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Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Thesis Project

**GRACE FOR THE INTERIM: A SACRAMENTS-BASED
CURRICULUM OF TRANSITION FOR PC(USA) CONGREGATIONS**

by

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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry

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In Christ’s service and for God’s glory,

Jon H. Reinink

Louisville, KY (April 2019)

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Boston University School of Theology, 2019

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ABSTRACT

Mission studies are checkpoints in the lifecycle of many Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations yet these curricula of transition need an overhaul to ensure their efficacy and to identify potential improvements. By evaluating several behavioral models (including Quinn's Advanced Change Theory, and leadership models by Fluker and Olsen), the author constructs a curriculum centered around a congregational study of Baptism and the Lord's Supper that fulfills the function of a mission study. In so doing, he provides an alternative for churches seeking to achieve the requirements of such a study while equipping them to discern God's call in the ever-changing world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
GLOSSARY	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: THE PC(USA) & MISSION STUDIES.....	11
A. Introduction.....	12
B. The PC(USA): Almost Designed for Mission Studies.....	13
C. Mission Studies: Recounting 50 Years of Self-Assessment	19
D. A Model Mission Study’s Purpose, Intent, and Necessities	25
CHAPTER THREE: LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE	32
A. Introduction.....	33
B. A Model for Organizational Change Guided by Leaders Modeling Change: Advanced Change Theory (Quinn).....	34
C. Leadership Formation: Ethical and Spiritual Role Modeling (Fluker)	53
D. Devotions, Fellowship, & Hospitality: Board as Spiritual Leaders Model (Olsen) 57	
E. Mission Studies: Transformative Leadership For, and Through, a Congregation ...	60
F. Who: Transforming Various Levels of Leadership.....	63
G. Practically Speaking: The Structure.....	65
H. Acquiring Adaptive Adjustments: Finding the Transformational Changes.....	67

I. Summary: A Working Mission Study Model to Inspire Change	70
CHAPTER FOUR: SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY	72
A. Introduction	74
B. Sacramental Theology: What & Why?	75
C. The Symbols & Significances	82
D. Integrating Sacraments & Change Theory: ACT’s Internalized Principles.....	87
CHAPTER FIVE: IMAGINED APPLICATION & ANTICIPATED IMPLICATIONS	89
A. Introduction	89
B. Imagining the Implementation of a Model Mission Study	90
C. So What?: The Implications.....	105
APPENDIX A: A MODEL CURRICULUM.....	113
Introduction to the Project Reader	113
Curriculum Overview	113
Getting Started: Notes for the First Wave (Primary Leadership)	126
The Gatherings: Wave 1	129
The Gatherings: Wave 2	137
The Gatherings: Wave 3	161
The Gatherings: Wave 4	175
APPENDIX B: The Twelve Distilled Values of the Sacraments	180
APPENDIX C: Sample Hand Out Resources.....	182
APPENDIX D: Facets of our Faith: An Exploration of the Sacraments	183

A. Introduction	183
B. Overview	183
C. What Are The Sacraments?.....	185
D. Symbols and Significances	190
BIBLIOGRAPHY	225
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	229

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CNC Congregational Nominating Committee
- COM Committee on Ministry
- FPCS First Presbyterian Church Springfield
- HLL..... High-Level Leadership
- ISP..... Interim Senior Pastor
- MSCC Mission Study Coordinating Committee
- PC(USA)..... Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

GLOSSARY

Board of Deacons / Board of Trustees: The elected leaders of the congregation who, under authority of the *Session of Elders*, manage other aspects of congregational life.

The Board of Deacons is a board of lay members who are nominated by the *CNC*, elected by the congregation, and ordained to the office of Deacon by the Session on behalf of the denomination to lead the congregation in ministries of caring, outreach, and mission. The Board of Trustees is a board of lay members who are nominated by the *CNC*, elected by the congregation, and empowered by the Session to manage the financial and physical assets of the congregation. Note that, under the constitution of the PC(USA), congregations are only required to have a Session of Elders; both of these boards are optional, though very common.

Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC): A committee of the congregation (i.e. independent of the *Session of Elders*) consisting of lay members (usually including an active member of Session and a pastor, *ex officio*) responsible for formally nominating members to fulfill various elected roles within the life of the congregation. Their responsibilities include ensuring the leadership roles are filled by members representing the breadth of the congregation's racial, cultural, and gender identities, as well as acting as an independent balance to the Session of Elders.

Councils of the Church: The four councils of the church are the four primary levels of government who, working together, are able to embody the full image of what the Church is called to be. Locally, congregations are governed by the *Board of Elders*. Regionally, congregations serve together in a *Presbytery*. The presbyteries gather together in 16

different geographic synods. And the national body, meeting every other year, is called the General Assembly.

High-Level Leadership (HLL): For this project, this will refer to the *Session of Elders*, *Board of Deacons*, and *Board of Trustees*.

Mid Council: A term that refers to the two mid-level councils of the denomination: *Presbytery* and *Synod*.

Mission Study Coordination Committee (MSCC): The team of congregation-elected lay leaders who manage the mission study process. In most cases, this is a slate of lay members, nominated by Elders and the pastor, vetted by the Congregational Nomination Committee and Committee on Representation, and elected by the congregation.

Presbytery: For most of the denomination, the Presbytery is the primary mid council serving as the body that reviews the ministry of its member congregations, encouraging them in their ministry and ensuring they are being faithful participants in the mission of the Church.

Primary Leadership: For this project, this will refer to the *Senior Pastor* and *MSCC*.

Senior Pastor / Interim Senior Pastor (ISP): The Senior Pastor primary clergy person with responsibility to manage the oversight of mission study process. For most congregations, this is their only clergy person and therefore known as the Pastor. For congregations in a time of transition, their primary leadership will be an Interim Pastor or Interim Senior Pastor. For some, it is an executive pastor, associate pastor, parish associate, or lay pastor. For the purpose of this project, “Senior Pastor” will be used to

represent the primary pastor of a congregation and “Interim Senior Pastor” will represent the primary pastor of a congregation in transition.

Session of Elders: The equivalent of a corporate Board of Directors, this is the established leadership of the congregation comprised of lay members who are ordained as PC(USA) Ruling Elders. The Session is a required leadership board, as per the constitution of the PC(USA).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What Should Have Helped...

First Presbyterian Church of Springfield (FPCS)¹ was still in shock as the process of finding a new Senior Pastor began. In the span of eight months, the congregation lost both their Senior Pastor, who had served as Pastor and moral compass of the community for nearly two decades, and their Associate Pastor of three years. FPCS was a congregation with several factors working in its favor: its size (having nearly 1,000 members), its history (being established in the community for over two-and-a-half centuries), and its wealth (with decades of financial stability, endowment growth, and recognition for generosity within the community). While the pastors left on good terms, and it had stability and history in their favor, the fear of change tainted people's view of the future, increasing anxiety among its membership and leadership.

As the leadership board of FPCS began writing up job descriptions for the newly-vacated positions, the presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM), the regional governing body, requested that the congregation first complete a mission study. The idea was that this self-study would give the congregation a better understanding of themselves and the direction of their ministry so their next pastors would be the best fits to serve and lead them. However, while its intent was to help, the mission study became burdensome and misdirected, assisting the congregation in describing a skewed perception of itself and doing very little to guide the congregation through the transition.

¹ To protect the stories and identities of congregations, First Presbyterian Church of Springfield is used as a characterization of experiences I had or saw while serving in and researching congregations going through times of transition.

Congregations have a perception of themselves, their ministry, and their communities that are not always as accurate as they might think. The life and rhythm of congregations can cause them to easily settle into habits that lose their theological significance if not regularly assessed. The demographics of the community surrounding a congregation can change without the congregation even recognizing it. The ministries of a congregation may continue to be geared for the congregation as it was decades ago, even though its own demographics, abilities, gifts, and needs have changed dramatically. For example, FPCS saw itself as a collective of young families in a small, stable city that practiced certain activities annually—like an Easter banquet and a Christmas play. However, the congregation's reality was that it was an aging congregation in a town that was seeing industrial sector growth and an increase in the number of professionals who commuted to a bigger city nearby for work. Its annual events were child-focused for a community with fewer young children, and those events were laden with non-Christian gatherings (including the Easter bunny visiting an annual Easter banquet) and holiday activities that lacked meaning or theological significance (including a Christmas play that avoided the birth of Christ). This congregation was unaware of its community and its activities had become repetitious traditions vacant of the theological depth that inspired their original chartering organization: a community of Presbyterians serving God by serving others in Christ's name and following Christ's example.

In the PC(USA), many congregations will regularly perform a mission study to give themselves a perspective on themselves and their surrounding community that allows for adjustment to best address the needs, skills, and abilities of their congregation

and their neighborhood. It allows for self-assessment and recalibration to ensure the congregation is best addressing its resources and skills with the setting and needs surrounding it. Most of these congregations will do a mission study in times of transition—whenever a pastor leaves, or before one is hired—to gain an understanding of their leadership needs. The new pastor or interim pastor can then naturally enter the time of transition and ensure appropriate steps are taken to adjust the congregation’s life and ministry to meet the identified needs and abilities.

The Mission Study Coordinating Committee (MSCC) of First Presbyterian Church of Springfield put some convincing work into fulfilling the mission study that was required of it. It surveyed some members, evaluated local census data, and interviewed some community leaders. It looked at city council meeting minutes, identified trends in business and resident statistics for the community, and summarized the results into a concise report. The report was presented to the Session of Elders and to the congregation at the appropriate meetings, it was accepted and approved by these bodies, and it was accepted by their presbytery’s Committee on Ministry, the committee appointed to confirm and supervise these kinds of transitions. Once complete, the congregation’s leadership promptly set aside the report and continued its hiring without considering any of the results that had come from the report! It had done the study. It completed the required task. It was permitted by COM to proceed to the interview phase of hiring a minister. However, the average member of the congregation had no idea that the study was even completed, let alone what the resulting report said. That report—approved at a meeting by the congregation in a multi-point motion without

conversation—was acknowledged but not understood. There was no engagement with the results. The mission study had been done, but the transformational work of the self-study was never achieved and it was actually subverted.

In going through the motions, the congregation had put on the façade of having done the mission study assessments. It presented a report of who it was—or who it believed itself to be—and hired an interim pastor upon the basis of that report. However, the congregation had little-to-no investment in the report's results, leaving the recommendations unimplemented. Further, it did not accurately represent the congregation, and so the interim pastor who was hired to support the congregation through the transition was subsequently fired for not being a “good fit,” even though he fit the profile based on the mission study report. The congregation's MSCC felt that it had failed in its leadership selection and that the church was now failing in its ministry. Some began looking for other congregations with whom they could worship without the stress of a pastoral search, while other members decided to show their discontent by withholding financial pledges they had made for the annual budget. The study was completed, but the internal shift had not yet been made and the results could not be implemented. Furthermore, the failure of change through the mission study caused the congregation more pain than if it had never been done.

In serving several congregations in various roles during their times of transition, I have been able to see the results of inadequate mission studies firsthand. I have been on staff or volunteering at three different congregations in the last decade as each worked through the mission study process and all were severely lacking in one area or another,

leading to a more harmful experience than a helpful one. In my current role, I work for the national office of the denomination and am able to support congregational leaders as they do their local work. This role naturally lends itself to extending help to congregations experiencing times of transition and needing extra support from the denominational staff.

Despite its important role in regular congregational life, the mission study process itself has not been evaluated or redesigned in recent decades to appropriately address its intended purposes for congregations in America in this day and age. In speaking to a few professionals in the PC(USA) who are familiar with the process of training leaders who facilitate mission studies, it became abundantly clear that there are very few resources for this process. The PC(USA)'s national staff member who works closest with training ministry professionals on the topic shared that she knew of very few complete and robust curricula.² She shared that since the requirement for its practice is officially mandated by regional—and not national—bodies, this kind of curriculum should therefore be managed by presbyteries and synods. Because of the placement of this responsibility, there is no centralized collection or source of resources. She noted that every community leader uses his/her own materials, and every trainer of these leaders finds his/her own books or curriculum. One of my colleagues in ministry spent years training ministers and leaders in the art of transitional ministry and mission studies. She shared with me that she did not know of any available resources. She tended to cobble together her own materials using

² This conversation took place before her departure from her position in Fall 2017. San Dawna Ashley, conversation with author, August 1, 2017.

activities and resources she happened upon throughout the years with some of those resources dating back many decades.³

Furthermore, there simply are no mission study curricula that approach the process of congregational self-evaluation and change in a way that encourages deep or adaptive change with a theologically-robust foundation. Mission study curricula are few and far between. Resources that exist are sparse, dated, and lack a level of implementation, integration, and impact that they should have. Leaders facilitating these studies are under-resourced and sources rarely utilize organizational behavior or leadership theories that have been developed in recent years. Presbyteries, while responsible for these materials, often look to the national offices for resources. Leaders doing this work are in need of helpful and robust resources that inspire reflection and open a community to change.

Chapter II of this project will begin by discussing the PC(USA) and the history of mission studies as they have been used and presented in congregations. This survey will identify the history and intent of these studies since their prevalence rose in the 1950s. The project will analyze resources provided by presbyteries to congregations and by the denomination to transitional leaders. Having gained an overview of how PC(USA) congregations have traditionally been approaching mission studies and having read resources produced by transitional ministry leaders in the past, I will develop an overview of the intent and foundation for the development of mission studies as well as paint a

³ Conversation with the Rev. Cheryl Montgomery, instructor for the Interim Ministry Training of the Synods of Mid-Atlantic and Lincoln Trails. Cheryl Montgomery, conversation with author, August 9, 2017.

background for the environment into which this curriculum will be speaking. This will provide the historical and contextual background for the curriculum that is presented.

In considering the curriculum gap and the anemic performance of the programs that do exist, two primary factors arise: the theological and biblical foundations of the mission study are almost always lacking or weak; and there is little connection between the mission study and the organizational development intent of it. A foundation in theology provides philosophical footing in the purpose that allows the members to “buy into” it, and organizational development theories give teeth that promote lasting change.

Mission studies, when done well, are innately theological as they explore the Church’s role in the world. They force the congregation to name who they are and explain what they do; namely, who they are and what they do in relation to God. They apply theology to the congregation’s existence and actions. It takes the congregation’s worship, service, and fellowship, and encourages it to consider those elements through the lens of what we know of God and what we know God expects of the Church. In so doing, the congregation is practicing an understanding of theology as it applies to everyone within that worshiping community.

As current mission study curricula lack an approach that facilitates change and significant integration of the study’s results into the life of the community, time will be spent considering transformational leadership models and organizational change theories applicable to congregational life. Chapter III will consider models for leadership and tools developed by Walter Fluker, Charles Olsen, Ronald Heifetz, and Robert Quinn. Elements of their work will inform the process and elements of the curriculum developed

for congregations approaching a time of transition. This chapter will be quite extensive in the material that it covers but it will identify an appropriate structure upon which the sacramental theology can grasp and take hold for maximum development impact.

As the project works to approach the congregation's existence in a more theological way, a connection with the sacraments can prove helpful in shedding theological light on their work and ministry. While sacramental theology is not the only lens through which this can be done, its tactile experiences, regular appearance in worship, and significant role in the theology of PC(USA) lends itself to being a natural catalyst for this work. More significantly, the symbolism and meaning behind the Lord's Supper and Baptism run deep with understanding of our identity in Christ, our mission from God, and our ministry with the Holy Spirit. The theology of these practices presents fertile ground for a community to explore its identity and ministry in the context of its local community and beyond. Additionally, appealing to a higher purpose or reason for this study and change can give a better opportunity for members to buy into the process. For these reasons, this project will pair the work of understanding a community's purpose for existence with a study of sacramental theology in Chapter IV.

The final chapter functions as an interpretive lens that will step back to consider this project's implementation and potential impact. The curriculum that is developed as part of this project, with its supporting information and resources in the appendices of this project, is not part of the argument of this thesis and neither are they part of this project's evaluation, however their inclusion is integral to supporting the thesis. Chapter V serves to emphasize this through interpretation and reflection. The actual

implementation and evaluation of the final curriculum by professionals in the field and in test congregations is not part of the scope of this project but is part of the greater timeline of this ministry with initial evaluations expected in the remainder of 2019. This curriculum, then, is a first iteration and will certainly be subject to evaluation, adjustment, and personalization for any given community.

Further, this project is intended to be used in the ministry context of the PC(USA), as that is the author's primary locale of ministry and service. The curriculum has a limited range of activities and study materials, given the constraints of the project, but future iterations of this curriculum may include optional substitutes or adaptations for alternative ministry settings or non-PC(USA) communities. This first edition of the curriculum has been developed to be used in a standard, average-sized parish context, but the nature of each community is so unique that creativity in its use and flexibility in its structure allow for non-normative contexts or congregations in which this model of ministry evaluation may not work.⁴

The ultimate desire is that this mission study curriculum will help congregation leaders understand their communities and identify changes that can, should, or will happen in their ministry and best prepare for that. The curriculum will give leaders the opportunity to use sacramental theology to identify key components of their ministry and assist the congregation in understanding and owning those concepts as part of their identity. It will then help that congregation use their understanding of the sacraments and

⁴ The PC(USA) has approximately 1.4 million members in 9300 congregations with an average of 153 members per congregation. Research Services of the PC(USA), A Corp., "Church Trends | Year At a Glance: Overview," 2019, accessed February 28, 2019. <https://church-trends.pcusa.org/overall/pcusa/overview/>.

the values derived from the symbolism of the Sacraments as the foundation upon which they can build the rest of their identity and ministry direction. This will equip them to refocus their ministry, identify appropriate leadership changes, and prepare them for the next chapter of ministry together.

This curriculum brings together the PC(USA)'s rich sacramental theology with current theories about leadership development and organizational behavior with the intent of equipping leaders of congregations with the tools to identify the strengths and needs of an ever-changing community. Congregations will have a time of learning, reflection, and introspection, followed by a time of discernment and visioning, ending in a better understanding of their identity, goals, and leadership needs for the future. As communities use these materials and themselves grow and change, this material will seek to be amended and improved so more of our communities can be better equipped to do this important work.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PC(USA) & MISSION STUDIES

“We believe what?!”

Despite the time of transition, the regular life of the congregation continued moving along, including the election, preparation, examination, and installation of officers. In recent years, the new Elders and Deacons were given several weeks of training before they were officially ordained and installed to their respective offices. In recent years, this training was run by the now-departed senior pastor. In his absence, I was asked to lead several classes, most of which covered the PC(USA) constitution: the Book of Confessions and Book of Order.

From the moment the first elder arrived in the classroom for that first Sunday lesson, I knew I had uncovered something of a sore subject. The first elder-elect arrived ten minutes early to share that, if the Heidelberg Catechism contains such terrible condemnations of all Roman Catholics, and if this is indeed the “law” for our denomination, she would be resigning immediately. Not thirty seconds after her freshly-aired threat of resignation, another elder-elect came in sharing his concern about the potential for ultra-liberal influences that could be contrived from the Belhar Confession, recently proposed to be the newest addition to the Book of Confessions. What ensued was a full ninety minutes of identifying concerns and talking through them. In so doing, we were able to define what the “law” and polity of the denomination looks like, and what we believe about God’s calling to continually interpret what God is saying to us through Scripture and other statements of the past. As hearts and minds began to settle,

the question lingered, “How did we not know that these statements were part of being Presbyterian?”

It became clear to those present that FPCS had undeniably, albeit totally unintentionally, lived in a certain shadow of ignorance and drifted from the traditional identity of being Presbyterian. Questions often surfaced asking things like, “We believe what?!” and, “What does the presbytery do to help us anyway?” But when we worked through the PC(USA)’s understanding of our connectionality and our calling to serve the world in Christ’s name alongside one another in ministry, our beliefs made a lot of sense. And when a member filed a harassment case against a church staff member, the presbytery expertly guided a judicial process that aired the concerns and began restoring trust.

Being Presbyterian is an identity that certainly brings headaches, but it also brings great structure and wholistic theology. However, just like most things in life, after a while, every PC(USA) congregation needs a tune-up or realignment to ensure it is on track and functioning properly.

A. Introduction

To aid with presenting a model mission study process for PC(USA) congregations, it is necessary to present the setting and history of the denomination as it relates to mission studies and transitions within ministry settings. This chapter will begin with a generalized description of the nature and culture of enquiry that is part of the PC(USA) and how they impact the mission study process and what a mission study should include. I will then discuss the history of mission studies as they arose through the

development of the field of transitional ministry with a review of models and examples of mission studies that have been used by presbyteries and transitional ministry professionals in the PC(USA). This chapter will close by summarizing the findings and identifying what a mission study's purpose, intent, and basic necessities should be, and, in turn, what this project's model mission study will aim to achieve.

B. The PC(USA): Almost Designed for Mission Studies

The structure and culture of the PC(USA) lend themselves to the mission study process and necessitate its proper use as a tool for self-evaluation and facilitation of change. From the social norms and principles that arise from the denomination's history and culture to the collective committee supervision structure that oversees ministry leadership in local congregations, mission studies are a natural process to surface in the regular life of Presbyterian congregations. Collectively, the history, culture, polity, and leadership structures are part of a complex identity that clearly needs a mission study to regulate and recalibrate the life and development of PC(USA) congregations.

The PC(USA) traces its roots to the Reformed tradition of Protestant theology. Initiated by Martin Luther and further refined by John Calvin and John Knox, the Presbyterian tradition finds certain principles to be central to its existence. Among those principles are the phrase *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (the Church reformed and always to be reformed), and the encouragement to ask hard questions about elements of our faith.⁵ These two principles inspire us to ask difficult questions as we regularly and

⁵ Presbytery of the Pines Committee on Ministry "Guidelines for Congregational Mission Study/Congregational Survey," 2005, accessed July 1, 2017, http://www.pinespby.org/uploads/2/7/8/1/27812375/congregational_mission_statement.pdf.

continually seek to respond to God in an ever-changing world. The mission study process should facilitate that continual response adjustment. Furthermore, the denomination's polity employs a system of checks-and-balances to decentralize power and voice of one human and requires God's voice to be spoken through the voices of God's people united. (This is not dissimilar from the political system of the United States of America, designed by people familiar with Presbyterianism, where power and ability are distributed to ensure the voice of the People is heard.⁶) These inherent checks and balances create space where a mission study makes sense to balance a congregation's understanding of their calling and changing leadership needs with the necessary oversight from the higher governing bodies without too much perceived interference.⁷ The mission study is the tool that is used in these moments to create pause, prompt the checks and balances to clear, and reevaluate new direction and purpose.

1. Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda

First, as offspring of the Protestant Reformation, the Presbyterian tradition readily echoes the cry of that movement of 1517 that the Church is reformed and ever reforming. Holding firm to the declaration in Romans and I Corinthians, we take seriously the commands to "consider your call," and to ever "be transformed by the renewing of your

⁶ It is often said that the Founding Fathers were influenced by Presbyterian principles, though it is more accurate to say that Presbyterians influenced the Founding Fathers, and the Founding Fathers helped refined Presbyterianism. See Leah Farish, "From Confession to Constitution: How the Presbyterians Shaped the First Amendment," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 2010): 319-338.

⁷ Every Presbytery—the council one level above the congregation—has a Committee or Commission on Ministry who certifies any congregation's preparation process as "complete" before the congregation is permitted to formally begin the search for a new, permanent pastor. Any COM should notice and address inadequate or hasty preparation.

minds.”⁸ As communities that center around the practice of rituals, and relatively-static liturgical calendars and Scripture lectionaries, congregations are liable to settle into a rhythm and tradition that is anything but transformative, dynamic, or renewing. Rituals can become habits. Traditions can become meaningless. Theological value can be lost as the steady rhythm of seasons erodes away the meaning and significance. Instead, congregations need to intentionally reflect on their practices, activities, and ministry on a regular basis so they can consider the greater emphasis of their ministry and the purpose behind their work and activities. They must consider the calling God has given to the congregation and why they are doing what they are doing. This regular interpretation of tradition—an activity that is integrated into most mission study curricula—will ensure that the tradition maintains its meaning and intent without becoming mundane, so attention can be given to any changing or growing areas in the congregation and community to which God may be drawing their attention.

2. Always Asking the Questions

Secondly, in addition to this Reformation standard, the PC(USA) is a denomination that inherently values continuous learning, critically engaging with what is preached and taught, and asking questions of our personal faith that cause us to wrestle with what we believe so we can claim our faith more wholeheartedly and earnestly. I have had conversations with a number of Presbyterians who joined the faith tradition later in life with this principle as the deciding factor—it was inspirational that a

⁸ I Corinthians 1:26; Romans 12:2, NRSV.

denomination permits and even encourages worshippers to question what is taught by religious leaders and what is found in the Bible in an effort to strengthen their personal faith. An element of the roots of Presbyterianism, reaching as far back as Martin Luther and the first shift away from 16th Century Catholicism by the Protestant movement, is the ability for adherents to question what is being taught. Because of this ethical obligation to ask questions and engage all aspects of faith life critically, Presbyterians find the role of education to be central to their existence. In fact, the PC(USA) *Book of Order* says that the Church is “called to continue the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ” through Christian Education, “nurturing [its members] through all seasons and transitions of life.”⁹ As congregations pursue this calling to probe questions of faith and nurture their members in Christian life, mission studies create a unique learning and formation opportunity. Mission studies are an occasion to probe what congregations believe about their reason for existence. They ask them to consider key theological truths about their calling. They create space to explore possibilities for ministry and compel research into the communities they serve. Mission studies are rich with theological exploration and learning opportunities. To miss the opportunity to perform a thorough mission study—or to ignore the opportunity altogether—would be to miss a moment of growth, nurture, and development in a season of transition in the life of a congregation and therefore a failure to fulfill a call Christ gives to the Church.

⁹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2017), 112.

3. *The Checks & Balances*

Third, the structure of the PC(USA) includes checks and balances of authority designed to ensure that regular self-evaluation is occurring. To show this, we can review some basic political structure of the denomination. In the PC(USA), local congregations are responsible for local governance and ensuring that ministry within the congregation and community are following the general tenets of the Presbyterian faith as expressed in Scripture and its constitution. Elected leaders in the local congregation are ordained as elders who, for set terms, supervise the programming, operation, and ministry of the congregation. Representatives from the elders of each congregation along with pastors within a specific region, collectively create the presbytery. The presbytery is responsible for chartering or closing congregations, maintaining the credentials of clergy (including ordaining, defrocking, transferring, and retiring), and a few other key elements with regard to higher governing bodies, including the election of representatives to the biennial General Assembly of the PC(USA).¹⁰ According to the constitution of the PC(USA), congregations are to seek, identify, and select their pastoral staff, but the presbytery is responsible for the transferring of credentials and formalizing of the relationship between the pastor and congregation. A congregation must vote to hire a pastor, but a presbytery must agree to that hiring and the pastor must be examined for membership if their credentials are not already held within the region. The varied councils of the denomination have clear responsibilities that ensure a balance of authority

¹⁰ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), "PC(USA) Structure and Governing Bodies: How it Works," 2008, accessed February 8, 2018, https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/howitworks.pdf.

with space and time for the Holy Spirit to influence and adjust the direction and energy of the institution.

Mission studies work to cue the various and appropriate councils to reflect and respond to the life of the congregation and presbytery to ensure that the mission of the Church is upheld in each worshiping community. With the complexities that exist in the identifying, selecting, and evaluating any pastoral appointment, it is in the best interest of oversight committees in each presbytery to ensure that the congregation is both prepared for a new pastor and aware of the qualities that their new pastor should have, for the protection and assured ministry success of both the pastor and the congregation. The presbytery should ensure that the congregation is truly ready for change and not in a stage of grief, mourning, or conflict (often depending on the grounds for the dissolution of the previous pastoral relationship). They should also ensure that the congregation has created a job description for their leadership position that accurately describes their community's needs, areas of strength, and desired areas of growth. A mission study, when done well, ensures that these elements are researched, identified, evaluated, and later, reevaluated for progress to ensure, or at least promote, success for both the new pastor and the congregation, from the perspective of a transition.

As congregations live into the cultural and structural realities of their denomination, mission studies simply make sense. As an institution that is "reformed and always to be reformed," congregations can use mission studies to facilitate the identification of areas of change or reformation so they can be sensitive to God's changing calling to the Body of Christ in an ever-changing world. Those roots in the

Reformation helped the Presbyterians become a community that valued evaluation and education, so the mission study process falls naturally into the laps of Presbyterians who seek to ask hard questions about their existence and identity as congregations that worship and serve in particular communities while learning more about their faith. And the mission study supports the political structure of the PC(USA) as it cues and triggers responses and evaluations by various councils to ensure that God's will is being lived out through the congregation. Mission studies exist, therefore, not only as a potential tool for congregations, but as a natural and even necessary tool for congregations and presbyteries to use as they seek to be a PC(USA) congregation in the world.

C. Mission Studies: Recounting 50 Years of Self-Assessment

The use of mission studies is not well-documented, but it is likely that they were primarily developed and used in the context of transitional ministry.¹¹ The history of transitional ministry and the mission study process is quite new, dating back only to the 1960s with the first known history of transitional ministry being recorded in a terminal paper for a doctor of ministry student in 2009.¹² The background on the development and use of mission studies is therefore sparse and hard to trace. The history that follows is based on sources that span various denominations developing transitional ministry studies simultaneously and together, for the most part, with experiences and resources from various PC(USA) clergy filling in some gaps.

¹¹ Transitional ministry, also known as interim ministry, is defined by this author as the time in the life of a congregation during which there is change in pastoral leadership.

¹² Frank Pierce Johnson, "Emergent Design: A History of Interim Ministry Training," (DMin diss., Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2009), 2.

Interim ministry and mission studies were formally identified and studied by Loren Mead in the early 1970s, most clearly associated with the formation of the Alban Institute in 1973. Mead readily admits, however, that Rev. D. Keith Irwin, a Presbyterian pastor, had started his own focused ministry in interim ministry in 1968.¹³ In 1970, Irwin moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota to start another interim ministry with Mead watching to develop his own study of interim ministry and successful tools for effective transitional ministry.¹⁴ Shortly after the establishment of the Alban Institute under Mead's leadership, Presbyterians spun off to create specialized interim ministry studies and training, including mission studies that fit the structure and culture of the denomination.¹⁵

The first known publication that explicitly addressed congregational mission studies was published by Dr. Henry Blunk in 1978. This was just a few short years after several pastors began noticing, describing, and studying the period of time between pastoral leadership as a dedicated time of transition with unique problems, opportunities, and needs for congregations.¹⁶ With a team of pastors and test congregations, Blunk produced this six-month, step-by-step curriculum to be used in congregations of 200

¹³ Loren B. Mead, foreword to *Transitional Ministry: A Time of Opportunity* by Molly Dale Smith (New York: Church Publishing, 2009), vi.

¹⁴ Johnson, 54.

¹⁵ Mead, foreword in *Transitional Ministry* by Smith, viii.

¹⁶ Henry Blunk, *Smaller Church Mission Study Guide* (Philadelphia, PA: Geneva Press, 1986), 4-6. This was published with the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In 1984, the Presbyterian Church U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church U.S.A., commonly known as the Southern Presbyterian Church and Northern Presbyterian Church, respectively, began the process of formally reuniting, a process that ended in 1986 with the creation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

members or fewer. It provides extensive preparation tools and suggestions for the process of evaluating a congregation and its community. With input from Blunk and his colleagues, as well as a host hundreds of other participants from many denominations in the U.S.A., a team came together to publish a handbook for congregations that contains tools that could be used in varying contexts, political structures, and communities.¹⁷ In the years that followed, various reiterations and reinterpretations of these types of materials were developed including books on congregational studies, like the widely-used handbook by Nancy Ammerman and her colleagues, *Studying Congregations*, and materials published by the Alban Institute and its daughter organization, the Interim Ministry Network.¹⁸

In terms of materials most relevant to the PC(USA), a couple of books were published by Presbyterian ministry professionals, presbyteries, and by the denomination, but many borrowed most of their elements from those primary sources written by Blunk, Mead, and the Alban Institute. In 1982, Grayson Tucker and the Presbyterian Church U.S. published a resource that provided congregations with a series of questions that equipped leaders as they reflected with their members on their congregation and the community. These types of questions, while not a mission study, do guide a congregation to do the work of part of a mission study. In 1993, the PC(USA) published Robert Linthicum's *Church: Discover Your Calling*, an updated and more thorough approach to

¹⁷ Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds., *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 3-4.

¹⁸ Bill McKinney, Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, and Carl Dudley, eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1998).

conducting a mission study than Blunk's 1978 version, with the focus of Linthicum's curriculum culminating in a congregation's development of new mission and vision statements.¹⁹ It is notable that, while it is among the most thorough of the resources found to date, Linthicum's resource lacks any reference to organizational change and uses very little theological reflection to undergird the purpose and direction of the study.

In addition to the key Presbyterian publications previously mentioned, many presbyteries have produced their own mission study resources (or collections of resources) over the years. Mission studies are not mandated by the denomination, nor by the constitution, and so presbyteries have the prerogative to define their own processes, requirements, and resources. What has come from this is years of borrowing, redeveloping, and redefining what others have used and required. In 1991, the Synod of the Sun published a small book that discussed phases of congregational life and types of leadership for smaller congregations including ideas for self-study to evaluate viability for staffing and process questions to assist in self-reflection.²⁰ Through the 2000s and 2010s, one presbytery after another published guidelines for mission studies and suggested outcomes for the final reports from congregations who were seeking only to rush through the transition and advertise their vacant pastoral positions (missing the purpose of a mission study process altogether). These booklets or online publications

¹⁹ Robert C. Linthicum, *Church: Discover Your Calling, A Mission Study Process that Enables a Congregation to Discover its Unique Calling* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Distribution Services, 1993).

