attended at least one session of the relational evangelism course. All of these subjects attended the new member class where they were taught in two, hour-long sessions how to share their faith. New members who missed both of the training sessions were excluded from the sample population. Of these subjects only those with regular attendance, defined as having an average attendance of twice per month, during the period following the last Inquiry Class (1 January to 1 May 2000, ninety-six people). More than the 362 people may have met this criteria but have not had their attendance recorded accurately. They must also have returned their questionnaire (forty-one people).

Out of the sample population of forty-one, twenty new members, who have attended the relational evangelism training, filled out the questionnaire and signed their name. Twenty-one chose to remain anonymous. Out of the twenty, only seventeen volunteered (or were available) for a follow up interview. The interview was conducted to get a deeper understanding of the research questions.

Instrumentation

Existing instruments for measuring the data I wished to collect from the new members do not exist. I devised two instruments to measure the variables sought.

The first instrument (see Appendix A) was the questionnaire given to the subjects.

The answers were entered into a computer and run through a statistical analysis program. The second instrument employed in this study was a self-designed interview protocol that arose from the research questions (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The data for the questionnaire was collected by mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed for return to the church. Only those persons who met the criteria listed were sent a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The subjects had the choice of remaining anonymous by not signing their name. This was to enable them to be honest in giving their former pastor the hard truth if this evangelism emphasis did not sit well with them. For those who signed their name a phone interview was conducted. The data for the interview was collected by notes taken during the interview. After the conversation ended, the notes were reread and amended for content that was not immediately recorded over the phone.

Data Analysis Procedures

The questionnaire's answers were inputted into the University of Central Florida's SPSS10.0 statistical program to give correlations between answers and means to the answers.

From the interview responses, trends and common themes were analyzed. To facilitate the gathering of data, each question was grouped together with its corresponding responses.

Variables

The subjects interviewed were all adults. They ranged in age from eighteen to eighty. Some had extensive religious background from a variety of denominations, such

as Mormon, Catholic, Baptist, and United Methodist. Some became Christians in the Inquiry Class. Some new members attended the contemporary service; others preferred traditional worship. Some of the subjects were single, widowed, separated or divorced. Most were white; although some Hispanics, Jamaicans, and African Americans joined during that period. Except for race, this group was very varied. Aloma UMC attracted people across the spectrum with respect to age, gender, previous religious affiliation, marital status and socio-economic level.

In the next chapter I present general and specific observations on the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative. In the final chapter, I will compile the results of this study.

Chapter 4

Findings of the Study

The purpose of this study was to implement a researcher-designed model that motivates and teaches a new member to practice relational evangelism and to assess the corresponding changes in new member's behavior. The findings of this study now follow.

Profile of the Subjects

Before I begin the presentation of the information, understanding the makeup of the subjects of this research may be helpful. The new members participating in this study joined Aloma UMC during the period of June 1996 to December 1999 (362 people). Of these subjects only those with regular attendance, defined as having an average attendance of twice per month during the period following the last Inquiry Class (1 January to 1 May 2000, ninety-six people) were included in the research. More than ninety-six of the 362 people may have met this criteria but may not have had their attendance recorded accurately. They must have attended at least one session of the faith sharing training and returned their questionnaire (forty-one people). The answers from the questionnaire given to this group of new members were evaluated quantitatively. The last answer on the questionnaire was evaluated qualitatively. The subjects were given an option on the questionnaire to remain anonymous. Those who chose to sign their name and agree to a follow up interview by phone were contacted (seventeen people). Three people signed their name but were unavailable for an interview. The seventeen known subjects were quite varied. Three females and one male in their twenties were included. One male and two females are in their thirties. Two males and one female are in their

forties. Two males and one female are in their fifties. One male is in his sixties and one female is in her seventies. In this group were young mothers, blue collar and white-collar workers, singles, divorces, remarried people, and a never married retiree. All the interviewees were Caucasian. Of those who gave an answer during the phone interview to the year when they joined gave the following responses: one joined in '96, two in '97, five in '98, and nine in '99. One subject gave the joining date of spring 2000, which was in error, since we did a query by date of joining. I will identify the interviewees by the number used to track their responses.

Analysis of the Study

To examine the results of this study, the research questions (RQ) and operational questions (OQ) divided the results. Each of these questions will be followed by the statistical results from the corresponding answers given on the questionnaire by the forty-one subjects. The statistical results will be followed by the written response to the last question on the questionnaire. The subjects were encouraged to write their answer to "How has the challenge to share your faith and invite someone to church influenced your spiritual growth?" on the back of the sheet of the questionnaire. The topical summary and anecdotal stories will be given after the appropriate research or operational questions. This will be followed by the qualitative analysis of the answers given by the seventeen subjects interviewed by phone.

The questionnaire was analyzed by using a posttest statistical computation. Dan Agliata, a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology at the University of Central Florida, processed the data using the college's statistical program SPSS10.0. Pertinent answers were correlated with each other to establish strong or weak, positive or negative relationships

between the results. These statistics are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 that follow.

Table 1. Frequencies and Descriptive Information

1. Date Inquiry Class attended

Date (estimated by subject)	Number	Percent
Summer 96	2	4.9
Fall 96	1	2.4
Spring 97	2	4.9
Summer 97	2	4.9
Fall 97	3	7.3
Winter 97	2	4.9
Spring 98	3	7.3
Summer 98	1	2.4
Fall 98	5	12.2
Winter 98	4	9.8
Spring 99	4	9.8
Summer 99	5	12.2
Fall 99	3	7.3
Winter 99	1	2.4
Other - This year (This was their estimated response, which was not possible due to computer query which limited subjects to new members ending 12/99)	3	7.3

Table 1, continued

2. Attended due to an invitation

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	10	24.4
No	31	75.6

3. Number of sessions attended

Response	Number	Percent
Both	33	24.4
One	8	19.5
None	0	0

4. Value of the sessions (note twelve subjects did not answer this question)

Response	Number	Percent
5 (most helpful)	4	9.8
4	12	29.3
3	13	31.7
2	0	0
1 (least helpful)	0	0

Table 1, continued

5-12. Value of the different components of the sessions and the “One by One” event

Component	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Biblical background on evangelism	0	4	11	15	6	3.64
Prayer in evangelism	0	1	15	10	8	3.74
Learning to tell your story	2	3	8	11	13	3.81
Understanding that regular people are evangelists	1	1	7	14	13	4.03
Learning the core beliefs of Christianity	1	2	9	11	12	3.89
Having a printed invitation to give to your unchurched friends	2	5	16	7	7	3.32
Having a specific event to invite your unchurched friends	0	1	12	12	12	3.95
Role playing by sharing your story	4	8	10	9	5	3.08

13. Have you invited a friend?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	32	78.0
No	9	22.0

14. How many friends have you invited?

Mean = 8.13 friends

1. How many of the invitees attended?

Mean = 4.56 friends

2. Which service?

Time	Number	Percent
8:15	5	12.2
9:20	24	58.5
11:00	12	29.3

3. Have you led someone to accept Jesus?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	3	7.3
No, but I attempted to share my faith	22	53.7
Total who shared their faith	25	61.0
No	16	39.0

4. How many have you led to accept Jesus?

Mean = 1.67 (of the three positive answers)

Table 2. Correlations

Correlation Between	Correlation Value:	Interpretation of Correlation
Date attended Inquiry Class Number of people you've invited	-.131 Very weak -	As the Inquiry Classes have progressed to the present time (i.e., summer ninety-six to winter 99), people have been inviting less and less friends.
Date attended Inquiry Class Number you invited who attended	-.254 Fairly weak -	As the Inquiry Classes have progressed to the present time (i.e., summer ninety-six to winter 99), more of those who have been invited did not attend.
Number of people you've invited Number you invited who attended	.747 Very strong +	The more people you invite the more people will attend.
Initially attended because of a friend Value of the sessions	.020 Very weak +	Those who initially attended because of a friend found the sessions more valuable.
Initially attended because of a friend Number you invited	.077 Very weak +	Those who initially attended because of a friend in turn invited more people.
Initially attended because of a friend Number you invited who attended	.158 Very weak +	The few that actually invited friends had friends that showed up.
Initially attended because of a friend Number you've led to accept Jesus	.500 Fairly strong +	Those who initially attended because of a friend were more influential in leading others to accept Jesus.
Value of sessions Number of people you've invited	.169 Weak +	Those who valued the sessions more also invited more friends.
Value of sessions Number you invited who attended	.255 Fairly weak +	Those who valued the sessions more and invited friends had friends more likely to attend.
Number of sessions attended Value of the sessions	.034 Very weak +	Sessions attended (one or both) and the value they attributed to the sessions were not related.

Research Question #1

What parts of the model used for training and motivating the new members were most important and helpful to the new members? This question was important for the evaluation of the training and to help understand the roadblocks that would keep the new members from sharing their faith and to understand what was particularly helpful to them.

Of the 41 new members who filled out a questionnaire, twelve did not give an answer to the question describing the value of the sessions attended on how to share your faith. Of the 29 who recorded an answer, 4 or 9.8 percent of the 41 gave an answer of 5, 12 or 29.3 percent gave an answer of 4 and 13 or 31.7 percent gave an answer of 3. No one responded with 2 or 1 (least helpful). All of the respondents felt that the two session faith sharing classes were helpful.

The mean of the eight components of the faith sharing sessions varied from a high of 4.03, which was “Understanding that regular people are evangelists,” to a low of 3.08 which was “Role playing by sharing your story.” This category of role-playing had the greatest range of answers. Where many put down 1 (least helpful), others put down 5 (most helpful).

