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TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: A MANUAL FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS

A TRAINING MANUAL PROJECT
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STEPHEN SOHNS
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ABSTRACT

To the Ends of the Earth: A Manual for Short-Term Mission Trips

Stephen Sohns

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

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The purpose of this paper with the attached training manual is to produce a consistent training format for Resurrection Lutheran Church's mission teams that provides for an individual's transformation, grows cohesive groups, and develops the congregation as a mission center for sending people into the world. Resurrection Lutheran Church is a medium-sized congregation affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). It was established in the North Houston area in 1971. Sending teams on international trips has become an important part of this congregation's overall corporate mission.

This paper will contain three major parts. In order to present an understanding of the impact of Resurrection Lutheran's mission trips, the first section will explore the culture of the congregation and its denomination. It will examine both the history and values present in the Lutheran faith and investigate the transition to mobilizing disciples to become missionaries at home as a result of their involvement in a short-term mission experience. Also, it will present the biblical-theological foundation for the mission trips themselves.

The second section will address three areas. It will discuss outcomes of the preparation and training. It will outline the goals of the training manual for both the leaders and the participants on the mission trips. It will set forth the pedagogy upon which the training manual experience has been created and discuss the style and the learning techniques that are encompassed within its various sections.

The third section contains the training manual. It will be presented in two main segments. Ultimately, it provides a foundation for understanding God at work in the world, God at work in missions, and God at work in the lives of the individuals on the teams. It is hoped that this manual also will impact other congregations who wish to do similar mission work.

Content Reader: David Luecke, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

There was not a dry eye in the building. A mission team had just returned from one week in El Salvador and was sharing the experience with the congregation on a Sunday morning. Upon first glance, it might not appear to be a great way to encourage those at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Spring, Texas to go on a mission trip. The team reported that the wheelchairs they were to distribute did not arrive until the end of the week. All they did was walk around the community and pick up trash until the chairs appeared. There were wheelchair distributions on Thursday and Friday for both young and old, and touching stories flowed of how children received mobility and double-amputees were given a chance to work because they finally had what they needed. People's lives definitely were changed. However, these were not the primary stories that moved congregational hearts on this morning.

The team told what happened when they hiked down the paths into the canyon near the river and saw where houses once stood but now were demolished by the rain and ensuing mud slides from two weeks earlier. Team members spoke about seeing families stand on a hillside looking at where their homes used to be. The missionaries from Texas shed tears in explaining that these abodes were barely ten feet by ten feet and that they had been flushed down the river along with the meager belongings of these impoverished families. The team could only pray and offer some food to the people. However, they longed to do more. It was at this moment that God's heart was fully shown to the whole congregation: the team challenged the congregation to participate in building a home for \$300. The church set a total goal of \$2,100 so that the second short-term mission team could return the next week with enough money to rebuild at least seven homes.

Emotion abounded that morning, but much more was happening. Members of Resurrection Lutheran began to see themselves as part of a global community. Men, women, and even children felt the call of God to reach across borders into El Salvador and show the people living in the small town of Delgado that God loved them. They embraced the vision of the team that had been there and experienced their excitement to help. A couple, who were first-time guests, showed up during the following week with a check for \$600, because they each wanted to give a house. In total, within a few days, an entire \$12,000 was raised.

The second short-term mission team took the money to build two homes during their week-long trip and gave the remainder to the local Delgado pastor so that he could make sure other homes were built. Even the local communist government was moved to participate as well; they built additional homes and a church. Some of the officials of the government and the workers were baptized into that church, and this local congregation was seen as the place where God provided help for the homeless and the disabled. The handicapped were assisted with mobility while simultaneously receiving a new home. Through this experience, the theme born that year for Resurrection Lutheran was a paraphrase of Acts 1:8 and later was printed on red t-shirts: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Houston, and in all Texas and the USA, and to the ends of the Earth.”

This is but one example of the many stories that can be told to describe the history and character of Resurrection Lutheran Church, a congregation that is a part of a larger body known as the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). Like many denominations, the Synod has a history of taking care of its own and being more inwardly

focused. Reflecting its denomination, Resurrection Lutheran likewise has had a history of focusing inwardly and emphasizing a self-centered ministry. Although positive stories can be told of how the pastor has helped members, how members have helped one another, and how the congregation has remained faithful to Lutheran teachings, there exist negative stories about human foibles and congregational failures involving relational conflict. Sadly, such history of intense conflict among both staff and congregants reveals the real issue that has confronted Resurrection Lutheran: an intense focus on church membership while ignoring the needs of the surrounding community. New stories about outreach and missions now influence members of the church to think beyond themselves. This quickly became evident in an opportunity just six weeks after the congregation helped the people of El Salvador.

Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast in 2005, and thousands of people flooded the greater Houston area. Many members of the congregation stepped up to feed, clothe, and house the refugees from New Orleans. Wearing their red mission T-shirts, they embodied Resurrection's new local-to-global outreach attitude of missions. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the mission field had come to us. Many congregants who had not been able to go on the week-long trips were excited to serve and happy to help meet the needs of those so drastically affected. Hurricane Katrina was definitely a "*kairos* moment" for the whole congregation,¹ as God was providing an opportunity for the congregation to serve others beyond the membership of the church. This amplified the understanding of the whole

¹ A "*kairos* moment" describes those intense instances during which disciples of Jesus recognize that God is at work in their life. I first discovered this concept in Michael Breen and Walt Kallestad, *The Passionate Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2005). The *kairos* principle forms part of the content of the training manual.

congregation as to why mission trips expand the thinking and experience of the team participants.

A storm is gathering that is larger than a mere hurricane, around the Christian Church in America.² As the first decade of the twenty-first century concludes, the American Church is in a predicament. The decline of mainline Protestant churches is the underlying foundation of this statement. In his book titled *The American Church in Crisis*, David T. Olson shares these statistics: “In 2000, 9.5 million people attended mainline worship services on any given weekend. By 2005 the number had declined to 8.8 million.”³ It is striking that this shrinkage took place during the “church-growth” era that focused on increasing the membership and numeric attendance of these congregations.

More recently, the outgrowth of the mega-churches would seem to indicate that Christianity is on the rise, and yet the growth of evangelical congregations has not helped the overall Church to maintain pace with the population growth. “From 2000 to 2005, the evangelical church grew in 28 states and declined in 22 states. . . . Most interesting was the uniform decline in the 10 Southern states from Texas to North Carolina, often known as the Bible Belt.”⁴ Although there was growth in attendance in certain areas, it is more a reflection of an increase in population than an outcome of reaching more people. Olson writes: “In no single state did church attendance keep up with population growth! Of the 50 states, Hawaii’s church attendance came closest to keeping up with population growth, missing that goal by the narrowest of margins -.02 of one percentage point!”⁵

² Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

³ David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

Short-term mission trips give Resurrection Lutheran an opportunity to provide a common ground to stem this tide as a congregation and also to provide a unifying bridge for the generations that make up the congregation worshipping together on Sunday morning. Resurrection Lutheran's generations are very distinct, and their needs are diverse. For this reason, this project will describe these generations and their unique needs and show how short-term mission trips and the training provided can address both.

Short-term mission teams normally have a mix of all these generations, and it is this learning to work together that offers a real opportunity to bridge the generational gaps to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. As the generations understand one another better, it also helps to educate the participants in how the congregational mission and vision of Resurrection can be lived out at home and be passed on to those yet to be born. This project will detail how the older generations are used to having a voice and show how their needs have driven the direction of Resurrection. It also will discuss how placing the older generations with the younger generations in a working relationship opens up understanding for what the younger generations need.

When Resurrection began to send out international teams, it was difficult to find organizations that would be able to assist Resurrection to go serve in other countries. The LCMS Mission Department indicated that the missionaries in foreign countries would not know what to do with a group of volunteers for a whole week. Resurrection Lutheran now works with World Access Project, Central American Lutheran Missionary Society, and Central American Outreach Ministries in Belize.⁶ Another organization that has

⁶ World Access Project, <http://www.worldaccessproject.org/> (accessed May 24, 2010); Central American Lutheran Missionary Society, <http://calms.org/> (accessed May 24, 2010); Central American Outreach Ministries, <http://www.caom.us/> (accessed May 24, 2010).

assisted on international mission trips is the Mobility Project, which now has been taken over by Hope Haven.⁷

Although the LCMS has attempted to stay faithful to the Word of God and to its confessional heritage, this has not translated to a higher commitment on the part of its members. The greatest claim the LCMS can make is that it has not declined as quickly as the more liberal denominational bodies. However, in comparison to another Lutheran body, Olson states: “The largest conservative Lutheran denomination, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), declined at nearly the same rate as that of the more liberal Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).”⁸ Olson reports some bleak numbers. He says, “The American Church Research Project shows that 17.5 percent of the population attended an orthodox Christian church on any given weekend in 2005.”⁹ The Project was established to measure the growth and decline of mainline Christian churches, and it showed not only a decline in the other church bodies but also in the LCMS.

In the midst of this crisis, a large goal has been set for the members and congregations of the LCMS through an effort called “Ablaze!” The Ablaze effort is summarized as follows on the Synod’s official website:

Ablaze! began as a vision of LCMS World Mission to involve every member of the LCMS, its partner church bodies, and partner mission agencies in one focused and concentrated effort to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know Him. By joining together in this effort, not only would those who hear and receive the message of salvation in Christ be transformed by it and brought into the body of Christ, but our own church bodies, mission organizations and congregations would be strengthened as members grow in discipleship through mission involvement. Additionally, all our Lutheran resources would be strategically coordinated, so that more can be accomplished in mission to the

⁷ Hope Haven: Unleashing Potential in People, <http://www.hopehaven.org> (accessed June 7, 2010).

⁸ Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*, 57.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

glory and honor of our one, true God. It was the desire of LCMS World Mission to give this vision away—to ignite a spark that would become a mission movement of individuals, groups, congregations, etc., all committed to the goal of reaching 100 million unreached and uncommitted people with the Gospel by 2017, which is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.¹⁰

There are two facets to this national emphasis. One prominent aspect is the goal of two thousand congregations planted, and the other is revitalizing two thousand current congregations that are declining. Given that there currently are about 6,600 congregations in the Synod, this would mean adding almost a third more congregations and also bringing the same number from a status of dying or nearly dead to becoming congregations that are vitally impacting their local communities.¹¹ These are not just big numbers but overwhelming statistics for a church body that never has shown the ability to plant congregations in significant numbers and whose stance on dying churches often is this: “Last one out the door turn out the lights.”

Resurrection Lutheran is a part of the Texas District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. This District has aligned its goals with those of the denominational body (LCMS) by setting a goal of two hundred established congregations by 2017.¹² An established congregation is a group that has the Word of God being preached and the Lord’s Supper and Baptism being practiced as a part of regular worship. These Word and Sacrament ministries are intended to be started and established by other congregations and not by the resources and staff of the District. Encouraging the launch of missions by congregations, rather than by staff and officials of the District, gives the opportunity for

¹⁰ The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, “Ablaze! Movement,” <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5248> (accessed March 30, 2010).

¹¹ Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. “What Are the Ablaze! Goals?” <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=10024> (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹² Texas District Mission 2000, <http://m2ctexas.org/> (accessed March 15, 2010).

individuals and congregations to be directly involved in every step of starting a new church. It is possible that one congregation could become the mother church of several new congregations.

A large part of this aggressive goal of the Texas District is owned by organizations that exist in both Houston and Dallas, called Lutheran Inner-City Network Coalition (LINC).¹³ The LINC organizations are focused on starting cross-cultural congregations in these larger urban centers. LINC Houston has opened thirty ministries in its first five years which represent many different cultures that speak Nigerian, Eritrean, Hispanic, Vietnamese, or Korean languages.¹⁴ Pastors who have shown ability to plant and grow churches in cross-cultural settings are being recruited from outside the Lutheran Church. Those that have embraced the teachings of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod begin a new partnership. These pastors are given support and training for the mission starts and are being trained through an LCMS seminary so that they have credentials that reflect their heart and work.¹⁵

The work of LINC often is connected to existing LCMS congregations and provides a means by which Lutheran churches can become involved in cross-cultural ministry in their own community. If a pastor and a congregation take this work seriously, it has the potential of helping the local congregations to become more mission-minded in their thinking and actions. The combination of LINC's work in Houston and the aftermath of Hurricane Ike in 2008 encouraged church teams from all over the country to

¹³ LINC Houston, <http://www.linchouston.org/> (accessed March 4, 2010) and LINC North Texas, <http://www.lincent.org/> (accessed March 4, 2010).

¹⁴ LINC Houston. "Who We Are," <http://www.linchouston.org/learn.html> (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹⁵ LINC Houston, "Areas of Ministry," <http://www.linchouston.org/ministries.html> (accessed March 15, 2010).

come to Houston to help out. Adults and teens were brought in to provide a mission experience for their own people and to assist those most devastated by the storm.

These teams are not much different from those who flood into other countries for personalized mission trips. parachurch organizations and congregations send people of every age into the mission field in nearly every country in the world.¹⁶ Although North Americans have fallen in love with the opportunity to participate with these mission opportunities, it is difficult to measure the value for those who receive these teams. An unbiased evaluation of the impact of teams raises questions for those receiving the teams. Such issues can include undue dependency of the local churches. Dependency means that both pastors and members of indigenous local churches rely too heavily on the funds and work of the short-term mission teams. The goal of short-term teams (week-long groups) is to build the capacity of the local church and to teach self-reliance. The impact of the teams is to encourage the people of these countries in their capacity and ability to do ministry on their own and not have an unhealthy or unduly high view of the American Church. Likewise, Resurrection has had to consider the impact of every mission team that is sent into the local community and into the world and has come to realize that any aid and assistance should be given only for the purpose of building up the local Christian communities.

Mission agencies, congregations, and individuals must understand these dynamics in order to create the type of mission trips that will be a blessing to those who go while encouraging healthy development of Christians and churches at the mission destinations. The goal is to raise the capacity of the local congregations and people as partners and not

¹⁶ Lausanne World Pulse, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/265/03-2006?pg=2> (accessed March 15, 2010).

simply to provide a “feel-good” vacation for North American Christians. Since mission work needs to be intentional in terms of outcomes for both those who go on the trips as well as those who are hosts and receivers, the leadership of Resurrection has some very basic expectations for what should happen as a result of personalized mission trips.

Since God Himself has a mission, and Christians join God for His purpose and design and not their own, it is important that team members understand what has been learned from participating in years of cross-cultural work and how what Resurrection has learned informs its attempts to be missional. The attached training manual has been written to pass on this knowledge in the hopes of sending out better equipped disciples. The principles taught to mission team members covered in the manual are specific. First, trainees will learn that “missional” means actually doing “mission” work right where one resides and not simply having an attitude of caring about “missions” as an international experience. Second, trainees will learn that “missional” means adopting the posture of a missionary. This causes the individual to learn about or adapt to—not adopt—the surrounding culture while remaining biblically sound. This missionary posture is just as true in a local mission experience within one’s home community as it is in a cross-cultural setting here or abroad. Third, trainees learn that “missional” means not automatically assuming that North American culture and practice are necessarily biblical practices.

Ultimately, trainees will come to understand that “missional” means being intentional and deliberate about reaching people in a community who do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is more than simply doing works of service; rather, works of service pave the way to share the Gospel. This involves being respectful, knowledgeable, and sensitive to the people of the culture to whom God has called the missionary to reach

with the Gospel. This is similar to the training and practice of foreign missionaries sent out to engage in trans-cultural mission work in other parts of the world (cf. Acts 1:8)

Threaded throughout the training is the concept that being “missional” means seeking to understand the culture God has sent the Christian to reach. This understanding creates new and effective pathways for communicating the Gospel to the unevangelized and requires seeking points of connection which align with the culture for the sake of communication. Such understanding involves knowing and comprehending cultural norms but not allowing those norms to supersede biblical theology and confession. Trainees will come to accept that the form of “church” being planted and nurtured in the culture may be thoroughly and continually biblical but look different in each cultural context.

By God’s grace and with appropriate training, personalized mission trips can serve to change the mission DNA of not just Resurrection but any congregation as well as carry out the *Missio Dei*. There are multiple blessings that can come about through the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of short-term missionaries and the mission fields to which they are sent. Those sent can begin to see their own lives as missional and that they do have a mission when they return home, wherever they live. When a team understands that its trip is about the Lord’s work, and is not centered on individual needs and desires, then there is a greater opportunity to build the capacity of the local church in any cross-cultural setting.

Short-term missions can strengthen both the host church and the receiving culture. By increasing the capacity of the local church to reach people for Jesus Christ, a congregation can become more courageous and confident in also fulfilling its mission right where it resides locally and not depend on outsiders to do the work or provide the

resources. As a local Central American church becomes more confident in its work and less dependent on outside mission teams, the kingdom is extended and the capacity for God's people to extend the Gospel grows. When the mission team returns home, its members are renewed with a fresh perspective of what ministry can look like right in their home environment. As seen with the El Salvador experience, their testimonies can fuel the rest of the congregation to participate as well.

This project and the development of a training manual are for the purpose of assisting Resurrection Lutheran Church to continue to grow as a missional extension of the hand of God. Personalized mission trips, taking individuals into cross-cultural situations, have been an important strategy for building a missional extension of the congregation. The process also serves to encourage the overall conversation with other North American congregations who desire to provide mission trips for their members. The development of the manual for this project reflects the experience of a church that has been involved in personalized mission trips into both international and local venues since 2003. The manual stems from the successes and failures experienced during these trips, and it uses them as a platform for building better mission teams with the hopes of impacting other congregations who wish to do similar mission work.

The leaders from the partner organizations also have offered feedback for the process on how and why mission team training is so important. They understand how mission teams can bring both positive and negative value to the local area. In 2003 Steve Oliver, then the head of The Mobility Project, stated that he saw the difference between teams from Resurrection and all other teams he had experienced. He said, "Resurrection teams come well prepared. . . . These teams work so well because they are well-trained."

Comments such as these have provided the impetus for the writing of this manual and the continual pursuit to improve the training process annually. Essentially, this training addresses the problems that often occur when mission teams come in and do many “good” things and provide many services and resources, because they have money and people, but do not provide them in a way that the local pastor/missionary or congregation can continue to offer. This new training seeks to end the unintended consequence of creating an expectation in the community that the local church cannot possibly fulfill once the short-term missionaries leave for home and take their ample resources with them. Creating this gap leads to marginalizing the local church and pastor and causes the teams to be regarded as the new messiahs who will appear and provide wonderful things for the people of the community. Unintentionally, even God can be set aside as being the real provider, when the locals look to the mission team for redemption or relief from temporary or systemic suffering.

For this reason, teams need to be trained and sensitized in order to prevent such a cycle. Beyond the scope and narrow ministry context of Resurrection, the manual can bless those congregations who are new to the personalized mission scene yet seek to engage in it with wisdom and in fruit-bearing ways. They can use the training guide as a means to work through the value and impact of mission teams for both the receiving communities and for their own mission teams.

PART ONE

CONTEXT AND RISE OF SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS

CHAPTER 1
THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A CONSERVATIVE LUTHERAN
CHURCH BODY

Garrison Keillor loves to poke fun at Lutherans on his radio program, *A Prairie Home Companion*, which often airs on National Public Radio. His stories depict Minnesota Lutherans as a cultural group and portray them as fairly self-centered Norwegians who love potlucks and coffee. More than one Lutheran has wondered why these fictional stories seem to hit so close to home and why non-Lutherans find them to be so funny.

There are seventy million Lutherans throughout the world.¹ Nevertheless, mission teams from Resurrection and the pastors have been quizzed about what it means to be a Lutheran because they never have heard the name “Lutheran” in connection with the Christian faith. Although Lutheranism is one of the oldest and most established Protestant denominations, and contains a rich history, many people do not know what a Lutheran is and even Lutherans sometimes are not sure what they believe.

To be a mission-focused congregation in a conservative Lutheran Church body is difficult at best. To be Lutheran is to have a strong focus on teaching the true faith as found

¹ Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. *An Introduction to Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/introlcms.pdf> (accessed March 30, 2010), 1.

in the Word of God. This desire of staying true to God's Word has created a tension between theology and practice, specifically theology and mission. This chapter will examine the tension that exists today in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod between theology and mission and how that tension has impacted the entire church body and individual congregations, like Resurrection Lutheran. Understanding the past often helps in comprehending complex dynamics that exist in the present. For this reason, the discussion in this chapter begins with the history of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

The History of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod began in 1847. It is now the second largest Lutheran denomination in the United States and numbers at 2.4 million.² The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest Lutheran denomination with 4.8 million members, is the result of the combination of three Lutheran bodies that merged in 1988.³ There has been a tense relationship among the groups that formed the LCMS and the ELCA since they began to pour into the United States as immigrants. This tension has existed due to differences in theology and missiology, which existed in each church body from its founding and has continued to grow over the years. The groups that make up ELCA had Scandinavian roots and came over first for building enterprise and were involved in the formation of the original colonies. The LCMS came from Germanic roots and became comprised more of groups trying to escape religious hardship and persecution. For the LCMS, purity of doctrine has been much more important than for the ELCA due to how and why they came to the United States.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Similar to many denominations, the story of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod begins in Europe, at the time of the Reformation. The Lutheran Church has a history that is traced back to an event in Wittenberg, Germany that occurred on October 31, 1517 and which serves as the starting point of the Lutheran Reformation when Martin Luther nailed ninety-five theses on the door of a castle church.⁴ These ninety-five theses were set to provide specific questions for debate on the theological concepts of justification, salvation, the place of the Church, the selling of indulgences by the Church to provide absolution for sin after death, and other areas of disagreement with certain Roman Catholic practices at the time. As a Catholic monk and professor, Luther intended to start a discussion on theology; but, his action launched the Lutheran Reformation. It was a Reformation because he intended to bring the Roman Catholic Church back to its earlier roots and to end certain spiritual abuses by the pope and the system of the day. Hallmark phrases were built around the doctrine of justification and how human beings are saved. The phrases were “grace alone,” “faith alone,” and “Scripture alone.”⁵ The Reformation did not take place within the Catholic Church; instead, Luther was excommunicated and began what was to become known as the Lutheran Church.

This Reformation emerged from Luther’s own struggle and study of God’s Word. Luther had struggled throughout his life with the grace of God. He felt unworthy to receive forgiveness from God. His continuing studies led him to the “discovery of the Gospel” and put him at odds with the leaders of the day in the Roman Catholic Church.⁶

⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Mentor Books, 1950), 121.

In 1518 at the Diet of Worms, he finally was called to recant his teachings and writings as being contrary to the teaching of the Catholic faith. His response instead was this: “Since then your majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”⁷ His fight with the Catholic faith at that time was to exclude the authority of the Church and popes from the authority of Scripture. He was willing to die in the effort to make the Scriptures the sole authority and norm for doctrine, life, and faith.

Luther’s statement has the potential of not only being the basis of the Lutheran Reformation in speaking of doctrine but also in speaking of life and faith in general and relating it to God’s mission through the individual believer. He personally changed the idea that the Catholic Church would be the source of doctrine and direct the life of the individual Christian.

Luther and the other writers of these confessions did not want to be doctrinal innovators. They, along with their contemporary descendents, have maintained that Lutherans believe and teach nothing more and nothing less than what the scriptures themselves teach and what Christians through the ages have believed. Therefore, we Lutherans consider ourselves to be catholic (small “c”), which means universal. At the same time, we have always thought of ourselves as “evangelical” Christians.⁸

When Lutherans consider themselves evangelical, it encourages every congregation and individual to think about the mission of the Church to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁸ LCMS, *An Introduction to Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, 6.

Some Lutherans came from Germany into the New World due to such opportunity for mission. In the early 1840s a Lutheran minister in Neuendettelsau, the Reverend Wilhelm Loehe,⁹ learned about the conditions for settlement in North America and the presence of the Indians from Lutheran pastors serving in this region. Rev. Loehe was very mission-oriented and during his lifetime sent missionaries all over the world, including the United States. He envisioned sending a group of lay people along with a minister to live among the Indians and to convert them to Christianity as Lutherans. The lay people were to be an example of Christian living, while the pastor worked with the Indians. These Lutherans came more with the idea of bringing Christ to the Indians than leaving the homeland to escape religious persecution. This became part of what was known as the Franconian Immigration of Lutherans, and most of this work was done in what is now known as Michigan.¹⁰

Other Lutherans entered the New World for personal reasons, and churches formed on the eastern seaboard to serve these new immigrants. This would be the beginning of what today is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.¹¹ In addition, by the 1800s, in Saxony, there was a growing concern about rationalism and pietism.¹² This initiated discussion about immigrating to the United States. Consequently, seven hundred immigrants from Saxony, Germany settled in Perry County and St. Louis, Missouri in 1839 and formed part of the Saxon Immigration.¹³ The focus on mission and the

⁹ E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 158.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 178.

emphasis on theology were born of early problems. The new immigrants dealt with an immediate leadership issue with their pastor, Martin Stephan. He was accused of mismanagement of money and adultery. He was banned from the group and sent down the river on a boat, but now the community was left with the question of who they were and how they would be led. He had been given the power, much like a European bishop, and now the misuse of this power had created a leadership vacuum. “After a hasty investigation, Stephan was excluded from the community, and the colonies stood at the brink of collapse. Laymen and clergymen both engaged in soul-searching questions on the nature of the church.”¹⁴ The theology of the LCMS is impacted by this history and experience of the Saxons as a result of placing so much trust in their first leader and finding that trust misplaced. Since then, the organizational patterns of the Synod and of individual congregations have included many checks and balances on the clergy. These checks and balances also have kept churches more focused on themselves rather than on the surrounding mission field.

The problem as well as the solution set the path of the LCMS from 1841 until the present day. The solution of removing Stephan as the leader and pastor caused the church to explore the concept of governance and transform. A debate on the nature of the Church was held between C. F. W. Walther and Franz Adolph Marbach and is referred to as the Altenburg Debate. Walther overwhelmingly won the debate and the ears of the colonists. Marbach became a footnote in history, and Walther became the first president of what was to become known as the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Walther’s argument

¹⁴ Ibid.

became the cornerstone of the polity and the future Lutheran body's existence. *Lutheran Cyclopedia* records him as writing:

The name of the true Church also belongs to all those visible societies in whose midst the Word of God is purely taught and the Holy Sacraments are administered accordingly to the institution of Christ. True, in this Church there are also godless men, hypocrites, and heretics, but they are not true members of the Church, nor do they constitute the Church.¹⁵

This quote became the basis of establishing voter assemblies comprised of the male colonists. These assemblies assumed the responsibility of decision making for the individual congregations. The new church body was identified as an advisory body to the individual congregations and therefore the church body polity. Since the Saxons had left Germany for the express purpose of establishing a Lutheran gathering that focused on justification by grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone, when Walther speaks of having the Word of God purely taught, the congregations and pastors of the LCMS have always agreed on that statement. Agreement on that statement has not meant unity in all teaching and practice. Although only the initial group dealt with a misguided leader in Stephan, the LCMS has continued to deal with trust issues. Unfortunately, these trust issues have hampered how congregations can be involved in missions and how the focus has been on control. Those trust issues will be explored later in this chapter, as they greatly affect current tensions in theology and missions.

The LCMS often has been referred to as a German church. Initially, schools frequently were formed in order to keep German children connected to the German language; however, today the LCMS is known for its marvelous school system that includes 1,320 preschools; 1,015 elementary schools; and, ninety-seven high schools

¹⁵ *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (St. Louis, CO: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), 21.

followed by ten colleges.¹⁶ Many churches kept German worship services until the advent of World War I. German Lutherans on the east coast felt pressure to drop the German-language services so as to not appear loyal to their homeland. Other churches kept German services even beyond World War II. The German Lutherans continued to emigrate from Germany through the late 1950s, as they continued to seek work after World War II. Congregations also were planted in the suburbs from 1945 through 1955 to reflect the movement of members from the city to the suburbs, adding an additional one thousand congregations.¹⁷ Churches provided worship services in the German language, which was a help to those moving into the United States but served as a natural boundary to the non-German-speaking culture.

The protectionist attitude toward language, culture, and theology has limited the impact of the LCMS on the culture for the past 150 years. The LCMS did not feel any need for change and feared that even changing to English could put a strain on pure doctrine. The LCMS grew a great deal in the 1940s and 1950s, due in part to the immigration of large German Lutheran families to the suburbs but primarily due to the Baby Boom. The fast growth during these decades has many LCMS leaders and members convinced that whatever Lutherans did during these glory years are the key to future growth.

The Tension between Missions and Theology

The LCMS collectively has been proud of its biblical and theological heritage. One of the denomination's primary publications, *An Introduction to Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, states: “The LCMS is well known for its emphasis on Biblical doctrine

¹⁶ LCMS, *An Introduction to Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, 3.

¹⁷ *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, 629.

and its faithfulness to the Lutheran Confessions. At the same time, the Synod has sought to make use of new ways to share the love of Christ in an ever-changing world.”¹⁸ The LCMS stands on this foundation for missions extending from Luther through the era of Walther; yet, during the twentieth century and up into the present day, it has tended to focus inwardly on its own members rather than outwardly on those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. As the LCMS formed in the United States, despite the problems with Stephan, there were plenty of opportunities for these congregations to reach out to those who did not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Walther certainly achieved much as the first president of the LCMS to point the fledgling denomination into thinking about the opportunity for mission work in North America. He took opportunities to share his heart for mission in sermons, conventions, and synodical conferences as he attempted to set the tone for the work of Lutherans in the United States.¹⁹ In the opening of the first meeting of the synodical conference of 1872, he identified the very aim of this group’s existence when he declared the following:

How important it is that beyond all else we make the saving of souls the end and aim of our joint work in Christ’s kingdom. . . . the one most important thing which can keep a worker in God’s kingdom from selfishness is in making the saving of souls the ultimate purpose of his work. . . . For what would happen if we really would make the saving of souls the ultimate purpose, the end and aim of our joint work?²⁰

These words were significant because they came at a time when Lutherans were in conversation about common doctrine, faith, and practice for the purpose of joining together. If there had been no common doctrine, the various synods (Lutheran bodies)

¹⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹ August R. Suelflow, ed. and trans., *Selected Writings of C.F. W. Walther: Convention Essays*, vol. 4 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981).

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

never would have considered joining with one another. For this reason, Walther set forth the significance of also having an ultimate purpose and a common aim. He continued to express the importance of the mission of God in Jesus Christ. During a sermon on Isaiah 43:21, entitled “The Christian Church Itself Is the True Mission Society Established by God Himself,” he shares this: “Yes, arise, Lord, even in this last hour of the world to rescue that which still may be rescued, and count also us worthy of taking part in this most blessed work.”²¹ His thesis asserted that the Christian Church is the true mission society, and with it he sought to encourage those who would hear this sermon to see themselves as part of God’s mission and not only the object of His mission. Later in the same sermon, he emphasized again how important it is that congregations and members see themselves as joining God in His mission. He said, “But the whole church must itself be a great mission society. The Lord has established it to be exactly this.”²²

As the first president of the LCMS, his words were not just for the congregation that day but serve as a rallying cry for the Church today to see itself as a mission society. In observing many Lutheran congregations remaining stagnant, these words strike to the core of what has not happened in the LCMS over its past 130 or more years of existence, especially when pastors tell other pastors that the Lutheran Church’s main duty is to keep pure doctrine and that God is not involving the Church today in His mission. This has been my personal experience in sitting through theological convocations with seminary professors announcing that today’s Church is not to be concerned about sharing the

²¹ August R. Suelflow, ed., *Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther: Selected Sermons*, vol. 2, trans. Henry J. Eggold (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 178.

²² Ibid.

Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even worse is hearing the agreement of pastors around the discussion table in full agreement with these professors.²³

Today the argument continues to divide missions from doctrine, and many believe that those churches that are growing must not be sticking with pure doctrine. This argument arises from the theological controversy of the 1970s and is discussed below. Many websites have sprung up to expound on the watering down of doctrinal purity for the sake of evangelism.²⁴ Walther is mentioned as someone looking for doctrinal purity and not mission. Jack Cascione, a Lutheran leader, writes: “The new Synod wasn’t intended for everyone but only for those wanting the ‘comforting refuge’ of God’s Word and the utopia of ‘pure doctrine.’”²⁵ The problem with this is how it causes the assumption to arise that congregations cannot engage the society in which they exist without giving up the truth, despite the clear Word of God that the incarnation is about the Word engaging the world in His own presence (John 1:1-14).²⁶ Walther’s response would be this: “For if the entire Christian church is the real mission society which God Himself has established, then all those who ignore mission work and do not care to do

²³ Some examples are David Scaer, “Dogmatics I” (lecture, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, 1980); Kurt Marquart, “Dogmatics II” (lecture, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, 1981); Kurt Marquart, “Dogmatics III” (lecture, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1982).

²⁴ Here are some high-profile examples: Reclaiming Walther in the LCMS, “Table of Contents,” <http://www.reclaimingwalther.org/tableofcontents.htm> (accessed June 7, 2010) lists several articles to this effect; Tim Rossow, “Doctrinal Stability? By Pr. Andy Simcak, Texas Confessional Lutherans,” The Brothers of John the Steadfast Blog, entry posted September 19, 2008, <http://steadfastlutherans.org/?p=583> (accessed June 7, 2010).

²⁵ Jack Cascione, “Walther’s Original Structure for Missouri: What Few Lay People Know Today,” Reclaiming Walther, <http://www.reclaimingwalther.org/articles/jmc00044.htm> (accessed April 16, 2010).

²⁶ All Scripture has been taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984) unless otherwise noted.

anything for it certainly are not true and living members of the church, that is, not true Christians.”²⁷

Cascione, who writes frequently for the Reclaiming Walther website, exemplifies today’s typical thinking that goes on in the LCMS:

Walther and his LCMS served a great purpose. By the grace of God, his books and the Synod’s legacy of theology and practice have been a great light in the annals of church history. The accomplishments of the LCMS may not be replicated in terms of purity, intensity, and quantity, till the second coming. However, I still hold on to Walther’s dream. He says “. . . by the Word alone the church will most assuredly stand also in these last days of sore distress.”²⁸

In other words, in the future there may not be as many to carry the light. However, the Church on earth always will possess the pure light. In another article, Cascione notes:

Walther has convinced me that his dream must be my reality. “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever.” God’s Word will not return void (Isaiah 40:8). Therefore, the true visible church must continue on earth till the end of time. God has always and will always provide an uncompromising visible witness to His Word on earth, if not Missouri, then another.²⁹

Since the LCMS has placed such a low priority on mission and LCMS pastors feel they are called to maintain pure doctrine, it is of no surprise that LCMS members do not view missions as a part of their daily life and vocation. However, based on his Epiphany sermon entitled “Arise, Let the Light Shine” that was preached from Isaiah 60:1-6 during a mission festival, Walther instead would “reclaim” that the Church and the individual members are truly responsible to carry out the Lord’s mission. He emphatically stated:

²⁷ Suelflow, *Selected Sermons*, 179.

²⁸ Jack Cascione, “Church and Ministry: The Missouri Synod’s Black Hole” Reclaiming Walther in the LCMS, <http://www.reclaimingwalther.org/sub/church-ministry.htm> (accessed June 7, 2010).

²⁹ Cascione, “Walther’s Original Structure for Missouri.”

And how could it be possible that we could only believe that without Christ there is no blessedness and no salvation; that He is the only way to heaven; that without Him there is only death, hell, and damnation; that all men must be lost without faith in Christ; how could we believe this and still fold our hands in our laps and not hurry to save what is to be saved? How could we?³⁰

That question is just as important for LCMS congregations, pastors, and people today as it was prior to 1876. That people “must be lost without faith in Christ” speaks to contemporary hearts about the existence of the Church on earth. Lutherans assert that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore “must” believe in God’s purpose for that Word. This purpose is to bring people to faith in Him through Jesus Christ.

It is not that Lutherans do not believe in missions; rather, missions have been mainly thought of as “distant acts of kindness” by which the person in the pew supports missionaries who share the Gospel on their behalf in other countries. While there is a time and a place for such collaborative efforts, the person in the pew began to think of missionaries as those exceptional people who were able to give up everything to go and share the Gospel. This narrowed the idea of the missionary down to the chosen few and that these chosen few deserved dollars and support. It relieved the rest of the church members from seeing themselves as missionaries and personally responsible for God’s mission. In understanding Jesus’ call for disciples, it must be understood that all followers of Christ are also all missionaries (Matthew 28:19-20).

In 1879, Walther gave a paper to a conference of pastors to this effect. “The Duties of an Evangelical Synod” was made up of various theses to express the role of the

³⁰ Paul F. Koehneke, trans., “C. F. W. Walther: Arise, Let the Light Shine,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (April 1960): 34-39.

Church and God's people. Thesis VI begins by stating how Lutherans are to focus on building Christ's kingdom:

A sixth major duty is that it not seek its own glory but only the glory of God, being intent not so much on its own growth but rather on the growth of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls. . . . seek to produce in its members, not so much zeal for its particular community but rather living faith, unfeigned love, and genuine godliness.³¹

Although not using the phrase *Missio Dei*, Walther describes the Church's mission as being directly connected to God's mission of bringing people to Jesus Christ. This is not only the mission of God being lived out as the Body of Christ but also as individuals. He adds, "Take an enthusiastic and, as much as possible, active part in all God-pleasing organizations dedicated to the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world."³² Lest anyone think that Walther's thoughts on missions for this new Lutheran body were outside the very founding of the Lutheran Church, he quotes Luther in this same thesis to affirm the purpose and intent of God's Church:

A Christian and also a congregation are plants that have grown from seed sown by other Christians and congregations. Therefore this congregation and every individual Christian is to be a seed from which new Christians and congregations can ever again grow. That is why the apostle says so emphatically, "The church is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26).³³

Walther goes to explain. He writes:

Just as surely as Lutherans are now members of Christ's Church, so surely they should be fruitful mothers; and, if Lutherans are unfruitful mothers—in other words, if they do not produce spiritual children or fail to do those things whereby

³¹ C. F. W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, vol. 2 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 254.

³² *Ibid.*, 256.

³³ *Ibid.* Luther discusses his original thoughts at length in Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Galatians*, vol. 27, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, trans. Richard Jungkuntz (1519; repr., St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963).

such children can be produced—then Lutherans are not obeying their calling and risk hearing God say, “You pious and faithful servant” but rather “You unfaithful servant!” It is just as Luther said, “Only for this reason does our gracious God allow Christians to live on earth, that they might bring others to the saving faith. Otherwise God would immediately take a Christian to heaven as soon as he is converted.”³⁴

If Lutherans adhere to the pure Word of God and the teaching of Lutheran forefathers, then they must adhere to the whole of it and not just advocate that which seems most comfortable and familiar. Like Walther, LCMS leaders and pastors in today’s culture must connect the mission with the historical and biblical roots of the LCMS, particularly with the theological controversies in the recent past. Faithfulness is not simply measured by adherence to the Word of God but by being fruitful in bringing others to the Christian faith.

Current Theological Issues in the LCMS

The 1950s through 1970s was considered a time of the “Battle for the Bible” in the LCMS. Lines were drawn on topics related to “Historical Criticism” and “Gospel Redaction Criticism” as they were being taught in the seminaries. Historical Criticism asserts an understanding that the Bible must be understood in the cultural context of the times in which it was written.³⁵ That theological understanding by itself would be fine within the LCMS, but the problem came when this understanding of cultural context began to question the relevance in today’s culture. This question was raised due to the use of Redaction Criticism. Redaction Criticism is a theory that the individual Gospel writers took a source document, the Gospel of Mark, and shifted the content to make a

³⁴ Walther, *Essays for the Church*, 256.

³⁵ R. J. Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1974).

theological point.³⁶ The positive part of Redaction Criticism is recognizing the varying perspective of the writers of the same event and appreciating the creativity of the Holy Spirit through each writer. The problem with the theory is it went beyond the creativity to questioning the historical content as being real.

The LCMS collectively had to come together to make some decisions and essentially voted that these methods of scriptural criticism were unacceptable and not to be taught in the seminary courses. The primary focus of the battle occurred at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and centered on the teaching of these methods. Kurt Marquart in *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective* describes the response of the conservative theologians to these methods:

It is clear even from Krentz' short book, and more so from standard authorities like the German scholar Hans Joachim Kraus, that the historical-critical method arose out of the rationalistic Enlightenment and differs from traditional biblical scholarship in that it insists on treating the Bible not as an unquestioned authority, but as one ancient book among others. All biblical statements are therefore open to challenge before the court of sovereign human reason. . . . This means that the critic and his reason are judge and jury, while the Bible, like all other ancient documents, is on trial whether as defendant or as witness; for even as a witness its credibility depends entirely on the findings of the critical court. This situation, of course, represents a complete reversal of the classic roles of reason and Scripture in Lutheran theology. Under the new, critical regime, reason is master and Scripture is servant, whereas formerly it was the other way round. For this reason alone. . . . using the historical-critical method with Lutheran presuppositions is as futile and absurd an undertaking as eating ham with Jewish presuppositions.³⁷

As these theological discussions were going on, politics began to creep onto the scene to make sure that the right people were in office to deal with the theological issues. The election of Jacob A. O. Preus in 1969 brought about a change in the theological

³⁶ Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

³⁷ Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977), 113-114.

movement of the Lutheran Church. This created a new political phase in the life of the denomination. With Preus in place, the LCMS returned back to its own theological roots that were grounded in conservative principles of scriptural interpretation.

In terms of theology, it was a positive move by the LCMS to identify with its theological and historical roots. By not associating with literary analysis that questioned the writers of the Bible and the text, the LCMS would continue to remain a conservative church body. Unfortunately, political machines grew from the controversies of the 1960s and 1970s. Periodicals, websites, and direct mailings now are sent to convention delegates during the months leading up to each convention to influence the election of officials and the adoption of resolutions. The impact on the LCMS has been the encouragement of distrust between pastors and congregations. Lines were drawn according to who was conservative and liberal, and even those lines have blurred. The church-growth movement, described below, raised these same questions over any issue within the church body. The periodicals that surfaced during the 1960s and 1970s, along with the new websites, include articles about those pastors and individuals who are not considered properly conservative.³⁸

This move back to historical Lutheran theology came with great pain as many professors of the St. Louis seminary left and started a new seminary that was initially called “Seminex.” Seminex was indicating that the professors and students had been exiled from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and so the name itself was shortening the phrase “Seminary in Exile.” This seminary remained in existence until 1987. Approximately 250

³⁸ *Christian News* edited by Herman Otten, <http://steadfastlutherans.org>, and <http://www.reclaimingwalther.org>, just to mention a few.

congregations left the LCMS and founded the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC).³⁹ The formation of a new seminary and the split of congregations from the LCMS incurred painful battle wounds, scars which have remained upon this family of Lutherans. The aftershocks of this split continue to hurt both bodies to this day.

Part of that pain involved pastors who had to ask for re-instatement into the LCMS. The split impacted the congregations who left, while others felt forced out. The AELC became a part of the new ELCA in the 1980s, but the result of the theological struggle has meant that any focus on missions often has been pushed aside due to theological issues. The congregations who moved from the AELC to the ELCA are now involved in the split that is going on within the ELCA. One example is the congregations which have formed the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). The name of this new church body indicates a desire to focus on mission and not theological division.⁴⁰

Division and split are agonizing but at times have the potential of helping a congregation or church body become healthier. Conflict can cause underlying issues to surface and be addressed. The core values of the organization can be re-established, renewed, and re-embraced. Unfortunately, the LCMS has not been able to find a healthy identity. The agreement in theology in the late seventies that could have catapulted the LCMS into becoming a dynamic and growing church has not taken place. Instead, there has been a spirit of unrest and ongoing theological division. There continues to be a faction that believes that the LCMS is not theologically pure enough, and politics have

³⁹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Lutheran Roots in America: The Historical Origins of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/History/Lutheran-Roots-in-America.aspx> (accessed May 3, 2010).

⁴⁰ Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, <http://www.lcmc.net/> (accessed June 7, 2010).

become the emphasis for this group. The effort has been focused around tri-annual synodical conventions, resolutions, and the election or re-election of presidents. Every convention includes resolutions for greater attention to theological purity and statements against mission.⁴¹

In the 1980s and early 1990s the church-growth movement as a means to spread the Gospel became popular.⁴² Those who feel a responsibility for theological purity have focused on the church-growth movement as a significant evil for the LCMS. The premise is that the church-growth movement is founded in reformed theology, which does not teach the universal grace of God in Christ's death, as well as relying on secular business principles rather than the Word of God. Church growth is seen as promoting entertainment instead of worship, evolution instead of creation, abortion in place of pro-life issues, and homosexuality as a lifestyle over and against family values. In an article entitled "What Lutheran Laity Can Do to Stop the Change and Keep Their Church Lutheran," Cascione writes:

If you have no hope of regaining control of your church constitution from Church Growth restructuring and returning to the use of Lutheran hymn books, Creeds, liturgy, and catechisms then start your own "Lutheran" church. The great subterfuge being promoted by the vast majority of District Executives and Presidents in the LCMS is that congregations, with so-called traditional structure, can't grow in the 1990s and beyond. This is a bold face [sic] lie. Most of the District Office Executives have been trained in Church Growth techniques by the Leadership Network, Fuller Theological Seminary, endless seminars, and others. They must now justify their positions and the layman's need for their expertise.⁴³

⁴¹ Jack Cascione, "What Lutheran Laity Can Do to Stop the Change and Keep Their Church Lutheran," *Reclaiming Walther*, <http://www.reclaimingwalther.org/articles/jmc00049.htm> (accessed May 24, 2010).

⁴² Carl George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell/Baker Books, 1991); Elmer Towns, John N. Vaughan, and David J. Seifert, *The Complete book of Church Growth*, Elmer Towns.com: *Spiritual Breakthroughs*, [http://elmertowns.com/books/online/cmplete_ch_gr/The_Complete_Book_Church_Growth\[ETowns\].pdf](http://elmertowns.com/books/online/cmplete_ch_gr/The_Complete_Book_Church_Growth[ETowns].pdf) (accessed June 7, 2010); Donald Anderson McGavaran and Peter C. Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdmans, 1990).

⁴³ Cascione, "What Lutheran Laity Can Do."

This quote is something I have heard personally from many pastors who are afraid that any attempt to grow the church also means that those pastors and congregations have given up their theological moorings. Due to this, growing churches are demonized as congregations that have given away theological purity for the sake of reaching people.

Carving Out a New Future

As a denominational body that reflects its Germanic roots and history, the LCMS has found it difficult to reach out to others without engendering internal strife and problems. However, since it takes the Word of God very seriously, that same Word of God encourages the congregations of the Synod to take a hard look at the *Missio Dei*. For this reason, a church body with a clear mission has the potential to escape its own history of internal fighting and move ahead together for the sake of God's mission. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS has had the primary responsibility of producing papers that respond to doctrinal issues. In addition to addressing Historical Criticism and Gospel Redactionism, it also has addressed women's ordination, abortion, euthanasia, music in the worship, and other practical areas.

The CTCR produced a document referred to as *A Theological Statement of Mission* in 1991. This document is important not just because it speaks about missions but because it is one of the few times this commission was not thrashing with controversy. It was an opportunity for the congregations and members of the LCMS to look at God's Word in light of what God has called Lutherans to be. This statement was developed not only to represent a foundation for why member congregations are involved in missions but also to recognize that the business world uses the word "mission" to express purpose and direction. The future of the LCMS depends on each member, pastor, and congregation

taking the idea of mission very seriously and personally. The Commission makes an early statement that provides a theological reason for hope in the LCMS:

However, there has been a growing recognition that everything the church does to communicate and demonstrate Christ's love for the world is an expression of God's sending and seeking love. At the same time, the word *mission* has increasingly been used to refer to the concern of Christ and his church for the physical and social well-being of individuals and society. This use of the word *mission*, when understood in the context of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, has Scriptural validity and important implications for the church's ministry.⁴⁴

This quote is helpful for both congregations and individual members to recognize that everything done in a Christian congregation ultimately contributes in some way to the end product of bringing people to Jesus Christ. Therefore, there really is no reason for a congregation to look at programs or budgets for home (what happens in the congregation) and missions (what happens outside the congregation). Every class and anything done should and can be for the purpose of reaching out to others for the sake of Jesus Christ. This statement also is a reminder that there is no division between the help given for the physical needs of individuals and the spiritual needs. Both deserve attention.

The LCMS is still relevant to Resurrection. Its roots historically and theologically reside with this wounded church body. As a congregation, Resurrection remains so that it can help carve out a new future that does not rely on the pain from the past. The LCMS certainly has been able to talk about missions in theological discourse, but the real change has been coming through individual congregations becoming involved in mission work. More congregations and pastors seek involvement in cross-cultural work. Near Resurrection Lutheran, there are five fellow congregations who are engaging in some sort

⁴⁴ Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *A Theology of Mission, Commission of Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).

of short-term projects. As Resurrection becomes more involved in Belize, three other congregations have been identified as working in that country. The work in Guatemala has been the opportunity of not only working with Guatemalan Lutherans but also laboring in concert with a sister Lutheran church in Resurrection's same area. As more and more congregations engage in short-term missions, it becomes ever more necessary to equip them properly. To date, none of these groups has indicated having any training or manuals to assist their teams. For this reason, the development of the training contained within this project not only can strengthen the work of Resurrection but can assist fellow congregations in training their teams to be more effective in the mission field.

CHAPTER 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO RESURRECTION LUTHERAN CHURCH

In 1990, I accepted the call to Resurrection Lutheran Church in Spring, Texas to serve as an administrative pastor with a focus on outreach and administration. This congregation had been planted in the Spring area with a specific purpose. At the time, Houston was spreading out very quickly and the need to serve Lutherans who were moving into the area was an important goal of the Texas District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. This chapter begins with demographic and socioeconomic information not only to describe the community in which this congregation resides but also to show how changes in this area have impacted the direction of the congregation. The demographics support that a congregation planted to serve Lutheran Christians needs to shift into seeking those outside the Lutheran Church and outside the Christian faith.

The chapter also describes Resurrection and the challenge it faces in making fully functional disciples at its present location. Attitudes and traditions of both the past and present will be explored. The church's mission and vision statements will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will examine Resurrection's stated values as informing and directing the future strategies for maturity and mobilization of the baptized.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Analysis of Spring, Texas

Spring, Texas is unique in the sense that it is an area and not a city. It is made up of multiple sub-divisions, each having its own autonomy from the others. There is no overarching government beyond the Harris County government. That means no city, no local police, and no local jurisdictions. The county does provide road service, water service, and a sheriff's department to service in and around the area. A disturbance or traffic problem could be handled by the sheriff's department or by the constable that is hired by the individual sub-division—or, perhaps no one may show up.

Houston borders Spring, but even the largest areas that are next to Spring do not have any real civic leaders or those who determine the area's direction and consider how to deal with the local problems that may arise. Due to this, Spring has both the blessings of independence and the challenges of having no specific leadership to deal with any perceived problems of homelessness, crime, and poverty. As a result of the latter, an organization was formed by local churches in the 1980s to address the problems of unemployment. Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) came into being under the mission of "neighbors helping neighbors," and this particular ministry covers enough zip codes to exceed the size of Austin, the capital city of Texas.¹

Northwest Assistance Ministries is an important key to understanding the demographics of the area and generally how area churches perceive ministry and mission in the area. NAM has grown and responded to distinct and consistent needs in the past twenty-five years. This has included changes in socioeconomic groups and addressing the

¹ Northwest Assistance Ministries, "About Us," <http://www.namonline.org/site/c.ktJYJ7MNIuE/b.2116653/apps/s/content.asp?ct=2921487> (accessed January 5, 2011).

struggles caused by Hurricanes Rita, Katrina, and Ike.² Congregations in the North Houston/Spring area have counted on NAM to take care of all needs. Although many members of churches make up the volunteer base of NAM, it also has caused churches to be overly dependent on this same organization to provide food pantries, meals on wheels, medical care for children, housing for homeless, job counseling, job training, support for those physically or sexually abused, and support for the elderly in the area. With a budget that is over \$9 million, NAM has encountered success in ways that very few organizations have experienced.³ The success has been so significant that some have blamed NAM for being a magnet that has brought “undesirables” into the area for the sake of receiving services. As a board member of NAM, I personally have received phone calls and notes from community members expressing their displeasure. Promotion of this idea has been short-sighted if anyone has thought that the demographics have changed over the years versus understanding the growing need to serve various socioeconomic groups that have come into the area.

There has been growth and a change in the make-up of the area surrounding Resurrection, and that change and growth have altered the face of ministry. This is reflected in the statistics gathered from MissionInsite,⁴ who partners with the Texas District of the LCMS as a provider of statistical data. Any congregation can receive the information by entering a special password and providing zip codes to narrow the

² Northwest Assistance Ministries, “History and Mission: Historical Timeline,” http://www.namonline.org/site/c.ktJYJ7MNIuE/b.2034941/k.2FAD/Northwest_Assistance_Ministries.htm (accessed January 5, 2011).

³ Northwest American Ministries, “About Us: Facts and Figures,” http://www.namonline.org/site/c.ktJYJ7MNIuE/b.5062845/k.91E7/Facts_and_Figures.htm (accessed January 5, 2011).

⁴ MissionInsite, <http://www.missioninsite.com> (accessed January 15, 2011).

demographic field. A ten-mile radius around the location of Resurrection was examined. Population and household growth, family trends, changes in racial make-up, and age demographics were the specific areas of study.

Table 1 reveals that the area around Resurrection experienced significant population growth from 1990 through 2008. It is anticipated that the growth will continue but at a slower pace than previous years. The rapid growth from 1990 through 2008 was expressed in the constant building of new schools by the two area school districts. Both school districts have announced construction plans, but they have pushed their building schedules back due to decreased growth. Table 1 also indicates that families should still be driving the growth and that churches, including Resurrection, will need to continue to focus on family and children ministry.

Table 1. Population and Household Growth⁵

POPULATION / HOUSEHOLDS & FAMILY TRENDS	1990	2000	2008	2013
Population	329,561	424,740	587,788	674,903
Population Change		95,179	163,048	87,115
Percent Change		28.9%	38.1%	14.8%
Households	117,811	149,893	196,942	220,956
Households Change		32,082	47,049	24,014
Percent Change		27.2%	31.4%	12.2%
Population / Households	2.8	2.81	3.0	3.1
Population / Households Change		0.04	0.15	0.07
Percent Change		1.3%	5.3%	2.3%
Families	86,954	111,394	143,387	158,870
Families Change		24,440	31,993	15,483
Percent Change		28.1%	28.7%	10.8%

⁵ MissionInsite, "Population and Household Growth," <http://www.missioninsite.com> (accessed January 15, 2011), 3.

While Table 1 shows how the area has grown, Table 2 illustrates the change in the ethnic mix. It only goes as far back as 2000 but anticipates growth through 2013. The population is expected to more than double between 1990 and 2013, while the average number of people per household also is increasing. This increase in household size likely relates to the growing Hispanic population in the area, as the White population has declined. Table 2 indicates that there is no longer any group that holds majority status, and the gap between White and Hispanic continues to shrink.

Table 2. Change in Racial Makeup⁶

RACIAL / ETHNIC TRENDS	2000	2008	2013	2000 %	2008 %	2013 %	2000 to 2013 CHANGE
Asian (NH)	19,992	28,601	33,232	4.7%	4.9%	4.9%	0.2%
Black / African American (NH)	59,472	81,437	94,658	14.0%	13.9%	14.0%	0.0%
White (NH)	248,589	300,660	321,237	58.5%	51.2%	47.6%	-10.9%
Hispanic /Latino	88,927	168,904	218,193	20.9%	28.7%	32.3%	11.4%
Two Plus Races (NH)	5,698	6,286	5,779	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%	-0.5%
Pac Is / Amer Ind / Oth (NH)	2,062	1,902	1,804	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	-0.2%

Table 3 shows that the average age of the community rose slightly between 1990 and 2000 but dropped from 2000 through 2008. The Hispanic community is noticeably younger than the Caucasian community. The superintendents of the two local school districts report that the growth in Hispanic community has been in the eastern, southeastern, and southern parts of the defined circle around the church.⁷ The growth has had a significant impact on

⁶ MissionInsite, "Change in Racial Makeup," <http://www.missioninsite.com> (accessed January 15, 2011), 5.

⁷ District Superintendents, interviews with author, Spring, TX, May 2008.

the rate of growth for the region's two main school districts. An area that developed due to German immigrants now has experienced a greater increase due to Latino immigrants.

Table 3. Average Age of Area⁸

	1990	2000	2008	2013
Study Area Average Age	29.8	32.1	30.3	30.8
Percent Change		7.8%	-5.5%	1.7%
TX Average Age	33.2	34.0	33.6	34.2
Percent Change		2.5%	-1.0%	1.7%
Comparative Index	90	94	90	90

Meanwhile, the percentage of married couples has gone down and the percentage of single parents has gone up, during the time from 2000 until 2008, as demonstrated by Table 4. The percentage change is expected to follow the same trends through 2013. These changes have implications for ministry for local congregations. For Resurrection, there has been increased consideration of how children's ministry programs have to consider single-parent needs. Resurrection currently provides ten summer camps to provide structured programs for children, and these camps continue to grow by at least 10 percent each year. Children's ministry will continue to make adjustments for the change in household types.

Table 4. Households⁹

HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18	2000	2008	2013	2000 %	2008 %	2013 %	2000 to 2013 CHANGE
Married Couple	49,887	56,750	58,156	73.4%	66.8%	63.0%	-10.3%
Single Parent	13,581	20,896	25,188	20.0%	24.6%	27.3%	7.3%
Non-Family Household	3,969	6581	8,245	5.8%	7.8%	8.9%	3.1%

⁸ MissionInsite, "Average Age of Area," <http://www.missioninsite.com> (accessed January 15, 2011), 7.

⁹ MissionInsite, "Households," <http://www.missioninsite.com> (accessed January 15, 2011), 7.

Statistics about giving and religious beliefs are very interesting as well, in particular because Texas is considered to have more religious interest than many parts of the country. A 2008 Gallup poll comparing belief in God among U.S. regions found that only 59 percent of residents in the Western United States believe in God, compared to 80 percent in the east, 83 percent in the midwest, and 86 percent in the south.¹⁰ This may not be the Bible Belt; but, given the reputation of the area and the fact that many of those moving into the area from Mexico and Central America are thought to be committed Catholics, one might expect to see some high numbers. The same MissionInsite data shows that 49.9 percent consider themselves spiritual, 37.9 percent identify themselves as Conservative Evangelical Christians, 20.6 percent think it is important to attend religious service, and 19.5 percent think of their “faith as important.”¹¹ These figures track closely with the rest of the state and give an indication of the challenge in the future for Christian congregations.

The area of Spring mainly developed due to the oil, gas, and chemical industries. This brought many engineers and geologists to the area. Resurrection certainly has had a significant number of engineers as a part of the congregation. Spring is also very close to the Bush Intercontinental Airport, and this serves as the major hub for Continental airlines. The job market includes pilots, flight attendants, gate agents, mechanics, and flight attendants. Resurrection has had many mechanics and flight attendants as a part of the congregation. Houston has become a major medical center for the world. The Texas Medical Center includes forty-nine institutions, and many of them are world-renown in

¹⁰ Frank Newport, “Church Attendance Lowest in New England, Highest in South,” *Gallup News Service*, April 27, 2006, Gallup, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/22579/Church-Attendance-Lowest-New-England-Highest-South.aspx> (accessed January 5, 2011).

¹¹ MissionInsite, “Households,” 8.

cancer, pediatrics, or other specialties. Resurrection's membership has included doctors, nurses, and other staff of these hospitals; others sell medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and medical supplies.

In Spring about 33 percent of the population is in sales and office occupations. Of the remaining residents, 30 percent are in management and professional occupations, 12 percent are in service jobs, 79 percent work for companies, 11 percent are employed by a government agency, and 5 percent are self-employed. Furthermore, 58 percent of the population have attended at least some college and/or received degrees. Spring is a suburban area that has 75.6 percent of the homes as owner-occupied and 24.4 percent as rental homes or apartments. The average income of a household is \$78,000.¹² Families invest a lot of time and energy to help their children succeed in school, sports, music, or other interests. Sports programs are available seven days a week, and parents report that their children are a part of many different sports teams. Children who participate in music, cheerleading, drama, and other school activities are encouraged to take additional lessons to increase their potential for success. Success in work, school, and sports is highly valued by the residents surrounding Resurrection Lutheran Church.

A Demographic and Socioeconomic Analysis of Resurrection Lutheran

Resurrection has similar demographics to the surrounding area of Spring. The congregation is slightly older than the surrounding community. Due to the number of older members, the average age is closer to 33.5.¹³ Although there are second- and third-

¹² Simply Hired, "Spring Jobs," <http://www.simplyhired.com/a/local-jobs/city/1-Spring,+TX> (January 13, 2011).

¹³ Church Secretary, comp., *Profile and Statistics Report* (Spring, TX: Resurrection Lutheran Church, 2010).

generation Hispanics in the congregation, the membership only reflects around 5 percent of the families as having a Latino background.¹⁴ There are no specific statistics on the jobs or income of the individual members, but it would appear from mere observation that the congregation reflects the rest of the community in terms of income, jobs, and education. If the Spanish-speaking service were to be included in the congregational demographics, those people ages thirty-five to forty would change the demographic picture somewhat. It would increase the Hispanic population by 5 percent and lower the earnings, jobs, and educational level of the congregation.

Early History of the Church

Resurrection Lutheran Church originated as a mission of the Texas District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in 1971.¹⁵ The District started the congregation as a response to the rapid growth of Houston in the late sixties and early seventies due to the growing oil industry. The Spring/Klein area had been settled by German settlers in the 1800s, and many old congregations were established. In Spring and Tomball (about twenty miles away) are some of the oldest Lutheran churches, as they began in 1852 (Salem, Tomball) and 1874 (Trinity Klein).¹⁶ Both churches started immediately with parochial schools that still are going strong today. Located in Spring, known as the Westfield area, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church had a school and a long history and

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, “Congregations,” http://www.lcms.org/locators/nchurches/c_detail.asp?C864536 (accessed January 13, 2011).

¹⁶ Ibid.

influence with its beginning in 1900; but, this has fallen off in recent years.¹⁷ As a new church, Resurrection was placed about halfway between Trinity and St. Matthew's, with about three miles distance to each. The charter members of the congregation reported that this new mission was seen as a threat to existing congregations.¹⁸

Consequently, the congregations that surrounded Resurrection were not a part of the new start and did not provide any support for the new mission. Both congregations lost some members to the new church in the area, but the congregation primarily was established to draw from all the new Lutherans who were relocating here. The first building still was being built when the District called the missionary-at-large to take hold of the new mission start. The pastor and the leadership decided not to follow the pattern of the other churches in building a parochial school but instead started an Early Childhood Center for children, who had not reached the point of going to kindergarten.