²⁰ Evangelism and Church Development Ministry Unit and the Synod of the Sun, *New Times - New Call: A Manual of Pastoral Options for Small Churches* (Louisville, KY: PC(USA), 1991).

often reference elements of Mead’s work,²¹ like the five developmental tasks for a congregation in the interim,²² or they use his suggestions to create a list of questions that must be answered by a mission study report.²³ As one transitional ministry specialist shared with me, when she leads a mission study she tends to “cobble stuff together but... I’m afraid the stuff is getting dated. ...As a transitional pastor, I would *love* a new mission study curriculum!”²⁴ Resources that are currently available and distributed are lacking relevance, integration of modern research, and the confidence of the professionals using them.

Even the training that has been developed by regional synods for pastors who are experiencing or specializing in congregations in transition varies from region to region and borrows heavily from one training to another. In reviewing the curriculum from regional sites designed for training PC(USA) pastors in transitional ministry, it is clear that mission study curricula are needed but have been neither developed nor distributed.²⁵ In fact, the denomination backed away from its movement in the 1970s when Presbyterians invested in developing uniquely Presbyterian resources to develop mission

²¹ For example, Northumberland Presbytery, “Manual for Interim or Transitional Ministry,” 2013, accessed January 28, 2018, <http://www.northumberlandpresbytery.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/1ab-MASTER-A-Manual-for-Interim-Ministry.pdf>.

²² Loren B. Mead, *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors* (Durham, NC: Alban Institute, 1986), 37-50.

²³ Office of the Stated Clerk & Office of Constitutional Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Washington Presbytery, “Nine Questions to be Answered by a Mission Study,” course handout, Transitional Lenses for Interim Ministry with Revs. Edmonds, Hart, and Sherwood (November 13, 2017).

²⁴ Cheryl Montgomery, emailed to author, August 9, 2017.

²⁵ Hart Edmonds, Laura Sherwood, Ken McFayden, “Transitional Lenses for Interim Ministry,” syllabus, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond (November 13, 2017).

study programs on their own.²⁶ Instead, the PC(USA) is reverting, having to piggyback on non-denominational and multi-denominational transitional ministry programs. This reversion began with the elimination of their own *New Beginnings* mission study and visioning program in 2016 while attempting to thin out the Presbyterian Mission Agency budget.²⁷ Another pastor in transitional ministry, sharing with me about the resources she uses, said that there are few thorough Presbyterian resources out there, so she relies on non-denominational organizations who specialize in demographic studies to do the bulk of the research, which she then takes and integrates into a reflection and report-writing process that celebrates successes and identifies opportunities for growth or sustainability.²⁸

In the development of this project, I informally approached a number of ministry professionals with experience in mission studies and transitional ministry to ask their thoughts. Details of their responses vary in the minor details, like when a study should be done or the detailed approach that best fulfills the needs of the study, but a common thread emerges: Since the development and codification of mission studies in the 1970s and 1980s, little has been done in the PC(USA) to develop them or modernize them. Materials are often quoted or developed from the original works of Mead, Blunk, and their team members, but few curriculum writers have worked to integrate more thorough

²⁶ Loren B. Mead, foreword to *Transitional Ministry*, Smith, vii-viii.

²⁷ Leslie Scanlon, "UPDATED: PC(USA) budget cuts result in elimination of five programs and eight jobs," *Presbyterian Outlook*, April 29, 2016, accessed February 10, 2018, <http://pres-outlook.org/2016/04/pcusa-budget-cuts-result-elimination-five-programs-eight-jobs/>.

²⁸ Wonjae Choi, emailed to author, January 27, 2018.

biblical study, theological inquiry, or organizational psychology into the mix. The other common thread that arises: such a program is greatly desired.

D. A Model Mission Study's Purpose, Intent, and Necessities

As was previously mentioned, presbyteries are independently responsible for the support of congregations going through transition and self-study, the development of transitional ministry and mission study resources, and the approval of mission study reports after congregations complete the process. As such, each presbytery has their own expectations and requirements for a mission study to be considered complete or effective, many explicit and many implicit or unspoken. By identifying the common threads that arise most frequently in their mission study publications, we can begin to identify key basics that should arise from a general mission study for it to be the most effective tool for use across the PC(USA).

Some presbyteries are quite explicit in what must be present in order for a congregation to have satisfactorily completed the mission study process. For example, New Hope Presbytery suggests that mission studies must include demographic studies of the congregation and the surrounding community, summaries of surveys of community leaders and the congregation, proof of a series of congregational gatherings, and conclude with a summary report that is approved by the church's Session, membership, and the presbytery's Committee on Ministry. They further identify that the congregational gatherings should take 8-12 hours and must include times of bible study, prayer, group building, history retelling, mission and vision development, and assessment of the

surveys taken.²⁹ In another example, the Presbytery of Boston uses similar explicit requirements but adds that a financial and asset review should be completed and remitted with their final report for presbytery to review and approve.³⁰ A mission study therefore needs to have achievable, identifiable outcomes that can be used as an evaluative tool by oversight committees at the presbytery level.

In other presbyteries, the expectations are less explicit and instead, congregations are given a broad array of subjects that must be discussed with approval being granted only once the Presbytery is satisfied that the congregation has successfully completed the self-evaluative work of mission studies. For example, in the presbyteries of Long Island and the Twin Cities Areas, congregations are given general direction for their reflection and assessment, giving the freedom the Committee on Ministry needs to ensure a congregation has not skimmed over the hard work of a mission study by simply answering some questions without much engagement. The Presbytery of Long Island uses and shares a publication from the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Areas outlining the following as the markers of a congregation successfully completing a mission study: a) a clearly identified vision and identity; b) a grasp on qualities that would be best for a pastor to have to help the congregation achieve their goals; c) rationale for the staffing

²⁹ Presbytery of New Hope Committee on Ministry, "A Guide for Churches Entering into an Interim Time, Part 2: Conducting a Congregational Mission Study," 2004, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://www.nhpresbytery.org/PDF/Forms/CommitteeOnMinistry/GuideMissionStudyInterimTime.pdf>.

³⁰ Sally Newhall, "Guidelines for Mission Studies from Committee on Ministry of Presbytery of Boston" accessed January 2019, https://presbyteryofboston.org/Portals/0/Documents/CommitteeOnMinistry/COM_MissionStudiesGuide.pdf.

and leadership structure within the congregation; d) the identification of conflicts in the life of the congregation and clear work to address those conflicts; e) an understanding of the change or stability of the demographics in both the congregation's membership and in the surrounding community in recent years.³¹ These presbyteries require an *understanding* of particular aspects studied in traditional mission studies instead of simply requiring a series of tasks to be completed and discussed in a report. In *Critical Moment*, Mead identifies a list of tasks that should be achieved in a time of transition—a list that would align more closely with these general expectations of a mission study instead of the precise list of tasks to be achieved. Mead identifies the five developmental tasks for a congregation to address during a time of transition. Congregations need to come to terms with their history, discover a new identity, allow space for leadership to change, reaffirm their connection to their denomination, and prepare for commitment to change within the ministries of the community, if that is appropriate.³² Mission studies should therefore achieve deeper interaction so as to help congregations understand themselves and prepare for change.

In an attempt to create a tool that inspired conversation instead of marking off a list of checkboxes, the PC(USA)'s Office of the Stated Clerk distributed a hand out among presbytery leaders as a suggested list of items that should be addressed by a

³¹ Presbytery of Twin Cities Area Committee on Ministry, "Congregational Mission Studies Guide," 2008, accessed January 28, 2018, <http://www.presbyteryofli.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Three-Mission-Study-Models.pdf>.

³² Mead, *Critical Moment*, 37-50. See also Northumberland Presbytery, *Manual for Interim or Transitional Ministry*, 2.

mission study. The “Nine Questions to be Answered by a Mission Study” proposed that these questions should be answered by any community completing this time of reflection:

What of our history is valuable to our future?

What do we do well that nurtures faith and why do we do it?

How do we describe our theological stance, and how will this guide our decisions?

What is the “style” of our congregation?

What are the practical challenges facing our congregation?

What is God calling us to do in mission locally, in our presbytery, and in the world at large?

What is the personality of our congregation and how does that inform our choice of pastoral leadership?

What kind of leadership (From elders, congregation, deacons, presbytery, and pastors) do we need to achieve our goals?

What qualities of our fellowship would attract the kind of leadership we seek?³³

This work by the Stated Clerk’s office appears to be the most thorough work produced by any office of the denomination and its councils in terms of identifying the necessary elements of a completed mission study. It lacks only two elements that arise in other lists: the hard requirements for a financial report and a time of Biblical or theological study. The idea is that after all of these areas have been studied and addressed, a mission study

³³ Office of the Stated Clerk, Office of Constitutional Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and Washington Presbytery, “Nine Questions...”.

will result in a community that knows helpful, specific details of their congregation and community as well as what their identity is and where they are called to go.

Given this broad spectrum of requirements and goals, it is possible to derive a clear listing of elements that a mission study must contain and results that should be achieved in order for one to be most effective. On a practical level, a mission study should research and discuss the demographics of the congregation and surrounding community, as well as give a sweeping overview of the financial situation of the congregation and its assets (financial, physical, and real estate). On a more philosophical level, the congregation's mission study needs to address its theological values, its desires for the future, the strengths of the congregation and community, and the story of the congregation—its history, highlights, and conflicts—on scales that acknowledge both the significant chapters within the living memories of its members, and on the generations-long story of the congregation as a whole.

Implicit in the mission study process, but rarely mentioned in the host of mission study resources, is the role it plays in pastoring a congregation through a time of forced change. The mission study is completed in a time of leadership transition or ministry shift. If a mission study is to be truly effective, it should make the transition easier and not more complex. Furthermore, it should help the correct transition occur and identify the appropriate leadership. A poorly conducted mission study and transition will increase the likelihood of conflict, possibly triggering multiple leadership transitions and could hurt the congregation in a host of ways.

Finally, a gap that exists in most curricula is that of thorough theological reflection. My conversations with interim ministry specialists have indicated that there is consensus in this fact.³⁴ There is a requirement for many that a “Bible study” be done, but the depth of the ones in published curricula is lacking. For a denomination that has culture-shaping roots in theological inquiry and a tradition of Christian education, the theological reflection within a project like a mission study should be more intensive.

A thorough and effective mission study will therefore include the following elements:

Demographic Studies

Financial & Asset Reviews

Study of Theological Values & Sense of Call

Telling of the Story and History

Independently

In the Context of the Surrounding Community

Highlighting Crises, Achievements, and Conflicts

Pulling It All Together

It will include two other subtextual elements that will influence its structure: a theological foundation and a process that will support the organization’s transition. The theological foundation of the project will be discussed in Chapter IV and will drive the study with uniting theological values as the congregation discerns its calling. The curriculum’s

³⁴ Wonjae Choi, emailed to author, February 23, 2018; and Montgomery, emailed, August 9, 2017.

structure will be heavily influenced by organizational change models, discussed in light of congregational life and mission studies in Chapter III. Together, this project's mission study curriculum will provide the elements that ensure that a presbytery can be confident of a congregation's preparation for transition in their ministry and that a congregation can be sure they are earnestly and thoroughly seeking a faithful and practical direction of their calling as a PC(USA) congregation serving Christ in the world.³⁵

³⁵ Despite my awareness and attention to cultural differences within communities, there is a notable gap in my worldview as a white male from Canada living in the Midwest and Northeast of the US. This curriculum may work well in most PC(USA) churches, but there will need to be adjustments—or complete restructuring—of this curriculum for congregations that are majority non-Euro-American in background (e.g. the many Korean American Presbyterian Churches). I look forward to seeing how it can be adopted to meet those cultures and contexts in future development of this program.

CHAPTER THREE: LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

How It's Done Matters Immensely

One Tuesday evening, at the end of another tense and long Session of Elders meeting, an elder remarked, "These meetings are not necessarily poorly run, but the business of this Board isn't kept at the forefront, leading us down rabbit trails and talking about the things other people should be deciding." The pastor, who had only been around for two of these meetings so far, acknowledged the comment of the elder—someone with years of professional experience in the corporate boardroom—and said that the next meeting could be set up very differently so the Session's would be addressed more clearly, but only if everyone agreed with allowing the pastor to adjust the docket. Without comment, the motion was made and carried.

When the elders received the agenda for the next meeting, it was immensely different. In fact, it looked more like a Sunday morning bulletin than a business meeting agenda. The Pastor had substituted the half-page of bullets, bookended by prayers, with an order of worship punctuated by business items and reports they had expected. The elder who made the original remark was incensed and, before the pastor entered the room at the meeting, commented to those of us nearby, "This is outrageous. How can anyone expect a board to make reasonable decisions when they are distracted by all this extra crap?!" Even though the Pastor's explanation that followed clearly refocused the work of the Session squarely as a worshipful calling, some saw the new meeting agenda as disrespectful use of time and wasteful.

That elder was only seen at meetings twice thereafter: to vote in favor of terminating the pastor's contract, and to mark the end of their term of service.

A. Introduction³⁶

To be Presbyterian is to espouse a particular form of church government under a wide-reaching umbrella of theological beliefs. This denomination, as is discussed in Chapter II, is one with a culture and *ethos* that is tied deeply to its roots in the Protestant Reformation and the formation of this country. This culture is what fuses its structure to its ministry and expression of faith through worship, outreach, and structure. The structure begs for regular realignment to keep traditions from becoming meaningless and to help the structure remain within the bounds of the denomination's polity. Interim ministry, the time of transition after a pastor leaves and before the permanent replacement is installed, proves to be most effective time for this realignment. Along with the realignment of polity within the congregation, this tends to be the time for internal reflection and consideration of the identity, calling, mission, and vision of the

³⁶ This chapter reviews a variety of titles and roles in the organizational makeup of PC(USA) congregations. While most congregations use these titles and roles, each has the ability to adjust, rename, or even eliminate them. To facilitate this project's discussion, the following titles and definitions will be used knowing that each community will need to interpret them appropriately:

Senior Pastor: The primary clergy person with responsibility to manage the oversight of mission study process. For most congregations, this is their only clergy person. For many, it is the interim pastor. For some, it is an executive pastor, associate pastor, parish associate, or lay pastor.

Mission Study Coordination Committee (MSCC): The team of congregation-elected lay leaders who manage the mission study process. In most cases, this is a slate of lay members, nominated by Elders and the pastor, vetted by the Congregational Nomination Committee and Committee on Representation, and elected by the congregation.

Session of Elders: The equivalent of a Board of Directors, this is the established leadership of the congregation comprised of lay members who are ordained as PC(USA) Ruling Elders.

Board of Deacons or Trustees: Two boards of lay leaders elected by the congregation and

Primary Leadership: For this project, this will refer to the *Senior Pastor* and *MSCC*.

High-Level Leadership (HLL): For this project, this will refer to the *Session of Elders*, *Board of Deacons*, and *Board of Trustees*.

congregation. This assessment is what is primarily addressed by the mission study process. The drive of this project is to develop a tool to facilitate that assessment and ensure that the integration of any necessary changes identified in the assessment are appropriate, possible, and likely to succeed.

The congregations of the PC(USA), though they share many similarities with one another, are each unique. Therefore, identifying a one-size-fits-all model to approach the task of identifying and integrating change would be naive and ill-advised. However, there are many models and theories about organizational behavior and institutional change that can provide insight and structure to such an undertaking.

This chapter will survey several models and theories of leadership development and organizational change to inform the final mission study curriculum of this project. In discussing these theories with the settings for which they were intended in mind, concepts for changing organizational structures and working with groups of stake holding members can be adapted to fit the Presbyterian context and encourage change in PC(USA) congregations.

B. A Model for Organizational Change Guided by Leaders Modeling Change:

Advanced Change Theory (Quinn)

1. Introduction to Advanced Change Theory (ACT)

Early in his book, *Deep Change*, Professor of Organizational Behavior, Robert E. Quinn, identifies two truths that have driven his work on the topic of organizational change: organization—being ordered and predictable—is not complementary to the

concept of change. Second, reality is never static.³⁷ An organization is a structured ordering that enables humans, creatures of habit, to function in the real, ever-changing world. However, since reality is never static, organizations are often best structured focused on reality in a particular moment. Therefore, in order for organization to best align with reality and serve people, it must be able to change regularly to meet new reality, or else it will become or else it will become irrelevant and eventually die.

Quinn's Advanced Change Theory (ACT) is an approach to organizational change that challenges the leaders and members of an organization to step away from the rigidity of a structure with the goal of achieving a balance of freedom and creativity with guidelines and assumptions so that as reality continues to shift, the organization is readily identifying those changes, responding appropriately. Like an organization who sees its profits and engagement in society rise and fall with society's dynamic needs and desires, so does a congregation see its ministry rise and fall with the changing of society. ACT loosens the system's structure for more flexibility and empowers organization leaders and members to change individually so the organization, a sum of its individual members, can more easily respond to societal shifts and thrive.

2. Assumptions of ACT

Built into the transformational work of ACT are some assumptions that must be identified and affirmed by leaders and members if it is going to be successful. First, the

³⁷ Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 5.

universe not only experiences change but *is* change.³⁸ Every aspect of life has change entwined within it. If we think scientifically, for example, there is never a moment where everything is exactly the same as it was a mere moment previous. Change is everywhere and a part of everything.

While the universe is defined by change, humanity, on the other hand, tends to resist change. Humanity functions best following rhythms, patterns, and the facade of permanence. This is seen in the anxiety and adrenaline that arises when people encounter new or foreign people, places, or things. In response to constant change, it is human nature to set up organizational structures to preserve permanence and create a sense of consistency and familiarity.

The second assumption of ACT flows from the first: systems are capable of transformation. In response to instability, humans work to create structure and a sense of stability. These structures can provide a feeling of familiarity and a veil of safety. However, in their stability these structures begin to lose the connection with reality to the changes of reality, thereby risking irrelevancy. Despite the seeming permanence of these structures and organizations, systems have both the potential and the necessity to be transformed and, in their transformation, a chance to change even the members and leaders within them.

³⁸ Robert E. Quinn, *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Extraordinary Results* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2000), 230.

3. Highly-Stable Systems: Systems Will Freeze & Frozen Systems Die

It is human nature to seek organization and structure. We are creatures who find our identity based on our evaluations of the interactions we have with one another. As we perceive the value of ourselves and others in relation to one another, we develop patterns, hierarchies, and groups to align values, identify roles, and exist within certain rules of behavior.³⁹ The stability of a particular organization or community is based on how much structure is present through hierarchies, rules, and values. Systems with little organizational structure, like grassroots organizations or newly-formed systems, are considered to be unstable, while those with long-established roles, inflexible hierarchies, and rigid rules of acceptance are highly stable.⁴⁰

Systems can change in their level of stability, though they will generally move from unstable to highly stable and find it difficult to move in the other direction. When a system is working well, all the members will feel valued and that they are benefiting from it. However, its success and ability to thrive is predicated on each member's participation. When the system no longer benefits an individual, loyalty to the system dissipates, and that individual will look to leave or betray the system in favor of their own benefit, like the elder who stopped attending session meetings in the opening anecdote of this chapter. When one leaves or betrays the system, it will fail others, causing them to leave or betray

³⁹ Quinn, *Change the World*, 231.

⁴⁰ Quinn, *Change the World*, 231.

the system in their own interest as well. To stop the inevitable decline, the system is given more structure, hierarchy, and rules.⁴¹

As a system becomes more structured, its members become more rooted where they are within in. An established and known system provides a sense of security and comfort, but the inability for an individual to address personal interests or needs can eventually outweigh that security and lead the individual to sever loyalty to the system. Therefore, as organizations become more highly stable, they become vulnerable to irrelevancy and insensitivity. This “frozen bureaucracy,” as Quinn calls it, provides an opportunity for self-preservation and recovery due to its stability and predictability, but it is merely slowing the *status quo* of a downward trend, inevitably leading toward a slow death.⁴² In a community that is renown and stereotyped for its rigidity and unwillingness to consider most types of change, it is striking that churches need to be more prepared for change if they are to avoid total irrelevancy.

4. Escaping Slow Death: Adaptive Change

By nature, a highly structured system is designed to resist deviations from the norm and arrest, if not eliminate, threats to the established system. The only way to redirect the course of an organization away from slow death is by a deep, adaptive change

⁴¹ Quinn, *Change the World*, 231-232.

⁴² Quinn, *Deep Change*, 13-20.

to address systemic challenges.⁴³ Smaller, transactional changes that address the symptoms will only buffer the speed at which an organization will achieve its ultimate destination: death by irrelevance.⁴⁴ Deep, adaptive changes that open up the structure, adjust the direction, and transform the culture of the organization are the only way its trajectory can be changed.⁴⁵

The danger of adaptive change for a highly stable system is that, in removing the structures in place—hierarchies, traditions, and rules designed to maintain stability—individuals may jump at the chance to serve themselves, as is human nature, and leave the instability of a less-stable system. This needs to be countered, however, by a leader who can persuade, engage, and leverage the members to envision a community of more significance and value than their current community, or what they could achieve independently. This vision of the Productive Community will inspire individuals to commit to the common good in lieu of personal survival.⁴⁶ As members commit to the vision of what could be when all are wholeheartedly engaged, the structures enforcing the stability of the system can fall away. The commitment to the vision by the members will hold individuals accountable and stability in place despite the system’s dramatic shift.

⁴³ Quinn’s understanding of a “deep change” used interchangeably with Heifetz’ understanding of “adaptive” change. See Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 28-29.

⁴⁴ Quinn, *Change the World*, 233.

⁴⁵ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 3, 6.

⁴⁶ Quinn, *Change the World*, 235-236.

Individuals will find fulfillment in their role and opportunity to shift to changing needs and growth as long as it ultimately serves the common good.

Quinn uses the concept of “flow” by Hungarian-American psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, to reinforce this idea of a Productive Community. Csikszentmihalyi suggested that when a person is wholly involved in a task, feeling totally in control of their actions yet at the peak of their ability, focus, and concentration, they enter a state of “high flow” where there is little distinction between the action and reaction within the task, the environment around is indistinguishable and time seems to change pace. In states of high flow, individuals feel centered and whole, fulfilled and accomplished.⁴⁷ Quinn takes this concept a step further, imagining what a community of individuals in high flow might look like. The Productive Community would effectively be a community of individuals who are all in a state of high flow and, if they are not in that state, are afforded the freedom and trust of the others within that system to explore where the needs of the system and the environment identify a need that matches the abilities of the individuals within it.⁴⁸ When the members of a system are in a state of flow, matching their abilities with the tasks at hand, the system embodies the Productive Community.

5. The Search for Flow: Change the System from Within, Change the Leader from Within

In a standard situation, where a leader is trying to identify problems within the system and institute change from the top down, the leader is innately part of the system’s

⁴⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (New York: Springer Media, 2014), 136-137.

⁴⁸ Quinn, *Change the World*, 239.

structure and not a variable to be edited. In attempting to change that system, then, the leader can conceivably be the safest participant in the system, the furthest from the problem, and the most shielded from the instability. The authority of that leader is assumed, leaving the members without a voice in the process and without a model to follow in terms of instituting the prescribed change measures. The pain of the members experiencing the change is ignored and the perspective on the proposed problem is narrowed to only the leader. The members are not inspired or convinced the change will work and commitment to the change will waver, causing the system to default to its previous condition.⁴⁹

As a leader guided by the principles of ACT, one would approach the process of system changes differently, seeking to understand the system and its systemic problems first by seeking to understand one's own role in the problem and knowing that the change may need to include oneself as well.⁵⁰ In leading an organization through change, the leader must be inner-directed and other-focused, being driven by internal values, independent of any others' comments, yet deeply conscious of the impact on others. ACT encourages leaders to find values internal to themselves as individuals. This project uses a study of the Sacraments (Chapter 4) to identify those values in a process that better reflects the polity of the PC(USA) and seeks the Holy Spirit's guidance through the congregation's conversation. Most often, this means the leader is continually clarifying each person's role and purpose since that may change as needs arise and realities shift. It

⁴⁹ Quinn, *Change the World*, 234.

⁵⁰ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 126-127.

means taking the responsibility when a change fails, but also providing opportunity for trying it again. It requires high flexibility and high trust between the leader and the members, and open communication to ensure all needs are met and all problems are addressed.⁵¹ It requires personal sacrifice, not as a compromise to achieve the productive community, but as a tool to drive toward the most productive community.⁵² As an organization adjusts and readjusts, picking itself up when it falls, and constantly refocusing to achieve precision in relation to an ever-changing reality, high flow is achieved and life together will be a thriving existence that outweighs anything they could achieve apart from the organization could achieve.

The leader can use persuasion, social leverage, or personal engagement to facilitate the process of gaining support and commitment from members of the organization, but what is often more effective is to empower others.⁵³ Gretchen Spreitzer, who studied under Quinn at the University of Michigan, suggested that empowerment may serve as the most effective way to lead. As individuals feel empowered, they are given a sense of meaning, self-confidence in their abilities, a source of self-determination, and a chance to see the impact on their organization and larger community. Furthermore, empowered individuals are more innovative, effective as leaders, secure in their work, and able to influence their colleagues.⁵⁴ By Spreitzer's

⁵¹ Quinn, *Change the World*, 236-238.

⁵² Quinn, *Change the World*, 233; Quinn, *Deep Change*, 13-20.

⁵³ Quinn, *Change the World*, 235.

assessment, then, an organization whose members are empowered will already see a step toward the Productive Community.

6. *Setting a Vision*

An organization experiencing the Productive Community state of functioning is one where the leader guides and directs the shifting elements of the institution to best use the skills of the collective to address their relationship with the ever-changing world. The leader is modeling and guiding change but empowering everyone in the organization to use their specialization — their gifts, skills, experience, and perspective — to creatively and appropriately identify opportunities or challenges and the responses. In this setting, the members of the organization are committed to the envisioned Productive Community, willing to make self-sacrifice for the good of the community, and stakeholders in the development of the system. In this environment, the need for highly stable structures—the hierarchies, traditions, and rules intended to maintain the *status quo*—is no longer present. Commitment and accountability hold the system together.

To stop an organization from moving toward higher stability and slow death, and instead move it toward lower stability and higher potential, the underlying culture of an organization must shift. The primary point of change for this shift is in the leadership. A leader who maintains structures and codified systems, in turn, maintains a highly structured organization moving toward frozen bureaucracy. A leader who models internal reflection, openness to change, freedom to experiment, and the ability to fall

⁵⁴ Gretchen Spreitzer, “Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace: Dimensions, Measurement, and Validation,” *Academy of Management Journal* 38, no. 5 (1995), 1442-1465.

without failing opens the space for others to do the same. The most effective way to empower members to change course is to codify an organizational vision that promises to radically transform the community and the outside world by doing the work of that organization.⁵⁵ Engaging members during the development of that vision, leveraging their skills and desires, and persuading them to join the movement will ensure they catch enough of the vision of the Productive Community to latch on and buy in to its ultimate goal. However, the process of developing that vision can be difficult.

Envisioning the Productive Community is a must for any leader guiding a transformational change process, but to best interpret that idea and the direction of travel required to achieve it, the leaders will need to develop a radical transformative vision that includes the Productive Community. The process of developing a vision is a difficult and tortuous one requiring an analysis of the system and culture of the organization and its surrounding world. Furthermore, the effective vision must confront any lack of personal integrity in the leadership and members in order to be fully adapted and integrated.⁵⁶ This means that all leaders and members will need to be ready to repeatedly fail at upholding core values they hold, be willing to admit those failures, and try again. Most are not

⁵⁵ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 199-200. Quinn shares that since the etymology of “radical” is based in the Latin word “root.” For a vision to be considered “radically transformational,” then, it must cut back to the root of an organization’s purpose and connection with reality. For example, a personal computer manufacturer could have a basic vision statement that described their company as one “creating efficient and effective personal computers for the home office.” Alternatively, a radically transformative vision would drive at the *purpose* and could say that they are “a customer-centric provider of home computing technology that makes life simple and entertaining.” The latter would inspire creative approaches to provide home computing equipment to address the changing everyday needs of the average home. The first would inspire... less.

⁵⁶ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 197-198.

prepared for the deep personal work of confronting such personal issues and opening oneself to public critique or a perception of weakness. Without such an investment, vision statements have a tendency to be empty or weak, leaving organizations without a depth of vision and individuals hiding their weaknesses.

A leader who is committed to ACT and the process of radical transformative change will communicate a vision coherently and in a way that inspires members to change without coercion or force. Together, leaders & members, will learn to live with integrity despite failures over feigning it and faking perfection. As the organization members take hold of the vision, the culture will shift from self-preservation to a united front striving for the vision. This process requires significant risk, deep investment, and has the potential for incredible loss.⁵⁷ If enough members do not buy in, the system could collapse from those who bail or hijack what remains. If the direction does not produce success or is limited by insufficient time requirements, it could be sentenced to death or early dissolution. In any case of failure, it is the leader who stands to take the biggest demerit. In that risk, however, is great reward. It empowers the members of the body by giving them a stake in the change that could truly drive the success or failure instead of leaving it solely in the hands of the leader. This empowerment ensures that members are held responsible for that potential gain or loss. Furthermore, that power creates space where openness, teamwork, democratic accountability, and security in shared responsibility thrive — all qualities that increase capacity for individuals to innovate,

⁵⁷ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 218-219.

lead, influence others, and self-invest. The potential for transformational change increases dramatically with an empowered team guided by a change-modeling leader who governs using the strength exposed as they are willingly vulnerable and risky. In that space, the process of change begins its work.

7. Translation to the Church and Key Takeaways

Quinn's theory and the accompanying work of both Csikszentmihalyi and Spreitzer assume workplace environments and organizations where the norms of engagement are different. In a workplace, leaders are often hired to accomplish a task or fulfill a role that leads to success; namely, positive income statements. Individuals give over half of their waking hours each week to these organizations in exchange for a paycheck. On the other hand, the congregations of the PC(USA) are often led by an individual who has training in theology, religion, and some psychology, but whose long-term commitment to the organization is somewhat limited.⁵⁸ The rest of the leadership is made up of volunteers who are usually financially and socially-engaged with the community, often on a level that revels or exceeds the pastor's. It is nearly impossible for a leader to "fire" someone without causing social and spiritual ripples that negatively impact the rest of the body. Furthermore, the member may have personal or generational history with the community and congregation that give them significantly more social collateral than many pastoral leaders could claim on their own. Despite the differences between the secular corporation and Presbyterian parish settings, ACT has the ability to

⁵⁸ Most permanent calls last 3-15 years and a pastor's continued engagement with that congregation is categorically denied in most presbyteries.

work nonetheless. Congregations of the PC(USA) are certainly different from a standard business organization but their structures lend themselves to benefit from ACT.

Of the overlapping elements several rise to the surface that clearly indicate that ACT could be applied to a congregational setting. ACT depends on committed leadership adopting the model first. If the primary leadership of the congregation — the Mission Study Coordination Committee (MSCC), which made up of a cross-section of the membership, and the Senior Pastor — adopt the model, their combined capacity would certainly achieve this among their congregation. Second, the structure of ACT includes a time of assessment and reflection to consider what internal discrepancies, pains, problems, or hurts are not being spoken. A healthy community of faith will include these types of opportunities as well, so a congregation is already prepared for this work. Most importantly, ACT is done with one eye on the self-centering work of challenging chinks in the armor of integrity which we wear, and with the other eye on the community and world surrounding us. Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, suggested that we need to interpret the world and our lives from the Bible.⁵⁹ This combination calls Christians to consider their integrity in enacting Christian values in everyday life. Leaders of secular organizations will often observe the world in relation to their company in search of new opportunities to arise. Those who align their organizations with ACT principles will be

⁵⁹ Barth is often quoted as having said that one should “read the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other,” but this has not yet been seen in any authoritative source. However, he did tell a Time Magazine reporter the importance of holding the two in tension.

The Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, “Frequently Asked Questions,” 2012, accessed January 20, 2019, <http://barth.ptsem.edu/about-cbs/faq>; “Barth in Retirement,” in *Time Magazine*, May 31, 1963. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,896838,00.html>

prepared to identify them and respond appropriately. Similarly, church leaders who do the same will seek and find opportunities for new ministry and innovative approaches to serve the community as they fulfill their calling in the world.

Quinn reduces ACT to a set of principles in several of his writings to assist in grasping the steps of the journey for an organization. The following building blocks can be used to facilitate a translation of this theory into the PC(USA) context.

Building Blocks of Advanced Change Theory for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

- 1) Look Within Ourselves: History, Story, God’s Story
- 2) The Kingdom is here: Envisioning the Productive Community
- 3) Total Depravity: Embrace your Inner Hypocrite
- 4) Transcend Fear & Expectations of Others
- 5) Embody the Vision, Live the Change
- 6) Disturb the System — Dramatically
- 7) Inspire Others through Modeling Change⁶⁰

8. Criticisms & Shortcomings

As with any theory, there are challenges and shortcomings that can arise. In responding to these challenges, Quinn recognizes the shortcomings, yet provides openness and opportunity for growth, development, and change. These challenges and

⁶⁰ Based on Robert E. Quinn, Gretchen M. Spreitzer, and Matthew V. Brown, “Changing Others through Changing Ourselves: The Transformation of Human Systems,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 9, no. 2 (June 2000): 147–164. See also Quinn, *Change the World*, ix.

responses apply to those implementing ACT in congregational settings as well and are worthy of discussion.