A weak positive correlation (+.169) occurred between the value of the sessions to them and the number of people they invited. The interpretation of the correlation is: Those who value the faith sharing sessions also invite more friends.

A fairly weak positive correlation (+.255) occurred between the value of the sessions and the number of people they invited who attended. The interpretation of this is: Those who valued the sessions on faith sharing and invited friends had friends more likely to attend.

Generally the new members felt that the training was helpful to them in learning the basics of relational evangelism. The correlations between the value of the sessions and what they did with the knowledge, inviting friends and sharing their faith, were positive. The correlation value was too weak to make it statistically significant.

From the seventeen people interviewed by phone, these are the responses with respect to the question: "Can you recall when you sat through two sessions on how to share your faith with a friend?" Thirteen said, "Yes." One said, "I was there for one." Three did not remember any specifics of the class.

The next two questions from the phone interviews were very similar but separated by other questions in the interview. The first was "Of what you learned (in the two faith sharing seminars) what was most helpful? Why? What stuck with you?" Because three of the interviewees could not remember the session, they are left out of the total. Of the remaining fourteen, four had vague answers that did not answer the question. Of the remaining ten only two had similar answers. Their "most helpful" part of the session was the role-playing (the lowest rated valuation of the components, but most varied in high and low responses, most helpful/least helpful of the questionnaire). The next eight commented on different aspects of the components of the faith sharing session.

From the seventeen people interviewed by phone, these are some of the responses with respect to the similar question: "What parts of the training were particularly helpful? Was there something that you wished was covered during the new member training? Any other suggestions?" The largest majority of the responses (8) just said something positive in general, "The class seemed to include all that was necessary," with no specifics about faith sharing (probably because many could not remember the specifics of the class).

Four people commented on how helpful the section was on how to deal with rejection, the fear, and the uneasiness of sharing your faith with an unchurched person. Number 18 commented, “I needed to learn about facing my fears, times when you might not want to share because of negative response. Every time you do it, it gets easier. Sharing myself with others, I’m not good at, afraid I’d be hurt, but knowing we were all vulnerable made it easier.” Three people talked about how significant the role-playing was for them. “To be able to practice witnessing by role-playing, to be able to keep the topic to two minutes and to be genuine, to share and also listen was wonderful. I was evolving; I changed because of a class!” Number 17, a new Christian who was taking on leadership roles in the church, said, “We were putty in your hands.” Indicating some people are open to whatever a spiritual leader, in a church, will lift up as important.

According to the new members, several parts of the model were helpful in training and motivating them. From the interview many of the subjects could not remember the specifics of the class. For the new members who joined right after I first came, the time between the class and interview was four years. Even for the most recent new members, eight months would have passed since his/her last class. Yet for most of the subjects, individual parts of the training stuck with them.

Research Question #2:

What have been the results in persons won to Christ and invited to church by members participating in this study?

This is the question that gets to the heart of the reason for the training and One by One event. Will a new member actually do what was asked of him/her? In many ways the answer to this question is the real evaluation of the relational evangelism training.

Thirty-two or 78 percent of the forty-one new members gave a positive response to the question “Since joining the church, have you invited an unchurched friend to one of our One by One events, such as a worship service or our dramatic musicals at Christmas or Easter?” Nine or 21 percent of the forty-one new members responded with a negative answer indicating they did not invite a friend. Of the thirty-two new members with a positive response, the mean number of people they invited was 8.13 friends. A little more than half of the invitees attended (mean = 4.56 friends attending).

Of the forty-one new members who responded to the question, “Have you led someone to Christ?” Three or 7.3 percent said, “yes.” The mean number of people invited by these three was 1.67 persons. Twenty-two or 53.7 percent of the forty-one new members said, “No,” but they did attempt to share their faith. Sixteen or 39 percent of the forty-one did not attempt to share their faith.

The mean number of invited visitors who attended by invitation of the thirty-two of the forty-one new members who actually invited their friends was approximately 2.2 people per year. This would mean that from those thirty-two new members who invited friends, over seventy visitors would have attended Aloma UMC during the year from their efforts. If that number were representative of the pool of ninety-six regular attending new visitors, then 78 percent of this group of new members (seventy-five) would generate 165 visitors per year. Some of these would become part of Aloma UMC’s family, attend the Inquiry Class, and invite their friends after training and exposure to the One by One event. If the same percentage (78 percent) holds true for the 266 non-regularly attending new members, they would generate 207 visitors. Two hundred and seven plus seventy-five would equal 283 new visitors generated per year.

This is not an exact figure. Accurately estimating the amount of visitors produced from this model is nearly impossible.

The seventeen telephone interviewees were asked these questions: “Since the training, have you been able to share your faith with an unchurched friend? Can you describe the encounter? How did you feel? What was your friend’s response?” Nine of the seventeen interviewees responded with a yes to the question, “Have you been able to share your faith with an unchurched friend?” Number 17, a new Christian said, “Yes, have done it a few times. At work I talk about my church; my life is now the church. A woman I know at work, a security guard who’s 35 years old was going through a rough time, so I said I’d pray for her, she responded, ‘I need that.’ I invited her to Alpha, she liked it but could not make the rest of the classes, but I got to talk to her further about my faith. Sharing is getting to be second nature to me now.” Number 9 said, “Yes, I don’t worry about it. I can talk about church, especially at work. I learned I didn’t need to be ‘undercover.’ I’m not afraid to let others know I’m a Christian. When they need someone to pray, they come to me, and I pray and tell them they can also pray!” Number 5 responds, “Yes! I felt confident. Everyone I approached received it well. They know me and knew where I stood. I’ve had positive responses from people.” Number 2 gives a response about a particular person, “I shared with my sister-in-law who had trauma in her life. She blamed God. I talked to her. I told her she had left God; God didn’t leave her. I’m not sure how she felt. She has a new man in her life, forgets good friends.”

Two people gave a somewhat positive response to the questions: “Since the training, have you been able to share your faith with an unchurched friend? Can you describe the encounter? How did you feel? What was your friend’s response?” Their

sharing was about church not Jesus. Number 7's response indicates this, "I share with people at work. Not so much a direct conversation but telling them about activities at church, exposing them to my church life, an ongoing dialogue, once in a while feedback. They are not churchgoers so they think about it. Alpha helped me to pray in public. You don't have to pray with elaborate words; simple is good."

Five of the seventeen interviewees gave negative answers to the question, "Have you shared your faith with an unchurched friend?" Two of the five were negative answers, but they obviously tried. Number 15 said, "I worked on sharing harder, but I'm just not good at it." Number 13 said, "I'm not around a lot of unchurched people except my daughter. Because of my example she is in a Bible study." Three were simple no answers.

Seventy-eight percent of the forty-one subjects said they invited a friend to a One by One event. The mean number of friends that each new member invited was 8.13. Out of this group 4.56 friends attended because of the invitation. A relatively large percentage of the new members actually did what was asked and expected of them. To extrapolate this data, the mean time between the Inquiry Class and the questionnaire was about two years. This averages to 4.6 invitations given to friends per year per new member and generates 2.2 visitors per new member per year.

Sixty-one percent of the forty-one subjects actually tried to share their faith with their unchurched friends. Fifty-three percent of the seventeen phone interviewees shared their faith with their unchurched friends. Only 7 percent were successful in leading someone to Christ. The low percentage may indicate the truth that secular people need to be exposed to Christian truth a number of times over an extended period. Part of that

exposure would be at the One by One events.

Operational Question #1

Will Aloma UMC have a larger number of professions of faith the years following the institution of this model of relational evangelism emphasis compared with the average number of profession faith during the previous five years?

Table 3. New Members 1994-1999

Year	Profession of Faith	Transfers
1994	42	41
1995	53	26
1996 (transition year)	43	57
1997	37	43
1998	43	46
1999	37	60

These figures were taken from the Journal of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church covering the years 1994-1999 in the Orlando District under Aloma United Methodist Church. These figures on profession of faith do not reflect the hypothesis that this model of relational evangelism will generate a greater number of professions of faith. Although no new Christians seemed to be present when I arrived at Aloma UMC. The total of the profession of faith includes confirmation class (primarily eleven, twelve, and thirteen-year-olds), Christians who do not have a current church membership, and new Christians. Attendance did increase during Sunday morning worship from approximately five hundred when I arrived in June 1996 to 650 when I left in June 2000.

Research Question #3

What changes have occurred in new members' own self-reported spiritual growth with regards to evangelism?

Sixteen of the forty-one new members gave written answers to question number 9, "How has the challenge to share your faith and invite someone to church influenced your own spiritual growth?" The written answers from the questionnaire can be categorized into groups:

1. *I'm not sharing my faith, but I have a good excuse. Six out of sixteen.* Some of the responses received in the interview included: "We can't seem to make friends." "(I've gone to their church) why their reluctance to show up at my church?" "I tend to be shy." "It's not something I've ever felt comfortable with. I feel like I'm preaching to them. I rely on my actions." "It's the sad truth (I just don't share my faith)."
2. *This has stretched me. I still can't share my faith, but I can invite my friends. Five out of sixteen.* Some of the interview responses were: A thirty-something newly married male who was becoming a leader at Aloma UMC writes, "My comfort zone doesn't allow me to speak up when I should ... but I am getting bolder, especially when I have flyers. I continue to pray for help ... to share my love of God." A young mother states, "It showed me ... just to invite is effective also." A college professor writes, "I've found that sincerity is not enough. I have to be able to answer questions ... with unchurched friends and acquaintances."
3. *Sharing my faith has taken me to deeper spiritual maturity. Five out of sixteen.* An anonymous person writes, "(Sharing my faith) lifts me up because I'm doing what God wants me to." Another nameless person says, "Sharing my faith and inviting people to

church, etc., has helped me grow spiritually by bringing my Christianity to the forefront of my daily life. It is becoming more and more a part of my daily life.” A single young man writes, “I have been a member of 5 different United Methodist Churches in my life in Georgia, Kansas, Texas, and Florida, and this is the first church that I attended regularly that had such a commitment to witnessing and sharing my faith. I was very wary and uneasy about this at first, but now I believe this is the most important part of my spiritual life. I have shared my story and experiences with many of my male friends, and believe this was helpful and beneficial to them and their relationship with God. Many of the men I have witnessed to have been moved by my testimony, but are not ready or willing to give their lives to Jesus yet. I believe ... my time and shared experience was not wasted and I have planted seeds that will eventually sprout, take root and thrive in their relationship with God.” A single woman, in her seventies said, “I’ve become more aware of all those who need to be approached. We’ve made attempts to influence 5 relatives.”

