

MISSIONAL FOCUS, FORM AND FUNCTION ARE REDEFINING
AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

by

DAVID W. HIRSCHMAN

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PROMOTER: PROF CJP (NELUS) NIEMANDT

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DEDICATION

To my C

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Most of all, to my Cheryl: words cannot express how thankful I am for all you have done to help me. Thank you for shared dreams.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation, *Missional Focus, Form and Function are Redefining American Christianity*, which I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



April 30, 2017

David W. Hirschman
Student No. u15029973

Keywords: Missional, *Missio Dei*, Christendom, Post-Christendom, Emerging, Evangelical, Institutional, Traditional, Incarnational, Focus, Form, Function

SUMMARY

The aim of this work, *Missional Focus, Form and Function are Redefining American Christianity*, is to capture and express a cohesive account of a developing missional church movement in the United States and its influence across the American religious landscape resulting from an intentional emphasis on context (focus), and how that focus informs ministry form and function. The transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century witnessed significant changes in ministry philosophy and practice not seen since the founding of the nation, and presents evidence substantiating that a redefinition of American Christianity is taking place.

Achieving the aim of this work necessarily includes not only a recounting and interpretation of current shifts across activities of the Church in the United States in its broadest sense, but also the incorporation of other important and contributing influences such as historical elements and their contribution to the development and formation of American Christianity, specifically the relationship between religion and populist efforts to achieve national liberty, as well as the rise of secularism, and the entrance into the Post-Christendom era.

Unquestionably, an important influence is that of contemporary voices speaking to the need for change in American Christianity and helping to redefine Christianity in the United States along *missional* concepts. Significant voices speaking into the greater international missional conversation and influencing missional efforts in the United States include Ryan K. Bolger, Neil Cole, Eddie Gibbs, Darrell Guder, Alan Hirsch, CJP Niemandt, Alan Roxburgh, Ed Stetzer, Craig Van Gelder, and others.

Churches employing the term *missional* to describe their understanding, conceptualization, and approach to ministry are an additional and essential influence. Using unique forms demonstrating a non-traditional focus that result in a variety of functions atypical for American churches, these ministries are adding to the evidence of a redefinition process already in motion. Among the five ministries included in this work are two noteworthy examples of churches pursuing *missional* ministry: the Life in Deep Ellum ministry in Dallas, Texas, and Tampa Underground, a network of micro churches in Tampa, Florida. The activities of these and other churches demonstrate the relationship between focus, form, and function as embodied in a missional approach to ministry.

Certainly, change is evident across the landscape of American Christianity, but how extensive and far-reaching must be determined. The goal of this work is not simply to confirm or dispute a redefinition of American Christianity as a result of missional church activity, but also in a broad and more overall fashion, to contribute to the larger dialogue addressing missional ministry in the United States, encouraging a greater understanding and embracing of *missional* ministry in American churches, and an energetic and effective pursuit of missional Christianity and church ministry in the United States.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism – (WCC)
GOCN	The Gospel in Our Culture Network
MCN	Missional Church Network
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
UMC	United Methodist Church
WCC	World Council of Churches

VITA

Dr. David W. Hirschman was born November 4, 1953. He received a Th.B. in Theology from Baptist International Bible College (1993), an MA in Religion (2006), M.Div. (2008), and DMin (2010) from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to Cheryl Lynn (Sneade) Hirschman, and they have two children: Timothy (married to Ashlie), and Jenilee (married to Joshua Chapmon). Prior to joining the faculty of Liberty University in 2008, where he presently serves as Associate Dean for the Department of Community Care and Counseling, Dr. Hirschman spent twenty three years in pastoral ministry and church planting work in Washington DC metro area.

The purpose of this work, *Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity*, is to tell the story, at least in part, of how the evolving changes across the religious landscape of the United States are contributing to the redefinition of American Christianity. This research compiles and interprets evidences of a phenomenological shift as seen in specific churches, clarifies elements of the missional conversation, and identifies how a missional focus informs church form and function to show that missional churches are redefining American Christianity.

Promoter: Prof CJP Niemandt

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“These are significant days. There has never been a time in all of history like now, change is the order of the day and it is rapid... [there are] dramatic shifts occurring in our time that merit our immediate attention and demand that we think differently about who we are as church in these days.”¹ With these words, Neil Cole expresses what a growing number of voices echo, that there has never been a more crucial time for American Christianity and the Church² in the United States. The continued decline of membership³ in mainline denominations⁴ and traditional expressions of church ministry,⁵ coupled with increasing numbers of Americans rejecting affiliation with Christianity and traditional Christian forms,⁶ presents the Church in the United States with an unprecedented

¹ Neil Cole. “Why We Cannot Afford to Stay Where We Are”, *100 Movements Blog*, July 26, 2016.

² ‘Church’ is used as a general reference to all expressions of congregational religious activity in the United States without differentiation of denomination or theological distinction. The term will be defined in a specific manner related to this research in a later section of this chapter.

³ Pew Research Center’s *2014 Religious Landscape Study* finds that “14.7% of U.S. adults are affiliated with the mainline Protestant tradition – a sharp decline from 18.1% when our last *Religious Landscape Study* was conducted in 2007. Mainline Protestants have declined at a faster rate than any other major Christian group, including Catholics and evangelical Protestants, and as a result also are shrinking as a share of all Protestants and Christians.” The Pew Research Center, *Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults*, May 18, 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults/> Accessed 6/15/2015.

⁴ Mainline Denomination is a general descriptive term referring to the oldest and most recognizable church groups in the United States, highly structured religious church organization with ties to Great Britain and Europe, and having a presence in the United States and North America from approximately the seventeenth century forward.

⁵ Traditional expressions of church ministry includes churches operating from a single location with services on Sunday morning (usually Sunday School at 9:45am and worship at 11:00am), and perhaps with Sunday and Wednesday evening services, and operating from a ministry approach unchanged for generations (see footnote 24). Eddie Gibbs uses the term “institutional” to refer to this expression of church (see page 6).

⁶ The Pew Research Center, *Religion & Public Life, U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious*. Nov 15, 2015. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/> Accessed 11/04/2015. This report notes, “The falloff in traditional religious beliefs and practices coincides with changes in the religious composition of the U.S. public. A growing share of Americans are religiously unaffiliated, including some who self-identify as atheists or agnostics as well as many who describe their religion as “nothing in particular.” Altogether, the religiously unaffiliated (also called the “Nones”) now account for 23% of the adult population, up from 16% in 2007” (3). Also, “As older cohorts of adults (comprised

opportunity to redefine itself in terms of its *raison d'être*. From before the nation's founding, the Church in the United States has been the beneficiary of a heritage that placed it on par with the most valued institutions in society. However, with the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, and with its stature and credibility questioned as never before,⁷ the Church and Christianity in America must examine and evaluate its reason for existence or it will become increasingly obscure and forfeit any role in influencing individuals and society as a whole.⁸

Observing the rapid onset of post-Christendom in the United States, and foreseeing the eventuality of an ineffective Christianity, significant voices have been speaking to the need for change within the Church in the Western world at least since the mid twentieth century.⁹ Stuart Murray characterizes post-Christendom as “The culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitely shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed

mainly of self-identified Christians) pass away, they are being replaced by a new cohort of young adults who display far lower levels of attachment to organized religion than their parents' and grandparents' generations did when they were the same age” (6).

⁷ Multiple factors have contributed to the fall in stature of the Church in general in the United States, such as the instances of abuse connected to Roman Catholic priests, and financial and moral misconduct linked to high profile clergy. For additional information see: David Finkelhor “The Legacy of the Clergy Abuse “Scandal.” *Science Direct*, Volume 27, Issue 11, (November 2003), 1225–1229. *EBSCOhost* (accessed July 15, 2016), Paul M. Kline , Robert McMackin & Edna Lezotte (2008) “The Impact of the Clergy Abuse Scandal on Parish Communities”, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, Vol 17:3-4, 290-300. *EBSCOhost* (accessed July 15, 2016, and Patrick O'Driscoll. "Pastor: 'I am a deceiver and a liar'." *USA Today* 6 Nov. 2006: 03A. Academic OneFile. Web. 15 July 2016.

⁸ Quoting Van Gelder (*The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*, p 24) Peterson writes, “now that the church no longer has a privileged position within North American culture, it is rediscovering its fundamental missionary identity to live as a new community demonstrating God's redemptive reign in the broader society.” Cheryl Peterson. *Who is the Church: An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 90.

⁹ Lesslie Newbigin is perhaps the earliest and most significant voice advocating for the recognition of a changing world turning toward post-Christendom, and how the Church must respond to this changing dynamic. Newbigin is not alone in this call, having been joined by such notable individuals as David J. Bosch, Darrell L. Guder, Craig Van Gelder, Alan Hirsch, and Neil Cole among a number of others.

to express Christian convictions decline in influence,”¹⁰ and Lesslie Newbigin questioned how Christianity might continue relevant in such an age by addressing how the Church should function in carrying out its mission in a world where Christian concepts and values are increasingly rejected.¹¹ Acknowledging changes underway at the time of his writing, he states, “...with the radical secularization of Western culture, churches are in a missionary situation in what once was Christendom.”¹² For Murray, this missionary situation requires what he terms as “transitions” in understanding how Christianity must operate, specifically, “from majority to minority”, “from settlers to sojourners”, “from privilege to plurality”, “from control to witness”, “from maintenance to mission”, and “from institution to movement,”¹³ describing and prescribing corrective shifts at the basic level of what it means to be Christian in a strange new world.¹⁴

Echoing Newbigin, David Bosch identifies the secularization of the West as a “paradigm shift,”¹⁵ and links the Church’s loss of its former “position of privilege” as

¹⁰ Stuart Murray. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 19. Murray adds, “Post Christendom does not mean post-Christian... The demise of Christendom does not mean the Christian story is becoming unfamiliar,” (*Post Christendom: Church and Mission*, 4). Murray’s statement that may not accurately reflect the understanding of current and rising generations in the US. Additionally, Frost and Hirsch define Christendom as “that period of Western history during which the church held sway as the moral and spiritual center piece of civilization.” They along with others maintain western culture has entered a Post-Christendom environment and culture. See Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 8, footnote 3. Darrell Guder adds, “Christendom describes the functional reality of what took place specifically in the North American setting... the dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral behaviors.” See Darryl L Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision For The Sending Of The Church In North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 48.