The mission congregation grew as new Lutherans were drawn into the area with the boom of the oil industry. Neighborhoods continued to spring up with the new roads, stores, and schools. The Spring area continued to show respect for the German settlers by naming the elementary, middle, and high schools after the German families; and, that still continues today with names like Klein, Kreinhop, Schindewolf, Haude, Lemm, Strack, and Benfer.

Resurrection was known as the progressive church, simply because the congregation had added a gymnasium instead of a worship center and the pastor wore an alb instead of more traditional garb. Despite these "modern" adaptations in the eyes of Lutheran neighbors, they continued to follow Lutheran liturgy and expect that Lutherans

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Resurrection charter members, interview by author, Spring, TX, 2008.

would be those who would come to worship, while others in the area would connect with one of the many surrounding Baptist churches. Outreach to non-Lutherans was not a strong consideration, because there were plenty of Lutherans to reach.

A strategic plan from the late 1980s provided a good idea of the thinking of the congregation. It reflected how denominational churches felt during the “churched era” of the United States.¹⁹ The leaders made sure to identify other churches as competition to be considered in the strategic plan, and the competitors included the names of LCMS, ELCA, and other Lutheran churches in the area. This strategic plan was done by the leaders and built as a basis for how the church would grow. The plan described how to do a better job of reaching the Lutherans moving into the area, rather than seeking those who had no churched background. It appeared that the assumption was made that everyone had a church and that Resurrection had a responsibility to grow by bringing in a higher share of Lutherans.

Resurrection began in 1971 with a handful of families and a building that had been put in place by the Texas District of the LCMS. The number attending grew to two hundred within six years,²⁰ and the congregation added on several buildings to handle the growth. The first building added included a multi-purpose room (gym) that could handle the worship on Sundays and provide space for all other activities during the week. The congregation added a preschool in 1973, so the gym became a primary space for the kids to play and learn. The preschool was intended to be an outreach to the community and a

¹⁹ Bob Newton, “Missionary Churches in a Post-Church World” (presentation, Gloria Dei Lutheran in Clear Lake, TX, May 2, 2010).

²⁰ Church Secretary, comp., *Profile and Statistics Report* (Spring, TX: Resurrection Lutheran Church, 1971-2010). All church attendance statistics are taken from this source, unless otherwise noted.

way to reach young families with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The preschool continues to be a signature ministry and is well known in the community for its work with children, maintaining an enrollment of around 120 children each year.²¹

By 1980 the growth of the preschool, the Wednesday midweek education program, and Sunday morning classes dictated the building of two more education buildings. These structures provided support for a congregation that had grown to over 350 in worship. Congregational membership continued to increase until it totaled over four hundred in worship. The staff grew along with the congregation and the buildings to the point that there were two pastors and one education minister. Part-time staff included support staff and music staff. As reflected below, there was no continuity in the staff. The education minister left due to financial issues, and the part-time staff came and went with regularity. The original senior pastor was the constant from the beginning of the church until 1990.

Congregation Looks Inward

The congregation grew and flourished with the influx of new Lutherans, but it also struggled when the Oil Bust of the 1980s came along. Unemployment created a great deal of stress for the congregation and really stretched the ideas of the strategic plan. The money that had been coming in with the new members that provided the plans for staffing dried up, and the thinning budget meant more stress on the staff to perform. Divisions began to surface among staff members, between staff and congregants, and among members of Resurrection. Fingers were pointed at different sectors of the

²¹ Ibid.

congregation concerning the negative numbers in attendance and in offerings. Staff left and members abandoned the church, as the circumstances became worse for the congregation and the surrounding community. Some members moved away, while others simply stopped participating due to the negative atmosphere. Senior pastor Al Franzmeier and associate pastor J. C. Henning became lightning rods for the controversy and considered moving out or moving on as well. Both pastors reported their experiences to me,²² and I also discussed similar issues with members of the Strategic Planning Committee who had served in 1989 and solicited reports from consultant groups that were contracted to help with the problems.²³ Ultimately, Henning had a heart attack in 1989 and had to step down from his position.

Franzmeier continued on but focused more and more on using his additional degree in counseling members of the church and community. The congregation attempted to build on his pastoral interest in counseling and establish support groups that were based on the beatitudes. When I arrived, these groups had just begun and were functioning every Tuesday night. The emphasis on counseling and support groups did not result in a healthier church but rather provided a more inward focus by the senior pastor and leaders.

There were two other basic problems in attempts to work with those who were in need of spiritual and emotional healing. The first problem was that many of the leaders, including the senior pastor, had their own emotional and spiritual issues that had not been dealt with adequately. The second issue was with the support groups being based solely

²² Al Franzmeier, interview by author, Spring, TX, April 1990; J. C. Henning, interview by author, Spring, TX, November 1990.

²³ Strategic Planning Committee, interviews with author, Resurrection Lutheran Church, November 1990.

on an intellectual teaching of the beatitudes without utilizing any basic group dynamics to provide support for those who attended. The counseling program imploded as Franzmeier took a position with a counseling agency that had contracted time with some local psychiatric hospitals, and the groups lost momentum as fewer and fewer individuals attempted to sit through the teachings.

I accepted the call as associate pastor in charge of administration and evangelism in 1990. At that time, the senior pastor was leaving and the counseling groups were trying to re-identify their purpose. The congregation appeared to have moved through its most difficult times, and there was a peace among the staff and members. The congregation began to grow rapidly from 1990 through 1994. Attendance went from averaging 325 per Sunday to nearly 450 per Sunday within that four-year window. However, the growth seemed to cause stress on the congregation; some of the members began to act out negatively again with staff and with one another.

The congregation experienced decline again, when some of the charter members expressed unhappiness with the new members becoming involved in the life of the church. Fear of the loss of control created anxiety, and families left to go to smaller congregations. One man, who was connected to three other families as father and grandfather, said to me, “Pastor, we have a lot of people around here who aren’t like us. We need to let some other churches take in these people and get more people like our families.”²⁴ Those families all left and also encouraged others to leave with them. There were similar issues with toxic people and circumstances that were worked through over the next few years, and it was around 2002 that the congregation finally began reaching a healthy stage.

²⁴ Interview with a member with strong family ties, Spring, TX, May 1997.

Certain dynamics assisted the congregation to reach its current level of health. First, Resurrection began to embody congregational governance that was not focused on power and control but releasing people to do ministry. The previous governance gave power to a handful of members who served on committees and boards. These groups spent most of their time trying to make decisions and not facilitating the means for members to engage in ministry. Shifting to a system of Board of Directors encouraged all members to be involved in ministry and abolished the idea that ministry means making decisions (and then doing nothing). Second, this system encouraged the pastor to be the leader of the staff and the congregation. The previous system added confusion by encouraging the boards and committees to act as the supervisors of the staff. It was confusing to both members and staff and created much of the division previously experienced by the church. The identification of a leader who was accountable to one set of leaders provided the foundation for creating health and healing in the congregation. After observing that the old governance system was inefficient and unhealthy, I encouraged the leaders of the congregation to look outside Resurrection for improving governance. I set up meetings with healthy and growing LCMS congregations in the Texas district with governance systems that functioned well. The whole process for the shift in governance took twelve months and was peaceful due to taking slow steps and allowing Resurrection leaders the opportunity to carefully study working models in sister LCMS congregations.²⁵

Several other elements have assisted Resurrection in becoming a healthier congregation, which caused it to begin to focus more on becoming a missional church.

²⁵ In order to help Resurrection conceptualize what a shift in governance might look like, I initiated our collective review of the following LCMS sister congregations: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Clear Lake, Texas; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Carrollton, Texas; and Christ the King Lutheran Church in Kingwood, Texas.

First, the staff led the congregation through learning more about conflict resolution using the updated version of *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*.²⁶ The Peacemaker information provided a foundation for dealing with conflict and encouraged members and staff to deal with one another instead of bringing others into the conflict. As the congregation became healthier and more positive, it again began to grow with more members. More members and a lack of conflict resulted in more dollars in the budget. More dollars in the budget removed the focus on congregational finances. The congregation was able to reach financial stability while also building a worship center.

Building a place for worship had been very important to the original members of the congregation. They shared their frustration that they had been worshipping in a gym for so many years. This group invested their time and money to help insure that this building would be built. There was broad support from all the members, and the congregation did it together in a positive spirit. The building included traditional and contemporary designs and was symbolic of a desire to live and grow together. The congregation was also supportive of my participation, as senior pastor, in two very important components. The first was a four-year commitment to the Pastoral Leadership Institute for strengthening the leadership skills of both me and my spouse.²⁷ It not only built skills, but Resurrection members recognized the value of program. This instilled more trust in the concept of pastor as leader. The second took the form of supporting my connection and investment with Fuller Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry

²⁶ Peacemaker Ministries, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), <http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.958123/k.CB70/Home.htm> (accessed March 30, 2011).

²⁷ Pastoral Leadership Institute, <http://www.plinstitute.org/> (accessed June 8, 2011). The Pastoral Leadership Institute is located in Dallas, Texas.

program.²⁸ This not only garnered more respect from the congregation but gave me a chance to apply with the leaders what was learned.

Finally, the start-up of sending people cross-culturally on mission teams has helped to remove the inward focus of members and to encourage them to think beyond themselves towards the needs of others. As members started to connect with the outside world, they began to look at their own congregation and work in a different way. Individuals began to stop seeking what they wanted from the church and started to look for ways that they could be the church in the surrounding community and the world. The congregation still provides ways for people to receive help by seeing Christian counselors, but the congregation does not focus all of its energy on unhealthy people and circumstances. Given Resurrection's history, this is a subtle but significant shift.

Resurrection's Mission, Vision, and Values

The mission, vision, and values of Resurrection were created by the members, leaders, and staff of Resurrection Lutheran Church. The mission statement was the first product, and it was crafted during a weekend retreat with the leadership of Resurrection in January 1991. I took them through a process of discovering God's mission for their congregation. After a few days of very hard work, they came up with the following statement: "Resurrection is a Christian Community that Celebrates, Acts on God's Word, Reaches out, Embraces souls under God's grace, and is Spirit-filled." The concept of "Celebrates – Acts – Reaches – Embraces – Spirit-filled" is encapsulated in the acronym "CARES." Due to the large number of people involved in this process, the membership

²⁸ Fuller Theological Seminary, "Doctor of Ministry," <http://www.fuller.edu/dmin/> (accessed January 13, 2011).

owns this statement; and, for this reason, it would be difficult to ever consider changing. This was developed as a corporate statement, but it also has been encouraged as a statement that can be used personally by the members. As Rick Warren came out with the *Purpose Driven Church*,²⁹ the congregation noted that his five purposes fit the five areas developed in this statement.

The “Celebrates” portion of this statement identifies that worship is the center of the congregation’s life. The word “Celebration” has been used to define worship that encompasses so many aspects of the Christian life and the corporate gathering of God’s people. This has been done by encouraging music, art, dance, and other creative gifts that God has given and that God’s people can come together to express as gifts to bless others.

The “Acts on God’s Word” portion has expanded the thinking of the congregation beyond Bible study classes. Choosing the word “Act” connects the study of God’s Word to the living of God’s Word. This has resulted in broadening and deepening the idea of missions over the years. Up until 1991, there was an emphasis on Bible study without considering how lives were transformed and changed by the Word of God.

“Reaches Out” was short, simple, and purposely placed in the center of the statement. This was done to emphasize that the center of worship, education, encouragement, and service always would be focused on reaching others with the Gospel. It also was placed in the statement to serve as a support for the idea that reaching out is the role of all Christians and not just the responsibility the paid staff.

“Embraces souls under God’s Grace” has proved to be an important balance to “Reaches Out.” The mission of the church is not only to see the need of the world but to

²⁹ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

see the needs of those within the Body of Christ and to help one's neighbor. Those words have encouraged individuals and the congregation to respond to God's grace in their own lives as they seek to help others.

“Spirit-filled” was used here instead of the word “service.” Originally, “Service” was an important part of this phrase, but it was not to be the exclusive thought. This phrase signifies the fruits and expressions of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Service still is encouraged, so that every person who joins Resurrection does realize that each one of us is expected to live a personal faith by serving God in His kingdom in the congregation and in the community at large. It is not meant to limit people to serving the needs of the congregation but to seek where the Holy Spirit may lead. This mission declaration has been a living statement that has gained more meaning over the years.

The vision statement was the one piece that started with the staff and was led by the staff in June 1993. This action resulted from having attended a George Barna conference that encouraged putting together the vision statement as a compliment to the mission and value statements.³⁰ The staff began to talk to leaders about a preferred future for Resurrection that would result from living out the mission statement. There was some concern by members that this would replace or diminish the mission statement. Over time, it was understood that this statement only would assist the corporate body to understand its mission as individual members helped others to reach their full potential. This is the reason that the statement is written in light of “each person” and not as pertaining to Resurrection.

³⁰ George Barna, “Innovative Church Leaders Conference” (conference held at Harvestime Church in Houston, TX, March 1997).

The vision statement is stated in these words: “Our vision is that each person in our community is actively discipling and bringing people to Jesus Christ.” The word “community” is used in order to expand the church’s thinking beyond members to include those who may be connected to Resurrection in other ways. The use of the phrase “actively discipling and bringing people to Jesus Christ” was to provide a picture that people are being transformed through their connection to the God’s mission through Resurrection.

The core values were identified first by the elders of the congregation in concert with some of the staff providing input in April 1997. The elders went through a process of speaking to members about their perception of the core values for the congregation. The input that was gathered from the members then was assembled and shared with them to provide opportunity for their input and feedback. After feedback and a few editorial changes, the following values were set forth, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Resurrection’s Core Values

NO.	CORE VALUE
1	The Bible is the sole authority for faith and life.
2	We hold to pure doctrine, because it is culturally relevant.
3	Corporate worship is essential in the Christian life.
4	Grace and power are received in the Word and Sacraments.
5	We will provide leadership in the development of mission-driven people.
6	Every member is a priest and steward of God’s resources.
7	Our unity of purpose with our sister churches is to reach the lost.
8	Excellence honors God and inspires people.

More importantly, the core values partner with the vision and mission statements because they are make declarations about God and people. The values about the Bible, doctrine, worship, and the sacraments express the importance of what God has to say and

that Resurrection treasures the way that He lives among His people. The values clarify that God creates the culture of His people, the Church, and that He defines Resurrection as well. The values that speak of leadership development, stewardship, reaching the lost, and excellence express the significance of people to the mission and ministry of Resurrection. Human beings are held in high regard within God's mission of sending His Church into the world. Everything that Resurrection is about flows from all people and not just a few. Value 7 revisits that everything about Resurrection remains focused on God's mission to reach the world with the Gospel. The section on missional focus is a result of this value.

From 1991 through 2003, these statements of mission, vision, and core values provided a foundation for Resurrection to transform from a congregation more focused on its own problems into a congregation that sends people into prisons, hospitals, blighted areas, and apartment complexes to spread the Good News. The mission statement began to be viewed as how the members live with one another, and now it is expressed as how the congregants live their faith in other countries. Regular events like egg hunts, fall festivals, and Vacation Bible School have become extraordinary means to reach out to families in the community.

New Focus on International Mission

The change to a mission focus for Resurrection happened slowly over time and even before members fully realized it. Although the church's missional focus officially begins in 2003, this was not the year of the first mission teams from Resurrection to go into another country. In the early 1990s, a team went to Haiti for some medical mission work. At that time, the congregation was not ready to embrace the idea of going to share the Gospel while caring for the physical needs of others. There were individuals who for

years were working on sharing the Gospel in some local prisons as well, but the congregational system had resisted the idea of going cross-culturally across a prison wall. It was easier for the congregation to focus on the needs of the church members.

Although some of these missions were practiced by certain individuals, additional congregants were encouraged to connect with personalized mission trips with other organizations. Those trips into Central and South America had profound changes on these individuals and eventually upon the congregation. The ultimate difference occurred because the culture of the congregation began to transform and allow individuals to bring forth ministry ideas from within the broader Body of Christ at Resurrection. One man not only had become very engaged in missions as an outgrowth of his life in the church but he moved his whole business from being an investment manager to providing insurance for those involved in mission work.³¹ This promoted more connections with mission groups and provided opportunities for connecting with the mission field.

In 2003, two major events happened in the same summer. I was on a sabbatical for four months and took a trip to Peru with some other pastors and their spouses to do leadership training in both Lima and Cuzco. The connection with Missions International, as the host of this trip, happened because a member of Resurrection provided insurance for the organization's other teams. This trip for this particular group was a culmination of the Pastoral Leadership Institute's process as a shared experience of our collegial group and an opportunity to see and experience the mission field. The pastors and wives were touched deeply by the experience but also realized that cost and distance would prohibit the ability to return on a regular basis.

³¹ Craig Robinson, interview by author, Spring, TX, February 2003.

During the same period, other connections made through the insurance business brought a new partnership with The Mobility Project. Those leading The Mobility Project at the time understood how to establish relationships with local pastors and congregations and provided an accessible, firsthand view of the poor and handicapped for those at Resurrection who began to feel a stirring in their hearts to help. The poor and handicapped were the primary focus of the work of the Mobility Project in Mazatlan, Mexico; and, the intention of this organization was to reach people with the Gospel by helping those who were most needy and impoverished in these third-world countries.

The people of Mazatlan, like those in El Salvador and Peru, wanted to find out why the richest of the rich would spend time with the poorest of the poor. Families wanted to know why the privileged would desire to share something with those who were outcast. The families themselves were ashamed, broken, and tired from caring for the people who could not care for themselves. The wheelchairs allowed the young and old to become “persons” in societies who considered them to be burdens. The Gospel message made sense when it was lived out in giving people life outside their dark and lonely room.

The teams from Resurrection learned something about Jesus, because the people who came looked tattered and helpless. Some arrived cleaned up for the special day, while others appeared with all the smells that are produced from living on a dirt floor with no bathroom. The odors that bothered various team members at first became meaningless, as they engaged in addressing the needs of these individuals. While mobility was given, prayers were shared, the Gospel was communicated, and Bibles were distributed. No one was asked first if they wanted a Bible or prayer, because the teams did not want anyone thinking that this gift of grace was dependent on the recipients’

willingness to do anything. Prayer was offered after the fact as a reminder that God gives first and that human beings can only respond (Matthew 25:35).

The values of the Mobility Project lined up well with Resurrection as a congregation, because the emphasis was not on “making decisions” for Jesus, “healing ministries,” or being a wheelchair ministry. The primary duty of the teams was to lift up the local churches that were doing the most to impact the community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The onsite pastors would be the ones who would be seen as the primary contacts for this ministry. They would work through the applications and find the people with the most need. The local church would be the location of many of the distributions so that the community would see that church as a place of peace and healing.

The teams had other projects during their weekly visits each year in both Mazatlan and in El Salvador. The first team that went out in 2003 spent the week building a church in a community that had been built on top of a dump. Trash was sticking out from underneath the dirt that was attempting to cover up what was underneath. Clothing was shared in that community and other economically and spiritually impoverished neighborhoods. Gang members were given the same opportunity as old women to receive clothing and food, and some of those same gang members brought their friends to the churches because they had been paralyzed by a bullet and needed a wheelchair.

In later years Resurrection’s involvement in cross-cultural, short-term mission trips expanded into building and repairing homes, constructing wheelchair ramps, visiting prisons, and working with children. One small church in Mazatlan was known for providing feeding centers for children every weekday. The children would come to eat

one good meal for the day, learn the Bible, memorize verses, and sing songs about Jesus before going on to their school day. The songs were led by men who had been released from prison, and these men were giving their lives back to God and to their community because they had heard the Gospel in prison through the congregation with whom Resurrection had partnered.

Before they offered their passports to pass through the gates, not many of the team participants had ever been in an American prison, much less a Mexican prison. Stories were numerous about what was seen in the medium and maximum security sections. The women came back in wonder about how female inmates could be incarcerated with their babies and children living there with their mothers. The younger members of the team asked why the prisoners were going to their cells with their “wives.” This was left to the parents on the trip to explain. In the midst of this cacophony of sound and sight, the team would come together and start leading a worship service, and prisoners and their families would gather around. Some members from Resurrection who initially were shocked by their surroundings found themselves standing, sharing the Gospel, and giving intimate testimony with people they never would want to meet on the street.

When Resurrection’s key international mission contact unexpectedly died in 2007, the church found itself re-evaluating its ability to do short-term missions across international borders. Significant questions surfaced about which organizations Resurrection would be able to partner with in Mexico or anywhere else. The pastors and other leaders had to consider the commitment of the congregation to missions versus a good feeling about this particular partnership. Simultaneously, those individuals who had

been involved in previous mission trips had to have a chance to grieve over the loss of a dear friend.

The Mobility Project, which appeared stable at the time, went into bankruptcy and was taken over by a larger organization named Hope Haven.³² Although Resurrection had worked at times with PUSH International,³³ it appeared to have no real leader and the controlling board did not have the same relationship with Resurrection. In addition to the internal problems of the organizations, Mexico itself has become very dangerous for North Americans along the borders and in the surrounding areas of the tourist towns. In light of these challenges, Resurrection began to diversify its mission work in order to have a wider range of potential partnerships. The two additional partners who have been added are Central America Lutheran Missionary Society (CALMS) and Central American Outreach Missions (CAOM).

Adding these groups has strengthened the potential for future mission work in Central America. Resurrection is CALMS' first Lutheran partner, and that provides a chance to encourage other Lutheran churches to consider mission teams in Central and South America. Back in 2003, there were no known Lutheran organizations and the church body was unable to deal with mission teams conceptually or practically. CALMS has opened up avenues to several countries and the potential for including Lutheran universities and seminaries as potential participants in places like Belize.

Although CAOM only works in Belize, this relationship has brought about active connections with pastors, leaders, and congregations in and around Belize City. These

³² Hope Haven: Unleashing Potential in People, <http://www.hopehaven.org> (accessed June 7, 2010).

³³ PUSH International, <http://www.pushinternational.org> (accessed July 6, 2010).

pastors have requested support, teaching, and encouragement for their own struggling ministries. Even though Belize has no official Lutheran presence in Belize, the Lutheran Church could become a major source of mission church planting, leader training, and ongoing support of churches in that area.

It is from these experiences that Resurrection Lutheran Church slowly has developed its theology of missions. Its present expression of its mission, vision, and core values through short-term mission trips has begun to inform and direct future strategies for maturing and mobilizing the baptized at Resurrection. This is where the congregation hopes to connect with itself in relationship with Christ, with the larger body of the Lutheran Church, and with others seeking to serve in this type of ministry.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS AND IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS ON TRANSFORMING INDIVIDUALS AND CONGREGATIONS

This chapter defines and sets forth the theology of mission and understanding of how the mission of God (Missio Dei) forms the foundation for this project and for Resurrection's shift to becoming a mission-focused church. I use the work of Wilbert J. Sohns, not because he is my father but because he exerted significant influence on those interested in building missional emphasis in the LCMS church body. The Missio Dei sets the scene and leads into a discussion of the impact of post-modernity on the Church at large, the LCMS, and Resurrection.

The final portion of the chapter engages the LCMS statement of theological mission through the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). Although this document is not read or used widely in the church body, it offers useful application to the mission of each local church. This section provides an opportunity for individual pastors to re-engage with this fine document and apply the new conversation around Missio Dei.

Defining Theology of Mission

The theology of missions forms the foundation and the reason Resurrection Lutheran Church sends people on personalized mission trips. John 17:18 serves as an

underpinning passage for the church's mission and also informs the training of individuals to be in mission. The passage reads: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." The great commission given in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and make disciples often has been used, and correctly so, as the basis for the Church to be involved in missions. However, this statement from Jesus emphasizes the sending dynamic of God as the *Missio Dei*. W. J. Sohns offers the following reflection:

John 17, the High Priestly Prayer of Christ, which highlights the *Missio Dei*, is one of the most profound passages of Scripture. It emphasizes the sending (mission) of Christ and ultimate purpose of His mission (sending). But it also emphasizes the sending of church and the ultimate purpose of her mission. The alpha and omega of the church's mission is the *Missio Dei* not the *Missio Anthropos*! It is Christ's mission! It is His work!¹

The "*Missio Dei*" is a phrase that means the "mission of God." A theology of mission begins with God and ends with God. The statement of the Church's mission is not "*Missio Anthropos*," a sending out on behalf of God but founded in humankind (*anthropos*). The statement of Matthew 28 to "go and make disciples" is certainly Christ's own words to His Church. Unfortunately, sinful human flesh can take that statement by itself and begin to infer that mission is about believers and their work as disciple makers. John 17 strengthens the passage by reminding disciples of all times and places that not only does the mission begin with God, it is God's mission. He is the one who sends. The Father sends the Son and the Son sends His people, the Church, into the world. Jesus during "the High Priestly Prayer" reveals how the *Missio Dei*, the sending dynamic, is central to His mission. There are parts of this prayer that elevate the sending and God's very heart for the world and for His sending of the Church into the world.

¹ Wilbert J. Sohns, *The Missio Dei and the World* (Gatesville, TX: Wilbert J. Sohns, 2007), 1. W. J. Sohns is a widely disseminated contributor to the topic of "*Missio Dei*."

In terms of a training manual, the emphasis of this prayer on the *Missio Dei* and the aspects of how that mission is carried out are very important. Jesus prays, “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them, I am not praying for the world but those whom you have given me, for they are yours” (John 17:8-9). Jesus’ prayer provides a wonderful encouragement that God’s mission first and foremost is about God’s connection to those who are sent. Jesus does not pray for the world here but for those who are sent. God does not forget His own followers, and He does not send them out by themselves. The relationship of God to His people is paramount in this “sending dynamic” of God. He does not send them out on this mission alone, because it is His mission. The training of people for going on God’s mission is to reconnect them with the sender. The basis of Jesus’ statement, “for they are yours,” infers that anyone sent needs to be constantly re-connected to the sender. The pedagogy of the equipping process and the training manual is to keep those who are sent connected in faith to the ultimate Sender.

His prayer brings up another important missiological truth for sending and training people for missions. Jesus prays, “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11b). Those who are sent are to be in relationship with God. They are to believe Him and the truth, but they are also to be united. Jesus does not send out individuals and those who are solitary individuals with no support. The sending dynamic that Jesus prays for here is the unity of God’s people, and particularly their unity, as they are sent out in God’s mission. This prayer that they “be one” relates to what Jesus says about Himself and the Father. He

prays, “That they may be one as we are one.” Jesus is speaking about the aspect that He is united with the Father, following the portion of the prayer where He states that the Father has sent Him (John 17:8). Just as He speaks of the unity of the Father and Son, and as He speaks of the unity of His people with the Father (17:9), He prays that “they may be one.” Here Jesus describes a unity with respect to relationship and purpose. The relationship is that Jesus restores human beings back to God and one another. The unity of purpose lies in the reality that His people are one in the desire to bring this relationship to the world.

Those who are sent are to be connected with the Sender as well as be connected together as those who are dispatched. The theology of missions is not just about the going out but also about the connection of God’s people to God (the Sender) and to one another (the sent). Jesus is very clear in this prayer about those who are sent being one with another, and He emphasizes that again later in John 20. After His death and resurrection, He speaks with His disciples for the very first time when he appears to them. Jesus being sent by the Father has been best shown in the very epic events of His death on the cross and His resurrection to life. In light of that, His first words to them are not “I’m alive” or “Surprise!” His first words are these: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). He does not speak with them individually about their personal calling, but He sends them all out. These words, together with the High Priestly Prayer of John 17, really do provide a richer understanding of Matthew 28 and the great commission.

In Matthew 28:19-20, the great commission starts with this command: “Go and make disciples.” Jesus says, “Go,” as πορεύομαι, which is the middle voice usage.² In other words, “while you are going” make disciples. In light of John 17 and John 20, Jesus

² *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, 2007 ed., s.v. “πορεύομαι.”

is reminding them that He has sent them—specifically, on His mission. They are connected to God, and they are connected with one another as they are going. The great commission of “while you are going” is related to Jesus’ prayer for those who are sent (John 17) and Jesus’ first words after the Resurrection: “I am sending you” (John 20:21). These are very important words here. The *Missio Dei* centers on the mission and the sending in God’s hands. It is His mission. The sending is for all. Jesus sends out all to go into the world; and, while the Church is going, disciples are being made. No one is excluded from being sent. Jesus dispatches everyone. If anyone ever would try to indicate that mission belongs solely to the professional missionary or staff pastor, that thought would be rebuffed by these words: “I am sending you” (John 20:21).

So far, the emphasis has been on the *Missio Dei* as it relates to God (the Sender) and His Church (the sent). Missiology is the study of the Church’s mission in light of God’s mission. According to W. J. Sohns, “Missiology is a study of the church’s mission. Therefore, it is really a study of the *Missio Dei*. It is a study of God’s mission in history of ‘reconciling the world to Himself in Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:18-19).”³ The first part of missiology is the study of God’s Word in light of His mission. The thoughts on John 17, John 20, and Matthew 28 are part of the exegesis of God’s Word on the subject of God’s mission. “The study of the *Missio Dei* requires one to exegete the Word!”⁴ The process of training disciples for personalized mission trips is to take them back to the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to bring them into contact with the *Missio Dei*, as revealed by God.

³ W. J. Sohns, *The Missio Dei and the World*, 3.

⁴ Ibid.

This process provides a basis for understanding that God propels each person into the world and that this sending is not only for personalized mission trips but for everyday life.

Training for mission trips brings people into contact with the Word of God; and, the exegeting of that Word provides the opportunity for God, as Sender, to connect with those who are dispatched. In addition, training for missions understands the world into which the Church is sent. Jesus says, “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). The implication for training is that those sent must understand the target to which they are sent. “There is another important facet to missiology and that is a study of the created and then fallen world. A study of the *Missio Dei* requires one also to exegete the world!”⁵ The world, as the target, must be understood in light of the Word of God. The Word of God informs the missionary about creation, the fall of mankind, and God’s history of mission into that world. This same world needs to be understood with respect to the dynamics of sin and the impact of sin. To exegete the world is to understand the culture, languages, and people groups. Jesus prays for His disciples as they are sent into the world, and His commission in Matthew 28 includes “all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

In Acts 1, Jesus speaks to those who are sent, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus speaks of this sending that is both near and far, and the understanding of the world must be of those both near and far. As one sent, the apostle Paul says, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish” (Romans 1:14). It is not just a matter of

⁵ Ibid., 4.

geography. When Jesus dispatches people from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, the first disciples had to know the cultural differences as they were launched. It must have been daunting to be propelled beyond those familiar realms to the ends of the earth. The apostle Paul states some of the qualities of those who exist as Greeks and barbarians and those who are educated and those who are not. Cultural differences likely existed in how people looked at the reason for marriage, family, work, and how all these things related to the existence of God. To the followers of Jesus, he said, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). The word “all” mentioned by Paul indicates how important it is for the Church at large, and congregations like Resurrection, to exegete the world.

“Thus,” explains W. J. Sohns, “under the enormity of the *Missio Dei*, the church knows, understands, appreciates and/or utilizes the language, the objects and materials, the actions and interactions, choices and changes, way of thinking, values, beliefs and world view of the people of the world.”⁶ For Resurrection, it has become a journey of understanding the actions, interactions, choices, and changes of those who live in the same community. The Hispanic community, those worshipping in the Spanish language at Resurrection, values relationships more so than time. The members of Resurrection have gotten used to the fact that no event starts on time, and there is no hurry to conclude the events. This is difficult for people who are used to starting and stopping on time. This might seem a small thing, but it has been a large adjustment for the members of Resurrection. The challenge of understanding the Hispanic world has forced the congregation to identify cultural differences with any group beyond itself.

⁶ Ibid., 6.