The interviewees were asked, “Before entering the Inquiry Class, how did you feel about sharing your faith with a friend?” Seven of the seventeen were already somewhat comfortable with sharing with close friends. Seven of the seventeen were uncomfortable/hesitant/did not/never shared their faith with friends. Three of the seventeen responded they would share only if someone would ask about their faith. Seven of the seventeen were already sharing their faith with their unchurched friends.

The next question asked was, “What were the struggles you had in sharing your faith with an unchurched friend?” Fifteen of the seventeen responded to this question. The highest number of responses, five of the fifteen, was the struggle with rejection.

Number 6 said, “I don’t like it when people roll their eyes, don’t want to hear about it. I have trouble bringing in Jesus’ name.” Number 18 said, “I guess just feeling frustrated when people don’t respond or are negative. Keeping a good Christian attitude when you get put down.” Number 15 responded, “I’m afraid I’ll ... appear judgmental.” The second highest response came from four interviewees who were now past their struggles. Number 9 said, “I use to struggle but don’t anymore. I’m more comfortable with sharing my faith.” Number 12 responded, “In the past I did, but I am no longer embarrassed. Now I have nothing to be embarrassed about.” Number 17 said, “At first I wasn’t bold enough. As a new Christian I was very nervous to share with anyone. I thought I had to know all the answers until I learned God uses me and it’s now my life. It’s second nature to share my faith.” Two interviewees gave the lack of biblical knowledge as their struggle. Four interviewees gave struggles that were different from the rest. These were the struggles with (1) being Jewish and Christian, (2) reaching an ex-spouse, (3) reaching worldly people at work, and (4) being over anxious.

The last question from the phone interview was “Over the last four years, when Joe was the pastor, Aloma put a lot of emphasis on evangelism with One by One events, new member training, with Joe’s preaching, and invitation to go on a Celebrate Jesus mission. Did this emphasis on evangelism affect your own spiritual growth? In what ways did you grow spiritually from this emphasis on evangelism?” Only two interviewees stated that this did not affect their spiritual growth. Number 13 said, “No, but I would have grown if I had shared my faith.” Fifteen of the responses were positive to the question about the emphasis on evangelism and its effect on their faith. Only one was positive but unable to give any specifics. All fourteen gave specific examples of how

the emphasis on evangelism affected their spiritual life. Some of these responses were as follows, Number 18 said, "I think it encouraged me to invite others. I invited others because I was excited about church. People would just love it if they came. I felt Spirit-led to invite people to church. My Mom invited a lady from the apartments and she only had a sweat suit to wear, but she stressed it doesn't matter what you wear. Outreach is SO important!" Number 5 said, "Yes, it challenged me to remember why I'm a Christian. I grew because I remembered my purpose!" Number 7 said, "I have an expectation now—there should be outreach in any church. I was selfish in wanting to just get situated first in church, to get use to it. My spirit wants to reach out." Number 12 said, "Without a doubt! I've been a Methodist all my life and Aloma is the first church I've attended that had a plan or mission statement. I never thought about sharing my faith. It had a big effect on me. It changed me, and now I share whenever and wherever I can. The emphasis on evangelism changed my life." Number 14 said, "Yes, it did—makes it more external than internal. Aloma has a larger percentage of people who did not grow up in the church. Different perspective on faith. I don't take my faith for granted now." Number 17 said, "I made a commitment to go on a[n] [evangelistic] mission next summer. I think God has called me to do this. He has been preparing me step by step. I can now be bold for God." One of the positive responses was from a very involved person who still is not sharing her faith (number 15). "Yes, it emphasizes the importance of it, but I still don't share well. I am involved as a table leader for Alpha, a Stephen's Ministry volunteer and I also teach the kindergarten Sunday school class. I love it!"

As shown by the above responses, the emphasis on evangelism has had a profound effect on some of the new members. For some of the new members this

exposure to evangelism training has started them on a journey of reaching unchurched friends as a life style. This conclusion is indicated by the following three statements. “I never thought about sharing my faith. It had a big effect on me. It changed me and now I share whenever and wherever I can. The emphasis on evangelism changed my life.” “I made a commitment to go on a [evangelism] mission next summer. I think God has called me to do this.” “My spirit wants to reach out.”

Operational Question #2

Will a new member invited to our church by a friend be more likely to invite their unchurched friends?

Of the forty-one responses ten or 24.4 percent attended because of a friend’s invitation. Thirty-one or 75.6 percent did not attend from a friend’s invitation. A very weak positive correlation (+.077) occurred between the ten who initially attended because of a friend’s invitation and the number of people they invited. The interpretation is that those who initially attended because of a friend, in turn, invited more people. Another very weak positive correlation (+.158) occurred between those ten who initially attended because of a friend’s invitation and the number of people they invited who attended. The interpretation was that those who initially attended because of a friend’s invitation invited friends that showed up. Both these correlations are too weak to be significant; therefore, the training and motivating factors for inviting friends works equally well for both those new members who walked in off the street and those who were invited by a friend.

A fairly strong positive correlation (+.500) occurred between those ten who initially attended because of a friend’s invitation and the number of people they have led to Christ. The interpretation was that those who initially attended Aloma UMC because

of a friend's invitation were more influential in leading others to accept Jesus as their personal savior. Again, because of the small number of persons who led someone to Christ (three of forty-one), this correlation may not hold for a larger sample.

Of the seventeen phone interviewees, five received invitations from people to attend church. Two of the five invitations came from Aloma's staff (a youth director and myself). The other three invitations came from a friend, a next-door neighbor, and a recommendation from an out of town minister who knew me. Twelve of the interviewees came to church for some other reason, which included such various prompts as the church steeple, their son's attendance in our youth group, and Aloma UMC's location. The largest single factor (nine of seventeen) had to do with driving by the church and seeing something at the church that drew them in such as the steeple, the sign, or the choir outside. One positive asset Aloma UMC has is its location on a very busy crossroads. One hundred thousand people drive by the corner intersection of SR 436 and Aloma Avenue in front of the church every day.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions of the Study

Chapter Five contains a discussion of the findings, the summary, and conclusions of the results gathered for this study. This chapter is divided into an overview of the reasons for this project, an evaluation of the Relational Evangelism Model, and the six major findings grouped in order of importance from the study and some other conclusions.

Reasons for This Project

From my observations and discussions with the district superintendents of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, an intentional approach to evangelism that mobilizes their congregations to reach their surrounding community by using the relational networks that already exist for their laity are lacking in our established churches. New church starts are excluded from this group, since they must evangelize to survive. As I was about to speak at a district pastors meeting in Jacksonville about evangelism, Terri Hill, the district superintendent, confided to me that most of the pastors in the Jacksonville District have never attended a course in evangelism. Many United Methodist pastors have never been exposed to positive approaches of evangelism. Because our society is becoming more secular and the majority of our established churches in stable neighborhoods are declining, our annual conference's churches must find new behaviors to fulfill the mission Jesus gave the Church: "Go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:16). Failure to do this means our churches will continue their decline.

Most of our pastors and the majority of our churches are still functioning in what

Loren Mead calls the Christendom model of church (13). Churches in the Florida Annual Conference were successful using the Christendom model through the 1960s because Christians were looking for a church to attend. As long as they could provide a hospitable environment and have decent music and preaching, this model of church worked. This Christendom model still works in areas where fast growing neighborhoods surround the church. A percentage of those moving in are Christians looking for a place to worship. This has lulled churches in demographically expanding areas into a false sense of security that the old way of doing things still works. I believe many pastors in declining churches still think that if they could just do a little better with the choir, build a nicer fellowship hall, or act friendlier that their church could turn around the decline. This will not happen without an intentional and intensive program of evangelism.

Leading someone to a relationship with Jesus has not yet become comfortable or easy for me. Yet when I follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and walk through my fears, I experience the presence of God in a profound way. No greater joy exists for me than connecting an unchurched person with Jesus and his body. I wanted to listen to my new members' who have faced their own fear and feelings of inadequacy in becoming a witness for Jesus. I wanted to hear the reasons for the new members inability to invite their friends or share the gospel with them. As a pastor and spiritual guide, I know knowledge will help me preach and teach better as I help lead them to do God's will in this matter.

Jesus establishes a repeating pattern in the New Testament. Jesus leaves heaven and comes to earth "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Early in his ministry, Jesus calls twelve disciples to "follow me" Luke 5:27 and

6:12-16. After teaching them Jesus sends out the twelve to “preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9). At the end of Luke 9 (vs. 59), Jesus again calls people to “follow me.” Two followers in the crowd give excuses why they cannot, but in the beginning of chapter 10, seventy-two disciples do answer his call. Jesus again sends them out to “heal the sick” and tell them, “The kingdom of God is near” (Luke 10:9). In Luke’s next book, Acts, the disciples who follow Jesus now number 120. In Acts 1:8 Jesus again sends out his disciples saying, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The rest of Acts is the story of this commissioning lived out, primarily in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Jesus still wants his disciples to actively seek those lost to him. Jesus wants his church to leave the four walls of our churches and to “Go” into the world to make disciples.

