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The Next Right Step: A Case Study in Listening for Change When Overwhelmed by Reality

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DISCERNMENT

Theology and the Practice of Ministry

The Next Right Step: A Case Study in Listening for Change When Overwhelmed

Ashley Crisp and Ashley Stirman

Abstract: In late 2021, two ministers at Highland Church of Christ began a conversation about accessibility and inclusion, primarily aimed at children's and student's ministries. The two ministers knew they were adequately able to serve the children and students at Highland that required additional support, but that it was not a sustainable system. They set out on a year-long process of acquiring information, resources, and fresh ideas, in the hopes that these would provide the answer they had been searching for. In late 2022, the answer to their problem became clear: they needed to listen to the people in front of them to know how to serve them best. They created a listening project and a team of congregants to interview members at Highland regarding accessibility and inclusion. The results that came out of the listening project were surprising, but they helped pave the way forward for Highland.

The Heart of the Matter

Highland Church of Christ is an imperfect church. Founded in 1929, Highland has a long history of loving the neighborhood, starting ministries that launch into nonprofit organizations, sending missionaries throughout the world, and appointing leaders that strive to put systems in place that serve all those God entrusted to Highland's care. But both leaders and systems are finite, and at a church the size of Highland¹ there are going to be things that fall through the cracks; one of which has been creating and fostering an accessible and inclusive environment for our brothers and sisters with disabilities.²

¹ Highland's population has fluctuated through the years, but membership has been consistently above 750 members since 1947. Andrew C. Fancelli, *From Roots to Wings: A History of the Highland Church of Christ* (Abilene: Classing Printing Consultants, July 1988), 13.

² We acknowledge the delicacy surrounding language related to disability. Both identity-first language ("disabled persons") and person-first language ("persons with disabilities") can be used depending on the individual's preference. Since this writing refers to a generalized population instead of specific individuals, we have elected to use person-first language as recommended by the ADA National Network. "Guidelines for

The topic of accessibility and inclusion is important to both of us. For Ashley Crisp, the children's minister at Highland, this conversation is personal. Her sister has Down syndrome, and she has witnessed the importance of accessibility and inclusion firsthand and has experienced church when inclusion occurs. For Ashley Stirman, one of the student ministers, she had a life-changing experience at Camp Barnabas,³ a summer camp for individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses. While we come to this conversation through different experiences, we both desire for every child and student to encounter God's love in a way that honors and celebrates who God has created them to be.

Highland's purpose statement is to call all people to God. This purpose statement emerges from two foundational beliefs: (1) all human beings are made in the image of God, and (2) hospitality is at the heart of the Gospel. In Gen 1:27, God created humankind in God's own image, and then immediately blessed them. God saw that everything God created was good (1:31). The Fall in chapter 3 results in a curse for both women and men. Women are cursed with painful childbirth, and men are cursed with rigorous labor. Physical ailments, chronic illnesses, disease, nor any other physical or mental disabilities are included in this curse, which points to the conclusion that these things are not a result of sin in the world. This is confirmed by Jesus in John 9, when his disciples ask who sinned for a man to be blind, and Jesus responds, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." Disabled bodies are bodies that bear the image of God.

Moreover, Jesus makes it clear that God is a God of hospitality. Jesus welcomes the children, feeds the hungry, and heals the sick. Time and time again, Jesus pursues, elevates, and communes with the marginalized, much to the dismay of religious leaders. Jesus was consistently interrupted by meeting the needs of the person in front of him. Our desire is for Highland to have the same level of interruptibility and intentionality in ensuring that our context is hospitable for all. Our goal for each person who walks through the doors is discipleship. Highland must be a place where *all* people are welcomed and included to be formed in Christ's likeness. All means all.

Writing about People with Disabilities," *ADA National Network: Information, Guidance, and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act*, last modified August 2023, <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing>.

³ For more information, visit www.campbarnabas.org.

Defining Reality

In the fall of 2021, we began regularly conversing about accessibility and inclusion at Highland. Crisp was seeing many children who had different needs or required additional support. Most of these children had been attending Highland for many years, and as such, volunteers and staff were familiar with these children and could scaffold their success using existing resources. However, in the fall of 2021, there was a noticeable increase in the number of children and students who needed additional sensory, emotional, and behavioral support.⁴ Some children had diagnoses such as autism, sensory processing disorder, or other learning impairments, but this was not the case across the board. We also had children who were impacted by trauma, including the adverse childhood experiences that arose as a result of the pandemic.⁵ The accessibility and inclusion conversation was further complexified by the inability or unwillingness of parents to share information about additional support needed by their children. From a ministry perspective, the array of issues was challenging.

