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ABSTRACT

A COSMOPOLITAN THEOLOGY FOR CREATING AN URBAN
MISSIONAL SMALL GROUP TO REACH POSTMODERN
GENERATIONS IN THE CITY OF LACOMBE, ALBERTA

by

Lyle Milton Notice

Adviser: Baraka G. Muganda

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A COSMOPOLITAN THEOLOGY FOR CREATING AN URBAN
MISSIONAL SMALL GROUP TO REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS
IN THE CITY OF LACOMBE, ALBERTA

Name of researcher: Lyle Milton Notice

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Date completed: October 2019

Problem

Many youths within the Canadian city of Lacombe, Alberta, are having difficulty finding traditional church attractive, engaging, relevant, and meaningful. Because of the prevalent postmodern mindset of youth in the community, thoughts toward church, religious gatherings, and organized religion are pessimistic and skeptical. Research has pointed out that faith-based community initiatives have been either lacking or ineffective in addressing the disengagement and disillusionment being demonstrated by postmodern millennials.

Method

The purpose of this study was to see if an urban missional small group made up of 10 to 15 youth would have a positive social spiritual impact on their personal lives. The focus was to bring postmodern youth together for a period of 12 weeks to create an urban missional small group intended to foster a sense of community and belonging. It was to employ open dialogue but also allow for discourse and debate, and it was to facilitate individual and collective spiritual development and growth. The dialogue would center on studying and reflecting on the life of Christ; however, the dialogue would also remain open to natural discussion points and personal sharing as raised by the participants.

Results

The results were reviewed and evaluated by conducting entry and exit surveys. The results of the survey evidenced that implementing a 12-week urban missional small group in an urban city had a substantial spiritual impact on the group participants. The key six areas evaluated were (a) personal life, (b) community life, (c) spiritual life, (d) urban life, (e) church life, (f) church experience/small-group experience. Each of these six categories included a series of questions.

The study showed, overall, that 64% participants' responses indicated positive and constructive improvement since before the participants had joined the small group. This ultimately revealed that urban missional small groups can have a positive, meaningful, constructive, and measurable impact on young urban church and unchurched postmodern millennials. Hence, a new urban missional church plant is scheduled to be planted September 2019.

Conclusions

In business, the term *disruptive innovation* means an idea that disturbs the status quo and changes the nature of the previous model or version that came before it. One may consider urban missional small groups as a type of disruptive innovation because they have the unique power to reach postmodern millennials. Small groups are a new and different way for young unchurched urban youth to meet spiritually, they focus specifically on mission in the city, and they foster a sense of diversity inclusivity, and they are, above all, user friendly.

As a result of this small group endeavor is that there is currently a core group of new urban missional leaders who are empowered and equipped to (a) share the gospel with others, (b) disciple new believers, and (c) successfully lead other small groups that will ultimately attract this niche demographic and impact it spiritually for Christ.

Andrews University

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MISSIONAL SMALL GROUP TO REACH POSTMODERN
GENERATIONS IN THE CITY OF LACOMBE, ALBERTA

A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Lyle Milton Notice

October 2019

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Ministry Context

The project took place in the city of Lacombe, Alberta. I am currently the associate youth director for the Alberta Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I have been in this role for over five years now. My ministry responsibilities cover Northern, Central, and Southern Alberta, which include the city of Lacombe. Lacombe is home to approximately 13,000 people, and I am currently a resident in the community. Of the 13,000 people, over 1,000 are youth between the ages of 11 and 19. The land area is 20.89 square kilometers with a population density of 560.3 persons per square kilometer. The percentage of the working-age population (15 to 64) was 65.4%, and the percentage of children aged 0 to 14 was 20.2%. In 2011, the number of census families in Lacombe was 3,275, which represents a change of 7.7% from 2006.

According to the 2016 Census as reported by Statistics Canada (2017), in terms of ethnic origins, over 9,000 people in Lacombe are of European origins and thus make up the largest ethnic group in Lacombe, followed by Canadian, Aboriginal, Caribbean, Latino, African, and Asian people groups.

In 2011, some 10.5% were common-law couples and 13.7% were lone-parent families. That said, 61.5% of the total population aged 15 and over were either

married (54.0%) or living with a common-law partner (7.4%).

In 2011 over 400 families were considered single-parent homes. The number of students not attending school beyond the age of 16 has been climbing while participation in the labor force has been increasing.

Statement of the Problem

According to Lacombe Police Chief Gary Leslie, “Youth crime (is) our number one priority and basically what it involved was car prowling’s, The issue of car prowling runs deeper in the community. Youth were at the top of the offenders list for these acts” (as cited in Cowley, 2012).

Because consistent recreational drug use amongst youth between the ages of 15-35 has sky rocketed in the city of the Lacombe, many youth are having to travel outside of city of Calgary to undergo rigorous and costly drug rehabilitation.

Further research has pointed out there are no faith-based community initiatives that address this dangerous and progressive phenomenon of youth drug and criminal activity.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate *Creating Urban Missional Small Group to Reach Postmodern Generations in the City of Lacombe* to influence youth culture in a positive way.

Delimitations

This project was limited to 10 to 15 urban youth in the community ranging in age from 15 to 35 and who are living the city of Lacombe, Alberta.

Description of the Project Process

Theology

I looked at a theology of urban mission and incarnational ministry based on the Bible. I focused my reflection on the concept of mission in the Old Testament and New Testament. I examined cross-cultural mission, Jesus's mission, Paul's concept of mission. I also took a closer look at Paul's contextualization of the Gospel to the city of Athens.

Literature

The specific areas of scholarly literature that I reviewed was urban mission/ministry, cosmopolitan theology, small groups, popular culture, and hip hop.

Demographics and Culture

I created and developed an Urban Missional Small Group Strategy that reached out to the at-risk teens in the city of Lacombe. I first learned, studied and researched the urban demographics of the skateboarding culture within the city of Lacombe.

Incarnational Ministry

I heavily immerse myself in the local street culture of skateboarding, in order to live incarnationally and find ways to effect change in the culture. I believe that as I engaged and make use of popular culture such as movies, music, media, and fashion, I was be able to have a more relevant and valuable impact on the youth culture of today.

After learning about the skateboarding culture, I then immersed myself into the culture, learning how to skateboard by skating at the local skate park in the city of Lacombe. As I engaged and interacted with the local youth at the Lacombe skate park

every week between the months of April and October for a period of four years, I gained trust, builded relationships, fostered friendship and established community that in turn expose the youth to Jesus Christ as I live out the Gospel incarnationally through my personal life.

By creating an urban missional small group that engages in dialogue and discussion, fusing culture through biblical/spiritual interpretation, I believe it had a positive impact on the lives of the youth in the city of Lacombe. This urban small group helped to empower and deter urban youth from participating in illegal drug and criminal activity, find positive place amongst creative community of peers, discover their innate gifts and contribute to society in a meaningful way. Urban Church programing took place on Saturday mornings.

Urban Missional Small Group

In September 2018, I sought space to host a pilot urban missional small group. The purpose of this study was to see if an urban missional small group made up of 10 to 15 youth would have a positive social spiritual impact on their personal lives. The focus was to bring postmodern youth together to create a sense of community and belonging. It was centered on growing and developing spiritually together by studying the life of Christ and imitating the life of Christ by becoming more mission minded and community outreach oriented.

The main activity of this project was an urban missional small group made up of 10 to 15 youth from the community. The small group met for a weekly period of one hour starting in September 2018 and concluded in December 2018. I, Lyle Notice, facilitated the small group meetings. Participants were expected to engage in healthy dialogue on a

weekly basis at the Alberta Conference Youth Department Office, located on 5816 Highway 2A, Lacombe, AB T4L 2G5, or alternatively at Good Neighbour CoffeeHouse located in Lacombe. Bible study and prayer were key elements of this small group meeting. Participants' level of involvement included expressing ideas and opinions in the form of conversation, dialogue, and personal reflection.

Questions asked at the small group meeting included (a) How has your week been? (b) How are you doing spiritually? (c) What books have you read lately? (d) What is Christ saying to you this week? (e) How can you become more missional in your everyday life? (f) How did the Bible speak to you this week? (g) How can we become more missional Christians in the community? (h) How can you make Christian more relevant in your everyday life? (i) What does urban Christianity look like in a postmodern world?

Data Collection

The specific type of data I collected was in the form of surveys. The introductory survey was given to the participants at the first meeting in September. The researcher administered the anonymous survey and collected it the same day. At the end of December, an exit survey was given to all participants and was collected the same day. There was a total of two surveys given, one at the beginning and one at the last meeting.

The results reflected the impact the urban missional small group had on the participants. Another goal was to learn the effectiveness of a small group in the context of urban ministry and urban spirituality. I intended to discover if participating in a small group was considered relevant to young urban postmodern millennials. It was also my intention to observe the power of small group dynamics and to understand the

significance of reaching and impacting postmodern youth from a spiritual and social perspective.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR URBAN MISSION

Mission in the Old Testament

In order to understand the biblical foundation of what mission is and where it originated from, one must first start by looking at the Old Testament. God is a God of mission and since the fall of man God had a divine mission to reach, rescue, reclaim and restore humanity. Let us take a look at what the Old Testament writers have to say about mission.

Many biblical characters were urban people. David grew up as a shepherd boy but chose Jerusalem as the capital city of his empire. His son, Solomon, further developed the city of Jerusalem into one of the wonders of the ancient world. Daniel was the mayor of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, another wonder city of the ancient world. Nehemiah was a city planner and community organizer. St. Paul, premier evangelist of the early church, pursued an intentional urban strategy to spread the gospel throughout the Roman world. (Linthicum, 1991, p. 22)

According to the *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*,

The city, whether small or large, starts to reign in the biblical setting and God shows His love and care for His people, using the city to protect them and the through city using his people to lead it in wisdom and justice. In fact by “[...] Many times the word ‘city’ actually means ‘inhabitants’”. A city may cry (1 Sam 4:13; 5.12) and can be shaken (Ruth 1:19, cf. Mt 21:10). It can be characterized as fair (Isaiah 1:26), faithful (Zech 8.3) and holy (Isaiah 48.2; 52.1, Ne 11.1, 18). [...] A city can experience joy (Jeremiah 49.25), boost confidence (Jer. 5:17) and be renowned (Ezek. 26.17). It may also have undesirable qualities. Can be proud (Zep 2:15), oppressive (Zeph 3:1) and bloody (Ezek. 22:2; 24.6, 9, concerning Jerusalem; In 3.1, concerning Nineveh). (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, Jr., 1998, pp. 1111-1112)

The city in the old Testament was considered an integral part of society in the ancient world:

The city with all its institutions is treated as a single entity in many passages of the Scripture. Raymond Bakke claims to have found 119 cities mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the prophets were not only involved in evangelization, but also in urban planning. Jonas called Nineveh – as a city, including the king – to repentance. Babylon, the symbol of collective evil, a target was so successful outreach to their lifestyle and even his government was affected. Joseph and Daniel were keys to the city planning held positions as powerful politicians. Jeremiah fashioned holiness in a strange city. Nehemiah was the architect of a true urban renewal in Jerusalem. (Claerbaut, 1983, p. 18)

It was said to be that Enoch the son of Cain who built the first city according to Genesis 4:17. Some would claim that the world's first city was built by a murderer. After the flood, cities popped up all over the place by the hand of the grandson of Ham, Nimrod (see Gen 10:10-12). Out of those cities Nimrod built, we are familiar with two of them: Babel and Nineveh. Both cities tell the sad tale of pride, corruption, and self-worship. At Babel, God saved the people by confusing their languages; forcing people of the same tongue to group together and leave to start their lives somewhere else.

When we look at the city of Nineveh, it was a city that was continuously wicked, so much that God sent the prophet Jonah to speak to the people in the city. It would be safe to say that God loves cities because his children are in it and he will go to great lengths to send missionaries for the purpose of spreading the good news and evangelizing.

However, although many of the Bible characters in the Old Testament and New Testament were urban, it is difficult to find any biblical evidence of the Children of Israel reaching their neighboring nations. Trying to find Israel trying to reach other nations or a rationale for conducting missions in the OT, is to be faced with disappointment, because the Israelites had chosen to close themselves off from the other nations. This was demonstrating a misconception of their election. The activities discussed in the OT was

not human, but divine acts with a view to the salvation of Israel and therefore the salvation of nations, faced with the divine deeds among the Israelites (Blauw, 1966).

Although the children of Israel were to be God's chosen people to reach the nations and they failed in the mission, the Old Testament divinely shows a missionary God, showing His grace, love and mercy to all people. The people of God in the Old Testament had a specific missional role that was supposed to work in centripetal manner (Moskala, 2011, p. 3). That is to say God would dwell in and among His people and because of his presence in them, the surrounding nations would be drawn into the center force of God within the Children of Israel.

The city's role in the Old Testament is big and relevant, we have read about it since the book of Genesis. The frequent of mention of towns in the Bible is very common, with about 1400 references (Greenway, 1981, p. 11). It is also interesting to note that although God's original intent was to have communion in paradise found directly in a garden setting, at the end of this earth's history, what takes place is paradise in a great megalopolis city called the New Jerusalem.

Jonah as an Urban Missionary

Taking a closer look at cosmopolitan cities in the Old Testament, the City of Nineveh would be considered a part of this group. It is interesting to note that Jonah calls it a big city at least three times (Jon 1:2; 3:2; 4:11). We also know that it is considered a sizeable city of its day because the Bible records that there were 120,000 children or people that made up the residents of the city.

The city may have been made up of over 600,000 inhabitants of which when there is have a large number of people in on given geographical location, there is bound to be

human challenges. It is interesting note that Nineveh is referred to as nothing but an evil and wicked city. The social morality of that given geographical location was considered to be one of the wickedest places of its time. Hence, the reason why Jonah is reluctant to follow even God's divine orders to go and minister and witness to the citizens of Nineveh.

It could be said that the attitude of Jonah resembles a large portion of many Christians today, one that views the city as evil, violent, immoral, and wicked. It is a fact that much of Nineveh's evil and immoral behaviour stemmed from an aggressive military that took advantage of smaller and weaker nations.

But even though the city of Nineveh was rife with urban problems such as violence, murder, exploitation, slavery and immoral behavior, it is very clear that God still loved the city because people inhabited the city. "The prophet Nahum spared no adjectives to describe this dishonorable traitor of the nation and city of sensuality (in 3:4). Nineveh was a master of sorcery and a capital vice. Its artworks have been perverted by obscenities, their culture by idols, and their beauty through violence" (Greenway, 1981, p. 20).

"This was the reality of Nineveh and is the reality of today's cities. However, God loved Nineveh and its population (cf. Jonah 4:11) as he loves the cities and its inhabitants today" (Guimaraes, 2010).

The lesson that we learn from the story of Jonah is that one that all Christian's should realize, although a city may be corrupt, ungodly and unrighteous, perhaps that is a city that needed to be evangelized the most. Perhaps there is need for more urban missionaries like Jonah who may be reluctant at first but then are sent to minister to the

needs of the community and warn of potential impending danger.

Taking note that it was because of Jonah's preaching in Jonah 3:6 that caused a change in the city,

the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." Furthermore, because of Jonah showing up and sharing God's message to the city of Nineveh the bible says in Jonah 3:6-9, "When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.

It is imperative to understand that with large cities there will come large urban problems, sometimes that require large solutions involving large numbers of people. If people who consider themselves loving Christ followers would take the time to make themselves an urban missionary and reach out to one person in their city or community, perhaps we would have transformation of evil cities to God fearing cities.

Nehemiah as an Urban Missionary/Ezra as Urban Pastor

As we read the book of Nehemiah, we come to understand that the city of Jerusalem that was once great was now a city that laid in ruins. The city of Jerusalem that had much identity, much history and much culture had now had its people scattered and taken off into captivity. When it was time to return they met in the square, the city of the city and it was there were urban missionary Nehemiah and urban pastor Ezra took up the mission of rebuilding and restoring the walls of the city.

Ezra would be considered a pastor ministering to city dwellers because he was designated historically as a priest. His main concern was not only the renewal of worship

to the city but also the restoration of the city. “Ezra’s concern was to restore the city and all the worship service.” Their attention and dedication to make the worship complete was such that “he convinced about 250 Levites to return with their families” (Hoff, 1996, p. 295).

Ezra was considered a member of the priestly family of Aaron, he was a great scholar and teacher, he returned from Babylonian exile and reintroduced the Torah to Jerusalem.

As we take a look at Nehemiah, we see a faithful servant who was not a priest by calling but felt called by God to lead God’s people on a rebuilding campaign. Nehemiah not only cared for the infrastructure of his community, but he also cared for its people.

Chapter 5 of Nehemiah shows care for the poor and land reform made, in which the lands and plantations were returned to their original owners, who were in extremely complicated situation, some having their children enslaved. Nehemiah was upset with this situation (Neh 5:6), because he realized how this could affect the infrastructure and generates a strong economic inequality in the city (Breneman, 1993, p. 202).

As we consider the importance of urban ministry there is a need to be careful to contextualize the Gospel in a way that people in the city will be able to benefit from it on their terms and in their own way. Greenway (1981) believes they may have even translated the writings, with the concept that many would speak only Chaldean after the captivity, and he also posts that in such deed “is an important principle for urban ministry today. People need to hear the Word of God in the language they know best and the cultural context in which they are most comfortable” (p. 52).”

The story of Nehemiah can be viewed as one of the greatest biblical examples of

what an urban missionary looks like from an Old Testament perspective.

There is an emphasis on the experience of Nehemiah as a kind of prototype urban missionary, someone who can encourage and mobilize the population of a city for its restoration. The steps followed by him suggest a roadmap for the development of an urban mission project that transcends boundaries of religion as an autonomous or differentiated greatness of the city as a whole. His spirituality is not limited to the welfare of his religious community, but the reconstruction and restoration of the ruined city. (Hoffmann, 2007, p.12)

Jeremiah's Urban Missionary Initiative

Jeremiah 29:4-7 states the following:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

In this text, we find a strong sense of a *theology of urban mission*. The Bible says that the children of Israel were to go into the city and live there. God gives them several things to do while in the city: (a) Build houses and live in them. (b) Plant gardens and eat their produce. (c) Get married and raise a family. (d) Seek the welfare of the city.

By closely looking at this text we will be able to see a biblical outline for practical methodology of Urban Mission set out in four points. Let start by looking at these four points.

Build Houses and Live in Them

The children of Israel were instructed to build houses in the city and inhabit them. There is something about building an house and living in it. There is a difference between occupancy and ownership. When we are renting a house, we are just occupying the space but when we build a house and we own the home there is more a sense of responsibility and longevity.

The idea is that one will be spending a certain amount of time in the neighbourhood that one purchased a home in. The Children of Israel were to be spending a long time in the city.

Plant Gardens and Eat Their Produce

Essentially, God was telling the children of Israel to lay down roots. There is a special principal here about urban ecology. He wanted to teach the children of Israel about community in the context of the city. By planting a community garden not only world they part-take in the fruits of their labour to sustain life, but they would be sustaining their neighbourhood as a whole. In planting gardens, they would become more earth loving, earth caring and earth literate. They would be more likely to take on a bio centric world view, thus understanding the relationship between earth and God.

Get Married and Raise a Family

There is an interesting progression to be noted in verses 5 and 6 (Jer 29). It begins with the building of houses, the settling in these houses with the next logical step being getting married and having children. But the progression does not stop here, for the next

step is for the offspring to then get married and have children which will result in the multiplication of the exiles and finally to maintain the numbers of the population.

Seek the Welfare of the City

The peace, the Shalom, in the Jewish concept has a broader meaning than the term peace in English. This expression represents “the ideal for life, means progress, prosperity, health, justice and deep spiritual contentment. Thus, there cannot be Shalom outside of God neither Shalom can propagate without compliance of the law of God (1 Kings 22, Micah 3:5-12, Jeremiah 6:13-15)” (Lyra, 2004, p. 110). “Prosper you” in NIV becomes “welfare” and “wholeness” in the other two translations. In general, an interpretation that only holds with one translation is likely to be suspect.

According to *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* (2011), “prosperity” means “the condition of being successful or thriving; especially economic well-being.” That is certainly not what “wholeness” means, and even “welfare” has quite a different connotation. This should give us an important clue that learning the specific Hebrew word will be helpful.

As it turns out, in this case the Hebrew word is one we may already know: “Shalom.” Normally this word is translated “peace,” but it has a much wider range of meanings than our word “peace.” The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* uses these words to describe it: “Completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment. . . . Unimpaired relationships with others and with God (Harris et al., 1980, p. 1112).

The emphasis of the word is not on economic prosperity, but more on the positive relationship with God and others. Another clue to the meaning of the word in our context is the contrast with “evil,” “harm,” or “calamity.” God promises that His plans are for

“shalom” and not for “ra-ah.”

Our English word “prosperity” is not a good match for “shalom” in this context. For to us, the main connotation of “prosperity” is economic well-being, with some overtones of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction. But for “shalom” the main connotation is good relationships with others and with God, with some overtones of other sorts of welfare: absence of war, economic success.

The biblical context and the historical context as well as the meaning of the Hebrew word all serve to undermine the interpretation that God wants all His people to have economic prosperity.

Mission in the New Testament

In 1 Corinthians 9:22 it says, “To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” We need to be adaptable (not unprincipled) in order to win people to Christ.

White (2002) states, “Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world” (p. 105).

When we look at our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there is no doubt that urban ministry was important to Him. Reaching the cities was the first priority on His agenda.

In Matthew 9:35, 36 it says,

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

In Matthew 11:1, “Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.” Jesus was constantly on a mission to reach the urban cities.

In the Gospel of Luke, the author tells us that after Jesus confirmed and authenticated His ministry in the synagogue on Sabbath, Jesus went on to quote the prophet of Isaiah. Jesus then closed the book, sat down and then he became what I would call a modern day urban missionary travelling toward the towns and villages, teaching in Capernaum and in Judea (Luke 4:18-44).

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Jesus then proceeded to roll up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’. (Luke 4:16-21 NRSV)

Jesus shared his vision for ministry and then went out and executed his urban mission in the community. The essence of Jesus’ mission is captured in a single vision—one vision with two dimensions. Jesus’ hope for a restored humanity, which had double focus: Firstly, People who are spiritually poor and secondly, People who are socially poor.

Portraits of Jesus painted on the canvas of the gospel depict him repeatedly reaching outside the church to those at the bottom of the social pyramid—poor people, women, Samaritans, lepers, children, prostitutes and tax collectors.

His ministry was not just in the church building it was more far reaching than that His church was in the community but was also the community. Jesus was able to be comfortable socially living in an urban setting and ministering to people of all likes and

cultures because of his urban upbringing.

History tells us that Jesus was born in Nazareth in a town called Galilee. Although, the picture of Jesus's birthplace is always portrayed by images of hillsides, mountainous areas and much grass, it is interesting to note that Jesus may have spent much of his upbringing in Sepphoris, which is the capital of Galilee.

If it were indeed true that Jesus spent most of his upbringing in the City of Sepphoris, then it would be safe to say that Jesus would have been exposed to urban life and urban living.

Sepphoris was a large Roman-influenced city. According to Aslan (2017), this city of Sepphoris was,

Rich, cosmopolitan, deeply influenced by Greek culture, and surrounded by a panoply of races and religions, the Jews of Sepphoris were the product of the Herodian social revolution - the nouveaux riches who rose to prominence after Herod's massacre of the old priestly aristocracy. (p. 44)

It has been suggested that Jesus, while living in Nazareth, may have worked as a craftsman at Sepphoris, where, during his youth. Scholars suggest that the largest restoration project of his time took place during his time as a young carpenter.

This historical information would clearly suggest that while we may believe that Jesus was a just a simple country boy, Jesus may have not been far removed from that vibrant urban life of Hellenistic culture.

It is recorded that Sepphoris was a cosmopolitan emerging city, where multi-lingual citizens could be found. This developing city had water works, satellite clusters of village community housing and had a heavy economic focus on trade and infrastructure.

The urban life that Jesus witnessed in the budding city of Sepphoris included theaters and amphitheaters showing the latest plays of that time period. Jesus would have

known the cultural and social temperature of His day.

Another point to consider that Jesus was a carpenter or craftsmen. The Greek word for carpenter is “tectone,” the best translation would be artisan. An artist of his time would have wide knowledge and understanding of the ancient Greek and Roman styles and architectural influences. Jesus would have been keenly aware of the socio-anthropological contours of His time.

Although Jesus grew up in Jewish culture of His time, He was quite astute with the varying cultural mosaic of His day, having to interact with Jewish people, Greek people and Roman people.

We see perfect sets of examples of this in the Bible where Jesus interacts with people of different cultures. For example, “the Samaritan women at Jacob’s well” (John 4), or “the Syrophoenician woman” (Matt 15:21-28). These encounters would prove that because of Jesus’s urban cultural exposure from his early development, His mindset had been groomed to allow Himself to interact and engage with people of different social classes, cultures and ethnic background.

It could be proposed that the reason Jesus had so much success in urban settings was because Jesus was a third culture kid. “Third culture individuals can also be referred to as cultural hybrids, cultural chameleons, and global nomads. TCKs are particularly adept at building relationships with other cultures while not possessing a cultural identity of their own.”

According to Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock (2010)

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the

sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (p. 13).

Useem says,

In summarizing that which we had observed in our cross-cultural encounters, we began to use the term 'third culture' as a generic term to cover the styles of life created, shared, and learned by persons who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other. The term 'Third Culture Kids' or TCKs was coined to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society.

In Matthew 2:13-23, With Herod the King seeking to kill Jesus, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and he was told to flee to Egypt and they lived there till the death of Herod. Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus at about the age of 4 or 5 walked (traveled) from Egypt across the desert past Gaza and Joppa along the Mediterranean Sea to Nazareth. Mary walked about 400 miles (643 km) from Egypt to Nazareth with Jesus and Joseph.

One of the first cultures that Jesus would have been exposed to would have been the Egyptian culture. It was a culture different than his parent's original culture and heritage. Jesus would have learned at an early age how to play, interact and engage with children who looked and talked different from him. That culture experience would have helped to shape his urban missionary mindset well into His adult years.

As it relates to a theology of urban mission, we could surmise that Jesus was an effective urban missionary because of his eclectic cultural upbringing. Jesus' early development afforded him to adapt an expanded worldview, third dimensional world view, interpersonal sensitivity, cross cultural competence, cultural intelligence and a higher level of general adjustment and cultural adaptability.

Jesus could be seen as an urban missionary participating in urban ministry with an urban agenda. In the Gospel of Matthew 9:35-38, states, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the

kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless.”

As we study the Bible, we can see that there is a theology of urban living that is deeply rooted in Christ’s method of incarnational ministry. Christ came down from heaven and lived as a human being amongst people in urban communities. Jesus travelled to many different cities to work and minister to people who were facing urban challenges.

A theology of urban mission living can be seen from the view of scripture found in John 17:14-19,

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

A theology of urban mission can also be connected to 1 Corinthians 9:19-23,

“19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those ”

As one ministers to a community, it is important that one have the biblically mindset of adapting to the environment and culture that one is serving in.

The Apostle Paul and the Urban Missionary Mindset

One should note that in the book of Acts 18:1-28, the apostle Paul worked continually in the cities. According to author,

he was very successful in some of them. Corinth was one. The city was cosmopolitan, made up of Romans, Greeks, those from across the Middle East, and plenty of Jews. Paul worked in Corinth for a year and half, and was directed by Jesus in a night vision to stay in the city because He had many people in there that would accept the gospel. (“The role of the church,” n.d.)

The author goes on to state that Paul's method of working in Corinth serves as a valuable model to us in our work in the cities. Paul adapted to his environment:

Paul found specific people with whom he connected. He found people who shared his connections to the Jewish faith, to Roman citizenship, and to the tent-making business in which he was trained. He used those skills to support himself. He lived in the household of a couple who became believers and evangelists themselves. ("The role of the church," n.d.)

The apostle Paul was not afraid to engage in dialogue with the local people in the community. Paul used conversation as a way not only to teach people but also to reach people for Christ. Paul's friendliness and willingness to open himself up and make himself vulnerable to the citizens in the community proved to be a successful way of reaching a particular people group.

In Acts 17:3, Paul walked around and observed his community and said, "For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Paul did not so much focus his urban missionary efforts in Jerusalem. Jonkman (n.d.) states,

In looking at Romans 15:18-19 we can note two elements that summarized Paul's work. First, he directed his work particularly to the non-Jewish world 'to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles' (vs. 18). Second, he limited it to the main area of the Roman world where others had not gone. Paul claims 'from Jerusalem round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.' The concentration of his mission was on four of the most populous and prosperous provinces, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia. Both Luke and Paul speak constantly of the provinces rather than the cities (Acts 9:31; 15:23; 16:6,9; 1 Cor. 9:2).

Jonkman (n.d.) also goes on to say,

The city was Paul's theater of mission. Paul's theory was not that he had to preach in every place himself, but by establishing centers of Christian life in the important places, the gospel might then spread to the provinces. The cities where he did plant

churches were centers of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence or of some commercial importance. (Allen 1991:13) It is important to note that, though we see today a rapid growth of urbanization, the city is not more important and the countryside less important. Rather, Paul's intention was to have the congregation situated in the city to be a center of light. (Acts 19:10) How else could Paul claim in [Romans 15:19](#) that he had evangelized the whole province? Particularly, the church in Rome was to be of strategic importance when Paul planned to leave the East and begin work in the West. (Rom. 15: 23 24).

Urban Living

As cities grow by migration, and urban centers attract more people to dwell in cities, there will be a huge need for Churches to participate in urban ministry. In order for churches to be effective in urban communities, Christians will need to have a greater understanding of urban living and its implications. What is urban living? When one thinks about a city, there are several factors you have to consider. Aspects of urban living would include the language, the culture, the fashion, social heterogeneity (food habits, dress habits, living conditions, religious beliefs, cultural outlook, customs and traditions of the urbanites).

the geographic space transformed by the man through the realization of a set of buildings with continuity character. Space occupied by a relatively large population, permanent and socially heterogeneous, there are residential, government, industrial and commercial activities, with a degree of equipment and services to ensure the conditions of human life. The city is the geographic place where they manifest themselves, in concentrated form, the social, economic, political and demographic characteristics of a territory. (Scarlato & Pontin, 2010, p. 5)

Jesus participated in urban living meaning that He lived within the culture of his time. Jesus looked like the average person of his day, wearing the clothing, eating the food, speaking the language, and following the cultural customs of His day. Although Jesus was divinity living through humanity, and was considered the Son God in all His glory, Jesus did not choose to come in kingly garb or royal attire. He chose to present himself as a regular citizen who lived and breathed just like the rest of society.

A theological argument can be made that when evangelizing and urban city, one does not have to show up in a suit and tie, business casual and clean cut. Often Christians make the mistake of trying to impress those they are trying to reach with a certain look or presentation. If we look at how Christ conducted himself in urban situations, we can clearly see that his uniform looked like that of his neighbors and fellow citizens. This would imply that as urban Christians seeking to fulfill our urban mission we need to actively take part in the current culture we are living in. In order to have the same success in reaching urban communities as Jesus did, we need to take the approach of injecting and incarnating ourselves into the subculture we find ourselves in.

Theology of Place

As I discuss the theology of Urban Mission, I cannot leave out the importance of theology of place. According to Bakke (1997), the question can be asked, “Does God care only about people, or does he also care about places, including cities? And if the Holy Spirit of Christ is in us, should we also care for both urban people and urban places?” (p. 23). Bakke (1997) continues,

Jesus did not flee places bulging with people, but sought them out so He could preach the good news, teach them, and address their felt needs. Incarnating and modeling what the church should be, a symbol of the kingdom and its agent in the world Christ went about ministering in peopled contexts and speaking to ‘urban’ issues. (p. 23)

Jesus lived amongst the community of people he ministered to. Jesus was incarnational. The Bible says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Jesus had to be present in order for Him to complete His work. Many churches are less effective because they do not live within the neighborhood of the church they attend. Where churches make the biggest mistake with evangelizing is, they usually only go door to door to hand out literature before a major evangelistic campaign.

To reach people there has to be something more involved than just knocking on doors once in a while. There is a big difference between being a part of the community and just ministering in the city. The church's presence is not enough, there needs to be a sense of the church being with the people.

Churches are usually good at putting on programs and ministering to the spiritual needs of the community, but incarnational ministry is about relationships and spending quality time with people.

In the Bible there is a text where God asks Moses to remove his sandals, "remove your sandals for where you are standing is considered holy ground." What are the implications of this specific text and the idea of a ministry of presence? When God asks Moses to remove his sandals, what was the purpose of this? Why did God only ask Moses to remove his footwear and not his outer wear? Was there something significant about the ground that Moses found himself standing on? Was that specific area or location Holy?