Quinn begins by openly admitting that the name “Advanced Change *Theory*, is a misnomer.”⁶¹ Theories are based on perfect environmental factors and are, by nature, a rule that is repeatedly reproduced and used as a building block for development and categorization in the field. However, ACT is a theory about an alternative reality; about the potential, not the actual. It is a theory that permits enacting and co-creating an alternate future and delivering it to the present. It is not a traditional theory, rather it is a Theory of Action, according to Quinn. “...ACT will never become a linear theory of normal science. It will always remain a rough set of instructions for how a person might pursue transformation. ... [I]t serves as a statement for understanding and guiding action, a map through a wilderness that all travelers, each in their own way, will have to navigate for themselves.”⁶² A primary weakness of ACT, therefore, is in its flexibility and application. It is not a quick fix, nor is it a prescription of rules. It is a lifestyle and culture that takes deep engagement, total commitment, and significant risk. For churches, the flexibility of this action theory is important for it to fit each unique context. Furthermore, the cultural approach works well for a community formed around a faith that “shaped our hearts.”

Another concern is in its assumptions about human nature. ACT assumes that systems breakdown an individual inevitably prioritizes their own success over the good

⁶¹ Quinn, *Change the World*, 248.

⁶² Quinn, *Change the World*, 248-249.

of the whole. However, its success relies on individuals to move past that very quality that is considered innate. Is it not naive to think that the selfish nature of humanity could be held at bay on a long-term basis simply by a compelling dream? Quinn suggests that if the values of ACT are truly adapted by both the leaders and members of an organization, it can achieve just that. As self-reflection continues and individuals are faced with the implications of their incongruent areas of life where integrity is lacking, subtextual negativity melts away.⁶³ As this becomes more and more true in the organization's members, confidence and self-control rise to the surface, taking the form of trust in one another and confidence in the vision of the organization. For PC(USA) congregations, we openly profess these things to be true: humanity is broken and tends to be selfish; and it is possible to strive for better life together by holding certain values.⁶⁴

Ultimately, as a theory of action, ACT must be implemented in order to be tested. As a theory of cultural adjustment and systemic change, it must be used in its entirety and past any "point of no return," rather than simply tested. It is difficult to evaluate a theory, if it must be adopted and endorsed before it can be tested, since it implies a bias in its evaluation. With that said, Quinn shares that it has worked in even the most unlikely places.⁶⁵ As companies have implemented ACT, those with dark futures and hopelessness in their fabric saw new life and positive change. When organizations endorse and model

⁶³ Quinn, *Change the World*, 252.

⁶⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), 2014), 104.

⁶⁵ Quinn, *Change the World*, 255.

ACT principles, change is inevitable and positive transformation is certain. Churches function similarly, knowing that when Christ's teachings are upheld and followed, the lives of followers are transformed, and the world feels that impact.

9. The Lynchpin: Internalized Principles (Chapter IV)

As this chapter moves through a variety of other theories and models for leadership and leading change, Quinn's ACT will be regularly referenced, however the most significant key for ACT and for this project is the vision. Once a leader has taken the time for self-reflection and attempted to align their actions with the values they espouse, they are to work to identify the vision, the Productive Community. This vision is a product of becoming a more genuine and integrity-driven leader. The drive for the community is based on these values. The leader's modeling of these values ultimately inspires growth and long-term commitment on behalf of the individuals to commit to the betterment of the community over themselves.

The values these leaders model, occasionally called "internalized principles," by Quinn, are often innate or assumed qualities that must be named and refined in order to fulfill that guiding role. He says that for a leader to be truly transformational for a community and able to confidently set forth a radical vision, they must not be driven by outside forces or expectations, rather they must be driven by internalized principles.⁶⁶ When the members of that person's community see their actions, driven by internalized principles — and specifically, moral principles — they are motivated to participate and

⁶⁶ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 127-128.

follow that leader's actions. Quinn says, "when organizational members see their leader 'walking the walk and talking the talk,' they themselves are inspired to take significant risks for the good of the collective."⁶⁷

Leading academic on the subject of leadership, Ronald Heifetz, would agree with the importance of leaders having these values internalized. In *Leadership on the Line*, Heifetz and co-author, Martin Linsky, share that adaptive challenges, or systemic problems, are due to internalized issues and can only be remedied by substituting those internalized issues with internalized values that combat the behaviors that surface. As the internalized issues are owned and ultimately resolved by the relevant parties, negative behaviors will be curbed, relationships will be strengthened for pushing through difficult moments, and enduring progress will result.⁶⁸ Where as Heifetz and Linsky emphasize the importance of individuals pursuing this process in order to make permanent change, Quinn would suggest that it is the responsibility of the leader to model this behavior and guide others through the process. In both cases, it is clear that leaders will need to identify and internalize their principles so they can best model integrity and change others and guide others through the process of aligning actions with internalized principles.

In the curriculum that results from this project, this focus on internalized principles will be seen as an integral part of guiding a congregation through the mission study process. As the leadership of a congregation spends time reflecting on their values

⁶⁷ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 127-128.

⁶⁸ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 127.

in the context of a community of faith and through a process that is rich with commands of God and the model of Christ, they will identify individual and collective principles to center around which to build or rebuild their congregation's identity. As the congregation builds up and out from those internalized principles, it will create a unified drive toward a vision that is greater than any one member, inspiring pursuit of the greater good, the Productive Community.

C. Leadership Formation: Ethical and Spiritual Role Modeling (Fluker)

1. Stories, Ethics, Integrity & Character: Ethical Leadership Model (Fluker)

As identified in ACT, to make the best and most lasting change within an organization, leaders must both be seeking to change themselves as well as lead by example, modeling the desired changes they would like to see. As a leader spends time considering their own values and dreaming of what a Productive Community might look like, they will identify the internalized principles which become the vehicle to move the direction of the organization. As they reflect further on those principles, seeing how their own actions align with them, they will identify characteristics, habits, and actions that will need to change in their own lives. As they understand this in themselves and work to make those changes, they will notice the impact it will have on their own lives. As those benefits surface, the vision of the possible impact of having a whole community dedicated to those principles becomes clearer: their Productive Community.

Understanding those benefits and their impact will enable the leader to better share that vision, and inspire others to participate.

Quinn has set the optics of ACT quite firmly on the realm of secular business and commerce, but Walter Fluker, Professor of Ethical Leadership at Boston University School of Theology, proposes a model that will facilitate a translation into a Christian worldview. While many leadership models rising to popularity establish the importance of character development, emotional intelligence, and authenticity, Fluker's model gathers those truths under one umbrella: ethical leadership informed by our faith.⁶⁹ Carrying that umbrella one step further, Fluker proposes that leaders must be aware, or "woke," to the environment around them as well as their environment within them; sensitive to how the stories they tell about their own lives shape their character, civility, and sense of community.⁷⁰ In the Ethical Leadership Model, Fluker shares that as leaders understand how their stories shape their inner environments, they will then be able to influence the "virtuosities" that build communities: character (integrity, empathy, and hope), civility (reverence, respect, and recognition), and community (courage, justice, and compassion).⁷¹ If leaders are able to facilitate these nine virtuosities in their sphere of influence, they will have the skills and integrity to lead ethically and effectively.

Leadership styles and qualities vary greatly from leader to leader and community to community, therefore the leader's personalized communication of these virtuosities to

⁶⁹ Walter Earl Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), vii.

⁷⁰ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, vii.

⁷¹ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 129 (Figure).

their particular organization will ensure the model's effectiveness.⁷² As a leader sifts through the story of their life, identifying their formative experiences, role models, and traditions, they will find ways to explain those virtuosities and examples from their own lives that explain those definitions, thereby understanding them more fully, and better able to communicate them in compelling ways to the particular community they are leading. As leaders share the examples and stories that are pushing, driving, and inspiring them, others will find points of contact within their own stories and experiences, relating to the leader and those virtuosities more fully. Quoting Jacob Needleman's Work, *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders*, Fluker reiterates this concept: "This is the mark of great ideas: they unify the disparate parts of the human being; they speak of a social order that is possible on the basis of an ordering within the individual self."⁷³ As a leader becomes in tune with their individual self, they become in tune with the virtuosities that inform and direct their morals (defined by Fluker as "the shared 'rules of conduct' of communities of people who share a history").⁷⁴ Leaders who understand their stories and virtuosities have a foundational set of morals that inform their ethics and, in turn, how and where they lead others. As they direct and lead in ways

⁷² This point is integral to ensuring this project is able to be used by other communities who are not of the majority culture of the PC(USA) (middle-upper class, anglo-saxon, caucasian, American). Leaders must identify values and methods of interpretation or communication that translate accurately to the community being led.

⁷³ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 56; Jacob Needleman, *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders* (New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam, 2002), 10.

⁷⁴ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 41, 56.

that are faithful to the community's morals, they will find unification and a willingness to follow.

Fluker's model suggests that leaders will then need to take time to reflect on three foundational concepts before they can approach the topic of change, if it is to be done effectively. Leaders will identify experiences and conversations that shaped who they are and what they understand to represent community, civil behavior, and worthy character. Their reflections will interpret:

Community: defining what makes someone morally courageous, differentiating between just and unjust action, and expressing examples of compassion.⁷⁵

Civility: learning how they recognize themselves and others in their interactions, respecting the differentiation and interconnectedness of individuals, and defining expressions of reverence and loyalty.⁷⁶

Character: understanding personal integrity, describing examples of empathy, and expressing genuine hope for the future.⁷⁷

This time of reflection and introspection is integral to the success of the model for change proposed in this project. Leaders making important changes must do so with their own change at the forefront. As leaders model reflection, change, and personal growth, they model the change process and inspire individuals to contribute in pursuit of a greater

⁷⁵ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 130-133, 136-143, 145-146.

⁷⁶ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 86-87, 90-92, 114-116.

⁷⁷ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 57, 62-73, 77.

good. With that said, how this time of self-reflection is introduced to the leadership of a congregation is of equal importance. The leadership of Presbyterian congregations, the Session of Elders and the pastor, are the primary overseers of the Church so our next consideration is when and how this kind of reflection is introduced to them and, perhaps more significantly, what can be done to integrate these reflections and internalization of principles into the culture of the leadership.

D. Devotions, Fellowship, & Hospitality:

Board as Spiritual Leaders Model (Olsen)

During career in pastoral ministry, Presbyterian minister, Charles Olsen, spent some time studying church leadership boards in an effort to make them more effective and successful. He discovered that elders were finishing terms of service on Session frustrated and exhausted, not in small part due to the lack of spirituality that was part of the Church board experience.⁷⁸ Further, he found that those with good spiritual experiences on Session led more effectively during their term of service and continued to do so in other leadership roles after their terms were complete. This was notably true for those who experienced theological, personal, or cultural conflicts with other elders on the board.⁷⁹ Olsen found that those who spent time in a variety of spiritual practices as part of their leadership work, including prayer, service, and discernment, experienced personal growth, spiritual fulfillment, and connection with the larger community, especially if the

⁷⁸ Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1995), xi.

⁷⁹ Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards*, xiv.

experience included moments of tension or conflict followed by reconciliation and partnership. These findings inspired his future ministry as a consultant and author guiding other church boards to become the center of the congregation's corporate spirituality. He proposes that the board of a church should not be a gathering of administrative leaders who happen to be religious, rather, the church leadership board should be the gathering of spiritual leaders whose business is to develop personal spirituality together to set the tone of the corporate spirituality of the church.⁸⁰ The traditional business of this board, then, should be a response to worship and an expression of faithful service.

To inspire this work and shape a cadre of leaders to be spiritually-attuned and Spirit-guided, Olsen turns to the Bible for answers and proposes several structural changes to the practices of church leadership boards. Quoting Paul's writing about worship in Romans 12:1-2, Olsen suggests to leaders, as models of the community, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, ... which is your spiritual worship. ... [B]e transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern the will of God."⁸¹ Boards should present everything they are and do as an act of worship, taking time to renew and sharpen their theological thinking so they are prepared to prayerfully discern God's will in their community. He suggests changing the agenda of the meeting to follow a traditional worship service.⁸² Board members should participate in designing and leading meetings and the various worship elements, honing their worship leadership

⁸⁰ Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards* xv, 27ff.

⁸¹ Romans 1:1-2, in part, NRSV.

⁸² Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards*, 3, 39-41.

skills. Prayer, then, becomes a form of punctuation in meetings, particularly as a tool for discernment during tough conversations. Singing enlivens moments with energy and creativity. The time for the Word may feel the least like an element of a meeting, however it often serves to inspire faithful responses in decisions that follow thereafter.⁸³ Responding to God's Word through the business and committee reports naturally leads to a reaffirmation of an offering of self to serve. Furthermore, this approach will easily shift toward storytelling versus report-giving as inspiring messages and stories of impact are shared during reporting.⁸⁴

As leadership boards adopt structures and habits that grow out of a service of worship and move away from a business meeting docket, their gatherings and their work shift from being transactional engagements that follow checklists and timelines to being transformational relationships that inspire wholeness and personal investment. As they approach times of difficult decisions or significant change, they step away from the logical or reasonable and approach it from a more spiritual and discerning perspective, making space and opening their hearts for the Spirit to move and compel them. They are more sensitive to their internal stories and to the collective internal story of the other leaders and are therefore better equipped to discern the Spirit of God being expressed through the congregation; better prepared to lead God's people through any wilderness; and ready to make personal sacrifices so God's people might fulfill the calling God has given them. They become leaders rooted in theological foundations discerning the will of

⁸³ Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards*, 43-44

⁸⁴ Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards*, 7, 44.

God for God's people as they wander the journey of life together in obedience to God's call and as an expression of love for God. This type of leadership is an important piece of the process, as will be discussed in the next section.

E. Mission Studies: Transformative Leadership For, and Through, a Congregation

In Chapter II, the concept of a mission study was discussed and, through study of the history, intent, and resources currently available, a list of elements and purposes were developed for a mission study to be thorough and effective:

A mission study will function to

- check the alignment of a congregation with the polity and beliefs of the denomination,
- prepare a congregation for impending change, and
- achieve substantive conversations about identity and vision with congregation members.

A mission study will have clear and achievable actions including

- having a time for members to collect and tell story and history of the congregation,
- having sessions for theological reflection and Bible study,
- compiling and evaluating demographic study reports of the congregation and community,

- ☑ naming and evaluating the congregation's fiscal and intangible assets and liabilities, and
- ☑ a summarizing report culminating in a vision for the congregation and its leaders.⁸⁵

As we hold up the goals of mission studies for consideration, the models of leadership and theory for organizational change proposed by Fluker, Olsen, and Quinn, fall into place as vehicles for their fulfillment.

Quinn's Advanced Change Theory is driven by the leader in a way that aligns with the PC(USA) mission study concept perfectly. In ACT, the leader's role is to, through introspection, visioning, and better understanding of self, identify, participate in, and model the desired change. The mission study done well will include each of these elements. Meditation, reflection, and discernment are common spiritual disciplines for many Christians and leaders.⁸⁶ Mission studies are leader-guided processes of self-evaluation and reflection meant to discern communal vision and prepare the congregation for impactful change. ACT is a leader-modeled theory using self-reflection to identify a vision of the productive Community so as to achieve lasting, transformational change. Further, it can be trusted that these leaders, particularly the pastor and elders due to the responsibilities of their roles, understand that it is their role to discern the vision and the changes to achieve that vision.⁸⁷ And in obedience to the Bible, Christians follow the

⁸⁵ Summarized from Chapter II.

⁸⁶ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*; Philippians 4:8; Psalm 119: 97; Joshua 1:8, NRSV.

example of Christ and live to be that representation in the world.⁸⁸ As such, it is reasonable, if not assumed, that pastors, elders, and other leaders of congregations are able and willing to be models of values and principles that can change one's life.

Fluker's ethical leadership model is designed to develop and prepare leaders to lead in a manner that integrates morality and ethics of the community by increasing self-awareness. Fluker's model serves to enhance the process of self-reflection for a leader who is using ACT to approach change and leadership. Furthermore, the Ethical Leadership Model centers around helping a leader understand how perspectives, biases, projection, and values are shaped by a leader's internal environment and the stories of their history and past. If one person's perspective is so shaped by those elements, then one body — the body of a congregation, for example — will have a similar relationship between their stories and how they receive from or project onto the community surrounding them. A person's individual leadership skills, ability, and roles within a congregation is, therefore, shaped by their stories, and the same is true of a congregation's leadership among their local community and presbytery. Integrating the Ethical Leadership Model, therefore, makes a lot of sense.

Lastly, we reviewed Charles Olsen's practical suggestions for setting a tone for church leadership boards that proposed doing the business of the church through the paradigm of worship instead of the traditional structure of a corporate board meeting. Mission studies should help recenter the faith, polity, and rhythms of the congregation to

⁸⁷ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 27.

⁸⁸ See, for example, 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; John 13:13-16; 1 Peter 5:3; Philippians 3:17, NRSV.

be more aligned with the PC(USA). This model also proposes spending a sizeable amount of time in theological reflection and prayers of discernment. Olsen's work suggests that when the leadership board doing the administrative leadership tasks of a congregation (i.e. Session and congregational meetings) does so as an expression of worship, not only does it shift the paradigm from finishing a checklist to glorifying God, but it pressures leaders to hold off on business or statistical reports and instead share stories of the impact of the ministry of the Church. Finally, Olsen's model injects prayer and discernment into a leadership team throughout their gatherings. As this occurs, they are shaped into leaders who, though they are individuals with different faith journeys, know how to discern as one body of faith. This is an invaluable skill for leaders and their community as they discern a vision for their community through a mission study.

F. Who: Transforming Various Levels of Leadership

The leadership and organizational structure of the PC(USA) has unique elements that provide need for interpretation, but also provide opportunity when implementing these models. In traditional models of organization, there are the leaders and the members; occasionally, there will be various levels of middle management added into that equation. In ACT, the role of leader is played by anyone who serves as a model for anyone else, most often the leader is higher up in the hierarchy of a system. In the setting of a PC(USA) congregation, members are understood to be part of a royal priesthood, a people called to roles of leadership for one another: through prayers, in sharing God's peace, and by proclaiming the gospel.⁸⁹ While there are positions of authority and

leadership in the system of the congregation, the role of leadership falls upon all who have been baptized. As such, it is appropriate to construct a mission study in such a way that it follows the various levels of leadership within a congregation, but that it provides transformative leadership skills and preparation for every member as they lead in a variety of ways in the life of the congregation and greater community.

With this understanding of leadership existing in all parts of the congregation, the structure of the mission study becomes important as it will introduce the order of the mission study process. If we consider the PC(USA) congregational hierarchy to include the pastor, the elected lay leaders (including the Session of Elders, MSCC, and the boards of Deacons and Trustees), and the members at-large, the ACT model takes on a new, multi-level perspective. The pastor, in partnership with the team coordinating the mission study, are the Primary Leaders and prepare the other High-Level Leadership (HLL), including Board of Elders, for a season of change. As the HLL are discerning the changes at-hand, they will act as leaders among the congregation, modeling changed behavior and discerning a vision. Finally, as the congregation models the desired change and seeks to work together toward the Productive Community, they become leaders of that change in the community that surrounds them.

By integrating this understanding of leadership development into the mission study, the transformative possibilities of this model no longer apply to the “leader” and the “organization” as separate institutions. It empowers the pastors, the MSCC, the HLL,

⁸⁹ 1 Peter 2:4-10, NRSV; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 83, 91.

and every member of the congregation to be a leader. Each member of the organization is given the opportunity to participate in a process that will challenge the values and internalized principles of every other person in the congregation and community at-large.

G. Practically Speaking: The Structure

The integration of leadership development into a transformational multi-tiered leadership program with the ultimate motivation of transforming a congregation and community will fall into four phases.

The First Wave: Preparing the Primary Leadership

The first wave will be to prepare the Primary Leadership for the mission study process. In most PC(USA) congregations, the Primary Leadership will be the pastor supervising the mission study process with the MSCC, made up of elected leaders of the congregation representing the breadth of the congregation's demographics. This leadership team will explore the curriculum, learn about the basics of the theories and models that support the mission study curriculum, and consider how their congregation might benefit on an individual and corporate basis. They will, on an individual basis, spend time in self-reflection, defining several virtuosities of ethical leadership as their experience would dictate, and exploring several theological values. This process will encourage leaders to identify their personal internalized principles and work to change their lives to increase their integrity in living in line with those principles.

The Second Wave: Guiding High-Level Leadership & Preparing the Body

The second wave will begin around the time that the Primary Leadership has grasped the process and begun to implement changes in their own lives. As they are modeling change and beginning to see that impact in their own lives, the Primary Leadership will introduce the model to the HLL. The HLL will be presented with a summary of the mission study process and given some more in-depth instruction in reflection and evaluation process. The HLL will serve as small group leaders and guides when the reflection and evaluation process begins with the congregation. The Primary Leadership will ensure the HLL members are equipped to do and guide others through the reflection process so internalized values for individuals and the corporate body is done in a way that permits all members to participate and contribute. This phase only requires equipping the HLL since their participation in the process with the other congregation members will permit modeling of the process since the Primary Leadership will be a little further ahead in the process, modeling the change and results of change.

The Third Wave: Embodying the Change as a Community of Leaders

The third wave will be the largest, taking the most amount of time, meetings, investment, and participants. The HLL, under direction of the Primary Leadership, will facilitate gatherings of the congregation to guide members through the process of reflecting on their lives (their histories, stories, experiences) and values (moral, ethical, cultural, and, very importantly, theological) to ultimately identify their internalized principles and the changes needed to have integrity as they hold those principles. This

process will then be repeated, but on a corporate basis, empowering individuals to share the history, tell the story and identify important theological and moral values.

The Fourth Wave: Synthesis & Summary

This phase will be a time for the Primary Leadership, with the HLL, to synthesize the experiences and notes from the three previous phases into one final Mission Study Report to be reviewed and approved by the congregation and their presbytery. The report will be written to identify the story of the congregation, including the history, the formational events of its past, the resources and demographics of the community, and the values that drive the congregation. The optional step here would be to use the report in the creation of a mission and vision statement for the congregation before evaluating how their values align with the internalized principles identified.

H. Acquiring Adaptive Adjustments:

Finding the Transformational Changes

An integral element of the curriculum is the identification of internalized values by the congregation. Fluker's Ethical Leadership Model could seek to do this by having the community reflect on virtuosities that tell the internal story of each member and of the congregation as a whole. For a worshipping community whose identity is established in the relationship they have with a triune God, the integration of theological reflection is a natural place to start. To deepen this theological facet of the internalized value identification process, the congregation will explore the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism (covered in chapter IV). The process of introspection, reflection, and

internalized principles identification is important and, if done right, will incite the appropriate, systemic, and enduring change of a congregation.

In taking the time to do personal and communal reflection before moving forward with a change, a congregation is taking the steps to set itself up to succeed. In an effort to equip leaders from common mistakes during change, Heifetz and Linsky remind leaders that making any change to a community is an unspoken declaration that what is currently happening is wrong.⁹⁰ This will put the community on the defensive and could alienate the leader. However, by doing this work alongside the congregation, they have a hand in identifying and leading that change. Furthermore, by taking a moment to step back and survey the scene, the congregation and its leaders may be able to see systemic issues that surface in symptomatic ways. If you consider a crowded dance floor, you may be sensing something — high temperatures, for example — and begin to address that with frequent breaks or a cold drink. If you step up to the balcony, you may see a different story: perhaps it is near the exit where there is heavy traffic, more bodies, and more body heat. By stepping back, perspective is gained.⁹¹

With perspective gained, a solution needs to be found that will improve the situation for all parties involved and serve to the betterment of the community as a whole. Quinn's ACT integrates a cycle whereby systems are constantly tweaked and reevaluated

⁹⁰ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 2.

⁹¹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 53-55, 137-138.

to ensure that changes made are indeed fixing problems, leaving room for reversion if solutions are not, after implementation, the best solution.⁹²

Tim Brown is a designer who proposes that Design Theory, a human-centered design process, can be applied to any number of contexts and problems. The Design Theory process involves an intensive survey of the facts surrounding the identified problem, imagining and trying a variety of edits or solutions, and trusting that the ultimate goal — living life without that problem — will arise as the process continues. Through a process of divergent, convergent, analytic, and synthetic thinking, the problem will be eliminated and a higher balance of form, function, and productivity will emerge.⁹³ Through divergent thinking, solutions of every kind are identified without hesitation or limit. After a number of ideas are presented, the many options are narrowed, converging on the very few most viable options. Through the analytic phase, the idea is trialed and evaluated. At this point the process can start over but with refined divergent thinking based on what was discovered in the trial, or the idea can be implemented on a large scale.⁹⁴ From Brown's perspective, this process of problem solving, if done often enough and with committed participants, will produce some of the best possible solutions that benefit those involved individually, thereby increasing morale and benefiting the community, and that positive momentum will drive toward energy, life, and

⁹² Quinn, *Deep change*, 167-169.

⁹³ Timothy Brown, *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 9

⁹⁴ Brown, *Change by Design*, 67-69

sustainability.⁹⁵ If we integrate the dance floor example here, it means moving to the balcony to assess the situation and design a potential fix, and then returning to the dancefloor to model the change. It will be necessary to go back to the balcony once or twice (or more) to refine and improve the change further. It's a dance of repeated assessment and adjustment, and it requires significant personal investment for the greater good.⁹⁶

I. Summary: A Working Mission Study Model to Inspire Change

This chapter compiles a series of elements that provide structure and body yet hold great space for flexibility in its implementation. Quinn's ACT establishes the skeleton and opens leaders to development, transforming the leaders so they are self-aware and hold integrity as they live into the role they envision for the church, while transforming the members into leaders in their personal and communal lives as well. Fluker's leadership model provides the reasoning and tools for self-reflection to improve self-awareness. Olsen's model ensures that the culture of the leadership is focused on God and cultivated for spiritual growth. With final comments from Heifetz, Linsky, and Brown, the mission study is ready to empower congregations to assess themselves, identify problems, explore adjustments, and refine systems to ensure that the congregation is living into the vision discerned for them individually and corporately in relation to the community and world beyond.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Change by Design*, 195, 199.

⁹⁶ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 127.

The weakest element of the aforementioned mission study is the identification of internalized principles, particularly due to the lack of theological reflection and integration of spirituality. This is where the next chapter will play an important role as the curriculum is developed.

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Philippians 4:8, NRSV.

CHAPTER FOUR: SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Realizing That Theology Matters

Of all the things I did during my time with them, the youth of FPCS connected deeply with one, in particular: a two-week lesson on the Lord's Supper. Over the years, the elders and pastors of FPCS had unintentionally set up walls around the Lord's Supper that had skewed how it was understood by the congregation and, more specifically, the children. In a time when volunteers were hard to find to serve the Lord's Supper in worship, the Session of Elders decided that all office bearers were responsible to serve it. This was later understood as the exclusive right to serve communion. At another point, Sunday school classes were rescheduled to meet during worship for the convenience of the children's parents. This was later understood to mean that children could not participate in the Lord's Supper until they were fully-confirmed members. Both of these implied beliefs are not true in the PC(USA).⁹⁸ So when I taught a class on the Lord's Supper for the middle school students—and later, with their parents—the Session felt pressure to make adjustments so that the congregation's practices did not reinforce these ideas.

Several months later, at the service of my ordination to ministry, I stood behind the communion table to preside over the meal for my first time, and the Holy Spirit moved many hearts to understand the Sacrament differently that day. As I spoke those familiar

⁹⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 96, 98.

words, the truth of the Sacrament became clear. The theology we professed through the Lord's Supper was made clear in the presence of those gathered:

"This is the joyful feast of the people of God!"

As I scanned the congregation, their faces communicated that emotion clearly: joy.

"In the day when Christ will gather his people..."

My eyes connected with Susan, whose mother said, while on her deathbed the week before, her only regret was that she would not be able to attend my ordination but wanted to celebrate with me when we saw each other in eternity—in that day when Christ comes.

"...they will come from North and South,..."

I look to my left and lock eyes with my grandmother, a Dutch immigrant who travelled from Canada with my family to support me in this milestone of my call, and to my right I see my Seminary friends from Massachusetts, California, and every state between, earnestly listening to these words of promise and joy.

"...and they will come from East and West,..."

I turned to the choir to ensure they knew they were included, and notice two people listening especially closely: a friend who identifies and self-presents as gender-queer, beside a church member who actively participates in conservative political campaigns.

"...to sit at the Lord's Table—together—in the Kingdom of God."

As I looked back to the front row where the communion servers sat, I emphasized the word "Together." The servers, who included an elder and her 14-year old son, an 80-something matriarch of the congregation, and a seminary-bound young adult, embodied

in themselves a breadth of diversity mirroring that of the community preparing to gather at the Table.

A. Introduction

Chapter II opens by establishing the background for this project and reviewing the culture and *ethos* of the PC(USA). The denomination is one that is rich with historical roots, cultural ties, and internal structural checks that facilitate and necessitate the regular performance of mission studies. However, there are many situations where mission studies are not very successful in achieving any level of impact or positive change.

In the third chapter, I present a number of leadership development and organizational change theories that will create the framing for the final curriculum and seek to shift the track record of mission studies. Quinn's Advanced Change Theory (ACT) provides the overarching structure for the mission study curriculum which will assist congregations in effectively identifying and progressing through times of significant change. ACT, and the resulting model from Chapter III, hinge on the leader or change agent identifying "internalized principles" or values. These values become the compass by which all decisions are made and on which all integrity is measured. By committing to live according to such a standard, the leader begins modeling a lifestyle that seeks to ameliorate the community rather than simply protecting themselves.

While ACT uses these values as a central step in pursuit of transformational change in leaders, it does not have methods for identifying values that will work for the PC(USA) leadership model and is personalized for corporate organizations instead of church-based non-profits. Chapter four will be designed to address these concerns and

ensure that the ACT-based mission study process, while structurally and psychologically sound, is infused with the breath that gives purpose to our work as the Church, is designed to respond.

This chapter will serve to discuss the symbols and significance of the Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) to identify potential values a congregation could use as internalized principles. I will share the strengths of using Sacramental Theology in a mission study setting, review several potential weaknesses of doing so, and then identify the twelve primary values distilled from the Sacraments for this project. Every value is a focus for study and can potentially have a different impact on the congregation, and so this chapter will propose several facets of change that each theme could have on a congregation's leaders, members, and surrounding community. This chapter will inform the Bible study and theological discussion that is integral to a congregation's mission study process and will be the engine that drives the congregation through a season of change and into its future ministry.

B. Sacramental Theology: What & Why?

Augustine is said to have described a Sacrament as a visible sign or form of invisible grace.⁹⁹ This description seems simple enough, yet there have been many discussions—indeed, fights, denominational divisions, and even deaths—over what a Sacrament might entail and its role in faith and salvation. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) traces its theological roots to John Calvin who described them as “a testimony

⁹⁹ Donald K. McKim, *Introducing the Reformed Faith: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 133.

of God's favor toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with a mutual testifying of our godliness toward [God]."¹⁰⁰ One of the most thorough definitions of a Sacrament comes from the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, one of the faith statements in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) constitution, and is bolstered by Scriptural references:

Q. 162 What is a Sacrament?

A. A Sacrament is
 an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church,^A
 to signify, seal, and exhibit^B unto those that are within the covenant of grace,^C
 the benefits of his mediation;^D
 to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces;^E
 to oblige them to obedience;^F
 to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another,^G and
 to distinguish them from those that are without.^H

^A Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26-27

^B Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

^C Romans 9:8; Galatians 3:27, 29; Galatians 5:6; Galatians 6:15

^D Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 10:16

^E 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

^F Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 10:21

^G 1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Ephesians 4:3-5

^H 1 Corinthians 10:21¹⁰¹

Further defining them, the Sacraments balance two important factors in their identity: they act as a reality of God's grace, serving as the vehicle that conveys God's grace to our lives; and our faith response, which is our action—or reaction—to the grace made known through them.

The Sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as defined within Reformed Protestant theology, so Sacramental Theology within this tradition is the study of those two sacraments that shape our understanding of who God is and our relationship with

¹⁰⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volume 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1277.

¹⁰¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 221.

God. How we practice the Lord's Supper is an expression of what we believe about God. Our understanding of Baptism is telling others something about what we believe about God and God's promises.

While this definition of Sacramental Theology implies that there are no other actions that "sign and seal God's covenant of grace," like sacraments do, it does not limit what is sacramental and sacred. In fact, it is my hope that the process of studying and discussing the symbols and meaning within the sacraments resacredizes the sacraments themselves; that is to say, makes them holy in the eye of each. Furthermore, the process serves to make the mission study journey more whole, integrated, important, and set apart. Therefore, this process resacredizes the sacraments, sacredizes the mission study, and sacramentalizes elements within it.

The Sacraments are clearly important elements of practicing faith for individuals but what their significance is for congregations is less clear. First, they are significant because their practice is one of the key responsibilities of the Church in fulfilling God's mission in the world, according to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).¹⁰² The Church needs to have an understanding of the Sacraments if it is to fulfill such a responsibility.

Second, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both significant acts for the Church in that they were instituted by Christ and have been part of Christian worship ever since. Throughout the New Testament, their practice is noted as regular and notable parts of

¹⁰² Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 1. (This mission, as it is fulfilled through the "sacraments, rightly administered," is delineated in F-1.0303.)

worship for the Early Church. Furthermore, they can be seen in writings and artifacts that these practices have continued throughout the 2000 years that followed.¹⁰³ The Sacraments are foundational elements of Christian worship. Knowing their background and understanding their historic significance will enhance the practice for believers today.

Furthermore, they are both practically and elementally significant practices in the worship and congregational life of every worshiping community. As the administration of the Sacraments is one of the marks of the “True Church,” and as their regular practice is mandated for every Presbyterian congregation, they are fundamental to participation in a community of faith. Without them, a congregation is not a true member of the Universal Church.¹⁰⁴ Understanding and studying them is, therefore, wholly necessary for a community of faith.