We did our best to support each child. Stirman created a temporary “buddy” system that allowed for students to be partnered with peers. In the children’s ministry, children that needed additional resources were the most successful with one-on-one adult support. All these children happened to be in the same class, so Crisp moved away from leading large group gatherings to provide support and bridge engagement between them and their classmates. For many months, we did our best to meet these needs, but soon realized our support was not sustainable, however valuable. We knew something needed to change, but we were not sure what to do differently.

Outside Resources

We began looking for resources that could help us determine the next right step regarding what could be feasible in our context.⁶ In February

⁴ At Highland, students are defined as 6th–12th graders.

⁵ Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are events in a child’s life such that affects their sense of safety or causes harm to their physical or emotional well-being. Robert G. Crosby and Lori A. Crosby, *Trauma-Informed Children’s Ministry: A Practical Guide to Reaching Hurting Kids* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022), 5; Stan Sonu, David Marvin, and Charles Moore, “The Intersection and Dynamics between COVID-19, Health Disparities, and Adverse Childhood Experiences,” *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 14, no. 4 (Dec 2021): 519 and 522.

⁶ “Next right step” is a phrase we have utilized throughout this writing to refer to a simplified decision-making process. The scope of an accessibility and inclusion conversation was so huge that it quickly became paralyzing. All conversations about the future of accessibility at Highland between us were riddled with indecision and anxiety about the magnitude of this work. We soon realized using “next step” language was a comfort. It allowed us to be grounded in the present reality while thinking about the future in a way that felt

2022, we attended the All-Access Disability Ministry Conference in Houston, Texas. The conference included sessions about stand-alone special needs ministries, but also provided a large emphasis on creating programs and practices to support individuals inside the existing ministry contexts.⁷ After the conference, we began to process and dream about what Highland would look like as an accessible organization that focused on providing inclusionary practices. We began to understand that this would not be changed by adding a few more volunteers or changing our programming. We needed to embark upon a cultural change for the whole church to be more accessible and inclusive of all people. This is a conversation that does not just benefit the children and student ministries but the entire church body.

The realization that our conversations about accessibility and inclusion were going to require a church-wide cultural change was daunting. We had many questions in the weeks following the conference: How do we even begin changing a church's culture? What do we do in the meantime with the struggling systems in our ministries? Are we the right people to lead this conversation? We began reading, listening, and looking at different resources to determine our next steps.⁸ As a result of the overwhelming breadth of our questions, we stayed in a research and discerning phase for the remainder of the spring of 2022 and into the summer.

Throughout this phase of discernment, we read a wide variety of sources and revisited works presented at the conference. One theory that shaped our conversations is the triangle of discipleship, presented to us by Bronwyn Murphy, an Inclusion Pastor at University Covenant Church in Davis, California, at the All-Access Disability Conference⁹ (See Figure 1). The triangle depicts progressions toward creating a space for discipleship for those with disabilities. The foundational level is that the church must have an awareness that persons who live with disabilities are within their congregation. Once a general awareness is established, churches can begin

achievable. We did not need to change everything all at once, we just needed to do the next right step. It kept us moving forward.

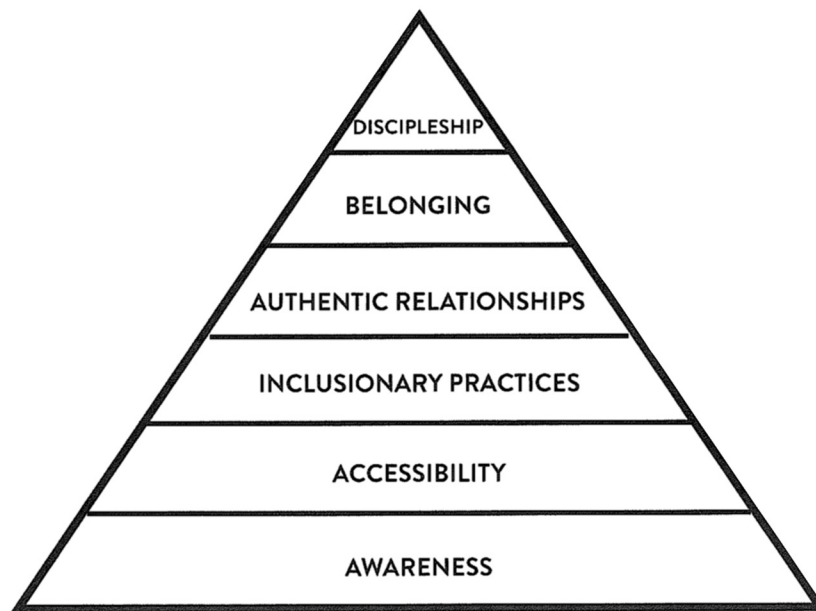
⁷ Here, we again want to note the tension regarding language surrounding disabilities and disability ministries. The term "special needs," though, is a known identifier across many contexts including schools and churches, but it is also a term we hope to move away from. Language is consistently part of our dialogue as we instinctively use different terms. Ashley Crisp prefers person-first language and uses the term "differently abled" for her sister, but Ashley Stirman uses identity-first language. We know that others engaged in this conversation may prefer different terminology. Exploring language use is a necessary part of this conversation.