¹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 10, 131.

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, rev. 1995), 2.

¹³ Murray. *Post-Christendom*, 20.

¹⁴ Strange new world is borrowed from the title of Murray’s book, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*.

¹⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 363.

characteristic of Post-Christendom, stating, “it is today a liability rather than an asset to be a Christian.”¹⁶ An early voice calling for change on the American scene, Leith Anderson, identified paradigm shifts amid changing demographics noting, “America is fragmenting” and questioned, “Will the Church be the Church” in addressing changing culture.”¹⁷ Following shortly after, Eddie Gibbs, refined Anderson’s somewhat distant and clouded view of the twenty-first century by proposing distinct steps to meet the cultural change already ongoing, writing, “We are faced with a generation of under-35-year-olds who are turning away from institutional expressions of Christianity, opting to define their own spiritual journey. Therefore, churches in the West must recognize that they face a missionary challenge that is more urgent and radical than it has been for many generations.”¹⁸

Among other notable voices, two are particularly strong and effective in calling for a “reorientation,” even a “revolution” of Church’s understanding of its mission and purpose.¹⁹ Writing just before the turn of the twentieth century, Darrell Guder presents the term “*missional*” and defines its understanding and application in the North American setting. Of particular importance is his statement, “we have learned to speak of God as a

¹⁶ Ibid., 364.

¹⁷ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century: How to Bring Change to Your Church*. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers), 1992, 17, 24, 33, and 21 respectively. Leith Anderson is an author and President of the National Association of Evangelicals, an advocacy organization in the United States describing itself as “a united voice for millions of American evangelicals since 1942,” and representing “more than 45,000 local churches from nearly 40 different denominations and [with] a constituency of millions.” [Http://nae.net/about-nae/](http://nae.net/about-nae/), Accessed 8/20, 2016.

¹⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11. *ChurchNext* is a strong resource in defining areas where the Church is or has failed, and in recommending specific actions to effect change.

¹⁹ Darrell Guder uses the term “reorientation” to explain the method of accomplishing change in the Church in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1998, 4, 8. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch employ the term “revolution” to describe the same call for change in *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 3.

“missionary God.” Thus, we have learned to understand the church as a “sent people,” demonstrating an essential element of Guder’s reorientation concept.²⁰ While Guder writes with an academic and scholarly approach, Frost and Hirsch (2003) present an argument recognizable to the more general and contemporary reader. They state, “we’ve become increasingly convinced that what the church needs to find its way out of the situation its in at the beginning of the 21st-century is not more faddish theories about how to grow the church without fundamentally reforming its structures. What the Church needs is a revolutionary new approach.”²¹ Highlighting the seriousness of this need and reinforcing the concept of mission and the Church as essentially missionary in nature, Newbigin writes,

The one thing that can certainly be said about this chapter of human history is that it is over. For more than two centuries, it has provided the framework in which the western churches have understood their world missionary task. To continue to think in the familiar terms is now folly. We are forced to do something that the Western churches have never had to do since the days of their own birth – to discover the form and substance of a missionary church in terms that are valid in a world that has rejected the power and the influence of the western nations.²²

Whether by choice or unavoidable necessity, portions of the Church in the United States have begun to respond to the evolving social and cultural shifts and to the collective voices calling the Church to return to its fundamental missionary (missional) nature.

The use of the term Church as a general description for religious activity in the

²⁰ Darrell Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

²¹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 6.

²² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), rev. 1995, 5. Newbigin adds, “we shall find that the New Testament speaks to us much more directly than does the nineteenth century as we learned afresh what it means to bear witness to the gospel from a position not of strength but of weakness” (5). This statement combined with Newbigin’s use of the phrase “form and substance of a missionary church” (5) potentially lends support to this research suggesting that focus, form, and function are essential elements of missional church presence and operation.

United States centered in congregations with or without denominational labels, and projecting a historically recognizable methodology or practice is problematic, and requires clarification for this research. Gibbs refers to institutional expressions of Christianity as those from which under-35-year-olds are turning away.²³ Institutional or traditional churches generally place a priority on maintaining projections of historical process and practice;²⁴ however, it is these items that hold increasingly less value for younger Americans. Citing Lyle Schaller, Gibbs writes, “he [Schaller] now recognizes that unless they [denominational churches] make some drastic changes, their future looks bleak... two years later he described the dysfunction that characterizes the majority of traditional denominations in his book entitled *Tattered Trust*,” in which he documents their numerical decline.²⁵ In their state of numerical decline and deteriorating cultural influence, denominational expressions of the Church are not contributing in a positive manner to the redefinition of American Christianity, although it may be concluded that denominations are contributing to this redefinition by their failure to address the “spiritual barrenness and consequent unattractiveness of many churches to visitors,”²⁶ causing some Americans to investigate what Gibbs calls “new paradigm” churches.²⁷ He writes, “These denominations have become increasingly sidelined not only within the wider culture, but within the churchgoing population of North America. However,

²³ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11.

²⁴ Historical projections of process and practice include aspects of church function that have not changed in centuries, and may be seen in hierarchal organizational structures, centralized locations, and standard activities, expected congregational dress and participation, each of which are duplicated across individualized congregations of the overall denomination.

²⁵ Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

during the same time in which many churches have been declining, others have experienced phenomenal growth” (a reference to the “new paradigm” churches).²⁸ Gibbs describes new paradigm churches as having “a laid-back approach while emphasizing excellence in all they do, empower[ing] laity for manifold ministries both within the church and out in the community, and are in close touch with their target populations.”²⁹ It is in these new paradigm churches that a missional intent may be seen, with specific concepts and approaches forming the fabric of their existence, such that are having a transformative and redefining influence upon American Christianity, and stimulating the vitality of the Church as a missional expression in the United States.

For this research, the use of ‘Church’ must be refined beyond the general reference to religious activity centered in congregations. Using the contributions of Gibbs, Stetzer, Tickle, Richardson and others, ‘Church’ is defined in this research as referencing churches historically labeled as evangelical,³⁰ but that have emerged from an institutional/traditional expression, in touch with their target populations (“new paradigm” as mentioned by Gibbs), and demonstrating concepts and approaches to ministry typically associated/defined as ‘missional.’ This usage (Church) does not include denominational expressions of Church, nor Roman Catholicism or the various forms of the Orthodox Church, and excludes other expressions of Protestantism unless specifically identified in referencing a particular denomination or denominational

²⁸ Ibid., 17.

²⁹ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, 17-18.

³⁰ Elwell defines evangelical as the description of one “who identifies with” evangelicalism. “The movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency.” An evangelical “believes and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 405.

practice. It also does not include religious groups considered as cults by some, and “new religions” by others, including Jehovah’s Witnesses and Latter Day Saints.³¹

New paradigm churches frequently have an evangelical association as opposed to a denominational relationship, and as such may be characterized as evangelical-new paradigm churches;³² however, an evangelical distinction is not sufficiently clear as Anderson and Stetzer note,

Many Christians hold evangelical beliefs, but don't call themselves evangelical; many Christians call themselves evangelical, yet don't hold to evangelical beliefs. And denominational ties don't always predict what someone actually believes. There are evangelical Episcopalians, for example, and Pentecostals who are more mainline in their theology.³³

Therefore, further refinement is necessary to define and present evangelical-new paradigm churches as the target population for this research.

Considered the preeminent authority on evangelical belief, David Bebbington presents “four qualities or a quadrilateral of priorities as the basis of Evangelicalism: “*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what might be termed

³¹ In his classic work, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Roger Martin labels Jehovah’s Witnesses and The Church of Jesus Christ, Latter Day Saints as cults. Walter J. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 1965. Following his death, Martin’s work was revised and updated by Ravi Zacharias in 2003. Gonzalez adds, “One of the most remarkable phenomena in the religious life of the United States during the nineteenth century was the birth of several movements that so differed from traditional Christianity that they could well be called new religions. The largest of these were the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian science.” See Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2 – The Reformation to the Present Day*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins publishers, 1985), 258.

³² Various authors associate missional churches with an evangelical background. This addressed in greater depth in section 2.5.2 of chapter two.

³³ Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer. “A New Way to Define Evangelicals,” *Christianity Today*, April 2016, 53-55.

crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”³⁴ Examining Bebbington’s positions, Harris believes definitions are becoming increasingly obscure, and evangelicals are finding it “necessary to qualify what kind of evangelical they are.”³⁵ He asks, “[is it] now appropriate to move beyond Bebbington, and to embark on a quest for evangelical identity that will be better suited to a postmodern era?”³⁶ In a similar manner, Anderson and Stetzer address the diverse nature of evangelicalism in the United States noting, “Evangelicalism is by nature a diverse movement... There is no evangelical creed... evangelicals do not agree on how to practice our faith; disagree over who can preach, how to practice baptism and Communion, or whether we should drink alcohol,”³⁷ suggesting a confused criteria with which to frame evangelicals and evangelical churches. In response, they present a four-part statement of beliefs for current evangelicalism as, 1) “the Bible is the highest authority for what I believe; 2) it is very important for me to personally encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as her Savior; 3) Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin, and 4) only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation.”³⁸ Anderson and Stetzer add, “those who agreed with all four statements were also likely to self identify as evangelicals.”³⁹

In defining evangelicals and evangelical churches, Gibbs notes the following as

³⁴ Brian Harris. “Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era.” *Churchman Journal*, Vol. 122, #3, 2008, 201-219.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer. “A New Way to Define Evangelicals,” *Christianity Today*, April 2016, 53-55.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

“theological nonnegotiables”: 1) the Trinity (tri-unity) of God, 2) the incarnation of Jesus Christ as fully divine yet fully human, 3) God revealed through Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ, 4) the universal need of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 5) the personal return of Jesus Christ to the Earth, and 6) the final judgment of all people before God.⁴⁰ To produce a definition for evangelical as referenced in this research, Bebbington’s quadrilateral of priorities, Anderson and Stetzer’s four belief statements, and Gibbs’ theological nonnegotiables were used to identify points of agreement between the three, and Table 1-1 presents A Comparison of Evangelical Elements as expressed in their descriptions.