The Church has been operating in a modern world since the time of the enlightenment. The modern world functions within the understanding that there is objective truth, unity, authority, and certainty. In this age of modernity, the Church could point to the Scriptures for certainty, authority, and objective truth as given by God. There are those who may reject this claim of authority, because they have a different source for objective truth and certainty. Secular science at times seems to stand in opposition to the Scriptures as authoritative in all things as it relates to how the world came to be. However, science still argues for certainty and authority based on its own disciplines.

Post-modernity has come and questioned everything that has to do with the modern way of understanding the world. Pauline Rosenau, author of *Post-Modernism and Social Sciences*, says post-modern thinking better relates with skepticism, pluralism, difference, and the deconstruction of ideas.⁷ In the case of creation versus evolution, post-modern thinking would not embrace science or the Church because post-modern philosophy allows a person to hold both views, no views, or a whole set of new views.⁸ This shift does not mean that the truth of God's Word has changed; rather, the means of communicating that truth have changed in order to accommodate its new cultural realities and surroundings.

The next portions of this chapter address how the traditional Lutheran Church can use past problems and weaknesses to engage with a post-modern culture and how short-term mission trips can bring various generations together for the greater good of the kingdom

⁷ Pauline Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 6-10.

⁸ Chuck Smith, Jr., *The End of the World . . . As We Know It* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 31.

amidst a world full of such constant change. The discussion will identify how these trips have created bridges between generations, between established Lutherans and newer members, and how such focused mission-minded endeavors broaden the mindsets of how church can be done. Through these experiences, biblical truth is being applied to actual life situations and tests assumptions about how, where, and why members at Resurrection Lutheran Church live out their Christian faith.

From Incremental to Discontinuous Change

One of the challenges of the Church of the twenty-first century is dealing with discontinuous change and the stress it causes. Incremental change is when there is a little bit of transformation at a time, which usually comes in a linear and expected fashion.⁹ In the post-modern world, change not only occurs faster but surfaces in unexpected places. Discontinuous change is the experience of this fast-paced, unexpected rise of transformation in every sector of life.¹⁰ Eddie Gibbs writes:

In the culture of post modernity, change is discontinuous rather than incremental. It comes rapidly and without warning. This culture has been described as a “plan-do” environment. The challenge, calling for flexibility and rapid response, is by no means confined to the church but is experienced in many areas of life such as business, politics and education.¹¹

Communications is but one common instance of the amount and rate of change in today’s world. Ten years ago, cell phones were used by a few people in business and the “techie” crowd. Email was used by only certain businesses but generally was considered

⁹ Mike Regele and Mark Schulz, *Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 31.

a waste of time by much of the population. Today, there is a cell phone in nearly every ear, and students in school are reminded not to text one another during class. Phones now send and receive email, explore the worldwide web, snap photos, record daily activity in a calendar, and provide face-to-face video conversations. Ring tones are personalized for each person in the address book. It is not a question about if someone has an email address but which one to use. Multiple email identities have been developed to manage home and business correspondence as well as to guard certain addresses from electronic junk mail. This is just one example of change but also shows the movement from incremental to discontinuous change that is being experienced daily.

Institutions do not deal well with discontinuous change, and Resurrection Lutheran Church is no exception. The challenge for Resurrection Lutheran Church in the twenty-first century is to care for the segment of the congregation that is afraid of change while reaching out to a world that is full of change. The strength of the Lutheran Church has focused on maintaining the “unchangeable Word of God” as a key to doctrine, but the weakness of the Lutheran Church has been in not dealing well with change of any kind.

As a congregation, Resurrection has had to confront issues that deal with change. The 1990s were spent discussing worship style, reaching non-Lutherans, and how Resurrection connects new members with the life of the church. These discussions and decisions created difficulties and stress on the existing members, and people came and went as a result of those decisions. As a theologian, writer, and seminary professor, Gibbs has written many books on how post-modernism has impacted the Church at large. He says, “Churches can become so traumatized by their internal problems that they fail to notice that society at large is in the midst of a cultural shift of seismic proportions, which

affects every area of society.”¹² Resurrection has had to look beyond the internal changes felt by church members to gain an understanding of the cultural transitions that were impacting these internal changes.

It is not so much the particular internal or cultural change that presents roadblocks; rather, they form when the problem becomes a dividing factor inside the minds of Christians about the world. The Church can become a culture of war with an “us”-versus-“them” mentality instead of living as the Body of Christ and a viable entity within the entire cultural shift. While holding the mindset of “us” versus “them,” a church grows older and less in touch with what is happening in the people that surround it. Gibbs agrees. He states:

Although traditional settings are becoming increasingly rare, traditional mindsets still prevail in many churches of all denominations, whether liberal or evangelical, mainline or independent. This is because the church is an inherently conservative institution, and the average age of people who attend mainline churches is twenty years older than the general population.¹³

Resurrection has been a good example of how the older ages dominate the church. From 1990 through 2000, not a single person under the age of forty served in executive leadership positions. These same lay positions often were held by individuals who had been in the congregation at least ten years. The Board of Directors now provides direction and leadership for Resurrection. The last six years have included leaders who are under the age of thirty and also board members who have been in the congregation less than three years. As younger leaders have served on the Board of Directors, the annual congregation meeting has drawn younger people and those who have recently

¹² Ibid., 19.

¹³ Ibid., 21.

joined the congregation. The annual meeting establishes the budget, approves the strategic plan, and elects the Board of Director membership. This trend has helped change the direction of the congregation from being concerned about ministry primarily to members to looking out at missions in the world.

Resurrection has begun to see itself as sent into the world, and that means looking at how change impacts the families that are dispatched into global cultures. It is no longer just about keeping the congregation's programs in place but encouraging families to live their lives as they are sent into the world. Change is not only in the church world but in family, work, and neighborhood. Therefore, Resurrection needs to learn to be more flexible in style and programs. Exegeting the world means applying the Scriptures to an ever-changing, current situation. Resurrection is constantly in the process of understanding the world surrounding the congregation. In his research, Gibbs comes to this essential conclusion:

Pastors must be equally skilled in exegeting both Scripture and cultures, bringing the understanding derived from this interplay to the task of applying biblically grounded insights to the issues of post modernity. They are challenged not just to be able to think clearly but to have the nerve and faith to act decisively in navigating through stormy and uncharted waters.¹⁴

The leaders understand these stormy and uncharted waters. For this reason, they frequently engage in a Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis.¹⁵ They assess the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation while considering the

¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹⁵ Quick MBA, "SWOT Analysis," <http://www.quickmba.com/strategy/swot/> (accessed June 15, 2011). While I employ this website to help teach and explain SWOT analysis to Resurrection leaders, I first gained information regarding SWOT from Jim Galvin, "Governance and Executive Training" (seminar, Pastoral Leadership Institute, Wheaton, IL, October 2, 2004).

opportunities and threats that exist in the community. Those four dynamics are constantly in flux as both the congregation and community transform and experience new realities.

Understanding this dynamic requires being prepared to respond to situations and circumstances. Resurrection desires to be prepared to deal with change, see where God has been working in the past, and seek His leading for the future. Mike Regele and Mark Schulz, in *Death of the Church*, challenge believers' assumptions and conceptions that they actually live in a churched and modern world. They write: "How do we respond to the pressures of change? One option is denial. . . . The first step is confession. Our strategies have not worked. . . . Second, we must learn how to do it differently. The beginning of that learning is understanding the chief force that has thwarted our efforts—change itself."¹⁶ This is difficult for Lutherans and will continue to be a challenge and a constant process of confessing and learning to grow as a mission-centered church.

Growing as a mission-centered church also means becoming more flexible and ready to change quickly. Strategic plans are no longer five- or ten-year products. Many of these plans were produced during a dynamic of incremental change. With the fast-paced change of today, Resurrection does more preparing than planning. Leonard Sweet describes this process in his book, *AquaChurch*. In essence, the description of leadership moves the leader from mapping to navigating. He says, "The leader does not operate as much with the right answers but understanding the need for the right questions. You can't create a map of terra incognita. You can't consult maps in a world where the terra is no longer firma. In a new world with no familiar landmarks you can only explore the new

¹⁶ Regele and Schulz, *Death of the Church*, 25.

world for yourself”¹⁷ He is describing what Resurrection has experienced in the Spring community. The congregation no longer can make maps of what will happen in five years, because the change in the community is too great. Instead, the work of leadership at Resurrection has become navigating through the sea of Spring, Texas that has different socioeconomic, cultural, and language waves.

He continues to describe the new voyage in this way: “*AquaChurch* changes the question from ‘Where is my map?’ to ‘Where is God calling me to navigate my life and my ministry?’ The challenge of leadership is this: How do you get people to ask new questions, to think in different ways?”¹⁸ The intent is to bring the leader out of paralysis, created by fear, into a type of leadership that takes risks. At Resurrection, after the Board began to understand that there was a huge shift taking place, the second largest challenge was communicating the reality of the cultural shift to members without creating fear.

Sweet acknowledges the difficulty of this:

The biggest risk of all is to embrace the future. It’s a lot easier to live in the past. The church’s low risk tolerance and fear of postmodern cultural situations is debilitating to the church’s witness. This unholy predicament that the church finds itself in today—fear-ridden, safety-fixated, immunity-seeking, risk-averse in a high-risk postmodern culture—can be reversed only if the church abandons its risk-free approach to ministry and mission and rediscovers the gangplank. The good news is that our cultural phobia is both treatable and preventable.¹⁹

It takes time to lead through this predicament, because people cannot be forced to leave what they know too quickly. For Resurrection, it has meant starting something new without disturbing what has worked in the past. As the new endeavor is successful, it creates a new safe place. Creating early successes gives confidence for trying more change.

¹⁷ Leonard Sweet, *Aquachurch* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1999), 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

Resurrection encourages leaders to lead. For Resurrection, leading means helping others to grow and trying something new that God wants to do. This something new can be in one's own life or in the life of the church. If leaders are not willing to take risks, then the rest of the congregation will not be willing to take risks for the sake of the Gospel. The emphasis on local and global missions has assisted Resurrection in embracing the future and raising up leaders. The *Missio Dei* has become real as members have experienced God's sending in a variety of countries and cultures. Low-risk tolerance has been set aside due to the example of small churches in foreign countries amidst difficult circumstances being all they can to shed the light of Christ in difficult situations. Team members have observed these churches with very little means making a huge impact in poor neighborhoods and in prisons. This cross-cultural experience has shrunk the post-modern gap and is providing a new bridge for local missions as well.

Impact of Post-modernity

The impact of post-modernity on the culture also has impacted the Church. People now look at the Church, the Bible, and Jesus Christ in a different way. Often the message concerning Jesus is sprinkled with Buddhism, New Age thinking, and American religious philosophy. This example of pluralism is familiar territory for those who talk to college-age students in the Spring area. I spoke with a young woman recently who described herself as "kind of Christian" with a mother who is Wiccan, a stepfather who is Roman Catholic, and two step-siblings who are gay and unsure of their religious moorings. Her perspective is that each person in her family has chosen something that is just as meaningful as her

contact with Christianity.²⁰ This thinking represents the relativism that is held by more and more people. Relativism regards that every religion, or no religion, reveals truth about God in some way.²¹

This is the context in which the people of Resurrection are ministering, and this is the world that needs to be reached by the missionaries who form part of the church's "sending" community. The training for personalized mission trips prepares individuals for dealing with going into other cultures in other countries, but it also provides a chance for these missionaries to be prepared for reaching the sub-cultures with the Gospel message about Jesus Christ. Many of these sub-cultures accept different ideas about God and the paths that lead to Him. Those who congregate at Resurrection encounter these people and ideas every day. As a mission-sending center, Resurrection hopes to prepare missionaries and help them be assured that there is one faith and to be certain of that faith. At the same time, the mission-sending center needs to encourage participants to be winsome in their dealing with people and to learn how to engage them in firm yet loving ways. Missionaries can be both certain of what they believe while engaging those who hold that all routes go to the same god. Gibbs offers this challenge:

The issues will remain baffling because the underlying premise is flawed. The argument that all religions represent valid alternative paths to the one truth fails because they not only have different starting points, but as the pilgrim explores each path, the discovery is made that the paths do not converge but diverge to the point that they are leading up very different mountains.²²

²⁰ Interview with post-modern woman, interview by author, Spring, TX, July 2010.

²¹ Regele and Shulz, *Death of the Church*, 75 and 85; see also Smith, *End of the World*, 66-68.

²² Gibbs, *Churchnext*, 220.

It is imperative that the process of training and involvement in a mission trip assists each person to have a greater appreciation for substance and not to be overwhelmed or convinced by image. Gibbs sums it up by simply saying, “What you see depends on where you stand. The world of the post-modernists is a world of image rather than substance.”²³ The role of the Church is to prepare and help families deal with this cultural reality. Resurrection takes that role seriously when preparing individuals for the mission field and for translating their mission work to their own home context as well.

Unfortunately, training mission participants takes place in an environment that is constantly changing. This is difficult, because training for mission trips entails leadership training. Although most people are aware that there has been a great deal of change, many are not completely aware of how much change occurs in today’s post-modern world. There is less certainty and more confusion for the individual in the post-modern age. Chuck Smith, Jr., writes: “There’s a cultural parallel to plate tectonics. Underneath the surface of our daily lives, tremendous movement has been taking place—shifts in thinking and in what philosophers call our worldview. The rapid pace of innovation, communication, and change has caused a ‘cultural earthquake.’”²⁴

Many current leaders were raised with thinking that was developed in the “modern” world. The modern world focused on objective reasoning and employed ideas that were rational in approach—especially in the areas of science, education, and religion. In a modern context, the rational approach is considered the only way of looking at the world, challenges, and personal life. Those who have been raised in a rational context and

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Smith, *The End of the World*, 11-12.

who trust in human reason are challenged by post-modern values. Smith has studied and written about the transition into the post-modern world. He describes it in this way:

Postmodernity is what comes after we all stop thinking like engineers (i.e., rationalism). Postmodernity is not irrational; it simply does not believe that human reason holds all the answers to life's questions. . . . By "privileging" reason, modern culture has created a bias against other cultures, thereby depriving them of power (or "voice") in the modern world. Postmodern people are not moved by reason alone; they also want to know how an event or object is experienced.²⁵

The modern mind seeks absolute truth, while the post-modern mindset needs no single thread that pulls all of life together. The modern world seeks a foundational truth or a history that ties together all strands of research and reason. This is a "metanarrative" or an overarching story that assists the theologian or the scientist to make sense of the world. Smith explains:

That is, a metanarrative is a big story that makes sense out of life, history, and the universe. Metanarratives, according to postmodern theory, are used to legitimize particular political structures, cultural preferences, and ways of life. Instead of one, grand narrative, postmodernity calls our attention to the many, varied, and local narratives of each culture or group.²⁶

The post-modern world rejects a grand, overarching metanarrative as being too narrow and instead accepts all narratives as reasonable expressions of each culture. This is challenging for churches like Resurrection who train to go overseas but find that there are many different cultures and viewpoints encircling them.

Members of Resurrection believe there is one overarching story of God's love for all of humanity through Jesus Christ; and, it is lived out in His life, death, and resurrection. The call to go to every people and every nation is an open invitation to the

²⁵ Ibid., 47-48.

²⁶ Ibid., 51.

whole world (Matthew 28:18-20). When this metanarrative encounters the plurality of perspectives rampant throughout the world, a tension develops. Smith identifies this existing tension and frustration for the Christian:

At this point the Christian mind wants to shout, “But all of that is wrong! There is a metanarrative, and it is the gospel. There is absolute truth, and it is God. There is a foundation upon which we must establish our morals, values and ethics.” True, but at this point our goal is to understand post-modernity and not fight it.²⁷

This is most challenging for staff, members, and leaders of Resurrection. The conversation about post-modernity captures different feelings about the transition from modern to post-modern. Those who have seen and felt the shifts may not be happy about what they observe and assume that those bringing up the subject are “for” these changes. Others simply want to ignore what is going on and continue to live life as they have known it. Training for mission work requires embracing the Gospel as the objective truth about God while we as missionaries go into a world that does not accept objective truth.

That is why the Christian faith creates such a stir. Jesus claims absolute truth and absolute certainty in God (John 14:1-6). Regele and Schulz agree and state:

The result was that the quest for absolute certainty was replaced by a tendency toward radical relativism. If knowledge and truth cannot be absolutely affirmed, then no truth is absolutely true. For much of the culture, that means nothing can be “true” in the sense of right versus wrong. All truth is relativized, and it becomes entirely impolite to suggest that one’s viewpoint on matters is more true than someone else’s. Reality is what you make it.²⁸

This has implications for mission work overseas and at home. Those who share their faith at home, at school, or in the workplace cannot simply say, “The Bible says. . .” For this reason, post-modern people will not accept this as authoritative or even helpful. Mission

²⁷ Ibid., 52.

²⁸ Regele and Shulz, *Death of the Church*, 70.

training in the post-modern context is helping individuals to understand the context of those with whom they seek to share Christ. Listening becomes very important. Those who want to share first must listen to people to find out their beliefs, their understanding of truth, and their perception of God. Through this intentional listening, missionaries at home and abroad can share their faith, their practice of it, and present it in a way that becomes relevant to a friend, acquaintance, or co-worker.

Despite the idea of relative truth, the Christian community can seize the opportunity in this cultural shift that is taking place. The answer is not to give in to undesirable or watered-down thinking. It is to state more positively what the Christian life means and who Christ is in this world. Rodney Clapp, author of *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*, asserts the following:

The culture wars bring a debate not only concerning fractious issues as abortion, homosexual rights, the role of women, and so forth, but also concerning the definition of culture itself. Christians despise the culture wars because certain culture “warriors” espouse positions some find disturbing (or even cataclysmic), the culture wars can be welcomed on the count that they help return us to a place where we can conceive of a Christianity as a way of life, as a specific manner of being and doing in the world. And they make it possible for Christians, like those who inhabit other ways of life, to move more easily and directly into the public, the social, the political and the economic realms—and to do so specifically as Christians.²⁹

His words are a reminder that Christianity is a way of life and the power of the Gospel means living out the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. The message of Christianity becomes real when embodied by individual Christians in practical, relational ways. Personal connection and edifying relationships can open hurting ears to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

²⁹ Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 73-75.

This message embodied in the lives of Christians brings integrity to the Church. When individual followers of Christ do this, a local church becomes what God has called it to be. Any less is hypocrisy, a charge often leveled against the Church by the current generation. Tom Beaudoin, author of *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*, says that this “common attitude affects the value Xers place on religious practice and is the most common charge I have heard from Xers about religions. The perception of hypocrisy is one reason religion is not a security blanket but a wet blanket to so many.”³⁰ For Resurrection, missions and service provide an opportunity to live out the faith by serving with one another. It is particularly powerful when multiple generations work together. This provides a bridge between previous generations who value cognitive biblical knowledge and newer generations, who value the practical aspect of the faith.

Nevertheless, the expectation of this generation about Church, even the Lutheran Church, can be turned into strength. The Church can surprise this generation by living out Christ in daily life and becoming a magnet to those who struggle with life’s ambiguity and questions. This is the reason that Resurrection has not sent out teams that are segmented by age. The interaction of the varying ages provides a chance to show care and concern for one another while serving others. The young people forge new relationships with older people and express joy in having older adults caring for them. Beaudoin comments, “That is why I boil down the religious quest of GenX pop culture to one question that begins on the most intimate level possible and in the midst of profound ambiguity. Our most fundamental question is ‘Will you be there for me?’”³¹ This

³⁰ Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

question has been answered again and again each year as new friendships and support systems have grown within the congregation. Personalized mission trips answer the question of the “GenX” culture as to how the faith is lived out and how Christians care for one another.

Consequently, the challenge is for the Lutheran Church to stand outside the culture yet interact with it. The Lutheran Church has seen itself as having a wonderful connection to the Scripture. The real opportunity now is not only to exegete the Word but also the world. If the Church can do this, it has an opportunity to be seen as distinct from the mistakes of the past and present. The Lutheran Church must ensure that theology and practice are not tied to modern or post-modern thought but to the Scriptures themselves. While the message stays the same, the delivery system can change to reflect the different values and thinking that are developing in the post-modern age.

Leaders at home, in the church, or in the community must make hard choices. The message of the Gospel that God sent His Son to die for the whole world is based on the history of sin and grace as expressed in the Bible. However, according to the post-modern world, all religions have equal footing and can be accepted collectively or even mixed together to form a new idea of being spiritual. The combination of giving all religions equal footing or combining them to form new religious thought is religious pluralism. This is today’s reality. Lutherans cannot ignore the religious landscape and hope that the world returns to the 1940s. God calls the Church to provide the certainty of the Gospel in a winsome way to a world that is dying without Christ in every time and age (2 Timothy 4:2).

Today the new spiritual suppliers, inside and outside the religious establishments, cater to this more openly religious climate. These suppliers take religious pluralism for

granted and play to themes of choice, individuality, and desirability of a cultivated and spiritually sensitive self. Knowing that pluralism is experienced as expanding psychological boundaries, they consciously define themselves in relation to a broadening and intensifying menu of spiritual possibilities.³²

This has been observable in both Generation X and Generation Y, who are growing up around Resurrection. Even those who have walked in the doors of the congregation seeking a Christian home bring a mixed bag of spiritual ideas that at best have a tangential connection to Christianity. Each person brings a different view of who Jesus is and what makes Christianity unique among world religions. Even older, more seasoned adults have explored other paths of spirituality. One individual reported that many of his Christian friends are now involved in witchcraft, astrology, and other “non-Christian” spiritual paths.³³ The bookstores in the surrounding areas are expanding the number of shelves that include a wide variety of spiritual disciplines outside Christian books.

It is no wonder that denominations in North America have experienced a decline in worship attendance for three decades.³⁴ The Church has enjoyed a Christian-friendly environment since the time the Emperor Constantine designated the Roman Empire as Christian.³⁵ The ensuing centuries have meant that the Christian Church has moved and thrived within a culture that was friendly towards hearing and agreeing with the Gospel.

³² Ibid., 91.

³³ Interview of post-modern young man, interview by author, Spring, TX, September 9, 2010.

³⁴ Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*, 36.

³⁵ Smith, *End of the World*, 106-107.

Again, in the terms I have been using, this is the full Constantinianization of the Church. The Constantinian Church is by definition responsive and reflective of the surrounding culture. It completely forgets the Church's own culture-forming and sustaining capabilities. It denies any real tension between the Church and the world; it overlooks the biblical awareness of Christians as nomads and resident aliens who never will be completely at home in a fallen world—even in an affluent, exceedingly comfortable fallen world.³⁶ The apostle Peter reminds believers of their state when he says, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Missionaries are being sent out from local congregations, like Resurrection, into a world that is no longer friendly to the Christian message. Therefore, Christians need to be prepared for living in this new world, a post-Christian world. There are those Christians who are not involved in the Christian Church. They have left the institutional Church, yet they consider themselves to be Christians. Gibbs considers three things that may be taking place in those who are Christian but separated from the Church:

Care must be taken in assessing the reason why people who identify themselves as “Christian” are not involved in a local church. Sometimes it is due to their refusal to take seriously the demands of Christian discipleship. At other times, they may have left the Church because they became bored or disillusioned with institutionalized religion. A third possibility is that persons have come to faith outside a church context and have never been invited into the fellowship of a local congregation; or, they have not regarded organized religion as necessary for meeting their emotional needs or relating to their spiritual pilgrimage.³⁷

³⁶ Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 36 and 39.

³⁷ Eddie Gibbs, *In Name Only: Tackling the Problem of Nominal Christianity* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000), 23.

Mainline churches have experienced decline that certainly would include these reasons listed. However, engaging people in missions can help address these issues. Mission training and trips can help to raise the idea of discipleship among those who refuse to take those demands seriously. Making a difference while learning can help encourage those who are bored, and those with little or no background can connect with fellow Christians from a local church.

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod has not been immune to this decline, as the church body continues to announce losses each year. From 1971 to 2001, the Synod’s baptized membership decreased from 2.89 million people to 2.54 million; and, confirmed membership decreased from 2.01 million to 1.92 million.³⁸ Much of this is because 80 percent of the congregations report one or less adults added through confirmation each year.³⁹ That means only 1,200 of the over 6,000 congregations add more than one adult member outside of transfers from sister Lutheran congregations. Unless more children are born to Lutheran families, and these children remain with the Lutheran Church until adulthood, the Lutheran Church will continue to shrink.

In the past, I have referred to those around me as either “churched” and “unchurched.” Over time, the use of the phrase “nominal Christian” began to be used to describe the many that claim Christianity but do not participate in the life of the local

³⁸ Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, “What Are the Facts Regarding Membership Changes in the LCMS Since 1972 and Why Does It Matter?” <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/Office%20of%20the%20President/Membership%20FAQ.pdf> (accessed January 16, 2011).

³⁹ Division of News and Information, LCMS Services, “2005 statistics: ‘Back-door’ Losses, Membership Down,” *Reporter Online: The Official Newspaper of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, August 31, 2006, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, <http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=10498> (January 17, 2011).

congregation. Creating a mission center is to encourage Christians to remove such constricting labels as “churched,” “unchurched,” or “nominal.”⁴⁰

These categories include people who have had contact with Resurrection and the congregation’s preschool. Members may not have known the actual labels of these categories; but, they have described their siblings, children, and grandchildren in similar descriptive language. It is disconcerting to watch people we know and love come and go from congregation to congregation or to try and re-engage those who were very involved in the church years ago. Discussion about reaching the unbeliever tends to bring up this question: “What about those who used to be in the church?”

Organizations that deal with change more slowly than their surroundings often die. Blockbuster and Hollywood Video are examples of two corporations that thrived when video rentals were the primary means that families employed to entertain themselves at home. Both companies have undergone bankruptcy and may not survive due to the changes in ways that families now purchase their entertainment: online video rental, digital film purchase, free digital streaming, Hulu. Congregations cannot depend on their past success and not watch for the changes and trends in society. At Resurrection, planning often has

⁴⁰ According to Gibbs, *In Name Only*, 94-96, “The term ‘nominal Christian’ is a comprehensive title which includes a wide range of people who are not currently, or never have been, part of the institutional church. . . . Anti-institutionalists. Those who have rejected organized religion. . . . Boxed-in. Those who rebelled because they felt their lives were so strained or controlled by churches setting ethical standards to which they were not prepared to submit. . . . Burned out. This is a consequence of long-term exposure to the church. . . . Floaters. In contrast to the burned-out, these are the rootless individuals who move from church to church to ensure that they never become involved or make themselves vulnerable. . . . Hedonists. These are the pleasure seekers who give priority to leisure interests over spiritual commitment. . . . Locked-out. They feel that the church has closed its doors to them because they were not of the right social background. . . . Nomads. These are the people, so prevalent in urban societies, who are incessantly on the move. . . . Pilgrims. These people are still engaged in a spiritual search. . . . Publicans. This attitude is a very commonly adopted by the unchurched. By charging churchgoers with being hypocrites and fakes, they justify their own nonparticipation. . . . True unbelievers. From the standpoint of the topic of this the book the category of the true unbeliever falls outside the range of nominal Christians.”

been done around the idea of improving what is done best by congregation. The changes in society may force the planning to look at something completely different.

The longer a person lives, the more he or she tends to dwell on the past rather than live in dynamic interaction with the present or be inspired by the hope of future possibilities. If this is true for the individual, it also holds true for institutions that have an inherited corporate culture reinforced by each succeeding generation. Furthermore, when changes in society occur at such a rapid rate and in an unpredictable manner, the desire to resort to a protective entrenchment becomes even stronger.⁴¹

The theology of mission, God's sending dynamic, has the potential of bringing a congregation out of its protective mode to be inspired by the future. Resurrection can and will change its own history as it becomes more of a mission-sending center rather than a protective haven for Christians. For this reason, Resurrection needs to consider its own future direction and focus.

Focusing on mission and on the *Missio Dei* provides an opportunity for Resurrection to choose its own best route. Joining God in His mission may provide a vastly different definition of success, but it will provide for a more unique definition of mission and ministry. Defining mission will not be easy in the next several years, because it will mean dealing with the past and future. There will be feelings of loss, because we are not operating in an era that we can begin to understand.

There are new sets of questions to be considered and new ideas to propose. The questions posed by Regele and Schulz for denominations can prove useful to local congregations like Resurrection:

⁴¹ Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 13.

This being the case, several critical questions ought to be considered. We pose the more significant and ultimately strategic.

- Some have insisted that the historic mainline denominations are dead. Is this true, or will the mainlines begin to recover as we move toward the next crisis-outer-directed era? Is their best strategy to “hunker down” and wait it out?
- Will the experientially inclined traditions begin to see their growth subside for the same reason?
- What will this mean for the strategies and tactics of the current “church growth” movement? Is it possible that many of these are really an expression of what works in an experiencing faith period?
- Will the independent-church movement continue to grow? Or is this simply a reflection of the anti-institutional bias of the era? Is it possible that the growth of the independent-church structure will begin to level off as the current inner-directed era runs out of steam?
- Will structural mission strategies such as cell groups and seeker-oriented programs continue to be the growth edge, or are they simply a logical extension of the level of structural fragmentation the church is currently experiencing in the generational cycle? Will they see their particular mission emphasis begin to trail off as the culture moves?”⁴²

As Resurrection considers the future, the first few questions serve as a reminder that the congregation is part of a bigger whole. It is not time to “hunker down.” It is a time to partner together in finding God’s direction together. The Lutheran Church depends on the certainty of the Scripture and not individual experience, but Lutherans can focus the Scriptures to inform personal experience. The church-growth, seeker-, and independent-church movements had their place in the church era. Now, there are strengths of the LCMS that can help in this post-church era. In focusing on the *Missio Dei*, Resurrection can address these questions as part of the past and move ahead in finding where God is moving.

The last few questions address the perspective of God’s mission. The *Missio Dei* never will end. Institutions may end, the way Resurrection goes about its business may end, but God’s work will not be completed until He returns. The form of church may pass

⁴² Regele and Schultz *Death of the Church*, 44-45.

away, but God's Word will not pass away. The institutional Church, as it has been known, is fading. This does not mean that the Church will cease to exist. Theologically, God will be faithful to finish what has been started (Philippians 1:6); and, it is certain that the Church will be the primary vehicle through which that will occur (2 Corinthians 5:20). However, it will not be through the existing structures and traditions—that is, through a particular American form of church.⁴³ Otherwise, so many denominations would not be in such decline; and, it would not have been occurring for such a long period of time.

I began to use the term “re-formation” in 1990 as a way of saying that the church needs to be formed again and not just reformed. Re-formation of the church has the potential to be an exciting time, because it allows Resurrection to re-imagine God's working among His people. Resurrection also can be a church that helps the LCMS re-imagine how to utilize its own historical and theological blessings and re-form how it envisions building upon the foundation of God's Word. This allows the LCMS to be re-formed based on a sound theology of mission.

Applying Theology of Mission to the Local LCMS Church

The theology of mission begins in the heart of God. It is defined by God Himself, and it is God's saving activity through the proclamation of His deeds in Christ Jesus for the salvation of the world. It is the basis of the Church's participation and each person's involvement in God's saving work for humankind. God shares His very heart in 2 Peter 3:9, which states: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” It is God's desire to save, God's desire to forgive, God's desire to reach out,

⁴³ Ibid., 183.

that makes the *Missio Dei* the complete work of God to bring people to Himself. This verse indicates that God is patient when it comes to bringing people faith, but He is active when it comes to bringing His mission to the world through His people: the Church.

The Bible begins with a clear vision of God's heart and His deep connection with humankind. The creation account itself emphasizes this connection of God to His created people. Genesis 1:27 states: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." After all of the wonderful work that God shows in creating the vastness of the universe down to the smallest molecule, it is only upon human beings that God stamps His very own image. Nothing else is expressed as "his own image" except for people. This image is seen best as male and female collectively. God creates the first human being in His own image; and, with that human being, He creates male and female to express the very image of God's character and work.