Theologically, the Sacraments are deeply meaningful and full of intention. Studying sacramental theology, the understanding of God and our relationship with God in relation to the Sacraments, keeps them from devolving into a habit or rhythm devoid of meaning. Instead, it brings new life and energy to these ceremonies and inspires life-long faith development.

Another important factor is their tangibility. Faith and theology can feel intangible and philosophical, making them difficult to grasp amidst the overwhelming brokenness of this visceral and profane world. The physical elements of bread, wine, and water force our bodies and minds to attempt to reconcile these theological realities with our physical

¹⁰³ Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; I Cor. 10-11; and Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-38; 10:48; 16:31-33; 22:16; I Cor. 12:13; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6, NRSV.

¹⁰⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 4-5, 93, 96.

surroundings and experiences. Reflecting on the Lord's Supper and Baptism may inspire a connection between faith and reality in a way that other aspects of faith may not be able to facilitate.

Practically speaking, studying the Sacraments should inspire the study of Scripture and historical statements of faith. Since the Sacraments are practiced based on the testimonies and letters recorded in Scripture, studying the Sacraments will require a study of the Bible. Generations of faithful Christians have studied, wrestled, and discerned what the Sacraments are and are not, recording those most compelling elements in statements of faith. To get the deepest understanding of the Sacraments, study of statements of faith and documents within Church history must be included. Most congregations will be required to include these types of studies in their mission study process and so the study of the Sacraments fits perfectly into this requirement. Furthermore, Presbyterians believe that the continued education of all members on all subjects of Christian discipleship is integral to the life of the Church and growth of God's Kingdom.¹⁰⁵

Finally, regardless of where an individual or community falls on the spectrum of theology or politics, there will always be at least one or two aspects of the Sacraments that all parties will be able to come around (even if it is the understanding that all Christians are part of the Body of Christ!) that can be wholeheartedly embraced and claimed. The study of the Sacraments is a relatively-safe discipleship and development

¹⁰⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 112.

activity for a congregation to undertake, and even if it is, how a congregation works through conflict or disagreement can greatly shape their faith.

As with all ideas and applications, there are certainly weaknesses to this approach. For example, the previous paragraph alluded to conflict-ridden congregations where theological debating is the norm or where the Sacraments are simply a tough topic. Where this is true, leaders may be inclined to generalize the values to lessen their potency. This tactic may avoid tension or clashes, but it does not inspire deep conversation, facilitate substantive relationship building, or push the congregation to challenge its own self-perception. Discussions around over-generalized or over-neutralized values can be the demise of the entire mission study. It would be better for leaders to spend extra time refining language in one value statement or in combining a couple of others to find an agreeable substitution. Another option would be to revert the process, so a value could be introduced and the participants would sift through Scripture and liturgy to find elements of the Sacraments to communicate those values.

Another concern that may arise is the potential for communities to claim the Presbyterian name yet remain distant from the denomination, or who have traditions or background that lends them to be unfamiliar with the Sacraments. Without appropriate guidance, these communities may inadvertently commit heresy or prod conflict among their members. For those congregations, they should be sure to spend time reflecting on the distilled values outlined and identify where tensions may rise. It should be central to the conversation among the leadership of the congregation to define why there are disagreements and whether or not those contrary beliefs constitute reasoning for

approaching the higher councils of the church. This process could be lengthy and even disturbing, but it aligns with the historic traditions of a denomination who is constantly reforming and asking questions of the assumptions of its faith. Furthermore, it will encourage in-depth conversation and push the congregation to deeply consider whether or not it is in line with the denomination and its standards of faith. From there, with the accompaniment of the COM or an administrative commission from the presbytery, they will explore where God is calling them to exist and how they might live into that identity.

Ultimately, for this project, the study of the sacraments is intended to educate members so they are conversant in the basics of sacramental theology. This ability to discuss the topics at hand will inform conversation the congregation will have around several value statements based in the symbolism of the Sacraments. Furthermore, from the elements of faith that they touch to the practical considerations of political affiliation and fulfillment of denominational polity requirements, studying the Sacraments as a congregation opens the door to creative worship, learning, and service opportunities. Studying the sacraments benefits many facets of congregational life, and can prepare a congregation for great learning and growth.

Furthermore, mission studies have other requirements that this process could fulfill, like theological reflection and study of Scripture. The final project curriculum will serve to provide the rooting for individuals to commit to the greater good of an organization to the degree that they are willing to make significant personal sacrifices for that greater good in pursuit of those values (Quinn would call it an “internalized principle”). Quinn’s Advanced Change Theory and the other models identified in the

previous chapter provide structure to this project, but they do not provide a process to identify those values other than to encourage leaders to continue introspection until a value of their identity is defined. The study of the values of the sacraments, then, is what inspires and guides the identification of those central values as well as inspires in-depth theological reflection with all members of the congregation.

Several other models are reviewed to enhance the ACT structure, including Fluker's Ethical Leader model, Olsen's Transformative Church Board model, Heifetz' Adaptive Leadership model, and Brown's Design Theory. The final result is a process for a leadership development and study that engages a congregation and its leadership in ways that its members, individually and communally, gain a better understanding of themselves and their community, thereby identifying areas of strength, challenge, and need.

C. The Symbols & Significances

1. An Overview

In Q & A 161 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* that was reviewed in the previous section, there are several elements that qualify Baptism to be a sacrament and, in the pages that follow, many of these elements will play a role in the values distilled from it.¹⁰⁶ First, Christ instituted Baptism when he commanded his followers to, “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, as the single clearest act of

¹⁰⁶ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 221.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 28:19, NRSV.

induction into membership in the Church, it is meant for those who are part of the community of faith. It signifies, seals, and exhibits God's love and grace, and calls us to respond in love by giving our lives to God and one another, strengthening and increasing our faith as we live, proclaim, and share our faith through our words and deeds.

Additionally, Baptism was given for identification, participation, and proclamation. Christ called those who were part of his fellowship to make disciples, first by marking them in Christ's name as part of the community through Baptism. The act of baptism requires those who are part of the community to accept those who are baptized as one of their own so they might be discipled to faithful followers of Christ and thereby identify those new followers through this act. Finally, Baptism is an act of proclaiming faith, requiring the one being baptized or their parents to own and proclaim their faith, and to do so in a public fashion in the context of a service of worship.

The sacramental qualities of Baptism present evidence of its necessity in the life of the Church as well as inform the Church and its members of its identity, role, and purpose. From the words of Christ instituting it as an act of induction into the Body of Christ, to the message of God's love and grace it conveys, to the calling for participants to respond, Baptism's value as a Sacrament and in shaping the life of the Church is clearly vital.

Similarly, following the definition of a Sacrament in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* and using the same document's definition of the Lord's Supper, it is clear that this ceremony is worthy of being classified as a Sacrament. The Lord's Supper is a gathering during a service of worship where God's people share a small meal consisting

of bread and wine. It was instituted by Christ as a remembrance of his death and celebration of the benefits his resurrection extends to God's people. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper signifies, seals, and exhibits the spiritual nourishment and grace received as the union with Christ and one another is affirmed during this celebration of love, fellowship, and sustenance.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ and given by God, not because humanity deserved it, rather it was granted solely by grace as an extension of God's unbounding love for all people. It acts as a testimony to God's favor enacted by the Church and granted as a tool for proclaiming this good news to the world.¹⁰⁸ As will be discussed, it directs our attention to the benefits of being co-heirs of the Kingdom of God with Christ and communicates the deep, invaluable wealth that is granted through the death and resurrection of Christ. As it does so, it feeds the souls of believers and brings forth hope and joy.¹⁰⁹ This sacrament, then, was given as a *gift*, as *sustenance*, as a *reminder*, and as a sign to *inspire and enliven faith*. Each of these purposes also inspires the values that will follow, influencing the role of the Church as it seeks to live into the identity it has been given. (See Appendix B for full listing of symbols and their significances.)

¹⁰⁸ Melva Wilson Costen, "The Lord's Feast," *Presbyterians Today*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/communion/>.

¹⁰⁹ Catherine González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Atlanta: General Assembly Mission Board, 1981), 17.

2. *The Twelve Distilled Values*

Studies have shown that people are drawn to situations where many options are presented, but when a decision needs to be made, having fewer options provides a higher potential for a decision to ultimately be made.¹¹⁰ The theological substance for the mission study curriculum will come from the values distilled from a list of 36 symbols and significances associated with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It would be difficult for a group to choose from among 36 options, and so I distilled them to twelve values. For this project, the process of narrowing the values until a core value is identified is a mark of personal investment for participants, therefore removing any choosing process might eliminate an important part of the process. To provide the initial list and then show the summarizing twelve values allows participants to know that they are part of the process of filtering the most important values from a long list of options without having the fatigue of reviewing all of those options. For each of the twelve values, support will be provided from sources like Scripture and the constitutional documents of the PC(USA). The simplification and full discussion of each value can be followed in Appendix D, if leaders or participants are interested in further reading or discussion.

Following a deep study of the symbols and significances of the Sacraments identified in the constitution of the PC(USA), its resources on the Sacraments, and in other writings on the subject, I identified 36 symbols and significances of Baptism and

¹¹⁰ Alina Tugend, "Too Many Choices: A Problem That Can Paralyze," *New York Times*, February 26, 2010, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2k9BieV>.

the Lord's Supper. I then distilled and simplified the list of 36 until the final 12 remained, six for each Sacrament:

Baptism

God's mark of the new covenant and irresistible grace.

Testament of worship and belonging to the One True God.

Initiation into the Body of Christ.

Christ's union with humanity

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which renews and inspires

Holy Spirit's unique calling.

Lord's Supper

God's heavenly feast of Bread and Cup

Uniting with Christ and with Christ's Body

Nourishing meal of restoration and reconciliation.

Remembrance of Christ's sacrifice made to deliver to us eternal blessings.

God's covenant and grace for us.

Holy Spirit's inspiration to live as thankful, praise-filled disciples.¹¹¹

The values, each 6-11 words long, provide a starting point for theological conversations with congregations and even some background for those who are not as familiar with Sacramental Theology or leading group discussions on the topic.

The time spent in group discussions about Sacramental Theology is meant to be a time of self-reflection, corporate identity searching, and listening for God's call. The

¹¹¹ Appendix D.

resources available in Appendix D contains theological discussion and reflection, as well as examples of implementation for each. Much of that material can inform conversation but it should not be used in place of having theological reflection with the participants, nor should be used as a prescription for implementing aspects of the values. They should round out the reflections and questions the leaders will use as they lead their congregations on a journey of self-exploration and calling.

D. Integrating Sacraments & Change Theory:

ACT's Internalized Principles

In Quinn's Advanced Change Theory, the leader or change initiator must take time to identify the internalized principle upon which they will evaluate their life, actions, and organization. From there, they begin to work on their own lives to model that principle, addressing places where those inconsistencies create gaps of integrity. In a congregation using this mission study, the process of deciding on the central values or internalized principles should start with the community. This part of the curriculum will therefore look quite different than Quinn's ACT.

As is described in Chapter II, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is structured so that a top-down decision process is avoided. By structure, it will need a more democratic or committee-driven process to identify an internalized principle. By culture, it will desire a process that is heavy with education and reflection opportunities. Therefore, a committee-based structure that uses individual and corporate study and reflection at three different levels of congregational leadership or membership will fulfill this process, while fulfilling another required task of a mission study.

For the sake of simplicity and ease of use, the final curriculum will include the twelve distilled values with theological background from the research in Appendix D. It will contain more background and suggestions of ways each value might be implemented in a congregation.

Ideally, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's will for the congregation's direction and focus will emerge as the field of values is slowly narrowed. The Primary Leadership will prayerfully consider the four values that are the least likely to connect with their congregation, based on what they know to be true about the community. The field will be further narrowed after a time of reflection and discernment by the High-Level Leadership of the congregation. The final value identification will be done through prayer, reflection, conversation, and communal discernment with the whole congregation. The final value identification may even be a variation of one of the twelve values as the Spirit guides the process of discernment among the congregation and the process of writing the final report among the Mission Study Coordinating Committee.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMAGINED APPLICATION & ANTICIPATED

IMPLICATIONS

A. Introduction

While many congregations and pastors are discouraged by the results of times of transition that are overwhelmingly negative, my experiences of ministry and conversations with other church leaders have given me perseverance and inspiration to find new approaches to leading congregations through these formative times of transition. What resulted from those reflections and conversations was this project. While there can be a sense of despair and reluctance around transitional ministry, a relentless spirit of hope arises from my experiences in which I cannot help but perceive the promise of better days, like the moment described at the beginning of Chapter IV.

For many congregations, a mission study is a document that represents a period of time they would rather forget where there was instability, intense emotion, and a fear of failure. For one congregation I served, the mission study marked the beginning of nearly four years of transition involving three senior pastors, two associate pastors, and many upset members who left. For another, the mission study report pushed away pastors they desired (good pastors can identify a poorly-prepared mission study and an unprepared congregation), and drew pastors they did not want toward the job posting that resulted from their incorrectly-completed mission study.

This chapter will reflect on how the mission study can effectively prepare congregations to thrive. It will consider what could have happened, had FPCS used the mission study curriculum that results from this project, and what the congregation might

see or understand differently as it began the search for a leader that best suited the ministry the congregation was best suited to fulfill.

B. Imagining the Implementation of a Model Mission Study¹¹²

As I pulled up to the church that Sunday, the worshipers from the 8:00 am service were beginning to leave the building, most were walking quietly with their eyes looking at the sidewalk in front of them, but then I noticed a couple of women leaving together, wiping tears from their eyes. The hours that lay ahead marked a time of shock and grief for the congregation who were now preparing to bid farewell to the longest-serving and dearly-loved pastor. The days and weeks that lay beyond that marked a time of anxiety and fear, mixed with anger and a sense of abandonment. But as they continued on the journey of congregational life together, the months and years beyond led that congregation to rediscover its identity, renew its call to ministry, and deepen its commitment to serve God together. That journey from those first hours of uncertainty to the last day of standing in confidence was strewn with barriers and hazards, marked by milestones, memories, and scars of the past, but it has equipped them for what is ahead, and has trained them to be responsive to God's working in the world.

When the senior pastor announced his planned departure, it was a surprise to nearly everyone. At the last meeting of the Session of Elders he would attend, just a few days before his announcement to the congregation, he told them the news and together, they began making arrangements. Five days later, when the announcement was shared,

¹¹² Throughout this portion of the chapter, I will use footnotes to reference different aspects of the underlying structure that come from Chapter 3.

the leadership of the congregation was ready to share the projected plans. What was made clear to everyone was that the process of this transition would take time and hard work. With the help of an interim senior pastor (ISP) and the Presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM) the congregation would spend several months completing a mission study to better understand itself. A rushed mission study would result in perceived development and an inaccurate self-understanding. That inaccurate self-understanding could lead the congregation to hire a pastor who would likely leave early because it was not the congregation, nor the role, that she thought she had come to serve. The congregation wanted to hire a pastor that fit the congregation the mission study would help them describe, not the one they thought they were.

About a month after the senior pastor's final service of worship, at a called meeting of the congregation, the Session of elders shared with the congregation the hiring of an Interim Senior Pastor (ISP) to guide them for the coming months. At the new ISP's recommendation, the congregation was asked to provide, over the next three weeks, nominations of members for a Mission Study Coordinating Committee (MSCC) to work with the ISP to do the mission study.¹¹³ A list of qualities was desired for this small team, including skills in writing, interpreting statistics, and public speaking. As members left after that congregational meeting, there was excitement in the air as many were

¹¹³ Identifying leaders within the congregation to participate in the tightly-knit MSCC provides the ISP, who is new to the community, the opportunity to capitalize on the social influence each of those team members has to shape and shift the community in ways the ISP alone could never achieve. Quinn suggests that these kinds of techniques are helpful in gaining influence within a community in addition to gaining influence by maintaining a high level of integrity to personal (or communal) values. (See Chapter 3, section B. 4.) Quinn, *Change the World*, 235-236.

discussing people who might fit the bill for the MSCC and others were planning how to show hospitality to the new pastor.

The new ISP had finished his second full week at the church when the next congregational meeting was held. At this meeting, three items were on the docket. First, the associate pastor shared that she had accepted a call at a different congregation and would finish her service at FPCS in four weeks. The associate pastor had already told Session and so they had made an agreement with me, a seminary student familiar with the congregation, to cover the leadership void this created while the focus was on the mission study and senior pastor search.

The second and third points were related to the creation of the MSCC. First was a discussion on the interim process that lay ahead, including the ISP's plan for the mission study. Emphasizing the importance of the MSCC and their input, he made it very clear that the congregation's earnest participation in the mission study would be the best way to ensure they would thrive as a community through this time of transition and grow into the next chapter of their ministry and life together. Finally, the Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC) presented a slate of nominees who would become the MSCC, vetted by both the Session and the ISP, which the congregation approved joyfully, celebrating what might come from their work. The meeting was dismissed and the new MSCC immediately gathered in the senior pastor's office to begin its work.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ This process may appear divergent or convoluted to the non-Presbyterian, but it is integral to the PC(USA)'s polity. It is a clear process by which delegates are appointed by appropriate bodies in such a process that balances of authority are not crossed. Where Quinn's ACT places the decision regarding direction in the hands of one leader, this is the Presbyterian approach that allows the body to empower several to work together and identify a desired direction that will eventually be ratified by the body once more. (See Chapter 3, section B. 7, 9.)

There was some excitement among the church members as they left the building that day, but it was clear that some were starting to fear the change that lay ahead and felt somewhat confused about the direction their congregation could be moving.

The ISP, in his office with the newly-appointed MSCC, set out the situation and the plan, emphasizing the pressure and pushback they would encounter over the upcoming weeks and months. Referring to the work of Robert Quinn, the ISP reminded the MSCC of the feelings of abandonment, grief, and fear that arise in any organization experiencing change. How that team of leaders approached their work would undoubtedly push against those feelings or affirm them. He reiterated to them, and the other staff members in the weeks to come, that the engagement of *all* members of the congregation, leadership, and staff in the mission study process will dictate whether or not the entire mission study is helpful or harmful.¹¹⁵ Before the MSCC dispersed, they discussed promotion of the Study, set dates for the various gatherings to include in calendar of the Church, and received a package of information about the mission study to review including background information on the outline, process, and theories within the project with an eye on the implications of each activity in the congregation. As the MSCC and ISP left the building afterward, they shared with me how excited and scared they were. They reminded one another that mission study was going to be a lot of work, but it had great potential for growth and that instilled some hope for the future.

¹¹⁵ It is important to note that the scope of this project did not include extensive research on conflict resolution and how to integrate it into the curriculum, though it is most certainly an important element of interim ministry and the mission study process. As is noted, Quinn mentions strong emotions that often arise and lead to conflict in this process, but it is also helpful to mention that Heifetz and Linsky's *Leadership on the Line* is entirely centered around leading through times of conflict.

The MSCC had been reviewing the curriculum and all its elements for a month when they officially began working through it. They had met after worship for a few moments the week before to confirm their meeting dates, answer any questions, and appoint a moderator, vice-moderator, and clerk. When they arrived at the church for their first three-hour meeting, the ISP and moderator were waiting for each of them with nametags and a warm hug. Once they had all arrived, they moved to church library, which had been rearranged so all the chairs were in a circle with a small coffee table in the middle. On it were some snacks and drinks, some napkins, and a loaf of bread. After some activities meant to break the ice, the MSCC chair quieted the group and pointed to the loaf of bread and said, “As grain from many fields come together and is ground into flour that makes one loaf, so we are many, coming together to serve the Kingdom of God.”

Many elements of the gathering and their activities were intentional, the committee would find out. Their welcome at the door was to ease tension and bring a feeling of hospitality. Their seating in a circle with some light refreshments, made them feel like they were guests at someone’s home. As the gathering continued, the committee—broadly representing the congregation’s demographics and, therefore, a collection of people who did not regularly spend time with each other—began warming up to one another, felt a friendship forming with each other, and were even able to share a few laughs together. At moments, it felt like a service of worship, like when they spent time in a confessional prayer and “passed the peace,” and at other moments, it was very much a meeting, like when they were spending time parsing out the details of upcoming

gatherings and assigning tasks to various committee members. What was true, however, was that it was a gathering that had intention and purpose, and it was undeniably about God, or at least about the Church.¹¹⁶ As they left, they were given some fairly deep questions to answer for the next meeting that would provide some fodder for their direction and conversation.¹¹⁷ They went home feeling good about the committee and hopeful for the mission study they would be leading.

In the three gatherings the MSCC had in those three weeks, they developed into a cohesive team that was prepared to lead a mission study with their congregation, both logistically and spiritually. Those gatherings gave ample space for team building and logistics planning, however the reflections they shared around the questions they brought home to answer were what shaped the committee members the most. One member said they served as a devotional focus for her week, and others agreed. The questions focused on the implications of the Sacraments, practices that were clearly an integral part of the congregation's life, and yet so far from each person's daily life. As they worked together to consider 12 different values that could apply to their congregation's ministry, they

¹¹⁶ Olsen's worshipful work plays an important role in how the gatherings are structured. Approaching these meetings with the same posture as a service of worship greatly shifts the way the work is approached as well. (See Chapter 3, section D.)

¹¹⁷ In Quinn's ACT, the leader must spend significant time reflecting on personal values until they are able to identify an internalized principle. (See Chapter 3, section B. 6; and Quinn, *Deep Change*, 198-200.) Fluker's model would have individuals reflect on their stories and how certain values are projected and understood as those stories are told, retold, and retooled. As leaders grasp the nuances of their own values and stories in relation to others, they will then have a better grasp of their leadership in relation to the world. (See Chapter 3, section C. 1; and Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 41, 56, 129.) Using both of these models in all three waves, individual reflection to facilitate learning and self-understanding is used, as well as group reflection and storytelling to foster idea sharing and to refine personal theological reflections.

each noted that the values became apparent in their daily lives as well.¹¹⁸ One member mentioned that a funeral he attended reminded him of the Lord's Supper and the feast in "those last days." Another remarked that studying Baptism made her think of neighboring churches as siblings instead of as rivals (which caused her to reach out to them and ask about their summer Bible School programs so they could collaborate instead of compete for attendance!). There was integration of their reflections in their life as a church and in their lives individually.

These reflections brought to the fore what the ISP wanted to cover one last time before they prepared for leading Wave 2: this is a project that requires integration and investment. In its most rudimentary form, the mission study is a process of summarizing in one place as many details as possible about a congregation and its ministry internally, locally, regionally, and internationally. While it would be possible to produce that report without months of work and hours of time from congregation members, it would then lack investment from the other members. The mission study, in a better form, is a process by which the congregation prepares itself for its continued ministry in an ever-changing world. The process the MSCC was experiencing and would be leading would finish with a final report, but it would serve to help the members understand the congregation's identity, confirm or realign its calling and ministry, and reconcile any errors or problems

¹¹⁸ A key element of the ACT is that leaders must be deeply committed to the internalized value that will redirect the organization. This commitment must be so deep that the challenge the leader experiences to live with integrity in regards to that principle must permeate all areas of life. (See Chapter 3. B. 6; and Quinn, *Deep Change*, 197-198, 218-219.) It is the call of the Christian to integrate their faith into daily life, so this curriculum does not need to push hard to integrate conversations of faith into daily life. Furthermore, the Sacraments use mundane elements—water, bread, and juice—to represent the sacred among us and so having a curriculum series on the sacraments is begging for this kind of integration of faith and daily life.

that surfaced. In order for the final report to mark the end of a process that could shape a congregation, all of the congregation's members needed to be invested. The ISP pulled out the introductory information he shared before they started meeting and turned to the theories that influenced the structure of their mission study. He referred to one of the theorists and reminded the committee that leaders who model change that serves the greater good, can inspire entire communities to do the same.¹¹⁹

The MSCC worked diligently to gain confirmation from every member of the Session of Elders and the Board of Deacons, ensuring each was able to attend the entire 28-hour retreat and were pleased when only one was unable to commit (and she joined by video conference for most of the sessions). Their commitment spoke volumes and would make it easier to encourage attendance at the congregational gatherings scheduled to start in three weeks. These High-Level Leaders (HLL) of the congregation came from a broad variety of backgrounds, yet their questions, concerns, and critiques were all similar. They were concerned about "wasting" time on a retreat, worried about the church budget shortfall, annoyed that the schedule lacked a clear outline of events and wanting assurance that a mission study report would be coming soon. There was an air of anxiety in the group as they began to gather.

The High-Level Leadership (HLL), which included the Session of Elders and Board of Deacons, was a collection of the strongest leaders in the congregation. As such,

¹¹⁹ ACT relies upon a leader being willing to fully embrace the process and model among the organization the values they hold. (See Chapter 3, section B. 7.) A community will be more willing to participate in living lives of integrity to certain values if they see leaders and individuals whom they respect doing the same. The MSCC and HLL need to be willing to model lives of integrity and to lead the community as they together seek what God's will is for that congregation.

their desire to be responsible with resources and time was understandable, but as the retreat moved along, their understanding of their responsibilities as elders and deacons began to change. For many, the first evening put everything into perspective when they began telling their personal stories of faith related to the congregation.¹²⁰ For the others, what shifted in their paradigm was how they saw their role in the leadership of a life-giving institution of faith during the next morning's gathering. For the most steadfast (stubborn) members, it was a reading of the demographic and financial reports in conversation with spiritual health and growth of the congregation that made the connection. What needed to be true—and was perfectly clear by the end—for each leader present, was that their role as a leader and their faith as a Christian equipped them to be trustees of an institution, to be sure, but also to be role models in their congregation and community.

As the retreat drew to a close, the HLL were finally drawing connections between their individual identities, the identity and statistical realities of their congregation, and the ministry and calling of God upon the congregation. Their time together had been a lot of sharing and talking, listening and absorbing, reflecting and discerning. They told stories to understand personal connections to parts of the congregation's life, teaching each other about one another, and learning things about their church they never knew.

¹²⁰ Fluker's model uses personal stories because there is something entirely protected and inscrutable about them. When a person tells their own example of a value based on something in their own lives, it is quite difficult for others to discourage or discount that. Instead, when people listen and then share their own stories, elements of the story may change or details may come or go in an effort to emphasize particular values or principles. (See Chapter 3. C.1.) In the context of this curriculum, storytelling levels the playing field and gives equal footing to participants so they can share and contribute to the development of the thoughts and topics at hand.

They noticed shortcomings when they reflected on how God’s purpose for the Church compared to the activities of their congregation. They found deep questions about their identity as a community of faith and as individual children of God stirring their souls and compelling their minds as they reflected on the Sacraments.

Members of the MSCC spent considerable time with the HLL pushing deep reflection and asking clarifying question so that they could take notes on how God was speaking to and through each person present. It was the conversations that probed their understanding of God and how God was working in the world that proved the most important. They triggered ideas, stories, and reflections that eventually would help the HLL describe what they were discerning for the congregation’s ministry and would equip them to lead the next wave of the mission study.¹²¹

When the Session of Elders met for their next regularly-scheduled meeting, several remarks were made that indicated to the ISP that there was a shift in focus and preparation for something new. One elder emailed him as soon as the docket for their next regular meeting was distributed to comment on how the meeting’s agenda was set up similarly to that of the retreat—like an order of worship. The ISP suspected that, had this been done before the retreat, the elders would have focused on the use of time and lack of focus on meeting business. This email, offering thanks for the focus on God’s ministry in

¹²¹ Brown’s Design Theory suggests that in order for a solution to be found for a problem, a leader should work with the organization (or a subset of the organization) do divergent thinking and convergent thinking. For the MSCC, collecting the diverging thoughts and stories provided a rich background upon which they could write the final report. This process has the ability to find the path of least resistance—or the solution with the fewest disenfranchised members—and helps all parties understand their voice and perspective is truly valued. (See Chapter 3. H; and Brown, *Change by Design*, 9.)

the congregation and offering a personal story that could act as an illustration for one of the committee reports, confirmed that a shift was coming.

Another notable change was in the primary topic of conversation in the murmur of the Session as they gathered to meet. The tension and anxiety that lingered in the air during previous meetings was set to the side. Warmth and trust seemed to embrace the board as they drew attention to various activities happening around the church.¹²² Urgency and the gravity of the congregation's ministry was still present, but instead of the fear of change and concern for finances driving the meeting, it was a deeper understanding of purpose that inspired impassioned conversation. And as they closed that meeting, offering prayers for their congregation and for one another, many felt the Spirit's moving among them, affirming that these moments of worshipful meeting were important and a way that the congregation was fulfilling its calling.

It was two weeks after the HLL had a retreat that the congregation began the four gatherings of Wave 3. To fit the variety of schedules of their members, the MSCC arranged to have four gatherings over two weeks. All members were strongly encouraged to sign up for one session each week, and anyone who could not attend scheduled a meeting with some members of the MSCC to ensure their reflections and input were

¹²² In wholeheartedly committing to ACT and making significant personal risks for the sake of the organization's success, a leader models a certain level of trust that, in and of itself, is admirable. As others join the cause and commit themselves to lives of integrity, committed to such a virtuous cause, the level of trust within the organization rises. (See Chapter 3, section B. 4, 6; Quinn, *Change the World*, 235; Spreitzer, "Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace," 1445-1460.) This is true in this curriculum as well. As members and stakeholders in the congregation see the commitment and investment of others, they themselves are more liable to make personal sacrifices and investments in the success of the congregation. When all parties are invested, trust goes up, since each participant is dependent upon the success of each other.

received. The logistics for these gatherings were substantially more complex to coordinate, but having had several weeks to plan and coordinate, the MSCC and HLL build schedules and found volunteers to ensure it all went smoothly. While coordinating the moving parts of such an event fell into place with advance planning, the preparatory work the MSCC and HLL had done took some time to prove helpful.

At both of the gatherings in the first week, the members were happy to feel a warm welcome from the MSCC and HLL greeters, feeling comfortable and embraced from the moment they arrived. However, as various MSCC members documented during their notetaking early in the day, there was a murmur of disappointment around the room as various participants observed what they deemed to be a waste of time. While this negative impression appeared to remain for several hours in the minds of some, the afternoon's conversation to discuss the details of the mission study process and its underlying theories gave space to air those concerns and have them addressed.¹²³

In the second week's gatherings, focus was directed toward the expression of the congregation's values. In addition to further reflection on the values of the sacraments, members were guided through reflections on how those values were expressed in everyday life, personally and individually, and how those interacted with the reality of the congregation as shown through statistics and an objective review of the congregation's ministries. As the conversation continued, MSCC members took notes on

¹²³ As is mentioned in Chapter 4, section C, the twelve distilled values and the process of culling the options is done in a way that provides opportunity for every level of church membership and leadership to submit their preference, as well as voice their opinions so that MSCC members, who will be writing the final report, are able to listen for opinions that can or should be included in the final report.

the reflections and any significant comments that arose so they could be sure that the final report reflected the conversations had in this space.

As the members participated in Wave 3 of the mission study over the next two weeks, many noticed that conversations related to the topics covered in the gatherings resurfaced in other areas of congregational life in the days and weeks that followed. A focus on stories and histories gave members some context and a better understanding of certain traditions and activities of the congregation, but also a deeper understanding of the purpose of the Church and how various denominations and traditions related to one another.¹²⁴ In focusing on the Sacraments, members began noticing images and symbolism that arose in church décor, Sunday morning liturgy, and phrases in prayers they frequently heard. From the moment the first meeting had finished, members began recognizing moments in their everyday lives that brought to mind the values of the Sacraments they had been discussing.¹²⁵ One person was reminded of their own baptism while bathing their infant son, while another was struck by the idea of God's irresistible grace while sharing his faith story, which began with being baptized as an infant in FPCS's sanctuary decades ago. Another member later shared that the reconciliation symbolized in the sharing of the Lord's Supper inspired him to set up a short lunch meeting with a sibling he had quarreled with recently. And one young child, who had attended with her parents, made a connection to daily life when she stopped to tear her sandwich in tiny pieces at lunch the next day, telling her father, "Body of Christ!"

¹²⁴ See footnote 120 (Fluker and the use of stories).

¹²⁵ See footnote 118 (Quinn and the integration of the internalized principles into everyday life).

What was striking for many members, was the ability to approach nearly any other member of the congregation, while at church or in public, and have a common ground, a common language, and a common topic of conversation around which substantive and deep reflection could be had. It was significant for this congregation to have such unity in conversation and freedom to reflect on something so weighty, as the congregation's very identity and purpose was at the center of it all. The posture of reflection and acceptance at the gatherings was a big part of that experience. In those gatherings, steps were taken to ensure that every voice was heard and that every heart was given the opportunity to share, thereby intentionally celebrating the diversity of voices that came together to create the face of their congregation. It was then the MSCC's duty to ensure that the diversity of voices was acknowledged and internalized in the text of the mission study that resulted from all the gatherings.¹²⁶ Creating the safe space for those voices to be heard was integral to capturing the fullest image of the congregation.

At the close of the final congregational gathering, the HLL who helped facilitate the two weeks of gatherings celebrated the achievements made and encouraged the ISP and MSCC for coordinating such a successful process. The MSCC members reminded them that the mission study was not yet finished since the report had not yet been compiled. The ISP took the opportunity to lift up the difference in understanding from the

¹²⁶ Quinn is clear that the dissenting voices who are pushing against change should have their concerns heard and acknowledged, though not always addressed, since that may compromise the entire change process (See Quinn, *Change the World*, 252-255). The use of Eric Law's Mutual Invitation to create space for every voice to be heard does more than simply placate the disenfranchised in the community. Tim Brown suggests that the best choice is the one that the most people agree with which is only possible to identify when the entire breadth of perspectives is heard. (See footnote 121; Brown, *Change by Design*, 67-69.)

first day to the last. At first, the mission study was thought to be a report that needed to be written and the gatherings were simply a means to an end. At the end of the gatherings, many HLL members had all-but-forgotten the final report, feeling instead that there was a sense of completion, achievement, and direction discerned, even without the report. There was a collective confidence that something had worked and that something could change, because of the hard work of all involved, from the Elders to the newest members.