Table 1.1 A Comparison of Evangelical Elements

Bebbington ⁴¹	Anderson & Stetzer ⁴²	Gibbs ⁴³
<i>biblicism</i> , a particular regard for the Bible	The Bible as the authority for belief	God revealed through Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ,
<i>activism</i> , the expression of the gospel in effort	The importance for personal encouragement of “non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as her Savior	
<i>crucicentrism</i> , a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross	Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of sin,	The universal need of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
<i>conversionism</i> , the belief that lives need to be changed	Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation	
		The Trinity of God,
		The incarnation of Jesus

⁴⁰ Eddie Gibbs. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2000, 54.

⁴¹ Restated from Brian Harris. “Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era.” *Churchman Journal*, Vol. 122, #3, 2008, 201-219.

⁴² Restated with minor adjustments for space from Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer. “A New Way to Define Evangelicals,” *Christianity Today*, April 2016, 53-55.

⁴³ Restated with minor adjustments for space from Eddie Gibbs. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2000, 54.

		Christ as fully divine yet fully human
		The personal return of Jesus Christ to the Earth
		The final judgment of all people before God

Bebbington, and Anderson and Stetzer's characteristics agreed in each area; however, Gibbs' characteristics agreed in only two points, leaving four points distinct, not as points of disagreement, but with no place of connection with Bebbington, Anderson and Stetzer.⁴⁴ Therefore, using the characteristics finding agreement across all authors produces the following identifications for evangelical as used for this research, namely, churches embracing, 1) the Bible as the authority for belief, 2) the death of Christ on the cross as the only sacrifice for sin, 3) conversion or the life changed by belief/trust in Jesus Christ alone as Savior, and 4) the importance of personally encouraging non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. This description provides support for defining 'Church' as evangelical-new-paradigm expressions.

The beliefs of new-paradigm churches fit the descriptions expressed by Bebbington, Anderson and Stetzer, and the concepts and practices of these churches reflect an understanding of missional principles of ministry.⁴⁵ Thus Church as used in this research is further refined to refer to evangelical, new-paradigm, missional churches and is defined as such.

Another area requiring clarification and explanation of its use is the phrase

⁴⁴ Gibb's noting of The Trinity of God, The incarnation of Jesus Christ, the personal return of Jesus Christ to the Earth, and the final judgment of all people before God reflects positions typically held by fundamentalists in the United States, and perhaps distinguishing them from evangelicals in belief and practice.

⁴⁵ Missional principles of ministry are discussed at length in Chapter 3.

American Christianity, a cohesive term that in its broadest usage encompasses the whole of religious activity in the United States. Sources cited in this research and developing evidence lend credibility to a redefinition process where change in ministry practices may be seen in movements toward missional concepts visible across segments of American Christianity; however, it is important to note that these sources are not stating that these changes (toward a missional movement) are a redefinition, or are inclusive of all groups comprising American Christianity. For example, while Vatican II represents what some consider as a major shift in Catholic doctrine, Roman Catholicism has changed little in its approach to and practice of ministry in the United States. This is also true for the various branches of the Orthodox Church in the United States. In a reverse fashion, the challenges faced by protestant mainline denominations reveal that their embrace of certain societal changes has diminished their influence and placed them in a struggle for survival, an example where change has not automatically contributed to or produced a more effective Church. Certainly, these groups are legitimate elements of American Christianity, but the redefinition proposed by this research finds little or no application to them, although certain authors included in this research believe that a movement toward missional ministry is possible also in denominational settings.⁴⁶ Where this research finds evidence of change suggesting a redefinition of American Christianity is in evangelical-new paradigm churches in the United States,⁴⁷ churches that are seeking new

⁴⁶ See Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church & Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2008, as a source advocating for missional denominations.

⁴⁷ Elwell supplies a more detailed definition of evangelical belief, specifically regarding, “Scripture as the divinely inspired record of God’s revelation, the infallible, authoritative guide for faith and practice... .. inerrant in all they affirm... the reliable expression of God’s will and purpose”; “the total depravity of humanity... tainted by sin”; Christ assuming “the penalty and experiencing death on our behalf... made atonement for sin on Calvary’s cross by shedding his blood”; the triumph “over death and Hell” by his

and more effective ways to reach those outside of their congregations, emphasizing the common items of Bebbington, Anderson and Stetzer, and Gibbs as presented in Table 1.1. As used in this research, the phrase American Christianity applies to evangelical churches as described, churches typically not part of a traditional denomination, able to direct/conduct ministry as required by setting or context, and reflecting the essentials as enumerated by Bebbington or restated by Anderson and Stetzer.⁴⁸

Now, nearly two decades into the twenty-first century, churches across the United States are demonstrating a reorientation and revolution of their understanding of, and approach to ministry by embracing an increasing understanding, application, and use of missional principles and concepts. This research has sought to discover and present elements contributing to and comprising a redefinition of American Christianity as a missional expression, and project on the future vitality of the Church in the United States.⁴⁹

resurrection; "...that salvation is an act of unmerited divine grace received through faith in Christ"; and looking "for the visible personal return of Jesus Christ to set up his kingdom of righteousness, a new heaven and earth, one that will never end." Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 406.

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note how authors define evangelicalism differently. Marsden states, "The essential evangelical beliefs include (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life." Noting differences in definition, Marsden adds in footnote, "The definition offered here, however, reflects the dominant Anglo-American usage." George M. Marsden. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing). 1991, 4-5.

Anderson and Stetzer add, "The western religious movement that has become known as evangelical does not have a founding document or a single recognized leader.... Evangelicalism is by nature a diverse movement... there is no evangelical creed... Neither do evangelicals agree on how to practice our faith; we disagree on who can preach, how to practice baptism and communion, or whether we should drink alcohol.... Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer. "A New Way to Define Evangelicals" *Christianity Today*, April 2016, 52-55.

⁴⁹ The authors referenced in this introduction are intended as representative of a larger group of authors, and not an exhaustive list of voices speaking into the call for change in the Church, or the missional movement.

1.1 Need for and Purpose of this Study

Even a casual glance across the United States reveals a landscape of obvious difference and dissonance in church ministry. A closer investigation prompts questions as to the underlying rationales that have produced numerous expressions of that which all claim is rooted in the mission of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ It is readily apparent that there is no longer a singular look or ‘feel’ to the ‘church’ or Christianity in the United States, and unifying elements are lacking overall, existing only in what may be referred to as “camps of belief.”⁵¹

Developments spanning the conclusion of the twentieth century and entrance into the twenty-first century have, and continue to redefine the expression of American Christianity. These redefining developments have caused both despair and delight; despair for proponents of the traditional or denominational form of Christianity, and even more delight for advocates of a missional approach to ministry, one unhindered by the historic “ties that bind.”⁵² Despair triggering alarm has lead some in historic denominational camps to sound the warning of an eventual demise if change is not forthcoming, while others in these same denominations desire to maintain their traditional practices, a decision producing a further lack of cohesion and marked by a continuing exodus of adherents with ever-declining membership numbers.⁵³

⁵⁰ The Mission of Jesus Christ is historically defined as the Great Commission containing his command to the Church to “Go and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19).

⁵¹ “Camps of belief” is an expression used by this researcher to describe the corporate belief systems of individual church groups (denominational and non-denominational) in the United States.

⁵² John Fawcett (1740-1817), “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” In the Public Domain. Originally published in *Hymns Adapted to the Circumstance of Public Worship* (Leeds, England), 1782.

⁵³ The Pew Research Center. “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” *2015 Survey of Religion & Public Life*. Nov. 3, 2015. “Among those who are affiliated with a religion, 46% say they want their church or denomination to preserve its traditional beliefs and practices, while 34% want their church or denomination

Traditional membership numbers have declined for the major denominations in the United States, primarily in mainline denominations such as Anglican/Episcopalian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian congregations;⁵⁴ however, this is not exclusively a mainline denomination problem, but one for traditional evangelical churches as well. A recent report states the Southern Baptist Convention is struggling to attract new members from “the Millennial and younger age group demographic.”⁵⁵ When combined with independent research describing “the continued, rapid growth of the religiously unaffiliated population,”⁵⁶ the plight of denominational groups struggling to maintain a sense of vitality and vibrancy faces further exacerbation.⁵⁷ In many traditional denominational congregations, the question is literally one of survival and what can be done in the face of this crisis.⁵⁸

In contrast, those favoring a return to a biblically grounded or *missional* approach to church ministry are rejoicing, finding new opportunities to fulfill the mission of God among people who have or are rejecting traditional expressions of American Christianity. Along with this, attendance growth among newer forms of church ministry reflects the

to adjust its traditional beliefs and practices in light of new circumstances. Far fewer (14%) say they want their religious group to adopt modern beliefs and practices.”

⁵⁴ The Pew Research Center. “Mainline Protestants make up shrinking number of U.S. Adults” <http://pewrsr.ch/1HcFY7O>.

⁵⁵ Morgan Lee. “Southern Baptists Struggling to Attract Younger Generations, Says New Report” *The Christian Post*, Monday, July 18, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/southern-baptists-struggling-to-attract-younger-generations-says-new-report-119739/>

⁵⁶ The Pew Research Center. “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” *2015 Survey of Religion & Public Life*. Nov. 3, 2015.

⁵⁷ Gryboski, Michael. “United Methodist Church Continues to Decline in America, but Gains in Africa.” *The Christian Post*. August 3, 2012. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/united-methodist-church-continues-to-decline-in-america-but-gains-in-africa-79384/> Accessed May 12, 2015.

⁵⁸ Cheryl Peterson writes of her experience as a Lutheran Church pastor facing congregational decline and survival in “Who is the Church?” in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, March 2012 Vol. 51:1 24-30, and also in *Who is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 2013.

possibility that a redefinition of American Christianity is exactly what is needed and may already be in process. The phrase redefinition of American Christianity is offered as a description of churches turning or returning to a *missional* focus as reflected by practices and activities of the Church in general in the first century,^{59, 60} and increasing numbers of voices are speaking to the need to embrace a missional ecclesiology.⁶¹ A representation of these voices within the United States include Ryan K. Bolger, Neil Cole, Eddie Gibbs, Dr. Darrell Guder, Alan Hirsch, Alan Roxburgh, Ed Stetzer, Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile; each has written extensively on the state of the Church in the United States and is an advocate for a missional ecclesiology.⁶² Their voices join with an international chorus emphasizing God’s inherent missionary nature and identity.⁶³

Employing the works of the previously mentioned authors and others, this research has endeavored to carry the missional ministry discussion to a finer level, by addressing the relationship between missional *focus, form, and function* in missional churches, and utilizing specific missional ministry examples, showing how this relationship is a key element in redefining American Christianity. It is believed that the

⁵⁹ Beard states, “The missional church movement has emerged as a voice calling for a return to the church’s inherent missionary nature and identity” Christopher Beard. “Missional discipleship: Discerning spiritual-formation practices and goals within the missional movement.” *Missiology: An International Review* 2015, Vol. 43(2) 175–194.