It is because humanity is created in God's image that God is very intentional in the redemption of His image in human beings, after their fall into sin. Genesis continues to set the stage for God's mission as sin and rebellion arrive. Adam and Eve have rebelled; yet, God is set on redeeming all those whom He created, loved, and received His stamped image. He sets up the whole *Missio Dei* by stating these words to Satan, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). The promise of God here begins to establish the arena for the rest of Genesis, and this story of sin and grace shows up in every relationship God has with His people (Genesis 12:1-3). God's heart of love is shown over and over (cf. Genesis 18:19; Joel 2:13; Psalm 51:1).

It starts when God makes the promise with Adam and Eve in this account (Genesis 3:15). God challenges Cain over his attitude of giving, confronts him over the killing of his brother, and advises him of his consequences. He also shows grace, as He promises, “Not so, if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over” (Genesis 4:15). There is no clue to what mark Cain carried; but, it protected him and allowed him to move on in his life, having been in contact with a gracious God.

The heart of God and the heart of His mission continue on in Genesis and are emphasized in the person and life of Abraham. God emphasizes His mission again with these words: “And all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). God recounts His promise through every failure and miscalculation of Abraham through forgiveness (Genesis 20); yet, He also challenges Abraham to see that He was committed to this mission. The heart of that promise for Abraham was God’s promise of a son. “Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he promised” (Genesis 21:1). This was more than just the promise of a son; it was the *Missio Dei* being brought about through this family. God had made covenants with sinful mankind that reflected His mission; and, that mission would be shown throughout the rest of the Old Testament in this same way (cf. Genesis 6:8; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:12; 1 Chronicles 16:15).

As the Old Testament built the anticipation and expectation for God’s mission to come to fruition, it is in Christ that the mission is clarified. The *Missio Dei* is a dynamic mission that is determined by Christ and His mission. He was sent (John 17:18), and He in turn sends those who follow Him to communicate God’s bold Gospel message (John

20:21). The apostle Paul reflects on these same words in talking about reconciliation between God and man due to the proclamation of the Gospel:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:17-20)

To those who are reconciled, He has committed His message. This is the nature of any “good news.” When something good happens to people, they are anxious to share that news with others. This Gospel of reconciliation becomes motivation and means by which God sends His people. This God is a “sending God,” and it all begins in His heart and is lived out in the mission of sending His own Son into the world.

The Lutheran church body, in convention in 1986, requested a commission to “initiate, facilitate, and develop a theological Statement of Mission” which would “reflect the urgency, vitality, and joy of our historic confession of Christ’s forgiveness by grace alone through faith alone as taught in Scripture alone.”⁴⁴ The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations responded in 1991 with the twenty-nine-page document called *A Theological Statement of Mission*, which was intended for all its congregations. It was presented back to the 1992 convention for consideration; but unfortunately, it never was distributed widely to the congregations or discussed in the Synod. Some of the important themes of this statement are being used here in this project, because they relate with the “sending dynamic” discussed above, and are presented below.

⁴⁴ For a complete copy, see The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *A Theological Statement of Mission*, November 1991, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/ctcrmission.pdf> (January 17, 2011).

God's Mission: To and For Everyone⁴⁵

God loves the world (John 3:16). His love is for more than the created land, sky, and sea. It is His special love for all people (John 1:12). In the first chapter of Genesis, God shares the joyful acts of creation up until the creation of mankind, and then to punctuate that act He reveals the particulars in the second chapter. Luther described God's relationship to the created world in this way.

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.⁴⁶

Luther describes the world that God creates, preserves, provides, and protects. The brokenness of human beings with God and one another is described in the third chapter of Genesis, but God never stops loving the world. It is for this world that it is said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Christ came into this world as a brother, lived in it, and became like one of us. The Father sends His Son to lay down His life for the salvation of the whole world with the desire to bring salvation to every man, woman, and child of every nation and language. A well-known expression of this mission is given through the great commission and in these words: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18). In this way, God's mission is to and for everyone.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12 and 25.

⁴⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism*, annot. by Edward W.A. Koehler (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 116.

The Church announces the good news that God cares for all people without making any distinction based on race, class, culture, or any other earthly criteria. The apostle Paul emphasizes how all of these distinctions have disappeared. He writes: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). The Body of Christ is not divided by any classification. This shows that God’s mission is for all and that He does not distinguish when showing His love (Acts 10:34). The promise mentioned in Genesis 12 is amplified through Galatians 3:29, which reads: “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” The Church of Jesus Christ reaches out to the world, realizing that this is God’s target. God’s people are all Abraham’s seed and heirs.

It is a proclamation of Christ’s reconciling work to young and old, rich and poor, male and female, powerful and oppressed, healthy and sick, well-fed and hungry, friend and stranger, able and disabled that compels the Church to go out into the world with the Gospel. Jesus connects this mission to others as being connected to a believer’s very relationship with God. In Matthew 25:35-36, he says, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Jesus identifies that the kingdom of God, His presence, is exemplified by God’s own people feeding, clothing, and visiting those in prison. The disciples wonder how this activity can possibly be related to the presence of God and the mission of God. Jesus answers, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

God's people seek to remove every sinful barrier that would keep others from hearing and receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is possible due to the active work of Christ on the cross for the world that God loves. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). Although sin may have created the barrier between God and people and among people themselves, the destruction of this barrier moves Christians to bring His peace to the world He loves. The immediacy is expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:2: "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." While God's mission is to and for everyone, it is a mission that exists and carries through over time. Jesus acted in time, within history, and His followers are called to bring God's favor in this very era as well.

Mission: Centered in Jesus Christ⁴⁷

God had His plan to reconcile the whole world to Himself through Jesus Christ. This mission is centered in the one who is sent for the reconciliation of the whole world. "That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Those who receive faith are credited with Christ's own holiness (Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:21) and receive full and free forgiveness for all their sins (Colossians 1:14). In faith, human beings are restored to communion with their Creator and receive power to live a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). By faith, people are set free from the power of the devil and the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Believers prepare for the Day of Judgment confidently, knowing that they are among those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

⁴⁷ The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *A Theological Statement of Mission*, 8-9.

All faith and trust are centered in God's promises through Jesus Christ. For these reasons, mission is centered in Christ.

As Christ is the center of this mission, the apostle Paul celebrates the richness contained within this mission. "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). God's grace brought Paul to understand Christ to be the heart of the plan, and it was this unsearchable gift that empowered Paul to go to the Gentiles. This mission built on Christ also came about as a "secret," a mystery. In Ephesians 3:9, Paul explains his participation in God's mission to the Gentiles: "to make plain to everyone the administration of this secret, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things." Although there was a mystery, that seemed to surround God's mission in Christ. This verse indicates that the Father was administering or managing this mysterious mission. God had a purpose in keeping it to Himself. The text magnifies how the mission was centered in Christ, as Paul declares that all is "according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11). The apostle goes on to expound on believers' freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12) and how they can exude that confidence when they realize that the mission is centered in Christ.

Mission: Belonging to All Believers⁴⁸

God's mission in history begins in Genesis and reaches its apex in "reconciling the world to Himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus points to Himself as the result of God's plan and the one who is sent to accomplish that plan. In turn, He sends His disciples. "Jesus said, 'Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'"

⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven’ (John 20:21-23). Sending is the dynamic feature of God’s mission into the world. God, the Sender, sends Jesus Christ (John 17:18). He is sent into a world that is in need of rescue; and, it is through this sending that the redemptive act of love is given.

Jesus Christ, the sent one, now sends the Church into the world to proclaim the redemptive activity of God in and for the world. Jesus, the sent one, prays to the Father and says, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them” (John 17:18). The sending dynamic is not found in Jesus alone. It is extended in His sending of the Church. The Church is sent not only collectively but also individually. The dynamic of being sent is the role of every individual Christian. In this way, mission belongs to all believers.

Each individual disciple of Jesus has been made new in Christ. This is supported by 2 Corinthians 5:17, which reads: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” He sends His people out as those who are new creations by His grace. In realizing the power of the grace of God in one’s life, believers are transformed into the sent ones of God to go to others. Individuals are dispatched through their own lives to give witness to what God has done and to share God’s love. Jesus has emphasized this as He has said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21). It is Jesus’ prayer (John 17), and it is the very dynamic of why He comes. This mission centered in Christ is pushed out into the world through all disciples in these words: “I am sending you.”

Paul is an apostle, one who is sent, and speaks to the church in Corinth, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of

reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). The nature of Christ was to come as one who is sent. The apostle Paul speaks of this sending God as well. He says, “All this is from God.” The mission is shown by how God reconciles people to Himself through Christ. However, He also says that He gave His disciples this same ministry of reconciliation. The *Missio Dei* is the rescue mission that brings Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. It reconciles all of humanity to God, and it simultaneously sends those who are redeemed right back out. In essence, the *Missio Dei* is a reconciling mission.

The individual is sent, as the Church is sent, and as Jesus is sent. This is the *Missio Dei*, and it is a reconciling mission that remains ongoing. The dynamic result of this mission is “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). This is a wonderful picture for each believer to see, because it is a description of the result of God’s purpose and plan. The center of the mission is Jesus, and the finality of that mission comes at the sounding of His name. Each believer sees the final stage of the mission in the fact that “every knee” will bow and that “every tongue” will profess that the sent one is Lord.

Mission: A Communal Endeavor⁴⁹

When Jesus sends out His followers, they are not dispatched alone. He promises His Holy Spirit (John 20:22), and He sends them together into the world (John 17:18). When the Holy Spirit calls humanity to faith through the Gospel, He brings people into the Body of Christ, the Church. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, this point is made clear. The apostle Paul writes: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and all

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13-15.

were made to drink of one Spirit.” Faith in Christ is not a personal or private matter between the individual and Jesus alone. The Bible reminds believers that they are children of the same heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). The picture of being His children reminds followers of Christ that they are part of the same family. As disciples of Christ are called God’s children, they are likewise connected as brothers and sisters in Christ. As a family, all members share the same family mission. In this way, mission is carried out as a communal endeavor.

The apostle Paul uses a different picture than family. He identifies believers as those who are emissaries or ambassadors. “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20). The use of the words “we” and “us” encourages followers of Christ to see that their work is done together. He does not say, “You are an ambassador” but rather “We are ambassadors.” God can make an appeal through the Body of Christ, because each member lives out the grace of God in community together. Jesus prays in John 17, “[May] all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). This prayer clarifies what it means to be ambassadors. Missionaries are to make their appeal to the world as they live with one another under God’s grace. It is an appeal to the world to see God’s grace and love at work.

He enables His ambassadors to confess a common faith (1 Corinthians 1:10). This confession of the common faith is a matter of unity and therefore a matter of mission. Followers encourage one another to persevere in the shared mission (1 Thessalonians 5:11). As fellow missionaries, believers are to be prepared. Consequently, Paul says to

teach and admonish one another with His Word (Colossians 3:16). It is that Word of God that informs followers of the one who sent them and serves as a reminder of their joint mission. The foundation of support comes through praying for and with one another (Acts 2:42). It is the example of the early Church, but also it follows the example of Jesus' prayer for His followers and His prayer for the sending mission. Collectively, missionaries bring comfort to those in need (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) as they are sent. Since believers are sent as a community, they are engaged in helping one another along the way and to use the various gifts God has given to edify Christ's Body (1 Peter 4:10-11). This joint mission depends on many people and many gifts in order to make an "appeal to the world." Therefore, the Church encourages the varied gifts of those who are sent.

Since this has been a communal effort of Resurrection, it has broadened the way Resurrection thinks about missions. As a result of learning to rely on this theology of missions, the congregation is less focused on "What's in it for me?" and there is more openness to using different elements of worship at any given service. In particular, those who attend the traditional service are more open to some aspects of contemporary music, and those who attend the contemporary service enjoy the addition of traditional elements. More importantly, there is more discussion around "sending" the church to help with hurricane relief, habitat builds, mission giving, community service, prison ministry, and local outreach. The question of "What are we doing for our own?" has not come up as "our own" has been more involved in going out together. Although congregants still measure worship and education attendance, more emphasis is now being put on counting the number of members involved in missions and serving.

The generational gap appears to be shortening. Those who are of a retired age do not ask when the younger generation will take over; rather, they seek to serve by their side in the church and on mission teams. Vacation Bible School includes workers spanning from twelve years old to seventy-eight years old. The mission teams also have reflected the same age spread, and grandparents have encouraged their grandchildren to join them on international trips to El Salvador, Mexico, and Belize. Team preparation is strengthened by small-group sharing that includes every age range as well, and there is no attempt to segment the groups by age. The teams that go into the community and beyond most often include mixed-age groups as well. This means that stories are shared among the teens about how much fun they had with the adults, and the older adults tell about their positive experience with young people as they share with their friends. The next portion of this project will discuss how Resurrection can continue this expression of the Missio Dei through a more strategic implementation of missionary preparation and team training.

PART TWO

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER 4

OUTCOMES OF PERSONAL PREPARATION AND TEAM TRAINING

Personal preparation and team training make a difference. Nothing can be assumed when working with individuals or with groups in any situation. This is particularly true in the work of God's people as His Body, the Church, in the world. A firmly grounded leader assumes that well-intentioned people do not always remember what they have been taught in preparing for service unto the Lord. They also may not apply what they have been taught in other circumstances to their current circumstance. Although Jesus clearly and consistently told His disciples that He would be given over to the Pharisees and would die, they appeared to be very surprised to actually see it happen (Mark 8:31). Likewise, disciples today who serve the Lord in cross-cultural situations often forget why they are going, how they are serving, and what they will be doing.

This lesson has been learned by the leaders of Resurrection. There have been times where Resurrection has released teams to go and work in cross-cultural settings. Whole groups of people have forgotten the lessons they learned about working with people of other cultures and caused embarrassment or unintended tension due to the breakdown of the working relationships. Expectations can set up people to succeed or fail.

North American Christians from the suburbs are used to having well-controlled environments. Most of these same Christians are accustomed to events or buses arriving on time and materials showing up when promised. Unfortunately, when these expectations are not met, many lose sight of the blessings of learning from other cultures. The North American consuming desire for punctuality and control overshadow learning how God can create relationships and discipleship while one waits.

When training does not take place ahead of time, then the leader of a group of North Americans spends more time reacting to problems. This often entails trying to convey spiritual and cultural truths to individuals who are frustrated and angry. In these moments, people rarely listen when their own emotions are in the way. The unintended consequences with those people living in the targeted field prove more difficult to resolve. Often they are polite, and the responses are kind and gracious; but, non-verbal cues are present, such as eyes that betray the pain caused by those who came on behalf of the Lord. The leaders of partner organizations also are put in a difficult situation, because they want to please the teams who are willing to join the mission endeavor but frequently are left with no means to help those who are hurt. People from Belize have shared about specific areas that no longer will receive teams from North America due to the drawbacks of having people from the outside enter their world and cause unmanageable difficulty.

Feedback from partners and team members has encouraged the leaders of Resurrection to continue to evaluate and improve the process of team preparation. The differences mentioned have included the following: “These teams come prepared to serve and not be served”; “This group is willing to do whatever is asked of it”; “These people really encourage each other”; “We always look forward to your teams because they are so

well trained”; and, “How do you get your teams so ready for these trips?”¹ This was a direct result of the team preparing and praying together before leaving on the trip. Resurrection’s initial team trips were with a partner that had four to five teenagers serving as interns. These young people remarked, “We prefer your team of adults and kids over the teams made up of people our age.”² When asked the reason, they responded, “Because your teams build us up and encourage us in what we are doing.”³

The training of Resurrection teams also proves helpful when there have been additional people added from other congregations from other states. Only one or two may be added to the core of the team but will be required to do the same reading, devotions, and study. When the core of the team is prepared well, they do a good job of including and encouraging additional teammates. Although not large, most issues that arise normally correspond to the training or lack of training of a particular team. Evaluation is constantly done in order to improve the way that each team is prepared to go into the mission field. This will continue to be part of the training process.

Team members are asked to envision what a missionary looks like in a daily domestic context. That is because any training done to prepare Christians to go out into other cultures has to be transferable to their lives back at home in order to embody the *Missio Dei* in daily life. The training not only should prepare the team for what they face in the field, but it should prepare them to be missionaries when they return. The vision statement discussed in Chapter 3 is that individuals are “actively discipling and bringing people to Jesus”; it is about their day-to-day lives. The mission trips are a benefit to those

¹ Steve Oliver and Miriam Oliver, interviews with author, Mazatlan, Mexico, July 2004.

² Ashley Sala, interviews with author, San Salvador, El Salvador, July 2005.

³ Ibid.

in other countries and our own team members. This spiritual transformation is intended to encourage individual team members to see themselves as missionaries everywhere they go. This entails recognizing how the theology of missions impacts spiritual formation.

Essentially, the outcomes of such personal preparation and team training focus on jump-starting participants in their individual growth and to foster an enjoyable learning community with fellow Christians. Properly done, an intergenerational group provides people of every age an opportunity to learn from and appreciate one another. The training manual serves as a foundation for the entire experience. Here are the key understandings that this project's strategy and training manual seek to reproduce in short-term mission participants as outcomes: how theology informs missions, how to experience God's ongoing presence in everyday life, understanding rest as part of having a more fruitful life, transforming current relationships into building deeper relationships with Christians and non-Christians, discipling others as a way to multiply, how to engage in daily mission, and ongoing personal transformation after the mission trip.

Outcome #1: Understanding How Theology Informs Missions

The first outcome is for participants in team training to understand how theology informs missions and how it prioritizes the steps to carrying out effective missions in daily life. The Bible has so much to say about God's mission into the world and is full of everyday examples on how to engage in mission. Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria provides both His desire to reach others and some good principles on how to engage others in Gospel conversation (John 4). Presented for study and reflection during training, this section of Scripture offers a good example of how mission team participants can understand how relevant the Scriptures are in today's context as well.

This understanding leads to a greater desire for each person to be in the Bible, because it expresses how God connects Christians to His mission. When participants in mission trips aptly understand what they personally believe about God and comprehend how their life is an outgrowth of God’s mission as expressed through His Word, they tend to hunger for more time in the Bible because it has become meaningful on a personal and experiential level. Those who have been on mission trips are more likely to join Bible studies or small groups in order to study the Word. As a result, I have observed mission team members becoming involved in group Bible studies. The team members also readily share insights from their own personal reading and study with one another before, during, and after the mission trip. Additionally, I have noticed more mission team members contacting me for information with respect to their personal Bible reading much more than the general population of the congregation.

Outcome #2: How to Experience God’s Ongoing Presence in Everyday Life

Since the Scriptures are the foundation and basis for mission, this outcome is the application of Scripture to daily life —essentially, living what was learned during the first outcome. This component and many of the other outcomes are encapsulated within the “Lifeshapes” structure. Lifeshapes is a discipleship vocabulary that describes a few key concepts that encourage lifelong learning and discipleship in the life and words of Jesus.⁴ These are covered in the “RAM Team Pre-Trip Training: Shaped for Missions” manual, contained in Part Three of this project.⁵ These shapes present such basic concepts as how

⁴ Breen and Kallestad, *The Passionate Church*. All “Lifeshapes” discussion comes from this source, unless other noted.

⁵ “RAM” stands for “Resurrection Acts 1:8 Missions.”

to be shaped by Jesus, engaging in opportunities for growth, remaining a lifelong learner of the kingdom of God, repentance, and faith in action and provide a structure for them to continue to take shape in the outcomes that follow. This second outcome of team training of how to experience God's presence in everyday life is tied to the Lifeshape circle and guides the participant in leaving behind the distractions of schedules, family, cell phones, internet, and television. In stripping away the trappings of day-to-day life, each participant can look for God's presence without those same interruptions or sidetracking disturbances.

The mission trip is an opportunity to serve the Lord and others in another culture. This experience opens up new vistas in how individuals see themselves in God's world. It challenges them to consider their assumptions about that world and how they fit into it. As they become open to God's presence in other settings, they become more aware of God moving in their life at home as well. This realization encourages growth and learning as a response to God's presence and a greater desire to serve the Lord at home. This desire to serve at home expands the idea of Resurrection being an international sending center to being a mission that impacts both locally and globally.⁶ Recognizing God's presence in everyday life provides a pattern for building missionaries and a missionary culture within the congregation.

⁶ Those who have participated in mission trips have volunteered for re-building hurricane-damaged homes in Houston, built Habitat Homes in the Houston area, gone into prisons to connect prisoners to Jesus, and assisted Resurrection in partnering with cross-cultural congregations in the greater Houston area. Resurrection is viewed as a leader in the Houston area for service and mission. Resurrection received the "Church of the Year Award" by LINC Houston in October 2010. This award was given to recognize Resurrection as the congregation that had made the most impact in the first seven years of LINC's existence. LINC was formed as a mission agency with the purpose of forming cross-cultural mission communities in the Houston area in 2003. The timing was outstanding for Resurrection, because it provided one more option for engaging individuals in mission.

Outcome #3: Understanding Rest as Part of Having a More Fruitful Life

When congregants have built a desire for spiritual growth because theology informs mission, and when God is experienced in everyday life, then there is a desire to sense peace in life. This third outcome of understanding rest as part of having a more fruitful life occurs by teaching short-term mission participants how to live a life with balance. Western Christians are used to working towards results and laboring to prove themselves. When living in God's presence—and specifically, valuing rest—the need for frantic activity can be set aside to understand that Christ followers are not simply judged by what they do but who they are.

When learned, a person rests in order to work rather than works in order to rest. This ordering of work and rest places more trust in God and not trusting solely in human ability to accomplish what needs to be done. Learning that God created human beings to both rest and work provides freedom for people to disengage from a life which enables stress-related disorders. To live as God intended is the ability to enjoy rest and enjoy work. The advantage of cross-cultural mission work is that teams observe societies that place more importance on family and relationships over production and work. Observing the disproportionate amount of time spent on career and success by North Americans teaches the team members to adjust their time with family and God. The pre-training “Shaped for Missions” modules prepare participants for this experience and ultimate outcome. This is an important outcome for people who are caught up in the pressure of the business world of

Houston, where there is an expectation for production and growth at all cost. Although producing is good, it is the “at all cost” that causes the problem.⁷

Consequently, the training and experience that lead to this third outcome seek to bring health to the Body of Christ and an understanding on how proper rest and work can help the church. In light of the priority of the mission, it may seem counter-intuitive to take time for rest. However, the appropriate use of rest and work actually can help God’s people be more effective in reaching the world for Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ can become a magnet to the many people who are hurting and exhausted as families. Otherwise the local church simply becomes another place to be overworked. This outcome is represented best by the Lifeshape of the semi-circle, found in the “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” of the two-part training manual.

Outcome #4: Transforming Current Relationships into Building Deeper Relationships with Christians and Non-Christians

Those who are aware of God’s mission in the Scriptures and are living a life that experiences Him breaking through into everyday experience also can live more fruitful lives through appropriate use of rest and work. These outcomes collectively lead to creating more space and time to spend in relationships with others. Consequently, the fourth outcome is transforming current relationships into building deeper relationships with Christians and non-Christians. This happens through the recognition that the Christian faith is not an individualized religion only concerned about personal relationship with God. Rather, the life of Jesus was connected with His Father in heaven and with others. He was deeply connected to His followers (the disciples) and He was

⁷ As a circuit counselor (a Lutheran pastor who connects with other congregations in the other area as advisor and counselor), I deal with many unhealthy congregations and pastors and see this dynamic frequently.

engaged with the world (the crowd). Resurrection's role as disciples should emulate the life of Jesus and represent this balance in their lives as well. The Father sends Christ followers into the world as those who are in relationship with others. During their short-term mission experience, the team members will experience relationship with their team as a community of believers who are on the same mission. This experience is a reflection of what life can look like at home. When the rush and hurry of life now includes rest, there is now time for relationships. Relationships with fellow Christians encourage each disciple to grow and to continue to be connected to God.

The teaching portion of the training helps short-term mission participants understand that Christians are never left to only spend time with other Christians; rather, they are sent into the world together, and deeper relationships with one another allow for and encourage them to go as God has called them to go. They learn that as God loved the world and came to live among people, the people of God are sent to live among others. This means building deeper and more lasting relationships with those in the world as well. People who are not Christian are not going to be viewed as targets or future customers but as friends. Training participants come to realize that those who do not know Christ can truly be friends if we love them, whether or not they become a part of our congregation. Training participants are brought through Scripture to understand that friendship is not based on the result of holding the same belief but loving others because God loves them. This outcome means that Christians become befriending people as God befriends humanity and that Christians are not cut off from the world; rather, they live among others as Jesus did.

The impact of this outcome is that the Body of Christ becomes more relevant to people. Christians are people who serve the community, people who care about the world

locally and globally, and people who will love no matter what. The Christian Church appears to have a public relations problem with the world. It is viewed as standing off by itself, having a separatist mentality, and not caring about anyone else. If this is true, then the church is not reflecting the mission of Jesus. He was accessible, available, and connected to people. God's people also can be accessible and available and be those who tear down the walls that exist between Christianity and the world. The apostle Paul describes how Jesus has done this for believers by stating, "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). He describes what happens to humanity with God and also how Christ followers can have new relationships with one another.

During the training, participants learn that this previous verse aptly describes how Christ does this through an act of love that describes relationship. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). It was Jesus who brought us near to Him through the sacrifice of His blood. He initiated the relationship and He sacrificed. This is what Resurrection trainees come to conceive how disciples build relationships. They become equipped to initiate the opportunity to bring others in and bring about friendship. As disciples, they learn the power of sacrifice and how to step out to engage others. This turns away any sense that the church is sitting back waiting for others to make the first move. Instead, relationships become the missional bridge to sharing God's love with one another in the church and together as a team in the world. The fruit of this particular outcome has begun to show itself at Resurrection as groups of Christian couples have invited their non-Christian friends to spend time with their Christian friends. They are welcome to belong first and

believe later as the Holy Spirit guides them. This is represented by the Lifeshape of the triangle, which is presented in the “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” portion of the manual.

Outcome #5: Discipling Others as a Way to Multiply

The life that is founded in God’s Word, experiencing God daily, balanced in rest and work, and functioning on the level of relationships is worth duplicating. The fifth outcome recognizes this, encourages it, and strategizes for intentional multiplication. This outcome is discipling others as a way to multiply. This multiplication is both a way to multiply the number of disciples as well as duplicate a way of life. Since relationship is important, disciples spend time with others to convey what it is to live under God’s grace. The expression of grace through these principles is shared in a way that disciples take on the character of those who lead. Those who are seeking to live out Christ’s mission are not doing so as a program but as a lifestyle. The values and reasons for this lifestyle can be conveyed through friendship and serving together. By sharing leadership roles with others, the next layer of disciples comes to realize their participation in the mission of Christ. By teaching and mentoring others, these same new disciples gain confidence in living out the mission of Christ and recognize the importance of discipling others. This cycle is what ultimately produces the outcome of multiplication through discipleship.

This outcome ensures that leadership is always passed on to more and more people. As an institution, congregations can centralize power and control among a few people. Those few people can be professional staff or a few lay leaders who enjoy being responsible for accomplishing the current tasks of the congregation. Unintentionally, many can be left out of the mission and ministry of the congregation, developing a culture in which a few do all of the work. Those who do all the work may even resent

those who do not help them; but, this is the result when there is no plan for encouraging others to join in the mission of the church.

This scenario often is played out among busy people who lead stressed lives, and many times it is these same people who say they do not have time to bring others along their journey for training purposes. Over time, those who are restricted to trying to do it all believe that it is just easier to do it themselves in order to get the job done. This scenario is a problem, because the job of a church in mission is to release more people into God's mission.

The anticipated impact of this outcome is that mission team members will experience being built up and seeing others alongside them equally edified to share the mission of Christ. Resurrection has experienced a growth in the number of people who serve. Volunteers at Resurrection range from age ten to age eighty-five. These volunteers help in the congregation, in the community, in cross-cultural settings, and in global settings. By experiencing a multiplication process on a mission trip, these team members have confidence and courage to practice this in their own families and in the life of Resurrection as a local congregation. Focusing on building up people takes away the need for having to find people to take care of the tasks. Joy grows in a congregation when more and more people have a sense that their role is a part of being sent in mission by Jesus.

Outcome #6: How to Engage in Daily Mission

The sixth outcome has to do with where people are sent and how to engage in mission. It relates to how God has formed trainees to use their unique personalities and interests to serve the greater mission of God. Not everyone will go out and be an evangelist. Everyone is not meant to be a teacher, pastor, or apostle. However, everyone is

formed to play an important part in the mission of God to reach the whole world. This outcome occurs through teaching and encouraging everyone to feel a part of the entire mission of the church. The mission team is a group that can encourage participants to understand how they best function in the mission field and back at home. In general, individuals either tend to be those who like to be on the forefront of mission work or those who prefer the familiar yet take pride in training others to be sent. The first type consists of people who like new endeavors and situations. They seek the next challenge and the new place to go. The second type functions best in familiar territory yet relishes organizing and preparing the next generation regarding what already has been learned.

The two groups can clash if those who like the new challenges feel dragged down by those who like to stick to the familiar. Those who enjoy organizing, teaching, and taking care of the saints may feel threatened by those who are always on the go. Nevertheless, the best circumstance is when both groups understand how they can complement each other. The mission of God always needs those who are willing to go out into new parts of the world and forge new paths; however, the ongoing mission always will depend on those who will teach, care for, and encourage those who are part of the family of God. Trainees learn that the mission team may have individuals who represent both ends of the scale and come to comprehend the importance of encouraging both those who pioneer and those who settle in their respective roles of participating in mission.

Equally important is helping the mission team to understand that the trip is a part of the mission of Resurrection and not the whole mission. Those who have experienced a cross-cultural experience can be excited and share that joy while affirming the work of those who never will go on a mission trip. For Resurrection, it has been important to

constantly state that the mission means going out into cross-cultural settings in Houston, into the local community, and into the world, while also participating in mission through Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and other existing groups. This outcome is related to the Lifeshape of the pentagon, which is contained in the “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” portion of the training manual. The impact of this outcome will be completed when the congregation is seen as a mission center and that everything that is done is mission.

Outcome #7: Ongoing Personal Transformation after the Mission Trip

All of the previous outcomes are related to the final outcome: spiritual transformation experienced by each person, for the team and for the congregation. This spiritual transformation results in a mission-driven person and a mission-driven congregation. This is an internal transformation that guides attitudes, values, and thought. For the individual, this internal transformation has the potential for encouraging short-term mission trainees to see every aspect of their life as a mission opportunity. The relationships that are formed at the soccer field, around the neighborhood, in the workplace, and in community have the potential for living out God’s mission. The soccer field is a place that people connect with the parents of other children. They share common experience around their children’s participation, and they often share hopes and dreams for these children beyond sports. When Christian parents are aware that these are opportunities for sharing their own experience and hope with God, then there is an opportunity to offer blessing in places outside the church. This is an external expression of how disciples see their lives as a conduit for God’s love. Likewise, internal transformation creates a desire to watch for these moments with neighbors, co-workers, hair stylists, waitresses, tax accountants, and

anyone else that crosses the path of the Christian. This outcome has an impact when teachers show up to watch children perform a Gospel musical in a worship service, when neighbors appear with members at fellowship events, and when neighborhood children attend Vacation Bible School with their Christian friends.