In order to answer these questions, we have to look at who gave the directive. It was God who gave Moses the command to remove his footwear. God is completely holy and righteous. The fact that God's presence is holy automatically makes the place, space, environment and geographical local intrinsically holy as well. Because God was present where Moses was standing, Moses was standing on holy ground. Let us be clear, the ground was not holy in itself or by itself, it was made Holy because God's presence was there.

This is where we get our development of a theology of place. Where ever God's presence chooses to exist or dwell, that place can be considered a holy place. We deem

church building or worship spaces as holy because God is considered to dwell there.

If we follow this line of thinking into the world with geographically locations, God's holy presence can dwell in certain places. The Bible says that we were made in His image and that our bodies are a temple of the living God.

If God can technically dwell inside Christian's bodies and spiritual life, Christian can then bring a sense of God's presence and divine holiness to a place, space or location in the city or community.

The Need for Christians to Be in the Cities

Jones (2004) states,

God doesn't have a mission for his church but a church for his mission.

For too long have Christians divided the church and its mission, with mission being understood as an activity the church engages in. Church and mission are inextricably bound together in indivisible interrelation. They must stand together or die apart. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the city, where the purpose of God is not just to transform the stranger but the church as well.

As we take a close look at the apostle Paul's life, we see that he attends three major world mission trips that bring him to large metropolitan cities. Paul visits urban cities with a personal missiological agenda that brings him in contact with urban dwellers.

Paul bypasses rural areas and geographical locations and sets his sights on sailing to the city, eventually making his way to the major city squares to mingle with citizens and local city dwellers. On some occasions he engages in conversations that include theological discussion with the people of the city. From the account of Paul's urban missionary lifestyle we can infer that Paul was intentional in reaching the urban centers of his day.

Paul often walked around cities living as one of the locals in order to learn from the people group he was trying to win for Christ. In some ways we can see Paul as a social scientist and anthropologist. He lives amongst the community in a very intentional way, he is able to make a significant impact on people because he engages in incarnational ministry.

Contextualization

What is contextualization? According to May (2005), “It is the ongoing work of presenting the unchanging message of the gospel in the mutable forms of the culture so that the receptors are able to understand, internalize, and embrace the message in the manner in which God intended it to be understood” (p. 89). In the process of contextualization, the message of the gospel does not change, but the method of presentation could be altered. From observation of Paul’s life and message, one could see how he presented the gospel to fit the needs of his audience.

Stetzer (2014) says,

Several missiologists and theologians have offered suggestions as to how Christians can practice a critical approach to contextualization. John Thorn lists six steps: be present, practice discernment, develop your theology, find courage, speak clearly, and love (p. 14). I like to explain that when examining a culture, Christians must decide what parts to accept, what parts to reject, and what parts to redeem for Christ. I believe this assessment tool will allow Christians to contend for the faith as they contextualize the Gospel message. (p. 15)

Many Christians have a huge problem with culture, stating that culture is evil, and God does not care about culture. But understanding the importance of culture is imperative or successful urban evangelism. If one does not learn to understand and appreciate culture this can lead to a cultural bias and feeling as though one culture is superior to another.

If we were trying to minister to an urban, hipster and millennial demographic in a large metropolis city, we must understand that the methods we use to contextualize the gospel may look very different from a traditional method. Stetzer (2014) writes of the indigenous church,

Describing what an indigenous church might look like, Allen Tippett writes that when the indigenous people of a community think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ; when they do things as unto the Lord, meeting the cultural needs around them, worshipping in patterns they understand; when their congregations function in participation in a body which is structurally indigenous; then you have an indigenous church.

Once we recognize that the Gospel is eternal and universal, we will understand that was brought to humanity in the context of human culture. Christ understand the very culture He was coming to minister in. Christ had a mindset that was inclusive and not exclusive, He understand the importance of culture(s) and appropriately shared the truth of the Gospel in a relevant and Christ centered way.

As Christians in the 21st century postmodern world, living in cities that are growing so rapidly, we need to understand the ideology of the city, the impact of urbanization, the importance the urban missionary.

Conclusion

As we take a closer look at the bible throughout the Old and New Testaments, the theme of mission runs very deep. God because of his love for people and His entire creation, he put together a plan that is constantly seeking to reach, rescue, reclaim and restore humanity.

Once we understand who God is, we will see that God's character is rooted in mission. And once we understand God's character, we will understand that His

expectation for church and His people are to be mission minded and to ultimate join Him on His divine mission to save humanity and restore it to its original ideal.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will review literature on three main subjects: firstly, urban ministry and its relevance to postmodern generations; secondly, cosmopolitan theology and its vital role in relationship building; and thirdly, small groups and their importance in effective postmodern urban ministry.

Urban Ministry

What is urban ministry? First, defining the term *urban* will be helpful in understanding urban ministry. When the term *urban* is used, it goes beyond the geographic dichotomy between cities and rural areas. *Urban* is more of a mindset or culture fueled by music, fashion, mass media, social media, technology, commercialism, secularism, postmodernism, entertainment, even dance, and a culturally developed language (including colloquialisms, slang, and jargon popularized in social media). It describes a type of lifestyle that has now become a recognizable culture people want to adopt and emulate cross-culturally.

The ministry that will resonate with, connect to, and impact urban people must also, therefore, be urban in nature. If a group of people identifies as urban, belongs to an urban culture, and lives in an urban area, how can they be successfully reached?

Sufficient exploration from a sociological point of view must be employed in order to minister to this urban demographic.

Postmodernism in North American is impacting our world, and it will continue to impact religious institutions and affect whether they will grow or die. According to Taylor (2008), attitudes toward institutions have become increasingly skeptical:

A growing number of people are increasingly unwilling simply to accept pronouncements of institutions, whether they be religious, political, or otherwise, and are instead looking to themselves, to their peers, and particularly to alternative resource centers, such as Internet Web sites and contemporary media, in order to create new means for grappling with questions of ultimate reality. This is not to say that the day of traditional institutions is over, but it is to say that those institutions no longer have the last word or hold the authoritative sway that they once did. (p. 113)

Understanding urban ministry and its mark on the world in the coming decades will be important for the urban ministry practitioner. In order to understand urban ministry, one must first grasp the meaning of culture. This is because the society's culture has been shifting to an urban culture, as can be seen trending across the world in urban centers.

Rynkiewich (1989) explores the definition of *culture* as follows:

Culture is a more or less integrated system of knowledge, values and feelings that people use to define their reality (worldview), interpret their experiences, and generate appropriate strategies for living; a system that people learn from other people around them and share with other people in a social setting; a system that people use to adapt to their spiritual, social, and physical environments; and a system that people use to innovate in order to change themselves as their environments change. (p. 19)

Culture is what helps to define people living in society. If we can understand culture and appreciate culture, it will help us to relate better to people on a missional level. In urban centers, there are urban individuals who think a certain way and behave a

certain way. Is the local church prepared to meet the needs of the citizens who are living in urban centers?

Conn and Ortiz (2001) state, “Urban populations will continue to grow at almost twice the rate of national growth, and large cities at a rate three to four times as high. Does the church show any indication of interest in these expanding urban centers?” (p. 141). This is where the idea of urban missional small groups comes into focus.

In the context of urban ministry and postmodern generations, it is important to look more closely at the research. Ortiz and Conn (2001) describe the changing perspectives of a developing urban generation:

The Christian community faces a new urban generation. They are less idealistic and considerably more pessimistic. Jaded and old before their time, without hope and marginalized by broken promises, they become easy prey to the temptations of cynicism and meaningless violence. How do we respond to their needs? (p. 210)

In candidly portraying the attitudes, skepticism, caution, and questions of urban citizens, Ortiz and Conn identified the need for missionally minded groups to address this mindset by connecting with it.

Dixit, Dixit, and Stiemsma (2014) say, “One study suggests that 50% of all young people begin leaving at age 15. Another grimmer study found that the percentage to be even higher, as high as 70%. The research is clear; young people are leaving the church in droves.”

Many young urbanites may never attend a traditional church service on a consistent basis and become committed, baptized members of a Christian church, having been intimidated by the forms, customs, and traditions of overly zealous or ritualistic church members, but perhaps they may be more interested in attending a small urban

gathering at a local coffee shop where the environment is less aggressive and more neutral.

In this urban landscape, an openness to learning and adapting is going to be key if the Seventh-day Adventist Church is going to have a chance at remaining relevant in the 21st century.

Woodward (2012) says:

If we want to create a missional culture in the congregations we serve, we need to understand how the different elements of culture work. The language we live in, the artifacts that we make use of, the rituals we engage in, our approach to ethics, the institutions we are a part of and the narratives we inhabit have the power to shape our lives profoundly. In addition, we need to cultivate learning, healing, welcoming, liberating and thriving environments. We do this by yielding to the work of the Spirit in our lives by developing communal rhythms of life—grace-filled spiritual practices which engage our senses, grab our hearts, form our identities and reshape our desires toward God and his kingdom. (p. 20)

Kinnaman (2007) expresses,

Millions of young outsiders are mentally and emotionally disengaging from Christianity. The nation's population is increasingly resistant to Christianity, especially to the theologically conservative expressions of that faith. Of course, we have always had detractors, but not the critics of the faith are becoming bolder and more vocal. And the aversion and hostility are, for the first time, crystallizing in the attitudes of millions of young Americans. A huge chunk of new generation has concluded they want nothing to do with us. As Christians, we are widely mistrusted by a skeptical generation. This is difficult to take. Our research findings are a punch in the gut to Christians, and they are particularly challenging to theologically conservative Christians... There is more we have to understand about outsiders if we want to represent Christ effectively to this culture. We are at a turning point for Christianity in America. If we do not wake up to these realities and respond in appropriate, godly ways, we risk being increasingly marginalized and losing credibility with millions of people. (p. 39)

With urbanization progressing at a rapid pace and urban youth experiencing societal challenges in their communities, the church or small group gathering could provide certain answers and solutions to their problems. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin (2016), a statement by Efreem Smith is referenced in which Smith talks about the

importance of belonging in an urban context and where ministry can come in to create a nurturing community:

Warmth resonates, especially doing ministry in an urban context. For kids growing up without biological fathers or being raised by an aunt or in foster care, the church as to stand in the gap and be a family. That means much more than a programmatic approach. Young people have to experience, “This is where I belong, where I’m affirmed, where I’m pushed and held accountable.” This is a hopeful finding for a small church in the inner city or rural area. You, too, can make a significant difference with young people. You can get in the game. (p. 167)

Church is not as important to society as it was in previous generations.

For many people, the old religions no longer offer comfort and consolation or guidance and insight they once did. The rise of many forms of religious fundamentalism has not helped. More and more people regard traditional religions as a source of conflict. Yet the desire for ultimate meaning continues. There are more and more resources available that offer “religion with the baggage.” Baggage in most cases means the perception of unnecessary and definitely unwanted dogmatics—arcane and archaic views that seem inconsistent with much of the rest of life—and a feeling that traditional religions are out of touch and incapable of responding quickly enough to the massive and social and cultural upheaval that many sense themselves navigating. (Taylor, 2008, p. 146)

Brian McLaren (2006) also sees an undeniable shift in attitudes toward the traditional model and role of the church, and while he sees change as inevitable, he also believes that at the core, people will still battle the same vices:

The church must move along or be moved off the map on the margins of irrelevance. I am not one who has idealistic notions of a millennial “new world order.” The new world on the other side will have the same old problems—a stubborn human nature, ecological risks, economic pain, hunger, disease, racism, sexism, all kinds of sin. But these problems must be faced in a new way because—make no mistake—a new world is bursting forth beneath our bands of concrete and asphalt, erupting under our miles of wire and drooping between creosoted telephone poles, having its strength like tectonic plates to crack presumably solid foundations. (p. 17)

Urban small-group ministry has a place in urban settings. Where the city may be large, overpopulated, and crowded, an urban missional small group may provide a place where young urbanites can find community and belonging. Roger J. Gench (2014) shares

his experiences of several decades of ministry in the city. He makes a pivotal statement regarding the apparent incompatibility between the church and the world, showing, rather, that ministry must be done in solidarity with the people and culture and communities it finds itself in—including urban centers:

The church is sent to all people and nations, and, therefore, is intentionally mixed into the world. It refuses to give up on what the faithful God refused to give up on. It honors the dynamic, intention, and pattern of the Word incarnate. . . . All of which says that this world, God's world, is neither alien nor strange for the church, but is partner, companion, and neighbor. Indeed, we can speak of solidarity of the church with the world, a solidarity that consists in the recognition that, since Jesus Christ is God's transformative way with the world, the church too should be in the world. (p. 20)

Conn and Ortiz (2001) would agree with Gench (2014) on the need for incarnational, intentional urban ministry, but they recognize the inherent challenge to commit and follow through on such approaches: “The most difficult step for many missionaries and urban church planters in the United States to take,” they write, “is to rearrange our lives. Jesus rearranged his life for us, and it is imperative that we rearrange our lives for the people he died for” (p. 4480). Clearly, for Conn and Ortiz, modern-day Christians must not shirk from accepting this challenge. In the context of cross-cultural mission in urban communities, this incarnational approach involves being and living in shared spaces within the community. The experience of some urban Christian churches that have adopted such models has been documented. For example:

In Hobart, the most southernly city in Australia, a group of Christians calling itself Third Place Communities (TCP) has been attempting to engage in this process. The members have rented apartments within a two- or three-minute walk of a nearby pub. Some of the single and childless couples live together in shared homes. Other couples live alone, but they all live in a very close geographic proximity to one another. It is their practice to gather in the pub several times throughout the week simply to sit with and meet members of the community. (Frost & Hirsch, 2003/2013, p. 35)

Missiologists, experienced pastors who have seen their churches and ministries grow, and researchers would all conclude that urban missional small groups have the ability thrive right in the midst of the city where God Himself dwells among the people in order to redeem them, reclaim them, and restore them.

Cosmopolitan Theology

What would successful ministry look like in the context of urban cities and the diverse people groups they comprise? At the heart of urban culture is cosmopolitanism; therefore, urban ministry cannot thrive unless it embraces cosmopolitanism. “The word *cosmopolitan* originated in the mid-19th century and was derived from the noun *cosmopolite*, or ‘citizen of the world,’ from the Greek ‘kosmopolítēs’” (MacMillan Dictionary Blog, n.d.). The word encompasses the vision of citizens from around the world, many different people from many different places, universally sharing space together.

Namsoon Kang (2013) points out that cosmopolitanism as a biblical value is evidenced in the apostolic church. Writing about the apostle Paul, she states:

[Paul’s] restless struggles both with his external and internal world must have led him to passionately envision a world of justice, peace, and equality and to long for a “community in which his radical egalitarian statement, “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Gal. 3:28). Considering the multiple layers of Paul, I believe Paul’s statement, “God shows no partiality” (Rom. 2:11), can also provide a firm ground for philosophical and theological cosmopolitanism along with other statements that Paul made. (p. 260)

Thus, Kang highlights the fact that Paul dwelled on and openly shared his communal ideal of inclusivity with respect to race, social class, and gender. Paul’s unequivocal stance that social constructs that people use to create boundaries do not define people, emphasizing that we are all one in Jesus Christ, elevates the importance of human

respect, dignity, and equality. It serves as a foundation for a systematic theology and ministry that promotes effective social justice.

In the context of creating an urban missional small group, cosmopolitan theology is what will help the psychology of the urban missional group members in their effort to build the bonds that solidify relationships across different cultural and socioeconomic lines, boundaries, and borders. Kang (2013) says,

If we began to regard all people we meet simply as fellow-humans, fellow-citizens-of-the-cosmos, regardless of their gender, skin color, physical/mental ability, sexual orientation, social class, or citizenship and nationality, it is not hard to imagine what the world would look like. (p. ix)

This statement is important in the context of mission and community and leads to the topic of *cosmopolitan theology*.

Understanding the core ideology of cosmopolitan theology will help to bring more success in the area of urban mission and ministry. Kang (2013) states, “Cosmopolitanism is a longstanding concept that wide-ranging scholars have recently, revisited. The term dates back to the Cynics, who first began to use the term cosmopolitan to denote citizen of the cosmos” (p. 20). She continues by citing Diogenes the Cynic, explaining that in his assertion that he was a “citizen of the world” meant that he “refused to be confined by his local origins and wanted to move beyond local group memberships. Diogenes meant to assert that local affiliations were of lesser importance than a primary affiliation with humanity” (p. 51). Once a person understands that he or she is a citizen of the world and not only a citizen of the country of his or her birth or local community, it opens up a whole new world of meaning in the context of community and familial love. The idea that we should be all seen and treated as equal in terms of human rights and dignity can be translated into small groups today. Small groups are

powerful in the context of creating intentional community connections. It would be beneficial for all participants of a small group to see themselves a part of larger piece of human fabric, rather than adopting merely a localized sense of identity.

Usually, when different people of different cultural ethnicities intentionally get together, such as multicultural events in churches or in communities, they celebrate (a) their geographic and cultural origins and offerings with pride as well as (b) the decision to come together, commune, and share with one another. In the spirit of cosmopolitanism, *where I come from* is not as important as the fact that *I came* and that *we are all here together*. The fact remains that we are all humans, part of the human fabric of life. But although people are born as separate individuals, they are interconnected to other humans and make up a universal people living in the same ecosphere. Human beings are individual, autonomous, and unique but belong to a universal community.

Hesslein (2015) mentions,

Toni Erskine constructs a more effective application of cosmopolitanism by examining the negotiation of difference in contemporary geo-political conflicts. Studying the construction of relationships between ‘strangers’ and ‘enemies,’ Erskine argues that we are each and all particular, but the existence of particularity as a human characteristic creates a universalism that results in the creation of multiple and fluid communities held together by individuals’ shared particularities. That each human is constituted of particularities is a universal human trait (and, indeed, the only one), and that we each participate in this universality is the basis for relationship with one another. (p. 71)

Although humanity is made up of many different individuals hailing from various cultural and social backgrounds, people can meet together and participate in life together because they are interconnected and interrelated through the tapestry of humanity.

The idea behind urban missional small groups is to create small cell groups of 10 to 15 people who are diverse, multicultural, postmodern, millennial, and urban. When

this mixture of people intentionally meet together to create community and foster relationships, it is a microcosm of what is possible on a global, universal scale. To further this idea, Livermore (2009) states,

What do you do when you encounter someone who isn't like you? How do you feel? What goes on inside you? How do you relate to him or her? These are the kinds of questions we want to explore in this book. Few things are more basic to life than expressing love and respect for people who look, think, believe, act, and see differently than we do. We want to adapt to the barrage of cultures around us while still remaining true to ourselves. We want to let the world change us so that we can be part of changing the world. And we want to move from the desire to love across the chasm of cultural difference to the ability to express our love for people of difference. Relating lovingly to our fellow human beings is central to what it means to be human. And when it comes down to it, Christian ministry at its core is interacting with all kinds of people in ways that give them glimpses of Jesus in us. (p. 11)

With so many different cultures, people, personality types, worldviews, and belief systems, how can humans possibly find ways to coexist cooperatively in community?

Livermore (2009) goes on to explain,

The billions of us sharing planet Earth together have so much in common. We're all born. We all die. We're all created in the image of God. We eat, sleep, persevere, and care for our young. We long for meaning and purpose, and we develop societies with those around us. But the way we go about the many things we have in common is deeply rooted in our unique personalities and cultures. So although we have so much in common, we have as much or more about us that's different. Asian. European. Tattooed. Clean-cut. Male. Female. Old. Young. Pentecostal. Emergent. Republican. Democrat. Suburban. Rural. Urban. These points of difference are where we find both our greatest challenges and our greatest discoveries. And as the world becomes increasingly more connected and accessible, the number of encounters we have with those who are culturally different are growing daily ... But seeking out and loving people of difference is a far greater challenge. Therefore, learning how to reach across the chasm of cultural difference with love and respect is becoming an essential competency for today's ministry leader. (p. 11)

The work of urban missional small groups is not intended to save the world, but to help bring people together on a local scale. If it is at all possible for urban small groups of this nature to come together and facilitate dialogue, growth, transformation, and community,

it is one small step toward a global postmodern urban culture that universally has shifted consciousness throughout humanity.

Race: A Human Construct

Despite cosmopolitanism's promotion of seeing oneself as a citizen of the world and urban culture's embracing of diversity, racial tension should be addressed because it is still something that may be experienced in the context of an urban missional small group. That is because societies with large urban populations oftentimes deal with racial issues. People seen as belonging to some races are not immune from being marginalized and facing regular discrimination, even in a multicultural society. Social and racial biases can and still do form. So, if an urban small group is assembling, at some point it will likely have to face the serious issue of race head on. Acknowledging that the current social landscape in society has categorized and marginalized people group based on race, helps people in a small group understand that individuals who have reservations may potentially join the group, which means that the group may have to work through racial issues or tensions if they arise. Cosmopolitan theology will help to understand and deal with racial challenges.

Cosmopolitan theology delves into the subject of race. It explores the question What is race? Where does it come from? How come some parts of society have, historically, been segregated, fragmented, classified, and categorized into groups according to race? Where did this construct come from? These questions are explored by not only cosmopolitan theology but also scientific and sociological research bodies. A special *National Geographic* edition entitled "The Race Issue" brings a fresh perspective.

In the article “There’s No Scientific Basis for Race—It’s a Made-Up Label,” Kolbert (2018) writes:

Morton believed that people could be divided into five races and that these represented separate acts of creation. The races had distinct characters, which corresponded to their place in a divinely determined hierarchy. Morton’s “craniometry” showed, he claimed, that whites, or “Caucasians,” were the most intelligent of the races. East Asians—Morton used the term “Mongolian”—though “ingenious” and “susceptible of cultivation,” were one step down. Next came Southeast Asians, followed by Native Americans. Blacks, or “Ethiopians,” were at the bottom. In the decades before the Civil War, Morton’s ideas were quickly taken up by the defenders of slavery.

So where did the concept of race originate? It was a prominent scientist/doctor who created the concept of race? Kolbert goes on to say,

Today Morton is known as the father of scientific racism. So many of the horrors of the past few centuries can be traced to the idea that one race is inferior to another that a tour of his collection is a haunting experience. To an uncomfortable degree we still live with Morton’s legacy: Racial distinctions continue to shape our politics, our neighborhoods, and our sense of self.

Truly fascinating about the concept of race is what Kolbert further states about common human ancestry:

Over the past few decades, genetic research has revealed two deep truths about people. The first is that all humans are closely related—more closely related than all chimps, even though there are many more humans around today. Everyone has the same collection of genes, but with the exception of identical twins, everyone has slightly different versions of some of them. Studies of this genetic diversity have allowed scientists to reconstruct a kind of family tree of human populations. That has revealed the second deep truth: In a very real sense, all people alive today are Africans... When people speak about race, usually they seem to be referring to skin color and, at the same time, to something more than skin color. This is the legacy of people such as Morton, who developed the “science” of race to suit his own prejudices and got the actual science totally wrong. Science today tells us that the visible differences between peoples are accidents of history. They reflect how our ancestors dealt with sun exposure, and not much else.

The fact that race and the color of our skin can be so divisive, which leads into a type of social classism. In actuality, we all have the same collection of genes, and we are all African.

Edmonds (2018) writes, “Historically, when humans have drawn lines of identity—separating Us from Them—they’ve often relied on skin color as a proxy for race. But the 21st-century understanding of human genetics tells us that the whole idea of race is a human invention.”

A common thread in what Kang (2013), Kolbert (2018), and Edmonds (2018) have said is that race is an artificial construct and that there is more that connects human beings than what separates them. By breaking down the social construct of race, there will be more of an understanding of where issues of race systemically stem from.

Small Groups

Thus far surveying the literature of urban ministry and cosmopolitan theology, one can see a connection between the importance of understanding these two subjects, that small-group members would benefit from understanding the urban demographic and from grasping the human construct of race, therefore learning how to accept ethnically diverse people. But how do these two subjects relate to small groups? It will be apparent that by understanding the elements and dynamics of what a small group does and can do, will help bridge the gap of connectivity between urban ministry and cosmopolitan theology.

Transformational Groups

Groups are collectives of individuals whereby people come together for frequent social interaction, usually with a common purpose or goal in mind. Transformational groups go a step further. A transformational group is one that not only comes together for a unified purpose but also (a) transforms those within the group and (b) impacts change outside of the group.

When growth takes place, it often happens in a community. According to Stetzer and Geiger (2014)

Scripture constantly paints the picture for us that growth happens in community, and there we see the eternal value. Growth happens in community because the Bible places community as a critical step of obedience for the Christ follower. So the Christ follower outside of community is living in disobedience. Community is assumed—if I am out of community, I am out of God’s will. The church (ecclesia) is the gathering of the called-out ones. They are called out of darkness, out of hiding and shame (Gen. 3:8–10) and into relationship with God and with others through Jesus. (p. 15)

Stetzer and Geiger (2014) inform us that growth takes place inside community and equates the church body with *community*. However, other theological, missiological, and research literature explores the potential and possibilities of community—ecclesiastical and otherwise—as manifested in smaller-sized groups.

McTaggart (2017) shares,

At some point I began to acknowledge that the group-intention experience itself was causing big changes in people: changing individual consciousness, removing sense of separation and individuality, and placing members of the group in what can only be described as a state of ecstatic unity. With each experience, no matter how large or small whether the global experiments or the Power of Eight groups, I observed the same group dynamic, a dynamic so powerful and life-transforming that it enabled individual miracles to take place. I recorded hundreds, if not thousands, of these instantaneous miracles in participants lives: they healed longstanding serious health conditions. They mended estranged relationships. They discovered a renewed life purpose and cast-off workaday jobs in favour of a career that was more adventurous and fulfilling. A few of them even transformed right in front of me. And there was no shaman or guru present, no complex healing process involved—in fact, no previous experience necessary. The inciting instrument for all of this was simply the gathering of people into a group. (p. xviii)

This research finding is exciting because it indicates not only that growth takes place in community but also that gathering in smaller groups can have a more powerful impact on the group members than do larger gatherings of people, such as a large church. If, in fact, an undeniable power resides within small group gatherings, churches would be

wise to create models for small group gatherings that can, in turn, empower and mobilize the larger church body.

Stetzer and Geiger (2014) and McTaggart (2017), although from different backgrounds, share the same idea that transformation can happen in the form of a small group. The act of people coming together opens up the possibility for something to take place that has a transformative impact on the group.

Assimilation

Within small groups, for transformation to take place, there must be assimilation.

Nelson Searcy (2008) speaks of transformation through assimilation:

Assimilation leads to life transformation by giving people the means and opportunity to become maturing followers of Christ. In broad terms, “assimilation” can be defined as the process used to encourage your first-time guest to continue coming back until they see and understand God’s power, accept Jesus as their savior and commit themselves to the local church through membership. (p. 4)

Powel et al. (2016) state that “structures are important” but that they “simply *are not enough*” (p. 166). In their collaborative exploration and research, they have made the following observations and conclusion:

Our research indicates that leaders need to stop assuming that programs alone are going to foster close relationships. In our analysis of the terms young people and adults use to describe their own churches or parishes, we noticed repeated words such as welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring. We began to call this warmth cluster. Across the board in statistical analysis, the warmth cluster emerged as a stronger variable than any one program. And while 6 out of 10 interviewees mentioned group practices like small groups, youth group, and retreats when they talked about why their church is thriving, what seems important about those practices is that they create space for people to be together and nurture relationships. (p. 166)

Literature that explores small-group dynamics unequivocally concludes that assimilation within small groups allows for bonding and connection to take place among

people in the group; it allows for relationships to be developed, fostered, and nurtured with spiritual impact.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

For a missional small group to be considered urban, it must have some element of cultural diversity. When different people from different backgrounds but with a similar value system come together, the results can be powerful. Cultural diversity can be correlated to financial success. In the business sector, some companies have figured out that when they have a diverse group of minds coming together, something happens in the process that leads to greater profitability. Hunt, Yee, Prince, and Dixon-Fyle (2018) show this:

Top-team ethnic and cultural diversity is correlated with profitability. In our 2017 data set, we looked at racial and cultural diversity in six countries where the definition of ethnic diversity was consistent and our data were reliable. As in 2014, we found that companies with the most ethnically diverse executive teams—not only with respect to absolute representation but also of variety or mix of ethnicities—are 33 percent more likely to outperform their peers on profitability. That’s comparable to the 35 percent outperformance reported in 2014, with both figures being statistically significant. . . . Our research confirms that gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity, particularly within executive teams, continue to be correlated to financial performance across multiple countries worldwide. In our 2015 report, our hypotheses about what drives this correlation were that more diverse companies are better able to attract top talent; to improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making; and to secure their license to operate—all of which we believe continue to be relevant.

Companies report that materially improving the representation of diverse talent within their ranks, as well as effectively utilizing inclusion and diversity as an enabler of business impact, are particularly challenging goals. Despite this, multiple companies worldwide have succeeded in making sizable improvements to inclusion and diversity across their organizations, and they have been reaping tangible benefits for their efforts.

The insight shared in this article suggests that the business world is discovering that for a company to produce and be profitable, its workers and teams need to be diverse in

gender, ethnicity, and culture. The question could be asked are Adventist churches in North America truly multicultural diverse places of worship? Are monoculture churches effective? Or are multicultural churches more effective because of the diverse sets of people that make up the body of the church?

The group that consists of a diverse set of people will not only be more profitable but also has the opportunity to be even more successful, because people would be bringing different perspectives, beliefs, and thought patterns to the table. At the core, or DNA, of the urban missional small group are diversity and inclusion.

Although diversity and inclusion are key elements factored into the success of an urban missional small group, the group if it is going to even more successful must have some form of purpose that empower each member with a mission.

Mission

Small groups that are highly successful appear to thrive because of their cultural and ethnically diverse atmosphere. If we have a group that is diverse culturally, adds While it is highly beneficial for a small group to come together for the purpose of sharing, discipleship, and accountability alone. There must also be an overall purpose, and that purpose takes shape in the form of mission.

Stetzer and Im (2016) argue that mission is central to a church's identity:

God is a missionary God in this culture and in every culture. His nature does not change with location. Therefore, a missionary posture should be the normal expression of the church in all times and places. The church needs to realize that mission is its fundamental identity. (p. 597)

With mission being foundational to the purpose of a church's existence, one might ask, What is mission? Stetzer and Im (2016) describe it as follows:

Establishing a missional church means you plant a church that's engaging in God's mission, is focused on the kingdom, and is part of the culture you're seeking to reach. We used the words mission and missional in the previous sentences, and we'll also use the word missions in this book. Because all three words are so important, we need to define them before we go further:

Mission. The word mission refers to all that God is doing to bring the nations to himself. **Missions.** The word missions relates to mission and refers to the pursuit of sharing and showing the gospel to all corners of the earth.

Missional. Missional means adopting the posture of a missionary, joining Jesus on mission, learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound. (p. 254)

Alan Hirsch (2006) explores missiology in the context of the emerging church.

Hirsch describes *mission* "as extending the mission (the redemptive purposes) of God through activities of his people" (p. 41).

Many churches function and operate without any mission or community outreach initiatives. Churches have a tendency to gather for formal worship service that caters more to in-reach of the church members but lack the vision or interest to look into their communities and find out what God is doing and how God is already working.

It would make sense for a church, which is to be made up of Christ followers to follow Christ to a place that leads them to be more missional. Christ's purpose for gathering twelve disciples was to establish community but he also equipped them for the purpose of ministry and service.

Guder (1998) shares,

We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. Mission means "sending," and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history. God's mission began with the call of Israel to receive God's blessings in order to be a blessing to the nations. God's mission unfolded in the history of God's people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God's work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected..... It continues today in the worldwide witness of churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (p. 4)

Stetzer and Im (2016) list what they call “seismic shifts” that “are manifestations of how the church lost its missional focus” and then postulate a reason as to why churches lost their missional focus:

But how did the church lose its missional focus? Maybe a short look at church history will help answer that question. The church of Western European Christendom was once a church without mission. After the Reformation took hold in the sixteenth century, the evangelistic mission of the church was often neglected. Roman Catholics were energized by “new lands” to reach, but Protestants lost much of this missionary passion. This loss did not go unnoticed. Counter-Reformation Catholics pointed to the lack of missionary participation among Protestants as evidence of a defective Protestant movement. This decline of missionary focus was evident in both Protestant belief systems and practice. Although the Reformation restored much of primitive Christianity, it also led to the loss of much—particularly in areas of mission. The consequences of this loss of missional focus continue today. (p. 566)

In the context of North America, it could be said that many Christian churches lie dormant and offer little more than dry and stale worship services that cater to more traditional churchgoers, but God did not intend for churches to merely engage in formal church services; Jesus intended the gospel to have a missional characteristic.