⁶⁰ Niemandt offers a persuasive argument for the need to model the activities of the first century Church in his article, Acts for Today’s Missional Church (Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, “*Acts for today’s missional church*”, HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 66(1), Art. #336, 8 pages).

⁶¹ Numerous definitions of “missional” and “missional ecclesiology” have been offered by a variety of scholars and will be explored in greater depth in this research.

⁶² The authors mentioned here are illustrative of the larger field of contributors to the missional ministry discussion in the United States, and not intended as exclusive or representing a priority. A number of additional authors are also included in this research.

⁶³ Neil Cole, Alan Hirsch and Dr. CJP Niemandt are examples of international voices. While primarily US-based, Cole and Hirsch speak regularly in international venues. Dr. Niemandt is a professor at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and writes with a South African and international focus. Additional voices include David Bosch and Stefan Paas, who are also referenced in this research.

manner in which missional churches view their context (setting/community) reveals their *focus*, and that this contextually influenced focus has a direct influence on ministry *form*. The concept of *form* is not one of construction or architectural style. While twentieth century thinking of church form would have been interpreted as relating to the outward, visible appearance of a building (painted white, arched roof, steeple), today *form* is beginning to result from *focus*, and how a ministry positions itself to engage its context. Both *focus* and *form* combine to support *function*, or the expression of mission in thought, action, and visible means.⁶⁴

1.2 Definitions

Terms used repeatedly and contributing in a significant manner to this study require a definition of meaning and explanation of their use. The following terms are used throughout this study:

Missional – Numerous authors offer a description for this term with many noting the difficulty of reducing the term to a simple or concise definition.⁶⁵ Credited with introducing the term *missional*, Darrell Guder writes, “the term was chosen precisely because it was a relatively unknown word,” and “by proposing the term “*missional*” we wanted to claim the right to define what it means.”⁶⁶ It appears that the term *missional* is

⁶⁴ Ed Stetzer has contributed an informative discussion on the place and role of buildings and facilities in missionally-oriented churches in “Trends in Church Architecture” Parts 1-5, *Christianity Today*, July 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/july/trends-in-church-architecture-part-1.html>, Accessed 7/22/2016.

⁶⁵ Roxburgh offers an intriguing explanation of what *missional* is not in *Introducing the Mission of Church*, 31–34, and concludes that *missional* church cannot be codified in a simple definition (45).

⁶⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015. 63-64. Guder adds, “we needed, somehow, to find a way to talk about the fundamental mission or nature of the church without using terms freighted with all kinds of baggage;” and “we wanted to stimulate a theological conversation about the church that took seriously the premise that, to use the language of Vatican II, “the church is missionary by its very nature” (63).

best understood in its use describing the Church (*missional* church) and defined by what it represents.⁶⁷ Its use in this study is understood as being sent, an extension of God as a missionary God. As the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son sent the Spirit, so the Church is sent by the Trinity into the world.⁶⁸ Peterson contributes, “In the emerging ecclesiology, the church is seen as essentially missionary,” as Bosch states, “Here the church is seen not as the sender, but the one sent... It is not that the church has a mission, God’s mission has a church.”⁶⁹ This description supports the use of the term *missional* in this research.

Mission – The term *mission* is different from *missions* in that its historic use reflects the primary thrust of a church, its reason for being and its focus, most often understood as the target of its energies, programs, finances, and time. It is frequently defined by the Great Commission, most often from Matthew 28:19-20. Bosch is more specific, stating, “Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world,”⁷⁰ and continues with, “...mission is God’s “yes” to the world,”⁷¹ expressed by the

⁶⁷ A working definition for the term *missional* is provided in Chapter 3.

⁶⁸ Niemandt offers a clearly framed description/definition of *missional*. “Although the *missional* church is difficult to codify in a simple definition, I find the following useful: ‘[a] reproducing community of authentic disciples, being equipped as missionaries sent by God, to live and proclaim His Kingdom in their world’ (Minatrea 2004:xvi), ‘[a] community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world’ (Hirsch 2006:82) and ‘[a] *missional* church is a church that is shaped by participating in God’s mission, which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world’ (Barrett *et al.* 2004:x).” Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, ‘Acts for today’s *missional* church’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #336, 1 footnote 2.

⁶⁹ Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 85.

⁷⁰ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 9

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10. Bosch has penned a delightful explanation of mission in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (8-11); time spent in this section and overall text is highly beneficial. It is interesting to note Bosch’s frankness in attempting to define ‘mission;’ he states, “Ultimately, mission remains undefinable... the most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about,” (9).

Church. Bevens and Schroeder add a striking clarification, “Mission is not just something that specialists (missionaries) do. It is something that all Christians are called to,”⁷² and Bosch states, “The entire Christian existence is to be characterized as a missionary existence.”⁷³ In this study, *mission* is used in a general fashion to refer to the church’s understanding of its purpose and reason for existence in carrying out the *missio Dei* (mission of God).

Missions – is understood as the activity of the Church in traditional missionary efforts, supporting individuals and families in their efforts to take the gospel to foreign nations. Historically in the United States, this has meant encouraging and supporting financially those who feel called to go to a foreign country for the purpose of evangelizing indigenous peoples to Christianity. *Missions* is used in this study to describe a church’s traditional missionary efforts where missionary families receive financial and prayer assistance supporting their efforts to relocate and minister in a nation outside the United States, and stress ‘sending’ as opposed to ‘being sent.’⁷⁴

Missio Dei – The mission of God. This is the underlying foundation and strength of the missional movement, and is defined best with Guder’s quote of Bosch, “The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another “movement:” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”⁷⁵ Bosch identifies this missionary

⁷² Stephen B. Bevens and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 140.

⁷³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*: 9.

⁷⁴ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*: 10.

⁷⁵ Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 5.

presence/emphasis of God as spanning both the Old and New Testaments stating, “A careful reading of both Old and New Testaments reveals that God himself is the subject of mission,”⁷⁶ and Bevans and Schroeder make an important contribution with, “God is Mission. Not that God has a mission, but that God *is* Mission. This is what God is in God’s deepest self: self diffuse of love, freely creating, redeeming, healing, challenging that creation.”⁷⁷

Focus – The term focus is used in this research to define how a church views and understands its context (setting, location, culture, economics, etc.), and interpreting this understanding in terms of opportunities to reach into its context.

Form – Form is used to describe the church’s response to its focus; how it positions itself to meet opportunities seen in, or derived from its focus. *Form* does not equate to architectural style or building type.

Function – is used in this research to describe the church’s overall missional activity resulting from its *focus*, supported by its *form*, and energizing its relationship to its context.

Christendom – Defined broadly, this term represents the environment in which the Church in the United States existed in its relationship with society as a whole, reflecting an acceptance and valuation of its place and role in life.⁷⁸ In this research, this term is used to define the prevailing understanding and acceptance of the Church’s place and purpose in American Society until the close of the twentieth century.

⁷⁶ David J. Bosch. *Witness to the World: the Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, reprint 2006), 75.

⁷⁷ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 10.

⁷⁸ Guder defines Christendom as, the “Christian influence on the shape of the broader culture.” Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: a Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans publishing, 1998), 48.

Post-Christendom – is used in this research to define the culture of the United States at the close of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries; a culture where Christian culture and values no longer occupy an overall place of importance and acceptance in society.

Church – Darrell Guder defines church as the “instrument of God’s Mission,” which is understood as a definition from a missional perspective.⁷⁹ In this research, with regard to Christendom, church is defined as the gathering of people to worship within a Christendom concept of religious activity, usually at a specific location and time. In application to post-Christendom, church references evangelical new-paradigm missional expressions, as previously discussed.

Mainline Denomination – an inclusive term used to describe religious groups primarily with an European background and having been present in the United States since its colonial history. Once contributing to the American form of Christianity, they are now characterized as a declining element with little influence on society or culture.⁸⁰

Evangelical – the term used to describe Christians emphasizing a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and evangelistic activity for the conversion and salvation of people without a faith relationship with Christ. Evangelical churches are generally seen as the opposite of mainline denominations in areas of theology and doctrine,

⁷⁹ Darrell L. Guder, ed. ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1998, 5.

⁸⁰ Craig Van Gelder provides an informative history of the development of denominations in North America as well as a discussion of new denominational forms, and focus on denominations as missional expressions in *The Missional Church and Denominations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2008. Van Gelder states, “denominations are not going to go away; however, they are going to continue to morph within our ever-changing cultural context” (11).

mission, and practice.⁸¹

Institutional/Traditional – This compound term is used to define churches practicing Christianity in the customary fashion of Christendom as seen in United States history, primarily in one location with characteristic program-driven ministries.

Multi-site – refers to churches with multiple locations (generally referred to as multi-site or multi-campus churches), and pastoral staff, usually employing multiple forms of technology (internet, video, social media, etc.) in the practice of their ministries.⁸²

Organic – A term frequently associated with Neil Cole and representing a non-traditional approach to ministry typically of smaller groups of people meeting in locations that do not reflect usual Christian settings.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, all of which have application to the Church in the United States as a missional expression and interpreted as influencing the redefinition of American Christianity. First, there appears to be an obvious lack of focus, or at least an incorrect focus in the majority of churches in the United States, contributing to faulty forms and functions, and leading to the present state of ineffectiveness highlighted by Peterson and others. Evidence shows that mainline denominations

⁸¹ Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer offer a definition for evangelicals, as those who may not necessarily use the label *evangelical*, but are recognizable from their belief in the following four ideals: 1. “The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe,” 2. “It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their savior,” 3. “Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that can remove the penalty of my sin,” and 4. “Only those who trust in Jesus alone as their savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation.” Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer, “A New Way to Define Evangelicals.” *Christianity Today*, April 2016, 52-55. See also Eddie Gibb’s definition of evangelical in *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes In How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 54.