⁸ See the appendix for a list of resources we found helpful.

⁹ Bronwyn Murphy, "Building a Culture of Inclusion" (presentation, All-Access Disability Ministry Conference, Houston, TX, February 26, 2022). Figure used with permission.

working toward creating accessible spaces and language. Once a church has become accessible, individuals with disabilities are able to engage in inclusionary practices, which leads to building authentic relationships among all members. As authentic relationships are created, a sense of belonging emerges, which then, and only then, paves the way for discipleship to occur.

Figure 1: Discipleship Triangle



We used Murphy's triangle model as an internal progress report during the summer of 2022 at Highland to determine in which ways Highland had made progress. It was evident that across multiple areas of ministry, the church was progressing in different stages. For example, the children's ministry was actively working toward inclusionary practices and authentic relationships while our worship services were still at a place of creating awareness and accessibility. After much evaluation and honest reflection, we realized that, from a congregational perspective, Highland was approaching the phase of creating awareness.

Despite the fact that we, as a church, were not as far on this journey as we had hoped, we determined the next right step was to meet a few immediate needs for our community. Therefore, we set out to accomplish three specific tasks. First, we repurposed a classroom in the children's wing and made it into a calm room using resources already available to us. We filled it with soft items such as rugs and bean bags, used lamps to dim the

lights, and included various tools like Play-doh, fidgets, and coloring materials.¹⁰ Second, we purchased fidgets for every classroom utilized by children and students. Third, we created “buddy bags” for use during worship services. Every buddy bag contained a visual schedule of the worship service, a variety of fidgets, and noise-reducing headphones. These initiatives, especially the buddy bags, were immediately put into use by our community.

Beyond those three initiatives, we still did not know what Highland needed. However, we knew that this conversation would not succeed without the church’s support, and we also knew that we needed to hear people’s experiences to better understand where we should be headed. We chose to create a survey to gather information, targeting three main topics in the survey: our building, the language we use, and our practices. This survey included both open-ended and Likert scale questions, as well as spaces for comments (See Table 1). This survey was sent out to fifty-two church members and had a 50 percent response rate. We received eighteen pages of comments that covered a wide range of topics. We were thankful for all the responses and the honesty provided by those who shared their experiences and perspectives, but we were, once again, overwhelmed by the vastness of the conversation and felt as if we were back to square one, searching for the next right step.

The Final Piece

A few weeks after our survey responses came back, two of Highland’s missionary partners visited Highland on furlough. Mark and Ali Kaiser live in Itu, Brasil, and work with Igreja na Cristo em Itu. The Kaisers also run a nonprofit in Itu called Crescimento Limpo (CL), which translates to “Clean Growth.” CL helps unhoused persons obtain housing, work, and education.¹¹

On their visit to Highland, Mark and Ali spent some time with the Highland staff answering questions about their ministry. They mentioned that everything CL had become has come out of asking their neighbors what they need, and then taking steps to meet that need. CL began with Mark and Ali inviting individuals living on the street into their homes for a meal. Several years later, they now have a community garden, popular cafe, large farm, woodworking shop, and a halfway house. Stopping and asking their neighbors about their needs paved the way for each step.

¹⁰ Fidgets are small objects used by individuals with sensory difficulties, anxiety, ADHD, etc. to provide activity with the hands. Examples of fidgets are spinners, stress balls, and pop-its.

¹¹ For more about the incredible work of the Kaisers, see www.crescentolimp.org.br/.