This outcome occurs through the corporate understanding of life and how congregational plans relate to the lives of people. For example, rather than seeing the soccer field as a competitor for church members' time, there is intentional equipping of these parents how to share their faith. The short-term mission trip training forms a large part of this. On a personal level, trainees learn how to issue invitations to people at places like a soccer field, neighborhood, and school. At the corporate level, the congregational planning becomes less about what happens on the campus and becomes more about how to engage members in mission in the community. The events that take place on the church campus are provided to give missional church members an excuse for bringing the friends who have expressed an interest in church life. However, the measure of success is not counting how many come but rather how many members connect with friends and neighbors in their personal lives. Small groups are developed so that Christians can support one another, but they also serve as a place to introduce friends to other Christians. With a spirit of invitation and relationship, it is important that people are seen as friends and not as evangelistic targets.

On the congregational level of planning, the leaders and staff begin to let go of measuring performance and success based on attendance and money. The measurement for success is based on helping others to live their mission among friends and neighbors. Success is not determined by how many of those friends and neighbors join the local

congregation but on how many of those people experience and connect with the Lord. This connection may begin with a willingness to discuss the state of their personal spirit or by accepting an invitation to investigate faith within the context of a neighborhood Bible study, a small group, another congregation in the area, or even progress to a personal spiritual growth plan. It is harder to measure success in terms of the growth and behavior of people in the community. It is much easier to measure the attendance of people at events or worship services. Measuring success by the size of the crowd tends to create more dependence on staff. Missional living means depending on God to work through His people, often in ways that are not visibly measurable. The staff is encouraged to spend more time with people than administering events. That begins with spiritual transformation and shows up externally when staff invests in the lives of church members. Lifeshapes reflects the teaching, understanding, and strategy of this outcome through the octagon and the hexagon, both contained in the “Mission Trip Preparation Kit.”

Chapter 6 will elaborate on a few of the Lifeshapes as a part of the pedagogy for the manual; but the concepts of many of the other Lifeshapes line up with the outcomes, as identified in this chapter. It is a blessing that the Lifeshapes so closely shadow what Resurrection attempts to accomplish through mission teams. This close relationship of the outcomes with the Lifeshapes provides a simple way to focus on what needs to be accomplished for the mission teams and ultimately for the congregation.

CHAPTER 5

PEDAGOGY OF TRAINING MANUAL

This chapter will explore the content and substance of the training manual and the means of building individuals and the team. It will identify the assumptions regarding how people learn and discuss how the “Resurrection Acts 1:8 Missions Trip Preparation Kit,” the second segment of the training manual, serves as a teaching tool. The pedagogy resides in putting the learning experience into the hands of the learner and not placing the responsibility on the teacher/leader. The chapter also lays out the roadmap for the leaders who prepare the teams for short-term missions and shows how they can pay attention to the effectiveness of the team time utilizing the manuals.

Prior Mission Trips: What They Have Taught about Training Groups

At Resurrection, personal mission trips have been a living laboratory for dealing with multi-generations. Nearly every team is represented by three and sometimes four generations, as they span from ages ten to seventy-eight. Although this is a considerable strength for the teams, it also provides a challenge for training. Expectations and learning are experienced differently by each generation. The challenging opportunity for training, and the use of training manual experience, is to span the generational gap and bring about

a cohesive team through the process. The training through the manual elements is important for sharing information, but the time that the team spends together as a learning community is even more crucial to their corporate and personal development. The first cross-cultural training that has to be done is to have four generations of individuals who live in the same area realize that they are from different cultures themselves.

The four generations that participate in team training fall into the following categories: Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers.¹ These descriptors are not rigid. Often the lines between them blur and overlap. The Builders are those born prior to 1945 and represent about 24 percent of the population.² The primary influencing experiences include both World Wars, the Great Depression, and the Korean War. For those who grew up in rural areas, the family, school, and church were very important and worked together as one cohesive unit to build a stable life. Belief in God was taken for granted. Builders are known to be hard workers and those who were able to survive difficult times. According to Gary L. McIntosh, Builders tend to learn best in classroom lecture settings. This is because they enjoy learning, but they are not apt to be involved in discussing personal issues.³

Within the church, this generation is best characterized by words, faith, service, and missions. In terms of the mission teams, these individuals bring a deep desire to serve and to accomplish a task for the Lord. Resurrection is blessed to have many wonderful

¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002).

² Ibid., 55.

³ Ibid., 64.

Builders who bring passion and spirit to the mission teams, and they are very willing to learn and serve with others.

The Boomer generation defines those born between 1946 and 1964. The Boomers represent about 26.5 percent of the U.S. population.⁴ The primary influencers with Boomers have been the Cold War, television, education, rock music, Vietnam, and technology. The combination of size and timing has made the Boomers the most studied, independent, and affluent group so far. McIntosh lists their characteristics as educated, media-oriented, independent, and cause-oriented.⁵ In the church, this group is not as loyal yet tends to focus well on people rather than programs. Bible study and learning are built around “What does it mean for me?” According to McIntosh, Boomers tend to learn in small groups and in sharing their hurts and needs.⁶ This is because they want to sense they are cared for and that they can care for others. For this reason, serving on a mission team is a perfect place to engage Boomers. They are given the ability to make a difference in the world and to seek significance in serving others. As a pastor, I have noticed that Boomers are able to connect with one another and other generations when they are serving in cross-cultural settings. At Resurrection, it has been the Boomers who come back home and engage large groups of people around the “cause” of missions.

The Busters are those born between 1965 and 1983 and represent 27 percent of the population.⁷ This generation has been shaped by the legalization of abortion, high

⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁵ Ibid., 85-87.

⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁷ Ibid., 122.

technology, video games, television, the fall of the Berlin Wall, strong group influence, music, the breakdown of the nuclear family, and the Persian Gulf War. The characteristics of the Busters include freedom, rejection of workaholic and career-centered lives, 1960s nostalgia, survival issues, practical education, and postponing marriage.⁸ According to McIntosh, Busters tend to learn best through experience and visual images. They enjoy that which they can experience because they have had more choices and opportunities than the previous generations. Due to the presence of technology, visual images are very important to their learning experience.⁹

This group is less connected to the Church. They have a stronger interest in local causes, enjoy less structure, and express faith in a way that meets needs. A tension can exist between the Busters and the older generations. The older generations have an expectation of a higher work ethic for the Busters and a sense that this group wants to accomplish something. The Busters seem to feel that the older generations have a broken sense of relationships, work, and self. These generations want to reach the Busters but often do not know how. McIntosh advises, “Keep in mind that a one size fits all approach to ministry will not work with Busters. They are a diverse group and successful ministry to them will depend greatly on the age group, social background, and geographic location of your Busters.”¹⁰ Mission trips are not “one size fits all” but provide a flexible enough cohesion to positively link the generations. I have seen Resurrection’s mission trips provide a safe place for the generations to work together and appreciate one another

⁸ Ibid., 131-135.

⁹ Ibid., 138

¹⁰ Ibid., 147.

more. By mixing generations in both training and during the trip, Resurrection finds ways to build on the common ground among the groups and to find points of intersection where they can serve others together.

The Bridgers is the last group to consider and includes those born between 1984 and 2002. They represent about 27 percent of the population.¹¹ Formative influences include post-modernism, the internet, MTV, and terrorism. This is a generation that is known for its entrepreneurial spirit, being technologically savvy, and able to appreciate the benefits of ancient traditions.¹² They also appear to be very demanding, diverse, fragmented, and tolerant. This group enjoys spending time and learning from the older generations. According to McIntosh, Bridgers tend to learn best when they can discover for themselves. They work from the generic to the specific in dealing with information and spiritual truths. This is because they are growing up in a pluralistic society and do not embrace absolute truth in the same way as previous generations.¹³

Through experience on the mission teams, I have observed this group gravitate toward the oldest members of the team. They enjoy the stories and history of the older members, and they want to connect these experiences to their own. Bridgers have shown a deep desire to help and to be a part of the team effort, more so than the Busters. These younger participants often are eager to engage with those in other cultures and hunger to learn how the experience impacts their life back at home. Since the Bridgers fit so well with the older generations, it has led Resurrection to keep mission team work as an

¹¹ Ibid., 162.

¹² Ibid., 172.

¹³ Ibid., 180.

intergenerational experience. Resurrection does not focus on sending out high school mission teams, since there is too much good that comes from keeping this group with the other three generations.

Cross-Cultural Connections: The Work It Requires

Cross-cultural work does not come naturally for any of the generations. Therefore, part of the pedagogy of the training manual segments is their presented order and integration with the mission trip. While the learning styles of each generation widely vary, the overall training content and process are the same. It starts with pre-trip preparation, continues throughout the mission trip, and moves into daily life application upon return.

Content: Pre-Trip Preparation

The pre-trip preparation is done for the benefit of the individual and for the sake of the team. It focuses on individuals and their preparation for the mission trip to change how they look at their whole life. At the same time, anything that is done to develop the individuals on the team will help the overall team effort. As the individuals on the team better understand their personal part in the *Missio Dei*, the more cohesive and effective the team will be together in a cross-cultural setting. All discussion in this section describes how the manual segments influence the individual and, as a result, the team. The preparation and the mission trip are for the sake of the time spent in a cross-cultural setting and in how these same people will be involved in the God's mission throughout the year.

The training manual experience essentially breaks down into three segments. The first two segments, the "Shaped for Missions" and "Mission Trip Preparation Kit," are related to pre-trip preparation. These function as a companion to the book, *The Circle*:

Choosing to Learn from Life by Mike Breen.¹⁴ Trainees are required to read the chapters of the book to begin to understand and use the Learning Circle in their own life. The Learning Circle is a process by which the individual encounters God at work in a life event. The individual processes and learns through that event through the six steps of the Learning Circle.¹⁵ The first segment of the manual experience provides guidance for the individual and structures the discussion process for the group. The second segment is filled with a series of topics related to mission trip preparation. The individuals are given reading assignments from the manual, and the group takes time to discuss the mission topics at team meetings. The final segment of the training experience is referred to as the “Field Manual,” because it is designed to go along with the participants on the trip.¹⁶ It is a brief yet practical guide for logistics that contains final thoughts for the mission trip travel list, short-term missionary “beatitudes” for the participants which are Scriptures to keep in mind as an attitude check, descriptions of what to expect the day of travel, customs forms, team responsibilities, and reminders for the return trip and re-entry into the United States.

The “Shaped for Missions” segment focuses on the Learning Circle and is divided into seven sections. These seven sections can be used at any seven of the preparation meetings. Normally, the first seven meetings will include the discussion sections of this manual. The flow of these seven sections are titled as follows: Shaped By Jesus, This is Your Special Time, Shaped for His Presence, the Circle of Life, Missions Provides a

¹⁴ Michael Breen, *The Circle: Choosing to Learn from Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2006).

¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶ Due to a lack of space within this training manual project, the Field Manual is not reproduced in Part Three.

Place to Learn, On a Mission Demands Action, and Shaped to God with God. This part of the manual segment introduces the concept and vocabulary of the Learning Circle, describes its use, provides discussion on the teaching surrounding the Learning Circle, and offers opportunities for application that ties it to missions. The group is encouraged to apply the concepts between meetings. Analyzing the benefits of using the Learning Circle as a training tool, the process of reading the material, discussing the material, and taking time for personal reflection bring great benefits. In developing his book, Breen comments on the blessing of studying the Learning Circle in small groups, “So how do you make the change? To being with, the leaders of your church’s ministry and small groups must be taught the principles of the Circle so that they understand the process themselves.”¹⁷ It causes individuals to look at their own relationship with God and opens up conversation with other Christians while providing a safe place to practice transparency. They begin to own the Circle and live it out daily in their own lives.

The “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” is read and used at the same time as “Shaped for Missions.” The two segments parallel one another. As the first part of the manual experience grows the team members to understand themselves and their relationship with God, the second part of the manual experience develops mission ideas in light of that personal growth. The “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” eases the group into considering and discussing important issues related to the mission trip. The initial introduction gives the history, purpose, core values, and addresses expectations. The history, purpose, and core values establish the foundation for why Resurrection does mission trips and encourages consistency among the various groups that go into cross-cultural settings.

¹⁷ Breen, *The Circle*, 187.

Establishing a consistency for mission teams also provides a platform for establishing consistency in what happens in the congregation for the at-home ministries.

There is a team covenant that has been developed right out of the values and expressed purpose for Resurrection teams. Covering this as a team lays the groundwork for the reasoning behind why the covenant was developed. Managing expectations is huge for Resurrection, because wrong expectations or too high expectations can create disappointment for those participating on a mission team. Since many members have participated in mission trips, there are many stories shared about experiences. People talk about life change, and they reference how God touched their life. These stories are very good; but they also create expectations for new team members, and returning members also may build expectations for any given trip. Expectations that are made for experiences, fellow team members, or for the trip can set people up for disappointment. In the midst of that disappointment, individuals miss what God is doing beyond their expectations. The training manual outcomes include building fruitfulness in life and passing on leadership. Consequently, a covenant relationship with one another encourages individual members to see themselves as a part of a team and that the entire team takes responsibility for what takes place on a trip. Leaders are not leading due to position; rather, the team is led through a common covenant. Through the training manual experience, the teams come to learn that it can be more fruitful to seek what God is doing rather than trying to tell God what they want.

The next sections of the “Mission Trip Preparation Kit” relate to teamwork and cross-cultural issues. The heart of both of these sections has to do with being a servant.

Servanthood is introduced earlier in this section but is developed more under the topics of teamwork and cross-cultural understanding. Discussing the topic of teamwork is a time of stretching and challenging people. Most everyone has come in with the desire or hope of doing something for God, but the trip will be more successful if this group can act as a team. A group of individuals never will have the same impact as a team. A team provides greater encouragement to the team members, to the hosts, to the local Christians, and to others who make contact with the team. When group members see themselves as a team, they also do a better job of dealing with cultural issues. This happens because the group monitors, encourages, and reminds one another of how the team is fitting into the local setting. In particular, Bridgers appreciate this aspect of the training because it is experiential, allows for discussion, and provides general teaching that is applied to specific circumstances. Resurrection's teams have done well overall in traveling into cross-cultural settings. I have observed the teams providing a seamless and positive interaction with the various groups during the trip.

Dealing with practical issues is not based in the mission of God, the values of the congregation, or teaching around the Learning Circle. Nevertheless, the practical issues are a very important part of team training and the manual. Being well prepared for packing, health issues, taking the right supplies, navigating customs, and getting through security can be significant to teams or their family members. Having concise, clear, organized instructions about international travel is very helpful for the mental preparation and providing confidence to everyone involved. Even though it is not directly tied into the first outcome, it fits well. The first outcome is to connect Christians in mission. God

is not chaotic in His mission; the plan for saving the world was strategic and planned. Carefully working out the details of a mission trip helps God's people not to be chaotic in His mission. In particular, the Builders and Boomers appreciate this part of the training because these groups are very interested in accomplishing specific goals and completing projects. Other congregations have expressed interest in using this manual, because these practical matters interest them most at first. They are aware of how little they know about taking a group on a trip, and leaders from other congregations often connect here first before they understand the importance of the rest of the manual.

The appendix of the "Mission Trip Preparation Kit" was developed so that additional devotions, Bible studies, fundraising letters, and a copy of the team covenant are quickly accessible between meetings. These are pieces that are products of the previous sections and are placed in their own section for easy use. The Builders and non-technological Boomers like having a hard copy of these items. However, for high-tech Busters and Bridgers, this section also is emailed to the team in a digital format so that they can personalize the appropriate resources. For instance, the sample fundraising letters can be adapted by each team member and printed or disseminated electronically for their own use. Nothing about the manual is proprietary. It is intended to be utilized by the team and also is something that can be shared with other congregations. If Resurrection becoming a sending center is an ultimate result of this project, then anything developed is something to be given away.

The third segment of this training manual experience is the pamphlet labeled "Field Manual." This portion was an outgrowth of the experience of taking many teams overseas. I observed how many people were trying to lug large notebooks that contained

the original manual. The notebook was too large for the carryon luggage and even too bulky for adding to the checked luggage. Additionally, the same types of questions were often asked in the last few weeks before the trip took place. Team members also struggled to have everything needed for the filling out of customs forms and other details dealing with the day of travel. The Field Manual has been formed to emphasize what was covered in the first pre-trip training segments, to provide information based on the potential questions that would come up, to give a checklist for final details, and to provide space for writing. The writing can include devotions, personal checklists, and a space for each person to journal about the trip. This not only clears space in the luggage but brings together everything that is necessary to encourage team unity and personal growth.

The reason for three separate parts to the training manual segments is to help the team members focus on the three distinct areas. The first segment, in dealing with the Learning Circle, challenges trainees to think of this trip as something God wants to do in them. The trip is not just a “feel good” trip of doing something for someone else, but God wants to grow each person who goes on the trip. The first segment is a team-building experience that gathers different individuals together for a common effort. The process begins by bringing individuals to a realization that God wants to work in them and that He wants them to be in relationship with one another. The second part has practical application to the mission trip itself. Breen describes it this way, “We must choose to live in community rather than isolated on its fringes—this is the way we were designed by God to live.”¹⁸ The intention of the process is to help the individuals to have practical experience in community. The articles on servanthood, cross-cultural settings, values,

¹⁸ Ibid., 161.

purpose, and packing all have to do with the trip. The value of these practical issues is that they all tie back to who people are in Christ and how they relate with one another. The team also looks at a third aspect of reaching out. Trainees are challenged to take their relationship to God, as individuals and as a group, and meaningfully make a difference in the world. These three aspects form a focus for the trip and also are applied to daily missionary life at home upon returning to Spring, Texas.

Content: Missions Trip

The mission trip becomes the extended classroom for what has begun in the pre-trip training. It helps to solidify concepts presented during the pre-trip training and provides a place for the team members to grow in wisdom and understanding. Whatever is learned during the mission trip also focuses on what it means for when short-term team members return home. The trip is not meant to be a solitary event but rather a catalytic experience that re-focuses everyone on the team into a new mission reality back home. That reality is for people to see that God has placed them in a mission field in their home, neighborhood, school, or office. These trips, combined with the pre-trip preparation, not only shift the lives of people but also focus the mission and ministry of Resurrection.

Unlike the pre-trip training, the mission trip experience does not include any reading, official training gatherings, or planned discussion times. The mission trip experience integrates the work, eating, resting, devotions, and worship time as a guided experience for the team members. Breen says, “It all goes back to the concept of your community be the setting for you to achieve clarity, confidence, and courage.”¹⁹ The

¹⁹ Ibid.

mission trip experience is intended to create community, which also provides greater courage and confidence for the team members. The team travels on a Saturday and the day mostly is taken up with traveling. With the travel, there are team members who lead a brief Bible study and worship time with the team. There is also a time of introduction to the area, the people, and the team quarters. The Bible study and introduction time again provide an opportunity for setting the stage for what will happen. The team unpacks personal items and supplies brought for the trip, and time is given in preparing for the next day. The Builders and Boomers enjoy this time because there is a sense of being prepared, while the Busters and Bridgers appreciate it as a time for togetherness.

Starting with the first day, time is taken at the end of the day for team members to share their high and low moments for the day. This is the opportunity for the team leader to debrief and coach the team. The shared experiences are received by the team; and members encourage one another through listening, praying, or through re-framing the experience through the use of the Learning Circle. The leader may or may not have to say much each day at the group debriefing. The potential is always there for the leader to help the group better understand the cross-cultural setting and to encourage both individuals and group to grow.

The Field Manual is used from the first day until the last day of the trip. The practical items helped the team to finalize their time at home, pack, prepare, and pray for what is to come. Upon arrival, team members use the Field Manual to reference training topics and resources, and there is room for the team members to journal their experiences. I included the opportunity to journal for three reasons. First, the idea of writing down

something tends to make team members more observant and process that which they consider most important. Second, journaling helps individuals not to forget any key thoughts and ideas forged during the day. Third, each person can review ideas and thoughts and chart personal progress over the week. Team members share duties all week for team devotion time, and the Field Manual is used to write down the Bible study and worship plans. I have observed that Resurrection teams tend to use the pre-trip materials, meaningful Bible passages, and personal experience in sharing at the Bible study. This is one way the team leader gauges what is taking place in the individuals and in the team as a whole.

Travel time also becomes an important time for the teams. These are moments in which the team rests, jokes around, shares stories, re-lives experiences from the day, and recalls how it connects with the past. The team leader occasionally uses the travel time (normally on a bus) to integrate the learning materials with the experiences that the team has on that particular day. The experiences of the team and the trip setting also provide an opportunity to help the team understand what is happening in their mission area the other fifty-one weeks of the year. This becomes a key in aiding team members to reign in their perspective. They are not the center of the mission area; rather, they are merely one part of an entire effort that occurs throughout the year. Team participants are reminded that Resurrection's mission groups are not the only way that God is working.

The leader also tries to be aware of the conversations that happen throughout the day among team members. The team leader will have one-to-one interaction with the individuals. This personalized attention raises awareness of how God is using this trip to

work in each person's heart. Team leaders can use their own Field Manual to make notes and reminders of what they observe. These observations can be used to build up individuals and to help guide each of them during the week. Since people are away from home, they often have one particular area of life that surfaces that they want to discuss. It may be rather significant or not, but guided conversation can help individuals learn or consider how it ties into God's mission. Personal interaction with the leader or other members of the group is a rich part of the trip experience and something that can help everyone grow. The one-to-one interactions, the debriefing time, the Field Manual, and the devotions all serve as a way that God builds up people during the trip. Those who come home from the trip share as much joy about the time spent with the team as they do talking about what they accomplished through the work done. Spiritual transformation takes place, and those who come home from the trips desire to have more time with other Christians and with God through His Word. In effect, mission trips change people, just as they changed the disciples of Jesus when He sent them out two by two and in small groups (cf. Luke 10:1-24). In essence, the pre-trip preparation, teaching during hands-on ministry, and post-trip reflection was the pedagogy of Jesus.

Content: Moving from Trip to Life Application

Moving from the trip to life application is a process that began in the pre-trip training. If team members are encouraged to join God in His mission and they are willing to grow as disciples before, during, and after the trip, life application will take place. Life application is really discipleship. The trip is not only about impacting another part of the world; it is about making disciples. Making disciples is about spiritual multiplication of

people in Jesus Christ. The team training process is for the purpose of preparing a team that can multiply itself on the trip by encouraging local Christians in their work. Upon returning home, the desire is for these same Christians to see themselves as disciple makers.

Moving to daily life application and spiritual multiplication means that each of these individuals will start looking for those people in their life who are open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From their brief experience in the mission field, team members now have deeper knowledge of how to recognize people who will welcome them into their life, who will receive them and be mutually connected in life and family, and who will connect them with their network of friends. Mission team members now have a framework for how to prioritize their time and begin including others on a deeper level of relationship. Life application means allowing the kingdom to advance through natural and normal relationships in one's own neighborhood or network.

Team members begin to recognize those who welcome them, who are a part of their lives and desire a friendship with them. Within this framework, there are those who want to find out more about the spiritual walk of these team members. It may be they simply are fascinated that the people went on a mission trip. However, ultimately they find out more about the Jesus who influences their lives and causes them to leave their families and work in a cross-cultural setting. There is no sense of uneasiness in talking about faith, life, and the mission trip. In fact, these people want to find out more and it becomes a part of discussion in their lives together. They eat together, spend time together, shop together, go to ball games, or whatever is the shared interest of this person and the mission team member. In doing so, they have a life connection that is

comfortable and there is an ongoing interest on the part of this other person to know more about Jesus. Additionally, these people introduce their friends and family to this mission team member, because they find that the spiritual journey is worth sharing with others. Mission team members prioritize this relationship, because they see God at work in their life and they do not want to miss God's timing for this person's life.

Due to the extensive past experience of personalized mission trips already through Resurrection, this dynamic is currently at work. There are whole families who have been baptized, because they became friends with members. Team members spent time with people who were curious, shared experiences, and explained what God was doing in their lives. This resulted in these families inviting themselves along to worship and ultimately joining the church.

The mission team members find that God is working through them and that He wants to reach people they know just as much as those in the mission field. They discover that God's mission is their mission. "If we make disciples like Jesus made disciples (i.e. the way we're supposed to!), we get more leaders than we can handle and more vision and action for mission than we have ever seen."²⁰ These stories of life change are shared with other members who have not been on trips. Consequently, the change becomes a part of the congregation because others begin to grow vicariously through what has gone on with the trip. Then Resurrection grows together as an outcome of what God is doing now right at home.

²⁰ Mike Breen, "The Church's Dirty Little Secret," Mike Breen blog, entry posted April 18, 2011, <http://mikebreen.wordpress.com/2011/04/18/the-churchs-dirty-little-secret/> (accessed June 10, 2011).

Those who have come back from mission trips have found ways to support mission communities in Houston. Resurrection has men who go into prisons for four days to share the Gospel of Jesus with convicts, teenagers who enter into the inner city of Houston to work with street ministry to the homeless, and those who teach English as a Second Language so that new immigrants also can hear the Gospel. Homes damaged by Hurricane Ike are being repaired by Resurrection people so that local Christian communities can support families and offer faith, and both young and old lead Vacation Bible School in dilapidated apartment buildings on the other side of town. Leadership for me as a pastor has meant helping members find where God wants them to go. I take to heart the words of Alex Absalom's blog, *Missional Made Simple: The Practicalities of Missional Communities*: "You as the leader need to define who it is that your Missional Community is called to focus upon as you go out in mission (i.e., in witness and service). This is absolutely critical for defining your Missional Community culture."²¹ The after-trip shift has moved me from doing ministry to focusing people on where they can concentrate their mission ministry. As a result of the pre-trip training, mission trip experience, and post-trip connections with team members, this is how I now spend my energy and effort as a pastor.

Learning Techniques

Given the uniform training content and process together with the diverse learning styles that exist among the generations, it is vital to provide an environment that accommodates various learning techniques. Jane Vella describes learning techniques that

²¹ Alex Absalom, "How to Create a Compelling Mission Vision," *Missional Made Simple: The Practicalities of Missional Communities*, entry posted April 22, 2011, <http://alexabsalom.wordpress.com/category/mission-vision/> (accessed June 10, 2011).

include using teamwork and small groups to promote interaction, discussion, and dialogue; teaching towards the cognitive (ideas), affective (feelings), and psychomotor (actions) domains; and designing to help learners learn through praxis, which is learning by doing.²² The role of the leader is to provide a safe environment and process for all team members in order for learning to take place. According to Vella, “Learners must feel safe in order to engage with other learners, teachers and the content. The atmosphere and design for learning must create a safe environment for learners.”²³ The team members also are expected to be subjects of their own learning and to take responsibility for the experience. Vella also encourages learners to take this greater role. She writes: “Learners must see the equality between teacher and learners and among learners.”²⁴

Small groups and teamwork provide effective learning frameworks for each person to be fully invested in the learning process. Containing no more than three at a time, these essentially are triads. The small size allows for everyone to have an opportunity to listen and share on any given discussion or topic. Triad members read before arriving for the meeting, receive a short teaching, and then are able to interact freely with one another. Team members present their views and receive immediate feedback and reciprocate with feedback on those things shared from their teammates. Vella affirms the importance of this process by stating, “The use of small group work is a central practice in Dialogue education because it creates a safe environment for learners

²² Jane Vella, *On Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

to find their voice, reflects life situations of teamwork and allows for peer mentoring which can enhance learning.”²⁵ The small group encourages high-level discussion, feedback, and a willingness to be accountable to others. This accountability relates to what they will do with the material in the coming mission week and their willingness to share their experience in the next session.

As mentioned above, the learning process also is built around teaching towards the cognitive (ideas), affective (feelings), and psychomotor (actions) domains. The assigned readings build on the cognitive. Older members of the team noticeably engage the learning process most deeply by reading manual segments. The reading definitely deepens the level of the small group discussion. Feelings are shared freely in the triads, and such discussion gives the team a sense that it is safe and good to share those feelings with the entire team. As generations, the Busters and Bridgers are more interested in sharing feelings. However, the older generations certainly join in and participate actively in the discussions. The discussion portion of “Shaped by Mission” requests action during the coming week by the team members. Using this during pre-trip training builds an expectation of living a fruitful life and applying what is learned to what is done.

The final technique is a part of the training from pre-trip to trip to post-trip. The team learns by doing. They do not talk about prayer; they pray. They do not talk about how to lead a devotional moment; they lead one. The team works on testimonies, skits, teaching children, leading a small group, and facilitating discussions. They role-play situations in order to learn how to do something with one another before they do it in a live setting. The advantage of learning by doing is that there is immediate feedback from

²⁵ Ibid., 59.

the team, the church members in other cultures, and by the recipients of the task. There is freedom to fail and to make mistakes.

This is the accountability that Vella references. She says, “Teachers must be accountable to learners through their learning design and facilitation and learners must be accountable to the teacher, each other and themselves through their actions.”²⁶ Team members are reminded that the leaders are not experts; rather, everyone is being disciplined in the process. This encourages shared leadership with one another, and it also encourages the local people of the culture to learn with the team and try new things. Resurrection has seen team members grow in confidence and joy, because they have been able to become those who do instead of those who just watch. It is discipleship in action.

²⁶ Ibid., 131.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEAM TRAINING

This chapter will present how implementation of team training occurs. It also will describe how to encourage and maintain the team building that goes on before, during, and after short-term mission trips. Finally, it will offer strategies that relate to the scheduling of meetings, the cross-connection of teams that are sent to different sites, and the process of recruiting people for future trips.

The Shape of Leadership Development

The team manuals have been produced because the training of leaders and development of disciples are at the core of Resurrection's vision and mission. There are eight total Lifeshapes referenced in *The Passionate Church*, however the circle and the triangle are the primary shapes that are used in the content and training of the teams. These two shapes were chosen because Resurrection cannot implement all eight shapes and needed to choose the two shapes that best lend themselves to building a short-term team. These two shapes also focus on the transformation of the individual (circle) and leading a balanced mission life (triangle). The square is another shape that is important in the short-term mission preparation process.

The square, as another Lifeshape, helps to define the pattern for leadership development at Resurrection. It symbolizes Jesus' discipleship style in very simple and replicable ways. The square is not talked about or taught to those participating in mission trips. It is the pattern for building leaders and working with others in the mission team process.

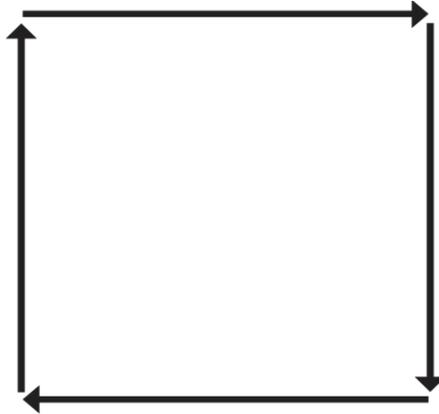


Figure 1. Square as a Lifeshape

The square has to do with discipleship and leadership development. The four sides represent the four stages of development. These are observable steps that Jesus takes with His disciples that are observable throughout the four Gospels. In the illustration, it begins at the top left, moves clockwise, and can be described as follows: “I do, you watch,” “I do, you help,” “You do, I help,” and “you do, I help.”¹ Jesus chose His disciples with the intent of sending them out. The process of training them could not allow them to keep watching Him and being dependent on Him. Jesus is committed to sending others, and He releases them from dependency.

This framework for leadership development is based on Jesus' ministry. Jesus' emphasis on leadership is not based on power and control but servanthood. Jesus' style of

¹ Breen and Kallestad, *The Passionate Church*, 128.

leadership is not about position or what He can get from others but about the positive transformation of lives. “We need leaders who will step out of ‘doing church’ and lead us to be the church. We need those who are not afraid to dive headfirst into our culture with the message of God’s unconditional buy-back offer of redemption.”² This leadership model is a process for training leaders of teams, team members, and partners in the field. It is a pattern that is valuable for anyone who is led or who leads. “A true leader looks like a sheep from front and a shepherd from behind.”³ When people realize that they are always following someone and always leading someone,⁴ then the leadership cycle will continue to develop more and more leaders.