Alan Hirsch shares,

Having spent much of my adult years grappling with the factors that together form a dynamic, distinctly missional ecclesiology, I also fully believe that the ecclesia (church) that Jesus intended was specifically designed with built-in, self-generative capacities, and was made for nothing less than world-transforming, lasting, revolutionary impact (see, for example, Mt 16:18). We were almost certainly not meant to become a domesticated civil religion! As far as I can tell, Jesus intended us to be something of a permanent revolution—no less than an expansive outpost of the kingdom of God. When we are not actually being that, then we have got to take stock in a big way. (cited in Woodward, 2012, p. 12)

Applying the principle of church mission to the context of small groups would mean that having a mission is vital to the longevity and meaning of that small group, but not to fulfill a personal mission of the group but, rather, to assist God in his overall mission to humanity and the local community context. Thus, Guder (1998), Stetzer and

Im (2016), and Hirsch (2006, and cited in Woodward, 2012) all put forth this notion that the mission God gives to humanity involves God acting through humanity in order to make a divine impact.

Incarnational

A common theme that emerged across a variety of literature written about successful small-group ministry was *intentional incarnation*. If Christians are going to make a lasting transformative impact on cities and communities in urban settings, understanding the value of an incarnational ministry approach is imperative. Living incarnationally means living meaningfully and authentically in a community and engaging a community for transformation. Gregory (2008) says:

I think if we are all intentionally about telling ourselves the truth of what lies inside of us—even in those deep, dark, and hidden corners of our soul—we would save ourselves much trouble down road. We would nip future problems closer to the bud. We would stop living life as fake and seemingly people. We would strengthen our spiritually walk. (p. 41)

Being intentionally incarnational within an urban missional small group was characterized as an imperative factor in missional success in the community. Missiology-oriented authors in the literature all pointed out from a number of angles that Jesus was intentionally incarnational because he left his heavenly home and incarnated himself into human flesh; he lived and walked and interacted with humanity and, thus, made the biggest impact on humanity by offering his life as living sacrifice that humanity might have an opportunity for eternal life.

Hirsch (2006) says, “John 1:1-18 forms the central defining scriptural text narrating to us the marvelous coming of God into human history” (p. 131). Hirsch goes on to say,

When God came into our world in and through Jesus, the Eternal moved into the neighborhood and took up residence among us (John 1:14). And the central thrust of the Incarnation, as far as we can penetrate its mystery, was that by becoming one of us, God was able to achieve redemption for the human race. But the Incarnation, and Christ's work flowing out of it, achieved more than our salvation; it was an act of profound affinity, a radical identification with all that it means to be human—an act that unleashes all kinds of potential in the one being identified with. But beyond identification, it is revelation: by taking upon himself all aspects of humanity, Jesus is for us, quite literally the human image of God. (p. 132)

Stetzer and Im (2016) state,

Missional is the posture—we join Jesus on his mission to people in culture—but incarnational describes what's actually happening. Just as Christ came to live among us, we dwell with the people around us. In many ways we're like them. But we're changed, transformed; and because of that, we seek to change and transform. The concept of being incarnational as it relates to church planting emphasizes the importance of relationships in effective church planting. It's not about establishing a location for worship; it's about establishing a basis for coming together in the first place. Good church planting depends on good relationships. (p. 276)

Thus, Hirsch (2006) and Stetzer and Im (2016) agree that the term *incarnational* is rooted in the act of Jesus coming to live and dwell among humanity for the purpose of saving it and transforming it. When a small group of people gather for the sake of transformation, if it is intentionally incarnational in its local community context, it will become transformed by the power of Christ, and it will naturally and organically transform its surroundings.

Gathering

Society has been coming together and forming groups for centuries. Coming together is a part of everyday life. Whether if it is for worship, a funeral, a concert, baby dedication, wedding, a birthday party, or even just to spend time at a family gathering, gathering has always been a part of the human equation. Priya Parker (2018) speaks on the cultural significance of group gatherings for regular as well as special occasions:

We spend our lives gathering—first in our families, then in neighborhoods and playgroups, schools and churches, and then in meetings, weddings, town halls, conferences, birthday parties, product launches, board meetings, class and family reunions, dinner parties, trade fairs, and funerals. And we spend much of that time in uninspiring, underwhelming moments that fail to capture us, change us in any way, or connect us to one another. (p. ix)

However, as Parker points out, it is important not only to recognize that humans gather but also to understand the significance of *how* we gather:

The way we gather matters. Gatherings consume our days and help determine the kind of world we live in, in both our intimate and public realms. Gathering—the conscious bringing together of people for a reason—shapes the way we think, feel, and make sense of our world. Lawgivers have understood, perhaps as well as anyone, the power inherent in gatherings. In democracies, the freedom to assemble is one of the foundational rights granted to every individual. In countries descending into authoritarianism, one of the first things to go is the right to assemble. Why? Because of what can happen when people come together, exchange information, inspire one another, test out new ways of being together. And yet most of us spend very little time thinking about the actual ways in which we gather. (p. ix)

Some church gatherings adopt a more traditional high-liturgy worship approach.

The church setting is usually filled with church pews, an elaborate organ, a prominent pulpit, with a large table in front of the rostrum. The worship services are set up mostly in a classroom style, pews facing the front of the altar, all of which lends itself to more of a spectator event rather than a participatory one. Sometimes the language used during such a service is archaic, assumes biblical literacy, and is thus difficult to understand for the unchurched urban youth newcomer. Churches sometimes assume that everyone who attends their worship service and church activities knows and understands all the social cues. To help resolve the language barrier and potentially off-putting or unfamiliar format for the unchurched urban visitor, perhaps a good place to start would be to avoid Christian jargon; employ simple, more engaging language; and explain the meaning behind why and how things are done.

The congregational songs are often from the hymnal and typically take on a more conservative and traditional style. For the unchurched urban youth with postmodern worldviews and who is also millennial, this is more of a distraction than an attraction. The way in which Seventh-day Adventists typically meet for church worship services may need to change if it is going to reach and impact unchurched urban youth.

Research evidence in relation to young adults leaving church could help build a case for new methodology for gathering people in a church context. A church being a group of people can come together and exist and worship outside of a church building. This is important for the urban unchurched youth because in the context of the traditional Seventh-day church structure, the postmodern millennial demographic would prefer to meet in new, different, and unconventional ways. The environment for the young millennial is vital and important. It is not just *that* one meets but *where* one meets. The place and setting must be neutral, less abrasive, less intimidating and have a more of a relaxed, laid-back, informal atmosphere.

By creating an urban missional small group that intentionally meets in a local coffee shop, not only will it change the location of church communion but it has the potential to create a new sense of spiritual belonging in distinctly neutral part of the community, where people in the community gather for social connection

Does the spiritual gathering only have to take place inside a church building in order for it to be considered authentic and official? Neil Cole (2009) identifies the fixation on “institution” that is prominent in Christendom. He unpacks the value system that naturally comes with a point of view that bestows providential significance to the institution:

The second problem is we elevate the institution to the level of being God's main, if not his only instrument on earth. We limit God to working within the institution. This is by far the worst consequence of initialization. If we see the organization called "church" as God's special means of working on earth, it takes on divine importance. If this is our perception of organization, then to resist it or exist outside of God himself. When we further the cause of the institution, we further God's cause. When we question it, we question God? Those who are not friends of institution are not friends of God but enemies. Anyone who competes with the institution must be against God. The worth of people is determined by their value to the institution and its objectives. Even the buildings that are owned by the institution are to be God's house. Of course, God may be working in and through the organized expression of the church, but I guarantee he is also at work outside of it. His kingdom is bigger than any church, denomination, or institution. (p. 37)

God is definitely working through humanity, the flesh and bones that He created, in order to redeem and transform people who live in urban communities through faithful Christian members living out the gospel incarnationally. Conn and Ortiz (2001) share insight from Viv Grigg and David Claerbaut on incarnational ministry. Viv Grigg (quoted in Conn & Ortiz, 2001) asked, "Where are the men and women who, like Jesus, choose to live as poor among the poor, establishing and tending newly formed churches day and night, exhibiting . . . the incarnational lifestyle?" (p. 336). Along that vein, Claerbaut (quoted in Conn & Ortiz, 2001) said, "The effectiveness of these [ministry] approaches is greatly enhanced when the pastor and as many members of the congregation as possible live in the community" (p. 336). In short, incarnational ministry is instrumental to community transformation.

If we are going to live incarnationally as Christians in urban communities, we need to be willing to live radically. As Shane Claiborne (2006) puts it, "We narrowed our vision to this: love God, love people, and follow Jesus" (p. 27).

Elements of a Successful Group

The power of a cohesive group must not be underestimated. When a group gets together, whether large or small, if it has a cooperative nature with a unified goal or purpose, it can truly achieve greatness. Coyle (2018) shares,

Group culture is one of the most powerful forces on the planet. We sense its presence inside successful businesses, championship teams, and thriving families, and we sense when it's absent or toxic. We can measure its impact on the bottom line. (A strong culture increases net income 756 percent over eleven years, according to a Harvard study of more than two hundred companies.) (p. 106)

In order for groups to be successful, some key things need to take place. For over four years, Daniel Coyle (2018) studied successful groups and well-established cultures such as Google, Disney, Navy SEALs, and basketball teams. He shares three observations of a successful group and refers to them as skills:

Skill 1—Build Safety—explores how signals of connection generate bonds of belonging and identity. Skill 2—Share Vulnerability—explains how habits of mutual risk drive trusting cooperation. Skill 3—Establish Purpose—tells how narratives create shared goals and values. The three skills work together from the bottom up, first building group connection and then channeling it into action. (p. 121)

It is hard to feel safe, be authentic, and find purpose individually or collectively in a large church gathering. Youth are leaving the big church structure because, without a sense of belonging, they feel out of place. They struggle finding a way to be authentic, and they struggle finding authentic people in the larger church setting.

This lack of belonging and authenticity is all the more reason for youth to gather in a smaller and intimate setting such as a coffee shop. It is a place they may frequent on a regular basis. A safe and authentic place and space where they can find community, meaning, and purpose, may help to retain the youth who are leaving and attract new youth who are interested in spiritual gatherings.

The Need for Community

The present modern world values and seeks social connectivity and a sense of community. Youth are finding ways to connect more than ever before in the history of the world. They have the ability to stay connected 24/7: connected to the web, connected to social media, connected to the global world, and, most importantly, connected to friends. They connect even without ever actually talking to one another, through the power of their smartphones. The current school culture is tied strongly to technology, social media, and smartphone use. This generation of youth do not feel the need to share and spend quality time the same way previous generations did. For example, through the application called Snapchat, they can now send messages that consist of sometimes only a picture and that disappears once it is viewed. They are highly connected, but it is a different type of connection.

Andy Stanley and Bill Willits (2004) speak of the importance of meaningful relationships and connection:

We are a culture craving relationship. In the midst of our crowded existence, many of us are living lonely lives. We live and work in a sea of humanity, but we end up missing out on the benefits of regular, meaningful relationships. . . . Starbucks sees itself in the business of doing more than selling a premium cup of coffee. Starbucks believes part of its corporate purpose is to create environments that connect people so meaningfully that it changes the quality of their lives. (p. 20)

The connection that they seek is not the same connection that the older generations yearns for, and perhaps that is why there is constant disconnect between the older and the younger generations. For instance, the older generation (baby boomers and older) still find value in talking on the phone, having verbal conversations, this new generation is satisfied with simply just texting. They think they don't need to speak or hear a voice to feel like they are connected or in community. While they may feel

connected to others, when all the texts of been sent and all the “snaps” have been fired off, they still oftentimes feel lonely and depressed. As Stanley and Willits (2004) say,

That’s because we were never meant to live in a state of functional isolation. We were created to be relational beings. Granted, we all have varying relational needs based on our wirings and temperaments; but the truth is, none of us was meant to live alone, away from meaningful connection. As one writer put it, “I have never known anyone ... who was isolated, lonely, unconnected, had no deep relationships—yet had a meaningful and joy-filled life.” And yet, as we discussed, that’s the way many of us have chosen to live. We live life around many people, but we experience life deeply with none. It’s no wonder so many of us feel alone and isolated, experiencing what one observer has called “crowded loneliness.” But that’s not what God originally intended. (pp. 27, 28)

Could it be that with all the technological connection, they are still lacking something? Maybe it is human face-to-face interaction and personal face-to-face conversation. There is something to be said about human interaction and engagement. They say we need at least 10 touches a day! That is hard to come by if most conversations only take place through text message and social media platforms. Do not get me wrong even as a millennial, my preferred method of communication is through text message; that is how I stay connected. But I do long for a sense of community and interpersonal/intrapersonal connectivity and engagement. I often wonder, with all this technological connectivity through social media, where is society going? What will the future generations look like? Will there be less personal connectivity? Are we headed to full blown virtual reality, where humans rarely interact? Who knows? One thing is for sure though, we are all connected through human fabric!

Conclusion

What does an intentionally incarnational approach to urban ministry, the foundation of cosmopolitan theology and small groups all have in common? It brings

together the method for understanding the theological concept of an urban missional small group and the impact it can have on an urban postmodern youth demographic.

Historically, Christians have habitually drawn distinctions between the profane and the holy, the sacred and the secular, but collectively, Christians must see that God views humanity as a whole and not as divided parts with some good and some bad.

Romanowski (2007) shares:

Christians who fragment God's creation into sacred and secular realms or distinctions between "the holy and the common," as one writer put it, often conclude that culture cannot be redeemed, "since it is 'common,' shared by believer and unbeliever." This view is based on a belief that since the Fall, culture is a necessary evil, its only worth being to serve "lesser" human needs. But how could culture be of "lesser" importance? It is our central task as image bearers. (p. 52)

He goes on to say:

That Christians draw lines making distinctions between religious and nonreligious aspects of life is an effect of secularization. The term secular should not be used to refer to specific activities in God's world—politics, business, education, or popular art—but to the orientation, the spiritual direction that is represented by the way people carry out these practices. Secular refers to the absence of faith conviction and perspective in performing these activities. As secularization occurs, a Christian faith orientation loses significance for our thinking, practices, and institutions. The effect is to weaken the influence of faith in public affairs, making it primarily a private matter having to do with personal devotional life and morality, family, and local congregation. It is as though God has no jurisdiction in public life. This is a complete fallacy. As the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper said: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine'." (p. 52)

The church and the world both seem to have their struggles. The traditional church model continues to separate sacred from secular, and outside of the church, the world seems to separate people based on their skin color, class, gender, etc.

Today in North America society, people still tend to be separated and segregated by cultural grouping and social status. News media outlets regularly report on racial

tensions usually ending in violent eruptions, police standoffs and protests all in the name of race.

However, it is becoming more apparent that there is a specific younger urban demographic and culture, that is not separating people into spiritual classes nor are they separating people based on their race. For this demographic of urban young people, both of those challenges of spiritual differentiation and race are becoming less of an issue and community. Diversity and inclusion are becoming more of the prominent focus. The research presented in this literature review is just a reflection of what has already become a reality.

Based on observation it could be said that there is a cohesive, collaborative, and collective community within the urban, postmodern, millennial generation. Urban culture, even on a cursory look, openly values a community-oriented society, mission-driven purpose, and actively creates inclusive environments and spaces. It becomes evident that race and color of skin are not deciding factors of whether people connect and foster friendships and relationships. The deciding factors go deeper; they are based on values, behavior, similar mindset, and peer interest.

In closing, as the literature was reviewed on the subjects of urban ministry, cosmopolitan theology, and small groups, a systematic framework for conceptualizing and constructing an urban missional small group with cosmopolitan theology as its bedrock became fitting and feasible. Because studies show that youth are leaving church at a rapid rate, the urban missional group will help to create and provide a new structure not meant to rival the traditional church, but to intentionally serve as an alternative

spiritual and social community where the urban unchurched youth can find hope, healing, belonging, and wholeness through Christ's transforming power.

CHAPTER 4

A COSMOPOLITAN THEOLOGY FOR CREATING AN URBAN MISSIONAL SMALL GROUP TO REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS IN THE CITY OF LACOMBE: DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

Introduction

As part of my Doctor of Ministry program, I was instructed to look for urban issues or challenges in my local community. This chapter delineates the process of uncovering the mounting urban issues in the city of Lacombe, Alberta, where I reside; as well, it describes the seminal moments of discovery that inspired me to address these urban issues creatively through ministry and the challenges that were endured. This chapter also includes a few missional outreach endeavors in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, that were fundamental in the journey of urban-ministry exploration and shaped the resulting ministry model currently in place in Lacombe. In my position as youth director for the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, my ministry was not limited to any one city, so multiple experiments were indeed possible. Finally, the chapter describes the factors that necessitated a revision of my original ministry idea and introduces the ministry concept that ended up working successfully instead. It is important to note here that the project currently implemented in Lacombe is not the original concept I had envisioned at the very beginning of this doctoral journey.

Early Encounters That Sparked Innovation

Passion for Skateboarding Reignited

On September 5, 2012, it was my birthday, and I happened to be in the city of Banff, Alberta. I walked into a skateboard shop. A particular skateboard on display reminded me of my early teenage years. The skateboard deck had graffiti artwork on it. I had not skateboarded in over 15 years, but the graphic on the board piqued my interest. It sparked an interest to rediscover myself and rekindle a former passion from over a decade ago. I purchased the skateboard and walked back to my car.

After arriving back home in Lacombe, I decided I would, as Conn and Ortiz (2001) describe, “rearrange” my life (p. 4480). I sought out the local skate park and decided to give my new skateboard a try. Since then I have been intentional about skating at the Lacombe skate park on as often as possible, reaching and engaging urban youth in meaningful dialogue for the purpose of building solid, authentic, and trusting relationships. The personal, one-on-one approach I used is not only something that I believe in intuitively and practise naturally but also the incarnational method of mission that Stetzer and Im (2016) advocate for, as discussed in chapter 3. I was consciously but naturally implementing their notion that being “missional” is a “posture” in which

we join Jesus on his mission to people in culture—but incarnational describes what’s actually happening. Just as Christ came to live among us, we dwell with the people around us. In many ways we’re like them. But we’re changed, transformed; and because of that, we seek to change and transform. (p. 276)

Drugs: A Tragic Disruptor

One of the first young skaters I met was Shawn,¹ a talented 14-year-old skateboarder. We developed a friendship, and I later found out he had been raised in an Adventist home. Several months into our friendship, however, I noticed that Shawn was gradually less present on a verbal, mental, and interactive level. Throughout our interactions around that time, I observed that his mental reasoning and cognitive processes were slowing down—and based on many preceding conversations with him, this was uncharacteristic of him. Sometime later, I learned that Shawn had become addicted to hard drugs, which explained his unusual aloofness. And now, because of his addiction, he was in need of serious treatment. In order to accommodate the treatment process, Shawn's family sold their home in Lacombe, moved closer to Calgary, Alberta, and enrolled Shawn in a drug-addiction treatment program that cost over CAD70,000 a year.

Shawn's example impacted me, and, what is more, he was not the only skater in Lacombe to succumb to hard drugs—many other young skaters in the city of Lacombe found themselves in similar situations. Drug use, I had discovered, affected this Lacombe demographic significantly enough that groups of addicted youths would frequent a location near the skate park dubbed “the lab,” so called because it was the place where they would experiment with different types of drugs away from the public eye.

As I frequently visited the skate park I also noted that the many youth who were present listened to the same music, dressed the same, and conversed in the same manner—regardless of race or cultural background. It led me to believe that a global

¹ A pseudonym.

urban culture, as it were, had formed and prevailed among postmodern generations, a culture that transcended traditionally defined demographics. Close and continued interactions with these urban youth in Lacombe revealed that drugs, alcohol, a pessimistic mindset, and a lack of meaning and purpose in life were common factors among them. What I encountered is precisely what Conn and Ortiz (2001) characterized in talking about the Christian community facing “a new urban generation” that is less idealistic and considerably more pessimistic”; “jaded” and “without hope”; marginalized by broken promises”; and “easy prey to the temptations of cynicism and meaningless violence. How do we respond to their needs?” (p. 210). It is important to note here that only continued connections built on trust allowed me to become privy to these matters; these issues were not apparent upon a cursory glance. Being familiar with urban culture, coupled with a passion for ministry, I reasoned that an urban arts center geared to the interests of these youth would allow them to find value, meaning, and a means to engage actively in interests that had not been explored within the existing recreation- or faith-based institutions.

Lacombe’s Troubled Youth

Many of the youth in the community were using drugs and were experimenting with substances that negatively affected and even devastated their lives. And yet, their spiritual and social needs, clearly, were not being met by existing community organizations. It was apparent that there was a gap in the community between the way the community at large perceived their own city and the social ill developing among youth in the proverbial alleyway. It was apparent that the community at large was either naïve, ignorant of the problems facing youth, or was simply still unequipped and unprepared to

address it, as social resources or services were either non-existent or ineffective to help these youth. One could say that the community was more unaware than unwilling, in my impression.

For example, much later into my efforts in Lacombe, the Lacombe Rotary Club was very interested to hear about the community project I was working on, so they contacted me to present my ideas to them. On the day of the scheduled presentation, as I shared about my interactions with troubled youth in Lacombe, many board members were perplexed that there were urban challenges at play in the city of Lacombe at all. This was a prime example of how key members and people in Lacombe were not even aware of the problems that were plaguing their youth.

Thus, the unaddressed needs of the newly emerging demographic in Lacombe warranted the creation a community outlet that would not only actively mitigate the youth's descent into drug addiction but also engender in them a desire to direct their energies more fruitfully. Important to note here is that Lacombe does have a Christian youth-oriented ministry center called YU-Turn, whose motto is "hope and wholeness for all youth" (Central Alberta Youth Unlimited, 2016). (Approaching and dialoguing with this ministry was part of the process as I explored ideas further, which will be discussed later in the chapter).

The existing Christian institutions and fixtures in the city of Lacombe, such as community churches and the Seventh-day Adventist private liberal arts university (Burman University), served as an effective outlet of faith for those who already had a strong faith-based background, upbringing, or lifestyle or had already developed a deeply spiritual relationship with God. However, the existing structures were not successfully

reaching the urban unchurched youth demographic. The overlooked, unmet needs of the unchurched-youth demographic necessitated an innovative venture that would bring about positive change for the youth of the city and, thus, through ripple effects, impact the community as a whole and society at large.

To effectively tap into a young demographic that was not drawn to the existing traditional churches and faith-based entities, I reasoned that I would have to reimagine church and design an innovative outreach model. Whatever project would be implemented would have to appeal to young people part of a growing group of people who, as Taylor (2008) notes, “are increasingly unwilling simply to accept pronouncements of institutions” (p. 113) and are looking for alternatives that already exist or are looking to create them. This model would have to include a new space that did not resemble a typical ecclesiastical worship space, a space where youth would feel comfortable to engage in meaningful dialogue, and even explore purpose and mission, in an environment free of prejudice, censure, and long-established expectations related to creed and membership. It would have to reach those youth in Lacombe who represent the larger group of “millions of young outsiders [who] are mentally and emotionally disengaging from Christianity” and are part of the “population [that] is increasingly resistant to Christianity, especially to the theologically conservative expressions of that faith” (Kinnaman, 2007, p. 39).

The Playground: My Own Positive Experience at an Urban Arts Center

When I was growing up in Toronto, Ontario, back then I connected with a youth center called The Playground, which offered free music lessons to youth twice a week. I learned how to DJ, write music, produce music, and breakdance. In the hip hop music culture, the term *lab* colloquially describes the place or even the act of experimenting with and creating music; it refers to the practice of allowing one's creativities to flow freely. Because of the formative and even redemptive experience at The Playground, the idea was born to create an urban arts program to reach troubled urban youth in Lacombe. Lacombe had a sports, recreation, and aquatic center, which means that Lacombe provided a recreational outlet that is typical of most Canadian towns and cities (fitness, sports, swimming, skating), but there was no alternative recreation-oriented community center. An urban arts center did not exist, and the lack thereof served as a perfect opportunity to create a place for personal development and creative exploration and self-expression. In North America, the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not yet have an urban community center with a focus on the creative arts.

A wide variety of professionals in the community would be consulted for voluntary involvement to help struggling youth. Lacombe had many skilled professionals in sectors such as counseling, finance, music, arts, and education. Because the problem of drug involvement was left unaddressed, more out of a lack of connection between the community at large and troubled youth than out of apathy or rejection, consulting Lacombe's professionals (individuals as well as entities) was a reasonable first step.

From Vandalism to Vocation: Impetus to Partner and Innovate

Another formative personal event in my Doctor of Ministry experience was meeting a young man by the name of Jack Mundy. I met Jack at the Lacombe skate park one day. He was a young, trendy skater, and we became fast friends. We shared the same interests in music, fashion, and business. I soon realized that Jack was not only a talented skateboarder but also a talented graffiti artist. As a true graffiti artist, Jack favored brick walls, buildings, and public property. Jack would often get caught for tagging buildings and would end up having to pay large fines. One day after speaking with Jack at the skate park, I suggested that instead of vandalizing public property, he should create images on paper that could be digitally reproduced on a T-shirt.

On March 2016, Mundy, with the help of Burman University Student Association, the Alberta Conference Youth Department, and a private investor launched a new local streetwear company at an art show called Artform, held at Lacombe Memorial Centre. I had mentored Mundy and helped him put his vision into action. Also, in the process of my mentoring role coming alongside Mundy, he also wanted to be involved in the development, launch, and operation of the anticipated urban arts center. Additionally, his newly launched streetwear brand was to be just one of the many various art projects to emerge from the “The Lab Urban Arts Center.”

Meeting Mundy and mentoring him to channel his craft and creativity to a better purpose was a very affirming experience for me. It confirmed the premise that all these youth needed was connections built on trust, mentorship and guidance from people who identify with and share in the positive aspects of urban culture, and tangible outlets where

their creativity and interests could be transformed into real contributions to the community—giving them the validation and purpose and mission they were lacking.

Momentum in the Community

Local Newspaper Feature

As a result, likely, because of regular involvement with the young skaters and open and regular discussions about an urban arts center and Jack Mundy's newly channeled passion for art and urban clothing, excitement began to spread and build in the youth at the skate park as well as their parents. Word somehow must have travelled about plans for the center, and Lacombe's major newspaper, *The Lacombe Globe*, was keen on covering the story as it was unfolding. For the story, Jack Mundy and I visited the newspaper's head office to be interviewed. The sit-down interview lasted about 40 minutes. The interviewer asked questions about the vision, the plan, how the idea came about, who was expected to attend, and the anticipated start or opening date of the center. Our stories and plans were received with enthusiasm, encouragement, and affirmation. The *Lacombe Globe* ended up covering the art/fashion show on April 4, 2016, that launched and debuted Jack's urban clothing line.

Visit to Lacombe City Hall

After visiting with the *Lacombe Globe* editor and receiving ample encouragement to follow through on the arts-center idea, I created a business plan that iterated the social and spiritual services the center would offer to the community and how it was going to contribute value to the city. I visited with key stakeholders in the city of Lacombe, since I was told it would be beneficial to inform the local city government of my plans for the

urban arts center. I gathered three youth from the community and presented my proposal to City Hall. Many of the city councilors were interested and intrigued about a new urban initiative. One particular council member encouraged me to apply to Lacombe for community funding designated to help fuel creative arts in the community of Lacombe. The visit to Lacombe City Hall and meetings with key stakeholders, community civic leaders, politicians, as well as business leaders in the community constituted the pitch-deck phase of the entrepreneurial process.

Pitching to the Youth Unlimited “YU-Turn” Center

Some of the leaders in the community advised that if I was going to create a Christian urban arts center, I would need to get buy-in from organizations and community leaders who might already be involved in a similar venture. So, I visited a Christian youth center in downtown Lacombe called YU-Turn, or Youth Unlimited, and spoke with Jake, a local Christian pastor who ran the center. We had a friendly conversation, and then I casually asked him how he would react if I were to set up another center a couple of blocks down the street. Pastor Jake’s response was not very favorable, and my idea was met with some resistance. He thought that since he was already running a center that catered to youth, there would be no need for a rival. I expressed that the urban arts center would cater to an urban demographic that did not attend YU-Turn; in response, he insisted that it was best to avoid a lone-ranger approach and that I could, instead, partner with him and use the center on alternate days.

I was hesitant because I wanted the arts center to have its own unique branding. Also, YU-Turn was Christian, and for the most part, the youth to whom this center appealed tended to have a strong Christian upbringing. The center I had envisioned would

appeal to unchurched as well as churched youth. Furthermore, I intended for the urban arts center to be affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination specifically. In fact, I desired the Adventist affiliation, even if this venture would wind up without the Adventist Church's official endorsement, support, or funding. My Seventh-day Adventist faith is not something I concealed or withheld from youth I was befriending, stakeholders I was connecting with, and ultimately in the center I was hoping to launch. And to clarify, I did not see Adventist affiliation to be a deterrent for unchurched youth if the interests, activities, and services spoke to the core of the urban and/or skater culture. Because partnering with YU-Turn would potentially obscure the Adventist affiliation for the arts center I was proposing, and because using the YU-Turn facility would be limiting in other ways (such as available days for facility use), I decided to not take Pastor Jake up on his suggestion.

Support From Lacombe Chamber of Commerce

From 2014 to 2016, I served on the board of directors at the Lacombe Chamber of Commerce. Naturally, I shared my vision for the urban arts center with the board members. The board members received my concept of the urban arts center with open arms. They were interested to know how the process would go. Many of them had teenage children and loved the idea of having a positive space available for their children to go to and to learn valuable life skills through urban arts.

I was also encouraged by business owners who sat on the board. They offered support and even offered to help (or find ways to help) with procuring sponsorships, funding, discounts, and a cheaper price point for rental space.

Support From the Local Member of Parliament

Because of the political connections I had formed while pastoring in Ottawa from 2008 to 2012, I was formally introduced to the Member of Parliament for the Lacombe/Red Deer riding. I invited him to meet me at the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. I pitched the idea about the urban arts center and the positive impact it could potentially have on youth in the city of Lacombe. He was personally touched by the idea; it resonated with him especially because he knew of a family member who was experiencing challenges, so he affirmed the need for and value of such a center. Without hesitation, he said, “I am in.” The Member of Parliament pointed me to funding opportunities, including community grants that would help get my concept off the ground. He also suggested I use shipping containers, which he said would be cheaper to work with and could be creatively transformed and repurposed into a space for youth.

Challenges to Urban Arts Center

Effort to Secure Rental Space for “The Lab”

In my haste and excitement to get the project off the ground in Lacombe, I began to meet with property managers to secure a rental space for the urban arts center. The intent was for the urban arts center to be located on Lacombe’s historic Main Street. When I was putting together the budget for a 12-month period, all the expenses would total over CAD60,000. Unfortunately, by the time I was able to secure the bare minimum to secure the space, it had already been rented out. Therefore, I had to explore other options, including the possibility of partnering with the Burman University campus. In retrospect, I realized my dream was perhaps too big to accomplish without taking smaller steps first.

Local Seventh-day Adventist Pastor
Voices Objections

On October 8, 2015, a community newspaper in Lacombe, the *Lacombe Express*, published an article about my intent to launch an urban arts youth center called the Lab (Appendix A). The article, written by Sarah Maetche, presented the topic in a very positive, encouraging, and supportive manner. However, because of this news article, a local Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Lacombe, along with his church board of directors, submitted a letter of complaint to the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The letter stated that members of the Lacombe Community Seventh-day Adventist Church were “quite dumbfounded” that the idea to open such an urban arts center could possibly have been born in the conference’s youth department and that the conference would condone this kind of an effort at all. “The Lacombe Community SDA Church,” the pastor wrote, “voted to have nothing whatsoever to do with this project.” The pastor objected to the artistic elements to be explored at the center, such as hip hop culture and breakdancing (which he called “forbidden activities”) and expressed that in his mind and in the board’s view, this youth center was antithetical to the gospel. The letter expressed high concern that the efforts and activities at the proposed urban arts center would derail the community church’s own efforts to reach the city with the gospel.

We are seeking to nurture our youths in the ways of God without these forbidden activities. Our church is growing, we presently have over thirty attending our prayer meetings as we study the final events of earth’s history. We foresee a conflict with your project in this community of Lacombe and our desire to reach the community with the gospel of salvation.

Toward the end of the letter, the pastor asked the conference to “rethink” the project and, instead, “bring it in line with the standards and beliefs of this great Adventist movement.”