One of the most common ways disciples are made for Jesus is through relationships. In thirty-five of the forty separate healing miracles Jesus performs, either the sick person’s friend brings them to Jesus (such as the four friends bringing the bedridden paralytic to Jesus through the roof) or the friend brings Jesus to the sick person (such as the ruler of the synagogue bringing Jesus to heal his sick daughter). Friendship connections play a big part of the calling of the first disciples. In the gospel of John, John the Baptist recognizes Jesus. He tells Andrew, “Look the Lamb of God!” (2:36).

Andrew meets Jesus and realizes that he is the messiah. Andrew then goes and tells his brother Simon. Andrew “brought him to Jesus” (2:42). Immediately after this story John tells the story of Philip finding his friend Nathanael and bringing him to Jesus (John 1:35-51).

A problem with most of the seven hundred churches of the Florida Conference of

the United Methodist Church is that they no longer follow the biblical pattern developed by Jesus. They do not fulfill the Great Commandment of Jesus in Matthew chapter 28 to “Go and make disciples.” We go and do good deeds, such as feeding the homeless and building Habitat homes, but these good deeds are not to make disciples. Conversely, churches make disciples if people come through the doors of the sanctuary on their own. United Methodist churches do not put the “go” and the “make disciples” together as Jesus asked. Mission is seen as something done overseas or in the ghettos of our inner city by special Christians. Churches normally do not look at their neighborhoods as the mission field. Normal Christians do not see themselves as evangelists to these neighbors.

David McIntire, the senior pastor of the The United Methodist Church of the Palm Beaches, ordered a Percept demographic study (which uses census and marketing data to determine the human profile of an area) of the three-mile area surrounding his church. In this three-mile area around his church, only 7 percent of the people are attending church. This would make it one of the most unchurched areas of our nation. When Jesus articulated the disciples mission in Acts 1:8, he gave this sequence of priorities, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” What I believe is implicit in this verse was the disciples’ responsibility for the town in which they currently lived, Jerusalem. A Christian’s first priority in mission is not cross-cultural, but in the city in which he/she lives. Another problem is that churches see mission as sending or supporting a missionary to do mission for us. Many Christians believe that we pay clergy or staff to accomplish the evangelism task Jesus asked us to do. Many churches do not mobilize their congregations to reach the world to make disciples.

New behaviors are needed to replace old paradigms that no longer work. Part of the new ways churches in the Florida Annual Conference are changing is the growth of hundreds of contemporary services to reach the Baby Boomer and younger generations. Many of these services start with little or no evangelism efforts. A few do mass mailings to their surrounding community. Most churches count on the “build it and they will come” philosophy of church growth. I believe that the young adults who come to these contemporary services are those with some church background. What is needed is a rediscovery that churches must get out of their comfort zone and to go into the mission field surrounding their churches. The model I have proposed and evaluated in this paper was an attempt at a practical approach for a church that wants to incorporate evangelism as part of the way they do ministry. It attempts to send the members of the church out to reach the people most likely to respond to their outreach efforts—their friends. This approach was intentionally developed as low cost for the church and low risk for the participants.

In formulating this model, I have tried to use the best available research in the field of evangelism. I have chosen relational evangelism as the method to reach unchurched people, primarily due to the fact that people normally become Christians through relationships. According to Arn and Arn, 75-90 percent of people would say a friend or relative was most responsible for them becoming a disciple of Jesus (43). My dream for Aloma UMC was to mobilize a group of laity who would actively seek to reach their unchurched friends for Jesus. Hopefully some of these people would take on this task as a lifestyle.

Part of the approach I have chosen was to recruit new members to mobilize for

this task. Three reasons underlie my logic for this decision. One reason was that new members usually have more unchurched friends than longtime members. This was especially true of those who join with no church affiliation. My second reason was, as a new pastor at Aloma UMC, I could only make a few demands of the longtime members at the beginning of my tenure without risking revolt. The third reason arises from the fact that new members in a church do not know what is expected of them (unless they are a United Methodist transfer). I told the new members in the Inquiry class: “What is expected of Christians at Aloma UMC is that they share their faith with their unchurched friends.” I found new members believed this easier than longtime members. They were excited about their faith. This excitement was a powerful motivating force when harnessed toward a goal. This excitement and joy of their newfound relationship with Jesus can often overcome the fear barrier that limits most people from sharing their faith.

The evangelism model that I have designed was more than just training. Once a quarter a seeker-friendly event focused the whole church on praying for and inviting their unchurched friends to worship. This was a practical way to remind the new members that we expected them to participate in the conversion of their friends. These One by One evangelism events were held every three months (once a quarter). Usually the new member would have been exposed to an event just before joining and then after joining. My hope was that this would be the way new members would utilize the evangelism training from the Inquiry Class. During the month between the prayer card and the One by One event, I would speak from the pulpit about their responsibility for connecting friends to Jesus and the church. A printed invitation inserted in the bulletin one week before the event was an easy, low risk approach to reach friends about their spiritual lives.

Two of our quarterly events were centered on our Christmas cantata and Easter musical drama. Both of these events happened during the times unchurched people would most likely attend church.

My dream for Aloma UMC was first, to mobilize our congregation to reach the unchurched in our neighborhoods using the existing relational networks of our new members. This was to fulfill the mission Jesus gave the church to “Go and make disciples.” Second, it was to empower some of our new members to begin a lifestyle of evangelism. I believe this happened by first teaching new members relational evangelism, then helping them see the world around them (their friendship networks) as the mission field. The new members would then pray and witness to their friends and possibly taste the joy of reaching their friends for Jesus. Third, it was to start a self-replicating cycle of new members (disciples) who invited friends to church that become disciples who invited friends. This duplicated in a small way Jesus’ pattern of seek (go), call to discipleship (follow me), and sending forth those new disciples into the mission field.

Effectiveness of the Model

Now I move to interpret the findings of this study. Was the relational evangelism model effective in teaching and motivating the new members to share their faith with their unchurched friends and invite them to church? I believe the answer is a qualified yes. Seventy-eight percent of the new members invited a friend. 61 percent of the new members surveyed shared their faith with an unchurched friend. Obviously, a majority of the new members did what was asked of them. A minority of the new members did not invite a friend (22 percent) or did not share their faith (39 percent). An anecdotal story

currently making the rounds says, “A United Methodist on the average invites one person to church every thirty years.” Even though all of the new members did not share their faith or invite a friend, at least this model increased the average for United Methodists.

When I entered the ministry in 1986, very few Florida United Methodist pastors had an evangelism program implemented in their church. Of the few that did, the program was based on Evangelism Explosion or something similar. Even though some of these churches were fast growing or large, most of these churches were looked on as odd. They were considered to be the “charismatic” churches. These were the churches that chose not to pay all their apportionments (denominational financial commitments). The unwritten paradigm was United Methodists do not evangelize. When I first entered the Florida Annual Conference, the closest thing to evangelism I heard from district superintendents was “to get the United Methodist retirees who have moved down from up north into our churches.” United Methodists have a culture like any organization, and intentional evangelism was not part of that culture. To begin the task of mobilizing my congregation for the mission of evangelism was a big step for me. A significant help to me was learning methods of evangelism that could be done in the context and theology of a United Methodist church.

One of the turning points for the Florida Annual Conference in the area of evangelism happened the year that I returned to Aloma. That year Bishop Cornelius Henderson became the spiritual leader of the Florida Conference (1996-1999). For Bishop Henderson, evangelism was the church’s top priority. Because of what he had accomplished at Ben Hill United Methodist Church—growing that church from 350 members to four thousand, because of his own continuing personal evangelism as a

bishop, and because of his leadership in prioritizing evangelism as the main concern of our annual conference, the paradigm began to change. One of the many stories that illustrate this change follows. Terri Hill, the district superintendent of the Jacksonville District, told me a story about a pastor who was leaving a church because he was expected to evangelize. I related this story to the bishop and two other district superintendents. At annual conference, where all the United Methodists pastors gather for their annual meeting, Bishop Henderson said, “If you think you can escape your responsibility to evangelize by changing districts, you are mistaken. We know who you are.” Many pastors probably felt like the rules were changed in the middle of the game.

Below are some of the results I found from the research.

Finding #1, Building a Self-replicating Cycle of Visitors Is Possible through New Members

The most important research question that pertains to this model is, “What have been the results in persons won to Christ and invited to church by members participating in this study?” Evangelism is at its heart both connecting people with the living Son of God, Jesus, and connecting people with his living body, the Church. This connection should result in a person that has faith in Jesus as their savior and that person becoming incorporated into a church. Therefore, a two-pronged approach is needed for this evangelism effort. The first part was to have the new members share their faith with a friend, connecting them to Jesus. The second part was to get these friends into a local church.