The square in Figure 1 above aptly represents Jesus’ model of development. The first step of the leadership process (the square) is the initial connection of the leader and the one who chooses to follow the leader. At this stage, followers are normally highly enthusiastic and confident. Due to these feelings, they do not realize that they also lack experience and competence. Being aware of this, the leader will give very specific and clear direction. The leader is also the model and example for the follower. The follower is a very excited person who does not know the full extent of the task ahead. The leader is aware that there is a very excited person seeking to be launched and that success depends on helping the follower move fully through all the stages of development one at a time.

At this initial stage, the leader also does not seek much input from the follower and there may not be much explanation either. The understanding is that the leader leads and followers follow. In Jesus’ case, He teaches (Mark 10:1), heals (Mark 1:34), casts out

² Ibid., 110.

³ Ibid., 111.

⁴ Ibid.

demons (Mark 16:9), and lives the example of one on a mission for God. He does not seek input from the disciples but directs them when and where to go (Mark 6:45). As any leader in the first stage, Jesus is very directive toward the disciples, so that they will watch what He does and says. This approach is helpful on a mission team. Everyone who has chosen to join a team is very excited, and most have little to no idea what the trip will entail. The leader on the team gives specific instructions regarding physical, mental, and spiritual preparation. Those with experience model how to prepare for a trip and the new individual(s) take on the example of the team. The new team members are not asked for opinions or input at this early stage. If they were, they would not know what to add due to their inexperience.

This process has worked well for Resurrection team training. The outcomes of encouraging team members to recognize God's presence, to live a fruitful life, and to seek transformation are developed through these specific steps of discipleship and training. It normally takes until the second or third meeting before excited team members begin to realize what they need from the team training. The training gives them assurance that they will be helped through this process, and they soon realize that enthusiasm is not going to help them to be successful on the mission trip.

The second stage begins for the follower when the newness starts to wear off. Short-term mission participants either lose enthusiasm or recognize how little they know about the task at hand. Confidence dips. They are no more incompetent or less experienced at this point; rather, the challenge arises because followers begin to recognize their lack of experience and competence. This is a key time for anyone going through the leadership process, because it is the point where many can give up. "Stage

two is the most important in the development process for the disciple. This is when excitement begins to die down and the feelings of incompetence and inexperience come to the forefront.”⁵ This is where the leader is so important. The leader still offers much direction and puts emphasis on being an example. In addition to this, the leader also remains highly accessible and willing to talk to followers. They will begin to have more questions and need the strong sense that the leader is available to them.

Jesus spent a great deal of time with His disciples, and He encouraged discussion around all of their questions (Matthew 17:19). This type of leadership was a key to their growth. They would sense that more was expected of them, and all while the religious people were showing opposition to Jesus (Matthew 12:24). Without Jesus investing time and energy into the disciples, they certainly would have been apt to walk away. This is an important stage for Resurrection leadership development and applies to developing both teams and team leaders.

The third stage in the leadership process is a subtle shift. The follower still may feel a lack of excitement and competence in the beginning of this stage. However, the shift comes in the level of doing. In previous stages, the leader was the one who was doing and the follower was watching or helping. Now, the follower begins to actively engage in the experience. The leader, like Jesus, functions as a shepherd and focuses on providing guidance. There is less direction—increasing the potential for team consensus—greater discussion, and increased accessibility to the leader. The leader knows that high accessibility and investing in the follower will augment the excitement and the sense of competence. The follower is given the chance to take on actual parts of

⁵ Ibid., 118.

the ministry and is even given a chance to fail. The failures and successes are discussed, and the followers come to sense that they are capable and that the support they have will increase their own chance for success.

On a mission team, it has meant giving a team member a short opportunity to share in a devotional moment, allowing a small group of people to share in front of a group, and working alongside experienced and competent teammates. The task is shaped to give team members success and to provide an opportunity to grow. The third stage for a mission team member can be a few days or the entire mission trip.

While the first two stages have brought followers from being enthusiastic, confident, incompetent, inexperienced starters to people who have lost enthusiasm and confidence, the third stage brings these same followers to the point where there is intermittent confidence with growing competence. Enthusiasm grows as experience expands at this level. The constant for the follower is the leader. Followers, or disciples, know on whom they can count. For Resurrection, it means a consistency of leadership for teams and for future team leaders.

The final stage is the most satisfying and brings the follower to the point of feeling high levels of confidence, enthusiasm, competence, and experience. The leader is able to step back without giving high direction or example any longer. More time is spent on consensus and explanation to keep the follower connected to the leader. The intent is for followers to do the work completely on their own, and the leader watches. The leaders look to give their own job away and to provide the same leadership process to the follower so that the cycle continues. The closeness between the leader and follower

remains, but the amount of time spent together decreases. The closeness does not depend on the time spent but on openness with one another.

This fourth stage can be described as full delegation. Delegation can be a very positive experience when there has been a process leading to delegation. I have observed that it is very easy for individuals to want to cut the steps short. Anyone managing a group of people can be tempted to send their workers from stage one to stage four without taking the time for guided work, debriefing, and the slow release of responsibility. This only leads to the building of frustration for the manager and the worker. The manager is frustrated because workers seem to lack excitement, do not do the job right, and quit early. Workers feel underappreciated, unaware of what is expected, and left alone. This four-stage process can be used in any situation that is intended to release someone for a task or job.

This process is so basic, that I have conversed with fathers about how this can be used in mowing the lawn. Fathers understand this because they can see step by step how to teach their children to take over the job. Fathers usually can remember circumstances where they rushed the process, and it was an unhappy experience for the family. Taking the time to work through each stage with their child, the lawn-mowing experience brings more enjoyment along the way and more satisfaction when the learners are accomplishing the task on their own. Resurrection mission teams experience the same enjoyment and satisfaction when the time is taken in training team members, when team leaders are brought up stage by stage, and when mission partners are empowered to grow. The more these steps are taken intentionally, the better the job that will be done building leaders for missions and for other roles in the congregation.

For team leadership development, the training process can take four months of training. It can encompass the whole time and task of leadership, because this new leader is responsible for a whole team. For team trips, new individuals can move through a stage within a meeting or two. This extension in the training process also applies to working with leaders in other countries. If I do not take the time to build up and encourage the leaders in other countries, they will become discouraged concerning their work. For example, a pastor in the rural area of Belize, Dinsdale Thompson, has mentioned numerous times that he would be gone from the ministry if it were not for Resurrection's work with him. This is a significant reminder that the team trips are not about short-term participants but about the local leaders and congregations.

Just as short-term mission team members are given brief opportunities by their team leaders for tasks in the mission field, so the team members must offer these same opportunities to local leaders and church members in the mission area. Local Christians may have watched an American team lead a group of children through Bible stories in past years, but there is a point where the role of teaching and leading Bible School is given to them. The Resurrection team members must release themselves from the desire of doing things and become assistants and helpers during a trip. When more responsibility is given to the local teachers, it may take more pre-trip trips to train and encourage those who will lead. I have seen the hesitancy of pastors when it comes to doing something new. At first, they do not believe that they are capable of doing it themselves. However, with patient help, they realize they can do more that week and throughout the year. For the partners in the field, this means that Resurrection is willing to invest themselves in a few partners over a long period of time and not jump from place to place.

There is one final issue still important for the leader. If leaders do not have the capacity to let go of doing anything themselves, they never will be able to raise up other leaders. The four stages all depend on the leader putting this into practice and not being concerned about control. Jesus' example of releasing disciples is evident in the words of Matthew 28:18-20. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." When leaders do not want to give up control, they have determined that they hope to keep their position for themselves. When this happens, it becomes a human mission instead of God's mission. Jesus says He has all authority, and it is from that authority that He desires to send His disciples. He reminds them of the process they went through by pointing to everything He has commanded up to that point. Nevertheless, He promises His presence until the end of the age. This confidence of Jesus in His disciples is what Resurrection can build in new leaders as well.

Strategy for Team Meetings

The strategy for team meetings is very simple. The team leader establishes the schedule for the team meetings. This includes when and where to meet and how often to meet. The team leader is guided by the mission, vision, and values of the congregation and also has experienced team preparation meetings as a participant. As long as the team has covered the manuals adequately, prepared themselves personally and corporately for the trip, and the logistical preparations are made, the team can meet in whatever way best facilitates their particular group. Team meetings at Resurrection all have looked very

different from team to team. Those meetings have been a reflection of the personality of the team leader, and they also have reflected the unique character of the team members. This flexibility is necessary, since every mission trip requires distinct logistics and different preparation for the team. Together with the uniform training manual content and process, these variations influence the character and nature of the team meetings. Any changes in team preparation will take place due to how the leader observes the influence of the preparation on team performance. It also can change as a result of the feedback from the team itself before, during, and after the actual trip. Additionally, it may shift as the team leaders share experiences with one another from other team trips.

The freedom given to team leaders for the preparation meetings is a good example of how leadership development takes place. The goal is not to find uniformity in how teams are prepared or how leaders lead the teams. The goal is to prepare leaders to be able to adequately lead amidst discontinuous change. Leadership is more of an art than a science. Rather than prescribing a specific formula and order for meetings (science), the leader is encouraged to learn what is best for the team's preparation (art). The team leader has the responsibility to learn the needs, the experience, and the gifts of each person on the team. This gives the leader the freedom to apply the principles for mission teams according to each team's specific situation. The constant in all meetings is that "Shaped for Missions" with the Learning Circle study is presented first with each team. The second portion of a team's time together centers on the "Mission Trip Preparation Kit" and covers servanthood, logistics, cross-cultural awareness, and personal preparation. The third part, or Field Manual, is given to each member and is utilized by every team. The use of the entire manual series ensures that the basic principles are a part of the team

preparation no matter how the leader sets up and schedules the meetings. Teams meet a minimum of six times and up to ten times. The teams meet often enough to work through the manual segments and also to prepare music, skits, testimonies, materials, and to make sure everything is packed.

Resurrection usually sends out three international teams each year. The team leaders gather together enough to evaluate the process, evaluate the past trips, and to prepare for upcoming trips. There is no prescribed number of meetings for the team leaders, but there needs to be enough meetings to allow team leader interaction. These meetings not only help the team leaders, but they also assist the pastor(s) to understand the dynamics of the teams and the trips themselves. The manual series will continue to grow and change as a way to react to the needs of the teams and the learning that goes on in the process. The overall process of team training and team trips into other cultures continues to teach the pastors about leadership development and training methods.

Strategy of Post-Trip Gatherings

Debriefing the mission team helps to bring context and learning to the experience. This extends beyond the trip. It is an opportunity to emphasize the discipleship principles that have been taught in the pre-trip meetings and to facilitate understanding of what happened during the mission experience. When the principles and experience are addressed again, it gives the individual team members a great opportunity for applying these same principles to their daily life at home. One of the goals of the team trip is to help members change the way they think and act back at home. Each trip brings the potential for new ideas and views on family life, work, and participation in their own congregation. The post-trip gatherings are a place where questions and challenges are posed to the team

members for re-entry into normal life. Resurrection teams almost always have had a fellowship gathering of the teams after the trip. The additional challenge is to bring three or four people together to talk about the entire process, the trip itself, and the principles taught through the circle and triangle. If these learning shapes are used beyond the trip, they also can become part of the daily vocabulary of these people at home.

Post-trip meetings help set the tone for the year-round mission of the congregation. As team members return from the mission field, they are prepared for how they handle themselves in their personal life and how they influence the congregation's understanding of mission. The teams bring together those who either do not attend the same service or do not know one another because they sit on the other side of the room. The shared experience of a mission trip binds these individuals into a new or deeper relationship. There is a greater feeling of togetherness among the individuals of varying generations, connecting the friends of these individuals together as well. It is more than just about relationships; it is about fostering a shared mission and vision. The new relationships and the shared experiences provide the opening for building a new missional identity for the congregation. The post-trip meetings encourage the team members to see their home congregation as a mission center that utilizes everything as a missional opportunity.

Identifying Partners in the Field

It is very important to choose partners in the field who have similar values as Resurrection. The value of producing a training manual series and training teams is amplified by choosing partners who have similar values. Finding a good partner is not easy, because too many congregations and pastors in other countries have been ruined by North American mission teams. Teams have destroyed these potential partnerships due to

the well-meaning but poorly executed desire of outside teams to do good things. Doing too much for the local congregations has created a relationship of dependency. The Christians in other countries rely on the North American teams to do the work, and the teams are anxious to do the work. Although there are good intentions on both sides, this type of relationship is counterproductive for the mission team. It is also debilitating to the Christians of the other countries to always expect help from the outside.

Therefore, Resurrection seeks those who value collaboration with outside mission teams and those who do not want to be dependent on anyone else. This primarily begins with the local pastor and other leaders. The attitude of the pastor/leader must be someone who wants to disciple others. That leader is someone who desires to learn and grow for the purpose of training others. Pastors who do not want to depend on others also will be willing to train others and empower them to train others. They may or may not have the experience in training others. Most of the pastors that Resurrection meets in other countries do not have very much formal training. It is not important whether or not pastors have training or experience, but they must have a teachable spirit. If a pastor shows a desire to learn and a willingness to train others, then it will be worth investing in that pastor and the congregation.

Typical partnerships have been with pastors and congregations. However, that is not the sole consideration when it comes to seeking those with whom Resurrection will work. The Christians who help those in their own country, who are teachable, who raise up other leaders, and who train others are the very type of partners Resurrection seeks—wherever they may be found. Examples of these types of partnerships include a Christian vocational school in Belize. The typical model for funding would be to send a check each

month to sponsor students. Instead, the school is in a partnership for building homes for families who do not have a home or reasonable housing. The students of the school will build the foundation for the home and will build part of the wall. Teams from the United States will come and work with the students and the future homeowner to finish the house. The U.S. team will provide funds that will buy the supplies and provide a flat fee to the school for each house completed.

This type of model accomplishes several things. First, it fosters the school's missional involvement in the community and using its own students to impact fellow Belizeans. Second, the homeowners are involved in the project and are expected to put in a certain number of hours on the home. The homeowner also will pay a monthly mortgage up to 25 percent of the value of the home. Third, the outside team has a chance to mentor the young men and women who assist with the house. Fourth, many homes will be built in the same area to develop a community. This provides an opportunity for the community to help in building the homes and helping one another. There also can be a community building built where a pastor can provide Bible studies and other discipleship options for the families. There is a potential for a "community" church to arise from the house-building project. The identity of this church will be influenced by this model of self-reliance and compassionate assistance. The model encourages the prospect that they can help themselves and portrays the North Americans as coming alongside them to assist.

Training is a big part of collaboration and partnership. Rather than doing things for those in other countries, the pastors and people can be equipped. Building strong relationships with the pastors and other leaders is important. After trust has been built, it is more likely that those who know the needs of the local congregations and communities

will tell Resurrection what they need. Since they are accustomed to miscellaneous North American teams coming down with a pre-established agenda to do what the team wants, these indigenous leaders are not used to sharing what they need. When they realize that Resurrection truly wants to know what they need, then the church can provide the right people who can train in the areas that fit indigenous needs. In Belize, the request has been for training pastors and church leaders to effectively counsel others. This allows those who are trained to go back and function with their own congregations and situations and not depend on outside resources to do it for them. The people are capable, and the role of Resurrection is to let the indigenous brothers and sisters know how capable they are and resource them to live up to what they can be.

Choosing Partners from the United States

Connecting with partners from the United States is also an important part of what Resurrection is doing in missions. The training manual series and the process of building teams serve the purpose of leadership development. Seeking congregations and parachurch organizations with similar values is very important. Finding those who want to train, edify, and disciple Christians in other countries fits well with Resurrection's goals. Resurrection has been very fortunate to have mission partners who share our desire to build capacity in the indigenous churches and communities. Bringing other congregations from the United States to participate with Resurrection in other countries will be recruited carefully. Many congregations seek to provide their first team with a good international experience as the goal. Resurrection's desire is to expand that good experience for the congregation into having a greater vision for themselves and the mission teams.

There are three areas that Resurrection considers for partnership with other organizations. These include vision, relationship, and results. In seeking an understanding with shared vision and compatibility, there are initial questions posed in order to look for common ground. “What is mission?” is the first and most important question. This helps to ensure that we share the same definition for what will be done. The second question is threefold: “What has God asked us to do together, what holds us together, and what could tear us apart?” Together these lead to a third question: “How do we work together?” Collectively, these questions serve to establish whether or not Resurrection can begin to think of working as partners. The definition of mission may not line up exactly at first, but conversation around this definition helps both parties. Both Resurrection and the potential partner can consider personal motivation for participating in international missions. Seeking what God may want to do and how people can join Him in that work connect both to a similar vision.

The next level of questions relate to the relationship Resurrection will have with the partner. The first question is this: “Who is responsible to make it work?” This question identifies what individual responsibility falls to each partner. It also clarifies that the partners each have a responsibility to make the partnership work. Another question is this: “What cultural differences may help or hinder the relationship?” This is a twofold question. On one hand, it is posed to find out if the respective cultures of the two potential partners align well. On the other hand, it seeks to see if there are any cultural issues in the other country that could create problems in the partnership. It is important to understand one another. Resurrection has experienced some congregations wanting to send teams to accomplish a certain task and celebrate that the work is done. Other

congregations understand that the task is a means of building the capacity of the local Christian community. There is a great difference between how groups will work with people in other countries. Resurrection would not want to be associated with a group that tries to push aside pastors, congregations, and community members simply to accomplish the task. The purpose is to build positive, lasting relationships in the midst of accomplishing the task in a cooperative effort involving all parties. This can be summarized in another question: “What gives us confidence in each other?” Discussing the answer can be the beginning of developing a covenant with each other.

The final set of questions revolves around results. The first is this one: “What difference will it really make in the work of the Gospel?” This query serves to take the partnership further than the sending of teams into foreign countries. This encourages a covenant relationship that will focus on reaching more people for Jesus Christ. It also recognizes that the ability to reach individuals in that country will depend on supporting the local church for a year-round effort. “How do we keep track of contributions and outcomes?” is a question that helps define the results. It also assists in understanding what will be measured. What gets measured is what normally receives attention. The covenant that is developed should contain some measurements upon which both partners can agree. The final question is this: “How do we handle changes and opportunities?” This question could come under the topic of “relationship,” but it fits better with results because the measurable outcomes are the result of the shared mission, values, and relationship of the partnership. The final measurement of any partnership is making sure more is done together than apart.

The initial reason for developing a training manual series was for the sake of developing Resurrection's mission teams. The training manual segments now can be used by other congregations who share the same values and who desire to become a mission center in their own community and the world. The shared goal is to give their teams a fruitful international experience and to create year-round missionaries back at home. By connecting these congregations with Resurrection's process, there is a leadership process taking place with the leaders of the congregations. There is an intentional use of the square-shaped process of leadership as leaders are taken through the steps of becoming missional leaders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Sending the first team to Mazatlan, Mexico was the beginning of a whole new direction for Resurrection Lutheran Church. Sending mission teams into foreign countries has changed the way the congregation acts and works. Mission trips have become the driving force for change and have helped to define what is done. Due to the international component, all current ministries are looked at with God's mission in mind. Vacation Bible School, summer camps for children, Sunday School, special events, and even adult classes have expanded their scope to be more outward thinking to be this: "to the ends of the earth." Going to the ends of the earth has focused the congregation even more on how to impact the community that is near.

Resurrection as a congregation celebrates the ability to send people into the local community and Houston. Before 2003, there was some participation with a local assistance ministry by a few people. Now there is a network of people who are involved in prison ministry, groups who regularly go into the city to rebuild hurricane-damaged homes, adults and teens involved in street ministry in downtown Houston, and retired men who drive weekly for Meals on Wheels. Service projects include teams that work with Habitat for Humanity, men who repair and refurbish homes for the elderly, and teens cleaning yards for the retired people of the congregation. Members of every age are actively involved in assisting a new Spanish-speaking service and supporting their new pastor. Members from age twenty-one to seventy-eight have helped to teach English as a Second Language on a weekly basis.

These examples point out that God can and does send His Church into the world, beginning at home. In going out in mission, there were certain outcomes that this

discussion sought to address that would impact mission teams and the whole congregation: how theology informs missions, how to experience God's ongoing presence in everyday life, understanding rest as part of having a more fruitful life, transforming current relationships into building deeper relationships with Christians and non-Christians, discipling others as a way to multiply, how to engage in daily mission, and transformation after the mission trip. The more people who go through mission training, the more who will be affected by these outcomes and who also will impact others in the congregation. The manual, the training, and the trips are the door to helping to guide the congregation in these ways as well.

Due to this, the project of developing a training manual for missions grew in scope over time as God opened more doors. Developing the manual also was enhanced as a result of the work of Breen and his 3D Ministries. His work in Sheffield, England was based on the development of missional communities. Breen and 3D Ministries' initial impact in the United States came about due to his work with Community of Joy Lutheran Church in Glendale, Arizona. Although they stopped working together, Breen and his associates felt a calling to the United States and began working out of South Carolina as a mission consulting group. We felt the biblical theology was very solid and fit the Lutheran understanding of how to put together a biblical model of congregations becoming mission centers.

The vocabulary for those communities is the Lifeshapes described in *The Passionate Church*. It made the most sense for me to use some of that vocabulary for this mission manual. The manual has become an avenue for introducing the Lifeshapes and connecting them with individual experience and missional living. The circle and triangle

are the most practical shapes for people living out their faith in Jesus Christ. The Lifeshape of the circle is the basis for learning from life and to encourage the team to learn from the mission experience. Breen's *The Circle: Choosing to Learn from Life* was short enough to ask people to read and simple enough for all to understand. Being short and simple did not mean that it was not challenging and transforming. Developing the first part of the manual around the circle challenges people to seek personal transformation and renewal. The triangle is even simpler to remember as the basic ideas of building one's relationship with God (up), surrounding oneself with a community of believers (in), and intentional contact with those who do not know Christ (out) are practical ways to help people lead a balanced life.

Although not officially part of the manual text, the octagon and hexagon come into play as part of the training experience. The octagon is helpful because it represents the importance of finding people in life who seek God and are open to discussing spiritual issues. The hexagon emphasizes that small groups, and clusters of small groups, do not just exist for fellowship. Any group that is formed is encouraged to seek a reason for existence, and that reason focuses making an impact. Thinking about impacting the community provides a mission for these groups. These same groups also exist to share that mission and impact with others. They are inviting others along for the missional journey.

One example of how this has manifested at Resurrection is a group of people who meet each Tuesday evening. This group formed because a number of members lost spouses through death. This group has grown to thirty men and women who come together each week. This same group travels together, goes out together, encourages one another, and even cooks for one another. Most in the group are not members of Resurrection but

grieving people who have been discovered by members of the group. Some in the group have become a part of Resurrection, but most have not made Resurrection their home. Nevertheless, they have a home within this group with their friends. This is an example of people on a mission. Transformation has happened without any conscious understanding of what they are doing. They simply live out their own calling to be God's people. They are people who have lost loved ones, and that loss is a platform for loving others who also have experienced loss. It is not done with the expectation that these people have to become members; rather, it is done simply to love one another as a reflection of God's love.

Discipleship has been what God has done to help individuals see themselves as sent out to fulfill God's mission. The process of putting together a manual began by borrowing articles and writings from other organizations and missionaries. The process of writing a manual was to find what God was doing at Resurrection and to have something that would reflect the core of who we are and where God is sending us. Although it is a reflection of our mission, vision, and values, this manual strikes a chord with those desiring to send out mission teams. In this way, the manual is a gift to the Church at large. If it helps others to identify who they are and what God is doing in their midst, I hope this manual will be used, changed, or modified. My prayer is that it will be utilized to help other congregations and organizations connect people with mission trips. For Resurrection, it is the beginning of extending who we are as a mission sending center. We never would have believed that God could bring us so far during this time, and there is so much more that He can do in and through us. To the ends of the earth is an emerging sense that God is sending each person to be God's disciple everywhere and at every time. We want to join Him in that sending.

APPENDIX
TRAINING MANUALS

The rest of this project provides the training manual components. First is the RAM Team Pre-Trip Training: Shaped for Missions, presented in Part Three, along with the main content of Resurrection Acts 1:8 Mission Trip Preparation Kit. The additional items contained in the Mission Trip Preparation Kit's appendix have not been included for review due to length considerations. For purposes of length, the Field Manual and Journal component are excluded as well.

Resurrection Acts 1:8 Missions
RAM TEAM PRE-TRIP TRAINING
SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

- I. Shaped By Jesus**
(Standing in the Changing Room of Life)
- II. This Is Your Special Time**
(Kairos Events as Opportunities to Grow)
- III. Shaped For His Presence**
(A Disciple is a Lifelong Learner—Kingdom)
- IV. The Circle of Life**
(Repentance)
- V. Missions Provides A Place To Learn**
(Faith in Action)
- VI. On A Mission Demands Action**
(The Circle in the Bible)
- VII. Shaped To Go With God**
(Always Learning)

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

I. Shaped By Jesus

(Standing in the Changing Room of Life)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, **Introduction** and **Chapter 1**

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **Matthew 11:28-30**

When Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you...” we tend to think He is asking us to exchange our burdens for His. A yoke is not a burden; rather, it is a way of sharing the weight of a burden. So what Jesus is saying in this verse is this: “Let’s share life together, and in the process, let Me teach you how to live in a way that brings rest to your soul.”

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 1

Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “Shaped By Jesus” Worksheet 1

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific which you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, **Chapter 2**
- Team Manual Sections

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

II. This Is Your Special Time

(Kairos Events as Opportunities to Grow)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapter 2

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **Mark 1:14-15**

“The time has come,” Jesus says. The time for what? This is no ordinary revelation like “time for lunch” or “time to take out the trash.” This is Jesus telling us that God is here. The time that God shall come down from His kingdom to live among men is no longer an idea of the future. It is right now. And for us to experience life with God, both now and in the future, Jesus gives the greatest instruction on how to live life in the presence of God: repent and believe.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 2

Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “This Is Your Special Time” Worksheet 2

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific that you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapter 3
- Team Manual Sections

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

III. Shaped For His Presence

(A Disciple is a Lifelong Learner—Kingdom—DVD-session 3)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapter 3

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **Revelation 21:3-5**

The kingdom of God is a place this verse describes as being free from death, crying, sickness, and pain. It is often a place people think of as the future realm of heaven. And while that is true, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is here, in the present. God the King lives within us; and wherever the King is present, so too is the kingdom. We get to experience daily moments where God reveals the same powers of the eternal kingdom to our lives in the present.

Read **Matthew 28:18-20**

A disciple is not only a learner of that which is taught to him but also an imitator of the one who teaches him. Jesus made His followers into people who would imitate Him in every aspect of their lives. His command therefore, was for His disciples to go out and imitate His life, to live as He lived. But Jesus didn't stop there. He gave the command that we are to create more followers that would also imitate Him. Making people who genuinely imitate the life of Jesus is what the Great Commission is all about.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 3 and Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “Shaped For His Presence” Worksheet 3

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific that you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapters 4 and 5
- Team Manual Sections

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

IV. The Circle of Life

(Repentance)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapters 4 and 5

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **Numbers 13:2, 30**

Wanting the Israelites to act in faith—believing in His promise—God gives them a simple command: Observe. And from their observation, Caleb and Joshua are prompted to act on their faith and obey the Word of God.

Read **1 Samuel 17:45**

Through his observation and reflections on his faith in God, David knows with confidence that his Lord is far greater than any weapon Goliath could possibly wield.

Read **Acts 9:4-5**

Here is further evidence how much God wants us to have a relationship with Him that is beyond dumping our petitions at His feet. He invites us to discuss life openly and honestly with Him, even if He has to use extraordinary methods to open the dialogue, as He did with Paul.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 4

Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “The Circle of Life” Worksheet 4

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific that you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, Chapters 6, 7, 8
- Team Manual Sections

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

V. Missions Provides A Place To Learn

(Faith in Action)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, **Chapters 6, 7, 8**

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **Matthew 6:33-34**

Throughout Scripture, Jesus outlines the plans He has for the disciples—even giving them ways to form their own plans. Some plans were short and simple, like the one in this passage, while others were more complex. Regardless of their detail, all of Jesus' plans were designed to help the disciples, and us, act out in faith.

Read **1 Samuel 20:14-15**

David and Jonathan shared a great friendship. The depth of their relationship gave them someone to turn to and ask for help in times of need. It is this kind of accountability that we all should strive for in our relationships.

Read **Matthew 7:24**

With this one sentence, Jesus sums up the final stage in the process of Repentance and Belief: Take action. Through our faithful actions, Jesus gives us the assurance that we always will have a solid rock to stand on and to trust in during times of trouble.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 4 and Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “Missions Provides A Place To Learn” Worksheet 5

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific that you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, **Chapters 9, 10, 11**
 - Team Manual Sections
 - **Matthew chapters 5-7**

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

VI. On A Mission Demands Action

(The Circle in the Bible)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, **Chapters 9, 10, 11**

Team Manual Sections

Matthew chapters 5-7

2. Reach

Read **Matthew 6:25-27**

In this passage, we can clearly see how Jesus used the principles of the Circle. In just a few short sentences, He highlights the steps of observation, reflection, and discussion in an effort to guide His disciples through the process of repentance and life-long change.

Read **Matthew 7:1, 3**

As we live out our faith, Jesus calls upon us not to judge others with criticism or condemnation but to lift one another up in friendship and accountability. This is the level of authentic community God calls us to live.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 5

Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with “On A Mission Demands Action” Worksheet 6

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific that you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

Assignment for next session:

Read:

- Choosing to Learn from Life, **Conclusion** and **Appendices A & B**
- Team Manual Sections

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS

VII. Shaped To Go With God

(Always Learning)

1. Read before class:

Choosing to Learn from Life, **Conclusion** and **Appendices A & B**

Team Manual Sections

2. Reach

Read **James 1:2**

Regardless of how many Kairos events you have been through or how many times you have successfully moved through God's plan for change, your life remains a piece of clay which God can mold and shape. Trials are a part of life, and God can use all of them for our benefit, causing us to mature in our walk with Him as we take each step closer toward His kingdom.

Choosing to Learn from Life DVD Session 6

Group sharing

3. Respond

Triads with "Shaped To Go With God" Worksheet 7

4. Reflect

Personal Journal Time

Write down something specific which you observed, learned, or experienced about you being shaped by Jesus.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 1 (35 minutes)

I. Shaped By Jesus (Standing in the Changing Room of Life)

1. BRIEFLY share an embarrassing moment in your life.
2. Did you learn something from that experience?
3. Discuss: *“We don’t learn by merely ‘having’ experiences; we learn by intentionally choosing to learn from our experiences.”*
4. When you run into tough or challenging situations, do you intentionally look for quick ways to “get fixed” or to completely escape?
5. Why is it sometimes easier to escape than to deal with a problem head on?
6. Reread **Matthew 11:28-30**. The One whom we know to be The Answer offers us an invitation: “Learn from Me.” Why do we sometimes hesitate to take Jesus up on the offer He makes in Matthew 11:28-30?
7. Jesus wants to shape you.
“Life’s answers don’t always live in the amount of knowledge we can accumulate. The secret is found in our ability to learn from our significant experiences and change as a response to those moments. Jesus will show you how.” (*CtLfl*, p.25)
“The Learning Circle is a tool that is meant to be both memorable and repeatable. It’s a tool that you can pull out and use in many different situations, just as if you had a hammer and screwdriver hanging from your belt. If you don’t wear your tool belt, you start to think you don’t need it. You forget about the tools that could be right at your fingertips and try to do things the hard way—and probably hurt yourself in the process!