⁸² Among the more notable examples of multi-site, multi-campus ministries is NewSpring Church headquartered in Anderson, South Carolina. NewSpring Church maintains 17 campuses across significant population centers in the state of South Carolina, with an average Sunday attendance exceeding 30,000.

continue to decline,⁸³ and numbers of churches are struggling to continue as they have in past years.⁸⁴

Second, Frost and Hirsch highlight what they consider as a significant factor contributing to the overall decline of the Church in the United States: the ‘*attractional*’ concept of ministry prevalent among American churches. The opposite of incarnational ministry, the attractional approach to ministry reflects the concept featured in the film *Field of Dreams*... “If you build it, they will come,”⁸⁵ an approach to ministry demonstrating an inward (self) focus and producing ministries with no intentional connection to their cultural setting.⁸⁶

Third, there are churches that *are* engaging their cultural settings effectively by demonstrating a knowledge and familiarity with the social, educational, economic, and culturally associated aspects of their environments, and an understanding of what is required to speak to those aspects to engage their cultures with God’s kingdom agenda.⁸⁷

⁸³ The Pew Research Center. “Mainline Protestants make up shrinking number of U.S. Adults” <http://pewrsr.ch/1HcFY7O>.

⁸⁴ Cheryl Peterson writes, “Whatever the cause(s), this decline is causing great fear and anxiety in the mainline churches... these churches are growing numerically smaller, but also because they have lost a certain cultural and social position within American society and are becoming” sideline” churches” (Peterson, *Who is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*, 2).

⁸⁵ Referenced by Roxburgh, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 17. *Field of Dreams* is a 1989 American film about an Iowa farmer who hears a voice instructing him to build a baseball stadium in his field. The film is known for its phrase, “If you build it, they will come.”

⁸⁶ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003, 19. Frost and Hirsch offer an excellent explanation of attractional ministry stating, “if we get our seating, our parking, our children’s program, our preaching, and our music right, they will come. This assumes that we have a place in our society and that people don’t join our churches because, though they want to be Christians, they’re unhappy with the product. The missional church recognizes that it does not hold a place of honor in its host community and that its missional imperative compels it to move out from its self into that host community as salt and light (19). Alan Roxburgh uses the same example and contributes an excellent explanation of *attractional* in *Introducing the Missional Church*, 17– 20.

⁸⁷ Quoting Anderson, Nikolajsen writes, “The New Testament’s message is that the promised new age has dawned and that the kingdom of God has broken into the world. Even though the church does not fully establish the kingdom of God, it is still a sign of this kingdom.” (Andersen W. *Towards a Theology of*

Addressing the need for cultural understanding by the Church, Niemandt stresses, “It is important for the church to recognise that contexts are always changing, precisely to be able to discern a pattern of how to live in our world.”⁸⁸ Bolger describes the activity of a culturally conscious church as those “deeply connected to the people in their context.”⁸⁹

By contributing to the ongoing research concerning missional ministry in the United States, and providing a framework for self-evaluation and assessment, it is hoped that churches will be encouraged to transition to a missional expression of ministry, to become incarnational in their practices, exhibiting God’s kingdom in daily life, and reaching their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁹⁰

1.4 Research Problem

The Church in the United States is changing in both a positive and negative fashion. The decline of mainline denominational membership, and the growing segment of American society classifying itself as having no religious affiliation may be seen as a negative change.⁹¹ In addition, internal turmoil evident in one denomination’s attempts

Mission: A Study of the Encounter between the Missionary Enterprise and the Church and Its Theology. (London: SCM Press), 1965, 304), Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, “Beyond Sectarianism: The Missional Church in a Post-Christendom Society.” *Missiology*, October 2013 vol. 41 no. 4, 462-475.

⁸⁸ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, “Acts for Today’s Missional Church”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #336, 2.

⁸⁹ Ryan K. Bolger. *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 354. Bolger expands on this concept by stating, “(they) have many conversations with the unchurched. They locate themselves in a space, within the culture, be in a café, a pub, a public building, or a home, but rarely in a church building. The community is made up of people with whom they interact every day as part of their network of relationships” (354).

⁹⁰ Frost and Hirsch offer a clear explanation of attractional versus incarnational ministry practice in *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 41-59. Citing Hirsch, Niemandt writes, “In the incarnational church, faith happens in every day life. A missional understanding of being a church means that being a church happens in the world. See Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology,” *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 408.

⁹¹ See The Pew Research Center, *Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults*, May 18, 2015, and The Pew Research Center, *Religion & Public Life, U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious*.

to reposition itself from a previous ideological position, and another denomination fighting to retain breakaway dioceses may also contribute to a negative interpretation;⁹² however, positive change is also apparent. In the midst of declining influence and increasing trouble, a redefinition of American Christianity appears to be taking place reminiscent of an earlier period in American history where religious understanding and practice developed contrary to accepted norms of the time.⁹³ Clearly evident in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century is a shift in focus, form, and function, suggesting a redefinition, and this shift/redefinition is seen by some to be gaining strength and continuing without abatement. In some ways, this redefinition reflects a radical alteration of concept and practice, and in other ways, changes are more subtle, but change is taking place. With this, important questions beg to be asked. Is this apparent change the result of calls for change as voiced by Newbigin, Bosch, Cole, Guder, Hirsch, Roxburgh, Van Gelder, and others, or is it simply the latest fad that will fade in time? Does it represent a turn/return to a missionally-based concept of ministry, or is it simply a new coat of paint on a tired, old structure?

Overall, the possibility of a redefinition demands an investigation with the goals of discovery of causes, of new understandings and approaches to ministry, along with a

Nov 15, 2015. This group is collectively referenced as the ‘Nones;’ see Pew Research Center. “Nones on the Rise,” *Religion & Public Life*, October 9, 2012.

⁹² The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church are two examples of mainline denominations experiencing decline in membership and organizational turmoil in the United States. See Tamar Pileggi “Methodist church meeting votes down BDS resolutions”, *The Times of Israel*, May 17, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/methodist-church-meeting-votes-down-bds-resolutions/> Accessed 7/17/2016; Ruth Moon, “Breakaway Anglicans Can Keep Churches Worth \$500 Million, Rules South Carolina Judge”, *Christianity Today*, February 5, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/february/breakaway-anglicans-can-keep-churches-500-million-south-car.html> Accessed 7/17/2016, and Kevin Eckstrom, “Breakaway Episcopalians win Texas church property fight”, *National Catholic Reporter*, March 4, 2015, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/breakaway-episcopalians-win-texas-church-property-fight>, Accessed 7/17/2016.

⁹³ This earlier period in American history is addressed in Chapter 2 of this research.

projection of the future vitality of the Church in the United States. Such an investigation should research the elements contributing to the redefinition, and how these elements differ from a Christendom-influenced church ministry concept. Additionally, research should include an investigation of how the identified elements influence ministry concepts in churches appearing to reflect this redefinition, any resulting ecclesiological challenges, and if the redefinition is the result of a missional focus, form, and function.

1.5 Research Gap

A gap exists in current research exposing a lack of investigation regarding how focus influences form and function in new paradigm missional churches in the United States. That *focus* informs *form*, and determines *function* is evident in churches characterizing themselves as missional ministries (those churches placing a priority on their setting (context) and permitting their contextual understanding/investigation (focus) to inform the form (interpretation) and function (incarnation) of their ministry activity). It is the objective of this study to reduce this research gap by investigating the relationship between focus, form, and function in specific and geographically distinct churches in the United States, and by identifying commonalities among the leading voices in the missional church discussion and ministry leaders, to produce a cohesive study highlighting current practices, and offer an informed view on a redefinition of American Christianity and the future of the missional church movement in the United States.

1.6 Research Questions and Limitations

That the state of the Church in the United States and of American Christianity is one of rapidly developing change, there can be no doubt. Long held concepts and

constructs about what the church should look like and how it should operate are being discarded by faith groups discontented with the “business-as-usual” approach of the institutional/traditional church, groups determined to reconnect with principles and practices reflective of the first century Church as a missionary venture.⁹⁴ From before the end of the twentieth century to the present, various contributors have offered challenges regarding the underlying approach, essential elements, concepts and principles needed to produce a church presence contextually relevant to aspects of American society, and therefore more effective in demonstrating incarnational ministry, resulting in a transformative presence, namely church as a missional expression.⁹⁵ To accomplish the aim of this work (capturing and expressing a cohesive account of the rapidly developing missional church movement in the United States resulting in a redefinition of American Christianity) requires several specifically focused, yet inter-related research questions.

First, what elements have contributed and continue to contribute to the process producing change among churches in the United States, and a redefinition of American Christianity? Second, what ecclesiological challenges are produced by this change and redefinition? Third, how does focus influence form and function in missional churches in the United States? Fourth, what concepts underlie a missional focus, form, and function? Fifth, can differences in focus, form, and function be considered missional although

⁹⁴ A ‘faith group’ may be a loosely organized group of believers unaffiliated with any organization to groups of people with direct links to defined and recognizable denominations.

⁹⁵ Alan Hirsch writes, “Incarnational ministry essentially means taking the church to the people, rather than bringing people to the church. In San Francisco, a remarkable urban missionary named Mark Scandrette embodies the “6 P’s” of incarnational practice in his neighborhood. By actively being part of numerous local groups of artists, community activists, and businesses, he brings the presence of Jesus into the lives of people significantly alienated from the church as they know it. His ministry is hard to measure using standard metrics, but what is unmistakable is that this invaluable ministry has brought the kingdom of God much closer to many unchurched people.” Received in a personal email, dwhirschman@gmail.com, March 24, 2016, 5:25pm.

distinct in practice or approach? Last, how well are churches in the United States positioned to weather changing spiritual and political climates, and what does the future appear to hold for American Christianity and missional churches in the United States?

This study proceeds under certain defined parameters and limitations. While evidence of missional movements can be found around the world, this research will focus on church change and current missional trends within the United States exclusively.

Leadership as a topic within the missional church discussion has received much attention producing significant dialog; however, aside from casual references, this study excludes leadership as an element contributing to the *focus, form and function* investigation.