People become disciples of Jesus in various ways. Sometimes a Christian will first witness to a friend. The friend comes to faith and then attends church. Sometimes

the Christian will witness to their faith. The friend is not ready to accept Jesus as Lord but will attend church with them. Later the person hears the claim of the Lordship of Jesus, by the friend or possibly at church, and becomes a Christian. Sometimes the Christian will first invite their friend to a church event. Later, the friend will be exposed to the gospel at church or by someone's personal witness. At this time the friend may be ready to accept Jesus as their savior. Many different scenarios are possible for how a person comes to faith and is incorporated into the church. Whatever shape the process takes, the result is the same: a disciple is made. Two findings are important considerations when thinking through the making of a disciple in our secular culture. First, secular people must be exposed to the gospel multiple times before they can make a decision for Jesus. Research has indicated a person must hear the gospel presented an average of 5.8 times before they will respond (Arn and Arn 118). Hunter writes that making new Christians necessarily involves a process, "which takes place in stages, over time" (Church 154). He goes on to say that most traditional churches have the wrong assumption that "instant" evangelism is the norm for how people become Christians (Church 154). Second, when secular people move from the world to relationship with Jesus, they often belong before they believe. They must know and trust the people of the church before they will intellectually assent to the biblical truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Many people find their truth in community. This is the great advantage of relational evangelism. They already have the trust of their friend. Breaking into a group (the church) is always easier when introduced by a friend, than when going as a stranger. Barna states that this friendliness factor is the primary reason people return to and remain at a church (79).

One of my dreams was to generate a self-replicating cycle of visitors from the new members. This sending of new members into the world to reach people for Jesus is much like the description of a fast growing church given by Green and McGrath, “[To send] new converts out before they realized church people generally did not do that kind of thing” (209). Because participation in the One by One event was offered to the whole church, many members who joined before this study was initiated also participated by inviting their unchurched friends. One of the direct consequences of generating new visitors is an increase in attendance for a church. Over the four years this model was implemented at Aloma UMC attendance increased from four hundred and fifty to six hundred and fifty in worship. This increase took place after ten years of decline.

Not only did this relational evangelism model generate first-time visitors. A majority (61 percent of the forty-one new members given the questionnaire) have shared their faith with a friend. Therefore, over half of the new members surveyed are reaching their unchurched friends with the good news of Jesus Christ. For many of these new evangelists, this proclamation of Christ is not a one-time event but a continuing process in relationship that happens through an ongoing dialogue over time. Also supportive of the existence of this self-replicating cycle is the fairly strong positive correlation value (.500) between those who initially attended Aloma UMC because of a friend and the likeliness that they would lead a friend to accept Jesus as savior.

I had hoped that more of the new members would have had the privilege of helping their unchurched friends become Christians. Three of the forty-one new members who filled out the questionnaire actually had that experience. Our responsibility as Christians is to share the good news of God’s saving grace in Jesus with those who do

not know him. A majority of the new members, 61 percent, did share their faith with their friends. God's responsibility is to actually change a person's heart. Our responsibility is to proclaim God's good news in Jesus Christ.

People may find inviting someone to church easier than actually sharing the gospel. Possibly more training could help them "close the deal," but bringing unchurched people to Jesus' house where they will hear the gospel and be exposed to people who live out their lives as Christians is important. There are many unchurched people who must belong before they believe. An invitation by a friend to church is of crucial importance in a seeker's journey of belonging to the body of Christ.

Over time, as the church grows and more of the new members take their place in leadership, a culture of evangelism will be developed. My hope was that the relational evangelism training and One by One events would help multiply the process by which people normally become Christians. Seventy-five to 90 percent of Christians active in any church measured say that a friend or relative was most responsible for them becoming a Christian (Arn and Arn 43). Bruce Williams, the pastor who followed me after my four-year tenure at Aloma UMC, invited the whole church to meet with him in informal home groups when he first arrived. He asked the groups to tell him where they wanted to head as a church. The consensus opinion after the last of the meetings concluded was "to grow deeper in the faith and to reach out to our community." Hopefully the majority of the new members will continue to invite their friends to church and attempt to share their faith for the rest of their lives. If this behavior continues it would confirm the original vision that new members would continue to view their world with missionary eyes.

Finding #2, the Relational Evangelism Training Model Helps New Members to Evangelize

Most of the subjects of this study found the relational evangelism training was helpful to them. With respect to the question, “Please circle the number that describes the value of the sessions you attended on ‘how to share your faith.’ (5 is most helpful, 1 is least helpful),” all the respondents gave a value of 3 or above. I have found that most Christians feel inadequate when they try to share their faith. When asked, “What parts of the training were particularly helpful? Is there something that you wished was covered during the new member training? Any other suggestions?” only two subjects gave the same answer. The majority that gave a specific response to the question above, all gave differing answers. This indicates many reasons that keep a Christian from sharing their faith. For one person the reason may be fear; for another it may be a feeling of biblical inadequacy. When a new member describes part of the relational evangelism training as helpful on the questionnaire, this probably means that this part of the component is what helped him/her over a specific problem with sharing his/her faith, since most do not. The highest valued component (4.03 out of 5) of the relational evangelism training session was “Understanding that regular people are evangelists.” The roadblock here is the belief that only special people are suppose to share their faith, such as pastors. Four people (the highest number of similar responses in the interview) commented on how helpful the section was on how to deal with rejection, the fear, and the uneasiness of sharing their faith with an unchurched person. I believe this is the primary reason Christians in our culture are hesitant to share their faith. Number 18 commented, “I needed to learn about facing my fears, times when I might not want to share because of a negative response.

Every time you do it, it gets easier. Sharing myself with others, I'm not good at, afraid I'd be hurt, but knowing we were all vulnerable made it easier." This comment directly leads to the next highest valued component (three similar responses) from the interviews: role-playing ("Every time you do it, it gets easier"). In the course of the class, participants practiced sharing their faith during the role-playing portion. This, much like really sharing your faith, is uncomfortable to people. As I watched people share their faith story in the Inquiry Class, I saw their body language change. By the end of the two-minute time allotted, new members were sitting forward in their seats, listening intently to the person speaking. They were totally engaged with each other. Normally, I would have to stop them at the end of the two minutes allotted from continuing on with their discussion. Some of the subjects rated this part "least helpful" on the questionnaire. I suspect that both people who are not used to sharing with others and those who are less relational had a hard time with this section of the class. None of the components of the relational evangelism training which were evaluated had a mean lower than three (out of a high of five). This indicated that the each component was somewhat helpful.

What I learned from evaluating this part of the model were the reasons for not sharing your faith are quite varied; therefore, what was helpful in overcoming the drawbacks was also quite varied. Even years after the class was attended (four years for some of the interviewees), many components of the training were still fresh in the minds of the new members. I believe they were remembered because those components helped them over the barrier that stopped them from witnessing for Jesus. From the interviews, these are the four most important (highest valued) parts of the relational evangelism curriculum that surfaced.

1. Regular people are evangelists;
2. Helping overcome a person's fear of witnessing;
3. Role-playing to practice sharing your own story; and
4. Learning the core beliefs of Christianity.

The rest of the curriculum tied for fourth since only one comment was in the interviews for each section. The second highest rated part (3.94) of the training on the questionnaire was having a specific event which to invite unchurched friends. Although this was technically not part of the curriculum (since it was not taught in the class), it was an integral part of teaching faith sharing and a part of the whole model. Within at least three months from the ending of the class, the One by One event was held to give the new members a practical way to implement their training.

Finding #3, Major Roadblocks to Faith Sharing Must Be Addressed

The following are four roadblocks to faith sharing that people voiced during the interview:

A. Evangelism is not my responsibility. The great majority of the new members had difficulties in sharing their faith, both prior to training and after the class. The first of these is that *regular people are evangelists*. The negative attitude that the training addressed is: *evangelism is not my job*. Michael Green lists the biggest reason why people do not share their faith "because they do not think it is their job" (Evangelism through 11). He goes on to say that there is a myth that says religion is a very private matter that must not be addressed. If it is to be talked about at all, it is the job of the clergy (12). In the first part of the class, the new members were asked to remember the person most responsible for their Christian beliefs. Almost without exception the

answers given were their family, friends, or coworkers. This exercise helped them see evangelism is practiced primarily by ordinary people like them.

B. I am afraid to share my faith. Just as strong a hindrance to faith sharing is the fear associated with evangelism. “Helping overcome a person’s fear of witnessing” was the second most important part of the training to the new members interviewed as cited in the last section. Number 18 commented on the helpfulness of the training, “I needed to learn about facing my fears, times when you might not want to share because of negative response. Every time you do it, it gets easier.” The struggle with rejection was the number one answer, five of the fifteen, to the interview question, “What were the struggles you had in sharing your faith with an unchurched friend?” Number 6 said, “[When I share my faith] I don’t like it when people roll their eyes and don’t want to hear about it. I have trouble bringing in Jesus name.” Even if a person knows that it is their responsibility to share their faith, they must still cross the fear barrier that inhibits their witness. There are two ways that help a person cross this barrier. The first and most effective is to be walked out by the hand by someone who is experienced in evangelism. This is on-the-job training. In the Celebrate Jesus missions we have instituted through Operation Evangelization in the Florida Conference, ordinary Christians who come on a mission are encouraged to share their faith for one whole week in a neighborhood surrounding a host church. People begin the week frightened to witness; they leave the week empowered and joyful. Unfortunately, on-the-job training was not part of the program. If I were to begin this again, I would find some way to help them actually do evangelism. This is the quickest way to overcome a person’s fear. Another way to help them overcome their fear is to provide the training and to give them a low risk way to

bridge the subject of their faith to a friend. The invitations were one of those ways.