In the two final weeks of the mission study, the MSCC worked hard to compile the final report. It would include the research and reflections of all who participated, but reduced to a succinct document that highlighted what would become a vision statement for the congregation moving forward. After many hours of edits and revisions, the report was presented to Session, who suggested only minor edits before presenting it to the congregation and the presbytery COM for approval. At that point, exactly six months after the previous pastor's departure, the congregation was approved to begin seeking their permanent replacement senior pastor. The search process took nearly 12 more months for the new Senior Pastor to be identified, interviewed, nominated, and called. When she began her ministry with the congregation, there was a sense of understanding of purpose that connected her to the congregation. When asked what drew her to apply, she mentioned the well-developed mission study report and a unity of voice arising from the congregation members.

C. So What?: The Implications

When this project was just a glimmer in my eye as I sat in a Boston University classroom, the widespread impact of a project like this seemed unlikely. As a pastoral ministry fellow at a large church, I had the education and training to be a pastor, but my position greatly limited my influence on the congregation's structure and organization, much less the structure and organization of other congregations. As leadership opportunities in other congregations began to surface, my ability to influence congregations became apparent. As I pulled research together for this project and described the final product to pastors, interim ministry specialists, and presbytery staff, the need for this kind of work became clearer and the potential impact of this project grew. In my last in-person class at Boston University, my classmates remarked that among the dozens of projects being produced by our cohorts, mine seemed have the greatest potential for publication and widespread implementation. As I designed this project and imagined its use in congregations, I have kept these thoughts in mind, not as a point of pride, but as one of encouragement, because the impact this project could have on congregations strikes me as very real and very important.

For congregations going through times of transition, or recovering from bad experiences with mission studies, this project could instill confidence or hope that the next time will go better. It could be the piece that inspires the Session of a small church to take a chance and identify some outrageous changes that could change the life of the congregation. It could catch the eye of the session of elders at a large church who has shuffled pastors for the better part of a century to avoid doing an actual mission study

process.¹²⁷ If this project does nothing more than grant hope or inspiration for leaders of a congregation in transition, it will have been worth the effort.

Practically, congregations who use this curriculum will explicitly make connections in at least three ways that could be formative for the congregation. They will be integrating organizational psychology into the structure of the congregation which may feel like crossing a barrier between faith and the social sciences for some, but is more accurately a balance of the two. The congregation will take time to focus on the practical theology angle of the Sacraments, which can, like other traditions and activities, otherwise get lost in the details of everyday life. Focusing on how the Sacraments impact our daily life and collective ministry can inspire a congregation to consider the symbolism that arises in everything related to those activities, but also related to expressions of faith in everyday life. Finally, congregations who use Olsen's structure for meetings will find a new perspective on their work and understand their business as an expression of worship. If embraced, a cultural shift can occur within a congregation wherein its members think more critically about its ministry and reflect more frequently on how it is living in obedience to its calling.

For pastors and mid council professionals supporting communities in transition preparing for mission studies, this curriculum could be the project that helps them succeed in their work. This curriculum could give them the confidence or clout to serve a congregation skeptical of the process. It is a process that will require all the

¹²⁷ One congregation I know has been able to overlap their retiring Senior Pastor with an incoming "Co-Senior Pastor" twice, effectively eliminating what would trigger a mission study for the congregation. They have not had a period of transitional ministry for over three decades.

congregation's leaders to make the mental shift to prepare for change. It could also be the element that saves a pastor from entering a relationship with a congregation claiming to be prepared for change when they are not. (Pastors who seek to change an unprepared congregation will arrest any development and potentially cause the congregation to totally reject the pastor's leadership.) This project could also be the bridge another ministry professional uses to connect a model or an area of their own expertise to make interim ministry even more impactful.

While this project sprung up from my big dreams, lofting many possibilities for its incredible success, it would be silly for me to suggest that it is perfect (it would, in fact, be heretical for a Calvinist to suggest such a thing!). One of the biggest limitations of this project is that, due to time constraints and the curriculum development process, it could not include a full test of the curriculum. The content within this project includes input from a variety of specialists in the field and has promise to be reviewed by over a dozen interim ministry professionals who could field test it for me, if the opportunity and interest arose. This large pool of ministry professionals with a wealth of experience who are willing to contribute to this project indicates both that the need for this kind of program is well-known in the field, and that there is significant potential impact due to the number of contributors the final result would have. Finally, to consider this final project something that is "finished" or "perfected" would be to go against a fundamental assumption of one of its basic theories, ACT. In a world that is always changing, our responses must be nimble and ready to change as well. The permission to adjust and react

to space, action, and context is always granted, so far as forgiveness is readily granted as well.

Another limitation is the amount of background knowledge required to successfully lead and guide this project, which can be substantial. This mission study curriculum relies on at least one person—usually the interim pastor—understanding the ways the various theories interact with one another and the context in which they live. Without that background and the conscious inclusion or mention of various facets of each theory throughout the mission study process, key elements could be missed, greatly reducing the potential for success. Future iterations of this curriculum may be able to integrate these concepts differently and in a way that is more user friendly, but in the meanwhile, this extra study could be a liability for the curriculum.

A final limitation that I expect to arise are the biases and worldviews that I bring to such a project. A pastor at a church in San Juan, Puerto Rico may find certain experiences to be exciting and useful that the lay interim leader of a First Nations congregation in the Pueblo villages of New Mexico. And a pastor at a large African-American PC(USA) church in Los Angeles will find certain topics or activities more compelling or natural than those of a Caucasian, male, Canadian-born pastor with left-leaning political and theological tendencies, like myself. In obtaining feedback and insights from many other church leaders, I hope to identify those hiccups and address them.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ I readily acknowledge that a major limit this curriculum has is tied up in culture of particular communities. I look forward to exploring how this curriculum will shift and impact other cultures within the PC(USA). See footnote 35.

Besides being field tested, which will be no small feat, to be sure, there are several other opportunities for improvement as well. I would like to consider a parallel curriculum for the classroom to assist the youngest members of the church, young children through middle school, in preparing for transition and implementing their own version of the mission study that would complement the parents' track. And looking toward the higher councils of the church, I would like to have the insight of someone working at a mid council level to consider how it would best be designed to assist them, both as regional bodies supporting lower councils, and as a community within the Church that goes through seasons of transition and could benefit from its own variation of a mission study. In my current role, I work in the same building as the primary publisher for the PC(USA), Westminster John Knox Press. The insights of their staff and editors will help prepare future versions for distribution. Finally, I would like to consider ways to integrate digital media into this curriculum that would increase its portability, simplify the implementation, and enhance the activities within it.

While reflecting on areas of the curriculum that lack strength or that could become more impactful, it struck me that I have learned quite a bit during this process that I did not anticipate learning. First, while doing the initial research for it, I was quite disappointed—shocked, really—at how little research and few resources are available on this topic within the PC(USA). This reality was the “last straw,” confirming for me that this was a project that needed to be done. For a denomination that is as large as the PC(USA) and that relies quite heavily on the mission study process to have so few well-

developed resources and even fewer that integrate modern social science was a problem that needed attention.

In the same vein, I noticed that changes in our denomination's polity and the steady decline in our membership has left some areas of our denominational life without leadership or guidance. In 2014, a new form of government was adopted that removed many of the required minutia in the denomination's polity, placing responsibility for things, like mission studies, in the hands of congregations and mid councils. Not responsible for mission studies any longer, the denomination had no need to address the out-of-date materials. Presbyteries and synods, already understaffed, were unable to address the need as well. Further exacerbating the problem, the Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly, two PC(USA) agencies who might otherwise contribute to this field of materials, went through their own financial troubles (fall-out from the recession of the mid-to-late-2000s and shrinking of annual contributions by a declining membership) and were unable to do so. This culminated in a vacuum that was felt by congregations going through transition; congregations who were without pastoral leadership and who were concentrating on their week-to-week ministry instead of the higher-level structures that would support them on a longer-term basis. This was all very disappointing to discover, yet not at all surprising. It pushed me harder to work on this project and adopt the cause as one I should be advocating for at a regional and national level, especially with the completion of this project.

This project afforded the opportunity to study social psychology, which was rather new to me as well. I have been reading up on the subject for a number of years but

this created the space to do some deeper study in the field that my previous studies have not afforded. In the process of skimming several racks of books in multiple libraries, I cannot help but feel like congregational leaders are missing out on a vast pool of resources in the field of organizational behavior and the psychology behind corporate business. Of course, there are significant liberties that leaders of faith communities must take to accommodate these ideas, but it certainly opens a wealth of possibilities.¹²⁹

Finally, I have learned that this will be a valuable contribution to the life of the PC(USA) and I can have confidence in that. I started this section sharing that I found momentum and encouragement when this project was described to leaders who are in or supporting communities experiencing times of transition. Not only did this show me that there was a need for this and potential for significant impact, but it helped teach me that this attempt to contribute to the national church would not go unnoticed or without impact. It has been, more than once, the confidence boost I needed to ensure I mentioned it to people who could share it with congregations who could use it, and the extra drive to not only complete it, but to do so with great attention to its application, as shown in Appendix A. This project has further confirmed for me that these opportunities which seem to fall into my lap are certainly intentional and are one way that God can impact the lives of others through my work.

¹²⁹ One major area of interest is the subject of conflict in congregations in times of transition. Times of interim ministry tend to be opportunities, triggers, or kindling for outrage and anger to brew, burst forth, or even destroy communities and I readily admit that this project glazes over that subject, due to the vast amount of time and engagement such a topic would require. This will certainly be a topic that is engaged in future development projects for this curriculum.

I look forward to seeing how this work continues to take shape and adjust as it is critiqued, tested, and amended. Much like the Church, that is always to be reformed (*semper reformanda*), this mission study will be at its best if it is always being reformed and improved.

APPENDIX A: A MODEL CURRICULUM

Introduction to the Project Reader

This appendix is the product of the in-depth study conducted in the previous five chapters. At moments, it will appear to repeat arguments that were clearly made in previous chapter, while at others it will appear as though to make assumptions about polity and terms. This is all due to the focused audience of the curriculum: Elders and ministers serving PC(USA) congregations.

It needs to be noted here that this curriculum has not yet been field tested. Evaluation of this program is outside the scope of this project, but specialists in the field of interim ministry will provide feedback on the themes, construct, and potential impact of the material.

Curriculum Overview

“We need to do a mission study. Why should we use this as our curriculum?”

In short, you should use it because it was designed by a Presbyterian, for Presbyterians, so that the Church can be the best witness possible to God’s love and grace. This program is designed with the polity and requirements of most mid councils in mind, but it does not shy away from deep theological questions that impact the paradigm from which churches do ministry, nor does it ignore the dynamics at play that hinder or facilitate healthy transitions and new ministry directions. It should be noted that this curriculum will work best in a congregation who knows they have the potential for significant change, since the underlying theory, Advanced Change Theory (ACT), serves

to completely reorient the culture of organizations. With that said, every Mission Study Coordinating Committee (MSCC) has the opportunity—and responsibility—to identify the need for change in the congregation as they attempt to realign themselves with the ever-changing reality of the world around them, and, therefore, the ever-changing call God has for them in the world.

“What is the anticipated outcome?”

This curriculum was designed so that congregations will emerge with a richer and unified vision for their collective ministry, as well as a completed mission study report that fulfills the requirements of their supervising mid council. Of course, this is dependent on the intensity of a congregation’s commitment to participate and their openness to hear God’s potentially life-altering call to do something new.

“Will it fit my congregation’s unique needs and personality?”

Absolutely. The curriculum included here is but one way of implementing this model of a mission study. Those who are in coordinating roles and are using this curriculum will find that it asks them to read and learn more about the underlying theories and theology that inform the structure. This is to equip them with the knowledge and comprehension, so they can make informed decisions and adjustments to the curriculum for their community’s benefit. The structure of the process should be followed fairly closely, but the engagement of members should supersede any limitations an activity might impose.

The following timeline is provided as an estimated schedule to aid in the long-term planning and scheduling of the mission study. It is important to note that this timeline is a mere guideline and suggestion, and assumes no breaks in the schedule. Depending on factors like the size of your congregation, the number of full-congregation meetings held, and any gaps in meeting schedules due to special events or holidays, this schedule can vary.

Week #	First Wave (Primary Leadership)	Second Wave (High-Level Leadership)	Third Wave (Congregation)
1	Prepare & Learn		
2			
3	Weekly Gatherings (three 3-hour sessions)		
4			
5			
6	Prep for Wave 2 & Data Research	Preparation	
7	<i>Participate in and Facilitate Wave 2</i>	Weekly Gatherings (three 3-hour sessions)	
8			
9			
10		Prepare Wave 3 & Conduct Surveys	Complete Survey
11		<i>Participate in and Facilitate Wave 3</i>	Gatherings (one 3-hour, one 8-hour retreat)
12			
13			
14	Final Data Collection	Final Data Collection	
15	Analysis & Synthesis		
16	Write & Edit		
17	Present Report	Receive Report	
18		Present Report	Receive Report
19	Continue implementation of report & Model change for community		

“Who is the intended audience?”

The audience for this curriculum includes pastors, elders, and other leaders within the PC(USA) and its congregations. It is hoped that this project, in one form or another, will serve to support leaders desiring a robust mission study curriculum with roots in Reformed theology, supported by organizational behavior theories. It will be a good read for any leaders who may one day encounter, attend, serve, or worship with a congregation going through a time of transition.

“Who is part of the mission study?”

In short, everyone. If someone associated with your congregation comes to mind, and they are not a part of the classification below, they are an important part of the mission study. In order for a congregation to benefit from a mission study, it will need the insights and thoughtful engagement of every stakeholder in the congregation’s life and in its circle of influence.¹³⁰ Furthermore, in order for change to happen and to become part of the new norm, all stakeholders need to understand the change and buy in to it.¹³¹ Participation by all parties is integral.

In this curriculum, there are several definitions or descriptions of various people connected to the congregation who play the required roles. Below are terms that are used throughout this curriculum that you may need to redefine or adjust to fit your particular context:

¹³⁰ Newhall, “Guidelines for Mission Studies.”

¹³¹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 2.

Primary Leadership: This is the collection of leaders of a congregation who will be responsible for the mission study process. In most congregations, this will include a pastor (often the Interim, Stated Supply, or otherwise temporary pastor) and the Mission Study Coordinating Committee. Together, they will take care of the logistics of the mission study's various components and gatherings until a final report is approved.

Mission Study Coordinating Committee (MSCC): This is a committee of either the Session or the Congregation appointed for a time to perform a mission study. This committee is often orchestrated by a pastor who may or may not have a vote on the committee. Team members are usually vetted by Session and elected by the congregation, or nominated by the congregation and appointed by session, often with input from the ISP staffing the MSCC.

It is important to note that the make-up of the MSCC is a significant factor to its success. As the final report of the committee will need to be approved by Session, the congregation, and the COM, it will need to be detailed and yet concise, accurate in its history and data, and sensitive to all voices. In most mid councils, a congregation's MSCC shall have 3, 5, or 7 members that are representative of the variety of genders, ages, incomes, races, and cultures of the congregation.¹³² Furthermore, it is advisable that the committee have board representation with one elder and one deacon, and a collective

¹³² This is a robust MSCC composition guideline, but it is important to note that this breadth of skill and representation will be important to constructing a well-balanced report. Check with your supervising mid council to see if they have similar guidelines.

skill set that includes writing, wordsmithing, computer use, graphic design, statistics analysis, corporate history, fresh perspective (new member), and visioning.¹³³

High-Level Leadership (HLL): The High-Level Leadership is comprised of those in ordained leadership roles who are not part of the MSCC. For most congregations, this will include active elders on the Board of Session and active deacons on the Board of Deacons. Some congregations may opt to include the Board of Trustees, if that role exists.

Session: The board of directors of a local Presbyterian congregation is also known as the Session of Elders, the Board of Elders, or the Board of Session. These are elected by the congregation and ordained through the constitution of the PC(USA) to their work which includes spiritual discernment, governing, discipline, and leadership in the regular life of the church and in the local, regional, and national councils of the church.

Board of Deacons (Board of Trustees): Most congregations have, in addition to the Session, a board of members ordained to the role of Deacon. This board is elected by the congregation, ordained through the constitution, and empowered to lead the congregation in service in God's name. Some congregations also have a Board of Trustees who are elected by the congregation and empowered by the Session to manage the facilities and structures belonging to the congregation. It is at the discretion of the MSCC to include one, both, or neither of these boards as part of the HLL.

¹³³ Grace Presbytery, *Congregational Mission Study*, accessed January 21, 2019, <http://www.gracepresbytery.org/resources/resources-for-churches/congregational-mission-study/>.

Community: In the context of this curriculum, when not specified, the “community” is in reference to the people and neighborhoods in the nearby proximity of the church, geographically, and those who are impacted by the ministries of the congregation, socially or otherwise. This is the subsection of the world who are impacted by the congregation and its existence, but not part of the speaking majority.

Presbytery: Most congregations make changes and decisions with regard to staffing, mission focus, and general institutional health alongside the supervising mid council’s Committee or Commission on Ministry (COM). For most congregations, this is your Presbytery, while for others, it is the Synod or another localized interpretation of the mid council political construct. Please use your appropriate term interchangeably when this curriculum references a Presbytery.

ii. **What** is a mission study?

“The mission study is a spiritual discernment process which provides the congregation with the opportunity for self-reflection, which can be enlivening and encouraging.”¹³⁴

On a practical level, the mission study is a moment of pause for a congregation to reflect on who they are and what their skills, resources, and needs are in this moment. On a deeper level, it is a moment to pause and listen for God’s calling for the congregation members, individually and corporately.

¹³⁴ Presbytery of Genesee Valley, “Committee on Ministry Mission And Mission Study and Statement: Guidelines for Churches,” 2013, accessed January 21, 2019, <http://pbygenval.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2013/01/Mission-and-Ministry-Study.pdf>.

Many mid councils have several items, reflections, or activities that must be done in order for a mission study to be “complete.” While these lists vary from mid council to mid council, the following objectives of this mission study cover the breadth of these lists and should equip a congregation to meet the minimum standards of their mid council with little trouble or fuss.

1. Mission Study Objectives¹³⁵

- Demographic Study of Congregation and Community and Understanding of any changes in recent years
- Survey and Interviews of Congregation and Community
- Financial & Asset Review of Congregation and Community
- Rationale for current staff and leadership structure and discussion of alternative models
- Needs of the Congregation and Community
- Study of Scripture and/or Theology
- Exploration of Corporate Sense of Call
- Telling of the Story and History
 - Independently
 - In the Context of the Surrounding Community
 - Highlighting Crises, Achievements, and Conflicts

¹³⁵ Office of the Stated Clerk, Office on Constitutional Services and Washington Presbytery, “Nine Questions...”; Presbytery of New Hope Committee on Ministry, “A Guide for Churches.”

❑ Describing the congregation’s theological stance, worship and ministry “style”, and personality.

❑ Pulling It All Together: Stepping Toward a New Identity, Vision, and Mission

iii. **Why** do we do mission studies?

Mission studies play an important role in the life of a healthy congregation. When a congregation’s long-time pastor transitions out of their role in the congregation, or when there is level of unrest or discord among leadership or membership, or when it is time for some reflection and realignment, mission studies can uncover standards that should be realigned in practices or traditions, space for exposure and reconciliation of conflict, and insight into discerning call and spiritual direction. In one of the earliest books on the topic, Loren Mead names five functions of mission studies:

- 1) Come to terms with the history
- 2) Discover a new identity
- 3) Allow needed leadership changes
- 4) Reaffirm the connection with the PC(USA)
- 5) Inspire commitment to adjust directions of ministry.¹³⁶

Mission studies, therefore, provide space for congregations to take an account of themselves and their surroundings, reflect on God’s call, discern potential changes, align with the denomination, and commit to implementing change.

2. Summary of History, Theology, Theories & Models Used

¹³⁶ Mead, *Critical Moment of Ministry*, 36-50.

a. History of the PC(USA) & Mission Studies

Mission studies only date back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the idea of “transitional ministry” was just beginning to gain traction. Despite this short time of existence, the mission study fits naturally into the polity, history, and theology of the PC(USA). The Presbyterian Church was born out of the Protestant Reformation, developed by Scottish parliament against the British royal rule, and became fairly established in the newly-colonized Americas shortly thereafter. The Presbyterian structure involving various checks and balances is the political-theological response to sources of significant conflict in the past, and an answer to the problem of power-thirsty leaders. Furthermore, it was formed in a time of significant change, prompting the church to assess and reassess what it meant to be a Christian in the world. It is almost in its nature, then, for Presbyterians to pause and reinterpret their position, role, and surroundings while checking the balance of control to ensure certain power struggles or heresies are not threatening an otherwise healthy church.

While this culture has been present in the denomination for many generations, only the last two or three have become familiar with the idea of a mission study. Not long after Keith Irwin and Loren Mead began lifting up this time of transition as an opportunity for growth in the late 1970s, several curricula arose as resources for congregations seeking to do this work. As a product of its time, the material lacks the significant connection with practical theology or social psychology that it could have had. With that said, these resources were able to raise interim ministry into public awareness and identify several standard goals for congregations in a transition. Since 1986, there

have been few new resources developed for interim ministry beyond modern interpretations of the original lessons, despite developments in the related fields like organizational behavior.

This curriculum attempts to do that work. By integrating several models and theories for leadership and organizational behavior, this curriculum will have an underlying foundation that drives change, empowers all levels of church members, and improves the lives of those involved, individually and corporately.

b. Underlying Theories, Models, & Theology

While most participants in the mission study will not need an understanding of the theories that guide the formation of this mission study curriculum, knowing the ‘why’ may help those coordinating the project lead and adjust more appropriately. With this in mind, highly condensed summaries of each are included below with additional resources for more information.

i. Advanced Change Theory (R. Quinn)¹³⁷

Quinn’s Advanced Change Theory (ACT) suggests that in a world of constant change, organizations are almost always on a slow trajectory toward death by irrelevancy. Quinn says that leaders can direct change, but only if they are modeling and participating in the change themselves. Through commitment to the greater good, internal strength

¹³⁷ Additional reading on Robert E. Quinn’s Advanced Change Theory: S. D. von Wolff, “Executive book summary of *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Extraordinary Results*, by Robert E. Quinn,” accessed January 20, 2019, <https://keithdwalker.ca/wp-content/summaries/1-c/Change%20the%20World.Quinn.EBS.pdf>; Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996); Robert E. Quinn, *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Extraordinary Results* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2000).

inspired by moral principles, and living with integrity as best as possible, leaders will inspire others to join in the pursuit of something bigger and better than themselves.

In congregations, ACT would suggest that leaders must demonstrate integrity in Christian living and commitment to the greater good of the community in order to influence change well. Leaders within the congregation should work to identify values they hold as foundational principles and consider what things in their daily lives should change to better represent that value. In so doing, others will see those changes and be inspired to participate in such a cause worthy of sacrificing personal gains. Slowly, but certainly, a cultural shift will occur and the closer-knit congregation is better-prepared to support and challenge its members.

ii. Ethical Leadership Model (W. Fluker)

In response to what Fluker identifies as a crisis of leadership, he developed the Ethical Leadership Model to assist leaders so they can develop into critically-thinking and ethical leaders. By starting with the telling and retelling of personal identity stories, Fluker guides leaders to understand where influences, biases, and self-imposed limitations arise. As leaders grasp the influences in their own lives, and gain a better understanding of self, they are led to explore how they perceive and interact with themselves, the community, and the world, and how they can express virtuosities of ethical leadership in everyday living.

The role of story is very familiar for people of faith, but this is a particular twist that can be very helpful for church leaders. As personal stories or examples of faith or connection to God or the Church are shared, leaders become more attune to how their

feelings connect them with the community of faith, how their stories and expressions of faith impact others, and how the congregation impacts them. Furthermore, as leaders understand themselves and their role in relation to the congregation better, they will be able to guide participants in ways that best reflect the present reality.¹³⁸

iii. Church Board as Spiritual Leader Model (C. Olsen)

Early in his career, Rev. Charles Olsen noticed that church board leaders seemed to be excited and relieved as they finished their terms of leadership, and then disappeared from church life for several weeks or months thereafter. What he found was that these leaders were being drained by the administrative duties of their service. In an attempt to refocus these boards of church leaders, he addressed the structure of the meetings. Instead of following the order and tenor of a corporate board meeting, the meeting was built around the order of worship. Meetings opened with prayer and singing, included times of proclaiming God's word and listening for God together, reports of committees became storytelling and opportunities for praise and thanksgiving. By refocusing the work of the board to fit the worship paradigm, board members once again became disciples of Christ.¹³⁹

iv. Symbolism within Presbyterian Sacramental Theology

¹³⁸ Additional reading on Walter E. Fluker's Ethical Leadership Model: Walter E. Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009).

¹³⁹ Additional reading on Charles M. Olsen's model: Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1995).

The Lord's Supper and Baptism are rich with significance and symbolism, from the grace and forgiveness God freely shares, to the promise of eternal life through Christ, to the commitment to service God's people make. This curriculum provides material on twelve aspects of the Sacraments that impact the life and faith of God's people. As these are studied, understood, and celebrated, facets of God's character and love are revealed and the direction of the Holy Spirit's calling becomes more clear.¹⁴⁰

Getting Started: Notes for the First Wave (Primary Leadership)

i. Direction: Mission Study Final Report

The mission study is ultimately done with the goal of writing an accurate final report that is approved and supported by the Session, congregation, and mid council representatives. With that said, the process of getting there is far more important than the final document that is written.

ii. Our "Why?": Discernment & Vision with lasting change

Through the mission study process, the congregation is shaped into a community of faith whose members are self-aware and better understand their role and influence in the world. As this knowledge is grasped, they are able to influence one another and the community at large to be more aware of others and can work to achieve a collective existence that allows everyone to find a higher level of wholeness and fulfillment: a glimpse of the day when all of God's children will feast in the Kingdom of God.

¹⁴⁰ Additional reading on Presbyterian Sacramental Theology: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II: Book of Order 2017-2019* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), 2017); Appendix D: Facets of Our Faith: The Many Lessons of the Sacraments.

Furthermore, as more members of the congregation participate in this shift, the likelihood of the change being more permanent and far reaching increases.

iii. Process

1. ACT: Modeling change

This curriculum is structured to permit time for each wave of leadership to learn the concepts of ACT and values expressed through the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and apply that to their lives just as the next wave is invited to participate. This is to maximize the opportunity for modeling of change and integrity to occur.

2. Ethical Leadership Model

There is a focus on the individual and corporate stories and histories so that participants can improve their self-understanding and gain the agility to incorporate their stories into the storyline of the congregation and of Christ's Church. Furthermore, the opportunity to share personal experiences and hear the fundamental underlying stories of others' lives will deepen relationships, increase trust, and strengthen the fibers that hold the congregation together despite tension or troubles.

3. Sacramental Theology

The symbols and significances explored in studying the Sacramental Theological values of the PC(USA) will strengthen the connection between individuals who share stories and the faith they espouse. Furthermore, the internalized principles that a congregation finds most compelling or striking will become principles that drive the transformation of the congregation.

4. Surface-Level Problems

Where this curriculum will seem inadequate will be in addressing surface-level or transactional problems caused by relational or systemic inconsistencies. While it is true that there is not an explicit problem-solving process, both Quinn and Heifetz suggest that in addressing internalized discord and influencing the system through internalized principles most surface-level problems fade away, or that they will remedy themselves.

iv. Data Collection

One of the more standardized and lowest-engagement requirements of every mission study is the gathering of statistical data on the congregation and community. This will inform the congregation of who their neighbor is and what resources, abilities, or needs may be hiding in plain sight.

Most congregations opt to use a service to provide this data and analysis for a small fee. The Research Services department of Presbyterian Mission, an agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is currently working with an organization called MissionInsite to acquire permissions for access for all of its congregations. The staff would acquire, analyze, and present the findings to Primary Leadership to equip them for their work. (And as function of their ministry, Research Services will do this work at no cost.)

v. Survey of the Congregation

A final data collection piece is a survey of the congregation's membership. The development of this survey should be done with research or interview specialists who can provide guidance to appropriate questions to ask, and awkward or misleading questions

to avoid. This part of the project will inform the interview questions developed for more detailed information gathering.

vi. Mutual invitation

To better facilitate conversation and ensure all are aware of the opportunity and expectation to share, use a group management technique called “Mutual Invitation”.

In a time of group sharing, the leader will start and express their thoughts. They will then invite another person to share. That person may speak, say, “Pass, for now,” or “Pass,” which allows them the freedom to share, temporarily pass, or remain silent.¹⁴¹ It provides comfortable and safe space for improved communication.

The Gatherings: Wave 1

Gathering 1.1: The Mission Study

Equipment & Set Up

Supplies for ice breaker activities; loaf of communion bread and/or cup of grape juice; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) (optional); handouts outlining process and anticipated timeline (optional).

Attendance

Primary Leadership Team (Pastor & MSCC)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

30 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

MSCC Chair

¹⁴¹ Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 79-88.

Icebreaker games or get-to-know-you activities for teambuilding among MSCC.

2 min. | **Symbol of God's Presence** Communion Bread / Cup MSCC Chair

“As grain from many fields come together and is ground into flour that makes bread, and as grapes from many vineyards are gathered and crushed to fill the cup, so we are many, coming together to serve the Kingdom of God.”

3 min. | **Opening Prayer** Pastor

15 min. | **Praise** MSCC Chair

Introduction of Mutual Invitation.¹⁴²

Through mutual invitation, take turns inviting one another to share prayers of thanksgiving for God's blessings in members' lives and in the congregation's life.

2 min. | **Confession of Sin** Pastor

After a time of silent prayer: “Great God of blessing, despite the good things that are in our lives, our eyes become dull to them and we focus on what we don't have or that of which we stand in need. Fill us with your Spirit so we might be ever thankful for what you have given and aware of how we can share those blessings with others. Amen.”

2 min. | **Assurance of Pardon** MSCC Chair

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

2 min. | **Passing of the Peace** MSCC Chair

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

10 min. | **Hearing God's Word for Us** Pastor

¹⁴² Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb*, 79-88.

Give a short reflection or devotion on the symbolism and significance of Resurrection and New life as they are represented in the Lord's Supper and Baptism. This reflection is meant to inspire hope as the committee works to find new life in a time of transition.

104 min. | **Responding to God's Word**

Pastor & MSCC Chair

In response to God's Word, let us turn toward new life!

Review of the background for the curriculum: essentials elements of a mission study, the process, the ultimate destination (final mission study report), and tentative dates for future gatherings (timeline).

Coordinate the gathering of details for the demographic report, resource reports, fiscal review, surveys, and interviews. This will include assigning team members to acquire or coordinate the surveys, interviews, and other methods of acquiring statistics, histories, stories, and more.¹⁴³

It would be appropriate to discuss the confidentiality, trust, safety, and grace that the MSCC should hold with one another. In having a Circle of Trust, for example, this committee takes on the shape and feel of a small group, enabling them to think creatively and critically without fear of judgement and with confidence in discerning the Holy Spirit's guidance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ The Presbyterian Mission Agency's Research Services staff are a free resource to any PC(USA) congregation and are very well-versed in identifying, acquiring, and interpreting many of these reports.

¹⁴⁴ A Circle of Trust a way to conduct the life of a small group as described by Parker J. Palmer: Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2009).

3 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth** Pastor

2 min. | *Preparing for the Next Gathering*

Reflect on the six values identified for Baptism in the Appendix. Consider which resonate best with you and how the world would change if everyone adopted that one as an “internalized principle,” or a deeply-held value. Also identify volunteers to lead worship elements in the next gathering.

Gathering 1.2: Joy In Christ

Equipment & Set Up

Projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.); large pillar candle and lighter; music for “Praise” section; handouts outlining the undiscussed elements of the curriculum background and the twelve values derived from the Sacraments (see Appendix).

Attendance Primary Leadership Team (Pastor & MSCC)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

20 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship** Leader 1

Watch video (and do guided activity in it): <https://youtu.be/b6A1Rmihnjg>.¹⁴⁵

1 min. | **Symbol of God’s Presence** A Lit Candle Leader 2

1 min. | **Opening Prayer** Joyful hearts, like dancing flames Leader 2

¹⁴⁵ Robert E. Quinn, “Untapped Exchange: Robert Quinn at TEDxUofM,” YouTube video, 13:16, Posted by “TEDx Talks,” May 3, 2016, accessed January 22, 2019, <https://youtu.be/b6A1Rmihnjg>.

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁴⁶

Ideas: “Sing Praise to God Above” (No. 645)

“Jesus Thou Joy of Loving Hearts (No. 494, verses 1, 4)

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (No. 623) “Joyful, Joyful” (No. 611)

2 min. | **Confession of Sin** Pastor

After a time of silent prayer, lead a corporate prayer of confession for not seeking or celebrating God’s working in the world, leaving God’s work undone.

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon** Pastor

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace** Pastor

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

14 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us** Leader 1

A team member will take some time to reflect on the joy that arises in the theological values of the Lord’s Supper, the joyful feast of the people of God, and Baptism, signifying renewal, rebirth, and eternal life.