Table 1: Survey Questions

Question	Style
How easy is it to navigate from the parking lot into the building?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
How easy is it to navigate to Bible classes?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
How easy is it to navigate to and around the children's wing?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
How easy is it to navigate around the building?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
How accessible is the auditorium?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
What word or words would you use to describe the adult classrooms? (Ex: inviting, overwhelming, busy, crowded, open, etc.)	Open-ended
What word or words would you use to describe the auditorium? (Ex: inviting, overwhelming, busy, crowded, open, etc.)	Open-ended
What word or words would you use to describe the children's ministry and student ministry areas? (Ex: inviting, overwhelming, busy, crowded, open, etc.)	Open-ended
What word or words would you use to describe the communal spaces (atrium, south foyer, etc.) areas? (Ex: inviting, overwhelming, busy, crowded, open, etc.)	Open-ended
How accessible and inclusive are our worship times?	Likert Scale (very difficult - very easy) - Comments
How does the language we use during worship services communicate our accessibility or lack thereof?	Open-ended
Do you observe any messages being communicated that are not overtly stated? These messages may be positive or negative. (Ex: Deaf/Hard of Hearing persons are not welcome in the worship service since we do not have an ASL interpreter.)	Open-ended
What do you wish Highland offered to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of our spaces?	Open-ended
Do you have any other comments that do not fit into a specific question?	Open-ended

This conversation with the Kaisers was significant because it helped us realize that listening to the needs of others and then acting upon those needs (i.e., doing the next right thing) was such a simple yet transformative ideal. That realization felt revolutionary for our context at the time because determining the next step had been a paralyzing task. Thus, rather than forging onward, we recognized the importance of pausing and spending time listening. And that is what we did.

Listening Project

Our experiences, readings, and survey as well as the theoretical and theological frameworks led us to the conclusion that we needed to listen to the people God entrusted to our care through a listening project. We also knew that it was essential that we listen well. In other words, we must remain intentional about who we listen to and what we listen for.

Listening for Culture

With that considerable goal in mind, Stirman engaged with Schein and Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. The thesis of this text states that uncovering the truth of culture is a prerequisite for true change to occur. For a culture to change, an organization must begin by listening for three characteristics of culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs, and unstated beliefs.¹²

Artifacts are observable products of a group, such as the physical building, the language used, the programs offered, the celebrated stories, technology offered, and so on. Artifacts are something an outsider can walk in and easily observe.¹³

Espoused beliefs are embedded assumptions about what is right and wrong, and what will or will not work.¹⁴ Espoused beliefs in a church setting may be something like a vision or mission statement, stated core values, and language used in corporate worship settings such as "all are welcome" or "come as you are."

¹² Edgar H. Schein and Peter Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, 2016), 17.

¹³ Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 26.

¹⁴ The authors describe the role of espoused beliefs this way: "The espoused beliefs and moral or ethical rules remain conscious and are explicitly articulated because they serve the normative or moral function of guiding members of the group as to how to deal with certain key situations as well as in training new members how to behave. Such beliefs and values often become embodied in an ideology or organizational philosophy, which then serves as a guide to dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events." Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 20.

Unstated beliefs are basic assumptions that guide behavior. They are incredibly difficult to pinpoint, and subsequently, to change. Unstated beliefs are below the conscious level of thought and are what undermines leadership efforts.¹⁵

To find the unstated beliefs of an organization, you must listen for artifacts and espoused beliefs. Where the two do not align, unstated beliefs are uncovered. For example, imagine an interview in which a member who uses a mobility device says they feel exceptionally welcomed at Highland. They are known, they are connected, and there is always someone around to open doors for them. Later in the interview, they reveal their desire for Highland to have an automatic exterior door so they could let themselves in. The artifact (lack of automatic doors) does not align with the espoused belief (“I feel so welcomed here”), therefore the unstated belief is then revealed to be “those that use mobility devices are not welcome at Highland.” This is an extreme example, but it is helpful in understanding the question framework we utilized for our interviews. We had to unearth unstated beliefs in order to understand the reality of our culture.

Listening as Leadership

The final piece we listened for came from Scott Cormode in *The Innovative Church*. Cormode poses that leadership begins with listening for longings and losses: “The human condition is that every person in the world experiences longings and losses. It is our shared story. And the gospel is God’s response to the human condition. If we are to proclaim a shared story of gospel hope, we need to recognize our own shared story of pain, our shared story of longing, and our shared story of loss.”¹⁶ For this project, we wanted to know where we had failed or been a source of hurt, but we also wanted to know what people thought we were doing well. We used the language of consolation, desolation, and aspiration to scaffold our question framework.