Unfortunately, the pastor's reaction (and the reaction of his board) were not unique and are not uncommon in the Adventist Church at large. However, this kind of disapproval is precisely the "dogmatics" and "baggage" that Taylor (2008) said many people perceive and now reject; to them, these are "arcane and archaic views that seem inconsistent with much of the rest of life" and feel that "traditional religions are out of touch" (p. 146). And as Livermore (2009) points out,

Few things are more basic to life than expressing love and respect for people who look, think, believe, act, and see differently than we do. ... Relating lovingly to our fellow human beings is central to what it means to be human. And when it comes down to it, Christian ministry at its core is interacting with all kinds of people in ways that give them glimpses of Jesus in us. (p. 11)

Neil Cole (2009), as discussed in chapter 3, challenges churches' pitfall of wanting to "limit God to working within the institution." The moral call to remain distinct and untainted by those we are trying to reach comes from the notion that "those who are not friends of the institution are not friends of God but enemies. Anyone who competes with the institution must be against God. The worth of people is determined by their value to the institution and its objectives" (p. 37). If the churches want to no longer neglect demographics with an urban mindset, they will need to first overcome their fear of association and refrain from ignorantly painting their urban cultural artifacts with one brushstroke.

Pitching to the Alberta Conference

Because of the pastor's email, the president's office at the Alberta conference called me in for a meeting. I was told that the term *hip hop* was offensive to many members within the Alberta conference and that the connotations were negative. The president presented me with three options. Option 1, I could resign and go freelance.

Option 2, I could take the word *hip hop* out of my dissertation or use another word in place of it. Option 3 was to present my dissertation idea to the executive committee of the Alberta conference; if they were on board, the conference would grant me its support. Because of the reaction to the newspaper article, I decided to take the third option, which was present to the committee (“EXCOM”). When I presented about the urban arts youth center in Lacombe to the executive committee, the reviews were mixed. The purpose for having the urban arts youth center was understood—namely, that it was a creative way to combat the problems of drugs, criminal activity, and lack of purpose felt by the youth. However, many members of the committee did not agree with the methods.

During my presentation, one member offered to share her thoughts. She recalled an experience in her home town, where a community center had been built. Apparently, the center attracted a certain “rough” population of youth that ended up vandalizing the property. When she heard my presentation, the proposed urban arts center reminded her of the possibility that a particular youth demographic could potentially disregard and disrespect the positive efforts, squander what was being offered to them, and cause the center to, in turn, have a negative impact.

Another concern was brought forward at the EXCOM meeting. The proposed location of the urban arts center, namely, “the Hideout” on the campus of Burman University, posed a huge problem for some. The objection was raised that the marginalized-youth demographic highlighted in this project should have their own space and program in Lacombe’s downtown core rather than on the Burman University campus. The community youth were perceived to be dangerous, secular, and unruly. The fear was that worldly beliefs and practices could harm or negatively influence the

Parkview Adventist Academy high school students (who share the campus grounds) as well as the college students. I addressed the concern and stated that, in contrast, I believed the proximity and location of the proposed urban arts center would serve as a great point of intersection and interaction; the older Burman students could play a vital mentorship role for the troubled youth of Lacombe. I later discovered that the reasoning I had in mind was precisely communicated in Roger J. Gench's (2014) appeal for the church to recognize a "solidarity" between the church and the world (p. 20).

Unfortunately, members of the committee simply did not share my perspective, and my idea was not accepted the way that I had envisioned and hoped.

Unfortunately, the objections that were raised very much echoed what Romanowski (2007) identifies as an arbitrary and false dichotomy between sacred and secular. He warns that as these distinctions become ingrained, "a Christian faith orientation loses significance for our thinking, practices, and institutions." The imagined rift between the church and the world "weakens the influence of faith in public affairs, making it primarily a private matter having to do with personal devotional life and morality, family, and local congregation. It is as though God has no jurisdiction in public life. This is a complete fallacy" (p. 52). However, the larger part of the Seventh-day Adventist institution is deeply committed to this secular-sacred distinction and that cultural elements perceived to be completely secular are to remain untouched. And ultimately, the fears expressed echo

During the lunch break at the EXCOM meeting, a member took me aside privately to ask about me about my intentions to use hip hop as a teaching method for the youth. After I explained that hip hop in itself is not bad and that it can be conducive for

positive messaging and positive life lessons, values, and principles, the member took offense and said that hip hop was dangerous and demonic. This sentiment echoes what Livermore (2009) describes as a “chasm of cultural difference” (p. 11), but instead of a desire to bridge it and connect with the other side, the mindset I encountered was one of fear. But as a youth leader, I was committed to “learning how to reach across the chasm of cultural difference with love and respect [which] is becoming an essential competency for today’s ministry leader” (Livermore, 2009, p. 11).

At the end of my presentation a vote was taken, which resulted in the EXCOM’s decision to receive my project. The committee understood that they could not vote to deny or disallow the project, because I had decided to embark on this as my personal project and not an official program under the auspices of the Alberta conference youth department. After the EXCOM meeting, I received a call from the president of the conference informing me that EXCOM voted to receive my project and that I could go forward under one condition: that I do not teach, practice, or engage in breakdancing with the youth.

Pitching to the Vice President of Student Services at Burman University

In order to cut cost, save money, and minimize the expenditures for the center, I decided to seek free space from Burman University. I scheduled a meeting with Stacy Hunter, the vice president of student services, and he agreed to meet me and hear out the idea for the urban arts center. By the end of our meeting, Mr. Hunter understood the reason and mission for the center and encouraged me to purpose the idea further. He agreed with my request to use the Burman University space called the Hideout, which is a student lounge. He gave permission to use the space on the condition that an appropriate

number of staff were designated to help chaperone the youth. The meeting with Burman's VP of student services was successful, in that he offered his time, support, and resources to help the plight of Lacombe's troubled youth.

In the end, although the space at Burman was made available, I chose not to utilize the space for the urban arts center. I understood that the unchurched urban youth demographic I was trying to reach may not have felt comfortable to come to the Christian campus of Burman University. In order for me to have the greatest possible success with this demographic, the place needed to be neutral, central, and disarming. Furthermore, the overall impression I was left with was that unchurched youth were viewed as a threat.

The challenges that were experienced trying to establish an urban arts center may serve as an answer to a question posed by Conn and Ortiz (2001): "Urban populations will continue to grow at almost twice the rate of national growth, and large cities at a rate three to four times as high. Does the church show any indication of interest in these expanding urban centers?" (p. 141). Unfortunately, it seems that the church's fear of unchurched young people's lifestyle still poses roadblocks for supporting innovative efforts to reach the urban culture.

Underlying Need for Rethinking Church

As mentioned already, there were many youths in the city of Lacombe who no longer saw value in the church and no longer wanted to support an institutionalized church structure. Youth were longing for a sense of belonging, a community that focused on acceptance and fostered a spirit of tolerance. It was evident that in the experiences of young Adventist Christians, a lack of trust and authenticity pervaded the Seventh-day

Adventist faith community in Lacombe. What was needed was not another church building, but a place that was inviting, accepting, yet missional.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, within the space of church life around the world, there needs to be a new ethic and paradigm, a new way of thinking. The church needs to rethink how it sees God, how it sees people, how it sees itself. Many have noted a sense of staleness with the way church is conducted. To them it appears that the expiration date has come and something new is long overdue. They want a new ethic that fosters a feeling of inclusivity for people who see church and community differently. Kang (2013) states, “In this postmodern context, general social categories such as gender, race, class, or sexuality can be too reductive of the complexity of social identities to be effective” (p. 23). It is evident that postmodern millennials do not want to be boxed in by categories and prefer not to box other people by putting labels on individuals. Kang holds that “the binary approach to the grand versus small, the universal versus the particular, the global versus the local makes one incapable of dealing with the complex reality of human life in this contemporary world” (p. 24).

This statement reveals why postmodern youth, even in the Christian and Adventist faith-based context, tend to be more universal and inclusivist in their thinking when it comes to race, gender, and religious beliefs. It hints at one of the reasons why postmodern youth are having a difficult time attending the traditional church. Most churches teach and uphold a binary approach about God and the world. The worldviews that are usually promoted and perpetuated insist on clearly drawn lines—black and white, right versus wrong, good versus bad.

While this cosmopolitan ideology of universal inclusivity is nowhere close to being adopted by churches and members who have a more traditional Adventist mindset, this is simply to highlight where the millennial generation *is* spiritually and what they think when it comes to societal issues. And because of the rift between how they process their world and how traditional Adventists classify their surroundings in a more definitive fashion, they feel that they can neither gain nor contribute through membership in a traditional Adventist congregation.

Detour: Missional Outreach in Edmonton and Calgary

Now, because I was the youth director at the Alberta conference, my efforts were not exclusive to Lacombe or devoted to the urban arts center startup only. A number of youth projects and events were underway not only in Lacombe but also in Calgary and Edmonton, for example. In all three cities I was forging friendships with urban youth and looking for ways to naturally build bridges and provide ways to help them explore spiritual matters and a connection with God in a relaxed and supportive environment. These projects purposed to have the “warmth cluster” that Powel et al. (2006) identified as a major marker of effective faith community—a “*welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring*” space and practice “for people to be together and nurture relationships” (p. 166). The following events happened concurrently with the arts-center endeavors and were instructive and influential in the shaping of the final ministry project that did take root in Lacombe.

Let’s Talk Calgary

On November 8, 2014, an initiative called “Let’s Talk” was born. The Millennial demographic thrives on discussion and meaningful dialogue, so I rented a coffee shop on

a Saturday morning, prepaid for food and drinks, and facilitated discussion around key topics that were impacting the youth. A mix of urban churched and unchurched youth were in attendance. Topics included homosexuality, depression, suicide, drugs, and abuse. The discussions were productive and therapeutic. Some remarked that being able to speak freely and openly was something they felt they and others did not have the chance to do at their local churches. This feedback affirmed the hypothesis that if youth were to in a neutral space that encouraged meaningful dialogue, it would prove worthwhile and spiritually beneficial.

While at Let's Talk Calgary, after listening to acoustic music and engaging in meaningful discussions, youth were given the opportunity to serve the community in the city of Calgary. Adventist Community Services T-shirts were given out along with food, clothing, and water. The objective was to engage in conversation as much as possible; to engender the impression that good things in life can indeed be free and have no strings attached; and to simply exemplify the kindness and love of Jesus Christ. When the call was made to centralize and mobilize to help meet the needs of the local community, Adventist youth rallied together in the hundreds to help make a difference. This was significant evidence that youth, if they were called to serve, would rise to the occasion.

Creative Arts Urban Cafe in Edmonton

Not wanting to leave urban youth from the other urban centers in Alberta out, my two colleagues from the youth department at the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and I decided to begin efforts to engage with urban youth in Edmonton. On November 1, 2014, youth from the urban city of Edmonton, Alberta, gathered at a not-for-profit youth organization called IHuman. This was an urban café for the creative urban youth. The purpose of the gathering was to engage in meaningful dialogue, establish personal connections, and share creative talents. Over 50 youth were in attendance, less than half of which were unchurched urban youth. The youth expressed themselves through poetry, song, music, and conversation. The youth were a different group, but they enjoyed the small, personal, and intimate setting where conversation would be the main focal point. The setting and atmosphere were different from the format of a traditional church service, but it was effective and made a personal impact on the youth.

Missional Outreach in Edmonton

After the creative art's urban café, an opportunity was given to the all youth who gathered, to serve the homeless community of downtown Edmonton. Because downtown Edmonton has a large homeless population, clothing, food, and water were given to each youth participant to distribute to people on the streets of Edmonton. The experience proved to be fruitful and seminal for the youth and meaningful and helpful to those who received the distributed items. The youth had desired to participate and wanted to make a positive difference. Their feedback was that this experience had moved them out of their

comfort zones and that they learned how simple it was to make a difference in someone's life by just offering something to someone and expecting nothing in return.

Let's Talk Edmonton Youth Gathering

On November 7, 2015, a group of over 50 Adventist youth gathered for Sabbath morning worship but in a different setup and format. The atmosphere was inviting and warm. The space was different, creative, urban, and neutral. The format of the worship experience was filled with poetry, spoken word, testimonies, and music. The discussions centered on abuse, homosexuality, trauma, and forgiveness. It was a powerful experience that proved that if unchurched urban youth will attend spiritual gatherings when presented in a non-intrusive and nonaggressive way. It was a powerful experience that showed that unchurched urban youth will attend spiritual gatherings if presented in a non-intrusive, disarming, and unpressured way. The reason I had wanted to try gathering in a way that was different from traditional church is because of the usual comments I would hear from youth who had attended church but had stopped attending. They had said that church was boring, irrelevant, uninviting, and unauthentic. The gathering on November 7 away from church was meant to appeal to—and provide an alternate, neutral space for—the youth who were disillusioned by or alienated from church.

My Second Idea: Urban Missional Church Plant

Given (a) the theological foundation as set out in chapter 2; (b) the research and professional experience many missiologists and theologians have contributed, as discussed in chapter 3; (c) the undeniable need for an alternate Adventist faith outlet that was progressive enough for the disillusioned youth; and (d) the success in how the youth events in Calgary and Edmonton were received, I decided that instead of continuing to

grapple with the challenges of establishing an urban arts center, I would embark on establishing an urban missional church plant. Since “church planting is an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new local churches as based on Jesus’ promise and in obedience to His Great Commission” (Malphurs, 2004, p. 19), then urban church planting is a venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new churches in one’s urban neighborhood. I will first start out by taking a look at the two Seventh-day Adventist churches that are located in the city of Lacombe, and then why a new urban church plant is needed.

In the city of Lacombe, there are two major Seventh-day Adventist churches: College Heights (located on the Burman University campus) and Lacombe Community. The College Heights church is large and has two services. The demographic of the church is composed mainly of senior Caucasian church members who like traditional Adventist liturgy, which is offered during the early-morning service. Many youths do not attend this first worship service. The second worship that takes place on Sabbaths is geared more to the non-traditional worshiper. Because the church is located on the campus, which means a young student population is already there, some urban young people would consider the second College Heights church worship service a good option.

However, there are a group of urban millennials whose preference of worship style would differ from that which College Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church offers. These particular youths would prefer a more relaxed, inclusive, non-threatening, and non-traditional worship gathering that involves more dialogue and less preaching. These urban millennials share the same mindset as the youth who participated in the Calgary and Edmonton initiatives.

The second Adventist church located in the city of Lacombe is the Lacombe Community Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Lacombe Community church is also made up of an older, Caucasian demographic. It can easily be classified as a monoculture church and lacks the diversity that Hunt et al. (2018) believes is important to the success of organizations. The Lacombe Community is usually seen as ultra conservative and fundamentalist in their theological views. The worship format is very traditional, and typically, only hymns qualify as music acceptable for the worship service. It was evident that the urban youth of Lacombe, whether churched or unchurched, would not feel most comfortable attending the Lacombe Community church. When comparing the options available for Seventh-day Adventist organized worship in Lacombe, both churches have a traditional worship option, and even the second worship service at College Heights church still followed the traditional style rather closely. This means that there was a segment of youth that did not have a church they would feel drawn to attending. I wanted to provide an option that did not exist.

Looking for New Possibilities

What I appreciate about this postmodern millennial generation is their unwillingness to settle for status quo. If something is not working or if something does not resonate or fit, they will attempt to fix it. If something does not sit right with them or align with their personal moral value system, they will take measures and come up with possible solutions. They value seeing a new and fresh perspective while looking at long-established and often unchallenged things. This reflects the attitude and sentiments of the younger generations. If they do not like something, they seek other options and alternatives, and if none exist, they would rather create a new reality than settle for

something that is, in their mind, broken. Their mentality speaks to their willingness to create and innovate their way through the difficult process of change in the 21st century. In many ways, the adults emerging now are a generation of disruptors; they take existing models of reality and build upon them or create new structures that enhance what the previous generation had.

The idea of urban missional churches and small groups is simply building off the traditional church foundation of *spiritual gatherings*, but enhancing the experience to create more intimacy and more authenticity. As Stetzer and Geiger (2014) state, “Scripture constantly paints the picture for us that growth happens in community, and there we see the eternal value” (p. 15). I purposed to start an urban church plant that would focus on young, urban, unchurched, postmodern millennials who did not feel comfortable attending a traditional church building. The urban church plant I envisioned would aim to address and meet the needs of the postmodern young person who longed for a fresh, new church experience. The worship gathering would take place at a neutral location in the heart of the community. It would be organized in a non-traditional, informal, casual way, a setting that would make people feel as if they were meeting up with friends at a café for conversation and food.

Why the Idea of a Church Plant Did not Gain Traction

Unfortunately, the Alberta conference leadership ended up rejecting the idea of an urban church plant concept in the city of Lacombe. The reason the conference was hesitant about this new urban church possibility was twofold: (a) There were already two major churches serving a population of only 13,000 people. Establishing a third option was deemed to likely lead to fragmentation and overlap. (b) The perspective was that

there was no need for an urban church plant because the city of Lacombe was not considered urban. The line of thinking was that Lacombe, although considered a city because it has a population of over 10,000 people, still feels like a small, sleepy, rural town. It was not viewed as being on par with larger Canadian cities like Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal.

However, while it is true that Lacombe is not a big city, more than meets the eye lies beneath the surface of Lacombe. When I first started this Doctor of Ministry cohort with a concentration in urban ministry, I was instructed to look for urban issues or challenges in my local community. Although Lacombe is not considered a metropolis from a geographical and population perspective, it does have urban issues and challenges and should not have been dismissed as simply not fitting the mold.

So, what was missing in the math of this sincere and highly respected conference leader that shaped his reasoning and led him to deny the viability and value of a youth-oriented urban church plant? It was context: he did not have (or was not familiar with) the cultural context to make an informed decision and instead based his evaluation on assumptions and lack of familiarity. Because I skateboard, I am familiar with a certain culture that has formed around the sport and related recreation and arts. Because I engage in the hobby, I belong to a particular urban and street community associated with it. There are characteristic perspectives, behavior, speech, and lifestyle values that exist in this community. Belonging to such a community, I am privy to knowledge and have firsthand experience with respect to the skate culture, its urban elements, and how it all relates to the larger community in Lacombe. This is a community the church leader would not have been exposed to.

For example, if one were to be out past midnight in the city of Lacombe, and if one had a particular level of urban street knowledge, one would notice a degree of illegal drug activity taking place. This alone constitutes an urban issue in the small city of Lacombe. A second example would be gang activity and criminal activity. A large number of break-ins and robberies are taking place in the city of Lacombe. There are drug dealers serving “Molly” (MDMA), crack, cocaine, and weed (cannabis). Those partaking in this drug culture often steal to support their drug habit and addiction; the money and stolen valuables are secured to pay off debts owed to the dealer and also to purchase more drugs.

Sadly, the demographic being affected the most by this urban drug phenomenon are youth between the ages of 15 and 35. Now, what if there was an urban spiritual community that catered to and focused on urban youth? What if there was a neutral space that urban youth could come to find a sense of community where they could be authentic and still be accepted and loved?

The Winning Pitch: Urban Missional Small Group

After the encounter of unforeseen roadblocks to plant an urban church, my wife, Cheri, saw the frustration and disappointment, and said, “Lyle, you are going too big, I suggest you do it on a smaller scale, like a small group.” I spoke to a leader in my organization who was very familiar with the work I had been doing in the community with the local skaters. I explained to him my idea of a leading a small group of urban youth in just simple dialogue and Bible study. He was excited and signed off on my new project. It was simple, inexpensive, but had potential.

Naming and Branding the Small Group

The name of the small group that was born from this idea, and that is currently in place in Lacombe, is “Oikos.” The Greek word *oikos* referred to “the basic unit of society in most Greek city-states” and “refers to three distinct concepts: the family, the family’s property, and the house” (*Wikipedia*, 2018b). Translated to something equivalent to our context, it means household or network. Inherent in this concept is that it is not just enough to be a part of a social group—it must be where quality face-to-face time is required for it to be authentic and meaningful. Thus, the urban missional small group is founded on the notion that spending quality time on a regular basis, as spiritual families, will help to foster a real sense of loving community.

The Oikos urban small group is considered to be a group of people about the size of an extended family, on a collective mission, networked with other extended families. The Oikos urban missional small group is, essentially, where radical love, mercy-filled mission, and passionate spirituality can be found. The branding slogan would be as follows: “Oikos: *Your home away from home.*” Oikos small group will model *lifestyle branding*, living and promoting a relational community that accepts all people with no discrimination.

Purpose

The purpose of this study, as it took shape, was to see if an urban missional small group consisting of 10 to 15 youth would have a positive social and spiritual impact on their personal lives. The focus was to bring postmodern youth together to create a sense of community and belonging. It was to be centered on growing and developing spiritually together by studying the life of Christ and imitating the life of Christ by becoming more mission minded and community outreach oriented.

Mission

Our mission was to create a global community of radical inclusion and a deep sense of justice and compassion for others. It was, further, to intentionally grow a community of 10 to 15 urban millennials who were mission minded, seeking to create transformational change, while looking at how to make their faith relevant in postmodern urban culture. One of the tasks as a group was to reflect on what it means to be a missional Christian in the 21st century.

Design

The design of this small group was structured as an informal meeting. The main component of the group was built on dialogue and discussion. There was a main facilitator of the discussion, but all members were encouraged to participate and share their personal opinions without judgment or condemnation. It was emphasized that there would be no discrimination and all types of people would be allowed to join this group. In designing the parameters for this missional, urban small group, it was to be founded on Coyle's (2018) principles for successful small groups, in particular, to (a) build safety, (b)

share vulnerability, and (c) establish purpose; it would attempt to nurture the dynamic between connection and action (p. 121). Furthermore, the connection this group would strive for was a value in itself, because, as Livermore (2009) states, “Relating lovingly to our fellow human beings is central to what it means to be human. And when it comes down to it, Christian ministry at its core is interacting with all kinds of people in ways that give them glimpses of Jesus in us” (p. 11).

Participants

The intended number of participants for the urban missional small group was 10 to 12 persons maximum. Ideally, a sufficient number to start with was eight participants. There would be no coercion involved. There will be no concealment or deception used in recruiting participants. Participants would be fully aware of the process, and participation in this research project would occur only out of their own volition.

Strategy and Promotion

The chosen method of recruiting was multifold. The initial strategy would be to advertise and promote this missional small group within this city of Lacombe. The hope was to attract a specific demographic of young adults. Additionally, youth would be invited to participate in this project by personal invitation, a sign-up sheet, and posters. As the meetings take place, it was hoped that the group would grow in size and, further, attract a variety of persons through word of mouth and personal invitation. The group would also use social media promotion, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter.

Format and Content

Bible study and prayer would be key elements of this small group meeting.

Participants' level of involvement would include conversations, dialogue, and expressing ideas and opinions. Questions that would be asked at the small group meeting include (a) How has your week been? (b) How are you doing spiritually? (c) What books have you read lately? (d) What is Christ saying to you this week? (e) How can you become more missional in your everyday life? (f) How did the Bible speak to you this week? (g) How can we become more missional Christians in the community? (h) How can you make Christianity more relevant in your everyday life? (i) What does urban Christianity look like in a postmodern world? One of the books chosen for individual and group reading and discussion was *The Gospel Primer* by Caesar Kalinowski, which is an eight-week guide to transformation in community.

The format of each session would take on that of an interactive dialogue with group participation. There would be one main facilitator guiding and directing the flow of the conversation. A structured outline would be used at each meeting and followed as closely as possible without hindering the natural development of dialogue. A schedule (calendar) and sample outline can be found in Appendix A.

Location to Meet

The main activity of this project was an urban missional small group made up of 10 to 15 youth from the community. The small group would meet for a weekly period of one hour starting in September 2018 and was to conclude in December 2018. I was to be facilitating the small group meetings. Participants would be expected to engage in healthy dialogue on a weekly basis at the Alberta Conference Youth Department office, which is

located on 5816 Hwy 2A, Lacombe, AB or at Good Neighbor Coffee House located in Lacombe.

Data Collecting

The specific type of data that I decided to collect was in the form of surveys. The introductory survey would be given to the participants at the first meeting in September. The researcher would administer the anonymous survey and collect it the same day. At the end of December, an exit survey would be given to all participants and collected the same day. A total of two surveys would be given: one at the beginning and one at the last meeting.

The results will reflect the impact the urban missional small group had on the participants. Another goal is to learn the effectiveness of a small group in the context of urban ministry and urban spirituality. I intended to discover if participating in a small group is considered relevant to young urban postmodern millennials. It was also my intent to observe the power of small-group dynamics and to understand the significance of reaching and impacting postmodern youth from a spiritual and social perspective.

Securing of the Data

All personal information collected such as name, address, phone number, email, and age would be kept confidential. Participants would be made aware from the start of the data collection process that their personal information would be kept private and confidential. Group members would be instructed to keep anything said by anyone in the group meetings confidential. This means that any information shared inside the group would not be shared with anyone from outside the group. Data collected in the form of

surveys would not be made public. All data would be kept for at least three years in a secure file in the Youth Department of the Alberta Conference.

Conclusion

An urban small group is vital to reaching and retaining youth who have no desire to attend traditional church structures. This project came out of two separate failed project ideas: first, the idea for an urban arts youth center and, second, an urban missional church plant.

Because of my knowledge of entrepreneurship, early-stage startup companies and small business, I knew that when one idea does not take root or succeed, it is not necessarily to be considered a failure; it may just mean that one needs to pivot in another direction. It was because of internal political circumstances within the Seventh-day Adventist governing institution that the two ideas did not work, but with some adjustments to my original projects and with some scaling down, I sought to create a viable product within permissible parameters.

It was through my personal experience, a recognition and firsthand encounter of spiritual and social needs of the community, access to social assets in the community, and my vision of change for the urban youth in the city of Lacombe that I arrived at creating and building an urban missional small-group model. I identified a problem in my community, I knew my target market and target audience, I knew I had a viable and relevant solution that was social and spiritual in nature, and I knew I could gather the right team members and resources to bring this idea to scale and create an amazing service or program that would meet the needs of my local community. What first appeared to be recurring failure would end up shaping a subsequent project model. When

a third model was enacted, it proved to be viable, given the parameters and resources available.

The following chapter will delve into the mechanics of the working model for the urban missional small group. It will show how the project was developed and scaled to meet the needs of an urban youth demographic in the city of Lacombe.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter first explains the outcomes of implementing my urban ministry project, “A Cosmopolitan Theology for Creating an Urban Missional Community to Impact Postmodern Generations in the City of Lacombe.” Secondly, it will evaluate the effectiveness of the urban missional small group that was conducted September to December 2018. This is followed by explanations of the mistakes, challenges, and lessons relating to the implementation process that can be helpful to others attempting to embark on a similar project or initiative.

Outcomes

When the first group meeting took place, there were approximately five individuals including myself. I did not know that I would have to deal with a lack of commitment from particular individuals. There were some who had signed up and never showed up, as well as several who came for one meeting and then did not show up for subsequent meetings.

We also ran into a scheduling problem. The original days of our meetings were scheduled for Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m., but then we tried Sunday evening thinking that it would be better for the group; unfortunately, Sundays did not fit well with the group, so we finally ended up meeting on Friday evenings.

One of the most challenging things during this small group process was the

problem of exclusivity. It was meant to be inclusive—we wanted to be inclusive—but sometimes it felt as if we also wanted to be exclusive. The core group of eight members who came faithfully every week developed a strong connection, a safe and warm community. But this led to a sense of protectiveness and slight territorialism within the group. This played out on two occasions; different people joined, and the group would jokingly interview the newcomers to see if they would fit well with the rest of the group. It was not necessarily a bad thing, in the sense that when one has something good one wants to protect it. And in trying to be inclusive, we also want to preserve and protect the core values and DNA of the existing group.

Although there were unseen challenges launching the urban missional small group, the weekly meetings resulted in key measurable growth from the participants of the small group.

Formation of the Missional Small Group

As explained in chapter 4, I decided to start a small group in an urban setting in the city of Lacombe, Alberta. A local coffee shop, Good Neighbour Coffee House, was a great fit and became the venue for a meeting every Wednesday night. I wanted to establish a safe and caring community group within the public marketplace. It was like a book club meeting but with a spiritual agenda. The book that I selected for the group to read was *The Gospel Primer: An Eight-Week Guide to Transformation in Community* by Caesar Kalinowski (2013).

Methodology of the Meetings

Each week for two to three hours, a small group of 11 urban postmodern millennials met as an urban missional small group to engage in meaningful and

intentional conversation. The purpose of these meetings was to create a space for warm and loving community, provide accountability, encourage spirituality, and foster a passion for mission.

Throughout the 12 weeks, I used an approach I call MILD, which stands for Mentorship, Involvement, Leadership, and Dialogue. As the facilitator, I implemented these four principles in my interactions with guidance with respect to the participants. The main instruments used to achieve the above desired outcomes were the four types of conversation: debate, dialogue, discourse, and diatribe.

Angel (2017) describes these four types of conversations:

Debate being a competitive, two-way conversation. The goal is to win an argument or convince someone, such as the other participant or third-party observers. Dialogue being a cooperative, two-way conversation. The goal is for participants to exchange information and build relationships with one another. Discourse being a cooperative, one-way conversation. The goal to deliver information from the speaker/writer to the listeners/readers. Diatribe being a competitive, one-way conversation. The goal is to express emotions, browbeat those that disagree with you, and/or inspires those that share the same perspective. (p. 1)

Through careful and intentional facilitation, relevant questions provided by the book *Gospel Primer*, each week participants were challenged by questions and encouraged to go home read, study, reflect, and write on the weekly recommended topic.

Weekly Meetings

Week 1: September 26, 2018

Topic: Introductory Meeting to Get Acquainted and Review the Syllabus

The goal of this meeting was to meet everyone, introduce ourselves to one another, get acquainted, share the expectations, and define the purpose of the small group. Our first meeting seemed a bit tense at first. As the facilitator, I did not know who was

going to arrive. Seven people attended the meeting. They were already engaged in conversation before the meeting officially started. They were diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds and different ethnicities. Consent forms and introductory survey were given out. Introduction were made, and each of the participants shared something personal that other people were unaware of.

Outcome

Participants became aware of the purpose of the small group and committed to coming back the following week.

Week 2: October 3, 2018

Topic: What is the Gospel?

The goal of this meeting was to discuss the biblical meaning behind the gospel. At this meeting, the participants discussed what the meaning of the gospel was. They were asked questions such as *How would you describe the gospel? Do you identify with the gospel? Do you share the gospel? Should we intentionally become friends with people in order to share the gospel? How would you share the gospel with non-believers?*

Outcome

The outcome was a deeper understanding of what the gospel means and better understanding of how to share the gospel with others.

Week 3: October 10, 2018

Topic: “The Story”

The goal of meeting was to look at the importance of story of Jesus and dig deeper into the gospel story of Jesus weaved throughout the Bible. At this meeting we

discussed what the story of Jesus and his purpose for coming to earth. It was described in the form of Creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Outcome

Each participant spoke of their personal story. The stories that people created for them, the experiences that had shaped them. Participants were very transparent in sharing very personal and emotional stories. This meeting help to group members to bond and feel safe to share in a safe environment.

Week 4: October 17, 2018

Topic: “Your Gospel Story”

The goal of this meeting was for participants to learn how to see themselves in the gospel story and to learn how to share their personal gospel story with others. Each participant discussed what the gospel story meant to them and then shared their personal gospel story.

Outcome

The group participants felt more comfortable to share their personal testimony and understood the importance of seeing themselves in the gospel story. The gospel became more personal to them and more meaningful. This meeting made a significant impact in the lives of each participant because the gospel become more real and more practical.

Week 5: October 28, 2018

Topic: “Gospel Listening”

The goal of this meeting was to learn how to be active listening and to learn how to better listen to hear the gospel in other people’s stories. This meeting focused on the distinction between merely hearing someone versus actively listening to someone’s story. The participants each practiced active listening and reflected on how it felt when not being listened to.

Outcome

This meeting took place at the conference office in the youth department. We did not meet on Wednesday, our usual day, because I was out of town. The youth department space had low lighting, comfortable couches, a bistro table, and bistro chairs. Food and drink were available for all of the participants to enjoy. The chapter we had been studying that week was about “gospel listening,” namely, how important it is to listen to people’s stories and to find out how God is speaking in people’s lives. After two hours of discussion, the meeting was about to close, at which point someone felt compelled to disclose a personal struggle. It turned out that after this individual vulnerably shared their personal struggle, others were given “the gift of going second,” as it were. Another member started to share their brokenness, then another person shared their personal trauma as a child. Thus, the group became an authentic, safe place for opening up about hurts and shame.

Week 6: November 4, 2018

Topic: “Four Eternal Truths”

The goal of this meeting was to learn about four characteristics of God: God is great, God is glorious, God is good, and God is gracious. Everyone reflected on their lives to recall experiences evidencing God in either or all of these four aspects.

Outcome

The majority of the group identified with God being gracious and feeling that grace was being extended to their lives. This personal inventory led to acknowledging God’s overall goodness and each participant feeling closer to God.

Week 7: November 9, 2018

Topic: “Two Lenses”

The goal of this meeting was to look at the Bible through two lenses, the lenses of topical versus narrative; to better understand how to view the Bible.