130 min. | **Responding to God’s Word** Pastor or MSCC Chair

Learning about the final aspects of the mission study curriculum and answering the following questions and any other questions that arise from the committee:

¹⁴⁶ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

Why the worship-style structure?

Why so many opportunities for small group and individual “reflection”?

Why the Sacraments?

What will we get out of all the surveys?

2 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

4 min. | *Preparing for the Next Gathering*

Reflect on the six values identified for the Lord’s Supper in the Appendix.

Of the 12 values of the Sacraments that have been reviewed, which resonate most with you? Which resonate least?

Could you reduce your personal values to one or a few statements?

For the next gathering, bring or make something, or think of one word that represents a symbol of God’s presence for you.

Gathering 1.3: Unity

Equipment & Set Up

Seats in a circle with space for everyone plus one (just in case; or as an intentional space for Christ at the table); a center table; Questions and a sheet of chart paper for each of the 12 values of the Sacraments; sticky notes of various colors; “cheat cards” with tips or hints for moderating discussion and using mutual invitation (optional); refreshments (optional).

Attendance

Primary Leadership Team (Pastor & MSCC)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

30 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Icebreaker games or get-to-know-you activities that will be used for future waves of this curriculum to improve teambuilding among MSCC, but also prepare for leading in future gatherings.

Using mutual invitation, introduce yourself again—name and what you do—but nothing more. Then watch Simon Sinek’s video: <https://youtu.be/qp0HIF3SfI4>.¹⁴⁷

Consider your “Why.” If there is time, introduce yourself again but begin with your name, your why, and then, what you do.

15 min. | **Symbol of God’s Presence** Show & Tell All

Through mutual invitation, each person will take a turn to share the symbol of God’s presence they have prepared to share.

2 min. | **Opening Prayer** Leader 2

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁴⁸

“In Christ There is No East or West” (No. 317, verse 4)

“We Gather Together” (No. 336) “Praise God All You Nations” (No. 328)

2 min. | **Confession of Sin** Leader 2

After a time of silent prayer: “Forgive us, Lord, when we don’t see others in your image or return hate or distrust for cultural difference. May we see our common humanity; our essence, shared, in your likeness. Amen.”

¹⁴⁷ Simon Sinek, “How great leaders inspire action | Simon Sinek,” YouTube video, 18:34, posted by “TED,” May 4, 2010, accessed January 22, 2019, <https://youtu.be/qp0HIF3SfI4>.

¹⁴⁸ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon**

Leader 2

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace**

Leader 2

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

75 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us**

All

The 12 values of the Sacraments (Appendix) will be distributed among the MSCC and then given 10 minutes to prepare to lead a short reflection and conversation on the one(s) they have been assigned.

After preparation, the group will reassemble and take 5 minutes consider together the theological significance and practical theological implications for each (e.g., How does it change impact our faith and how we live out our faith?).

45 min. | **Responding to God’s Word**

Pastor & MSCC Chair

Eliminate two from the collection of twelve that would be the least relevant or impactful for your congregation. This decision should be done as a team, by consensus and discernment. You must unanimously decide for the two that will be removed.

Individually, rank the remaining 10 values. Then, as a team, consider how you might eliminate the next two. Ideally, the decision will be unanimous, but it is the job of the committee to decide whether a majority vote or unanimous discernment is better for the situation.

Finally, review the logistics for the second wave.

5 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Work through the logistics for the future in whatever way works best for the team to ensure that all elements are covered. This may include gathering things like hospitality and promotion into one volunteer's portfolio for the entirety of the curriculum or teaming up to ensure all details are covered by different team members (and external volunteers) for each gathering.

Identify worship leaders for the next gathering and assist in identifying elements needed for preparation.

Adaptations

Retreat-style: Be sure to integrate plenty of time for socializing, rest, and reflection in the longer schedule.

The Gatherings: Wave 2*Gathering 2.1: Why***Equipment & Set Up**

Set up room with tables in a large "U" with 4-6 chairs around each table; have one center table for the symbols of God's presence; questions and a sheet of chart paper for each of the 12 values of the Sacraments; sticky notes of various colors; hand out or slide with an image of Ford's circles (see **Confession**, below); "cheat cards" with tips or hints for moderating discussion and using mutual invitation (optional); refreshments (optional).

Attendance

High-Level Leadership (HLL)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING30 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Icebreaker games or get-to-know-you activities for teambuilding among HLL.

Using mutual invitation, introduce yourself—name and what you do—but nothing more. Then watch Simon Sinek’s video: <https://youtu.be/qp0HIF3SfI4>.¹⁴⁹

Consider your “Why.” If there is time, introduce yourself again but begin with your name, your why, and then, what you do.

1 min. | **Symbol of God’s Presence** Communion Bread and/or Cup Leader 2

Any symbol of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the Trinity; ideally, a symbol that is significant to the congregation, from the sanctuary, or the Church logo. For example, consider the seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (see <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/stated-clerk/stated-clerk/seal/>).¹⁵⁰

2 min. | **Opening Prayer** Leader 2

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁵¹

“Will You Come and Follow Me” (No. 726) “I the Lord of Sea and Sky” (No. 69)

“Come, Live In the Light” (No. 749) “O Jesus I Have Promised” (No. 725)

10 min. | **Confession of Sin** Leader 3

Consider Ford’s Circles of Congregational Code. It is the job of leaders to crack the DNA code of a congregation, Kevin Ford suggests. Imagine a series of many

¹⁴⁹ Simon Sinek, “How great leaders inspire action.”

¹⁵⁰ “The Seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), accessed February 11, 2019, <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/stated-clerk/stated-clerk/seal/>.

¹⁵¹ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

concentric circles, each once more removed from the central DNA code of the congregation. There are always errors in different layers of the code (we are human, after all), but good leaders will be able to see what parts of each layer are true to the DNA. Starting at the outside, layers could start with Décor and Architecture, then move toward stories of the Heros, Myths, and Rituals, and then move closer to the DNA through Strategy, Mission, Vision, and Values.¹⁵²

Consider: Where has the architecture of our worshiping space failed to communicate meaning appropriately or at all? What rituals have lost meaning, or have slowly shifted away from their original intent and into a realm of heresy? (Note to leader: use non-controversial examples here to emphasize the need for change, not to call anyone onto the carpet).

Together, we can confess that there are errors that have surfaced in the code of the Church, and others that have not yet made an appearance. Enter a moment of silent prayer.

Following the silence, the leader alone, or in unison with the congregation, pray: “We work so hard and design things for your glory, but when we perceive ourselves to be underappreciated and overworked—when our purpose is questioned—all bets are off. Forgive us when we cause good things to go bad. Forgive us when our best intentions fail. Help us to see your perfect plan using our imperfect selves. Amen.”

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon**

Leader 3

¹⁵² Kevin G. Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get Great* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 111-112.

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace**

Leader 3

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

24 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us**

Leader 4

One MSCC member will introduce the values of Sacramental Theology that will be discussed in upcoming gatherings, and then choose two of those values to present now. Ideally, a connection to their personal “why” or the corporate “why” would be included.

90 min. with Break | **Responding to God’s Word**

Leader 2

A mission study process is one way for a congregation to better understand their “why.”

Take 5 minutes, followed by a break, for individual consideration of the questions below. Then, in small groups of 4-6, spend 3 minutes each answering the questions together.

- Consider your own “Why”: Why do you do what you do? What is the purpose behind fulfilling your daily tasks?
- What is a story from your own life that sums up who you are? (E.g. “This morning, en route to work and dropping off my eldest child at school, I was talking my youngest through their disappointment. I am a parent, a counselor, an employee, and a chauffeur!”)

- What story is an example of your faith journey or expression of faith? This could be a transformative moment, or the process of your formation.
- What is a story that expresses your connection to the Church or to your congregation?

In the final half hour, confirm the logistics and leadership roles for future gatherings. Review the remaining lessons of the curriculum and answer questions or concerns from the group. Make the entire curriculum available for those who are interested, especially the background information from the beginning of the curriculum.

4 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Reflect on the four values of Baptism that have been identified.

Prepare for any leadership roles remaining.

Reflect more on stories of your life that summarize you, your relationship with God, and your relationship with the Church.

MSSC should prepare reports (demographic, financial, etc.) for initial review at the next gathering.

Adaptations

Alternative: Set up as a seminar, consider inviting a speaker to guide the purpose and needs assessments.

Retreat Option: In a 30-hour retreat, this lesson would cover the first evening. Start with the gathering activities after dinner or during dessert and work through the evening, closing with a short vespers service.

Large Church: Divide into small groups based on similarity in personal stories or connections to the congregation.

Small Church: This gathering can be done in less time with a smaller group, so integrating the demographics reports into the discovery of the congregation's "Why," may jump start some productive conversations.

Gathering 2.2: Story

Equipment & Set Up

Enough chairs to set in small groups of 4-6; one or more MSCC member in each group to guide conversation and take notes; small central table for symbols of God's presence; slides/whiteboard/chart paper/markers/sticky notes/etc. for taking group notes; notebooks or paper for individuals/supplies for the "Win As Much As You Can" activity; supplies for **Symbols of God's Presence**.

Attendance

HLL

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

20 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Activity: "Reds and Blues"¹⁵³

See information on how to conduct this activity by visiting

<https://workshopbank.com/prisoners-dilemma>. As you wrap up the activity, include a

¹⁵³ Nick Martin, "Prisoner's Dilemma (AKA Reds & Blues)" WorkshopBank, accessed February 1, 2019. <https://workshopbank.com/prisoners-dilemma>.

question that reflects on whose leadership they followed in the group, on how trust was built and maintained, and what might happen if that leader lacked integrity.

2 min. | **Symbol of God's Presence** "Consumed" Lord's Supper Leader 2

On the table, have an already-broken loaf of bread, a mostly-empty cup of grape juice, a crumpled napkin, and a towel beside a bowl of water or representation of the baptismal font.

"We take our blessings: Baptism is shared and the blessed meal has been consumed. The remnants of the Sacraments on the table are a symbol in and of themselves. They proclaim that God's people have been claimed, called, sustained, and sent out."

2 min. | **Opening Prayer** Leader 1

"God of perfect love, through the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us a model to imitate and lead us so we might live a life that reflects you. In the daily blessings we receive, we find your abounding grace. In the stories of our journeys, we see your faithfulness. In the recollections and chronicles of history, we glimpse your omnipotence. In fearful awe and worshipful praise, we gather to celebrate your goodness and revel in your glory. May your name be praised! Amen."

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁵⁴

"I Love to Tell the Story" (No. 462) "Deep in the Shadows of the Past" (No. 50)

¹⁵⁴ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

2 min. | **Confession of Sin**

Leader 2

After a time of silent prayer: “Though you are a model of generosity and grace, we often fall short of what you have called us to do and to be. Forgive us for our selfish ways and sinful tendencies. Give us hearts that seek purity and wholeness. Forgive us, we pray. Amen.”

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon**

Leader 1

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace**

Leader 1

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

22 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us**

Leader 3

Using mutual invitation in small groups of 4-6, take 2-3 minutes each to share a story from your life that highlights various characteristics that make up who you are in one situation. (E.g. “This morning, en route to work and dropping off my eldest child at school, I was talking my youngest through their disappointment. I am a parent, a counselor, an employee, and a chauffeur!”)

After hearing the stories, consider, in your small groups, what themes arise from them. What did you learn about the other people in your group? How do those stories inform your understanding of how they interact in your worshipping community? What can we learn about God from these stories and this activity?

15 min. | **Break**99 min. | **Responding to God’s Word**

Leader 3

Recall with the large group some leaders identified through Scripture whose stories made them uniquely prepared to be who God needed them to be:

- Moses (Born a slave; raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, leader of many people; worked as a shepherd, earning experiences in humility and manual labor; appointed by God to lead despite past sins, learning the value of forgiveness; eventually finding himself shepherding and leading many people who, time and again, needed the forgiveness of God and of him.)
- Esther (Living as a child among an oppressed people; taken as a slave into the palace of the King; chosen to be the wife—Queen—to that King; able to be a voice for her oppressed people, demanding justice for the man leading that genocide.)
- Paul (A Roman-born, classically-trained Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; renowned for his understanding of the law and scriptures; so zealous that he worked to persecute Christians until he met Jesus while on a crusade; was then able to preach to scripture-understanding Jews, while being culturally relevant for Romans, and able to use his citizenship to withstand the scrutiny of the Roman rulers.)
- What others come to mind?

Our stories are central to our identity, not only because they shape us, but because they shape how we perceive the world and interact with the world. Our stories identify the influences and influencers in our lives, enable us to better understand ourselves, and

expose our biases and limitations. As we tell and retell our stories, we refine our ability to lead those around us using the skills, experiences, and limitations we have.

Another mental note to keep is that there is a difference between sharing a history and sharing a story. A history leans more toward factual recollection while a story drives to share a theme or message by emphasizing certain details and missing others. The story of Scripture impacts us differently than a history of God's people might. The story of this congregation identifies certain themes that the history of this congregation might miss. Your stories of this congregation will tell us something that your history of this congregation will not.

Break out into small groups of 4-6 to continue storytelling. Spend about 5 minutes per person per prompt. Your stories may feel mundane or irrelevant, but if they are meaningful or could have shaped you, they cannot be insignificant. It's your story.

- What story/stories summarize or best portray your faith life and journey?
- What story/stories summarize or best portray your connection to the Church (i.e. the Church universal, the Body of Christ)?
- What story/stories summarize or best portray your connection to this congregation?

2 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Leader 2

10 min. | *Preparing for the Next Gathering*

Reflect on the 4 values of focus from the Lord's Supper that have been selected by the MSCC and primary leadership. What do they make you think about? How do those values get reflected in the life of your congregation?

Prepare for any leadership roles that may have been assigned for the upcoming gatherings.

Assign interviews, data collecting, or reporting that may need to be done yet.

Adaptations

Alternative: Consider meeting off-site at a place that has significance for the congregation or is part of the congregation's ministry or history. For example, gather in a past worship space, like an old church building or the first worship space of the congregation to emphasize the movement from the past to present. Or meet in a spare room of a nearby homeless shelter, food bank, or summer camp that is supported by the congregation.

Retreat: This gathering could start immediately following breakfast on the first full day of the retreat, from 8:30-11:30, for example. Include ample time for breaks since this day will feel more like a marathon of meeting and deep reflection. Encourage participants to take the time they need for personal reflection, mental breaks, and fellowship.

Large Congregation: Spend extra time during Wave 1 or after the first gathering in Wave 2 preparing the leaders of Wave 2 (primary leadership and any others whose assistance may be needed) for small group leadership. In a large church, with more participants, small groups may need more support to ensure they stay on-track and are covering the topics required. The leaders, who should be dispersed among all the small groups, should have tools for guiding group conversations, refocusing meandering diatribes, empowering unheard voices to be heard, and note taking for future reference.

Small Congregation: This gathering could be shortened to include more freedom in the schedule, enabling more personal reflection, fellowship opportunities, or restructuring of lessons to shorten Wave 2 from 4 gatherings down to 3.

Gathering 2.3: Sacramental Theology

Equipment & Set Up

Supplies for opening activity (blank notecards with pens or markers near door; basket or collection plate; printed/projected version of the congregation's mission or vision statement on the wall, large enough to be seen easily); symbols of God's presence; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) (optional); music; handout identifying the 8 remaining values derived from the Sacraments, with space between each (to be used to facilitate notetaking and reflection in small groups and individually (have 2 per person available) (optional); whiteboard, chalkboard, chart paper, or other tool to facilitate tracking the large-group conversations; drafted reports and summaries to review for the next gathering.

Attendance

Primary Leadership Team (Pastor & MSCC)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

10 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Have the mission or vision statement for your congregation projected or printed large enough for everyone to easily see as they walk in. Before they find a seat, they are to write the word that stands out to them. The leader will take these cards and share with the group which word(s)/phrase(s) received the most attention.

Dwell for a few moments together on what the results mean for your congregation and leadership. What themes arise? Are there unmet goals? Is the reach to achieve them unattainable? Where are the gifts of your members being well-used?

During this gathering this group will spend time *discerning* what God is saying. The Presbyterian form of government seeks to represent Christ's will by majority vote after listening to the diversity of voices in the room, earnestly seeking to be faithful to God's Word as it has been revealed. As discussions are had, opinions are sought and shared, and the Holy Spirit moves, may eyes be opened, ears be readied, and hearts prepared.

2 min. | **Symbol of God's Presence**

Leader 2

Consider a symbol (or symbols) representing God as Judge, as King, as Lord, or as Ruler (e.g. a gavel or crown).

1 min. | **Opening Prayer**

Leader 3

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁵⁵

“Come Sing, O Church, In Joy!” (No. 305) “I will Exalt (Te exaltaré)” (No. 622)

“All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name” (No. 263) “Laudate Dominum” (No. 635)

2 min. | **Confession of Sin**

Leader 3

After a time of silent prayer: “Forgive us, Lord, when we doubt your power, minimize your authority, or hesitate to obey. Give us minds to critically engage, but hearts that obediently follow. Amen.”

¹⁵⁵ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon**

Leader 3

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace**

Leader 3

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

90 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us**

Leader 2

Together, read aloud the 8 values that have been distilled from the Sacraments and narrowed through the discernment of the primary leadership. After each, pause to ensure everyone knows what they mean or if any questions arise. Record any questions that could inspire debate or reflection and post them on somewhere so they can be seen (on a whiteboard, some chart paper, or on the screen/projector) so they can be used to push conversation later.

In small groups of 4-6 (try to have different people work together this time), work through the prompts below. Be sure to invite each person to speak on each topic, and work together to curb over-zealous conversation partners.

- Consider stories from the Bible or Church history that connect to these values.
- Do you have personal stories that connect to these values? (Ask only if there is time).
- Is a value something that is aspirational? Can one ever “complete” a value? Do values inspire growth and “set the bar” higher, so to speak? Are they to function as a rule or a guide?

- What parts of this congregation's life, ministry, history, or stories make any of these values significant or relevant? Do they "set the bar" higher or do they provide affirmation?

10 min. | **Break**

60 min. | **Responding to God's Word**

Leader 4

Take some time (15 minutes or so) to be alone and reflect on each of the values. The High Level Leadership will be spending time paring down this list to four. Having spent time on each and knowing your community, is it okay to limit this conversation to four? Is four too many? If you committed only to four values—two related to Baptism and two related to the Lord's Supper—to which four would you commit? Give at least one reason or story to justify each choice.

In a large group, discern together which values hold the most significance and potential impact for your congregation. Through conversation and reflection, discern together which four values to study with the larger congregation: two from each Sacrament. Work together to make this decision by consensus, if at all possible.

With the final four values established, break into small groups once more to discuss stories. Recall and retell stories connecting to these values. What personal stories inspire you to follow these values? What examples or parts of the congregation's history or story enmesh these values with it? How do the stories that others tell, and the details about the stories they choose to share, influence your perspective? These stories, and the ability to understand how personal and corporate stories communicate, will be helpful as you lead and model change among the congregation and community.

12 min. | *Preparing for the Next Gathering*

Pause for a moment and take a step back from all that has been reviewed and discussed during this gathering. Consider the process of making a decision, including personal reflection, small group discussion, and large group discernment. Encourage participants to take time to reflect on what went well and what caused tension since they will be providing leadership in both the large setting and in small groups of Wave 3 with the congregation. Suggest writing down stories, examples, and tools that helped concepts click and encouraged participation or conversation. (Remember that if you want to tell another person's story, you should get their permission.)

If there is interest, or if there is anticipation of some difficult conversations in Wave 3, it may be appropriate to prepare for that. In addition to prayer, pastoral support, and mediation tools, Heifetz and Linsky provide helpful resources and tips to help leaders protect themselves while working through difficult social situations.

Take some dedicated time to address the logistical planning for the final gathering of the second wave and the upcoming third wave of the mission study, including facilities, hospitality, scheduling, invitations, managing sign-ups, childcare, etc.

Distribute drafts of any prepared reports for participants to review before the next gathering, including survey summaries, demographic reports, financial and gift reviews, needs assessments, etc. Allow participants to have time to grasp what information they will be receiving, even if it isn't the most complete report that they will receive. (Ensure each copy is marked in a way that will easily identify it as an incomplete draft that has not yet been reviewed, approved, nor audited.)

2 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

Adaptations

Alternative: Work to integrate the Lord's Supper and Baptism into the order of service for the meeting.

Retreat: Encourage time alone to be spent in silence for the afternoon—or day—and provide opportunity at the end for discussion about hearing God in what is around us. How do we discern God's voice from others that bombard us?

Large Congregation: Large congregations often have a process or rhythm when discerning God's will. Use this opportunity to try something different. Pay careful attention to who is not participating in conversation and ensure they are heard. Consensus may be very difficult, so voting in the end may be the best result.

Small Congregation: Time of corporate reflection and discernment can be significantly shorter in some small congregations, therefore including the reflection portion of gathering 2.4 into this one will enable a small congregation to cut back to 3 gatherings in Wave 2.

Gathering 2.4: Outreach to Members & Community (or "The Deacons' Portfolio")

Equipment & Set Up

Set up room with chairs around individual tables (for small groups and writing); one member of the MSCC at each table to guide conversation and take notes on what is said; printed copies of the reports which summarize studies on the demographics, finances, gifts, and needs of the congregation and larger community; supplies for

gathering; symbol(s) of God's Presence; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) (optional); handouts for this gathering (optional); highlighters and pens.

Attendance

HLL

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

30 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another."

Mark 10:43b-45: "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Review the demography reports for your congregation and your community. Consider them separately but recognize that there is strong connection between the gifts and needs of both. What other highlights do you see? Are there statistics what you expected? Do they shine light on an opportunity for ministry? Where do you see God's love and presence?

What questions or concerns arise? Are there concerns? In considering these "needs" or "problems," Dr. Gil Rendle, a Methodist minister, author, and consultant, says that many congregations see changes or problems, assume the worst, and prepare for a slump.¹⁵⁶ However, in the corporate world, when an error or problem arises, opportunities

¹⁵⁶ Gil Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual & Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2007), 38.

for cost recovery and even new profitability arise. Rendle suggests that needs and problems can be inverted for congregations as well, turning them from a negative into opportunities for God’s people to respond in obedience to God’s clear call.¹⁵⁷ So how can the needs and problems that arise become opportunities for growth, change, or obedience to God’s call?

2 min. | **Symbol of God’s Presence**

Leader 2

Three items: the membership rolls, or a symbol of the congregation’s membership; an item or image that represents the neighborhood surrounding the congregation; and a world map or globe. “Genesis 1:27 says that humankind was created in the image of God, therefore God’s presence is reflect in each life in this congregation, in the neighborhoods nearby, and around the world.”

1 min. | **Opening Prayer**

Leader 2

3 min. | **Praise**¹⁵⁸

“Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love” (No. 203)

“Lord, You Gave the Great Commission” (No. 298)

“Will You Let Me Be Your Servant” (No. 727)

3 min. | **Confession of Sin**

Leader 3

After a time of silent prayer: “For those who are in need and just beyond the walls of our building, we pray. For those who are within reach of so much help, but cannot

¹⁵⁷ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

make that last step, we pray. For those who have so much, yet are oblivious to the needs beyond them, we pray. Forgive us, gracious Lord, for the lives we ignore; for the needs of others we leave unfulfilled; for the deeds we have left undone. May our hearts be prepared so we might serve you in this community and around the world. Amen.”

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon** Leader 3

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace** Leader 3

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

30 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us** Leader 4

Take time in small groups to review the other reports provided for this gathering. Read the summaries and reports, highlighting what surprised you and underlining what did not surprise you.

After working through it once with your small group, read the 4 values that were identified in the previous gathering. With these in mind, put a star beside anything that you feel is God’s Word for you or this group of leaders in this moment, especially it relates to your congregation striving toward these values.

Finally, do the same with the demographics report that was presented earlier, putting a star beside anything that relates to these values.

10 min. | **Break**

82 min. | **Responding to God’s Word** Leader 5

In a large group, share the highlights from your conversations. Write down on a board or chart paper items that were given a star. When it appears as though everyone that wanted to speak has had a turn, invite everyone to take their highlighter and put a checkmark on the phrases that they each, individually identified. (This may take a moment for everyone to have a turn, so allowing a quick break to grab a snack or drink may facilitate this process.) When everyone has added a highlight mark, stand back and see what phrases have the most highlighting.

As the leader moderates the large group conversation, have one MSCC member take notes and another write on a board or on chart paper point-form notes from the conversation for everyone to see. The leader should begin the conversation by emphasizing the importance of creating a space of safety and honesty for everyone to share since these questions hold some significant weight for many, and that sharing what God is stirring within their hearts and minds can be scary because of the vulnerability that comes with sharing. Being respectful and even encouraging should be the aim. Almost nothing is too far removed to be identified, little will be immediately changed in the life of the Church by uttering it here with little follow-up. This is an idea-storming session to dump and gather our collective reflections.

What is God's Word to us in these reports?

What might God be saying to us and through us as we interpret them?

What gut feelings arise when seeing these statistics and these summaries?

Where are the connections to the 4 values from the Sacraments?

If we were a community defined inside-and-out by one or two of those values, which values would make the biggest impact on what these reports would look like?

The leader should be sensitive to quieter and louder voices in the room, inviting individuals to share, if they feel safe, and acknowledging, but passing over, those who have shared multiple times. At the end of the time of sharing, or when everyone has spoken and conversation has lulled, thank everyone for participating and for allowing it to be a space for safe conversation.

The leader should summarize the conversation with what was heard, highlighted and emphasized. Then, the leader should remind the group that this conversation is important to stir our hearts to move, but the congregation's conversations in the next wave of gatherings will be the truly revealing conversation for the leadership. As congregations have these deep conversations, things arise that may confirm, deny, surprise, or concern the leaders, particularly if the leadership and the membership do not align. In all cases, the leaders of the Church—all present for this wave of gatherings—will need to play the role of moderator, counselor, and interpreter so the intent of the congregation is best understood by leadership, and the intent of the leadership is heard by the congregation.

For no more than ten minutes, reflect with the group how that activity may be amended to best fit the congregation and its sensibilities or culture. Evaluate the reports that were given for accuracy or disclaimers, missing datapoints, or questions that remain hanging. Appoint a person or a team to ensure that the version of the report that will be shared with the congregation has any modifications made—which could include the

simplification or addition of information—so the reports are accurate and clear but not missing anything. (It is important to maintain integrity in the process and accuracy of reporting, though simplification may be the most appropriate way to present accurate information.)

As has been discussed before, the role of stories and a leader’s ability to tell their own stories greatly shapes the way they lead and how they interact with others. In new arrangements of small groups, share a personal experience that best relates to one of the highlights from the report. After sharing your story, identify what feelings you have that make it so notable and so connected to the reports presented. Then have the group reflect back what that story and those feelings made them feel. If there is time, discuss how a leader’s story of joy made the group feel? Did an experience of anger raise up a united front against something? Did a connection of love inspire an affinity within the group for that cause or person? As we know ourselves, our stories, and how the stories we tell impact others, we will be able to better lead and influence others.

As this final gathering closes, spend the last portion in preparation for the next wave. Review the agenda and various tasks. Spend several moments reviewing resources and skills they will need as they model the 4 values in the community and as they participate as peer-leaders, including resources for leading tough conversations and knowing when to take a break or ask for help.

2 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

Adaptations

Alternative: Host this gathering at an alternative location that is related to the data in the reports. This could be at the community center, a public school, a park, or retirement home.

Retreat: Host this gathering as the third so that it is between lunch and dinner. Start with a 30-minute prayer walk through the community, if held in a populated area, or through a place that provides opportunity for reflection. Then, following the three-hour session, have someone familiar with the area provide a guided prayer walk. The guided prayer walk may be one interspersed with landmarks or ministries over which the group can pray, or a series of guided meditations or prayer practices that can provide spiritual growth and renewal.

Large Congregation: In congregations with a team of more than two pastors, be sure to prompt them to provide opinions and insights that may be unique or even contrasting. If the pastoral leadership can model conversation between differing opinions in a respectful way that honors the expression of faith found in each opinion, congregation members with alternative views will feel emboldened to contribute to the diversity of voices that expresses the complex voice of God speaking through God's people.

Small Congregation: Conversation time will be shorter, allowing for the second wave to be condensed from three to two lessons. It also permits creativity in both the conversation but also the training of leaders to guide conversation. Take time during some of the deeper theological conversations to ask the leaders to think of answers that others who are not like them might pose. Ask them if their personal stories would have an

impact on someone who was another race, gender, generation, and economic class than themselves. And ask them to consider if there are other personal stories they have that might better communicate their intended message.

The Gatherings: Wave 3

Gathering 3.1: History & Story

Equipment & Set Up

Large gathering space for the entire group to gather, sit, fellowship, commune, and meet; spaces nearby or around the building for small groups to have break-out sessions; communion table in a front-and-center, or central and easy-to-see place; microphone (optional); supplies for gathering; symbol(s) of God's Presence; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) and/or boards or chart paper for group conversation notes; handouts for this gathering (optional); hospitality supplies (snacks).

Attendance

All members & regular attendees

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

8 min. | Gathering & Call to Worship

Welcome Team

For 20 minutes before and the first eight minutes of the gathering, create a warm, welcoming, and joy-filled space. Each community will have different ways of expressing "home," and so there will be no wrong way of doing this. At the very least, it should include name tags for each participant and something to eat or drink.

2 min. | Symbol of God's Presence

Leader 1

The Christ Candle is lit and, with the assistance of leaders spread out around the room, the crowd is lightly hushed to respectful silence.

2 min. | **Opening Prayer** Leader 1

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁵⁹

“O God Our Help in Ages Past” (No. 687)

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (No. 465)

“We’ve Come this Far by Faith” (No. 656)

2 min. | **Confession of Sin** Leader 2

After a time of silent prayer: “God of provision, who gave Israel food and drink throughout their 40 years in the wilderness, as we journey through our lives, we can be sure of your faithfulness in one moment, but yet lost and wandering the next. Forgive us for our forgetful minds and distrusting hearts. May your truth continually be revealed to us through the story of Scripture and story of our lives: the truth that we: we are a people of hope, guided by the Creator of all, who knows all, sees all, and forgives all. Amen.”

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon** Leader 2

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace** Leader 2

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

60 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us** Leader 3 & 4

The leader or pastor begins with the story of the Church or the story of Scripture. This can be a “Bible in 30 minutes” workshop or play that includes focused highlights on

¹⁵⁹ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

topics like God's faithfulness, the cycle of sin that entraps God's people, God's love and grace, and more. It could also be a shorter summary of the Old Testament with a longer focus on the Early Church. However it is approached, it should be a story that provides background to the Church with a focus on God as the one who created, redeemed, and sustains all things.

To contrast the story telling in the first thirty minutes, the next thirty minutes should be a history of the congregation. This can be done by a local historian or congregation member, but ideally it would identify factual elements of the congregation's life, historical significances, and milestones within the journey that has brought it to where it is today. Highlight the stark difference between history and story, since it will be something that likely comes up time and again.

10 min. | **Break**

95 min. | **Hearing God's Word for Us**

Leader 3 & 4

Clarify with the group some of the differences they noticed between the story of the church and the history of the congregation. What are the benefits of story telling? What are the benefits of having a history teller?

The next thirty minutes will be a time that will prime the pump of telling the story of the congregation. If you have a good story teller or writer in the congregation, invite them to tell a story about how the congregation began, or about a transformative season in the life of the church. While it may be tempting to tell everyone's favorite stories, identifying themes and order for this first thirty minutes sets the model for your congregation to follow. Identify themes that mirror themes in the story of the Church told

earlier, or that can map into the theological conversation that is forthcoming regarding the Sacraments. Use themes that strengthen the bond of the membership and not splinter over hard feelings or sore memories.

For the next activity, mutual invitation will be used as a way of recognizing the diversity of voices in the room without unintentionally excluding others. Teach the large group the basics of mutual invitation, from respectful tone and reactions, to respecting confidentiality of conversation, to seeking diversity of opinions through commitments to join the conversation and to invite unheard voices to speak.

As the stories that are selectively told share a thematic progression or familiar map of topics, help the members see that connection. Then encourage the group to split into small groups of roughly 5-7 individuals (try to split up people who live in the same residence) and using mutual invitation, take 2-3 minutes each to share a memory or story of their own about this congregation that have shaped who they are or have had significant impact on their relationship with God or others. After each story, ask what it implies about this congregation.

In the large group, facilitate a twenty-minute summary conversation where small groups are invited to share one or two thematic highlights from their conversations. Before taking a break, share the importance of story and how each individual has stories and experiences that have shaped them into the people who interact with others based on those stories and experiences. As we understand our own history and stories, we can learn how they shape who we are and how we can retell them so we interact with the world differently.

10 min. or Meal | **Break**

53 min. | **Responding to God's Word**

Leader 3 & 4

In the first 20 minutes, present a quick overview of the process of this mission study curriculum as your congregation is practicing it with a point-form summary of the goals. Continue with a short summary of Quinn's ACT, emphasizing the role of internalized principles and leading by example. Provide an opportunity for questions and resources, if interest is piqued in studying the subject deeper. (This may be a topic that uses less time or is too dense to cover in such a short time; use judgement as to whether or not this is integral for your congregation's understanding of the process.)

Spend the next 10 minutes introducing the values derived from our Sacramental Theology and the process by which the leadership discerned the 4 most relevant and impactful values for study in this congregation. Read the four statements out loud in unison and provide the opportunity, through visual aids or an hand out, for participants to see a short summary of each value.