Interview Questions

We needed to hear from our church about our artifacts, espoused beliefs, and unstated beliefs, while also listening for consolations, desolations, and aspirations. What emerged was a rubric of questions, one question per area, as demonstrated below. The numbers in the table correspond to the numbered questions below (see Table 2).

¹⁵ Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 26.

¹⁶ Scott Cormode, *The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 50–51.

Table 2 – Interview Question Matrix

	Consolation	Desolation	Aspiration
Artifacts	1	2	3
Espoused Beliefs	4	5	6

1. Tell us about a time or season when you and/or your entire family were able to attend church successfully. What was available to you to make this possible?
2. Tell us about a time or season when you and/or your whole family have not been able to attend church successfully? What was missing? What was different?
3. What do you wish Highland offered in order for your family to feel welcome here?

These next two questions invite you to think about Highland’s beliefs and values. These can be overtly stated or unstated. For example, a friend states that timeliness is a value (stated belief) but always shows up late (unstated belief).

4. How do these make you feel welcome in Highland’s community?
5. How do these make you feel unwelcome?
6. What are we missing that you wish or hope for Highland?

This question set was imperfect. We could have workshopped and researched more to fine-tune, but we were running out of time to get the project launched by our self-imposed January 2023 deadline. Ultimately, our goal was to ask broad questions to a wide cross-section of Highland to gather as much information as possible.

Implementation

Toward the end of January 2023, we had our first listening project meeting with a team of nine Highland members. We chose the team members for this project based on their connection to the project subject, whether personally or professionally, their relational credibility at Highland, and their listening skills. We thought peer-to-peer interviews would likely elicit more honest, full responses than a staff-to-member

interview. Therefore, it was important for us to intentionally consider who was conducting the interview so that not only would the interviewee be made comfortable but also so that the interviewer would feel comfortable and confident in leading this task.

The goals of the initial meeting were: (1) getting our team members acquainted with each other, (2) filling the team in on the background of the project, (3) providing basic listening training, (4) making interview assignments, and (5) reviewing the project timeline. We handed each member a folder that had the interview questions, a list of interviewees with contact information, a listening training packet provided by the Siburt Institute at Abilene Christian University, and the projected timeline. We also gave team members language for how to invite someone to be interviewed, as well as a brief informed consent paragraph¹⁷ to be read at the beginning of each interview. Additionally, we used a Google Drive folder to keep track of interviews. The folder contained all of the information covered at the initial meeting, as well as a space for team members to upload notes from their completed interviews.¹⁸

From January through April, team members conducted interviews. We asked each team member to conduct two interviews.¹⁹ In mid-March we reassembled the team for a time of check-in. The only goal for this meeting was to listen to what team members had been hearing in interviews. We also wanted to know if any questions should be reworked or if any other potential interviewees had come to mind.

¹⁷ We were primarily working with a marginalized and vulnerable population. These interviews served as an evaluation of both how we were and were not meeting needs in our community. This work was never intended to be research producing generalizable knowledge nor a collection of identifiable information about living individuals; thus, it is not research in the academic sense of the word and does not require Institutional Review Board approval. Nonetheless, we chose to begin our interviews with an informed consent statement so that our community understood that they retained the power to choose whether or not to speak throughout the interview. Our informed consent paragraph read: "Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the listening project. This interview will take about an hour. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview at any time. This interview will not be recorded, but I will take notes to present to the listening project team. You may be quoted or paraphrased to that team, but your words will not be published elsewhere. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?"

¹⁸ Initially, the two of us assigned interviewees to the team members, but we used a portion of our meeting to allow team members to swap if they felt like someone else might be a better fit. Assigning interviewees achieved two things. First, we ensured a broad cross section of Highland was interviewed, rather than just those that were connected to our team members. Second, it invited team members to reach out to people they may not necessarily know very well. This was especially meaningful to interviewees who felt disconnected from Highland.

¹⁹ Some of the interviews were with couples, and others were with individuals. The total number of people interviewed was twenty-four.

Concluding the Project

At the end of April, the entire listening team came together for one final meeting. We used this time to reflect on themes and observations that emerged from the interviews. Stirman presented the organizational culture listening information and asked the team members to think about what they heard in their interviews in terms of artifacts and espoused beliefs. We provided the example given above about a member in a mobility device and invited team members to brainstorm unstated beliefs that currently exist within the culture of Highland as heard through the interviews. They provided the following list:

- It is your job to connect at Highland.
- Inclusion is unusual at Highland.
- Inclusion is not my job.
- Everyone is welcome here, until I am inconvenienced.
- Our current level of diversity is good enough.
- We can be all things to all people.
- We expect our leaders to be perfect.
- Trauma and/or mental health problems should be checked at the door because they are overwhelming to me/I don't know how to respond to them.
- Excellence in worship is of the utmost importance.