Outcome

Participants discussed and agreed that there is a need for both in order to have a clear and comprehensive picture of God. The Bible can be both interpreted from a topical point of view and from narrative perspective. One is not better than the other; both are necessary for spiritual growth and development.

Week 8: November 16, 2018

Topic: “Gospel Identity”

The goal of this meeting was to understand what the term “gospel identity” meant and for each participate to learn how to see their identity in light of the gospel. The group focused on what their current identity looked like and what it means to have Christ’s identity.

Outcome

Participants talked about their identities. Many were struggling to define their identity. It was a growing and learning experience, as the group members learned about one another in a deep and meaningful way. Group members shared personal experiences that have shaped who they are today and how they currently think. They determined that identifying as a Christian was more important than anything else they were trying to be.

Week 9: November 17, 2018

**Topic: “Social Bonding
Christmas Pizza Party”**

The goal of this meeting was simply to engage in social bonding. Group members joined one another at a member’s home to enjoy pizza and movie night.

Outcome

Group members watched the movie *Black Panther*. It was the group’s first experience socializing with one another outside of our weekly small-group meetings. Participants displayed ease, openness, and willingness to spend time with each other. It created a happy and healthy environment for all small-group members.

Week 10: November 23, 2018

Topic: “Gospel Rhythms”

The goal was for each participant to understand that there are natural rhythms of life, different seasons in life, and that God is always working in each season of their life. Group members discussed the difference between church building and being the church. Participants wanted to model what it meant to be the church body and live out the family of God.

Outcome

Participants talked about the rhythms of life and how sometimes they do not feel like attending traditional church. The book the group was studying mentioned that church is not a production or a performance, that it is not about *doing* but about *being*. It was affirming for them to hear from one another how they felt the group was impacting their spiritual lives.

Week 11: November 30, 2018

Topic: “How Is Everyone Doing?”

The goal of this meeting was to get a sense of how each participant was doing in relation to the small group. At this meeting each participant shared their personal journey since starting with the small group.

Outcome

This group meeting was to see how people were doing spiritually. Group participants prayed together, laughed, and connected more deeply. The nature of the meeting was informal but meaningful. As the facilitator, I personally shared my story of

rejection and how I was having a difficult week. The group members encouraged me and prayed for me. Each participant openly shared where they were in their spiritual lives and revealed that since joining the small group, they had each grown spiritually in a tremendous way.

Week 12: December 7, 2018

Topic: “Come As You Are, But Where Are You Now?”

The goal of this meeting was to conduct our last official small group meeting, distribute the exit survey, and to do a spiritual checkup on each participant. The group participants gathered one last time officially as a small group to share how they were doing spiritually and to complete the exit survey.

Outcome

The research exit survey was distributed. The feeling of the group was cheerful but apprehensive about ending the year. It was evident all 12 individuals wanted the group to continue to meet the following year, 2019. Close to the end of the meeting, someone felt comfortable in sharing his/her personal struggle with spending and incurring large amounts of debt. Another individual shared his/her struggle with eating chalk. We affirmed each person and made a personal pact to journey with each other to recovery, restoration, and victory in Christ. Dates were set for next year to bring in a financial advisor and a health practitioner to help with the group members’ personal struggles.

Week 13 December 8, 2018

Purpose: “Social Bonding Christmas Party”

The goal of this group meeting was to mainly socialize, have our last official meeting together, and to celebrate our growth as a small group community. Participants had a community meal at a local restaurant downtown Lacombe called Cilantro & Chive.

Outcome

The group enjoyed in-depth conversations ranging from family, sex, relationships, society, and church issues. At the end of meetings there was a true sense of community. The group had organically formed into an inclusive, warm, and welcoming small group that focused on being missional and being more authentic.

The Evaluation

After the conclusion of meeting for 12 weeks with the urban small group, the introductory survey and the exit survey were evaluated and compiled in the form of bar charts and pie charts.

The Results of the Introductory Survey

Here are the results of the introductory survey that was given to each of the 12 participants on September 26, 2018. They have been put in the form of bar charts and pie charts.

The target age range of this DMin study was 15 to 35. However, while people older than this age group participated in this small group, Figure 1 shows that the most common age range among participants was 23 to 29. This urban missional small group study was open to male and female participants. As figure 2 shows, six participants were male, and five were female.

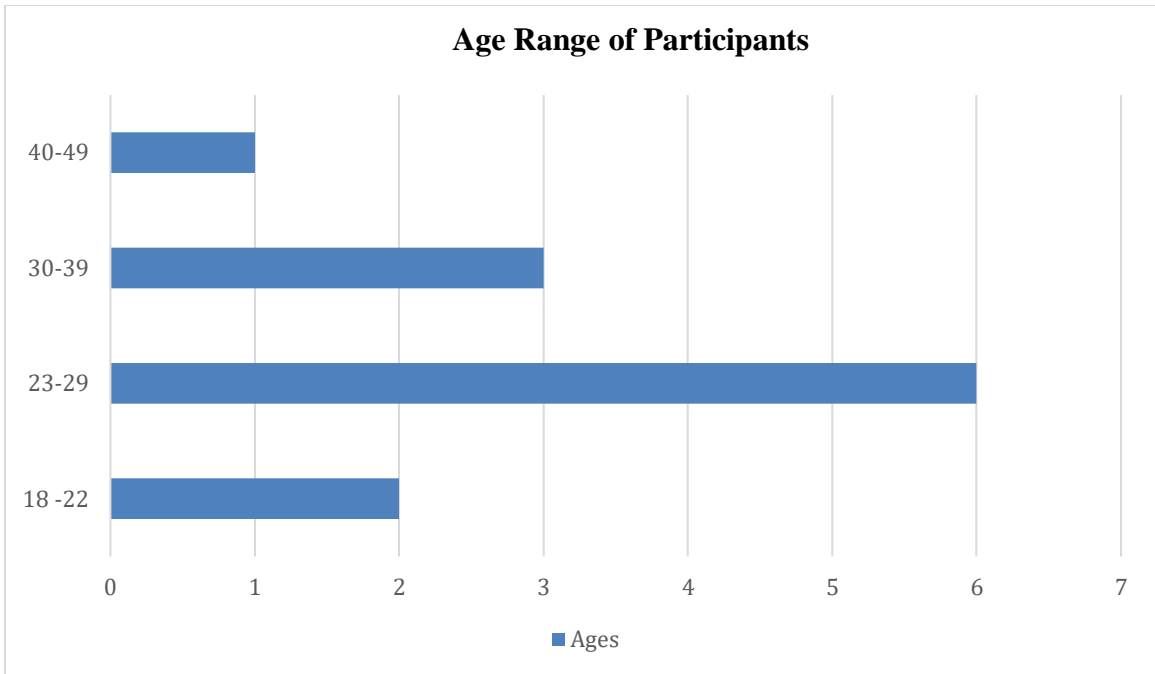


Figure 1. Age-range categories of the small-group participants.

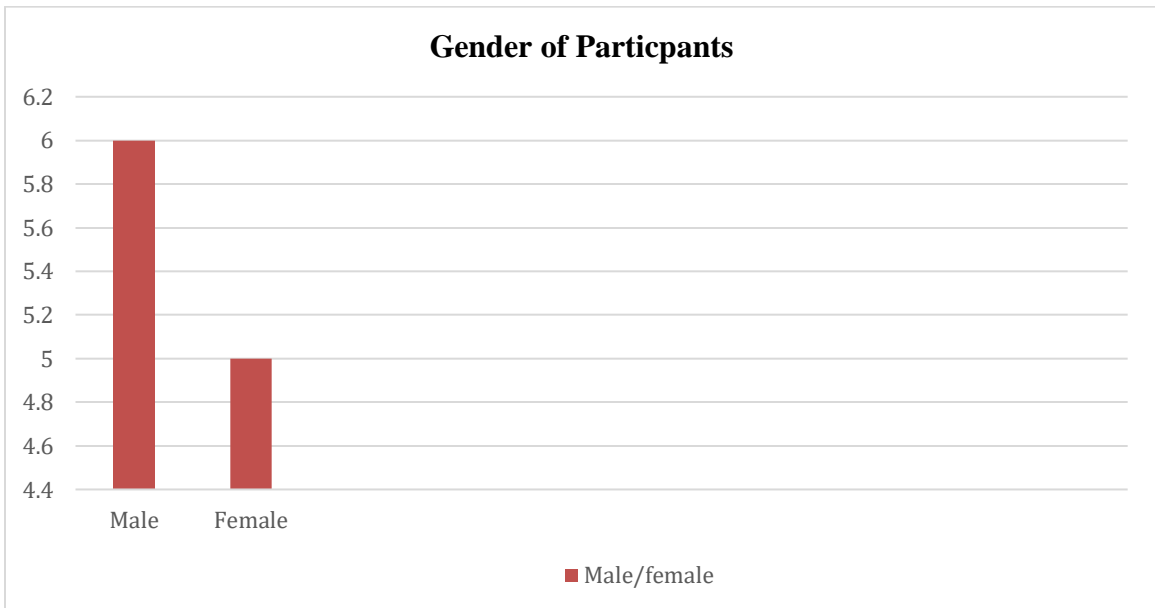


Figure 2. Male-participant and female-participant representation in the small group.

Figure 3 indicates the proportion of participants in the group who were either churched, unchurched, or were not attending church regularly at the time. The term *unchurched* refers to people who identify as Christian but have not been connected with a church for a long time. Half (50%) of the group was churched, 40% were unchurched, while 10% did not attend church.

In terms of the ethnicity of the participants in this small-group study, the majority of the group, 67%, was Black, 17% Hispanic, and 17% Caucasian, as portrayed (see figure 4)

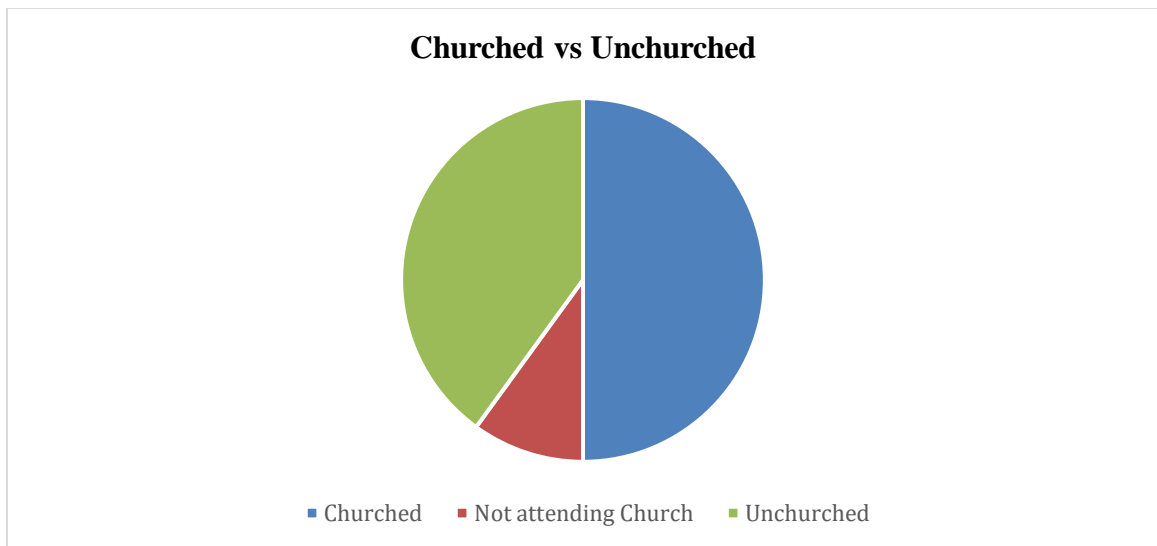


Figure 3. Church connectedness among small-group participants.

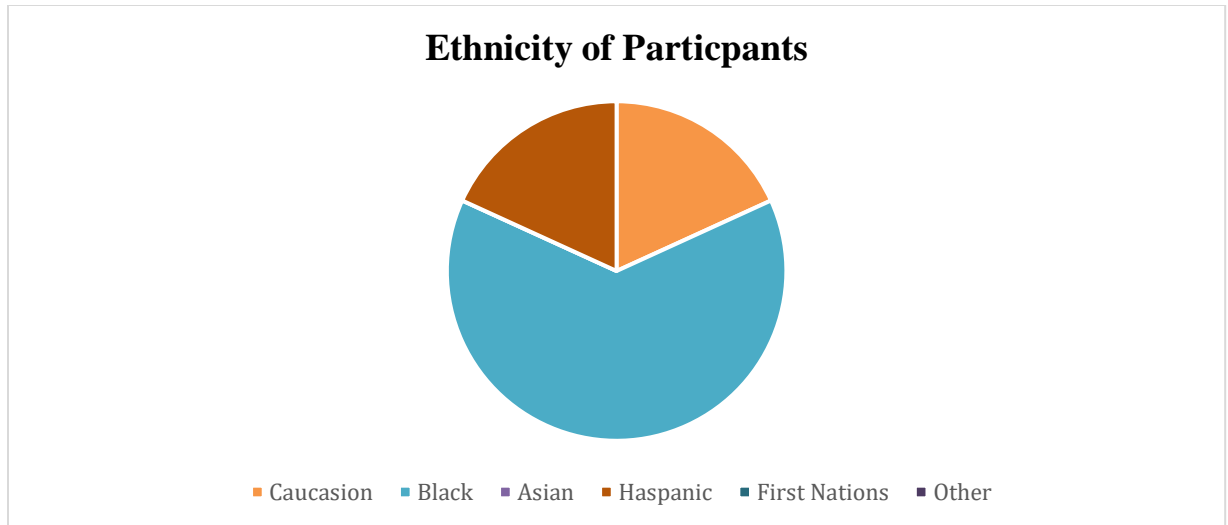


Figure 4. Ethnic background of small-group participants.

In terms of the occupational life of the group members, the majority of the group were students (see figure 5). The rest of the group were of the working-class demographic working in various sectors (see figure 5).

Figure 6 shows the responses that small-group survey participants gave to questions relating to one's personal life. Over 73% of the group considered themselves postmodern and millennial. And over half the group indicated that they listen to hip hop music.

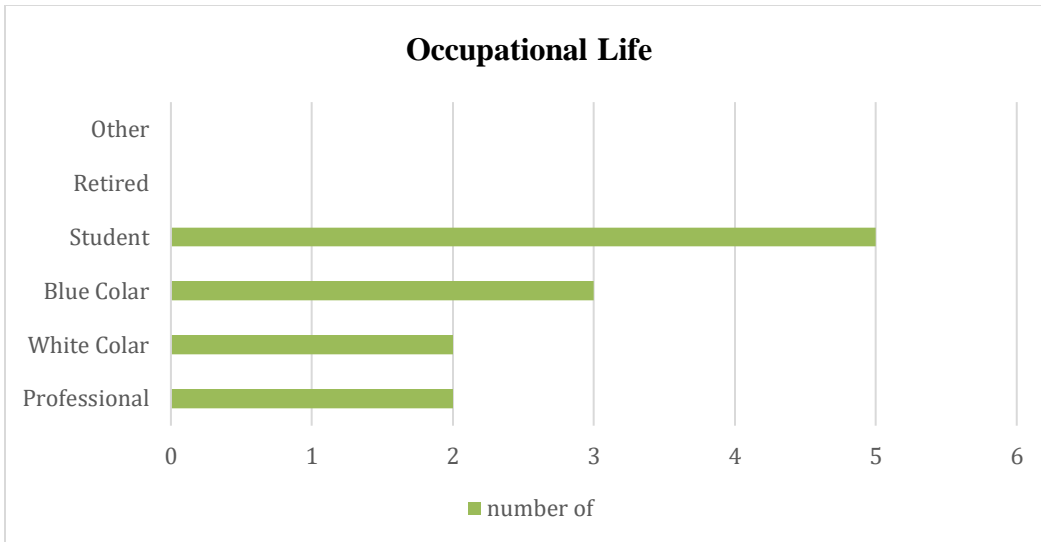


Figure 5. Occupations of small-group participants.

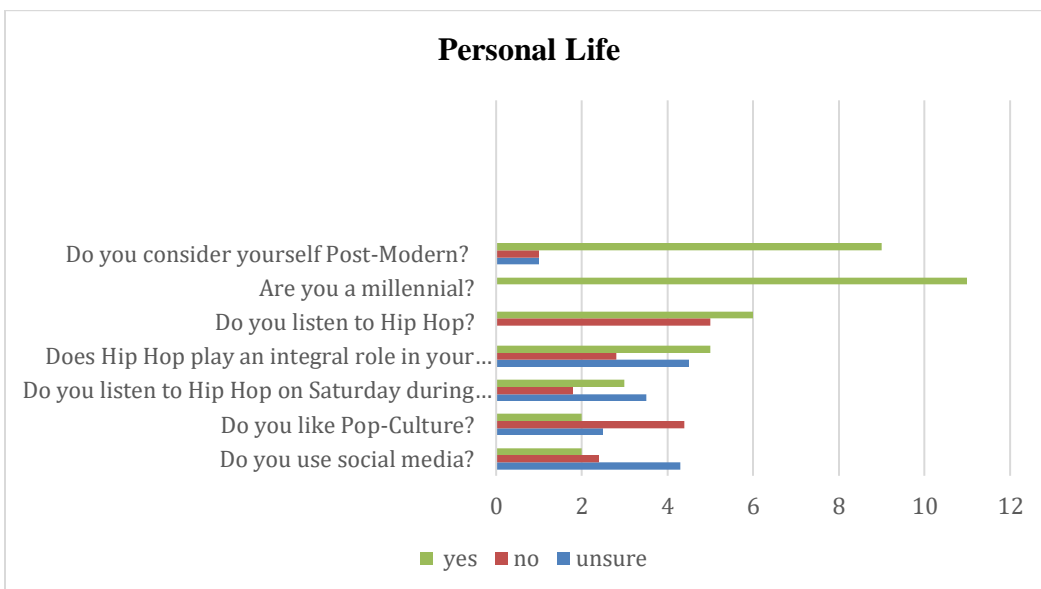


Figure 6. Participant responses to questions relating to personal life and entertainment preferences.

Figure 7 shows the community life as experienced by the 11 small-group participants. Five individuals in the group did not initially (prior to small-group participation) have a community where they felt a sense of belonging. Four did not, at the

time of the survey, feel a sense of community. And five were not, at the time, involved in any outreach or mission on the community.

Figure 8 indicates the level of urbanity of each participant. Close to half of the group considered themselves to be urban but identified less with urban culture. Four of the group participants were not involved in community outreach activities or urban ministry. Four of the 11 people indicated that they had an understanding of urban ministry.

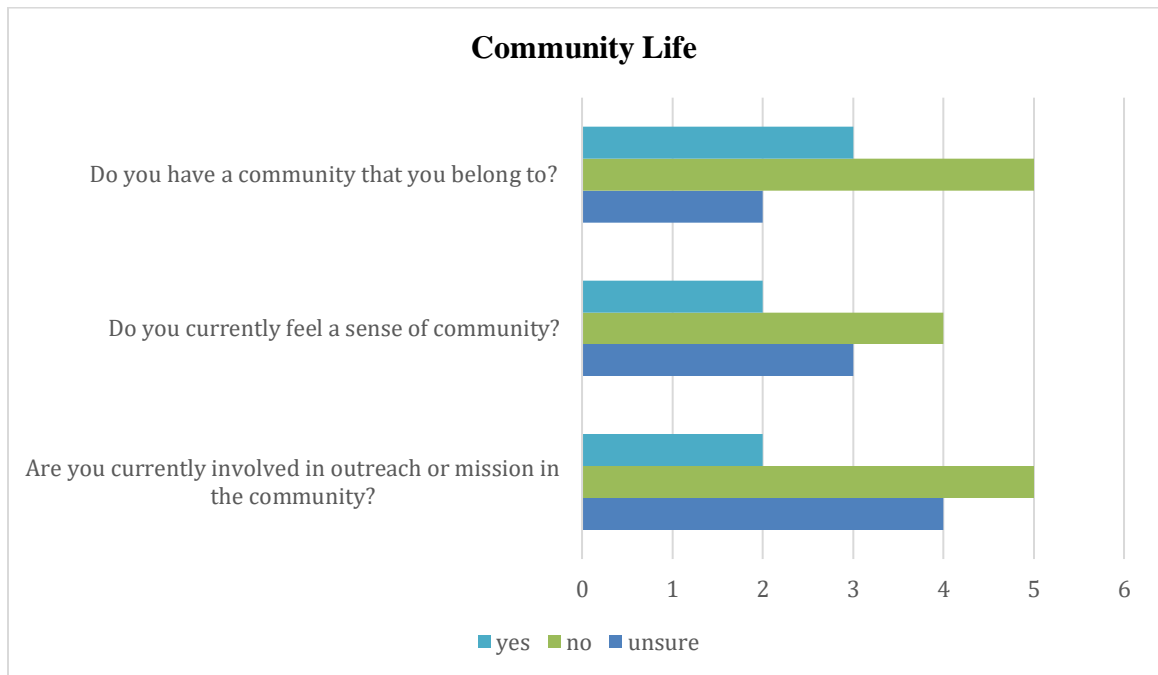


Figure 7. Community life as experienced by the small-group participants.

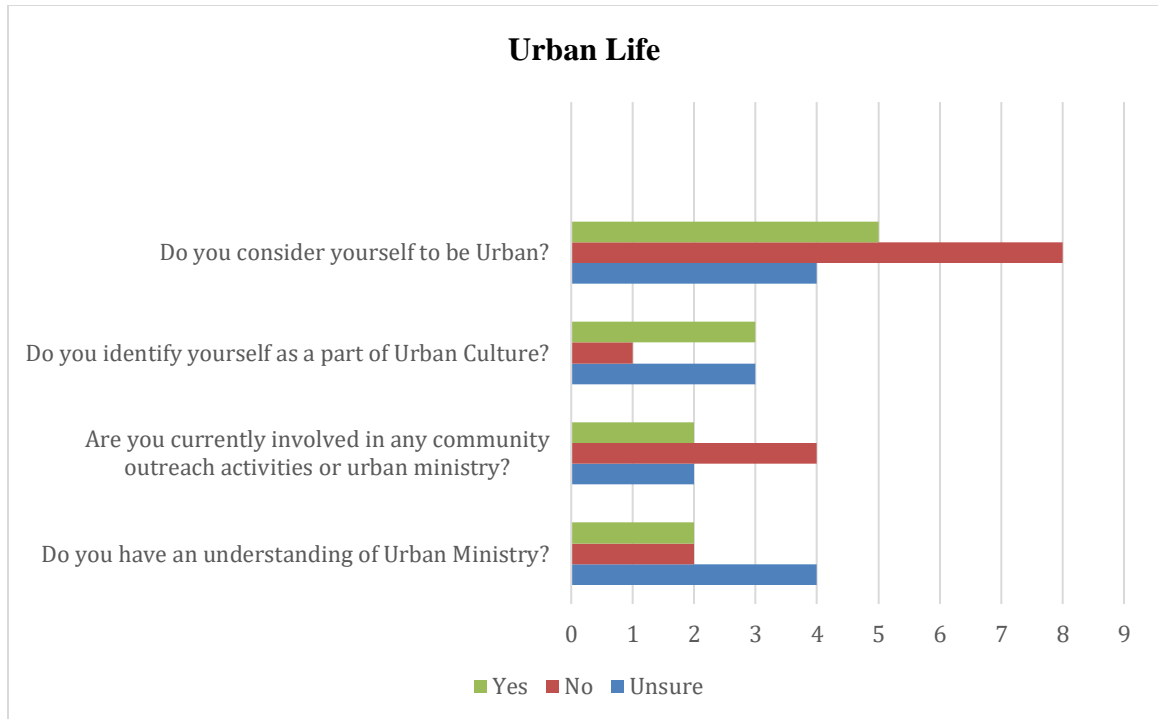


Figure 8. Urban life as understood and experienced by small-group participants.

Figure 9 reflects the spiritual life of the group participants. A total of 64% of the group members were unsure if they would be saved if Jesus were to come back right at the time of the survey. Also, while 45% of the group read the Bible, the majority of participants were unsure of they were interested in the Bible. A few participants, accounting for 36% of the group, did not identify as Seventh-day Adventist, and over 36% indicated they were unsure as to whether they identified as Christian.

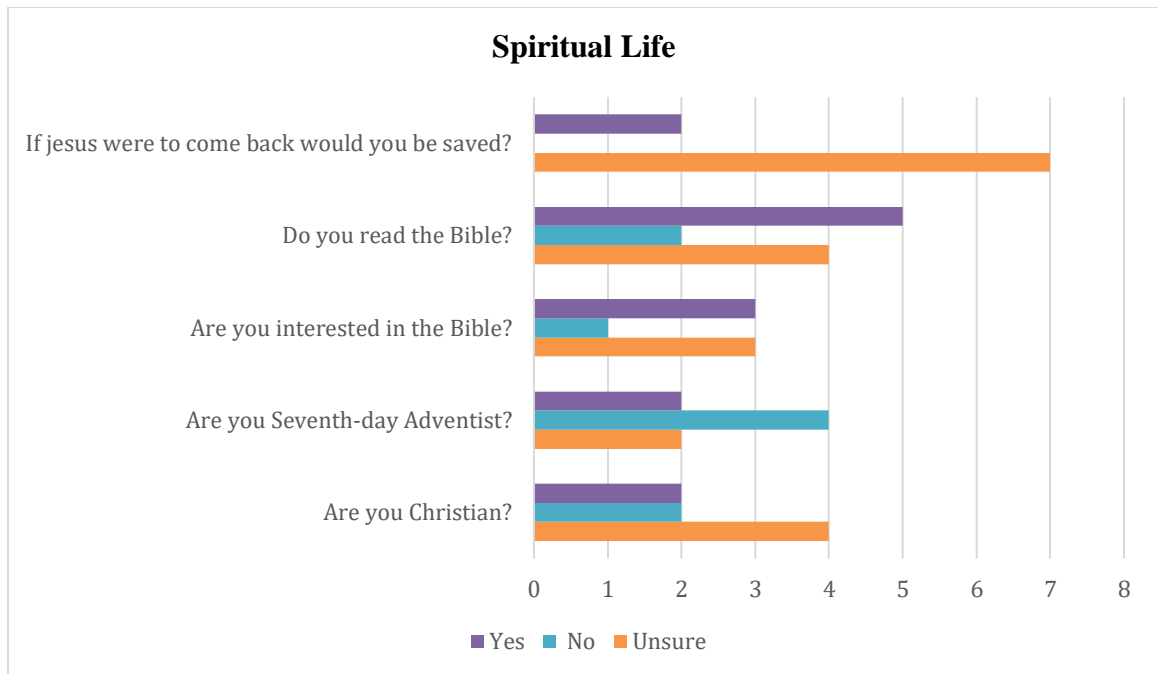


Figure 9. Self-reflections about spiritual life among small-group participant.

Participants also answered specific questions pertaining to church life as they individually experienced. The surveys indicated that 64% of the group participants did not deem church to be relevant, would not invite their friends to church, did not feel safe sharing at church, did not feel safe sharing their talents, and felt that they had to pretend to be someone else to fit in, and felt judged when they went to church (see figure 10).

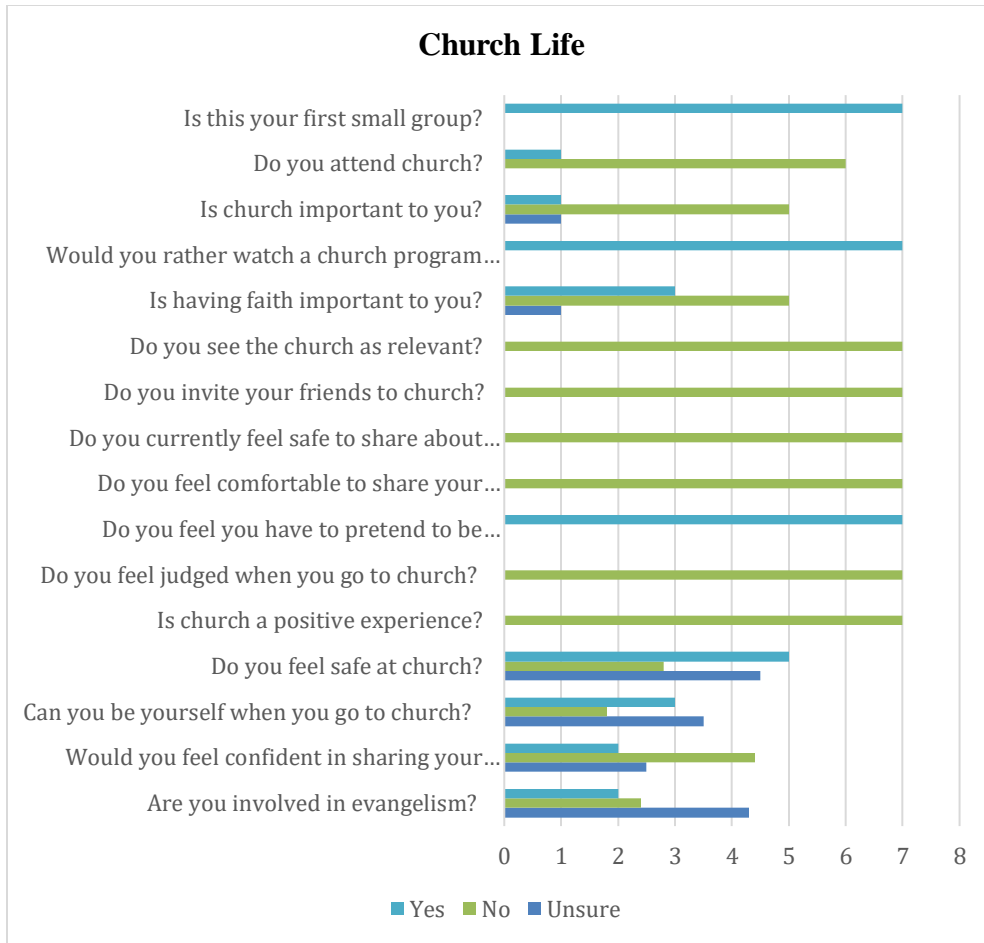


Figure 10. Church life as viewed and experienced by small-group participants.

Figure 11 indicates church experiences of the group participants. At the time of soliciting this introductory survey, based on the responses from the participants, over 64% of the group members did not have a positive view of church. The majority the group did not see the role of the church as purposeful in their lives.

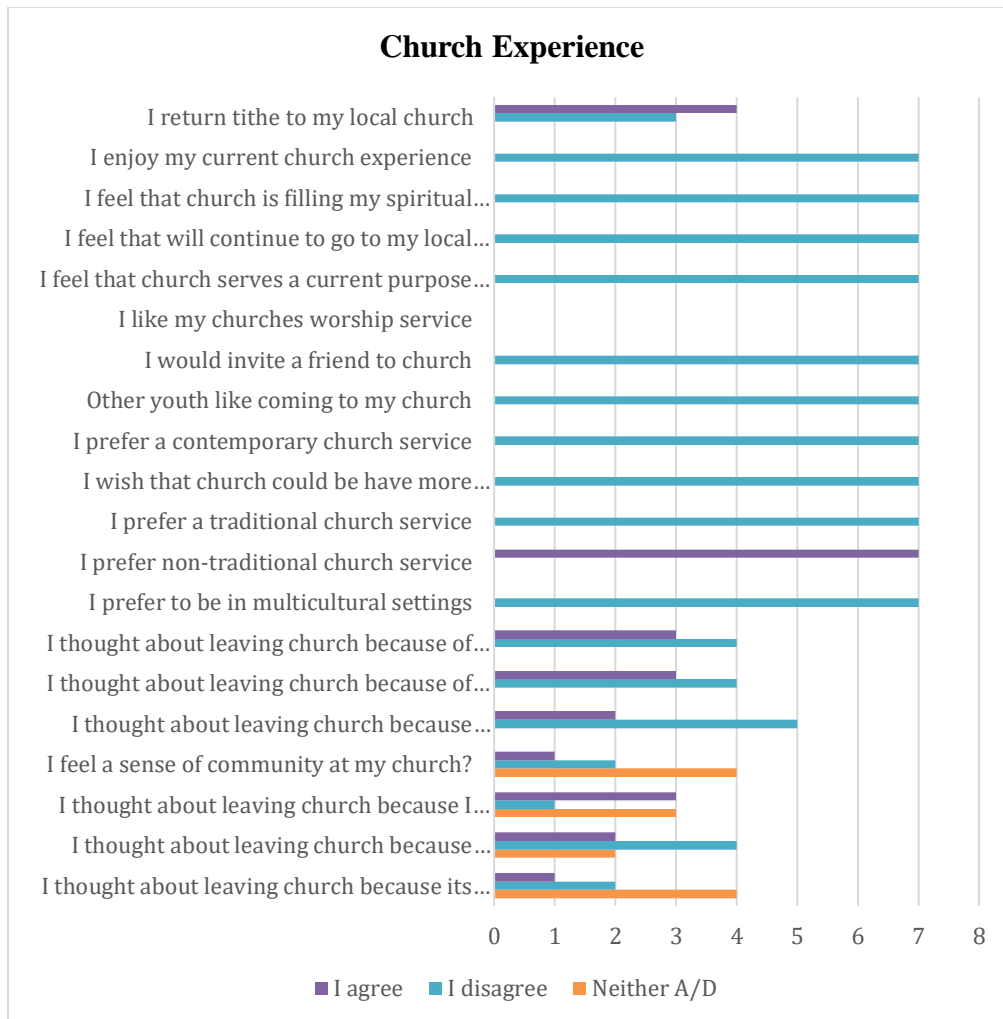


Figure 11. Church practices, preferences, and sentiments among participants.