All too often we only go halfway around the Circle, then we forget about the rest of the tools we have available to complete the job. *God wants us to be a completed project*—not something left unfinished. He will continue to produce events in our lives that seem to us to be the same lesson over and over again. Only when we make it through the entire Circle do we begin to see life-changing results.” (CtLfl Workbook, pp.16-17)

Do you believe this is possible for you?

8. In what areas of your life do you personally need to choose to learn from your experiences?

9. What changes do you think might happen in your life if you made such a choice?

10. What tools or techniques do you personally have in place right now that help you recognize the need for life-change and then help you implement those changes?

11. Are you ready to see how the Learning Circle can help you?

12. Begin watching for opportunities to choose to learn from your experiences.

13. **Spend time daily in God’s Word.** Daily connection with God is necessary to learn the voice of His Son Jesus, to learn God’s heart, and to enable you to be shaped by Him.

14. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 2 (35 minutes)

II. This Is Your Special Time (Kairos Events as Opportunities to Grow)

1. BRIEFLY share a personal challenge or blessing in your life since we last met.
2. What did you learn from that experience?
3. Reread **Mark 1:14-15**. Note the key words: *time, kingdom, repent, believe*.

4. Learn to recognize a **Kairos event**—

“The event leaves an impact on you—and it’s never neutral; it makes an impression on you.” (CtLfl, p.34)

“With every Kairos event in your life, Jesus gives you an opportunity to move on in your discipleship: ...to grow as a person; ...to step into the process of learning the way Jesus teaches us to learn; ...for God to intervene and for you to learn from Jesus.” (CtLfl, p.36)

“Kairos events can either be positive or negative experiences. They can be times of celebration and joy or times of pain and sadness. Kairos marks a significant shift in your life.” (CtLfl Workbook, p.25)

“When we encounter these Kairos events, whether they are positive or negative, it’s as though the curtain between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world is pulled back a little bit. It’s as though the margin between the two worlds gets thinner, narrower. It’s as though you can push through. Jesus seems to be saying that the kingdom is so close that you could reach out with one hand and take it—that’s why some of the translations say, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand.’

When you go through these experiences, it’s as though the Lord wants each of us to learn how to make the most of this event, so that we can enter afresh into His kingdom and to receive anew what it means to grow in Him.

...this is Good News! God wants to impact every single part of our lives. This takes God out of the boxes of our Sunday school classes, our Bible studies, and worship services and puts Him smack in the middle of our messy lives. And that’s exactly where He wants to be!” (CtLfl, pp.36-37)

5. Why do you think painful times are often Kairos events?

6. Recall a Kairos event that was particularly painful. Share how you were able to grow spiritually through that experience.

7. Note the list of Kairos events in the Choosing to Learn from Life book on the lower half of page 37.

8. **Watch for Kairos events** until we meet next time. Remember, when you see them, “God is near; He wants to intervene and have you learn from Jesus.”

9. **Spend time daily in God’s Word.** Daily connection with God is necessary to learn the voice of His Son, Jesus, to learn God’s heart, and to enable you to be shaped by Him.

10. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 3 (35 minutes)

III. Shaped For His Presence (A Disciple is a Lifelong Learner—Kingdom)

1. BRIEFLY share a Kairos event in your life since we last met.
2. What did you learn from that experience? How did you experience the kingdom of God?
3. Discuss the meaning of “kingdom” as Jesus refers to it over and over in the Gospels, in His sermons, in His parables, and by His miracles.
Kingdom:
 - The rule of God in our lives, His kingship.
 - It does not refer to a geographical location.
 - The kingdom refers to God’s effective and powerful presence and influence in our lives—through relationship.
4. Reread **Revelation 21:3-5**. How does the description in these verses match up with your own picture of the kingdom of God?
5. What do you think is the understanding of many Christians about the kingdom of God?

6. What do we learn about the kingdom from Jesus in the Gospels?

“Jesus doesn’t leave the kingdom of God in the future. He wraps it up within Himself. He casts out demons, He heals miraculously, and He disarms Satan, because the kingdom is not only coming, it’s here! In Jesus, the future rule of God breaks into the present moment.” (*CtLfl, p.42*)

“Jesus has given us a taste of His kingdom through the personal peace granted to us in our relationship with Him. ...Our freedom from death and separation does not begin when we enter into the future kingdom; it has already begun. We are living in the kingdom right now!” (*CtLfl, p.43*)

“Jesus was serious about the call to the kingdom of God. He called for a response: repent and believe.” (in Mark 1:15) (*CtLfl, p.44*)

7. “Often we think of ‘repentance’ as an outside thing, as actions. But actually, repentance starts on the inside. The Greek word ‘metanoia,’ we translate into English as “repentance,” means a “change of heart or mind.” It describes a process of transformation that takes place inside a person. In the process of repentance, we take a long, hard look at the Kairos event. We ask questions about it, we talk to other people. We try to understand what happened and why we responded the way we did because we want to learn from the experience.” *(CtLfl Leaders Guide, p.44)*
8. “Belief is another action word. The Greek word ‘pisteuo’ means an active trust, taking action based on certainty you have in your heart. We show our faith in our actions. It can also be translated as ‘faith.’ This is where we begin to change our actions. The inner changes that we have experienced in the process of repentance now start to impact our lives—the things we do and say.” *(CtLfl Leaders Guide, p. 44-45)*
9. Why is it important to put faith into action? (see **James 2:26**)
10. What makes it difficult to put faith into action?
11. Reread **Matthew 28:18-20**. The words, “time,” “kingdom,” “repentance,” and “faith,” are the heart of what it means to be a disciple. As if to underline the importance of discipleship, Jesus made this statement about discipleship as His last words before He ascended back to heaven.

“The word ‘disciple’ in itself is important for us to understand. In Greek it’s the word ‘mathetes.’ It means ‘learner’ or ‘pupil.’” *(CtLfl Leaders Guide, p.46)*
12. What prompts you personally to choose to learn something new in any area of your life? Do you have a different motivation in your spiritual life?
13. How does understanding that a disciple is a learner change your ideas of discipleship?
14. **Watch for Kairos events** until we meet next time. Remember, when you see them, “God is near; He wants to intervene and have you learn from Jesus.”
15. **Spend time daily in God’s Word**. Daily connection with God is necessary to learn the voice of His Son Jesus, to learn God’s heart, and to enable you to be shaped by Him.
16. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 4 (35 minutes)

IV. The Circle of Life (Repentance)

1. BRIEFLY share a Kairos event in your life since we last met.
2. What did you learn from that experience? How did you experience the kingdom of God?
3. What can really happen from a Kairos event?
“When a Kairos event occurs, we must decide whether to enter the Circle. From the moment we step into the Circle, we are in a learning mode. Things will not go back to the way they were before the Kairos event.
...If we don’t step into the Circle, we don’t learn from our Kairos events. Truly, it can be hard work to stop doing things our way and let God have total control of our lives. But when we do, we give God the space to change us and lead us in a new direction.” *(CtLfl, pp.50,51)*
4. Discuss these terms and thoughts:
Kairos = is an event word; it has a beginning and an end.
Repentance = is a process; learning means continually repenting of the way we approach life, deciding to think differently.
= We will not progress in our walk with Jesus unless we go through the Repent side of the Circle.
“It’s difficult to backtrack and review our mistakes—it’s often painful. But ignoring our weaknesses and the effect they have on our lives and the lives of people we love does not make them go away.” *(CtLfl, p.51)*
5. Take 2 minutes to answer these questions:
 - Think about a Kairos event in your life that revealed an area needing change. How did it affect your life?
 - Identify a Kairos event in your life that you chose to disregard either by running away or simply ignoring God’s prompting to change. How did that choice impact the “big picture” of that situation?
 - When something big happens in your life, good or bad, who or what do you immediately turn to for guidance or advice?

6. State how do you feel about this thought:

“The way we enter the kingdom—to allow God to rule our lives—is to make the inner changes necessary so that the outer behavior becomes natural. Once we change on the inside, the new attitude will affect our outward actions.” (CtLfl, p.54)

7. Discuss the steps in the Repent side of the Learning Circle:

Observe = take a long, honest look at the Kairos event. If we are going to make that inner change, we need to pay attention to our thoughts, emotions, reactions, and behavior to see what might need changing.

Reflect = we have to ask questions of our observation; Why? Who? What? When? How? This is where some get stuck in the cycle of worry. Change happens to us when we listen to questions and begin to answer them. Our answers must be honest if real change is going to happen.

Discuss = somehow we have to allow the resolutions forming in our hearts to be formed into words and conversations so that there is at least one other person helping us through this process. We are afraid of what conclusions the other person may draw about us—but if we are serious about making these changes, somehow the inner changes have got to come out into the open.

8. Which of the Repent steps do you have the most difficulty with? Why do you think that may be?

9. Consider this:

“Each time around the Circle means you have grown a little more and taken on a little more of the character of Christ...

Jesus wants us to learn how to be like Him. He commands us to love others as He has loved us and that love shall serve as proof that we have learned from Him (John 13:34-35).” (CtLfl, p.68)

10. **Watch for a Kairos event** and choose to enter the Learning Circle. Begin to work through the Repent steps.

11. **Spend time daily in God’s Word.** Daily connection with God is necessary to learn the voice of His Son, Jesus, to learn God’s heart, and to enable you to be shaped by Him.

12. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 5 (35 minutes)

V. Missions Provides A Place To Learn (Faith in Action)

1. BRIEFLY share a Kairos event in your life since we last met.
2. What did you learn from that experience? How did you experience the kingdom of God?
3. Give an example of how “real life” sometimes gets in the way of great plans.
4. When your plans get spoiled, are you more likely to try again or just give up? Explain.
5. Reread **Matthew 6:33-34**. The key to any plan is God’s kingdom. We seek that first, and God takes care of the rest.

6. Discuss these terms and thoughts:

Kairos = is an event word; it has a beginning and an end.

Kingdom = the kingdom refers to God’s effective and powerful presence and influence in our lives—through relationship.

Believe = means taking action. Faith, by its own definition, is active; believing in something and putting that belief into action are inseparable. Our faith does not rest in the hope of things that God promises us or tells us, it rests in God Himself. We have an active trust in God that affirms His presence in our lives and assures us that He wants nothing but the best for us. Our faith is active.

7. Discuss the steps in the Believe side of the Learning Circle where faith is evident:

Plan = should address what needs to be changed so that outward behavior can represent the change that has taken place in your heart. Many Kairos events reveal the fact that we often put something or someone in our lives in place of God.

Account = at least one other person needs to know about your plan to hold you accountable; faith is something we’re accountable for because it’s something we’ve got to act on. Disciples are always accountable to other disciples.

Act = faith bubbles up and rises to the surface where it turns into action. Faith is always acted out, never kept bottled up.

8. Which of the Believe/Faith steps do you most need to work on? Why do you think that may be?
9. Discuss the following:
“Planning is about vision; it is about having an intention to do something. As you take the information gained from your observations, reflections, and discussions about a Kairos event, you can begin to create a plan that will affect your outward behavior. You have a vision of the end result, and you make a plan on how to get there. Making a plan is usually easy; implementing the plan is where people usually get hung up.” (CtLfl Leaders Guide, p.60-61)
10. Since plans are often easy to create but difficult to implement, do you think someone holding you accountable to your plan can help you with that process?
11. What is it about the word “accountability” that makes us uncomfortable?
12. Have you ever been in an accountability relationship? What was the best part and what was the most difficult part?
13. Consider this:
“Accountability was a way of life for the disciples. Notice that whenever Jesus sent the disciples out to accomplish a task, He always sent them out in pairs. At all times, they were accountable to each other for their tasks and their behavior. They continued this practice all throughout their ministries. We, too, need to develop the kind of friendship where we can invite trusted friends to hold us accountable.” (CtLfl Leaders Guide, p.88)
14. How do you think your life would change if you had the kind of accountability relationship described here?
15. Read **Matthew 7:24-27**. The people who truly follow Jesus not only hear what He says but also do it. They take action.
16. What one thing most motivates you to take action? (*urgency of need; sense of conviction; guilt; compassion; love; sense of injustice; ...*)
17. **Watch for a Kairos event** and continue to work through the steps of Repent and Believe.
18. **Spend time daily in God’s Word.**
19. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 6 (35 minutes)

VI. On A Mission Demands Action (The Circle in the Bible)

1. BRIEFLY share your experience so far in moving through the steps of the Learning Circle with a Kairos event.
2. What are you learning from that experience? How have you experienced the kingdom of God through it (*God's effective and powerful presence and influence in your life*)?
3. Reread **Matthew 6:25-27**. How does seeing the whole Circle in one passage of Scripture help you understand it better?
4. How does this verse apply to your upcoming mission trip?
5. How would you respond if you were trying to hide your worry and somebody revealed it?
6. The moment of worry is a Kairos moment. What should we do with it?
7. Reread **Matthew 7:1,3**. We are made for relationships—with others and with God. We need community. Jesus gives direction for living in community.
8. How does the community of our mission team fit into God's plan for us to serve as disciples and make disciples? (*Remember the definition of disciple is "learner" or "pupil".*)
9. Jesus wants us to put His words into practice. How do we do that?
10. Read **Matthew 6:33**. This is the clearest statement on planning that the Bible gives us.
11. What part do praying and Scripture take in the Learning Circle?

12. Jesus taught about heart attitudes of love and compassion in His words and actions. This was seen as radically different than the teachers of His day who emphasized Law and outward behavior only. He was attempting to reconnect people to the heart of the Father.

What does this have to do with being a disciple and teaching disciples?

...with being a servant?

13. Jesus asked the disciples to look at the birds of the air. What do you think He is asking you to look at right now?

14. In what ways are you like the foolish builder?

In what ways are you like the wise builder?

15. **Watch for a Kairos event** and continue to work through the steps of Repent and Believe.

16. **Spend time daily in God's Word.** Learn the voice of the Good Shepherd.

17. **Pray for one another** for the weeks ahead as Jesus works to shape each of us for mission service for Him.

SHAPED FOR MISSIONS—Worksheet 7 (35 minutes)

VII. Shaped To Go With God (Always Learning)

1. BRIEFLY share your experience so far in moving through the steps of the Learning Circle with a Kairos event.
2. What are you learning from that experience? How have you experienced the kingdom of God through it (*God's effective and powerful presence and influence in your life*)?
3. Reread **James 1:2**. Why is God certain to give us regular reminders of humility like the one He gave Mike Breen?
4. What is one lesson you've been learning afresh after all these years?
5. Which one of the six parts of the Circle has had the most impact on you? Explain.
6. Has the Circle become easier for you as you've come to understand it more?
7. How has studying the Learning Circle changed the way you look at ordinary events?
8. Has there been an extraordinary Kairos event in your life to which you can go back and process through the Circle? This process may reveal some change in your life that God wanted but that you overlooked.
9. How do you feel about how fast your discipleship Slinky is moving at this point in your life?
10. Make a plan for using the Learning Circle on your mission trip. Begin utilizing that plan now, as preparation for the trip is actually part of it. Your journaling can easily track Kairos events and processing them through the Learning Circle.

May the Lord guard and keep you in His care as you grow closer to Him each day!

Mission Manual

Mission Trip Preparation Kit

Resurrection Lutheran Church
Spring, Texas

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INTRODUCTION

Resurrection Lutheran Church has been providing personalized mission trips on an annual basis since 2003. We began with a team of 10 partnering with The Mobility Project in Mazatlan, Mexico. That first team was blessed to help build a church on a local landfill for a majority of the week and to spend two days providing wheelchairs for the disabled poor. Since then, teams have gone to El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala and Belize.

Our teams have gone into prisons and nursing homes, worked with local churches, built homes, provided Vacation Bible School for children, distributed rice and beans and clothes, worked with children in feeding centers, built wheelchair ramps, built additions onto churches, painted, swept, done concrete work, done street evangelism, provided skits in apartment complexes, trained youth and adults to share their faith, and trained Christian leaders.

Mission teams have included more than the members of Resurrection Lutheran Church. Individuals and groups from other churches have joined Resurrection members. Teams have included those as young as 11 up through those in their 70s. Children have joined their parents in the mission field and grandparents have taken their grandchildren into foreign countries. Although teams are often sent back to the same places, no two trips are ever the same. God's time (Kairos) will always change depending on the needs of the people and the specific gifts of the teams.

PURPOSE AND CORE VALUES

We are a Christian Community That Cares! (Mission Statement)

We desire that each person in our community is actively discipling and bringing others to Jesus Christ

(Vision Statement)

We are sent to assist in the transformation of people to be Christ-centered servants and leaders in short-term cross-cultural mission experiences. This happens as we impact the world for Jesus Christ as we respond to physical and spiritual needs. (Purpose Statement for short-term teams)

CORE VALUES OF OUR TEAMS

Christ Centered – We are Christian in how we live out our mission by modeling our actions and attitudes after the person of Jesus Christ.

Compassion – We care deeply about the needs of a hurting world.

Servant hood – We exist to serve Christ and others in the spirit of giving which drives us to appropriate action.

Mobilizing People – People are our most sacred obligation and our most valuable resource. We will continually nurture relationships while enabling, equipping and empowering others to serve.

Ministry to the Impoverished – We will work with those who lack access to vital resources in a manner that will enhance their personal dignity, while sharing God’s love in Jesus.

Sharing the Gospel - We will communicate the message of Christ in a clear and culturally sensitive manner in all we do.

Integrity – We will live out our values through keeping our promises, to each other and to the people we are called to serve.

Partnering – We will attempt to do nothing alone. We will gain strength and insight from understanding, appreciating and respecting the differences of individuals and organizations with whom we work.

Quality – We will do our work with excellence, through meeting the needs and seeking to exceed the expectations of those with whom we work.

Learning – We will be intentional about capturing and utilizing insights drawn from our individual and corporate experiences and relationship



HOW WE WORK

Although those who participate on teams are always impacted by the work in other countries, our goal is not to fulfill the needs of the individuals on the team. The team, with the help of Resurrection, raises their own support in order to go and accomplish what God wants to get done through the local church in the target country. “Our Hands, His Work” is the motto of each team and it is for the express purpose of holding up the local ministries in each country and not outshining those ministries.

Therefore, the mission teams will not establish anything or do anything that cannot be sustained by the local church, pastor and missionaries. Missions is not doing good things for people in other countries, but bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to those that are served. We share in action, work and deeds. Teams provide assistance to those who are in need in order to also share the blessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Jesus dealt with the needs of people and brought the Kingdom of God, we also help people and bring Jesus.

As St. Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the gospel at all times, if necessary use words.” There, we are respectful of our local partners, the people receiving help, and the people of the country. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not sharing our American lifestyle but sharing Christ crucified.

SERVANTHOOD IS THE KEY

What is a servant? It’s possible that well-meaning Christians, wanting to accomplish something “significant” on their short-term trip, are unknowingly actually seeking to fulfill their own needs rather than the real needs of the people they have come to serve. The result is self-serving rather than an example of true servant hood. So what is a servant? There is a longer discussion on servant-leaders in the appendix, but this table addresses this question by presenting a contrast between the servant and non-servant.

Servant	Non – Servant
Denies Self	Promotes Self
Is a learner first	Is a teacher/preacher first
Builds people to fulfill a shared vision	Uses people to achieve their own vision
Called to empower others	Driven to personal ambition
Resists personal recognition	Seeks recognition, position and prestige
Freely accepts criticism	Freely offers criticism
Trusting of people	People must prove themselves
Confident of role and abilities	Deep need to prove competence
Communication is open and direct	Communication is closed and indirect
Gives up personal rights	Demands personal rights
Listens first	Talks first
Leads from the heart of a servant	Leads from a position of power and authority

GOALS

Resurrection’s involvement in global missions goes beyond simply sending teams into other countries for fulfilling experiences. Resurrection teams are always a part of a bigger picture of what God is doing across the world. Every team going into every country is a part of a bigger effort of other churches supporting the work of the local church.

Our goal is to be open to what God may be doing in the future in each country and beyond. Our experience in wheelchair distribution, building, education, etc. may mean bringing new partnerships.

These partnerships may include different agencies, churches, individuals, schools, hospitals, doctors, pastors, or other groups that can help expand the work in any given country. We are seeking ways to share resources and learning across the various cultures we serve. The wheelchair work being done in Mexico today could be a new venture in Belize tomorrow.

Our work as a congregation today in one rural area could turn into a church-planting movement throughout the country. It is not about our church and our work. We do not care about who gets the credit, as long as God's work is done and He receives the glory and the Gospel is shared.

EXPECTATIONS

Expect the unexpected

Expect to wait

Expect to eat things you can't identify

Expect to be amazed by God

Expect to have your heart broken over what breaks God's heart

Expect to love the unlovable

Expect to touch the untouchable

Expect to take care of yourself and your team members

Expect the "plan" and "schedule" to change regularly – and often

Expect to improvise

Expect to be Jesus to the unexpected

Expect to fall in love with the people

Expect to not know what to say

Expect to be a team player – even when you don't feel like one

Expect tears

Expect to be loved by the people you work with

Expect to be touched

Expect to give and give some more

TEAMWORK

BEING A PART OF A MISSION TEAM

Being a part of a mission team begins with some self-evaluation concerning your own motives for wanting to go on a trip in the first place. Although you want to go with the expectations that God will be doing something in you, you are not the purpose for the trip. You will not become a professional missionary by going on a trip, but you will grow in your ability to see ways to join God in mission the rest of your life because of the experience.

Our mission teams do not go to “feel sorry” (pity) for the people or to feel we can “fix” them or their way of doing things in their country. The primary purpose of the trip is to serve God, show His love, and be used by God in following the Great Commission to make disciples. The team projects are vehicles to sharing the gospel and not the point of the trip. As you participate in evangelism, teaching and construction alongside the local missionaries, you will be filling a gap in global missions that no one else can fill. Each one of us wants to remember that whatever we do in work and deed, will be followed up by the pastor and people that we leave behind. So, we want to offer the kind of support that will encourage their work.

Being a part of a mission team means personal and group preparation for the roles and jobs that we will do together. You will be asked to do personal pre-trip preparation and to gather with your team. This preparation and training are very important and will help determine the effectiveness of the team. God will use us as we become a team that is open to God’s working in and through us.

MISSION TRIPS ARE NOT VACATIONS

When you are on a mission trip, you are asked to set aside your own wants and needs. You will be asked to adhere to the team’s schedule, participate in team activities, work, eat what is placed in front of you (with joy), and serve others. Going with the proper understanding of the difference between a vacation and a mission trip will enable you to better understand the importance of being a servant on a team. The prepared servant accepts the disappointments as well as the joys of the project. When things get off course, look for God’s hand rather than reasons to complain. He will be working.

THE CURSE OF INDIVIDUALISM

Americans are the most “individualistic” people on earth. While we take great pride in this at home, it can be a real problem in the mission field. For the average North American, giving up the right to individualism and the right to be comfortable are perhaps the most difficult aspects to becoming part of a unified team. Yet these are part of the servant attitude required for serving on a mission team. The hierarchy in the mission field is: serve God, serve the host, serve the people, serve each other, and serve myself.

MODEL COOPERATION

It may take flexibility and lots of grace but always model cooperation, servanthood and love in relationships with teammates and team leaders. There can only be one leader. No matter whom you are what you've done or where you've been, we submit to the team leader. If you are having some kind of problem with a fellow team member, take the lead in sitting down and talking it out. Pray together for resolution and reconciliation. It does not mean involving the team. Only go to the team leader if you cannot work it out.

Avoid judging the effectiveness of the local ministry based on your short-term observations. Never override the input of the local host missionary or the team leader in your interactions with the people you are there to serve. It is so important to listen to the local people. We have to be careful about speaking because it carries so much weight among the people. In America, speaking our mind is encouraged and that is not bad in and of itself. Unfortunately, people in other countries will often sit back and they may not share what they are thinking or speak about what we have said. So, we must be careful to listen and encourage others to share ideas, plans, and opinions. Practical suggestions are best shared behind the scenes with the leader of the team and not with the group.

COMFORT VERSUS SURVIVAL

We as Americans have done an excellent job of figuring out ways to keep our physical comfort at a high level. In a "survival" based culture, we may move into our mode of trying to change our host and their culture. We are trained to see difficulties and come up with ideas to make life easier. When changes can't be made, we can easily be tempted to complain. COMPLAINING can be a terrible virus on a team and can easily be caught by other teammates. Accept the fact that in the country you are visiting, YOU ARE THE FOREIGNER. Find ways to see the differences as interesting, educational and enlightening. Share those views with one another.

REACHING GOALS

Americans value efficiency and production. Other cultures, especially Latin cultures, put more emphasis on relationships. Most team members have project objectives in mind before they arrive. Having goals is wonderful and gives people direction, but they are not the most important part of the trip. The relationships are the ways that we will lead people to Christ and that is the primary reason for the trip.

Make preparations and then prepare to go with the flow. Setbacks are best met with humor. You will find out how flexible you are when things go wrong. Remember, GOD IS IN CONTROL! It is His schedule and program and we know that He will bring greater blessings in whatever direction He takes the team. Look for what God is getting done!

RELATIONSHIPS

To accomplish the most and to get the most out of the mission experience, it is important to bond as a team. This requires an effort to get to know the people and some giving up of what we consider to be our “rights”. Don’t isolate yourself or spend all your time with a few friends. Work with different partners. Eat with someone different at each meal...and EAT WITH THE LOCAL PEOPLE AT MEAL TIME AND NOT JUST YOUR TEAM.

Use common sense with male/female relationships. In most countries you may visit, public displays of affection are considered offensive and inappropriate. Never flirt with a person in the host country. If there is an attraction with someone on the team, wait until returning home to act on that relationship. Attraction and relationship with someone in the host country is absolutely avoided.

You may find many situations that are funny to you, and may be tempted to laugh, make a comment, smirk, etc. Good guests think of the feelings of the people that they are serving rather than express humor or laughter.

COMMON COURTESIES

- Be on time for meals, projects, devotions, and departures
- Attend all meetings
- Respect the needs of others for privacy, silence and sleep
- Watch out for any behavior in yourself. It is easy to find in others...look at self.

MISSION TEAM VETERANS AND ROOKIES

If you have been on a previous mission trip, especially to the same location, don’t expect a replay of past experiences. Go with the intention of learning new things. RESIST the urge to compare experiences, leaders, projects and teams. RESIST the temptation to be the self-appointed tour guide for the team. Allow everyone to see the country, project and experience through their own eyes.

If this is your first time, you still need to deal with expectations. A desire for the trip of a lifetime may get in the way of seeing what lifetime experiences God is providing for you. The sharing of those who have been on previous trips has to be set aside to allow God to reveal what He is doing here and now.

CODE OF CODUCT

- No team member will leave the team or main group unless the team leader is notified and agrees, and then it is best not to go out alone – always have someone along.
- Church property, host country property, or any other property that doesn’t belong to you, must be treated with care and respect at all times.
- There will be no extreme romantic displays of affection during the mission trip. Married couples use common sense.

- All meetings in preparation for and during the trip are mandatory and cannot be missed without permission from the team leader.
- The possession for and during the trip are mandatory and cannot be missed without permission from the team leader.
- The possession and use of firearms, illegal drugs or pornography is prohibited.
- All participants are expected to dress and act appropriately for the host country and its culture. Never forget we are representatives of Christ.
- Check with the team leader or host before buying or consuming alcohol. We must be respectful of the witness we will be to those around us.



LET'S GO PREPARED AND "CONSIDER IT PURE JOY!"

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." —James 1:2-4

The responsibilities of being a part of a mission team were discussed in the previous section. In thinking about these responsibilities, we want to remember that our approach is one JOY! Our spiritual and mental preparation will assist each of us in having a positive attitude.

"How could I respond if..."

- My luggage gets lost on the airline and I don't have clean clothes for four days?
- I get bumped off of my flight at the beginning of the trip and have to arrive a day late in a foreign country I've never visited by myself?
- I've been asked to speak at a worship service – right now!
- I have to skip a meal because our bus doesn't show up?
- When I finally do eat, the food looks and smells like a 3rd grader's science project?
- I don't like the group leader?

- There is no toilet seat on the toilet?
- Someone sees a scorpion in the room?
- There is no shower curtain?
- Roaches! I thought we left Texas – and more show up after the lights go out.
- Electricity and hot water didn't show up in my room?

Missionary life is filled with the unexpected and unplanned. Simple tasks at home are major daylong challenges in another culture. Life seems to be in “slow-mo.” Add the language barrier and culture shock can be quite shocking at times. **Beginning to pray** can open avenues of grace and power for endurance, but also seek God's love and hope that we might have joy. **Our desire is that this trip will be a life-changing experience – and it will!**

JOY WITH SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND SENSITIVITY

Our Latin American contacts as well as other resources offer some very helpful advice regarding local customs. Keep in mind that the nationals will pay very close attention to the US team, so please watch what you say and do. Think of them before you do anything as representatives of Christ and our home church.

General protocol includes personal space and punctuality. Latin Americans tend to stand closer to each other during conversation than most North Americans. As for punctuality, a 30-minute delay is customary. Keep in mind, however that WE must be on time as guests in this country. Regardless of how late our hosts may be, two good sayings we adopt are **“BE FLEXIBLE” AND “HURRY UP AND WAIT!”** Our waiting time as a team is also God's time.

JOY IN GREETINGS AND HAND GESTURES

Our team training time will provide opportunities to talk about local customs and expectations in handling greetings. Be very careful concerning hand gestures. We associate a meaning with “thumbs up” or the “ok” sign, but in other countries, these may be considered obscene gestures.

JOY IN CONVERSATION

Good topics of conversation include family, occupation, technology, or fashion when speaking with women.

Topics to avoid: salary, how much you are paid for something. **IMPORTANT: DO NOT GET DRAWN INTO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GIVING MONEY TO ANYONE! CHECK WITH YOUR TEAM LEADER.**

Remember that countries in Central and South America are part of the Americas! DO NOT refer to the team as being from “America”. Refer to your home as the “United States” or “North America”.

JOY IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Pictures and Video are a wonderful way to provide memories of God's work through the team. The only caution is to be sensitive of those times and places that may not be appropriate for taking pictures. This may include worship times, places where people are in susceptible circumstances, or where it may cause tension with the local government.

THOSE "LOUD AMERICANS"

Keep in mind that our "American culture" rewards loud and boisterous behavior, which is usually offensive to other cultures. We can unintentionally embarrass our hosts in foreign countries by simply joking, talking loudly with each other, and laughing loudly.

Although our "outgoing/loud" behavior may be a part of our culture, we must be sensitive when in another country. Keep in mind that our witness can be compromised in those situations. We cannot even assume we are "by ourselves" when we are eating out or at the team house. We are on call at all times.



WORKING WITH LOCAL INTERPRETERS/DRIVERS/OTHERS

All of the work with our local partners depends on our team approaching every situation with humility. Drivers and interpreters are serving us... but we are serving the Lord together. We want to constantly encourage the importance of team with one another and our hosts.

Interpretation takes patience on both sides. Use simple and direct phrases when speaking through an interpreter. Most important, be cautious not to use slang or phrases that would only be meaningful to someone living in the United States. If you slip and say something that has no meaning to your interpreter...you'll be able to tell by the look on their face. Simply restate it in a way that can be translated to the group on your behalf. Even though you are talking through your interpreter, remember to look at the audience as you are speaking (even an audience of one).

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