We then asked team members to represent the interviewees and, using the list of unstated beliefs, offer ideas of what they felt Highland needed. Team members each provided three of these “felt needs” at Highland and ranked them from most important to least important. As a result, we left the meeting with twenty-seven felt needs and an overwhelming realization that we had no idea what to do with this information. We took the rest of the week to reflect on and pray over what the next right step would be before coming together to deliberately process and synthesize the information we were given by the listening team members. When we examined the felt needs again, two main categories emerged: (1) creating spaces and avenues for connection and (2) providing opportunities to raise awareness about accessibility and offer additional training for volunteers.²⁰

²⁰ Fifteen felt needs were related to connection and twelve expressed a desire for more awareness and training.

We decided that the next right step was for us to split into two teams with each team focusing on one of the two prevalent themes. Stirman would lead a “Connection and Belonging” team tasked with conducting an additional listening project regarding how people become connected at Highland. Crisp would lead an “Awareness and Training” team tasked with researching and implementing ways Highland can better equip volunteers to meet individual needs as they arise, as well as the best ways to raise church-wide awareness about accessibility and inclusion. As of October 2023, both of these teams have been formed and members are working toward their respective goals. These teams are living in the tension of working to address the present reality while looking ahead to shape the future of Highland one step at a time.

Reflection

This work was difficult. Listening instead of acting requires great patience because it is slow. We are approaching two years since we first began these conversations, and we are, in some ways, still facing the same challenges. The most important result that came out of our listening project was not new programming or resources, but the lesson that listening is a faithful discipline.

We saw the value of listening to our community in the way our participants were eager to be interviewed and share hard things. We heard in their responses the genuine gratitude in being granted an opportunity to express consolations and desolations free of judgment. The practice of listening formed us to be quick to listen and slow to speak, to have humility, and to be patient. Listening began as the means to an end, but along the way, it became both the means and the end. As we continue to listen to our community, we expect more changes and shifts to occur, but listening to the people God has entrusted into our care will continue to be an essential component of any work we set out to do.

Seeing where the listening project led us initially involved managing some disappointment. We hoped there would be an overwhelmingly obvious next step that solved some of our problems, or at least pointed us in the right direction to meeting needs in a sustainable way. Instead, we uncovered additional barriers to inclusion that required our attention, which created more work for the two of us.

Over time, the initial disappointment has faded, being replaced by signs of hope. In May of 2023, we began sharing the results with our staff, elders, and key volunteers, and invited them to engage in our work by joining one of our teams. We anticipated strong support in the way of team

participation from each of those groups, but we were both surprised by the way the listening project results have seemed to spread and multiply. Ashley Crisp has seen volunteers becoming more creative in how to disciple children with differing needs, coming up with solutions on their own, and experimenting in real time. They are creating more space, both physically and metaphorically, for children to be themselves and finding ways to meet them where they are. Trying a strategy in an effort to engage the child has become more important than looking for long-term sustainability. That paradigm shift is essential because it grants permission to not worry about the future and the work feels more manageable. Seeing a renewed investment in authentically welcoming and creating space for our community gives us hope that we will have what we need in each moment to call all people to God.

Open-handed listening to the community's needs led us in almost an entirely different direction than we started. Consequently, we faced a choice: follow the path we initially set out, or pivot to meet the needs of the people God entrusted to our care. We chose to pivot. This is hard, good, and faithful work, which will likely never be complete. There will always be ways that Highland can be more accessible, more inclusive, and do a better job of calling all people to God. We know this. However, we also know that we are called to work diligently and faithfully to ensure that every person in our community knows with total certainty that they are supported and that they belong.

Appendix: Additional Resources

This is a list of resources the authors found helpful during the listening project.

Beaumont, Susan. *Inside the Large Congregation*. Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2011.

Bolsinger, Tod. *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2015.

Eisland, Nancy L. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Grcevich, Stephen. *Mental Health and the Church: A Ministry Handbook for Including Children and Adults with ADHD, Anxiety, Mood Disorders, and Other Common Mental Health Conditions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.

Hardwick, Lamar. *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Keyministry.org

Powell, Kara, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin. *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016.

Swinton, John. *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness, and Gentle Discipleship*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.

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