Multiple terms or descriptions are used to identify faith groups in the United States, including denominational labels, or terms such as evangelical, fundamental, pentecostal, reformed, and the like; however, this study will seek to classify a redefinition of American Christianity or evidences of church change concentrating solely on evangelical new paradigm missional expressions of church.

Multiple ethnicities are represented among churches in the United States, and hold a place in American Christianity; however, this study will not classify the redefinition of American Christianity or evidences of church change in terms of ethnicity.

The Church Growth Movement played a significant role in evangelical church settings in the United States from approximately 1970 to the close of the twentieth century; however, other than references from sources, this study will not focus on Church

Growth or other movements as influences contributing to a redefinition of American Christianity and church change in the United States from a missional perspective.^{96, 97}

1.7 Literature Review

Since the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first, much has been written about the need for change in US churches, and a variety of voices have proposed an assortment of opinions on the “*what*,” “*why*,” and “*how*” of such change. These calls for change have emerged from both evangelical and mainline denominational ranks, and can be found in the writings of multiple authors (Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, Tim Keller, and Cheryl Peterson as examples).⁹⁸ A separate and somewhat unique company of voices are those united by the term *missional*, a concept centered in the foundational understanding of who God *is* and what He is *doing*. Grasping that God is a missionary God, and that the *Missio Dei* (mission of God) has a Church as opposed to the Church having a mission, provides a key and unifying element for their writings.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁶ Gary McIntosh summarizes three essential tenets of the Church Growth Movement by citing Dutch missiologist Gisbertus Voetius, who believed, “The first goal of mission is the conversion of the heathen; the second, the planting of churches; and the highest, the Glory of God. These three goals comprise a condensed version of today’s Church Growth Movement.” Gary McIntosh, *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 2.

⁹⁷ Geoff Thomas provides a balanced critique of the Church Growth Movement in “The Church Growth Movement,” *Foundations*, Vol. 33 (Autumn 1994): 20-26.

⁹⁸ Stetzer and Rainer are representative of an evangelical perspective, while Keller and Peterson share a mainline denominational heritage (Keller is Presbyterian and Peterson is Lutheran). While influential, none of these individuals should be considered as an exclusive voice representing their theological or denominational constituencies.

⁹⁹ The concept of God as a missionary God is not the exclusive product of US voices calling for church change, but is linked primarily to the writings of David J. Bosch, who states, “during the past half century or so there has been a subtle but never the less decisive shift towards understanding mission as God’s mission” (*Transforming Mission*, 389); “Our mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission, not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone” (*Transforming Mission*, 390), and “There is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa” (*Transforming Mission*, 390). An emphasis on understanding *Missio Dei* as the basis for mission may also be found in the writings of Darrel L. Guder, Craig Van Gelder, and Alan Roxburgh among others, and in documents such as the World Council of Churches’ *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.

writings of this group provide essential insight into the current missional conversation and missional ministries in the United States, and form the basis of a comprehensive literature review.

While much has been written on the concept of missional ministry, comparatively little has been directed toward how focus affects form, and how form affects function in US churches. As early as 1992, Leith Anderson addressed the form or shape of the Church, providing descriptive labels for what he envisioned twenty-first century US churches might resemble, but without addressing *focus*, *form* and *function* in an in-depth manner.¹⁰⁰ Discipleship and community are a significant emphasis in many of the current published works, and for the authors of these works, these two topics are what they suggest should be the focus, and form the practice and function for twenty-first century US churches.¹⁰¹ Still other authors advocate a variety of emphases such as connecting with changing cultures, returning to an Acts 2 church model, and manifesting a holistic kingdom presence. Combining these emphases produces a number of volumes to include in a literature review, and clearly distinguishes volumes stressing purposeful change that has application to this research. Authors contributing to the missional ministry discourse and influencing research on *focus*, *form*, and *function* include, but are not limited to Neil Cole, Eddie Gibbs, Darrell Guder, Alan Hirsch, CJP Niemandt, Cheryl Peterson, Alan Roxburgh, Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight Friesen, Ed Stetzer, and Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile.

¹⁰⁰ See Leith Anderson. *A Church for the 21st Century: Bringing Change to Your Church to Meet the Challenges of a Changing Society*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers), 1992.

¹⁰¹ Examples of a discipleship and community emphasis can be seen in Cole's, *Cultivating a Life for God: Multiplying Disciples Through Life Transformation Groups*, Earley and Dempsey's *Discipleship Is...*, Hellerman's *When the Church Was a Family*, and Donahue's *The Irresistible Community*.

Writing in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*,¹⁰² Darrell Guder proposes that North America has become a mission field and the North American Church must recover its missional heritage. Guder believes the North American Church is hindered by a non-missional theology and structure “shaped by the legacy of Christendom” and “formed by centuries in which Western civilization considered itself formally and officially Christian.”¹⁰³ Drawing attention to its highly academic style, Van Gelder and Zscheile note that *Missional Church* was not intended for a popular audience; rather, as an “...argument for a missiological ecclesiology – a missional church,” a theme “that appears to have resonated deeply with many church leaders.”¹⁰⁴ Written convincingly, Guder’s volume is a call for change in the Church reflective of its position in the midst of a changing society.

Continuing his contribution to missional literature, Guder penned *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*¹⁰⁵ in which he emphasizes the role of evangelism as central to church ministry, and again calling the Church to recover its historic mission of witnessing to the mission of God. Quoting David Bosch, Guder writes, “Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God... Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission... There is a church because there is a mission, not vice

¹⁰² Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1988.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁴ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 49.

¹⁰⁵ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2000.

versa.”¹⁰⁶ This work is another important contribution to understanding the concept of missional ministry.

An additional contribution by Darrell Guder is his *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*¹⁰⁷ in which he reemphasizes his previous calls for the Church to regain its missional priority, and issues a challenge to the Church to “move from a theology with a mission component, to a truly missional conception of theology – that is, one in which mission is at the very core of both concept and method.”¹⁰⁸ This volume represents a substantial examination of the place of theology in missional ministry.

Written from a more practical perspective, Alan Roxburgh’s *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*¹⁰⁹ presents the challenge of knowing and understanding the changing North American culture and what is required for successful twenty-first century ministry. He writes, “Across denominations and long established church organizations is a deepening anxiety about what it means to be God’s people in our day.”¹¹⁰ This is an important source in responding to the changing North American culture.

A small companion text to *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, is Roxburgh’s *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*.¹¹¹ Again, written with a practical application, this text provides

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁷ Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., ix.

¹⁰⁹ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2011.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 114.

¹¹¹ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*, (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing), 2015,

church leaders with historical information concerning the changing cultural landscape along with specific methods for understanding and engaging the cultural context.

Dave Browning's *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less*, is a small, but not insignificant book that details the change-steps taken at Christ the King Community Church in Bellingham, Washington.¹¹² Advocating for a “new paradigm church,”¹¹³ reflective of the first century Church in the Book of Acts, Browning states, “the Church has always undergone change, reformation, and revolution. But today the major reforms taking place in the Church are in the area of methodology rather than message, in practice more than theology.”¹¹⁴ This book is an important source in highlighting the desire for change many churches seek and their willingness to change existing models (forms) and methods (functions).

An important addition to the topic of church change is Eddie Gibbs' *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*.¹¹⁵ Drawing upon personal experience and declaring the urgency of responding to societal and cultural change, Gibbs employs a term identical to that used by Dave Browning, “new paradigm churches,”¹¹⁶ and identifies specific areas of change churches must make. This volume makes an important contribution to understanding the mindset and practices of a missional church.

Balancing academic depth and practical insights, Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and

¹¹² Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2009.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁴ Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 19.

¹¹⁵ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2000.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

Dwight Friesen have written *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community*.¹¹⁷ In it they emphasize the need for active communities to replace the individualistic tendencies of congregational life, which they state, “have fragmented the Western Church.”¹¹⁸ This text offers a plan for church change that reflects a missional mindset.

Contributing important observation, evaluation and insight from a South African perspective, yet with application to the greater focus and study of the missional movement, CJP Niemandt has authored a number of intriguing journal publications addressing various aspects of missional. In “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology,”¹¹⁹ Niemandt has produced a succinct five-part description of a missional congregation,¹²⁰ as well as what he terms as “a new theological understanding of the congregational identity, now understood as being a gift of the Spirit.”¹²¹ In “Developing Missional Congregations: Council for World Mission Africa Region Assembly,”¹²² Niemandt explores the role of leadership in missional churches, stating, “The missional potential of congregations are unlocked by missional

¹¹⁷ Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁹ CJP Niemandt, 2010. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology”, *Southern African Journal of Missiology*, Volume 38, Number 3, November 2010 ISSN 0256-9507. 397-413.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 398. Dr. Niemandt describes the missional church as: “aware of the context they are living in”; “letting Scripture and prayer shape them as individuals, and as a church, as they engage in forming a people of God”; [able to] “recognise God’s actions directly around them, as well as in the wider world”; “know[ing] how to discern and listen to God’s specific call to them”, and “are a sign, and a preview, of the future that God intends for the whole world.”

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 411.

¹²² Prof. Nelus Niemandt, “Developing Missional Congregations: Council for World Mission Africa Region Assembly.” Dutch Reformed Church South Africa and Science of Religion and Missiology, University of Pretoria.

leadership.”¹²³ Finally, in “Trends in Missional Ecclesiology,”¹²⁴ Niemandt investigates the “growing interest in missional ecclesiology”¹²⁵ and the essential element of the “mission of God, God as the agent of mission and the church’s participation in the *missio Dei*.”¹²⁶ Each of these articles contributes important information to this study.

Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile co-authored *The Missional Church: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*.¹²⁷ In it, they highlight the “dramatically changing context”¹²⁸ facing the Church in North America and offer a comprehensive treatment of what a missional church is and how it must operate. Of particular importance are the “six movements” comprising The Argument of Missional Church in Chapter 2 of the text.¹²⁹

Cheryl Peterson offers an introspective look at the state of the Lutheran Church in the United States and by application, of mainline denominations in general in her work, *Who is the Church: An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*.¹³⁰ Reflecting the influence of Guder, Van Gelder, and others, Peterson presents an argument for a missional presence in denominational life. This text is important in showing the attention to and development of a missional culture crossing denominational and theological

¹²³ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁴ CJP Niemandt. 2012, 'Trends in Missional Ecclesiology', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu>: 2048/10.4102/ hts.v68i1.1198.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁷ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile, *The Missional Church: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011).