Results of the Exit Survey

An exit survey was distributed to each of the 12 participants on December 7, 2018. The above chart indicates information collected on the participants' personal life. After 10 weeks of meeting as a small group, 45% of the group indicated they felt more authentic within the small group than before the small group formed; 64% of the group participants were more trusting of people in the group and felt that they had been spiritually transformed; and 64% of the group participants also indicated that they felt the group had changed their lives (see figure 12). They had become happier and had grown

as individuals after meeting together for 10 weeks.

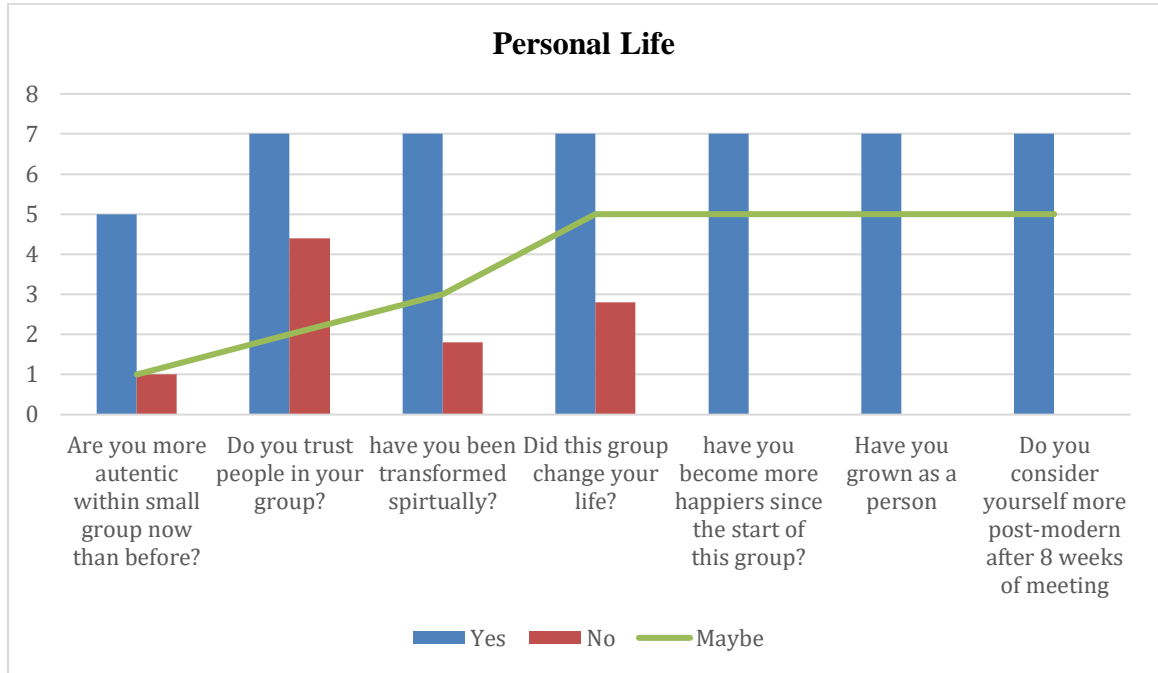


Figure 12. Personal reflections on how the small group has positively affected participants in terms of happiness, interpersonal relationships, and spiritual health.

Figure 13 indicates the community life of each participant. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the group participants considered the small group to be their community, whereas prior to meeting 45% indicated that they did not belong to a community. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the group felt they had a sense of community after 10 weeks of meeting, previously only 36% felt a sense of community. Previously only 45% were involved in any community outreach activities, after the small group meeting concluded, 64% of the group participants felt they gained a passion for social justice.

Figure 14 describes the urbanity of participants after 10 weeks of meeting as a

small group. Five out of 11 in the group still consider themselves to be urban. After the small-group experience, 36% considered themselves to be a part of urban culture, whereas previously close to 27% were unsure. Previously, a little over 40% were involved in community outreach, but after meeting in the small group close to 45% were engaged in some form of outreach or urban ministry. Previously, a little over 36% felt they had an understanding of urban ministry, but after meeting as a small group close to 64% felt they had a better understanding of urban ministry. Nearly 64% of the participants indicated that urban ministry was important to them after meeting as an urban missional small group.

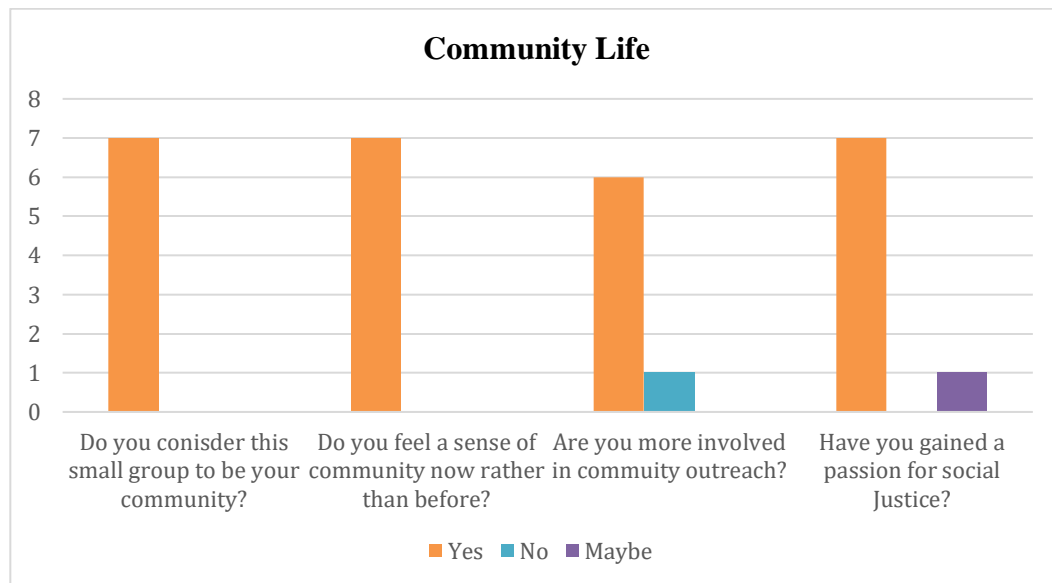


Figure 13. Community life as experienced by small-group participants after 10 weeks of meeting in a small group.

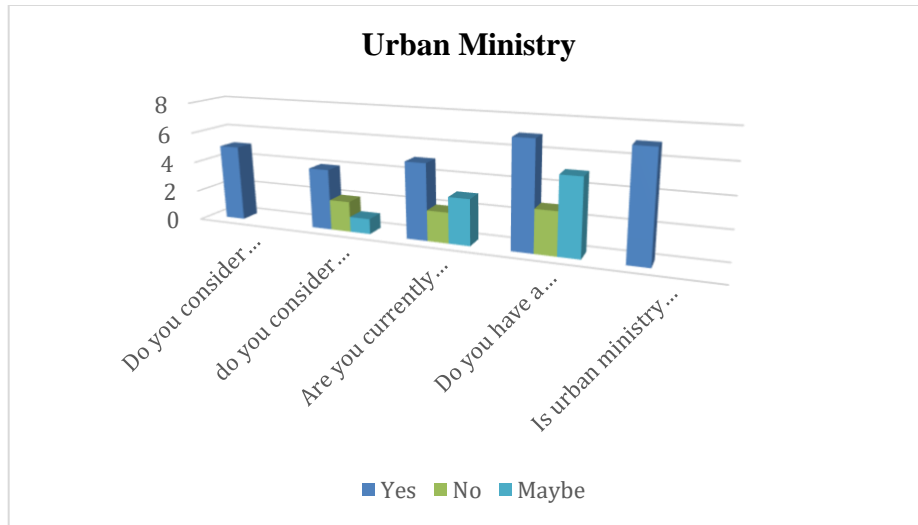


Figure 14. Participants' reflections on the topic of urban ministry after 10 weeks' participation in the small group.

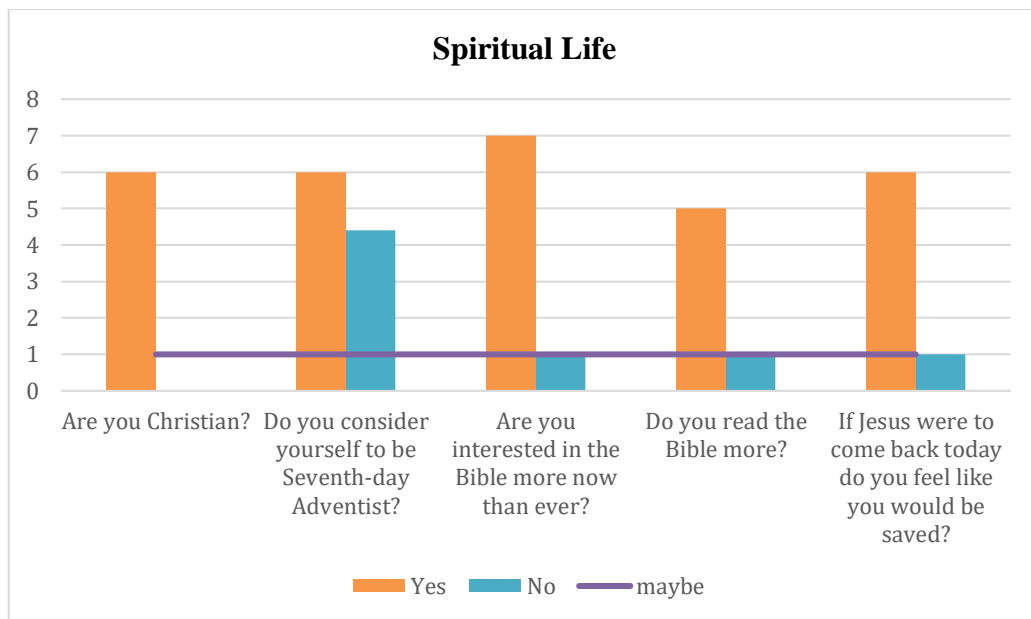


Figure 15. Participants' responses indicating their relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist faith and the Bible at the conclusion of the small-group experience.

Figure 15 indicates the evidence of spiritual life after the 10 weeks of small-group meetings: 55% identified as Christian, while only a little over 36% previously identified

as Christian. Previously, 36% of participants identified as Seventh-day Adventist, but after the small-group experience, 55% identified as Seventh-day Adventist. A total of 64% of the participants were more interested in the Bible, as compared with less than 36% previously (before the small group). More intriguing to note is that after the small-group experience, 55% of the participants believed they would be saved if Jesus were to come back right then, whereas at the start—prior to the 10-week small-group experience—64% of the participants were unsure.

The small group shaped some participants' intentions about church attendance: 55% indicated that they were now attending church; however, the introductory survey indicated that 55% were *not* attending church. As well, after the small-group experience, 64% of the participants indicated that faith was important to them, whereas at the time of the introductory survey only 45% indicated that faith was important to them. At the conclusion of the small group, 55% said they were more likely to join another small group.

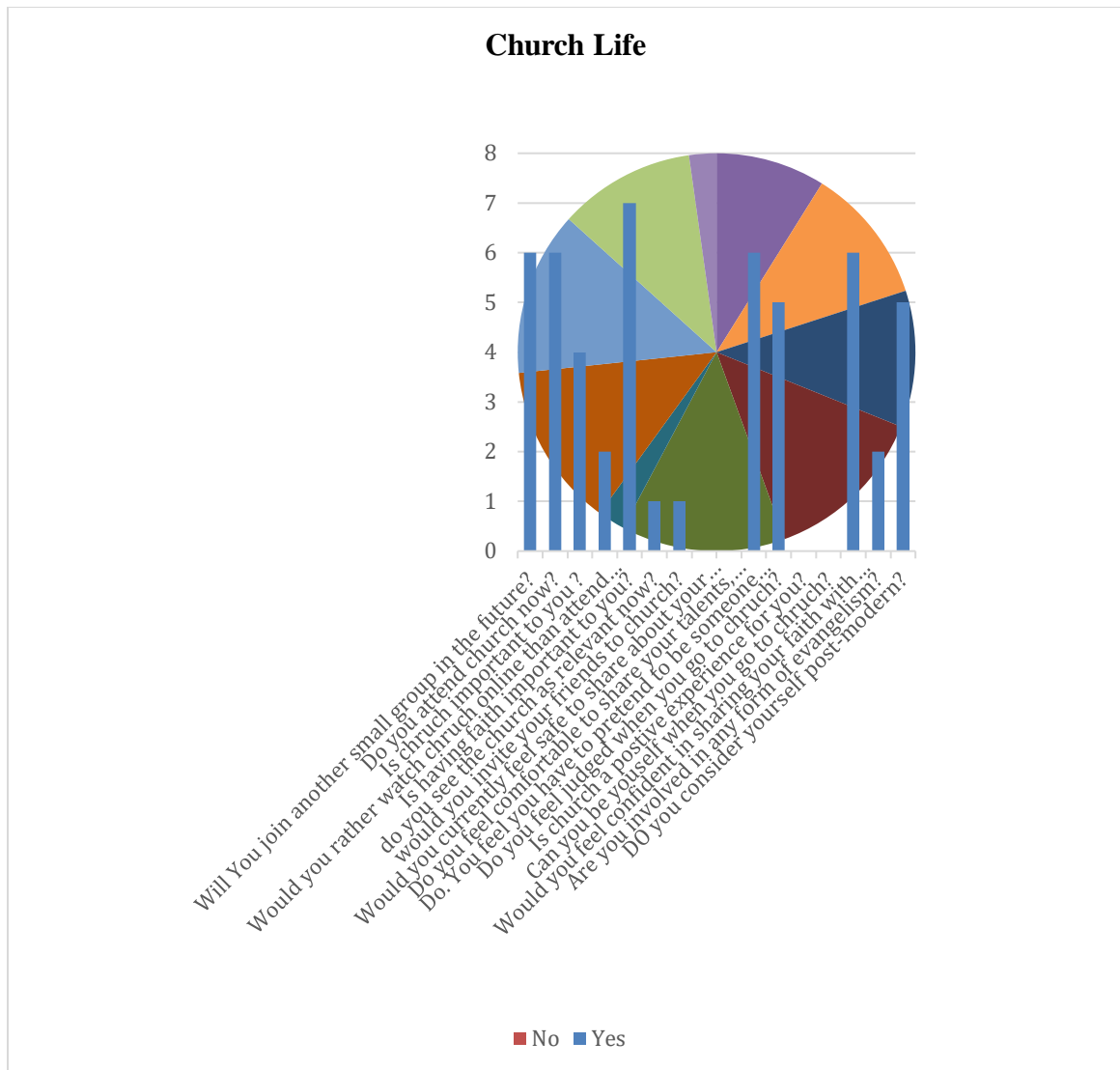


Figure 16. Church-attendance reflections and plans of participants at the end.

Participants were also surveyed about their reflections and opinions on the value the small group brought to their lives and the positive changes experienced. It was evident that after 10 weeks of meeting together, over 73% of the group participants felt that the small group was loving, friendly, relevant, warm, safe, fulfilling their spiritual needs, and that they preferred small group over a traditional church gathering (see figure 17). 64% indicated that they wanted the small group to transform into a church plant.

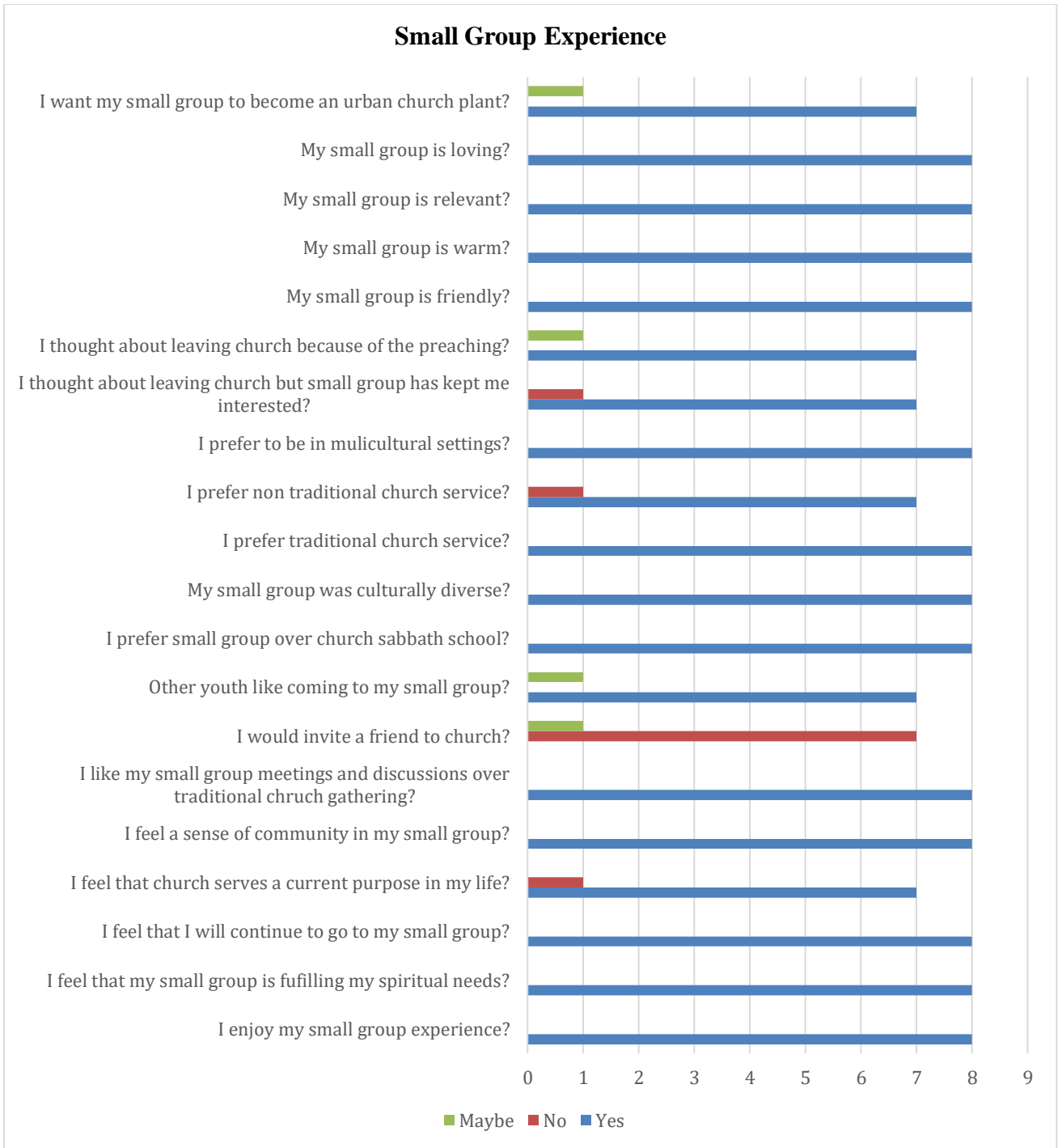


Figure 17. Opinions and reflections about small-group dynamics.

Overall Conclusion of the Evaluation Results

After careful review and evaluation of the results of the surveys, it was evident that implementing a 12-week urban missional small group in an urban city will have a substantial and measurable spiritual impact on the group participants. A comparison of the results from the introduction survey against the results of the exit survey indicates comprehensive impact on the participants' lives as a result of belonging to the urban missional small group.

The six key areas evaluated were (a) personal life, (b) community life, (c) spiritual life, (d) urban life, (e) church life, and (f) church experience/small group experience. A series of questions were asked in each of the six categories.

At the conclusion of the research study and evaluations in each of these six areas, results implied that on average, 64% of participants' responses indicated positive and constructive improvement than prior to joining the small group. This ultimately reveals that urban missional small groups can have a positive, meaningful, constructive, and measurable impact on young urban church and unchurched postmodern millennials.

Conclusion

The question looming in the back of my mind during the entire process of implementing the urban missional small group was: *How do I reach urban, postmodern millennials who want nothing to do with church or religion? Is this the most effective way to reach this demographic?* And then it dawned on me I was in actuality reaching this specific niche demographic through the small-group project.

In business there is a term—*disruptive innovation*. It refers to ideas that disturb the status quo and change the nature of a pre-existing model or version. Urban

missional small groups can be considered disruptive innovation because they have the unique power to reach postmodern millennials. They are a new and different way for young unchurched urban youth to meet spiritually. A small group can focus specifically on mission in the city and foster a sense of diversity and inclusivity while, above all, being user friendly.

After the implementation of the urban missional small group, it was evident that the purpose of the group had been realized. It had created community, had become mission oriented, and had provided a safe and caring space for youth in the city of Lacombe. It served its purpose and created spiritual community for many of the participants who no longer attend traditional church.

The review of literature in chapter 3 shows that there is an increasing need for faith-based urban initiatives for youth in urban areas. Churches in large metropolitan areas tend to focus on feeding the spiritual needs of its own community and yet sometimes forget (or do not take seriously) the needs that the other citizens of the city may have.

The greatest takeaway from this small-group experience, as mentioned earlier, is that the group resulted in a new core group of urban missional leaders who are empowered and equipped to, firstly, go out to share the gospel; secondly, disciple new believers; and thirdly, successfully lead other small groups that will ultimately attract this niche demographic and impact this niche demographic spiritually for Christ.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this project dissertation was to study the impact that urban missional small groups can have in urban settings. A small group was established with the intent on effectively engaging and benefiting urban youth who were disillusioned with faith and organized religion, were not partaking in traditional church services, and were at risk of involvement with gang activity and drugs.

Chapter 1 provided a description of the ministry context, namely the 13,000-resident city of Lacombe, Alberta, which has roughly 1,000 youth aged 11 to 19. Youth in Lacombe have been facing challenges related to crime involvement and recreational drug use. Since faith-based community initiatives to address this growing problem were lacking, the task of this project evolved to developing, implementing, and evaluating an urban missional small group to reach postmodern millennials in Lacombe and influence youth culture in a positive way.

Chapter 2 laid a biblical theological foundation for urban mission by discussing examples from both the Old and the New Testament. Bible characters such as Jonah, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah were portrayed as urban missionaries addressing the social and spiritual needs of their communities. In the New Testament Jesus and Paul were, essentially, urban missionaries taking their ministry to the urban centers of their day. The

concept of urban living, theology of place, and the need for Christians to live in the cities were highlighted.

In chapter 3 literature in three major areas of study, urban ministry, cosmopolitan theology, and small groups, was reviewed and findings compared. As discussed, missiologists, theologians, and ministers have been asking what can be done to stop the hemorrhage of youth leaving church, and what can be done to reach and attract unchurched urban millennials. The research and practical ministry application as part of this project concludes that cosmopolitan theology lived out in the form of an urban missional small group can be one solution.

The description of the intervention was shared in chapter 4 and provided insight about the city of Lacombe's transition toward urbanism and about the growing problems the youth of Lacombe are experiencing, such as drug involvement. The chapter also explained the process of how the project to be implemented transitioned from initial urban ministry concepts to an urban missional small group.

An urban, cosmopolitan group of young adults, consisting of churched, unchurched, or non-attending individuals, were assembled in order to gauge if meeting as a group over a span of 12 weeks would make a significant, valuable, and measurable difference in their lives. During this said time frame, with initial meetings taking place at a local coffee shop and then shifting to the Alberta Conference office, the results were favorable and promising. Ultimately, on average a young-adult group of eight to 12 individuals regularly met, shared meals, fostered a loving sense of community, built trust, and created a warm and welcoming environment for participants.

The experiences of small-members and the results of the project were evaluated in chapter 5. The project outcomes were depicted in the form of graphs and charts. The results, confirmed by the surveys that were completed by participants, showed that the urban missional small group had not only had a spiritual impact on the group participants but had also created a new crop of young adult leaders and made way for the start of a new urban postmodern church plant. The results indicated that an urban missional small group that is warm, accepting, nonjudgmental, and missionally oriented, can attract, engage, and retain this niche demographic, a demographic that is largely either unfamiliar or disillusioned with traditional church.

Evaluation Conclusions

This chapter will summarize best practices and key lessons distilled from the planning, implementation, execution, and evaluation of the project. The evaluation method comprised a comprehensive questionnaire at the initial small group gathering and an exit survey at the conclusion of the gatherings after 12 weeks, completed by those who attended. The purpose was to track any changes the participants experienced in areas such as personal life, spiritual life, and church life as a direct result of being part of the small-group community. Overall, as chapter 5 delineated, participants underwent positive changes in outlook, sense of purpose and belonging, and intentions to become actively involved in future faith-based gatherings and outreach. They had grown spiritually, had experienced an increase of faith and belief in God, and expressed aspirations to continue developing their spiritual community of inclusivity and transparency.

New, Fresh Ways of Gathering

It is evident that young adults *want* to come together and *want* to be in community, but they do not want to feel judged or criticized—which is a common sentiment in mainstream Adventist church settings. More than 80 % of the participants in this urban missional small group preferred nontraditional church over traditional church settings. Small groups are an effective alternative to traditional church. Utilizing small-group methods and finding creative places and more natural spaces to meet helped to reach and attract young adults. Therefore, new and fresh ways of gathering need to be investigated and implemented continually in the Adventist Church. However, it should be noted that young adults' views of local church are also malleable. Prior to attending small group, most of the participants did not have a positive view of the local church. Over the course of several weeks and by the end of the 12 weeks, some participants showed a more positive view of church and its purpose for the Christian.

Young Millennials Have Interest in Spiritual Matters

Exit surveys showed that the majority of small group members were indeed, and contrary to popular assumption, interested in spiritual activity, spiritual conversations, and spiritual development. Previously they had not been as interested in speaking about spiritual things, but as they attended this group on a regular basis, spiritual conversations began taking place and became important in their lives; they progressed toward seeing spirituality as a relevant factor in their lives. The research shows that at the beginning of 12 weeks, many participants did not appreciate faith-based group gatherings. However, after meeting together regularly for 12 weeks, many group members now appreciate gathering together to have spiritual conversations.

Young Adults Desire Dialogue and Multiculturalism

A potent phenomenon within the urban missional group was dialogue. Creating a safe place to communicate was key to a successful urban missional small group. Communicating about life and different topics, where everyone's input was valued, created a sense of acceptance and belonging. It is evident from this small-group experiment that many of the young adults who participated in this study preferred to be in a multiethnic and multicultural environment as far as faith-based spiritual gatherings were concerned, and preferred not to attend monocultural church environments. Diversity is key when dealing with this particular demographic.

Increased Interest and Involvement in Outreach and Ministry

The data revealed that over 80 % of the small group members were also more interested in community outreach and urban ministry. And some of them put that interest into action by the time the small group meetings had concluded.

Recommendations for Implementing Urban Missional Small Groups

The small-group project that was implemented for this doctoral study is most suitable for adoption by youth- or young-adult pastors and local church youth leaders who are tasked with reaching and retaining urban millennial youth. However, the key components to successful implementation have more to do with values than with a step-by-step action process. Essential to any ministry that wishes to connect with youth are some key qualitative interpersonal values that must be innate to, or adopted by, the ministry leader.

Essential Interpersonal Values for Small-Group Ministry

Be Incarnational

Because urban youth love community and long for socialization, the church can focus its efforts on living among urban youth in their everyday lives. One of the most powerful things Christians can do is *journey with* urban youth every day, sharing in their joys and struggles. Urban youth need to see how Christians live every day and see that there is meaning in the way they choose to live their lives.

Keeping it 100 and Being One's Self

Urban youth are drawn to peers and leaders who are not afraid to be authentic, who share their faults instead of cover them up. They also need to see that churchgoers are not “afraid” of others being authentic—in their lifestyle, their experiences, and their social identity. Being oneself is highly important to urban youth. Urban youth sense when something is contrived or adopted with a specific goal in mind; therefore, authenticity cannot be something a small-group ministry leader adopts superficially. It must be an internal value and natural way of being.

Relationships are Key

The young demographic thrives on real relationships. They seek to develop new and different relationship experiences. They will go beyond their comfort zones and their cultural backgrounds and will intentionally connect with someone whom they deem as having something valuable to offer and seem worth connecting with. Therefore, a ministry leader engaging a small group must also shake any apprehensiveness toward “the other.”

Creating a Community

Churches structured around traditional worship tend to focus more on the act of worship itself than on being welcoming. It is seen as a place where religious services are being exchanged. Church is a place to *come* and to *get* something spiritual, yet for urban youth, church should signify finding and *creating community*. Urban youth want to know that there is a place where people love them, care for them, and do not judge them but treat them like they belong there and have a place and purpose—and further, that they can be free to discover that purpose rather than have it imposed on them. Urban small groups are a good way to offer what youth are not able to experience in church.

How to Engage With Urban Youth

Urban youth have a collective set of values that they identify with and ascribe to. They also have idioms and colloquial expressions that are used to communicate, affirm, and disseminate these values. To reach urban youth, these values—which are indeed positive, constructive, commendable, and practical—one must internalize these values, not just superficially use them as code words to attract them—because urban youth are able to discern pretense.

Keep it Real

“Keeping it real” means that one is always true to one’s self and never go against or violate one’s own personal principles. This is significant because it is compatible with the Christian principle of standing for one’s “convictions.”

Speak Truth to Power

“Speaking truth to power” means that we always tell the full story about higher powers that seek to enslave, oppress, or abuse power for negative purposes. This value is also point of connection because Jesus always sought to lift up the marginalized and free them from socially enforced bondage. He also gave religious oppressors of his day their spiritual diagnosis and rebuked them for preying on the vulnerable.

Always Change the Game

“Always changing the game” means that a person always stays current, timeless, and ahead of the “game”—in other words does not fall behind and is not easily blindsided and also does not allow others to pin them down, figuratively. Just when people think they have figured us out, switch up the format and keep them guessing with something new.

Rep Your Hood

To “rep your hood” means never forget where we came from and always represent the place and people who raised us. When we have made it to certain level of success, go back and bring along those who have supported us from our earliest days. In other words, “repping your hood” is a form of gratitude, recognition, and humility—a commendable and virtuous practice.

Never Front for Company

“Never front company” means do not present ourselves as something we are not and do not seek to impress people by trying to be something we never were. This

principle is, really, a practical iteration of authenticity and integrity. In effect, it speaks against pride, an undecided or shallow identity, and even superficial works, as it were.

Express Yourself

Urban youth value uninhibited self-expression and creativity—and the vulnerability and courage that it takes to do so. For the church to be relevant to urban postmodern youth, it must seek to change its environment to one that invites a life of expression. Church members will need to be more open, inviting, and expressive of emotions and feelings.

Embrace the Struggle

Life, with its ups and downs, joys and sorrows, is seen as a beautiful struggle. There are thorns in life, but the journey is ultimately a string of experiences that one must seek to press forward and keep it moving.

Don't *Talk* About it; *Be* About It

Do not just talk about what we are doing or going to do; be a person of action. Let your actions speak for themselves.

Always Strive to Make Power Moves

A power move is a move that “changes everything.” It is a powerful, life-changing move one makes, and it ultimately propels that person forward.

Know the Power of Broke

Most people from the “hood” who managed to succeed with nothing to start, know the power of being broke. When we are broke and do not have many resources, it

forces us to be persistent and resourceful. Having nothing has a way of pushing a person to achieve and become more than what they currently are.

The Seven Key Components of an Urban Missional Small-Group Model

The People

The people who attend the urban missional small group are non-traditional and contemporary. They are seeker sensitive, looking to meet God in unconventional ways. They are unique and not tied to tradition, customs, and formalism. The majority of the people who attend a missional church will be unchurched and have no church experience. They come with a laid-back attitude and are often known to be artistic and creative.

The Environment

The environment of the urban missional small group must be inviting, warm, friendly, and, most importantly, non-judgemental. Urban people will feel accepted and welcomed. Those who attend will feel open to come and be, to share and express themselves. The biggest component of the urban missional church environment would be that of safety. Those who attend will feel safe with their feelings, their emotions, and their identity.