Encourage everyone to split into small groups again and reflect together for 3-4 minutes total on each value. Are these values that are appropriate for the Church? For this church? If you picked one to "live by," what would change? If the whole community did this, what would change? Which would be the easiest to implement? The hardest?

2 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor or Leader 1

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Reflect on the four values distilled from the Sacraments and consider which ones connect with your life and faith. Do you have any stories, personal experiences or stories from the congregation, that might express those feelings you have about them?

Distribute the summary of reports that will be part of the next gathering. Encourage participants to read through it and identify 3 or more particularly interesting things they would like to discuss further.

Adaptations

Alternative: Find a room or space that is large enough to host most of the group with enough working markers to give each person one and tell the story of the congregation using butcher paper hung around the entire perimeter of the room.

Retreat: Extend each activity and provide ample time for personal reflection and rest. Consider how the Sacraments could be integrated or mentioned at meal times in unique ways, sometimes impactful, and sometimes in terrible puns! Try to highlight mundane and extraordinary reminders of the Sacraments that are all around.

Large Congregation: In larger congregations who already have small groups in the regular rhythm of church life may find those groups to be good to facilitate or prime certain conversations and hold those talks outside of valuable congregational gathering times. It is important to note that a small group working solely on their own without interacting with other small groups or individuals are acting like separate churches instead of one connectional community of faith.

Small Congregation: If your congregation is small enough, try having these conversations without splitting into too many groups. Consider having a membership sleepover as part of the gatherings or as a youth element.

Gathering 3.2: Sacramental Living

Equipment & Set Up

Supplies for gathering icebreakers; symbol(s) of God’s Presence including a “recently-used” communion set and baptismal font; music; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) or method for presenting topics to the larger group, like an instructional board (whiteboard, chalkboard, smartboard) or large chart paper; pens; paper; sticky notes; and invitations for participants to remind them of the important upcoming meeting dates; handouts for this gathering: Reflection guidance worksheet; group discernment tools handout; summary report on the demographics, gifts, skills, resources, and needs of the church and community; “voting” ballots, 2 per participant; evaluation worksheet (optional).

Attendance

All members & regular attendees

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING

10 min. | **Gathering & Call to Worship** Leader 1

Icebreakers: Clusters & Conversations

2 min. | **Symbol of God’s Presence** Leader 2

Set the central communion table as if both sacraments have happened. Include broken bread with crumbs, grape juice in the chalice with a drop here or there, and a baptismal font with a damp towel and a baby soother, children’s Bible, or baptismal

certificate nearby. “As many grapes from many vineyards come together into one cup, and many heads of grace from many fields come together into one loaf, so do we of many backgrounds and experiences, stories and cultures, come into one loaf. And while we are many in voice and many in opinions, we are one in faith and united in our witness to Christ. May we join that one voice, celebrate the diversity of voices, and respect especially those whose are different.”

2 min. | **Opening Prayer**

Leader 2

5 min. | **Praise**¹⁶⁰

“We Are One In the Spirit” (No. 300) “Come Now O Prince of Peace” (No. 103)

“For Everyone Born” (No. 769) “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation” (No. 394)

2 min. | **Confession of Sin**

Leader 3

After a time of silent prayer: “O God, forgive us for being a fickle people. You have shown us and told us how to live so our lives are pleasing to you. Yet despite your clarity and command, we insist on exploring the diverse paths you intended for us to avoid. When the diversity you *did* intend for us greets us face-to-face, we revert to the familiar, ignoring the Other because of their accent, or dismissing your beauty because it is different. Forgive us for our disobedient ways and misguided spirits. Give us hearts that seek your beauty, and wisdom to know when we are being led astray. Amen.”

1 min. | **Assurance of Pardon**

Leader 3

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

¹⁶⁰ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

1 min. | **Passing of the Peace**

Leader 3

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

55 min. | **Hearing God’s Word for Us**

Leaders 4 & 5

Introduce the values of the Sacraments by briefly reviewing the basics: what makes something a Sacrament (see the Larger Westminster Catechism Q&A 162 if you want help); why Baptism; why the Lord’s Supper; and some very quick responses from the participants about what they both mean. This is to simply help get people into the frame of mind to think about Sacramental Theology.

Spend 3-4 minutes explaining the process taken to identify the four values of the Sacraments that are being considered by the congregation at this gathering. If you have a projector or other way of displaying the other values, share them and describe how the leaders among the congregation felt as they narrowed the discussion. Be sure to offer the other values as a resource for individual study or reflection. A key element here is transparency and honesty to build trust. As the congregation grasps the personal investment and honest thought put into this process, they will be more inclined to be personally invested as well.

On a projector, board, or chart paper, display the four values of focus for this gathering and then spend 4-5 minutes on each value. Be sure to discuss the facets of each value that are the least familiar to the members and draw examples of implications of each value that may not naturally come to mind.

After this initial overview of the four values, divide the large group into small groups of 4-6 and encourage each to spend 7 minutes on each value. Ask them to discuss personal thoughts and impressions of each but spend the bulk of the time considering what practical implications choosing each value might have on their lives, as individuals and as a congregation.

10 min. | **Break**

75 min. | **Hearing God's Word for Us**

Leaders 4 & 5

As the group gathers back together, call on the group for their highlights. What ideas dominated conversations? Where was there energy in the discussion? Where was the lull, if there was one?

Take 10 minutes to share and record (on the projector, board, or chart paper) some of the personal and corporate implications of choosing each value to be an internalized principle. It is important for the leader and/or scribe for this activity be as objective as possible, not imposing their personal feelings on the conversation or emphasizing particular answers over others. The leader's goal is to keep conversation moving and acquire many responses for each value.

20 min. | **Personal Reflection**

Invite participants to find a place where they can spend a few moments in personal reflection. Ask them to pray about each, reflecting on what God might be saying to them and what God is calling the congregation to be or become. Ask them to consider which value aligns with each of these descriptions: the easiest and the hardest for you, personally, to adopt; the most similar to and the most different from your congregation's

current ministry practices; the one that is the most difficult to grasp; the one that scares you a little bit; the one that makes you the most excited; the one that you think would only be possible with God's help; the one that you keep coming back to. The last thing that each individual must do is to rank them and bring that paper back to their small group.

45 min. | **God's Word for Us**

Leader 4 & 5

In small groups, have one person tally the votes and prepare the ranked slate for discussion within the small group. Each group should have one member say a prayer for thoughtful, respectful conversation, and then begin a discussion to discern a final ranking for them by consensus. All voices should be heard and validated. Participants should invite those who have not spoken to share their thoughts and encourage those who have said a lot to listen or reflect back what they are hearing.

At the end of the time, each group will complete one, unified ballot. The ballots will be tallied and, in a large group, the final breakdown will be shared. Be sure that it is clear that the ranking of these values will become central to the final report that is written but may look a little different so that subtleties of conversations and feelings toward the values are included. Encourage individuals to join the leadership of the congregation in committing, personally, to one or more of the values. As those values become part of the fabric of our lives and collective life, we become models for that change to those who are around us and the culture of the congregation and community will change and become more in line with the values God models to us through the Sacraments.

Going back into small groups, encourage each participant to share a story from their personal life or from the life in the congregation, that expresses the value or values that rose to the top of the list for the congregation. Remind participants that the stories we tell are parts of our lives that shape how we interact with other, and the details we emphasize or the way that we share them will greatly influence the way they are received and the impact they have.

10 min. | **Break**

120 min. | **Responding to God's Word**

Leader 6 & 7

Distribute among the large group (or project) the summary reports that resulted from the required reports and research: demographics assessment; gifts and resources review; needs and opportunities identification; and a summary of survey and interview results with occasional quotes or highlights, if appropriate. Be sure to include a description of all the research and data collection that was done so there is confidence in the data collected and the summary presented.

In small groups, invite conversation around these questions:

- 1) What connections and correlations do you see?
- 2) How do the values discussed earlier interact with these statistics and summaries?
- 3) Knowing what you didn't know before, does your story or experience of the world change? Does it change the story or history of the congregation?

After 40 minutes of discussion, invite small groups to come back to the larger group meeting space. Walk through the questions together and summarize highlights from their conversations.

The final step of any theological reflection and discussion as deep as the ones had tonight, must include a practical response or change. Given what was learned or discussed, what happens next? Have the participants spend 15 minutes evaluating the two gatherings using appreciative inquiry:

- Through these gatherings: I learned...; I realized that I need...; I noticed that I have...; I can offer...; I receive...; I now can't imagine our church without...; and I hope (practical)....

15 min. | **Benediction & Sending Forth**

Pastor

The last step is to identify what will happen next, with a reasonable timeline for participants to check in on. Share the anticipated completion date for the final report and when the congregational meeting to approve it will be planned. Remind participants that their role is to be a model of the values we want permeating our community. Close by sharing a vision for the future and a culture toward which they should strive. Invite participants to join hands for a final prayer or song that has significant meaning for the community.

To do before the next gathering

MSCC members should plan to gather either immediately after or in the days following this gathering to prepare for the fourth wave. Using a pre-written outline that a team member designed earlier or a different outline that will guide the writing of the final

report, distribute various pieces to be pre-written or heavily-outlined. It is best to pre-write only sections that are primarily based on objective facts. For example, one individual can draft the history of the church or compile a financial sheet. However, the committee will need to work together to recall the details, emphases, and connections made in the gatherings to best reflect the story of the congregation or how the congregation's finances are interpreted.

Adaptations

Alternative: Lecturing about the four values of the Sacraments may rely too heavily on participants learning in lecture-style settings. If this is true for your congregation, consider breaking it up so that each value is discussed separately, and include role plays to show some implications of each value. Other alternative options would be to integrate the worship and programming of the church into the evaluation of the theological values. Have the pastor or a series of guest preachers focus services of worship around each of the values to increase awareness and reflection. Or use simple paper or digital surveys that are used by those who participate in the programs to gauge how feelings are toward the values, changes, and subjects being discussed in these gatherings.

Retreat: In a retreat setting, provide more time and space for personal reflection, questions to deepen conversation or prayer journaling, and guided spiritual practices to dwell more earnestly on the topics at hand. Emphasize, as well, the personal implications that come with each of the values and encourage more time to be spent on how each individual's lifestyle might change.

Large Congregation: The large church will need to be careful to include as many people as possible in these gatherings and provide alternative feedback and learning opportunities to those unable to participate. These gatherings will also provide an opportunity for community building in large congregations as members can settle into cliques or circles of friends who all participate in the same programs at the same times. This event is off-pattern and will bring people in contact with one another who may never have met despite years of attendance.

Small Congregation: Small memberships may feel personally tied to any program or activity in the life of the church and theological values that imply a shift of focus, either diminishing other areas of ministry, or drawing attention to something that represents significant personal investment or ownership, will increase tension. Making decisions by consensus and using mutual invitation in these settings will be difficult but important to ensure individuals do not feel railroaded or left behind.

The Gatherings: Wave 4

Gathering 4.1: Summarize & Distill

Equipment & Set Up

A skeletal timeline slide, image, or story of the Church universal, starting with Christ and trailing off in the current year; post-its; markers; symbol(s) of God's presence; projection set up (screen, projector, computer, etc.) or another method for presenting topics to the larger group, like an instructional board (whiteboard, chalkboard, smartboard) or large chart paper; handouts for this gathering (optional).

Attendance

MSCC (Primary Leadership)

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR WORSHIP & MEETING**5-10 min. | Gathering & Call to Worship**

Leader 1

Recall the story of the Church together. Create a long writing space at chest height along the length of a wall using many pieces of chart paper taped together, or butcher paper affixed to the wall (20-40' should be plenty, depending on the size of your committee and size of the creative works). Start individually, and then together, to map the story of the Church, starting with the stories of the New Testament. Use pictures or symbols to represent historical events and movements of the story. Use similar symbols, colors, or pictures to show how the story from Scripture can be echoed in the life of your congregation.

Alternatively, work together to remember the stories of the Early Church. Have one team member act as the scribe, recording the important points in a column on the screen or some chart paper. Then, following the movements of the story, identify a story or stories related to the life of your congregation. Identify similarities and differences in your tales.

2 min. | Symbol of God's Presence

Leader 2

A closed Bible in the center of the meeting or workspace, representing God's Word, always present, always relevant. Or have a Bible open to a particular verse that speaks to the context, setting, or congregation.

1 min. | Opening Prayer

Leader 2

4 min. | **Praise**¹⁶¹

“Here In This Place ” (No. 401)

“O God, You Are My God” (No. 743)

“I’m Gonna Live So God Can use Me” (No. 700)

Confession of Sin

Leader 1

John 3:30: Even John the Baptist—whose life was promised to his parents as a prophecy, and whose very existence was almost exclusively to proclaim the coming of Christ—was wise and humble enough to say, “[Christ] must increase, I must decrease.” After a time of silent prayer: “Forgive us for times when we get the equation mixed up, putting ourselves before anyone else, especially you, dear Lord. May our lives instead be such that you are not just increased, but that you are magnified. Amen.”

Assurance of Pardon

Leader 2

Use a liturgical phrase or action familiar to the worshipping community.

Passing of the Peace

Leader 2

“Having been granted forgiveness, our hearts may be at peace. Let us share that peace with one another saying: The peace of Christ be with you!” **And also with you.**

Hearing God’s Word for Us

Pastor or Chair

As a preface to the conversation to come, share with the team that they should be serving as notetakers, summarizing and reiterating the voice and intent of the congregation, not note-makers, interpreting and translating what was said. Note-taking keeps personal bias further from the congregation and permits a better representation of

¹⁶¹ All hymn suggestions are taken from the most recently published hymnal. David Eicher, *Glory to God: the Presbyterian Hymnal*, (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2013).

the congregation while note-making requires more personal opinion, which would influence the final report.

Begin by outlining the report that will be written. Many mid-councils will advise on the format, content, and appendices that are required, but a thorough report will include the following: Introduction (purpose, leadership, and process); Identity (historical timeline; story of the congregation; the larger community; the membership; beliefs and practices); Leadership (leadership model and structure including staff); Ministries & Programs (worship; children & families; youth & young adult; adult & older adult; member care; mission & service); Gifts & Resources (facility; finances; gifts); Areas of Strength & Opportunities for Growth; Future Hopes & Discerning Direction; Mission of the Congregation; Vision to Achieve the Mission.

Ideally, the sections of the report that are reliant upon data (and not the reflections of the congregation) will already be drafted or outlined by team members. Beginning with these drafted sections, walk through each section and review the notes and details from the gatherings to ensure that all details are accurate. For sections that are more interpretive in nature, find examples and notes from the gatherings that support any generalizations or summary statements that are made.

Once the entire report has a drafted outline, take a short break, and then spend 30 recalling the gatherings. Review notes that your team made during those workshops. Recall the conversations that we had, the comments that were made, and the feeling in the room when different topics were discussed. Identify words or phrases participants used often, didn't use at all, or avoided. What sentiments were clear in the large group?

What sentiments were uttered under the breath of those in the backrow? Who was speaking the loudest or the most? Who wasn't heard from or didn't contribute?

One last time, walk through the outline again. For each section ask one another, "Which memories and notes are not represented here? Which voices are not heard and which voices are overstated?" The final product will aim to reflect of the voice of the congregation without losing the diversity of the differing voices within it.

Responding to God's Word

Pastor or Chair

The last step of this gathering is to provide a schedule or expectation for deadlines and check ins regarding the report. This will look different for each committee, but most will find it helpful to set clear expectations and establish a covenant to engage edits with the intent of seeking a product that represents the congregation best.

Benediction & Sending Forth

Pastor

Close in a time of prayer. Thank God for the gift of fellowship, and the strength that comes in serving together. Pray for each member of the team, lifting up concerns they might have, and affirming them for the gifts God has given them and that have been important in this work. Finally pray for clarity in memory, so details won't be lost, and eloquence in writing, so it might be concise, accurate, and best reflect the congregation.

APPENDIX B: The Twelve Distilled Values of the Sacraments

Below are twelve values that have been distilled from the more exhaustive collection in Appendix D. These selected values play a significant role in the curriculum in Appendix A.

Baptism

Baptism | 1: God's mark of the new covenant and irresistible grace.¹⁶²

Baptism | 2: A testimony of worship and belonging to the One True God.¹⁶³

Baptism | 3: Initiation into the Body of Christ.¹⁶⁴

Baptism | 4: Christ's union with humanity.¹⁶⁵

Baptism | 5: Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which renews and inspires.¹⁶⁶

Baptism | 6: The Holy Spirit's unique calling.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² See Appendix D, section D, part 1.iii-vi.

¹⁶³ See Appendix D, section D, part 1.i, ii, xvii.

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix D, section D, part 1.vii, viii.

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix D, section D, part 1.ix-xii.

¹⁶⁶ See Appendix D, section D, part 1.xiii, xiv.

¹⁶⁷ See Appendix D, section D, part 1.xv, xvi.

Lord's Supper

Lord's Supper | 1: God's heavenly feast of bread and cup.¹⁶⁸

Lord's Supper | 2: Uniting with Christ and Christ's Body.¹⁶⁹

Lord's Supper | 3: Nourishing meal of restoration and reconciliation.¹⁷⁰

Lord's Supper | 4: Remembrance of Christ's sacrifice to deliver to us eternal blessings.¹⁷¹

Lord's Supper | 5: God's covenant and grace for us.¹⁷²

Lord's Supper | 6: The Holy Spirit's inspiration to live as thankful, praise-filled disciples.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix D, section D, part 2.i-iii, v, vi.

¹⁶⁹ See Appendix D, section D, part 2.vii, viii, xv.

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix D, Section D, part 2.x, xi.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix D, Section D, part 2.xii-xiv.

¹⁷² See Appendix D, Section D, part 2.iv, xvi.

¹⁷³ See Appendix D, Section D, part 2.ix, xvii-xix.

APPENDIX C: Sample Hand Out Resources

To view updated examples of handouts, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/AModelMissionStudy-C> .

These will include various hand out for the lesson plans within Appendix A.

APPENDIX D: Facets of our Faith: An Exploration of the Sacraments

A. Introduction

As part of this project, an extended amount of research was done into the significance of the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was difficult to find an exhaustive resource with this information that fell in line with the Presbyterian tradition. As a response to this resource void, and since it did fit within the scope of this particular project, it became an appendix to support the work done within the project. This appendix will provide an overview of an extensive list of symbols and significances that arise from the Sacraments. I will then give a brief explanation of each and suggest some potential implications for those who use each as an internalized principle or guiding value. Of course, this resource is not exhaustive, as careful as I have been, and I am always interested in expanding this, if any readers feel so moved to share.

B. Overview

Baptism

"I Baptize You in the Name of the Father"

- i. We testify that we worship the One True God
- ii. We declare that we are God's
- iii. God's mark of the heavenly realm
- iv. We are claimed by God's grace before we can even respond
- v. God's grace is extended to all
- vi. A sign of God's covenant

"...and of the Son..."

- vii. Initiation and Enrollment into the Body of Christ, the Church
 - viii. Union with the Body of Christ
 - ix. Christ's identification with sinners
 - x. Union with Christ
 - xi. Death and rising with Christ
 - xii. Pardon and cleansing from sin
- "...and of the Holy Spirit."*
- xiii. Renewal
 - xiv. Anointing of the Holy Spirit
 - xv. Call and anointing for service and ministry
 - xvi. Call to God's justice
 - xvii. Affirmation of our faith

The Lord's Supper

"Take": A Gift

- i. Bread: manna, Passover, Sabbath meal, and feast
- ii. Bread of life
- iii. True Vine
- iv. New covenant
- v. Meal of the realm of God
- vi. Foretaste of the Kingdom
- vii. United to Christ
- viii. United to the Body of Christ

“Eat”: Consume & Sustain

- ix. Thanksgiving to God
- x. Nourishes us spiritually
- xi. Nourishes us socially
- xii. Sacrifices of Christ

“Remember”: Remind

- xiii. Remembrance
- xiv. Benefits of his death and resurrection
- xv. Reconciliation with Christ and the Body of Christ

“Believe”: Inspire & Enliven Faith

- xvi. Gift and means of grace
- xvii. Call to discipleship
- xviii. Invocation of the Holy Spirit
- xviii. Sacrifices of ourselves in praise and celebration

C. What Are The Sacraments?

In the 5th Century, Augustine is said to have described a Sacrament as a visible sign or form of invisible grace. This description seems simple enough, yet there have been many discussions—indeed, fights, denominational divisions, and even deaths—over what a Sacrament might entail and its role in faith and salvation. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) traces its theological roots to John Calvin who described them as “a testimony of God’s favor toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with a mutual

testifying of our godliness toward [God].”¹⁷⁴ One of the best definitions of a Sacrament comes as part of the collection of faith statements in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) constitution and is bolstered by Scriptural references:

Q. 162 What is a Sacrament?

A. A Sacrament is

an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church,^A

to signify, seal, and exhibit^B unto those that are within the covenant of grace^C,

the benefits of his mediation;^D

to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces;^E

to oblige them to obedience;^F

to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another,^G and

to distinguish them from those that are without.^{H, 175}

^A Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26-27

^B Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

^C Romans 9:8; Galatians 3:27, 29; Galatians 5:6; Galatians 6:15

^D Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 10:16

^E 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

^F Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 10:21

^G 1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Ephesians 4:3-5

^H 1 Corinthians 10:21

Further defining them, the Sacraments balance two important factors in their identity: they act as an objective reality of God’s grace, wherein the sacrament is a vehicle that conveys God’s grace to our lives; and our faith response, which is our action—or reaction—to the grace made known through them.

Effectively, the Sacraments are tactile signs that evince God’s grace as it is made known to and in God’s people. The Sacraments are clearly important elements of practicing faith, but it does prompt the question of why reflecting upon them is important

¹⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1277.

¹⁷⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 221.

for congregations. First, they are significant because their practice is one of the key responsibilities of the Church in fulfilling God’s mission in the world, according to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).¹⁷⁶ If it is a key responsibility, it is certainly worth studying and understanding.

Second, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are both significant acts for the Church in that they were instituted by Christ and have been part of Christian worship ever since. Throughout the New Testament, their practice is noted as regular and notable parts of worship for the Early Church. Furthermore, they can be seen in writings and artifacts that these practices have continued throughout the 2000 years that followed.¹⁷⁷ The Sacraments are foundational elements of Christian worship. Knowing their background and understanding their historic significance will enhance the practice for believers today.

Furthermore, they are both practically and elementally significant practices in the worship and congregational life of every worshiping community. As their administration is considered to be one of the marks of the “True Church,” and as their regular practice is mandated for every Presbyterian congregation, they are fundamental to participation in a community of faith. Without them, a congregation is not a true member of the Universal Church.¹⁷⁸ Understanding and studying them is, therefore, wholly necessary for a community of faith.

¹⁷⁶ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 1. (This mission, as it is fulfilled through the “sacraments, rightly administered,” is delineated in F-1.0303.)

¹⁷⁷ Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; I Cor. 10-11; and Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-38; 10:48; 16:31-33; 22:16; I Cor. 12:13; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6

¹⁷⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 4-5, 93, 96.

Theologically, the Sacraments are deeply meaningful and full of intention. Studying the sacraments keeps them from devolving into a habit or rhythm devoid of meaning. Instead, it brings new life and energy to these ceremonies and inspires life-long faith development. It will also open the door to further reflection on the Sacraments, what is sacred and sacramental, and general reflection on sacramental theology in the context of congregational and everyday life.

Another important factor is their tangibility. Faith and theology can feel intangible and philosophical, making them difficult to grasp amidst the overwhelming brokenness of this visceral and profane world. The physical elements of bread, wine, and water force our bodies and minds to attempt to reconcile these theological realities with our physical surroundings and experiences. Reflecting on the Lord's Supper and Baptism may inspire a connection between faith and reality in a way that other aspects of faith may not be able to facilitate.

Practically speaking, studying the Sacraments naturally inspires the study of Scripture and historical statements of faith. Since the Sacraments are practiced based on the testimonies and letters recorded in Scripture, studying the Sacraments will require a study of the Bible. Generations of faithful Christians have studied, wrestled, and discerned what the Sacraments are and are not, recording those most compelling elements in statements of faith. Studying the Sacraments would require studying these documents as well. Most congregations will be required to include these types of studies in their mission study process and so the study of the Sacraments fits perfectly into this requirement. Furthermore, Presbyterians believe that the continued education of all

members on all subjects of Christian discipleship is integral to the life of the Church and growth of God's Kingdom.¹⁷⁹

Finally, regardless of where an individual or community falls on the spectrum of theology or politics, there are aspects of the Sacraments that can be wholeheartedly embraced and claimed. The study of the Sacraments is a non-polarizing discipleship and development activity for a congregation to undertake without fear of alienating individuals or cliques with strong or differing opinions.

Ultimately, there is an extensive list of reasons that justify the study of the Sacraments for PC(USA) congregations. In fact, from the elements of faith that they touch to the practical considerations of political affiliation and fulfillment of denominational polity requirements, their study lends them to be a natural topic of study that will undoubtedly benefit many aspects of a worshipping community's life together and faith. As a community learns about and reflects on the Sacraments, they will identify qualities and values in them that will challenge their own way of life. For example, discussing the radical hospitality modeled at the Lord's Table could challenge a congregation's own practices toward immigrants in their community. Or a conversation about the anointing for ministry that is implied through Baptism may give a member the confidence—through faith—to seek a leadership role in the Church or pursue a call to ministry. The Sacraments are full of values that inspire us to be more faithful followers of Christ who have integrity in what we believe and do.

¹⁷⁹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 112.

D. Symbols and Significances

1. Baptism

For ease of discussion, the symbols and elements of meaning of Baptism have been divided into three primary groups: elements that relate primarily to God, God's action, and our relationship with God; elements that relate to Christ, the Body of Christ, our relation to Christ, and the benefits of Christ's death; and elements that relate to the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit's work through and in us.

"I baptize you in the name of the Father,..."

i. We testify that we worship the One True God

In participating in Baptism, as conscious beings receiving this sacrament, as parents requesting it for our children, or as members of the community of faith affirming or even remembering the statements that are vowed and proclaimed, participants testify that they agree in worshiping the same God, in one religion with all Christians.¹⁸⁰ This element provides an essential piece of unifying faith: that in baptism, all are worshiping one God. Further, it unifies Christians beyond denominational affiliation, enabling us to reach beyond doctrinal differences, work for reconciliation and forgiveness for past differences, and provide a point of reference from which our conversations of faith and belief can stem.

¹⁸⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1313-1314.

ii. We declare that we are God's

In Baptism, participants actively choose to be “reckoned among God’s children,” Calvin shares.¹⁸¹ In Baptism, participants publicly identify as Christians with all the rights and responsibilities that follow—and there are many.¹⁸² Baptism is a statement by parents that they wish to have their child raised as part of the community of faith, being taught in the ways that God has called the Chosen People to live. It is a statement by those choosing to be baptized to enter into the new covenant that God established through Christ with all people. It is a declaration of intent to live within the expectations of that covenant: striving to follow the Church’s teachings and participating in the fellowship of the Church. It is a commitment to share in its worship and ministry, participate in prayer and service, give of one’s own time and gifts, ultimately giving the activity of every day to be a disciple of Christ.¹⁸³ It is point of dedication of one’s self, and a commitment to participation in the Church, and an act of self-sacrifice.

iii. God’s mark of the heavenly realm

The Sacrament uses regular water for its celebration, which leaves no lasting mark, however, it is dripping with symbolism and meaning that marks us with a spiritual imprint that identifies us as God’s. This mark is one of the realm of God; one that may not be visible to those on earth.¹⁸⁴ Yet this mark—as we are reminded every time we

¹⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 13, 1303, 1313.

¹⁸² Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 103.

¹⁸³ The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit of the PC(USA), *Book of Common Worship*, 404-410.

¹⁸⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 93.

witness Baptism celebrated or recall the promises of the ceremony—is one that implies a different lifestyle on earth. While the mark is of the heavenly realm, its effects impact us daily. A community that chooses this as a central identity will remind themselves to remember this mark and its implications daily: to live into the promises made at baptism, to live lives worthy of God’s promises, and to live in such a way that their lives, individually and communally, are a manifestation of that invisible mark.

iv. We are claimed by God’s grace before we can even respond

The Reformed tradition practices the baptism of infants, which declares this statement most clearly. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God’s love claims people before they are even able to respond in or with an act of faith.¹⁸⁵ Before a child has a chance to be faithful or faithless, good or bad, the sure promise of God’s love is present through baptism; it is the *preeminent* sign of God’s grace!¹⁸⁶ Through Baptism all can know that God’s grace precedes any act one may do and it can supercede any symbol, error, sin, or misdeed within the ceremony itself.¹⁸⁷ In Baptism, Christians celebrate and claim that they are full beneficiaries of the abundant grace of a merciful God. Claiming that grace-filled identity as a central value for a congregation can impact the way they see themselves, how they interact with the world, and how they serve God.

¹⁸⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 20.

¹⁸⁶ Small, *To Be Reformed*, 110-111.

¹⁸⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1325.

v. God's grace is extended to all

The theological justification of Baptism for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states plainly that, "Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace, offered to all people."¹⁸⁸ Living into this will allow members to open themselves to the love and grace of God in full confidence. It further calls the Church to treat every person in and out of the worshiping community as though they are covered by God's grace. Participation in the community is not limited. Benefiting from mission or community life is not with condition. All are invited to join, fellowship, contribute, and benefit.

vi. A sign of God's covenant

Just as circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Israel, Baptism is a sign of God's covenant with the Church. It is a new covenant that is driven by grace and through which God cleanses us to make us whole and holy.¹⁸⁹ The language of Baptism, its ceremony, and its meaning consistently point toward God and the covenant made with the Church. Calvin suggests that it is a covenant that harkens to that of the Old Testament and functions as a contract for our obedience today.¹⁹⁰ The covenant promises God's faithfulness to those who are baptized and calls us to obedience. When congregations choose to focus on the covenantal nature of Baptism, the concepts of promise, commitment, and relationship can rise up and direct their relationships within their

¹⁸⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 93.

¹⁸⁹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 20, 93.

¹⁹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1260.

congregation and with the surrounding community. It may also call a congregation to do some reflection on what it means to be obedient to that covenant, individually and communally.

“...and of the Son...”

vii. Initiation and Enrollment into the Body of Christ, the Church

Baptism is the moment when the visible act is performed to publicly proclaim one’s inclusion into the covenant. According to Presbyterian polity, it is considered the point at which a person is admitted into membership into the Church.¹⁹¹ The Second Helvetic Confession says that Baptism is the enrollment and entry into the Body of Christ.¹⁹² It is an act by believers and the Church that officially declares one’s participation in the Church. A congregation that focuses on the element of initiation might engage in ministry that celebrates Baptism regularly in fun and unique ways, or engages in public acts or service that shares with the community the importance of that moment for its members.

viii. Union with the Body of Christ

Being admitted into membership in the Church simultaneously indicates reception into, and union with, the Body of Christ.¹⁹³ Physically, it is a moment that includes the presence of representatives of the community of faith that will support the one being

¹⁹¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 20.

¹⁹² Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 100.

¹⁹³ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*,

baptized: parents, sponsors, the congregation, the pastor, and others who may gather to celebrate the event. It is, practically, a moment that involves representatives of the broad spectrum of the Body of Christ as one is accepted into it.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, Baptism symbolizes that God's people have been marked, not only in a way that can be seen only in the heavenly realm, but in a way that marks them as a part of the Body of Christ. Congregations that focus on the union with the Body of Christ may emphasize hospitality and the care for other members of the Body, and celebrate those who participate in the life of Christ.

ix. Christ's identification with sinners

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Christ was bowing to identify himself with the sinful life of humans who, at the time, sought forgiveness through repentance in John's baptism.¹⁹⁵ In his discourse on the topic, theologian Dan Migliore says that baptism celebrates solidarity of all the parties involved, including Christ's act of solidarity with the world in all its sinfulness.¹⁹⁶ A congregation who recognizes this solidarity might celebrate this liaison between the divinity and humanity of Christ, take comfort in the depth of God's love for humanity (who went so far as to humbly identify with sinful humanity!), or encourage its members

¹⁹⁴ Mick, *Living Baptism Daily*, 40.

¹⁹⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 261; Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 159-160.

¹⁹⁶ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 293-294.

to remember the dignity that exists within each person because of this connection with the divine.

x. Union with Christ

Just as Baptism indicates Christ's act of identifying with sinful humanity, it is equally an indication of one's union with Christ. By participating in a similar baptismal act, we are indicating that they bear the mark of the Kingdom, entering into a life-death-resurrection calling, the same calling entered into by Christ as his own baptism.¹⁹⁷ The community that focuses on this union with Christ will discuss the calling to follow Christ's example of death to worldly sin in pursuit of new life in Godly-pursuits. It may also celebrate the benefits of being considered co-heirs with Christ of God's eternal blessings.¹⁹⁸

xi. Death and rising with Christ

The letter to the Romans proclaims that, in Baptism, believers drown and die with Christ, but are also raised with him.¹⁹⁹ This concept is emphasized in many non-Reformed traditions through immersion baptism where the person, following Christ's example of death and resurrection, is submerged to symbolize death and emerges from the water symbolizing resurrection or rising to new life.²⁰⁰ The resurrection to new life provides hope and joy in two specific ways. First, in remembering one's Baptism,

¹⁹⁷ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 294.

¹⁹⁸ Romans 8:17ff, NRSV.

¹⁹⁹ Romans 6:3-4, NRSV.