Number 9, a long time Christian's response on giving an invitation to a friend, "At first I thought, I've never done that before. I was anxious, but God prepared her heart. She gave me a positive response. She came!" Number 17's response to the question on what was it like to give an invitation to a friend, "Initially I was not bold; I put them in their mailboxes. But then I gave one to a neighbor. They came to the Christmas Cantata. I gave one to my sister, and she came." Hopefully all Christians should come to the place where they are able to walk through their fear and experience the joy that comes with helping their friend to connect with Jesus. "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

C. I have no experience. I think role-playing was another way the training was helpful to new members getting through their initial fear of sharing about their faith. The best way to overcome a lack of evangelism experience is to help people see an experienced evangelist share their faith, then have the experienced person to walk along side to give them moral support for their first try. Unfortunately this type of training was not provided. The next best thing to really doing it was the role-playing that happened in the class. For some of the new members, this was the first time they shared their testimony.

D. I have inadequate knowledge of the Bible. The last of these roadblocks to faith sharing is the new member's feeling of inadequacy. Often this fear centers on their perceived lack of biblical knowledge. This feeling of inadequacy is often at the point of what to say about the basics of Christianity needed for saving faith. According to Tuttle, giving the trainee the core of the gospel is often helpful (Someone 21-38). One new

member who was in the group that did not share his/her faith commented, "It's not something I've ever felt comfortable with. I feel like I'm preaching to them. I rely on my actions." This statement gives me a sense that the person feels inadequate to be a verbal witness for Jesus. This attitude of inadequacy gives an open door for feelings of fear. Many types of feelings of inadequacy arise that lead to fear such as physical appearance, shyness, age, gender difference, etc. Part of the Apostle Paul's theology in this area of perceived inadequacy is the knowledge that we are witnesses to the world through our weaknesses. Paul relays this revelation from God in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "But [the Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.'" God can use us in mighty ways when we are dependent on him because of our weakness. One person who did not share her faith gave this excuse, "I tend to be shy." Tuttle says that a person's sphere of influence is sometimes determined by his/her weakness (Personal Interview). A shy person probably has a different group of friends than an extrovert. The Apostle Paul states this truth in 1 Corinthians 12:22, "Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." A Christian may have someone in their network of friends that may only be reached by him/her.

Some personal observational reasons for the minority who either did not invite nor share their faith, even after training and encouragement to invite their friends during a One by One emphasis, are as follows: The majority of those who joined Aloma UMC were transfers from other churches including United Methodist. First, transfers often come with their own agenda and expectations of what church is supposed to be. Every Florida United Methodist pastor has heard the words, "Well, up north in my old church we did it this way." Second, some of those who joined are retirees. They come from a

generation that grew up in Christendom, an era Loren Mead describes in his book, The Once and Future Church (13). In Christendom the assumption is everyone is a Christian, and faith is a private matter. Many of the transfers to Aloma UMC come from this paradigm. Number 15, a seventy year old, longtime church member who transferred to Aloma UMC said, "I still don't share well. But I am a table leader at Alpha, a Stephen's Ministry volunteer, and I teach the kindergarten Sunday school class. I love all of it." Here is a Christian who is willing to do everything else but evangelism, because it is so far out of her comfort zone. Another possibility for the lack of evangelism in their spiritual life may be the low number of unchurched people in their social network. I cannot allow people who are uncomfortable with sharing their faith to stop me from leading the church in this area. As a leader, I know if I waited for unanimous consensus before I undertook a project, I would never start anything.

Finding #4, New Members Can Reach Their Friends for Jesus

The most important part of this study is, once the training was completed and the One by One event was implemented, whether the new members actually shared their faith and invited their friends to church. As stated above 78 percent of the new members invited a friend according to the questionnaire. Sixty-one percent of the new members surveyed shared their faith with an unchurched friend. A majority of the new members did what was asked of them. A minority of the new members did not invite a friend (22 percent) or did not share their faith (39 percent). The seventeen telephone interviewees were asked these questions: "Since the training, have you been able to share your faith with an unchurched friend?" Nine of the seventeen interviewees (about 53 percent) responded with a yes. A minister does not have to wait until the new members become

theologically literate to begin the process of helping secular people become Christians.

Finding #5, Teaching and Motivating New Members to Do Evangelism Produces Evangelists

Out of this group of new members (seventeen interviewees), two gave responses indicating they have adopted a lifestyle of evangelism. They were numbers 12 (a Christian all her life) and 17 (a new Christian). This is how number 12 explains the change in her life: “In the past I did [struggle with sharing my faith], but I am no longer embarrassed. Now I have nothing to be embarrassed about.” Number 12 answers the question if the emphasis on evangelism has affected her spiritual life, “Without a doubt! I’ve been a Methodist all my life, and Aloma is the first church I’ve attended that had a “plan” or mission statement. I never thought about sharing my faith. The relational evangelism class had a big effect on me. It changed me, and now I share whenever and wherever I can. The emphasis on evangelism changed my life.” This is number 12’s assessment on the impact of the relational evangelism training, “To be able to practice witnessing by role-playing, to be able to keep the topic to two minutes and to be genuine, to share and also listen was wonderful. I was evolving—I changed because of a class!” Number 17 and number 12 represent the two large groups of new members—those who are new Christians and those who are longtime members of church (transfers). Although the sample (seventeen) and the number of emerging evangelists (two) are small, I believe this is replicable. The pastor who emphasizes evangelism in preaching and programming will empower some of their members to use their God-given gift of evangelism. This finding was the most surprising to me.

These are number 17’s comments: “I made a commitment to go on a

(evangelism) mission next summer. I think God has called me to do this. He has been preparing me step by step. I can now be bold for God.” Number 17 said, “At first I wasn’t bold enough. As a new Christian, I was very nervous to share with anyone. I thought I had to know all the answers until I learned God uses me, and it’s now my life. It’s second nature to share my faith.” For number 17, this class helped shape the direction of his Christian discipleship. Number 17 showed how much influence pastors have over new Christian’s spiritual formation, “We were putty in your hands.”

Two evangelists out of seventeen is about the 10 percent of the population of Christians commonly thought by people who study spiritual gifts that may have the gift of evangelism. My reasoning for this change in Christian behavior is that by teaching and preaching on evangelism and empowering the new members to live out their faith by practical small steps, these gifts have been unleashed in new members 12 and 17. If this percentage holds true, then nine or ten of the ninety-six regular attending new members and possibly thirty-six of the 362 new members who went through relational evangelism training have been released to function in their God-given gift of evangelism.

Finding #6, Teaching and Motivating New Members to Evangelize Deepens Their Spiritual Growth

On the bottom of the questionnaire was the question: What changes have occurred in new members’ own self-reported spiritual growth in regards to evangelism? Six or 37 percent out of sixteen (who responded to this question) were categorized into the group: *I’m not sharing my faith, but I have a good excuse.* Evangelism was too difficult, too uncomfortable for this group to practice. Yet even those who did not share their faith did wrestle with their responsibility to be witnesses for Jesus. This group comprised those

who had the least spiritual growth from the evangelism emphasis.

Five out of sixteen, or 31 percent fit into the second category: *This has stretched me. I still can't share my faith, but I can invite my friends.* One of the interview responses was, "My comfort zone doesn't allow me to speak up when I should, but I am getting bolder, especially when I have flyers. I continue to pray for help to share my love of God." A college professor writes, "I've found that sincerity is not enough. I have to be able to answer questions with unchurched friends and acquaintances." Even though this group was still uncomfortable with sharing their faith, they were part of the majority who invited their friends to the One by One event. They seemed to take this responsibility to be witnesses for Jesus to their unchurched friends seriously.

The last group, five out of sixteen, were placed by their responses in the last group: *Sharing my faith has taken me to deeper spiritual maturity.* Some of the interview responses included: "[Sharing my faith] lifts me up because I'm doing what God wants me to." Another person who chose not to sign his/her name said, "Sharing my faith and inviting people to church ... has helped me grow spiritually by bringing my Christianity to the forefront of my daily life. It is becoming more and more a part of my daily life." A single young man writes, "I have been a member of five different United Methodist Churches in my life in Georgia, Kansas, Texas, and Florida, and this is the first church that I attended regularly that had such a commitment to witnessing and sharing my faith. I was very wary and uneasy about this at first, but now I believe this is the most important part of my spiritual life. I have shared my story and experiences with many of my male friends and believe this was helpful and beneficial to them and their relationship with God. Many of the men I have witnessed to have been moved by my testimony but are not

ready or willing to give their lives to Jesus yet. I believe my time and shared experience was not wasted, and I have planted seeds that will eventually sprout, take root, and thrive in their relationship with God.” A seventy year old single woman said, “I’ve become more aware of all those who need to be approached. We’ve made attempts to influence five relatives.” This is the group where the training had the most dramatic impact on their spiritual life. When we obey God’s wishes even when it seems uncomfortable, God draws close to us, and part of God’s nature is revealed. The Apostle Paul writes about this in Philemon verse 6, “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.” Parts of God’s nature and purpose will never be received by some Christians because they have not participated in God’s mission for the Church: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

Other Related Findings

As indicated by Table 4, Aloma UMC had an increase in attendance during the four years I was pastor. Ten years before I came (1986), the average attendance was about seven hundred. During the intervening years, the attendance at Aloma UMC steadily declined. The emphasis on evangelism described in this study helped our church to become a friendlier place for visitors. Since the majority of subjects came to Aloma UMC from reasons other than an invitation by a friend, such as location, then this impersonal attraction factor for Aloma UMC was also there during the years of decline (1986 through the summer 1996). I lost some old time members, and I lost some visitors during my tenure. A possible reason for this loss is that an emphasis on evangelism and the changes that occurred to help our services become seeker friendly is uncomfortable to

traditional United Methodists people. Some of these changes were adding three hundred thousand dollars worth of audio-visual equipment to our sanctuary, projecting the words to the hymns on the over head screens during our traditional worship, and removing the large pulpit and standing in the center to preach. As I traveled the state speaking and interacting with pastors about the changes needed to reach the secular world outside our church property, the number one roadblock to these pastors implementing the changes needed was the backlash they would receive from traditional members. Many pastors were not willing to pay the cost required to change. Some people enjoy a church with low expectations of them. I lost some visitors by requiring attendance for the Inquiry Class to join the church. This outcome is part of the honest proclamation of the faith. Many times Jesus spoke the hard truth. The consequence was that disciples left him. One of those honest statements was when Jesus said to his disciples, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). The consequence of this statement is found in verse 66, “From this time on many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.” The following statement, attributed to Steve Sjogren, pastor of Vineyard Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, resonates with my vision, “God is not so much concerned about the attendance of the church you serve. God is concerned about your church’s sending capacity.” How many Christians can you send into the world from your church to fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission the historic mission of the church?