The Space

The space of the urban missional small group must be a neutral space, nonaggressive, and unthreatening. The space is very laid-back with low lighting and artistic in nature. Chairs must be set up that are comfortable and in a circular setting. Couches should also be a part of the design, and the space should be open concept, like a café-style setup.

The Culture

The culture of the urban missional small group must be open, authentic, and accepting. The culture reflects people who are artistic, musical, and creative. Artists are constantly creating, making mistakes, recreating, and reformatting. The culture will be open to its participants to come and create. It will allow the worship community to struggle with idea of creating identity and developing themselves into whom God has chosen each person to be.

The Experience

The experience of the urban missional small group must be organic and not pretentious. The urbanites who come to the worship should have an experience that makes them want to come back. The worship experience is an experience that constantly takes the believer on a journey of personal development and self-discovery. The atmosphere will encourage participants to explore how God is leading and moving in their lives. God will have free reign to move and display His love, mercy, and grace to all those who attend.

The Relationships

The relationships fostered in the urban missional small group must intentional, nonabrasive, and nonjudgmental. Discipleship and mentorship will be highly focused on. Each person that comes will have a spiritual mentor assigned to them. This mentor will help to support and empower the new believer who joins the urban missional church plant. There will be a commitment to living life together on mission in mid-sized gospel-

centered communities that are small enough for people to care for one another and for the surrounding community.

The Gathering

How the urban missional small group comes together will be intentional and will be a community that encourages and fosters grace-filled relationships. Each gathering will explore and discover purposeful and meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ and fellow believers.

Practical Steps to Starting a Small Group for Urban Youth

The aforementioned values are fundamental to a small group that yields mutual growth and spiritual edification among urban youth. The practical steps for actually starting a small group then become intuitive: (a) Be intentional. (b) Know where you are going and where you want to take the youth. (c) Establish yourself as the point guard. (d) Build the best team. (e) Have a game plan. (f) Carefully select a suitable location to meet. (g) Create the right environment and set the right mood. (h) Allow people to feel safe and be themselves. (i) Commit to being consistently non-judgmental. (j) Finally, foster a diverse multicultural environment.

Recommendations for Further Study and Practical Ministry

The following are recommendations for further study and research. There was very little Adventist research available on urban culture. Because there was a lack of research on urban culture from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, I had to consult non-denominational Christian literature, such as from the Barna Group, for further

information. This means that on an academic and scholarly level, Seventh-day Adventists are not contributing substantially to peer-reviewed research and dialogue on urban ministry. Therefore, more study and research must be initiated by Adventist educational institutions so that Adventists can contribute meaningfully to this dialogue and also apply the knowledge to practical ministry.

There was also no research available from Adventist scholars on cosmopolitan theology. More studies need to be conducted on this emerging and relevant theological and missiological subject. Engaging in discourse on cosmopolitan theology would be a leading-edge endeavor for the Adventist Church. Because cosmopolitan theology seeks to create universal connection among humanity by seeing everyone as equal and valuable, it would be good for Adventist scholars and theologians to study this important subject. Cosmopolitan theology is compatible with our Adventist message of unity and hope and wholeness for all through Christ. By espousing the values of cosmopolitanism, the church could strengthen its ideology and theology of respect for all as well as its ideal of universal community based on the perspective that the human race is one family.

Next, a more in-depth look at cosmopolitan theology and an honest consideration of it will be beneficial to the Seventh-day Adventist faith as the church continue to grapple with race and gender issues. This doctoral project introduced the concept of cosmopolitan theology briefly, but I intend to study this subject further and recommend that scholars, pastors, and professors in our institution do so as well—and do so collaboratively and comprehensively.

Each local conference across the Seventh-day Adventist divisions and unions would do well to implement conference-wide urban missional small-group strategies. If

each local church facilitated an urban missional small group, with their local youth pastor or youth leader as the facilitator, we would see young adults being attracted to this outreach model.

Urban missional churches need to be planted. With a rapidly changing world, and with globalization and urbanization taking place at alarming rates, our youth are changing. We need to create and plant urban missional churches that are DNA-specific, as it were, to this generation and culture of young people. Urban missional church plants that happen in rented-out coffee shops, old storefronts, movie theatres, and other non-traditional places that can be repurposed for spiritual endeavors and that have more of a neutral and relaxed vibe will attract the urban millennial hipster.

Conclusion

Urban missional small groups need to be formed as an alternative to traditional church structures because there is an urban unchurched youth demographic that is not interested in attending traditional church services. Young adults who are unchurched or who have stopped attending church do not see the relevance of the traditional church. However, if more small groups were created that foster communal living, authentic, transparency, and a nonjudgmental environment, they would feel more inclined to attend these faith-based small-group communities.

APPENDIX A

Urban Missional Small Group Program

The Syllabus

Urban Missional Small Group Syllabus

Fall Semester 2018

Group Leader: Lyle Notice/Mobile (587) 877-9793. Email: lnotice@albertaadventist.ca

Our group meets Wednesday evenings, 7:30 PM-9:00 PM at Good Neighbour Coffeehouse in Lacombe.

We will be discussing the book *The Gospel Primer*, by Caesar Kalinowski.

It's an eight-week guide to transformation in Community.

Description of the group

How do we create a global community of radical inclusion and a deep sense of justice and compassion for others?

A community of 10-15 Urban Millennials who are mission minded, seeking to create transformational change, while looking at how to make their faith relevant in postmodern urban culture.

We will be taking a look at what it means to be Christian in the 21st century. Discussion topics include urban culture, community, music, fashion, politics, pop culture and entertainment. (This group is will help provide qualitative data for Doctoral Research on Small Groups)

Meeting Schedule

1. Sept 26 Introductory meeting to get acquainted & review the syllabus
2. Oct 3 What is the Gospel?
3. Oct 10 The Story
4. Oct 17 Your Gospel Story
5. Oct 28 Gospel Listening (*Sunday 12 Noon at Conference Office*)
6. Oct 31 Four Eternal Truths
7. Nov 7 Two Lenses
8. Nov 21 Gospel Identity
9. Nov 28 Gospel Rhythms
10. Dec 5 Pizza Christmas Party (*Conference office*)

APPENDIX B

The Format

Schedule of First Urban Missional Small Group Meeting

Date: September 26, 2018

Time: 7:30 PM

Location: Good Neighbour Coffee House

- 7:30** People arrive & socialize while enjoy something to drink (14 min)
- 7:44** Welcome & Prayer (1 min)
- 7:45** Intro of “*Oikos*” urban missional group & fill out contact list & survey (15 min)
- 8:00** Participant Introductions: Introduce yourself, what you do, where you live, and why you decided to join the urban missional small group, what are your expectations for the group (15 min)
- 8:15** Introductory Icebreaker Game: Tell three things about yourself, two being true and one being false. The group tries to guess which one is false (15 min)
- 8:30** Hand out syllabus and reading material. Discuss outreach ideas/dates. Discuss social activity/date. Go through schedule for next meeting times (5 min)
- 8:35** Ask for volunteers for various roles (5 min)
Group Coordinator _____
Prayer Coordinator _____
Food Coordinator _____
Social Coordinator _____
Outreach Coordinator _____
- 8:40** Group dialogue (15 min)
- 8:55** Prayer requests & conclude the meeting (5 Min)

APPENDIX C

The Sign-up Sheet

“OIKOS”
Urban Missional Small Group
Good Neighbour Coffee House

Date: **Wednesday, September 26, 2018.**

Time: **7:30**

PM

Print Name	Address	Phone #	Email Address
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APPENDIX D

Urban Contextual Information

Streets Is Watching

The term “streets is watching” means that people in the streets are watching what’s happening in the community. This implies that the community has its eyes open for what’s happening and what’s not happening. It is awareness that that comes from being in the “hood.” When we are living and maneuvering in the inner city, we always have to keep our eyes open for what’s going on around us. When something takes place that is noteworthy, it will have everybody in the community eyes open.

If something of importance takes place in the community, those who live in the neighborhood will watch with open eyes to view the situation. If they church is operating from an intentional place, trying to serve and impact the community in a meaningful way, the streets will be watching.

As a church, we want to impact our community in the most powerful and effective way that causes everyone who lives in the community to be vigilant to see what the church is doing on a daily basis.

Essentially as a church and as Christians we must learn the streets, what it means? How it speaks, how it operates, and how it moves? When we do this from an intentional place we will understand how then to meet its needs and minister to it successfully

Streets is Talking

The term “streets is talking,” was popularized by American Hip Hop Entrepreneur and Music Mogul Sean Carter better known as Jay Z. When the term “Streets is Talking”

is used it means that something has gone viral by word of mouth in the urban community. This idea that something has become important enough that it has taken the streets, the community, the neighborhood by wildfire.

When the streets are talking, it means that the people in the community have given credibility to a certain thing or someone. The fact that the streets “the people in the community” are talking about a particular thing or subject, means that it is highly important and very relevant. We get the pulse of the streets, by what is being said on the streets and by the people on the streets.

The church must get to the place where the “streets” (people in the community) are talking about what the church is doing and the impact it is having on the community. In order to get to this place, the church must intentionally discover what the “streets” are saying? The church must learn from the “streets” what the community is? Who the community is? And how the people in the community operate?

The Urban Code

There is a global urban cultural code that exists in societies around the world. The urban code is a global multiracial and multicultural collective consciousness. In Urban culture, there exists universal truths and universal values that all urban people subscribe to and hold to. I will go as far as to say that there exists a new urban tribe. An urban tribe is a new group of people that represents a new kind of urban citizen of the world, they have a strong sense of connection to the urban culture and the global urban village.

In the global urban village, there is a common language coupled with symbols, rituals and tools that urban people use. This global urban code is universal and describes

a new reality for the world. It is not widely recognized nor accepted, but it is real and it exists without societal approval. We will learn about this new urban reality from a spiritual, psychological, sociological, theological economical and anthropological point of view.

Urban E-Village

Urban millennials, are a unique technology tribe, they are all interconnected to each other through the internet and social media and. Instagram is great example of this social phenomena. If someone loves urban streetwear, then by downloading the Instagram app and typing in #streetwear, one is brought to a variety of posts that inform of the newest urban streetwear releases. Millions of street wear fashionistas gather online to view, post, like or share content.

In the urban community, shoes or “kicks” as they are referred to are important pieces of artifacts that are desired. When a flagship retail store like “Supreme” has its weekly drop of new clothing items, urban fashion heads all line up for hours trying to be the first to purchase the new gear. With technology and the power of social applications, through the app store, buyers can now visit and app and see where the next drop will be and what date it is schedule for.

An example of this is an app called Copdate, which allows buyers to know when the next drop is, where it will be, and select to pick up the shoes that will be brought to market.

The Globalization of Urban Subculture

In our societies of today, there has been a major shift concerning culture. Societies throughout the world has transitioned from tribal, rural, to industrial, suburban and now we have stopped at one of most important places, urban subculture. Because of the rapid rise in technology cultures are being infiltrated and impacted by the globalization of urban subculture. According to the book *Essentials of Marketing*, “A subculture is a homogeneous group of people who share elements of the overall culture as well as cultural elements unique to their own group. Within subcultures, people’s attitudes, values and purchase decisions are even more similar than they are within the broader culture.” (MKTG3, Lamb, Hair McDaniel)

The Urbanization of culture and globalization is impacting, politics, government, business and economics. Marlene Morris Professor of Clinical Marketing comments, “Thanks to the vast reach of media vehicles such as MTV, the Internet and the Hollywood film industry, urban subculture, long discounted as a passing fad by many, has become one of America’s most notable exports (Morris 2004).”

Urban culture is impacting the way how people communicate and live their lives. In today’s Urban Culture, there is a certain way to dress, there is a certain way to talk, there is a certain way to use words and communicate, there are certain types of music that has become popular, there is a certain way to engage in community which all have been inspired by urbanism or has urban elements.

According to Manal A.S. Abou El-Ela Cultural Globalization and Changes in the Urban Form of Metropolis Cities, "Societies might borrow and adapt cultural elements into their system without demolishing their own. According to Appadurai (1996), the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization is the most controversial issue in the interpretation on increasing interactions across the globe. Moreover, he addresses two different terms which are more related to the connection between place, culture, location and identity; territorialization and deterritorialization. The former embraces a series of processes ranging from diffusion from their origin across borders to establish in a new place and form, while the latter takes roots in places away from their traditional locations and origin." The culture of the previous generation has been taken and remixed with an urban twist. It is important to understand this culture shift, if there is going to be any type of interaction, engagement or dialogue from the church to people who identify as urban.

Urban subculture has travelled across geographical divides, we can see it express itself through a post-modern global culture that has a very unique and distinctive behavioural pattern. How did urban culture travel across the globe and become a global culture, this has been possible to through technology, social media and the internet.

Marlene Morris Professor of Clinical Marketing states, "The Urban segment in the U.S. is estimated at 59% Caucasian, 19% African-American, 17% Latino, 4% Asian and 1% "other" approximately 16 to 34 years old whose purchasing decisions are either directly or indirectly influenced by inner city trends and hip-hop culture. Illustrative of this diversity is the fact that over 80% of rap CDs are reportedly purchased by white

youth (Stavraka, 2001). We can see that urban culture is not limited to one race or culture, it touches many different types of people from diverse backgrounds.

With the rise of the internet, it has helped to provide a constant and steady flow of information reaching a large audience of people simultaneously. Teens in Germany, France, Africa, and the Philippines can have access to the internet and can watch the same urban music video on their phone, TV screen, iPad or laptop all at the same time. In some ways, the impact of the internet has been socially positive from a cultural standpoint. In a research paper on *Globalization and its effects on urban culture in the city of Tehran*, Yahya Mohammad Zadeh says, “Some people state that the technologies of the Internet may be helpful in decreasing social class discriminations. But this weakens the strength of the traditional elites who have monopolized the information [29]. It provides new wonderful forms of communication which facilitate the citizens’ participation and makes it more effective and it encourages a wholly intellectual society [8].” Youth from across the world are learning about urban culture and learning what it means to be urban. With the proliferation of knowledge and the internet, not only is urban culture being disseminated but it is also being created.

Everyday cities are becoming more populated with people and different cultural elements. As people move more rapidly into cities, cities provide a great place for cross-cultural interaction. Teens are finding places to gather and congregate in order to socialize and network through urban subculture.

Five factors that impact Culture and the Globalization of Ideas

According to Hogan, “Appadurai proposes five factors that contribute to the global exchange of ideas and information. He labels these five dimensions “-scapes,” which are fluid and constantly shifting, just as cultures are. Within each of these -scapes however, exists multiple realities, as an idea or image changes its context depending on the spectator. With the meaning of ideas changing depending on the person ingesting them, we must then grapple with the existence of an “imagined world,” in which our reality is no more real than somebody else’s.”

Appadurai’s 5 scapes

- 1. Ethnoscapes:** (the movement of tourists, immigrants, refugees and guest workers)
- 2. Mediascapes:** (the worldwide distribution of information through newspapers, magazines, TV programs and films)
- 3. Technoscapes:** (the distribution of technologies)
- 4. Finascapes:** (global capital flows)
- 5. Idioscapes:** (the distribution of political ideas and values)

Marketing and Consumer Implications Within Urban Subculture

A large demographic of youth makes up the population around the world. Because of the economic challenges that families face, families are more prone to live in urban centers as opposed to rural or suburban settings. Youth are reared and raised in large metropolitan cities out of economic necessity. Many parents who make a home in city settings are drawn to the economic benefits that are being offered such as welfare, food stamps, government housing and community programs.

Because there are more job opportunities that exist in the city, families move to the city for economic upward mobility. Urban teenagers seek jobs from an early age that afford them the privilege to buy personal wants, needs and desires making them urban consumers. Kubrin says, "Material objects also play an important role in establishing self-image and gaining respect." Youth earn income, to buy clothing that make them look and feel a certain way. If we follow their spending habits, we will find out what they are buying and what is important to them.

Youth who make up a particular demographic in urban cities bring a specific level of consumership and buyership to business and the market place. I believe that by understanding the consumer mentality of the urban youth, it will unlock ways of how to connect, market, and engage this urban demographic. Morris goes on to say, "The pervasiveness of this segment along with over \$890 billion per year in buying power in the U.S. alone (Stavraka, 2001) makes it a highly sought-after one for marketers, with brands from Coca Cola to Louis Vuitton to Hennessey using celebrities in the urban

market to promote their products to broad audiences.” They why how brands promote themselves, feeds into the buying mentality of the urban youth.

Urban subculture is largely influenced by hip hop culture and impacts what urban people buy. Morris writes, “Guy Primus, executive director and senior analyst at UrbanIQ, a division of Vanguard Media, reported that the urban segment is a racially diverse group of consumers made up of approximately 59% whites, 19% blacks, 17% Latinos, 4% Asians and 1% “other” between the ages of 16 and 34 whose purchasing decisions are either directly or indirectly influenced by inner city trends or hip-hop culture (UrbanIQ, 2000).” It is interesting that Hip Hop plays a vital role in the marketing and branding of certain products, which in terms influences the urban youth buying patterns.

If the Christian church is going to effectively reach and engage the urban youth, we must understand how and what type of marketing influences impact the urban youth. Morris says, “With roots firmly entrenched in hip-hop culture, the urban market is heavily influenced by rap music and pop culture, which influence sales of ‘culturally cool’ items including specific luxury brands.” If hip hop is playing a heavy role in how it influences the urban shopper, then it would be beneficial for the church to research and investigate why hip hop is having such a heavy influence on urban youth.

Urban subculture stands on the premise that one be true to themselves, and know themselves, it is important when trying to market to urban youth, that they brand that we are trying to promote is always authentic and true. Marlene Morris goes on to say, “Urban identifiers are a lucrative market, and their influence extends to others in their

household and other parts of society. By understanding the components that influence this segment, advertisers can effectively target these consumers. From product positioning to message development and media strategies, marketers can generate more favorable views of U.S. products by reaching international consumers who identify with this group.

Despite the opportunities, marketers should consider their existing consumers when marketing to younger segments and hiring celebrities. Brands must stay true to their identity while keeping a finger on the pulse of urban culture.”

When it comes to church services, the Church must engage with this urban demographic in such a way that is authentic, real and true to its brand. Perhaps looking at and applying consumer marketing strategies may be helpful. Are there certain ways that the church can structure, fashion construct and market itself to appeal to the urban consumer?

Urban Branding

Branding in the urban subculture is key in helping to understand what shapes the urban mindset. If the brand does not speak right, this demographic is not buying it. “Marketers and Anthropologists alike consider brands to be meaning systems. The brands we choose to display, wear or just call our own say a lot about who we are. While it’s a stretch to say ‘*we are the sum of our brand choices,*’ it’s not as far-fetched as you might think.”

Branding from its early conception was always about advertising the tagline and logos, but as the millennial generation came into being, advertising have had to switch from word based advertising to image and symbol based advertising. I guess what

millennials are ultimately saying is, “less is more!” For example, when we look at McDonalds, it’s the Golden Arches, when we look at Tech Company giant Apple, it is now just an image of an apple, when we look at coffee company Starbucks, it’s the Starbucks symbol and no words. There is instant brand recognition without having to explain what company it is, because tied the brand is intellectual and emotional meaning.

What type of branding does the church have? How is the brand of Christianity and the church perceived? Is it a type of brand that urban youth would want to be associated with?

The Need to Understand Secular Society

In order to successfully reach secular urban people, people who are considered non-religious or unchurched, we have to understand the type people group we are trying to reach. The society we live in today is considered a secular society. People think more differently than people of modern societies of the past. The average citizen in Western society today has different life style values. The Western culture of today is one that is considered to be less religious and is not heavily influenced by traditional religious structures such as the church. The secular person that lives in North America thinks very different from a Christian person in North America.

The Christian population has values that are very much rooted in God, the Bible and religious church services. For the secular person, they may not have any belief in religion, God or the Bible for that matter, and has no interest in attending a church building on a continued and regular basis. Many secular people may base their beliefs about life around science, the universe and nature. Their lack of belief in the traditional

view of God maybe due to a lack of interest, lack of understanding or lack of indoctrination and education or simply just a choice not to believe in a Christocentric way.

When Christians in general understand that the secular person in which they are trying to reach through traditional evangelism, is one who lives in a metropolitan city, thinks differently about God and approaches life much differently, it will help lead to a more impactful and meaningful methodology.

Urban Youth Subculture

If Christians are going to step out beyond their church comfort zones and reach the urban, secular, postmodern millennial youth population, there must be an intentional process in learning and understanding this new and unique culture. For example, if one were going to a foreign country to be a missionary, the expectation would be that the practitioner would need to first learn the culture and learn the language of the people they were trying to reach.

It is no different for Christians today, who are trying to reach a new culture group; urban, secular, postmodern millennials. The culture that Christians must seek to study, learn and understand involves characteristics that make up urban youth of today. The mental characteristics that make up the secular urban youth of today: *Media Mentality, Bling Bling Mentality, Cult Mentality, and the Nihilistic Mentality.*

Media Mentality

The three most important forces influencing and impacting this culture is technology, media and peer influence. From the begging of MTV youth have been impacted by media. Now with the influence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram, youth spend a considerable amount of time engaged in social media. Urban youth of today spend a greater amount of time watching Netflix, surfing the web and listening to music on Spotify, tidal or apple music. Essentially what has happened is the media has replaced old structures and old platforms of news.

What they watch is impacting their lifestyles, their values and also their moral compass. The images that are being clicked on and the videos that they are constantly watching on their screens are impacting the way they think and how they see life.

The reality is friends have a greater impact and influence on their peers than any other parent, teacher or older people. They are constantly being pressured to have the best body, to dress in the most popular clothes, to drink, experiment with new drugs, and practice a sexually actively lifestyle.

The fear of non-acceptance be peers is a major concern for urban youth. Many youth do not feel accepted by parents, families or loved ones, so they seek attention from their friends. If they can gain respect amongst their peers they feel they have a sense of acceptance and community.

The Bling Bling Mentality

Urban youth of today put a heavy premium on jewelry and accessories. In urban large centers, we will notice urban youth wearing necklaces of some kind. Having a gold necklace tells a story of how that person came to be where he/she is today. A gold chain is something that shows other people they are worth something.

In the 1990s there was a change from gold to platinum in terms of the type of favoured precious metal. Platinum was seen as more valuable than gold, so many urban youths wore platinum chains, watches and bracelets to say to the world, not only do I have expensive tastes but I have the money to afford an expensive life style.

There has a been trend since the 1980s where rappers wore gold fronts over their teeth. It was one thing to wear a precious metal around one's neck but it was another thing to wear precious metals in our mouths. Even today we will still find urban youth wearing gold fronts, this is to show the world their audience that I am somebody who can afford gold in my teeth.

The Nihilistic Mentality

Much of the urban music today known as mumble rap or cloud rap, has a very dark undertone to it. The content of the music is primarily focused on a dark mentality that has no respect or regard for life. We have seen rap transform from its early humble beginnings in the 80s, its grimy underground golden era 90s, its bling bling early 2000s, to its dark and suicidal carefree tendencies.

In the 90's rap had extreme political undertones, that pushed a pan-Africanism. The content of rap criticised government claiming systematic oppression, the context was informative and educational at best. The tone of each rapper was not optimistic about life and making it to 25 years of age based on the gang violence or police brutality which created despair and hopelessness. Kubrin states, "The conditions in extremely disadvantaged communities have led scholars to cite a growing sense of nihilism in black youth culture, an outgrowth of living in an environment filled with violence and limited opportunities (Boyd, 1997, p. 67; Bruce et al., 1998, p. 44; Kitwana, 2002, p. 126).

Kubrin goes on to say, "Real and perceived powerlessness shapes social psychological well-being and can lead to anger, frustration, and despair. An important part of this worldview is a sense of resignation and acceptance of the world as it is. "One must understand that some young people bereft of hope for the future have made their peace with death and talk about planning their own funerals. . . . The high death rate among their peers keeps many from expecting to live beyond age twenty-five" (Anderson 1999, p. 135).

Mainstream rapper of today have come a long way from politically inspired messages bottled in their verses, rapper of today have heavily been influenced by drugs and alcohol and are much more fascinated with death being memorialized. This content is feeding into the minds of urban youth, suicide is not attractive and alluring. The urban youth of today has no regard for life nor for the living.

The Cult Mentality

The common belief is that people join cults to conform. Actually, the very opposite is true. They join to become more individual. At the heart of the desire to join a cult, in fact any community to which we will become committed, is a paradox.... As one cult member unequivocally put it, 'Belonging allows the individual to become more himself.'" (*The Culting of Brands*, by Douglas Atkin, 2005, p. 4).

Many urban youth of today join cults for several reasons, Social identity, security, satisfaction, responsibility and protection.

Urban Street Language

The youth of today, talk much differently than youth of earlier generations. Urban language of today's society is heavily influenced by the early hip hop movement in New York, Jamaican patios, Toronto urban slang and London urban slang. When we combine these several key elements, we have a blend of a words that urban youth use to communicate today. The urban language used today by youth is not homogenous to one culture. It would be easy to think that the urban language being used is only found within the black or West Indian culture. It is interesting to note that urban language is not confined to country or culture, but it can be found being used in urban locations and being used by youth of all different races and cultures.

Here are the top 70 words used within urban language.

Number	Terminology	Meaning
1	Bredren	Brother/Close Friend
2	Fom	Family
3	HMU	Hit me up
4	Steeze	Style
5	Come thru	Attending
6	Word	To confirm something
7	A Minute	A long time ago
8	Manz	person
9	Link Up	To connect
10	I am Down	I am confirmed
11	Snake	untrustworthy
12	wagwan	Whats going on? Hi
13	Yo Guy	Hey you
14	Styll	still
15	Mandem	Group of people
16	Live	Something that is really happening
17	Fire	Amazingly great
18	Cheesed	Angry or mad
19	Sus	Suspect

20	Ting	A person, place or thing
21	Been a Minute	A long while has passed
22	Word	affirmation
23	Lit	Extremely excited
24	Sav	savage
25	A Bill	\$100
26	Cop dat	To obtain
27	Run Up/pull up	Approach the scene
28	Fresh	nice
29	Dope	cool
30	Chill	relax
31	Soft	Easy or weak
32	Bless	Thankful/good
33	Bare	Lots
34	Grimy	Shady behaviour
35	Sketchy	Unreliable
36	Guap/Cheese/Bread	money
37	Scoop me	Pick me up
38	Popo/beast/12/Babylon/the people/bwoy dem/5-0	Police
39	Whip	Car
40	Kicks	Shoes
41	beef	Disagreement

42	Curve	Reject
43	Bruh	Bro/brother
44	Dead A--	Being completely honest
45	Droppin Dimes	Telling information to police
46	fleeky	amazing
47	gucci	good
48	Glow up	transformation
49	juice	Credibility
50	KYS/KMS	Kill yourself/kill myself used sarcastically
51	rachet	Raunchy
52	smash	Hook up
53	Tweaking	high
54	squad	crew
55	TBH	To be honest
56	thirsty	Attention seeking
57	woke	Enlightenment
58	thicc	Voluptuous
59	Throwing shade	Talking badly
60	Straight fire	Popular or trendy
61	lean	Intoxicating drink
62	Slide in the DM	Direct message someone

63	High Key	Wanting a lot of people to know
64	Finna	About to do something
65	I am weak	Something is extremely funny
66	Savage	Harsh or wild
68	BRB	Be right Back
69	Clout Chaser	Someone latching on to people who are popular
70	tea	gossip

Urban Streetwear Fashion

Clothing and fashion play an important role in urban subculture of today. If we are going to understand the urban person of today, we must have a knowledge of the type of clothing the urban person is wearing. The clothing that urban people wear is important to them, because when they wear it, they are making a statement.

The clothing they wear is an extension of who they are. When they get up in the morning, what they are going to wear for the day is one of the first things on their minds. The type of clothing that they wear is called urban *streetwear*. Streetwear found its roots in California surf and skateboarding culture. At the core of street fashion are elements of

hip hop, 1980s and 1990s culture, sportswear and military influences. With streetwear comes a certain attitude and a full-blown expression.

Streetwear attracts people of different cultures, colour, creeds because it allows the wearer to fully express themselves artistically and atheistically through clothing and fashion trends. Street fashion builds upon narratives that are outside of the norm and traditional, it is antiauthoritarian and brings to it a rebellious nature that seeks to constantly fight against culture norms, unequally typecasting itself as anti-establishment and nonconformist.

People who wear street fashion clothing are characterised by casual and comfortable everyday wear that would include such pieces as jeans, joggers, track suits, t-shirts, caps and sneakers. If we are wearing such brands as Supreme, Yeezy, Nike, Adidas, The hundreds, Diamond Supply, Thrasher, Vans, Jordan's, Rock a Fella, Sean John, Billionaire Boys Club, Ice Cream, Offwhite, Antisocial, Black Apple, fly society, Illegal Civ, GOLF, Odd Future, Fear of God, Comme de Garson, Kith, Gosha, Crooks and Castles, Undeclared, 10 Deep, Lrg, Bape, Stussy, Blvck Scvle, DGK, HUF, Public School, Polo Ralph Lauren, and Tommy Hilfiger.

For the urban youth, wearing clothing and brands that represent their, ideals, values and attitudes are important. They do not want to be told what to wear and will not accept being told how to wear clothing. Wearing their own style of clothing represents freedom from others, it also means breaking free from cultural and societal oppression.

Understanding the Important Role Hip-Hop Music Plays

Hip-Hop music and Hip-Hop culture for more than over four decades has been deemed as negative and inappropriate. Many of Hip-Hop favorite artists have music that have been banned from store shelves, countries and listening platforms. Although it has had a negative rap sheet, what cannot be denied is its power to reach across all culture boundaries.

Real Hip-Hop speaks from the heart and is deeply authentic sometimes to the point of offensiveness. The reason why Hip-Hop has lasted this long is because of its ability to spread a message of speaking truth to power while always remaining real, rugged and raw. While much of its lyrics appear to glorify, gangs, gung, sex, and money, beneath its sketchy surface and sordid past is a powerful soul that can uplift, empower and revolutionize.

Alexander Crooke post-doctoral research fellow states, “But while many people struggle to look past the profanity, materialism, and high-risk messages often celebrated within mainstream rap music, hip hop culture at its core, is built on values of social justice, peace, respect, self-worth, community, and having fun. And because of these values, it’s increasingly being used as a therapeutic tool when working with young people.”

Urban Street Economics

In order to understand the mind of an urban street person, it imperative to understand their mentality when it comes to economics. The urban street youth sees and views their world in the context of their “hood.” They see their hood as market place in which buying and selling takes place through the products of illegal/illicit street drugs.

If the urban youth is a seller of drugs, their work environment is seen as the street corner covering a set of particular blocks of space. The customers are those in the neighbourhood who are seeking to purchase particular street drugs. It is interesting to note that, what makes any hood revolve is the supply and demand of street drugs.

If the urban street youth is a customer seeking drugs, they are using the little resources they have available to purchase the drug. If they are unemployed or still living at home, it is very possible they are borrowing, stealing or selling other items to come up with the money to help support their recreational habit.

In the street/hood context, rival gangs fight for territory in order to corner the market on street pharmaceuticals. Much of the gang activity that takes place in urban cities are centered around the protection of assets, goods and services and scarce resources that include space, territory, people and the product in the form of different types of street drugs.

Whether the urban street youth is a seller or customer of illegal street drugs, the main purpose of each day is to survive another day. Surviving another day means not

getting caught by the authorities for possession of illegal drugs and not getting jumped, robbed, set up or killed.

The drug dealer plays an important role in the hood. He is the one that makes sure that all customers are satisfied and that the flow of drugs into the community remains constant and steady. In his mind, his rug business is no different than the local convenience store that is considered legal, he operates in the very same fashion providing a product for a specific niche market, demographic, sometimes at bargain prices.

Urban Code of The Streets

In the context of urban street life there is something called the “G Code.” G can mean the game or it can stand for gangster. The G code or street code are rules that one follows in order to maneuver safely and successfully through the streets.

Elijah Anderson shares, “The rules of the code in fact provide a framework for negotiating respect...The code of the streets is actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system.” He goes on to say, “So when a person ventures outside, he must adopt the code--a kind of shield, really--to prevent others from "messing with" him... For people who are unfamiliar with the code--generally people who live outside the inner city--the concern with respect in the most ordinary interactions can be frightening and incomprehensible. But for those who are invested in the code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about testing their manhood.”

Charis Kubrin says, “Mostly ethnographic in nature, this work describes how structural disadvantage, social isolation, and despair have created a black youth culture or “street code” that influences adolescent behavior, particularly with respect to violence.” The street code is real yet informal, its concrete yet abstract. It exists and is understood for those who choose to live by it.