²⁰⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1325; Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 160-161.

attention is drawn to find new life and joyful resurrection despite daily struggles.²⁰¹ Second, and on a much broader scale, this imagery of Baptism finds its resurrection complete with earthly death. Earthly death, therefore, witnesses to the resurrection to eternal life found through Christ.²⁰² Congregations focusing on the death and rising with Christ that is symbolized in Baptism will emphasize active relinquishing of one's sinful self to God, representing death to self with Christ. They will also celebrate the new life received daily and at the end of a life. Regular prayers of confession and funerals are then witnessing to resurrection and renewal that is experienced in living a life with Christ and in receiving eternal life at life's end.

xii. Pardon and cleansing from sin

Scripture declares that Baptism first points to the cleansing of sin and is a declaration of forgiveness.²⁰³ Just as external washing cleanses the body, Christ promises in Scripture that the waters of baptism purify believers from uncleanness within and act as a sign and seal of the remission of sins.²⁰⁴ Baptism therefore indicates that, by union with Christ in his death through baptism, all sin is forgiven and removed.²⁰⁵ Believers are cleansed, forgiven, and free to live as new creations!²⁰⁶ Communities who celebrate this

²⁰¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 261.

²⁰² Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 106.

²⁰³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1325; Small, *To Be Reformed*, 109; Acts 2:37-42, NRSV.

²⁰⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 39, 154.

²⁰⁵ Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 58.

²⁰⁶ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 70-71.

pardoning and cleansing might emphasize the assurance of pardon during the confessional sequence of worship, or strongly encourage individual and communal acts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

“...and of the Holy Spirit.”

xiii. Renewal

Baptism symbolizes resurrection in Christ which is reflected in the believer as it symbolizes a rebirth, produces a new creation, and results in a life that is changed and renewed.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, as baptism indicates pardoning, cleansing, and forgiveness, it implies repentance and renewal by the Holy Spirit in how one conducts life.²⁰⁸ Baptism therefore is a sign and seal of the Holy Spirit’s regeneration of believers’ lives by the work of Christ so they can no longer be the same sinful beings they once were.²⁰⁹ Congregations who emphasize the renewal aspect of Baptism may encourage regular reflections on how they are different than they once were, or seek opportunities to contemplate the new creation that God may be calling them to be. As a community, they may pursue activities that manifest God’s new creation or seek to redeem and renew the world.

²⁰⁷ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 160; Gerrish, *Christian Faith*, 262.

²⁰⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 93.

²⁰⁹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 223.

xiv. Anointing of the Holy Spirit

God anointed Jesus for service in his baptism and similarly anoints believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit in their own baptism.²¹⁰ The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a gift that is promised in Acts 2:38 as an element of one's baptism. As the Holy Spirit is poured out, one is united with Christ and blessed with the manifold gifts of that union including the renewal of one's spirit, a call to service, and the opportunity to respond.²¹¹ Congregations who celebrate the Holy Spirit's anointing may choose to anoint with oil, water, or prayer to affirm a call, appoint to a particular ministry, or call on God for wholeness, healing, and renewal. They may emphasize one's calling to serve God's Kingdom by the anointing of the Spirit or lean toward seeking the movement and calling of the Holy Spirit in worship and common life.

xv. Call and anointing for service and ministry

In a children's sermon, Rev. Wezeman shared that the story of Jesus' baptism in the Gospels is designed for us to recognize that just as Jesus' baptism was the sign that he was called to share God's message with the world, our baptism is a sign that we are to share that message too.²¹² While that sermon simplified it a lot, it emphasizes the importance of what the Presbyterian tradition highlights as the second, responsive part of Baptism: the call.²¹³ To this point, most of the points of Baptism have celebrated the gift, but equally as important is the response we give.

²¹⁰ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 92-93

²¹¹ Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 64-65.

²¹² Wezeman et al, *Touch the Water*, 42-43; Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23, NRSV.

Our response should be to follow Christ and fulfill our commission to service.²¹⁴ Through our baptism, as the Holy Spirit empowers them, believers are put to work as disciples in God's mission as they follow the mission, discipline, and practices of the Church.²¹⁵ What that looks like varies from person to person and community to community, varying in particular acts of service, ministries of justice, evangelism, and more. What is ultimately true, however, is that through baptism, *each* is called.²¹⁶ Communities who center their ministry around the calling and anointing for service and ministry may dwell on discipleship opportunities and Christian formation for all ages. They may celebrate those who have unique calls to ministry in their midst but will equally gather to support one who has a less notable or undiscerned call, for everyone's call is to be celebrated, pursued, and blessed.

xvi. Call to God's justice

As part of the call to service and ministry, Baptism calls the members of the Church to God's acts of justice and righteousness in the world. These include proclaiming the gospel of God's liberating love, showing compassion to all, seeking justice for the oppressed, working for peace, and advocating to care for God's creation.²¹⁷ Ultimately, through its rich symbolism, call to respond, and the movement of the Holy

²¹³ Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Invitation to Christ*, 43-44.

²¹⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 93

²¹⁵ Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 65, 214.

²¹⁶ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 102, 115.

²¹⁷ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 115-117.

Spirit, Baptism is a sacrament that implicitly creates a community that is faithful, open, and inclusive. This community will naturally challenge perspectives and cultivate interdependence to such a degree that members will work to foster faithfulness, inclusivity, justice, and compassion for anyone they encounter.²¹⁸

xvii. Affirmation of our faith

John Calvin's discourse on Baptism identifies a handful of implications that arise from the Sacrament, not the least of which is the affirmation and proclamation of faith. In Baptism, believers declare that they are part of the Kingdom of God by publicly professing and affirming their faith.²¹⁹ Furthermore, the Presbyterian tradition suggests that all who are present—parents, sponsors, family, and community gathered in worship—shall profess their faith through the Holy Spirit, thereby showing unity and faith, and attesting to their commitment to the Sacrament.²²⁰ Those communities laying claim to this affirmation as a key value will study faith statements of the Church (i.e. the *Book of Confessions*), emphasize unity of faith, and find opportunities to declare statements of faith communally and individually.

²¹⁸ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 162-163, 180.

²¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1303.

²²⁰ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 94, 101; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 101.

2. Lord's Supper

For the benefit of this project's final curriculum, the symbols and elements of meaning of the Lord's Supper have been divided into four sections following the words proclaimed by ministers as they distribute the elements which have been paired with the four purposes of this Sacrament that were discussed in the previous paragraph: Take (Gift), Eat (Sustenance), Remember (A Reminder), and Believe (Inspire and Enliven Faith).

Take: A Gift

- i. Bread: manna, Passover, Sabbath meal, and feast

Meals, and namely, bread, have been among the mundane-turned-holy elements laden with significance for the Christian tradition and history, from the days of the Israelites through to our vision for eternity.²²¹ In the days of the Exodus, the Israelite people wandered the desert and were sustained by manna, a sweet bread provided by God that met their needs throughout their journey. Just as God's people needed sustenance daily in the wilderness, so does the bread of the Lord's Supper echo this regular provision of sustenance for our spiritual lives.²²² As the Jewish people remembered and remember that deliverance from Egypt, they celebrate the Passover, a feast of unleavened bread. In this feast, like in the Lord's Supper, there is a renewal of the covenant made by God at its institution with an element of celebration: wine. Furthermore, the Passover feast and

²²¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95-96.

²²² González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 14-15.

Lord's Supper both nod toward a banquet of total liberation in the future and toward a fulfilled covenant.²²³

In the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath meal includes blessed bread and wine. These were not chosen because they were simply the most common foods; they were sacramental elements from generations back, chosen by the God of Israel to keep them in touch with the past while looking toward the future. The Lord's Supper also contains motifs of a feast, a theme that is found in each of the four gospel accounts.²²⁴

Furthermore, we know through Scripture and study of the Early Church that the first iterations of the Lord's Supper were celebrated as a feast, so they would have included wine, a celebratory banquet food, but since the table was to be open and accessible to all, including the poor, it was simplified to include just bread and wine—elements of common sustenance and celebratory drink—so that all could be included.²²⁵ These significant historical ties must be remembered if the Church is to retain a full understanding of the Supper's value and implications.²²⁶

Communities who celebrate these food-related aspects of the Lord's Supper will put emphasis on the meal and the bread. They may make an effort to share meals together more often, or highlight the community that gathers and forms around bread broken and a meal shared. They may emphasize the celebration of the Supper as a joyful feast of

²²³ González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 15.

²²⁴ Gerrish, *Christian Faith*, 276-277.

²²⁵ Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 81-82.

²²⁶ González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 15.

abundant bread and celebratory drink, adjusting their liturgy and worship to do this. They might also focus on the inclusivity of the meal, inviting all to participate, regardless of background or membership.

ii. Bread of life

According to the gospel of John, Jesus declares that he is the Bread of Life; the one who will supply all of of humanity's needs including providing eternal life.²²⁷ In the Lord's Supper, this declaration is repeated and proclaimed for all who partake in the meal.²²⁸ Through the hand of Christ, God gives the Church a banquet where the life-giving bread comes to feed believers' souls. John Calvin suggested that one's soul feeds on the Bread of Life until that day when one is finally granted immortality with Christ.²²⁹ Some practical theologians take the Bread of Life imagery and sacramental bread a step further by suggesting that when the bread of the Sacrament is lifted and blessed, it beckons participants to recall the daily blessings received from God daily: from the bread eaten at breakfast, to the meal presented in the Sacrament where the interconnectedness of worship and life is brought to light. From this perspective, the bread at the Lord's Supper is the Bread of Life; it becomes the bread that evokes the reality of one's life in Christ—eternal life in Christ.²³⁰ Congregations who focus on the Bread of Life may look for sacramental moments in the mundane, similar to seeing the bread at a meal as a

²²⁷ John 6: 25-29, 48, 50, NRSV.

²²⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95.

²²⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1360.

²³⁰ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 163-164.

reminder of the Lord's Supper. They may celebrate the Sacrament with an eye on the Bread of Life as the element that is spiritual food until eternal life, or that, just as God provides daily bread for sustenance, God provides spiritual sustenance as well.

iii. True Vine

Jesus spoke of himself not only as the Bread of Life but also the True Vine.²³¹

This metaphor brings forth two significant connections. The first and obvious connection is to grapes, wine, and fruit of the vine which fills the cup at the Lord's Supper. Second, as the Lord's Supper is a regular and integral aspect of communal worship for any congregation that provides spiritual nourishment, it shows an eternal dependence upon God. Just as branches are dependent upon the vine for life and sustenance, so are God's people dependent upon God for basic sustenance of life.²³² If baptism engrafts believers into the Body of Christ, the Lord's Supper is the continual nourishment from the root.²³³ Communities who identify the True Vine as a central value may emphasize the similarities between their relationship with God and their relationship with the rest of Creation. They may focus on the dependence upon God and celebrate the many ways they see God's sustaining grace in everyday life. They may also understand communal worship and the sharing of the Lord's Supper to be integral to maintaining a healthy spiritual life, both individually and communally.

²³¹ John 15: 5-8, NRSV; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95.

²³² Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²³³ González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 13.

iv. New covenant

In the liturgy for the Lord's Supper, the words of institution that are spoken over the cup as it is present almost always include the phrase, "This cup is the new covenant, sealed in [Christ's] blood..."²³⁴ This phrase, spoken in various iterations, comes from passages in the Gospels and 1 Corinthians.²³⁵ The concept of covenant arises here as a sign and symbol of the covenant that once was (the Old Testament covenant made with God's people, Israel), and the covenant that is now (the New Testament covenant made with *all* of God's people).²³⁶ The new covenant established through Jesus' death and resurrection brings life, hope, and sustenance for the day-to-day ups and downs for all who follow Christ. Congregations centering their life around the new covenant element of the Lord's Supper will celebrate God's mercy to all people through the covenant which was sealed by Jesus' death and resurrection. Out of thanksgiving and joy, they may focus on evangelism, wanting to share the good news of that covenant with anyone who might not know. They may also decide to focus on Christ as mediator of the new covenant, studying what that might mean for their ministry, service, worship, and fellowship.

v. Meal of the realm of God

Among its list of theological meanings for the Lord's Supper, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) includes that it is a meal of the realm of God.²³⁷ Despite the pomp and

²³⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95-96, 98.

²³⁵ Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:23, NRSV.

²³⁶ Gerrish, *Christian Faith*, 276-277.

²³⁷ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 96.

circumstance surrounding the elements and the people, in its most profane reality, it is still a gathering of broken human beings sharing some snacks. However, through the work of the Holy Spirit, this becomes a meal of the realm of God, granting life, hope, and sustenance through simple elements and meaningful liturgy. Congregations focusing on this aspect may seek to identify and celebrate the transformation that happens within participants who are changed by partaking in this Sacrament. Alternatively, they may see the Spirit's work in this profane act, and turn to seek God's heavenly work in the humdrum moments and seemingly-insignificant all around them. In terms of the practice of the Sacrament itself they may decide to celebrate it with high formality, respect, or even excitement, given their heavenly understanding of the Lord's Supper.

vi. Foretaste of the Kingdom

As much as the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice, it is also a summoning of Christians to hope for that day when Christ will come again.²³⁸ As the Sacrament curates a collective hope for that day, it stirs up the promises of that day: eternal life, no more sorrow or tears, and the final damnation of death.²³⁹ In its celebration, the Lord's Supper gives a foretaste of the promised reign of God, prompting joy and celebration.²⁴⁰ Communities who focus on this foretaste of the Kingdom of God certainly feel this celebration and go out from their gatherings with courage and hope for

²³⁸ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 289.

²³⁹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 96.

²⁴⁰ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 163.

the work that lay ahead and the promises beyond.²⁴¹ These congregations may also live into these eternal promises, thereby creating space for the Lord's Supper to be an opportunity to support and empower its members so they can create moments where justice prevails, needs are met, and grief is avoided.²⁴²

vii. United to Christ

By participating in the Lord's Supper, we declare our bond with Christ.²⁴³ The act of participation and the symbolism within the Sacrament indicate that we are therefore made completely one with Christ and he is made completely one with us.²⁴⁴ As we partake in Christ's body and blood, shared with us through the Holy Spirit as we eat of the bread and cup of the Sacrament, we become united with Christ, living and guided by the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁵ Communities who highly value their union with Christ in the Lord's Supper may seek to see one another as Christ, thereby shaping the way they interact with one another. It could also cause them to seek to live more just and holy lives since, in the Lord's Supper, humanity's imperfection joins with Christ's perfection.

viii. United to the Body of Christ

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament that proclaims unity within the Body of Christ. Just as Baptism is the Sacrament that proclaims admittance to the Body of Christ, the

²⁴¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 296.

²⁴² McElvaney, *Eating and Drinking at the Welcome Table*, 81.

²⁴³ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1414.

²⁴⁵ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), *Book of Confessions*, 40.

Lord's Supper is the regular and repeated declaration that we are indeed united together, as part of this mystical body known as the Body of Christ, the Church.²⁴⁶ At the Supper, the Body of Christ gathers, symbolically joining the disciples and believers from many generations and places around Christ's one table.²⁴⁷ The Sacrament is one of human participation in God's acting in the world by sharing life—and a meal—with one another.²⁴⁸ Theologian John Koenig places it in context by recalling the Last Supper where Christ initiated this sacrament first shared the new covenant of hope that tied it all together: Christ's presence and God's promise indicate that all of humanity belongs in relationship with one another—always. The Supper, therefore, is not only a declaration of union, it is the regular celebration of God's plan for humanity to be fulfilled through relationship together.²⁴⁹ Congregations celebrating unity in the Body of Christ might use symbolism around the bread and cup that draw attention to many members becoming part of one body. For example, John Calvin included in his reflections on this concept the idea that grain from many fields is gathered to create the Supper's loaf—a symbol of unity. Similarly, the grapes of many vineyards are gathered and crushed to fill one cup—a symbol of unity. A community might also integrate 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 into their embodiment of the Body of Christ, which would inspire them to react against any

²⁴⁶ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁴⁷ Mick, *Living Baptism Daily*, 81.

²⁴⁸ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 294.

²⁴⁹ Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 43-44.

indignity, injustice, or pain against any member of the Body of Christ, since one member of the body cannot be hurt without both Christ and the rest of the body being impacted.²⁵⁰ Naturally, then, this community might also find their ministry leaning outward to support the members of the Body that are in need outside the walls of the worshiping community.

Eat: Consume & Sustain

ix. Thanksgiving to God

As we partake in the Lord's Supper, the blessings we receive and the overwhelming significance it represents cause participants to be filled with thanksgiving.²⁵¹ This Sacrament is therefore an opportunity for believers to turn to God and give thanks for the blessings we have received—from the simple elements of bread and wine, to the eternal promises of salvation and boundless grace.²⁵² Since thanksgiving is the first response within this sacrament of God's people to God's promises, and since it occupies the bulk of most Lord's Supper liturgies, the Sacrament is often understood to do more than simply trigger a thankful response, it commands one.²⁵³ In the recently-revised *Directory for Worship* for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the details of the prayer of thanksgiving and the importance of giving thanks is considered one of the basic elements of the Sacrament, commanding its own subsection for proper administration of

²⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1414-1415.

²⁵¹ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 20.

²⁵² *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 6.

²⁵³ Mick, *Living Baptism Daily*, 82.

the sacrament.²⁵⁴ Communities who identify the element of thanksgiving as central to their ministry may include and emphasize prayers of thanksgiving whenever the opportunity arises. They may create separate moments, or even ministries, that revolve around seasons of giving thanks, and opportunities to express a thankful response through service, worship, or other celebrations may be frequent.

x. Nourishes us spiritually

When looking at the general descriptions of the Lord's Supper in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) constitutional documents, they almost always mention the spiritual nourishment that comes from participating in the shared meal, despite its very physical acts and elements.²⁵⁵ John Calvin suggested that this foundational aspect of the Sacrament is due to God's foresight and understanding that the followers of Christ need regular spiritual nourishment throughout the journey of life.²⁵⁶ The Supper, therefore, provides spiritual nourishment through the regular proclamation of sanctification by God's promises confirmed through Christ and encouraging constant growth in faithful living.²⁵⁷ This nourishment is a continuation of the promises made in Baptism whereby God's grace is extended to believers as they promise to strive—with the Holy Spirit's help—to live a holy life.²⁵⁸ In considering the spiritual nature of the physical elements, it

²⁵⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 97-98.

²⁵⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95-98; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 155, 184.

²⁵⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1360.

²⁵⁷ Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Invitation to Christ*, 44.

²⁵⁸ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 288.

is understood that the signs of bread and wine do not represent Christ's flesh and blood exactly, rather they represent the invisible "food" that our souls receive from Christ's flesh and blood that was sacrificed. By regularly participating in the Lord's Supper, God continually supplies believers with the only food their souls need to sustain and preserve the life promised in the New Covenant, that is, eternal life in Christ.²⁵⁹

Communities who value highly the spiritual nourishment of the Lord's Supper may communally focus on the joy and gratitude that comes from understanding the fulfilled promise of God's care and nourishment.²⁶⁰ They may also encourage members to see this as God granting them strength to go through the joys and struggles of life every week; as a call to lift up prayers of thanksgiving daily; and as a command to live differently, discovering and serving God in every part of life.²⁶¹ It would be natural for these congregations to strongly encourage members to make a special effort to be present for the celebration of this life-sustaining Sacrament.

xi. Nourishes us socially

As God's people gather to consume this Sacrament, they consume nourishment through food (physical), nourishment through worship (spiritual), and nourishment through fellowship (social and emotional).²⁶² As the Body of Christ comes together

²⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1360-1361; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 128.

²⁶⁰ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 3.

²⁶¹ Wright, *The Meal Jesus Gave Us*, 32.

²⁶² *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 13.

around the table, its members are encouraged to seek reconciliation for wrongs committed, as well as fellowship and celebrate together, breaking bread, drinking wine, and otherwise feasting with one another.²⁶³ As the gathering itself encourages social wellbeing, it strengthens relationships within the Body and further inspires care and longer-term support within it, thereby participating in the divine life by sharing life with one another.²⁶⁴ Congregations who emphasize the social nourishment may put special attention on delivering the Lord's Supper to members who cannot participate in communal worship services so as to encourage connection to the larger Body as well as showing care for those who have special needs. They may take time in worship, during the Sacrament, or in dedicated times outside of worship for care, prayer, and fellowship within the membership. They may also seek to regularly share the Sacrament with other worshipping communities to strengthen the bond of fellowship with followers of Christ beyond the walls where they gather.

xii. Sacrifices of Christ

In consuming the elements and significance of the Lord's Supper, believers take into ourselves the significance of the sacrifices of Christ. They celebrate the sacrifices Jesus made in his life, death, and resurrection for God's people.²⁶⁵ They understand that the sacrifices were awe-inspiring, life-saving, and the reason they can have hope for reconciliation with God and one another. Communities who see Christ's sacrifice as a

²⁶³ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 296.

²⁶⁴ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 294.

²⁶⁵ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 7.

unifying point for life together will regularly, (possibly weekly), recall what God mercifully gave in order to save the people who once turned away. They may use Christ's sacrifice as an example for the lives of the members of the congregation, calling members to sacrifice from their own lives so they might better serve God's Kingdom. They may also see Christ's sacrifice as the compelling reason to participate in the ministry and worship that the gathered community of faith facilitates.

Remember: Remind

xiii. Remembrance

When it is celebrated in most Presbyterian and Reformed congregations today, the Lord's Supper generally takes on one of two tones: celebratory and victorious; or, as this subsection discusses, remembrance and sacrifice.²⁶⁶ The Lord's Supper is a celebration that brings God's people to remember. First, in its institution in the Gospels, Jesus told his disciples to keep this feast to remember him and so his followers would remember the greatest gift his suffering would become for all of humanity.²⁶⁷ In remembering Christ, believers open themselves to God's love, are then filled with the Holy Spirit, and are given renewed meaning. Therefore, in remembering Christ, we grow in our ability to love God and one another.²⁶⁸ In the meal, we remember Christ's sacrifice and death for the

²⁶⁶ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 292.

²⁶⁷ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 95-96; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 128.

²⁶⁸ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 2-3, 6; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 155.

sake of God's people.²⁶⁹ Finally, we reflect on and remember all of God's fulfilled promises throughout our lives and the history of God's people.²⁷⁰

Congregations who revolve their identity around the remembrance aspect of the Lord's Supper may value time spent identifying God's many blessings and fulfilled promises made evident throughout their lives individually and communally. They may consider the role of storytelling and other activities that encourage communal recollections of God's working in their lives. They may also find great importance in naming and detailing those memories and stories that play integral roles in communicating the deep meaning of the Sacraments so as to import fuller meaning for their community.

xiv. Benefits of his death and resurrection

In the Lord's Supper, believers partake in Christ and receive the benefits of his death and resurrection.²⁷¹ Understanding the sacrifice made through Jesus' death and resurrection as evidence, believers can know for certain that God's love for them is undying and eternal.²⁷² Through that sacrifice, the people of God are granted an eternal gift by pardoning our sins and redeeming us from Death.²⁷³ The Lord's Supper enriches our lives by establishing hope on the horizon.²⁷⁴ The first hope is in the knowledge that

²⁶⁹ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71; Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 151.

²⁷⁰ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 97-98; Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁷¹ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 296.

²⁷² Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁷³ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 128.

Christ's second coming is in the future and that it will usher a day of wholeness and peace.²⁷⁵ In the Lord's Supper, believers are promised that eternal life is in God's plan for humanity and it is transmitted through participation in the flesh and blood of Christ.²⁷⁶ Congregations centering their life around this may be drawn to connections between the promises claimed in both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, noticing that the latter is the opportunity to return to the Covenant since humanity's sin—even the post-resurrection sin—is covered by Christ.²⁷⁷ They may choose to dwell on God's forgiveness and recognize the healing that comes in individuals' personal lives and relationships through that forgiveness. They may also choose to live into the eternal hope that arises from the blessings identified through the Sacrament which would inspire them to act and speak in love and joy to all they encounter and with whom they fellowship.

xv. Reconciliation with Christ and the Body of Christ

The Lord's Supper works as both a symbol and act of reconciliation of humanity with God and with one another.²⁷⁸ Through God's gift of salvation, humanity is released from the power of sin and offered a new way of life: the way of Christ. The Sacraments, each in their own way, call believers to that transformed life by transforming their relationships.²⁷⁹ The Lord's Supper enriches the lives of believers, brings God's vision

²⁷⁴ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 12.

²⁷⁵ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1369.

²⁷⁷ González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 9.

²⁷⁸ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 296.

²⁷⁹ Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Invitation to Christ*, 43.

for their lives into perspective, and directs them to new life through reconciliation with God.²⁸⁰ In addition to realigning their relationship with God, the gathering at the table brings together God's forgiven and forgiving people across whatever dividing walls may have been built to create genuine community and wholeness.²⁸¹ In the Lord's Supper, God's people gather in obedience, awe, reconciliation, and peace, seeking healing and wholeness in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Breaking bread together cultivates community, gratitude, and generosity within the worshiping community and in solidarity with the hungry, dispossessed, and marginalized.²⁸² The community centering their life around reconciliation may understand their mission and ministry to be seeking wholeness for all of God's people nearby and far away. They may find inspiration in centering worship and education around issues of justice in the world or serving God by serving the underprivileged of their surrounding community.

Believe: Inspire & Enliven Faith

xvi. Gift and means of grace

During the celebration of the Supper, in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, participants are reminded of God's lavish gifts and fulfilled promises.²⁸³ In participating in the meal, believers are reminded of and receive these gifts, including the forgiveness of

²⁸⁰ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 13.

²⁸¹ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 103.

²⁸² Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 180.

²⁸³ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 289.

sins and eternal life.²⁸⁴ It is declared in the prayers but also indicated through the practice of sharing a meal with one another and with Christ at God's table.²⁸⁵ For the disciples and followers of Christ—and indeed for believers today—it symbolizes a mercy-filled invitation that extends forgiveness, despite the actions of the past, and demonstrates the saving power of God's love through Christ.²⁸⁶ By remembering the commands given by Jesus at the Last Supper in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, participants open themselves to receive God's love and forgiveness—a renewal of the promises received at Baptism—and thereby grow in grace and in their ability to share God's love with others whom they encounter in their daily lives. The Sacraments not only remind believers, but they communicate the truth: that all are forgiven and have nothing to fear. At Christ's Table, God's promises are regularly renewed and God's people can hear, taste, and digest the idea that no sin is beyond the grace extended by Christ. Even the worst sin can be healed and one day all will understand total forgiveness and utter wholeness in God.²⁸⁷ Congregations who center their ministry around this will work to communicate symbols and acts of grace within the congregation and to those in the surrounding community. In celebrating the Lord's Supper, emphasis will be upon the fulfilled promises of God and

²⁸⁴ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 53-54.

²⁸⁵ Morgan, *Who's Coming to Dinner?*, 137, 140. In his discourse on John 21:4-14, Morgan discusses the significance of the risen Jesus preparing and sharing breakfast with his disciples on the beach. It wasn't just food he was sharing with them as a friendly gesture; it was forgiveness and undeserved, amazing grace that Christ was extending to a collection of men who had disowned and abandoned him through the vulnerability of an invitation to eat together.

²⁸⁶ Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 59; *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 2-3.

²⁸⁷ Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Invitation to Christ*, 47.

the wealth of blessings God has bestowed. They may also find that activities that meet unspoken needs in the lives of those who least expect it may fulfill a call to ministry and mission while celebrating the underserved mercy and grace received through the Sacraments.

xvii. Call to discipleship

The Lord's Supper, like Baptism, consists of promises made by both God and humanity, acting as a contract of sorts.²⁸⁸ Besides being a symbol of the vast array of blessings that span beyond life and death and into eternity, it is also a call by God on our lives. The Sacrament turns believers to look inward, considering their own salvation and relationship with God and with those around them, but then calls them out into the world.²⁸⁹ In the context of a service of worship, the Lord's Supper is a response to God, and in that response believers renew their obedience to Christ, sincerely expressing our desire to be true to Christ, and therefore servants of God.²⁹⁰ As God's servants, believers are given tasks that require sacrifice and commitment.²⁹¹ It is not only a being servant to God, but, as Jesus teaches in the gospels, it is being a servant to the world and putting oneself in lowly positions for God's glory.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1259-1260.

²⁸⁹ Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Invitation to Christ*, 43-44.

²⁹⁰ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

²⁹¹ Mick, *Living Baptism Daily*, 79.

²⁹² Luke 22:24-30; John 13: 16-17; Morgan, *Who's Coming to Dinner*, 44-47.

The Lord's Supper is a demonstration of the story that God has been weaving throughout history: a story that portrays God's people as a servant people who—though battered and beaten—refuse to die because of the motivation of God's love expressed through service to the world, a display made perfect through the model of Jesus. As God's people gather at the Table, they celebrate this model and commit themselves to continuing to tell this story through their own expressions of love as taught by Christ.²⁹³ In the Early Church, the gathered meal would have been the time when the servant-hearted spirit of God's people would have been best communicated to those who gathered to learn more, thereby becoming an opportunity for formation.²⁹⁴ God's people gather at the Table to be formed as disciples so they can excel in holiness of life and be united in service to God's Kingdom.²⁹⁵

Furthermore, the Lord's Supper acts as a proclamation of faith on behalf of the participants. Since the Sacrament of Baptism often includes proclaiming God's promises over infants who cannot claim the promises for themselves, active participation in the Lord's Supper plays a special role in declaring faith on the part of participants. As Christians partake in the elements of the Sacrament, and even as part of the liturgy in the associated service of worship, they proclaim their faith in word and in action.²⁹⁶ Part of

²⁹³ Morgan, *Who's Coming to Dinner*, 49-51.

²⁹⁴ Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 85.

²⁹⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Confessions*, 131.

²⁹⁶ MacLeod, *Presbyterian Worship*, 65.

that proclamation includes the understanding that they are disciples in the Church, that the Church is called to God's service to the surrounding world, and acceptance of those associations and their implications through the receiving of the blessing, benediction, and charge as the service closes.²⁹⁷

Finally, the call to discipleship is present in all the recollections of Jesus' teachings and practices found described in the Gospels. These narratives repeatedly tell of how Jesus broke bread with his disciples, tax collectors, prostitutes, Pharisees, and many others. The discernment he used to decide with whom he would eat and do something as intimate as share a meal suggests that his gracious hospitality went far beyond social convention. This is therefore a model for his followers to shape their ethics and their own practices of grace.²⁹⁸ The Lord's Supper does not expressly tell God's people how to care for the hungry and injusticed, but it does model hospitality, compassion, and justice that Christians should doggedly pursue and display in their own practices and faith.²⁹⁹

Congregations who identify the call to discipleship as a foundational truth for their community will likely have formation opportunities for all ages available in all areas of congregational life. They may work to see God's call to discipleship fulfilled in every element during services of worship and consider times of study as educational or formational more than informational or opportunities for reflection. They may also find

²⁹⁷ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 99.

²⁹⁸ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 293.

²⁹⁹ McElvaney, *Eating and Drinking at the Welcome Table*, 79.

their development of mission and outreach ministries to be walking a fine line between being formational for members and extension of hospitality and service.

xviii. Invocation of the Holy Spirit

In the liturgy and prayers of the Lord's Supper, the community calls upon the Holy Spirit to come among God's people and among the elements that are being distributed for its celebration.³⁰⁰ As the Spirit moves among the elements and in God's people, Christ's presence is made known in powerful and life-changing ways.³⁰¹ By the work of the Holy Spirit, believers are moved to confirm their faith by participation in the Sacrament. As they participate, believers' sense and understanding of their vocation and calling is strengthened.³⁰² The congregation that values this movement of the Lord's Supper will understand the Church's role to be the vessel that points to the action of the Holy Spirit, the communicator of Christ's teachings to the world.³⁰³ They may desire to leave unplanned space in meetings and services of worship so the Holy Spirit can move and proclaim something new and unique in a community. They may also emphasize calling upon the Holy Spirit in worship, meetings, ministries, and gatherings to empower their work. These communities will see successes as God's movement among them through the Spirit's work.

³⁰⁰ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 6, 97.

³⁰¹ Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 69.

³⁰² Calvin, *Institutes*, 1259-1260; Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 64.

³⁰³ Molnar, *Karl Barth and The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 165-166.

xix. Sacrifices of ourselves in praise and celebration

In most worshiping communities, if the Lord's Supper does not take on a feeling of remembrance, it is then a meal of celebration.³⁰⁴ In joyfulness, participants offer themselves in praise for what the meal communicates.³⁰⁵ When not remembering the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper mirrors the meal shared with the risen Jesus by the disciples on the road to Emmaus: a celebration of Christ's victory and extension of grace.³⁰⁶ When the Early Church gathered for Sabbath and Saturday meals, they would retell the stories of Christ and the Apostles, stirring up excitement and joy. These meals would have certainly been energy-filled celebrations—meals of joy and praise.³⁰⁷ For us today, as our lives are enriched in the Lord's Supper, we are inspired to renew our commitment to Christ in sacrificing our praise, and even our lives, in showing God's love to our neighbor.³⁰⁸ Because of Christ's display of grace, and as grace is communicated in the Lord's Supper by the Holy Spirit, we are inclined respond by sacrificing ourselves further by being God's witnesses.³⁰⁹

Communities who understand sacrifice as a key element of their identity may work to understand their every individual and communal act as a response to God's

³⁰⁴ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 292.

³⁰⁵ Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), *Book of Order 2017-2019*, 96-97.

³⁰⁶ González, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 14.

³⁰⁷ Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, 83.

³⁰⁸ *What Every Presbyterian Should Know*, 12; Gear, *Our Presbyterian Belief*, 71.

³⁰⁹ Morgan, *Who's Coming to Dinner*, 137, 159.

grace. They may strive to share love and hospitality unconditionally, working for justice and sharing resources with all of God's children, considering all that vast work as a sacrificial act in response to Christ's own sacrifice.³¹⁰ They may also spend time shaping services of worship so that every element is an opportunity to sacrifice praise and energy for God's glory.

³¹⁰ McElvaney, *Eating and Drinking at the Welcome Table*, 82-83.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