Table 4. Primary Worship Attendance

Year	Average Attendance Sunday Morning
1986	700 (approximate)
1994	510
1995	498
1996 (the year of transition between pastors)	526
1997	596
1998	622
1999	646

Since our culture has taken a radical shift from a Christian nation to a secular one, I was curious if a traditional service was an event a new member might not invite a secular person to attend. This is much like never recommending a movie you know someone will not like. Out of the forty-one responses to the question, “Which service would you most likely recommend to your friends?” Five or 12.2 percent invited their friends to the 8:15 a.m. traditional service. Twenty-four or 58.5 percent invited their friends to the contemporary service at 9:20 a.m. Twelve or 29.3 percent invited their friends to the 11:00 traditional service. When I was appointed pastor in June 1996, the attendance at the contemporary service was about one hundred people. When I left in June 2000, the average attendance was about 220. The majority of new members were generated out of this service. Surprising to me was the small percentage of young adults in their 20-30s who preferred the traditional service. The contemporary service was not “church” to them. Most of these young adults came from a church background rather than a secular background.

The figures on profession of faith (see Table 3) do not reflect the reality of Aloma

UMC when I first arrived. The attendance for Sunday morning in June 1996 was about four hundred to four hundred fifty (if one plots the decline from 1994 through 1995 and extrapolates this attendance to June 1996), and the attendance for Sunday school was about four hundred. This high ratio of Sunday school attendance to worship attendance is very unusual for a United Methodist church. A possible reason for the closeness of worship attendance to Sunday school attendance was that the church had been in decline for the ten last years. Ten years ago the attendance averaged over seven hundred. The people who remained over the ten years were the people who had relationships with each other in a small group setting. Another reason for the high ratio of attendance worship to attendance in Sunday school was small groups who have met together for a long time are often a very unfriendly place for first-time visitors. Groups of not yet assimilated visitors are the people who usually make worship attendance higher than Sunday school. When I arrived at Aloma UMC I found very few new Christians. The higher number of professions of faith (indicated in Table) before I came does not fit with the reality I experienced at Aloma UMC when I started. Three possible reasons might explain this. One reason could be that new Christians who joined Aloma UMC quickly left the church because they could not make friends. The second reason may be that the recorded professions of faith were people who were Christians that did not have a current church membership to transfer. We now have a way to record these new members as “restored” that do not lump them in with new believers. Before 1996 we did not have that category. The third reason is that many of these profession of faiths were young men and women between the age of eleven and thirteen who were newly confirmed. The second and third reasons for the high profession of faith before 1996 are the most probable of the three in

my opinion.

Epilogue

The journey from starting fresh at Aloma UMC in June 1996 as their new pastor and leaving Aloma UMC four years later was a fruitful time of my ministry. Seeing an increase in the attendance of a church that had declined for ten years in a neighborhood that had no new housing starts was rewarding. As I mentioned earlier, growing a church in a stable neighborhood is rarely done in our Florida United Methodist churches. I attribute the growth in attendance to an intentional evangelism focus during those four years (which is also rarely done in Florida United Methodist churches). I don't think I would have been as intentional about putting an evangelistic system in place if not for this study. Part of my ongoing focus as spiritual leader of Aloma UMC meant I needed to continue the integrity of this study. This resulted not in a one-time program (a normal United Methodist approach), but was an ongoing practice at Aloma UMC.

The relational evangelism training in the Inquiry Class and the One by One events still continue at Aloma UMC. Barna echoes this reasoning saying more than a one-time program is needed to reach unchurched people:

“Ministry to unchurched people is about developing a culture within the church, not a program. Evangelism is not an activity, but a lifestyle in these churches. [To be effective] it must change the hearts of its own people so they become passionate about reaching folks who have no connection with Christ “ (116).

The once a quarter emphasis on our One by One event forced me to constantly articulate why we were trying to reach our friends for Jesus. This meant I was restating the vision of Aloma UMC at least once a quarter. Because my hectic schedule could have sidetracked me from planning to have a One by One event, the methods for this study

forced me to be consistent. Since I am a biblical preacher, and I preached on the aspects of relational evangelism during the One by One emphasis, the congregation over time understood the biblical theology of evangelism. Robinson states a simple truth that I tried to put into practice: “Unless the pastor’s teaching-preaching sounds forth the gospel and creates the atmosphere of evangelism in the church, it is unlikely that the church will become mobilized for effective outreach” (146). In my year-long travels during my sabbatical at Asbury’s Beeson Doctoral program, we were able to study large, fast-growing churches. As we listened to their senior pastors, one common thread emerged. Each of these churches found a method that worked, something that fulfilled the mission and vision of their churches. Whatever that method was (servant evangelism, small groups, need meeting ministries, media driven worship), they kept repeating it over and over. These pastors found what worked for them and kept replicating it. This was a good lesson to learn in this world of change and innovation. Change and innovation are a means to find a system that works. Once what works is found, you stop changing and start instituting.

In this rapidly secularizing nation we must find models of evangelism that work. I believe relational evangelism will be a successful approach for churches that want to reach their communities. Most people who study evangelism know that, as Hunter has stated, making new Christians necessarily involves a process “which takes place *in stages, over time.*” An ongoing relationship between friends is the ideal way for a seeker to go through these stages over time. Hunter goes on to say that most traditional churches assume that “instant” evangelism is the norm for how people become Christians (Church 154). As shown by the research in this paper, most people believe that the job of

evangelism is the work of someone else, such as the pastor. An evangelism-training course is a good way to discredit this myth. Only when we attempt to mobilize all the disciples from our congregation, rather than leave the task of evangelism to a select few, will we fulfill Jesus' Great Commission to "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:16).

I believe the first step in helping Christians evangelize the world must include training that helps people face and reduce their fears about evangelism. This was the number one hindrance to the new members in this study that kept them from sharing their faith. A successful mobilization for evangelization in our secular culture should begin with a less risky approach to evangelism, such as the relational approach, because of this fear barrier. Talking to a friend about spiritual matters is far easier than talking to a stranger. Our first responsibility as witnesses to the world is to the people we know. Unchurched people actually favor this approach to religion. According to Barna, the most preferred form of marketing by a church would be an invitation by a friend or neighbor. Sixty-three percent said the invitation would have some impact on the likelihood of them attending (107). The success of relational evangelism, confirmed by Arn and Arn's research, is that this is the normal way most Christians (75-90 percent), who are active in a church, come to faith in Christ (43).

The most serendipitous aspect of this study is the revelation that this model has enabled the gift of evangelism to surface in some of these new members. Two of the seventeen interviewed by phone now practice relational evangelism as a lifestyle. Interestingly, two of the new members, who now function in the gift of evangelism, were a longtime Christian and a new Christian. I had wrongly assumed longtime Christians functioned in their gifts. What I realize now is these gifts emerge as Christians attempt to

do ministry. In 1 Corinthians 12, Apostle Paul says the function of these gifts is to “build up the body of Christ.” I wrongly believed, as many Christians do today, that discovering your spiritual gifts is simply a matter of taking a spiritual gifts inventory. Instead I now believe spiritual gifts are latent and must be called forth, by teaching, through modeling by mature believers and by performing ministry. A Christian must take the risk to actually evangelize someone before the gift of evangelism will emerge, much like a mother bird must push her chicks out of the nest for them to learn to fly.

One of the passions of my life is to grow God’s church by reaching unchurched people. One of the by-products of this relational evangelism model is the number of people who visit from the invitation of the new members. From the research on the forty-one new members 78 percent of them (thirty-two) have invited friends who attended. The average number of visitors each new member invites who attends per year is about 2.2. What has intrigued me is the realization that I could have instituted this in my last church, Community UMC of Fruitland Park. When I left after six years, there was an average attendance of 450. Four hundred of the 450 were new members who went through the Inquiry Class. If I had instituted a relational evangelism training class at Community UMC, as I did at Aloma UMC, 312 of the new members (78 percent of the four hundred) would have generated 686 visitors per year by invitation from those new members. This is not counting the normal “drop in” visitors. Many of these new members would have become members of Community UMC.

I have learned and grown by completing this study and implementing the model. I am gratified that parts of this model actually worked. Whatever church I will serve, I will continue implementing a similar model, because this has helped me lead the church to

fulfill Jesus' mission for the Church to go and make disciples.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Member,

Would you help me evaluate the new member Inquiry Class? I will be using the responses from the questionnaire to help me with my doctoral dissertation. Please take a few moments and fill out the questionnaire below. By answering honestly, you can help me, and those pastors who read my research, to design an Inquiry Class that will be helpful to new members. I am **not evaluating you** by this questionnaire; rather, I am seeking to understand how well this approach worked. Please return it to me in the enclosed stamped & addressed envelope ASAP.