¹²⁸ Ibid., xvii.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹³⁰ Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who is the Church: An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 2013.

boundaries.

Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford coauthored *Right Here, Right Now: Everyday Mission for Everyday People*,¹³¹ a practical guide for informing thinking and transforming the efforts of churches to connect with their communities. They write, “Every Christian is a missionary and we are called to live out our commitment to Jesus’ Lordship in every sphere and domain of life.”¹³² *Right Here, Right Now* is an important contribution to understanding the missional concept.¹³³

Coauthoring *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically From the Inside Out*,¹³⁴ Neil Cole and Phil Helfer present a missionally-based concept for transforming how a church sees itself and how it works in the world. Beginning from the premise that the Church does not understand itself, Cole and Helfer state, “The church is the presence of Jesus among his people, called out as a spiritual family, to pursue his mission on this planet.”¹³⁵ This is also an important contribution to understanding the missional church concept.¹³⁶

Ed Stetzer’s *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church that’s Biblically*

¹³¹ Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford, *Right Here, Right Now: Everyday Mission for Everyday People*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2011.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³³ Alan Hirsch has authored and co-authored a number of works including *The Faith of Leap* (with Michael Frost), *On the Verge* (with Dave Ferguson), *The Permanent Revolution* (with Tim Catchim) and *The Forgotten Ways*, each with application to the missional church movement.

¹³⁴ Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically From the Inside Out*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass), 2012.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³⁶ Neil Cole has authored and co-authored a number of works including *Cultivating a Life for God*, *Organic Church*, *Church 3.0*, and *Primal Fire* (with D. Baker, E. Waken, P. Helfer and Paul Kaak) each a contribution to the development of the missional church movement in the United States.

*Sound and Reaching People in Culture*¹³⁷ is a comprehensive guide to redefining the concepts of twenty-first century church planting. The book reflects a Southern Baptist Church flavor and is an attempt to channel church planting efforts toward the most effective missional expressions.

*Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel Centered Ministry in Your City*¹³⁸ by Timothy Keller is a look at city ministry based on Keller's experience as pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, and offers important information for post-Christian ministry in an urban environment.

In his epic contribution to the missional discussion, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*,¹³⁹ David J. Bosch presents an in-depth investigation and analysis of multiple aspects of missiology including biblical elements from the New Testament focusing on the early Church and Paul's role in the Church's development. Of special importance is Bosch's focus on "Paradigm Changes in Missiology" and his weighty section on "Toward a Relevant Missiology." No serious research into twenty-first century missiology can proceed without including this text.

Published prior to *Transforming Mission*, Bosch's work, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*¹⁴⁰ offers a thorough historical analysis of mission, beginning with Israel as a nation, and continuing with the Church, investigating major points such as the biblical foundation of mission, the theology of

¹³⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church that's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic,) 2006.

¹³⁸ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel Centered Ministry in Your City*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2012.

¹³⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 2010.

¹⁴⁰ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in the Theological Perspective*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers), 1980.

mission through the ages with an emphasis on the evangelical theology of mission, and completing the text with a holistic theology of mission in general. Bosch's, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*,¹⁴¹ is a smaller, but equally significant contribution to the missional dialog, offering thought-provoking points on Christianity in a post-Christendom age and how Christianity must operate in an evolving western culture. Each of these works are highly beneficial texts for understanding the mission of the Church in the twenty-first century.

1.8 Locating Self as a Researcher

Valid research requires locating the researcher in relationship to their research.¹⁴² Wendy Sword maintains, "In a qualitative study, the researcher's curiosity, relationships with participants, and conceptual lenses through which data are gathered and interpreted have significant bearing on the research," and "Locating oneself in the research endeavor in this manner is essential for establishing a context within which others can appreciate the evolving search for new understanding and the creation of a final research product."¹⁴³ This research is the culmination of more than thirty years of observing the Church in the United States and the larger transitions of American Christianity. During this time, these two entities (which at times appear to be one, yet at other times appear to

¹⁴¹ David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), 1995.

¹⁴² Wendy Sword writes, "I believe that disclosure of how one is inherently enmeshed in the research enhances the legitimacy of findings and new insights... Locating self in the research endeavor does not lessen the credibility of its product as a representation of the experiences of others. Rather, it makes explicit how our stories are contextually bound and strengthens one's integrity as a researcher." Wendy Sword. "PEARLS, PITH, AND PROVOCATION, Accounting for Presence of Self: Reflections on Doing Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 9 no. 2 (March 1999): 270-278. EBSCOhost (accessed July 9, 2016).

¹⁴³ Wendy Sword. "PEARLS, PITH, AND PROVOCATION, Accounting for Presence of Self: Reflections on Doing Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 9 no. 2 (March 1999): 270-278. EBSCOhost (accessed July 9, 2016).

be distinct and moving in two different directions) have undergone an evolution in focus, form, and function to become, in some ways, completely different from their former selves; in some respects for the better, and in other ways, for the worse. These shifts and changes have captured the interest of this researcher as American churches and Christianity in general have moved from traditional expressions and positions (both theological and practical), towards models reflecting, and more acceptable to societal and generational changes. As a Christian, this researcher became involved in traditional church ministry in 1971, and as an ordained Baptist minister, has participated in several types or expressions of ministry since 1982; beginning as a Fundamental Baptist church planter, then transitioning to Traditional, and Evangelical, and more recently to a Missional expression of Christianity. These seasons of ministry along with personal study and research have contributed to the formation of concepts and ideas (opinions) that compel verification and validation, or will require a continuing evaluation toward an understanding of what represents biblically-based and effective ministry in the United States for the twenty-first century.¹⁴⁴ Having observed actions by historic denominations that have resulted in their decline, as well as changes in attitude among the general American culture, this researcher believes the Church as an entity in general in the United States must change, and that American Christianity must return to first century principles or face continued marginalization, or near extinction.¹⁴⁵ In looking to accomplish this

¹⁴⁴ See Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, (28), “clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researchers position (Merriam, 1988). In this classification, the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study.”

¹⁴⁵ This researcher agrees with Peterson in her assessment of mainline denominationalism in the United States: “We are living in a time when survival is on the mind of most mainline congregations and denominations. The viability of the main line churches is being questioned in nearly every corner of the church, with some prognosticators even predicting their demise. One analyst has forecasted that... the

research, this researcher worked with five individual churches (not denominations) appearing to reflect a missional approach to ministry, and through interviews and surveys, endeavored to collect, interpret, and express data confirming or disproving that missional focus informing church form and function are redefining American Christianity.

1.9 Research Approach

The approach for this research pursued a thorough investigation of pertinent sources addressing various facets of the missional church movement in the United States, and developed interview and survey instruments based on information from these sources. These instruments were used to interview church leaders and survey congregants at the selected churches, and interviews with significant voices contributing to the missional church discussion were pursued as well. The resulting data was analyzed and statistical information derived through an investigative process used in formulating conclusions from the research.

1.10 Method of Study

The research methodology or design¹⁴⁶ employed for this study was a qualitative approach utilizing a phenomenological methodology primarily, but also including aspects

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will “turn out the lights” by 2046. It is an undeniable fact that the mainline churches in the United States are in a significant numerical decline” (Cheryl Peterson, *Who is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*, 1), and “Whatever the cause(s), this decline is causing great fear and anxiety in the mainline churches... these churches are growing numerically smaller, but also because they have lost a certain cultural and social position within American society and are becoming” sideline” churches” (Peterson, *Who is the Church?* 2).

¹⁴⁶ Yin refers to research method as the “Research Design” which “...is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions. A research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. See Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2014), 16.

of case study investigation to accomplish a fully researched study.^{147, 148} Regarding qualitative research, Yin writes,

By now, qualitative research has become an acceptable, if not mainstream, form of research in many different academic and professional fields. As a result, the large number of students and scholars who conduct qualitative studies may be part of different social science disciplines (e.g., sociology, anthropology, political science, or psychology) or different professions (e.g., education, management, nursing, urban planning, and program evaluation). In any of these fields, qualitative research represents an attractive and fruitful way of doing research.¹⁴⁹

Qualitative research methodology offered the greatest potential for the investigation, interpretation, and evaluation of the perceived facets of this enquiry, and can be seen in Yin's emphasis of the benefits of qualitative research. They are: 1) Studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions; 2) Representing the views and perspectives of the people in a study; 3) Covering the contextual conditions within which people live; 4) Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior; and 5) Striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone.¹⁵⁰ Each of Yin's items had direct application to

¹⁴⁷ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design - Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 57-58. Creswell states, "Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)" (73). Further, he presents Phenomenological Study as a research approach that "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (57), "describing what all participants have in common as they [experienced] a phenomenon" (58), and "reducing individual experiences to a description of the universal essence" (58). This research will employ both methods in a mixed-method investigative approach.

¹⁴⁸ Addressing the relationship between Case Study and Phenomenological research, Robert Yin states, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. In other words, you would want to do case study research because you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case." Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2014), 16.

¹⁴⁹ Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2014), 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

this research reinforcing the selection of phenomenological method within the larger Qualitative Research approach.

Using the interview and survey instruments referenced previously, a selection of questions related to church focus, form, and function were used in interviewing pastors or leaders in the selected churches. These questions were compiled from a variety of sources including the published works of the significant voices speaking to the subject of missional ministry (Cole, Guder, Hirsch, Niemandt, Roxburgh, Stetzer, and others). As well, this research endeavored to include interviews with the primary contributors to missional writing and discussion today, either through face-to-face interviews and by telephone communication.

It is apparent that the landscape of American Christianity is changing. In seeking to determine answers to the previously mentioned research questions, this study sought to answer a greater question of motivation in missional churches in the United States, namely, what influence has *focus* upon *form* and *function* in the Church as a missional expression?

Following the introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 identifies historical elements that have influenced the growth and development of American Christianity and the Church as a general entity in the United States. The intent of this chapter was not simply to identify certain historical elements, but to demonstrate how these elements continue to contribute to change and support the assertion of a redefinition of American Christianity.

Chapter 3 clarifies various aspects of missional ministry and missional ecclesiology, establishing a basis for missional ministry shaped by *focus*, *form* and *function*, and presenting specific research gleaned from recognized authorities/sources

associated with the missional church dialogue, and from selected churches. Research data sought from focus groups (participants of the selected churches) was unable to be obtained due to the participation of only one church. Repeated requests for participation from the other four churches were unfulfilled rendering this aspect of the research without application due to a lack of comparison data.