The code influences all urban youth, because if we are going to be respected in this type of community environment, one must have respect from others and one must have respect for the streets. One of the street code is, “death before dishonour.” Loyalty and being true to friends and foes. In the streets no matter what happens, you never tell or snitch on someone to the authorities. Snitching on a friend or enemy could get one hurt or even killed in some situations.

Gangster/Thug Life Mentality

Understanding the persona that is portrayed by urban youth of today is important to understanding where the youth are coming from. Urban youth in the cities of today, pattern themselves based of a character from the movie “Scarface.” The iconic fictional character Tony Montana played by Al Pachino.

The reason why so many urban black youths look up to a fictional character like Tony Montana, is because he represents what a true gangster is. He expresses his feelings, he has no regard to upper class society, he is a rebel that defies the establishment and most of all because of the riches to rags narrative. Tony Montana, made it from

nothing to something and he did not conform to society, he carved his own path and this is why Tony Montana is idolized by urban youth of today.

We will notice that many urban youths display a fearless, overconfident and aggressive type behaviour. This is partly because the world in which they live is tough and in order to make it, become successful and overcome hardship one has to put on a tough exterior.

To urban youth, those that are weak get crushed, stepped on, overlooked and beat up, so in order to make it they have to appear to be physically tough and mentally intimidating.

If one don't have respect in the streets, one has nothing! According to Kubrin, he states, "At the heart of street culture is the issue of respect, defined as being treated right or being granted the deference one deserves" (Anderson, 1999, p. 33)

"Respect and honor are especially prized among males who have few "personal accomplishments or cannot draw on valued social roles to protect their self-esteem" (Horowitz, 1983, p. 81)."

Drugs and Urban Youth Culture

Since the 90's, drugs have played an important role in hip hop and urban communities. Drugs of choice would weed, heroin, crack, mushrooms, and cocaine. The most popular of them being weed. Weed has always been glorified amongst urban youth. We have had rappers like Snoop Dog who have always promoted weed drug use. In most

recent times, drugs are playing a major role in the everyday life of the urban youth. The drugs of choice today are different and come mainly in pill format. The drugs that are being glorified today are lean, meth, Xanax, molly, Percocet's, K2 and Fentanyl.

There have been many cases where youth barely over 20 years of age dying of overdose or suffering from severe cases of drug addiction. The promotion of these types of drugs have reached an all-time high. In urban communities, drugs are being pushed and promoted, to the place where it is becoming normalized amongst our urban youth. This rise in drug usage amongst urban youth can be attributed to the new type of Hip Hop Music. This new genre of hip hop music entitled cloud rap or sound cloud rap, is gaining huge popularity and much faster rates than the late 80's early 90's rap.

With the rise of the internet, social media and technology people had access to the latest sources of music, and the music that is currently coming out shows and encourages people to live their truth whether that is immoral, evil, and unethical.

There is an unhealthy indulgence in self-absorption and reckless behavior. The more reckless and careless we are with our life, the more popularity we will gain and the more followers and likes we will have on social media.

It would appear that life is just a game, and to a certain extent it is not real. Risk taking with a certain demographic of urban youth is at an all-time high. These youth push boundaries and physical human limitations to see how far they can go without dying, but if dying is a result of their actions, they believe that hopefully they will be memorialized in a legendary and mythical type of way.

Urban Subculture Communities

There is a powerful sense of community in urban youth subculture. A true sense of community in the urban subculture takes place in various forms and in various places. Community takes place on the streets in gangs, in a crew or posse, in the hood, in the park, basketball court, skate park, and the barber shop.

Many urban youths find a sense of community in *gangs*. When family fails, gangs will take youth in. Usually there is first an initiation, being jumped into the gang. Then once they pass the test, they become official members usually getting a tattoo of some significance, they are given a nick name/street name, and assigned to some level of responsibility or entry level role. Gangs are places where brotherhood takes place, in the gang there is a sense of love, belonging, safety and support.

A *crew/posse* is a group of friends or associates that come together usually under a name. Each person represented in the crew represents the crew. This concept of crew differs from a gang in that their purpose for existence is not to fight opposition for respect, power, money or territory. The crew is just an informal group that comes together based on friendship and social activity.

Urban youth's also find a sense of community in the *hood* or on the *block*. In the hood, there would usually be a central place where all youth congregate. It could be a bench in the neighbourhood, a *park* or in front of a building. This spot would naturally become a meeting spot to converse, socialize, learn, teach, exchange daily news or information.

The *basketball court* is where we will also find many urban street youths. Urban youth are drawn to basketball because of NBA players such as Michael Jordan, Allen Iverson, LeBron James, and Steph Curry. Whether young or old, urban youth tend to congregate around the basketball court because of what it represents. Many successful professional basketball players came from the streets and were considered urban youth at one time, the fact that they made it out of the hood and off the streets speaks of the promise and possibility of urban youth around the world.

More and more as *skate parks* are being developed, there are larger portions of urban youth found at the skate park. What is interesting is that at the skate park where we find urban youth, these urban youths who congregate there are made up of a variety of different cultures. We will find African American, Caribbean, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, and Indian at the skate park. They spend a large portion of time at skate park skating, chilling, hanging out and building community.

Historically we have always seen black urban youths at *barbershops*. The urban black youth has always visited and congregated at barber shops for the purpose of getting a fresh line up or a fresh cut. Barbershop are becoming increasingly popular not only among urban black youth but all cultures. The idea of a fresh fade which is a type/style of hair cut is being pursued by many cultures no matter what the hair texture.

The reason why barbershops are not only for a fresh cut or shave, is because it is also seen as a place of conversation and dialogue. At the barbershop, there is always an ongoing conversation taking place. The barber is not only cutting hair but is typically also

engaged in conversation which could be focused on politics, religion, culture, or world events.

The Perception of Religion in Urban Youth Subculture

While many urban youth claim to be non-religious, agnostic or aesthetic there is a portion of them that have had religious upbringing or have come across some form of religion. They view religion from a skeptic's point of view and see it as an institution of control that is based on racism, sexism, classism and anti-urbanism. There are some urban youth that subscribe to Islam as a way of life, emphasizing that it is an honest religion that is not Caucasian based.

Many urban youths who have been raised on Hip Hop music have subscribed to the religion that is most widely connected to Hip Hop, the nation of Islam. The religion that is closely connected to Hip Hop would be the movement of The Five Percent.

A large portion of Hip Hop artists make reference The Five Percent. According to wiki, “The **Five-Percent Nation**, sometimes referred to as **NGE** or **NOGE**, the **Nation of Gods and Earths**, or the **Five Percenters**, is a movement founded in 1964 in the Harlem section of the borough of Manhattan, New York City by a former member of the Nation of Islam (NOI), Clarence 13X, who was named Clarence Edward Smith at birth, and who ultimately came to be known as Allah the Father... While the Nation of Gods and Earths has been incorrectly characterized as an organization, an institution, a religion, or even a gang, representatives of the Nation teach that it is a natural or mathematical way of living, not a religion.”

There is a smaller portion of Urban youths who subscribe to a Rastafi way of living. Because of the tight connections between Hip Hop music and Reggae music, Hip Hop music has often co partnered with the Rastafari elements. Hip Hop in essence is a spiritual form of music with many spiritual undertones.

APPENDIX E

Pictures of the Process

A Visit to Lacombe City Hall



After visiting the newspaper editor I was excited that a project was coming to the city of Lacombe. I visited with key stakeholders in the city of Lacombe, many of them said it would be beneficial to let local city government of Lacombe know my plans for the urban arts center. I gathered three youth from the community and presented my proposal to City Hall.

Artform Fashion Show and Street Wear Brand Launching



On March 2016, Jack Mundy with the help Burman University Student Association, Alberta Conference Youth Department and private investor launched a new local streetwear company at an art show called Artform, held at Lacombe Memorial Center.

Good Intentions to Secure Real estate



I went out meeting with property managers to secure a rental space for the urban arts center. I tried to secure a rental space

Let's Talk Calgary



On November 8, 2014, an initiative called “Let’s talk” was born. Millennial demographic thrives on discussion and meaningful dialogue. I rented out a coffee shop on a Saturday morning, prepaid for food and drinks and facilitated discussion around key topics that were impacting the youth.

Missional Outreach Calgary



After listening to acoustic music and engaging in meaningful discussions, youth were given the opportunity to serve the community in the city of Calgary. Adventist Community Services t-shirts were given out along with food, clothing and water.

Creative Arts Urban Cafe Edmonton



On November 1, 2014 youth from the city of Edmonton gathered at a not for profit youth organization IHuman. This was an urban café for the creative youth demographic.

Missional Outreach Edmonton



After the creative art's urban café, an opportunity was given to the youth that gathered to serve the community of downtown Edmonton.

Let's Talk Edmonton Youth Gathering



On November 7, 2015, a group of over 50 youth gathered for Sabbath morning worship but in a different set up and format.

APPENDIX F

The News Article that Created “beef”



“Local group aims to open youth centre in Lacombe

And maybe that’s what the city is missing - a place for skaters to park their boards, a place for artists to work on their latest creation

- SARAH MAETCHE
- Oct. 8, 2015 10:00 a.m.
- COMMUNITY
-

Having a place to call home – a place to kick off your shoes and work on creative projects with your friends – are few and far between, especially if you are a teen in Lacombe.

And maybe that's what the city is missing – a place for skaters to park their boards, a place for artists to work on their latest creation or a place for teens to receive mentorship as they navigate through life.

Creativity ebbs and flows and so do visions. Lyle Notice, an associate youth director at Alberta Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, has a clear vision of a place, a community hub designed for youth interested in urban culture (those interested in skateboarding, street art, hip hop and the like), for this city.

“Some people may say Lacombe is not urban so to speak,” said Notice. “But there are urban elements to it. There are kids who are and who identify with it. It would be cool to have a spot, a place in Lacombe where they can come and sort of just be themselves and be creative – have a safe place to land.”

And off that vision, a concrete idea has formed – the creation of an urban youth Centre called the Lab.

“The term lab comes from an old-school hip hop term, when a DJ or producer was in the ‘lab’ they were working on their craft, they were working on their skills,” explained Notice. “This would be a place where these kids can come and work on their art, their craft.”

Designed as a youth-targeted drop-in centre that would be mainly open during the evening hours, the Lab would feature urban hair cutting, break dancing workshops, DJing and beat making – some of the main elements of hip hop.

“It would be like a cool, swanky hub for people who have ideas, who basically want to work on themselves,” said Notice.

“No one is there to help them navigate through some of those choices that they are making,” he added of some of the youth in the city. “So, if they can come into a place where they receive mentorship, life skills, empowerment, where we can teach them how to become great citizens of society and how to become the greatest person they can be.”

Notice's passion for youth outreach, hip hop and the concept of the Lab comes from his upbringing.

“I'm not saying that hip hop saved my life but it helped to save me from going the wrong way.”

By attending a centre in Toronto that had a similar concept, Notice learned some of the elements of hip hop and how to break dance. “It gave me focus and a purpose,” he said. “It was something I could put energy and time into. I want to bring the same sort of opportunity to some of these kids here in Lacombe.”

For young Lacombian, entrepreneur and skater Jack Mundy, 16, the Lab would be a place where he could actualize his dreams.

Mundy and Notice met at the skate park a few months back and began discussing ideas to start up a clothing line. Mundy is already deep into plans to create a skateboarding clothing line that has a taste of Lacombe blended into it.

“We just want to make something for the skate community in Lacombe,” said Mundy. “The Lab would be a great place to develop the idea.”

Mundy added quite often, once the sun sets, skaters in Lacombe don’t have anywhere to go and just hang out. The Lab could be that ‘after-hours’ place for youth to kick it, in a safe atmosphere.

As one of the driving forces behind the Lab, Mundy shares Notice’s vision of what the centre could be.

“It’s given me the opportunity, with the Lab, to express myself and make something for our city that we can be proud of,” he said. “It’s helped me kind of find myself and identify who I am. It’s going to be cool for it to develop and see it grow.”

Notice pitched the idea to Lacombe City councilors at a recent council meeting. The councilors were receptive to the idea and were excited to see how the idea evolves over the next few months.

“I really hope that this place can bring a sense of pride to Lacombe,” said Notice. “I see multiple people benefiting from an initiative like this.”

The Lab will start off as a one-year pilot project. Notice has secured support from several Seventh-Day Adventist organizations and plans to seek out grants and other funding opportunities within the community. He also plans to have many volunteers on deck, including Burman University students, to help manage the centre when it’s in full operation.

With a possible location selected, Notice and Mundy hope to have the Lab up and running by next summer.

For more information about the project, contact Notice at notice@albertaadventist.ca or a t 587-877-9793.”

APPENDIX G

“The Lab”

Christian Urban Arts Community Center in the City of Lacombe



“THE LAB” CHRISTIAN URBAN ARTS COMMUNITY CENTER

Executive Summary

In the City of Lacombe youth violence, criminal activity and drug usage is on the rise. Many teenagers are experimenting with illicit drugs and other harmful substances. Those who frequent the local skate park in the city of Lacombe are often exposed to drug abuse and alcohol consumption. Several cases reveal that teenagers who attended the skate park, engaged in drug usage and are now undergoing severe addiction treatment. With this sudden spike in drug use within teens at an early age, intentional and proactive action must take place in order to curb this unfortunate phenomenon.

In response to the enormity of the drug issue and its unforgiving effect on young Lacombe citizens, I propose renting approximately 1700 square foot urban arts youth center in city of Lacombe providing recreation, education, skills training and sexual health services to young men and women, ages 11-24. Since the proposed space is located on the Campus of Burman University, a request will be made to use the “Hide Out” three times a week.

Currently there is ‘no indoor *urban* creative space for youth to call their own’ in the City of Lacombe. The youth community has expressed an urgent need and desire for an urban arts community centre. You are invited to join in this special integrated effort to bring some relief to the young lives affected by Drugs and substance abuse in one Alberta’s best cities, setting a valuable example for others to follow.

Join us in the special effort to establish “The Lab” Urban Arts Community Center!

Outline of the Proposal

Key Issues

Some of the key issues that are contributing to the rampant spread of substance abuse and criminal activity in Lacombe youth include:

- **Lack of Positive Male Role Models:** Many boys today lack a positive male figure in their lives. Studies have shown that involvement of a father or a positive male role model has profound effects on children. Even in homes where the father is present, research shows that the average father spends less than 10 minutes a day one-on-one with his child. In our society, emotional and spiritual fatherlessness is becoming the norm.
- **High-risk sexual behaviour:** Many kids, particularly young men, are engaged in high-risk sexual behaviour including sex at an early age, sex with multiple partners - often coerced, transactional and/or with older men – and low condom use. There is little reinforcement from adults due to closed dialogue between generations on issues relating to HIV/AIDS, sex and relationships.
- **Lack of youth-friendly services:** Current after-school activities in Lacombe, which include watching television and “hanging out” with friends, are almost entirely self- driven and unsupervised. There is no specific place for youth to congregate, enjoy free time together in a controlled and safe environment and openly discuss issues and concerns. Youth suffer from boredom and lack of focus increasing the risk of engaging in high-risk behaviour.
- **Feelings of vulnerability:** There is no central, structured environment that promotes group solidarity amongst youth. While Lacombe youth are generally quite determined and resilient, they are not being adequately supported to develop aspirations, nurture talents and chase dreams. The vulnerable situation may be contributing to feelings of alienation and misdirected youth.
- **Variety of issues:** Many of our youth deal with multiple issues that make their lives challenging. Poverty, homelessness, addictions, mental health issues, gang affiliation, familial neglect and very often abuse.

MISSION & GOALS

“The Lab” Christian Urban Arts Community Center is an initiative that aims to improve the lives of youth affected by substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and gang activity in City of Lacombe by providing opportunities for youth to grow, create and express themselves in a positive way through the Arts.

The mission is to foster a safe, open and supportive environment that will nurture transformational leadership and positive development of youth in order to help reduce the impact and incidence of substance abuse on young people and their community. The youth centre will provide sport and recreation, education, skills training and sexual health education to young men and women, ages 11-24.

OVERALL GOALS

1. To provide educational, recreational, cultural, health and lifelong learning opportunities for youth.
2. To offer personal growth and advancement opportunities for youth.
3. To ensure that youth in the City of Lacombe have a safe and positive space to dream, play, create and engage in artistic expression.
4. To encourage and develop their talents, confidence, self-worth and ultimately their potential to become positive contributing members of the community.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

1. To provide regular weekly activities and programs to 20-50 youth, encompassing youth from grade school, middle school, and high school ages.
2. To reduce the number teens in Lacombe involved in violence, criminal and drug activity and by providing education on the impact of drugs, and by using history of hip hop/pop culture as a tool.
3. To provide life skills and personal development classes in order inspire and motivate youth to achieve success.

The strategic objectives of the youth center are:

1. To secure consistent attendance at the centre
2. To promote positive, choices in young people
3. To decrease the number of criminal behaviour
4. To create income-generating opportunities for youth
5. To monitor outcomes of determine factors influencing attainment of goals

The goals to achieve these objectives at 12-months are:

1. To secure significant enrolments
2. To expose youth to positive healthy and life changing experiences
3. To provide life coaching
4. To provide positive mentoring and role modeling
5. To provide proper education on drugs and substance abuse

Note: The objectives and measurable goals will be more specifically defined at the stage of actual program and service development

The goals will be achieved using the following methods:

1. Conduct an early peer-to-peer promotion and outreach campaign targeting youth and parents in Lacombe and surrounding “catchment” areas to build awareness of the centre and encourage sustained attendance. Formally engage youth and community from the beginning to create material ownership of the youth center. Offer sport/skateboarding and other recreational activities to attract and maintain youth interest and participation.
2. Provide intentional, interactive, educational and recreational activities and workshops. Invite guest speakers to promote discussion-based learning and safe dialogue around drugs, substance abuse, sex and relationships.
3. Create a warm, friendly and trusted atmosphere to engage youth in discussions about healthy life choices and future goals. Conduct a centre-based campaign to encourage positive lifestyle choices.
4. Establish relationships with local businesses with the intention of setting up entrepreneurship opportunities for youth to make and sell their creations. Provide skills development and entrepreneurship training to youth (e.g. offer computer courses). Invite guest speakers from business and educational institutions to promote entrepreneurial and academic aspirations in adolescents.
5. Conduct biomedical and socio-behavioural research as the basis for program and services evaluation.

ACTIVITIES

LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOPS: The Lab will be a place where youth can come and relax while learning leadership skills, communication skills, conflict resolution, community building, and personal development. Offering programs such as workshops and seminars in basic life skills, tutoring, and life improvement seminars can address this issue. These programs may include services such as seminars on personal finances, proper nutrition and hygiene (personal, environmental, ecological), how to procure proper housing (rent or purchase), and interpersonal relationships, to list a few.

LIFE COACHING WORKSHOPS: The Lab will offer one on one personal life coaching to youth who are in need. Life coaching will help youth to discover purpose and set and achieve personal goals.

JOB SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: In lower income communities the unemployment and poverty rates are disproportionately high. In some communities they reach up to four times the city's average. Offering accessible job skills training can provide the help many people need to find work. Simple seminars in how to complete a job application, how to dress professionally, and how to interview can make a significant difference in job procurement. Our job fairs will bring motivated employers to prospective employees. Urban mission trips will bring the mobile service unit to the city along with skilled professional craftsmen who will lead construction projects. The mission trips can also include seminars on simple house repair and maintenance.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: The Lab will lend support to a young person by teaching skills, listening to their perspectives and creating a sense of belonging. The Mentorship program will help improve peer and family relationships, and helps Alberta's youth develop the confidence, self-esteem and social skills they need to be productive members of society.

YOUTH PROGRAMS: The Lab also provides youth education, media, dance, art, music programs, athletic activities, a homework help program, youth summer jobs, and a leadership program. It will also be home to the STORMCO youth leadership program, which will serve youth between the ages of 11 and 24.

HEALTH CARE EDUCATION: Health care services include a broad range of ministry opportunities. Education will focus on diet, exercise, and other lifestyle related habits. Health care education will also include specialized services such as professional counselling.

LIFESTYLE HEALTH: Although Lacombe is a healthy city over-all, people in all classes have lifestyle diseases. This can be remedied through 1) nutritional, wellness and fitness education; 2) providing nutritional food free or at low cost through community gardens; and 3) Health expos that include sharing what the city has to offer in various health programs can also be conducted in the various neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The Lab will provide youth with weekly opportunities to help serve the needs of the community through outreach programs, service projects, and compassion ministries.

INTAKE CENTER: In addition to providing services directly, The Lab Urban Arts Center will also function as an intake and referral center, connecting community members with the broad range of services already available in the city.

URBAN BARBERSHOP: There is a need to provide young men with skills that excite them, enhance their confidence and increase their income with dignity. There are young men who are released from detention centers, or are living in shelters and need proper hair maintenance. Learning hair-cutting technique is a skill that can be turned into entrepreneurial opportunities. Men can also get a fresh hair cut for the job interview or for a good first impression. Imagine the sense of pride they can have once they learn the trade!

RETAIL T-SHIRT/CLOTHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Youth have creative minds and creative energy that can be effectively harnessed. Youth will have the opportunity to create and design custom trendy t-shirts with positive branding that will be sold at the center. The proceeds from sales will go back into the center's programs and activities. A small scale of skate merchandise will be sold at the center, youth will have the opportunity to see how business and inventory is run.

URBAN MUSIC EDUCATION: Music is a huge part of the lives of urban teens in today's age and society. Understanding the history of urban music and its use as a powerful tool can help teens in their daily lives. We will be using music as curriculum resource guide. Its goal is to mobilize the power, popularity and potential of urban music/culture as a platform for transformative education and re-education. Intended as a resource for both school- and community-based educators, it will describe the what, why and how of using urban music as critical pedagogy to engage and activate the hearts and minds of learners ages 11 and up.

ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM: Bullying is a pattern of unwelcome or aggressive behavior, often with the goal of making others uncomfortable, scared or hurt. The effects of bullying on youth can be traumatic and long-lasting. Victims of bullying can show a range of social, emotional, behavioral, physical and spiritual problems. In extreme cases, bullying can lead to suicide. Our goal is to educate and empower youth to effectively combat bullying and promote a culture of inclusivity, equity and diversity. Taking a holistic approach to the issue of bullying, our unique programs also focus on working with youth who have been identified as bullies.

FROM G's TO GENTS: *From G's To Gent's* is an urban youth program designed to help misdirected young men change their lives and become gentlemen. The objective of the program is to make the transformation from a roughneck to a sophisticated gentleman within the given time. Topics such as how to be a true gentleman, how to dress for success, personal grooming, manners/etiquette and physical fitness will be covered.

THE WORD ON THE STREETZ: On Sabbath mornings, the center will have a seeker sensitive urban church service for those who are interested and considered unchurched/postmodern/millennial. The church program is called, "The WORD On The Streetz." "The WORD On The Streetz" is a small group church program initiative that contextualizes the Gospel of Jesus Christ through urban lenses and expressions.

ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED/TARGET GROUP

According to Lacombe former Police Chief Gary Leslie, "Youth crime (is) our number one priority and basically what it involved was car prowling's, The issue of car prowling runs deeper in the community. Youth were at the top of the offenders list for these acts."

Because consistent recreational drug use amongst youth between the ages of 11-24 has sky rocketed in the city of the Lacombe, many youth are having to travel outside the city of Calgary to undergo rigorous and costly drug rehabilitation.

Further research has pointed out there are no faith based urban community initiatives that address this dangerous and progressive phenomenon of youth drug and criminal activity within the skateboarding community of Lacombe.



Lacombe Police Report 2015

Crime Rates On The Rise In Lacombe

In terms of the Lacombe community, 2015 proved to be a busy and challenging year for the Lacombe Police Service. Calls for service have risen 20 per cent since 2013 with significant increases in several areas last year:

TYPE OF CALL / INVESTIGATION	2015	2014	% DIFF
Break and Enter	74	44	+68
Drug (Trafficking / Possession)	52	29	+78
Firearms	11	5	+120
Frauds	53	43	+23
Impaired Driving	77	67	+15
Mental Health	91	78	+17
Mischief to Property (vandalism)	137	97	+41
Thefts / Possession of Stolen Property	341	311	+10
Assaults (Common, Domestic, Sexual)	28	11	+154

“In addition to almost 7,000 calls for service over the year, during the last six weeks of 2015 Lacombe Police responded to an armed robbery; aggravated assault; violent home invasion and a homicide. These are the types of crimes typically unheard of in Lacombe, but they reflect the trends being experienced in central Alberta to which Lacombe is not immune. 2015 also saw four Lacombe Police cruisers rammed by fleeing suspects in stolen vehicles, and a Lacombe police officer struck by two suspects fleeing from a theft in a stolen vehicle.”

“It is not just the increase in calls, but the nature of the calls that places the greatest strain on our resources,” said Police Chief Steve Murray. “These types of investigations are far more serious and complex in nature and require significantly more time and resources to properly investigate and successfully prosecute the offender. I am particularly concerned with the callousness and disregard for the lives, safety and property of others exhibited by these offenders towards victims and the police.”

“Factors such as a growing community; the weak economy and the stresses on individuals and families are becoming very evident in the types of calls Lacombe police are being called to respond to.”

“Typically, when crime trends escalate, there is pressure for the police to become strictly reactive versus proactive, yet I remain convinced that investing in the areas of mental health, addictions, affordable housing and support for individuals and families is critical to preventing behaviors and actions escalating and requiring the involvement of the police and criminal justice system,” stated Chief Murray.

”While the 2015 trends are alarming, Lacombe remains a safe and desirable community. “We are building important partnerships with community groups and social agencies to look at root causes of crime and how we could be more effective at preventing and addressing those causes, so I would not want to see us lose that momentum,” says Murray.”

“The Lacombe Police Service has already begun reviewing its business plan to ensure that service delivery strategies align with the changing nature and complexities of these investigations.”

By putting this urban arts community center in place, youth will be able to receive the following:

- Spiritual and religious programing;
- Life coaching;
- Professional music instruction/production;
- Computer competency in word processing;
- Graphic/visual arts studio; includes photography, painting
- Theatre and dramatic performance;
- Fashion and design;
- Hair cutting/barbershop;
- Guidance and literary development;
- Music education & workshops;
- Tutorage and academic support;
- Resume and job skills development.
- Business education and financial literacy
- T-shirt/Clothing creation and distribution
- Motivational Speaking

Programs & Services

The Christian Urban Arts Community Center will run for a one-year period starting September 2016 with a Grand Opening. This urban arts initiative will end on December 31, 2017. However, at the end of the year 2017, the program will be evaluated and if there is valuable evidence of positive, tangible and successful results that can be measured, continuation of the program will be considered for the year of 2018.

The Christian Urban Arts Community Center will provide after-school programs and services to young men and women, aged 11-24, from 6-10 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Sabbath mornings the center will have a seeker sensitive urban church service for those who are interested and considered unchurched/postmodern/millennial. The church program will be called, "*The WORD On The Streetz.*" "*The WORD On The Streetz*" is a small group church initiative that contextualizes the Gospel of Jesus Christ through urban lenses and expressions.

The centre will focus on Seven key areas of activity: 1) The Arts 2) Education 3) Job skills/employment training 4) Personal development 5) Drugs and substance abuse recovery 6) Sexual health education and 7) Spiritual Development.

All activities will be underpinned by evaluation and socio- behavioural research conducted by a local research team of students from Burman University.

The Christian Urban Arts Center will also contain an indoor common room with a television and DVD player, pool table, air hockey, pool table and music studio. The space will allow for positive interaction and enhance open and safe dialogue amongst peers. Internet access and personal computers will also be set up. The centre will include several rooms, both large and small, to facilitate drama, artistic expression of movement, art, singing, music and creative activities as well as health-related education workshops skills/employment training sessions. The centre will also offer sexual health education including professional counselling.

Research

This proposal is considered to be a Doctor of Ministry Project proposal through Andrews University Theological Seminary. After three and half years of living as a resident of Lacombe and a becoming a regular skateboarder at the Lacombe Skate Park, I have come to the conclusion that there are urban problems directly impacting the youth within the community. I am proposing that in order to effectively help and combat the rising crime rates, drug activity, and violent behaviour amongst the urban youth of Lacombe, a Christian Urban Arts Center would help to provide a positive environment and programming.

To prove that the center is having a positive physical, social and spiritual impact on the community, weekly surveys will be administered to a core group of 10-12 Non-Adventist youth. The participants will qualify as being considered *unchurched* between the ages of 11-24. After a one-year period, results compiled will then be reviewed to see if the center had any positive and spiritual impact on the lives of the participants.

Community Participation

Community representatives, both adults and youth, have expressed an enthusiastic interest to become deeply involved in establishing and maintaining the urban arts youth centre. Community partners have been designated as follows:

- **Alberta Conference,**
- **College Heights SDA Church,** a group of 10 local adult stakeholders
- **ADRA Canada,**
- **Lacombe Chamber of Commerce**
- **Lacombe City Council**
- **City Lacombe Office of Community & Economic Development**
- **To The Stars**
- **Lacombe Rotary Club**
- **Burman University**
- **Lions Club**
- **Kinsmen**
- **Blaine Calkins, Member of Parliament**

Partnerships & Collaborations

The youth center will be established in direct partnership with the designated community partners (see above) as well as Burman University Students. The religious studies department Burman University and its students will be called up to provide spiritual mentorship to the youth who attend the urban arts center.

Representatives from all collaborating groups will be encouraged to participate in a series of networking and program evaluation sessions and workshops to further identify the specific concerns and needs of youth and develop a suitable corresponding curriculum.

Administration

The centre will be led by a centre manager Lyle Notice, who will be responsible for administering and overseeing the programs, services and volunteer staff.

There will be four volunteer staff including a youth worker, and two youth facilitators and one life coach. The staff, some of which have already been identified, will be selected locally or in the surrounding areas of Lacombe. All staff will be required to have

a police check, and will undergo formal and informal training in a variety of areas. The centre will openly welcome volunteer support, and will also actively seek student assistance from Burman University in this regard.

Governance

The youth center will be governed by Lyle Notice, in consultation with the project steering committee, who will serve as the volunteer executive board.

The steering committee will consist of twelve individuals: Lawel Natufe, Adam Deibert, Ian Bramble, Tyler Pelley, Luke Bannis, Richard Grey, Nwamiko Madden, Ted Deer, Christian Lintan, Keith Richter, John Nichols, and Denise Nichols.

This Committee comprises individuals who bring the richness of experience, the expertise of their professions, and financial, social and strategic resources to the project.

Promotion & Outreach

The youth center will engage in proactive promotion and outreach activities to promote the youth centre primarily to the adolescents in the city of Lacombe. These activities will be primarily driven by the community partners through social media, word of mouth, door-to-door distribution of flyers and invitations to the opening celebration of the youth centre. The donors, residents, local business and the community at large will be invited and encouraged to attend. A careful promotion and outreach plan will be developed and set into motion by the Administrative committee of the Alberta Conference, in consultation with the community partners, to build awareness and encourage youth attendance and participation.

Possible Site Location

Several potential sites in Lacombe have been identified. The specific location of the youth centre currently being explored by Lyle Notice is located on the campus of Burman University Campus. The space is currently called "The Hide Out." Several other potential sites in Lacombe have been identified.

Future Home for “THE LAB” Urban Arts Community Center

Picture #1



Picture #2



Picture #3



Picture #4



Picture #5



APPENDIX H

Future Steps for the Oikos Urban Missional Small Group

STAGE ONE: CONTINTUED COLLECTIVE CONNECTING & GROWTH (January–April 2019)
Developing social relationships: monthly trips, social events, socializing
Continue core gathering: meeting more people and casting the vision, growing spiritually
Creating urban missional culture: learning urban culture, culture of the city, developing missional mindset
Spiritual retreat: core group members meet in Banff for spiritual empowerment
Fasting and prayer: schedule monthly fasting session for the success of the core group and future urban church plant

STAGE TWO: STRATEGY (May–August 2019)
Strategize the plan for developing urban missional church plant
Launch vision
Networking
Journeying
Team recruitment
Leadership development

Add monthly worship gathering on Sabbath morning
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STAGE THREE: TRANSITION (September–December 2019)
Relocation: secure local meeting place, new building to gather in
Transition: changing from small group to church plant group
Core group development assessment: How are doing as a core group? Spiritual/personal checkup

STAGE FOUR: SOFT LAUNCH (January–April 2020)
Weekly worship service: preaching the mission, vision, children’s ministry
Volunteer missional teams: assemble and develop volunteers for public launch
Life groups: create life groups
Leadership development: identifying life group leaders

STAGE FIVE: PUBLIC LANUCH (May 2020)
Public launch of urban church plant: May 2, 2020

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