Thank you! Joe MacLaren

1) When was the approximate date you attended the Inquiry Class and joined? Please circle:
summer '96, fall '96, winter '97, spring 97, summer '97, fall '97, winter '98,
spring '98, Summer '98, fall '98, winter '99, spring '99, summer '99, fall '99

2) Did a friend initially invite you to Aloma?

yes no

O.Q. #2

3) Did you attend the two sessions given during the Inquiry Class on how to share your faith to your unchurched friends?

yes no, I only attended one of the two no, and I was unable to attend

If you answered no in question #3 skip down to question #6.

4) On a scale of five to one, (five being most helpful, one being least helpful), please circle the number that describes the value of the sessions you attended on how you share your faith.
(5 is most helpful, 1 is least helpful)

5 4 3 2 1

R.Q. #1

5) Please circle the value of the different components of the faith sharing sessions.

(5 is most helpful, 1 is least helpful)

5 4 3 2 1 Biblical background on evangelism

5 4 3 2 1 Prayer in evangelism

5 4 3 2 1 Learning to tell your own story

5 4 3 2 1 Understanding that regular people are evangelists

5 4 3 2 1 Learning the core beliefs of Christianity

5 4 3 2 1 Having a printed invitation to give to your unchurched friends

5 4 3 2 1 Having a specific event to invite your unchurched friends

5 4 3 2 1 Role-playing by sharing your story

R.Q. #1

6) Since joining the church, have you invited an unchurched friend to one of our "One by One" events, such as a worship service or to our dramatic musicals at Christmas or Easter?

yes, if yes please estimate the number of people you invited _____, how many attended _____

no

R.Q. #2

7) Which service would you most likely recommend to your friends? 8:15, 9:20, 11:00

8) Since the Inquiry Class have you led someone to accept Jesus as their savior?
 yes, if yes how many? 1 2 3 4 5 no, but I attempted to share my faith no
R.Q. #2

9) How has the challenge to share your faith and invite someone to church influenced your own spiritual growth? Please share your thoughts on the bottom or back of this paper:
R.Q. #3

Name: _____ (This is optional. There is no need to sign the questionnaire if you prefer to remain anonymous.) **Would you be open to participating in a phone interview to follow up this questionnaire?**
 yes (*Phone number* _____), no

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONS FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

- (RQ1) 1. When you first visited Aloma, who or what was responsible for your visit?
2. When did you join the church?
 3. Before entering the Inquiry Class, how did you feel about sharing your faith with a friend?
- (RQ1) 1. Can you recall when you sat through 2 sessions on how to share your faith with a friend?
2. Of what you learned, what was most helpful? Why? What stuck with you?
- (RQ1) 1. Do you remember when you were asked to pray for an unchurched friend during our One-By-One event?
2. How did you identify that person?
- (RQ2) 1. You were asked to give an invitation to a friend. What was it like to give an invitation to your friend?
3. What was their response?
- (RQ1) 1. As you think back over the training, what did you find particularly helpful?
2. Is there something that you wish was covered during the new member training?
 3. Are there any other suggestions?
- (RQ2) 1. Since the training, have you been able to share your faith with an unchurched friend? Can you describe the encounter? How did you feel? What was your friend's response?
- (RQ3) 1. What were the struggles you had in sharing your faith with an unchurched friend?
- (RQ3) 1. Over the last four years, when Joe was the pastor, Aloma put a lot of emphasis on evangelism with our One by One events, new member training, with Joe's preaching, and an invitation to go on a Celebrate Jesus mission. Did this emphasis on evangelism affect your own spiritual growth?
2. In what ways did you grow spiritually from this emphasis on evangelism?

APPENDIX C

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING

- 1) List below the words (adjectives) that would describe an evangelist, as understood by the world outside the church.

1	7
2	8
3	9
4	10
5	11
6	12

- 2) List below the words (adjectives) that best describe the person most responsible for your being a disciple of Jesus.

1	7
2	8
3	9
4	10
5	11
6	12

Notice the difference between these two lists...there is no crossover! The people in list two are the real evangelists, these types of people lead people to Christ.

- 3) “I want to ask you this question: Will you be this kind of person for someone you know?”
- 4) One of the most important things for you to understand is that Jesus came to tell us the good news. Evangelism comes from the Greek word for **GOSPEL**. It can be translated as “proclaiming the good news” or bearing the good news.” Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus again and again emphasizes the importance of helping people understand the good news. Parables like the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son are examples of Jesus communicating God’s concern for lost people.

*Note: This two hour training in relational evangelism is given with my comments and underlined answers in bold. These answers and comments were not included in the

handout given the new members. You are welcome to photocopy and use the following in your training.

Five Scripture Verses on Evangelism

1) Matt. 28:18 (**Please read**) *The Great Commission*

Is evangelism essential to the stated purpose Jesus gave his church? What is the key word mandating evangelism in this text? **“GO” Give me some examples of how our church fulfills Jesus’ mission to “go and makes disciples.”**

2) John 1:43-49 (**Please read**) *The calling of the first disciples*

Nathanael wanted an argument from Philip. Philip responded in a different way...How? **Instead of an argument he offered a relationship with Jesus.**

What did Philip want for Nathanael? **To introduce him to Jesus**

The normal way people become Christians is in the context of **relationships**. In any church you measure, **75 to 90%** of the congregation will say that the most important factor in their becoming a Christian is a friend or relatives influence in their lives. The next biggest % is the influence of a pastor at **5-6%**. **1%** said they became a Christian because of an evangelism committee visit. The percentage of people that said Billy Graham or some evangelist was the most important influence was less than **5%**. The Biblical support for one person sharing their faith with another is overwhelming. Of the 40 people who suffered from some disease that Jesus cures in the New Testament, **34** were either brought to Jesus by a friend, or Jesus was taken to them by a friend or relative.

3) Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23 (**Please read**) *Parable of the Sower*

What types of people get to hear the Word of God (seed)? **Everybody, good, bad, worldly, worriers, insincere, lovers of things**

Should we be sparing in throwing the seed (telling about Jesus)? **No! The Bible says we should always be prepared to give the hope that we have through Jesus (1 Peter 3:15).**

4) Luke 10:2 (**Please read**) *Prayers to the Lord of the Harvest*

Who helps a church to find people willing to share the good news? **God helps a church.** If a person wanted their church to reach lost people what would they do? **Pray!**

5) 1 Peter 3:15 (**Please read**) *Peter’s instruction for witnessing* “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have [sharing your faith]. But do this with gentleness and respect [as a friend to a friend].”

Who is to be a witness to the good news of God’s Son? **Some are very good at it having the gift of evangelism. All Christian disciples have the responsibility to share the good news. Why? You may be the only person God has to share the good news. A person with the gift of evangelism may not have a relationship with your friend. Remember**

your list of the person most responsible for you coming to Christ? Did they have the gift of evangelism? (probably not)

One of the chief stumbling blocks today in the effective telling of the good news to our society is the common belief in most church congregations that evangelism is the responsibility of the **pastor or staff**. There are only three references to those who are “evangelist” (with the special gift of evangelism), while the scripture contains over 120 references to and exhortations for all the members to preach the gospel and make disciples.

IN WHAT MANNER ARE WE TO GIVE OUR TESTIMONY?

Active listening is one of the most important parts of relational evangelism. Active Listening shows love and respect for a person. Active listening helps us move to the next step in relational evangelism by recognizing a felt need in the person’s life. Research has shown that most people come to faith in Jesus because he meets a felt need in their life. Here is a short list of some of those needs:

Searching for meaning and reality, hurting out of some disappointing relationship, emotionally broken, lonely, separated, hypocritical, masked, pretending, sinful, in bondage to fear, despairing, helpless, needing a touch from God, unable to believe in a good God.

Our task, therefore, is to establish a relationship out of which needs can surface, and then seek to apply the gospel truth to meet those needs. The great need we all have and that makes possible a person being able to open their heart to you is the need to be loved. Real love means that if it is in your power to meet their need (if naked clothe them, if hungry feed them, if in prison visit them) then you fulfill that need. As felt needs surface we can apply the gospel naturally. Most people are unaware that “their deepest needs are ultimately spiritual.” One way to bridge from felt needs to spiritual things is to give a witness from our own autobiography, born of personal experience.

Faith Sharing Exercise: in two minutes or less share an experience where God met the deep need of your life. Please break into groups of two. Find someone other than your spouse or friend to share.

Effective Evangelism - Relational Witnessing 2

1. Fill in the names of unchurched people you know in these spheres of influence in your life.

Home

Work

Social Groups

Church

2) Sharing your story. Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26) (**Please read**) **What was Paul like before meeting Jesus? What happened in Paul's encounter with Jesus? What was Paul like after meeting Jesus?**

- _____ (The person I was before meeting Jesus.)
- _____ (What happened when I met Jesus.)
- _____ (The change in my life after meeting Jesus.)

3) The three key elements of my story are....

- (before)_____
- (when)_____
- (after)_____

4) Things to avoid in sharing your story....

- (a) Using language that no one understands - **Christianeze**
- (b) Being **Overly concerned with details...story too long**
- (c) Over **dramatize** what happened
- (d) A **self righteous or Holier than thou** attitude

5) Communication theory, how we really communicate to others.

Non Verbal Language: 92 %

Tone of voice

Body language

Words: 8 %

Sharing your testimony

Break out in groups of two to share your own testimony. This should be done in two minutes or less.

There is an easy way to remember how to share the essence of the gospel.

Three words to remember in order:

Sorry

Thank you

Please

I am **sorry** for the things I have done wrong in my life. I now turn from everything, which I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank you that you now offer me this gift of forgiveness and your spirit. I now receive that gift.

Please forgive me. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit. Amen

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