Chapter 4 addresses and interprets the research data gleaned from the contributions of the significant voice participants, while Chapter 5 compiles the research data from the ministry leaders, presenting and discussing findings pertaining to the presence of focus, form, and function in the selected churches and its application to the redefinition of American Christianity, and projecting forward concerning the missional church and its future vitality in the United States.

Chapter 6 concludes the study summarizing discoveries and applications of the research data, and offering recommendations for areas of continued study.

1.11 Participants

Participants for this study were selected to produce research data from distinct perspectives, and Table 1.2 presents participants in the research by group. The first group is comprised of ministry leaders from six church ministries located in geographically distinct areas of the United States, and appearing to employ a non-traditional approach to ministry in their location/context. The importance of this group cannot be stressed more strongly; these are individuals leading ministries in specific ways and for specific purposes in their locations. The research in these groups reflects a simplified application of Case Study approach to research, reflecting data associated with these specific ministries individually and reflecting research data from a leadership

viewpoint.

Congregational focus groups form the second research contingent of this study; those participating in a ministry from a participant viewpoint (non-leadership perspective). Five groups (one from each ministry) were intended to be instrumental in determining if leadership intent, values, and philosophy is interpreted in a like manner by members of the congregation. As stated previously, the unfortunate non-participation of four churches forced the elimination of this research avenue.

Significant voices (recognized authorities), those contributing published works on the missional movement comprise the final group of research participants. These are six well-known authors with meaningful contributions to the missional church discussion. The research data from this group adds significant value to the study, and the combined data is instrumental in confirming a redefinition of American Christianity, and the value of the Church as a missional expression. Completed interview and survey forms were retained and incorporated as supporting documentation for this research.

Table 1.2 Research Participants

Group 1 – Ministry Leaders (Case Studies)	Group 2 – Focus Groups (Phenomenological)	Group 3 – Significant Voices
Joel & Rachel Triska Life in Deep Ellum (Dallas)	Life in Deep Ellum	Neil Cole
Brian Sanders & Jeremy Stephens Tampa Underground (Tampa)	Tampa Underground	Dr. Rod Dempsey
Ryan Saari The Oregon Community (Portland)	The Oregon Community	Dr. Darrell Guder
Shane Duffey NewSpring Church, Anderson, SC	NewSpring Church	Alan Hirsch
Scott McCleod Ecclesia Communities	Ecclesia Communities	Dr. Ed Stetzer
Dan and Martha Mitchell Lighthouse Community Fellowship	Lighthouse Community Fellowship	Dr. Craig Van Gelder

1.12 Data Collection

Research data was collected through personal interviews and each research participant completed the informed consent form approved by the university.¹⁵¹ Additionally, each research participant received a transcript of their interview for validation purposes.¹⁵² Questions included in the interview and survey instruments were selected and constructed in a general fashion with each research group in mind, permitting personal interpretation by each participant within his or her specific understanding. The research instruments produced ample data for interpretation and for a meaningful contribution to this study. Fully transcribed copies of each interview along with interpreted data and illustrative charts have been retained as part of this research process.

1.13 Data Analysis

When completed, the research data was duplicated by electronic means to prevent loss, and carefully reviewed for the identification of themes and common points of agreement among participants, as well as points of divergence and disagreement. Qualitative research evaluation software was obtained and employed to produce the maximum research findings possible.¹⁵³

1.14 Data Validation

Once accumulated and interpreted, with themes and other important findings

¹⁵¹ The Informed Consent Form can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁵² The interview and survey instruments can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁵³ Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software program was obtained and employed to process and interpret the data obtained through the interview and data gathering activities of this research. Atlas.ti is described as “a powerful workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data.” More information regarding Atlas.ti may be found at Atlas.ti.com.

identified, the research findings were validated using Creswell's validation concept, he states, "We seek to have our account resonate with the participants, to be an accurate reflection of what they said. So we engage in validation strategies, often using multiple strategies, which include confirming or triangulating data from several sources, and having other researchers review our procedures."¹⁵⁴ The initial validation process began with the interviews of the significant voice and ministry leader participants. Each interview was recorded by electronic means and then transcribed in typed form using Microsoft Word, an electronic document and word processing software.¹⁵⁵ Once completed, the transcribed records of the interviews were compared to the taped conversations for accuracy. Following this process, the transcribed record was returned to the participant for their verification of accuracy and validation.¹⁵⁶ Although some participants in the validation process did not respond, a number were willing to assist in this process ensuring transcripts of the interviews were accurate and valid.

A second validation method used was triangulation, where experts in related disciplines reviewed the content of chapters for accuracy and agreement within the academic discipline, as well as the sources used in their construction. The final method of validation employed was that of peer review, where academic colleagues of this researcher read chapters of the research for content, construction, and representation of sufficient academic rigor. Table 1.3 presents the individuals participating in the various validation efforts.

¹⁵⁴ John W. Creswell. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 45.

¹⁵⁵ See Microsoft Word, <https://products.office.com/en-us/word>

¹⁵⁶ Examples of the validation process are included in Appendix B and C.

Table 1.3 Validation Participants

Significant Voice Interviews	Ministry Leader Interview	Discipline Experts	Peer Review
Darrell Guder	Joel & Rachel Triska	Ken Cleaver ¹⁵⁷	John Durden
Alan Hirsch	Leann Theivagt	John Durden ¹⁵⁸	Leo Percer
Ed Stetzer	Dan Mitchell	Leo Percer ¹⁵⁹	Chet Roden ¹⁶⁰
Craig Van Gelder		Ed Smither ¹⁶¹	Dwight Rice ¹⁶²

1.15 Chapter Summary

There has never been a more critical or exciting time for the Church in the United States as it faces tough questions about its present and future. Years of social acceptance and perceived value have faded and no longer exist as a generally accepted supposition. Increasing numbers of the United States' population have no interest in what the Church is or does, causing turmoil within denominations, with congregations searching for answers and struggling to survive. In the midst of this turmoil a renaissance of sorts has appeared. Throwing off tradition and practice reminiscent of early American religious

¹⁵⁷ Ken Cleaver is a graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, holding the PhD in American Christianity. As such, he reviewed Chapter 2 for accuracy in content and presentation.

¹⁵⁸ John Durden is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, holding the PhD in Systematic Theology. As such he reviewed Chapter 3 for accuracy in content and presentation and Chapter 4 as a peer reviewer.

¹⁵⁹ Leo Percer is a graduate of Baylor University holding the PhD in Biblical Studies. As such, he reviewed Chapters 3 for accuracy in content and presentation, and Chapter 5 as a peer reviewer.

¹⁶⁰ Chet Roden is a graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, holding the PhD in Biblical Studies. As such, he reviewed Chapter 3 for accuracy in content and presentation, and Chapter 4 as a peer reviewer.

¹⁶¹ Ed Smither is a graduate of the University of Wales-Trinity Saint David, holding the PhD in Historical Theology, and from the University of Pretoria, holding the PhD in The Science of Religion and Missiology. As such, he reviewed Chapters 1 and 2 for accuracy in content and presentation.

¹⁶² Dwight Rice is a graduate of Liberty University, holding the PhD in Pastoral Care and Counseling and possessing thirty years as a church pastor. As such, he reviewed Chapter 5 as a peer reviewer.

history, and embracing new principles and understandings, the missional church is emerging, attracting people to what some consider are old ways, and others new. In the midst of this, it is possible that a redefinition of American Christianity is underway and that churches are beginning to embrace a missional posture. This could be the future of American Christianity and the Church in the United States.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Citing Gordon S. Wood, Hatch writes, “the early Republic [presents] the time of greatest religious chaos and originality in American history.” The activities of evangelical churches in the United States in their efforts to present a vibrant and relevant Christianity are reminiscent of the earliest days in American history where Christianity was redefined with new understandings, concepts and practices. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 220.

CHAPTER 2: ELEMENTS AND UNDERCURRENTS INFLUENCING AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

2.1 Introduction

In discussing the unique features of American Christianity compared with those of other western countries, and seeking a singular distinguishing element, Nathan Hatch writes, “What then is the driving force behind American Christianity if it is not the quality of its organization, the status of its clergy, or the power of its intellectual life? I have suggested that a central force has been its democratic or populist orientation.”¹⁶⁴ Continuing, he addresses core elements forming an essential framework for understanding the development and growth processes of American Christianity, writing, “American Christians reveled in freedom of expression, refused to bow to tradition or hierarchy, jumped at opportunities for innovative communication, and propounded popular theologies tied to modern notions of historical development.”¹⁶⁵ Summing his view, Hatch asserts, “For two centuries Americans have refused to defer sensitive matters of conscience to the staid graduates of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. They have taken faith into their own hands and molded it according to the aspirations of everyday life.”¹⁶⁶

Hatch’s statements provide a setting for understanding American Christianity in its broadest sense, from a historical perspective inclusive of all faith groups present from

¹⁶⁴ Nathan O. Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 1989, 213. Hatch asserts three unique features distinguish American Christianity from other countries; “the vitality of religion among ordinary people, the continuing prominence of populist religious leaders, and the vitality of mass democratic movements that reflect the charisma and organizational skills of these leaders.” See Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 21.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 219. It is interesting to note that each of these schools originated primarily as institutions for training early American clergy. See Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 17-18, 196, and Billington, Loewenberg, and Brockunier, *The Making of American Democracy: Readings and Documents*, 41-42.

early colonial times. More importantly, Hatch provides a basis for developing reasonable conclusions regarding actions and practices observable within current American Christianity as reflective of earlier inspirations and aspirations as it responds to an increasingly secular culture¹⁶⁷ by embracing a progressively missional approach to ministry.

Rooted in American history, these observable actions and practices by current religious groups indicate a shift toward a redefinition of Christianity in terms of a missional expression, and is more readily seen, and concentrated almost exclusively in the evangelical wing of American Christianity, while mainline denominations, Catholicism, and Orthodox churches continue their historic practices and approaches to ministry. Hatch identifies two centuries of what might be referred to as common tradition among churches in the United States, where “religious movement [was] firmly identified with popular culture,”¹⁶⁸ and notes the early growth of “the Methodist and Baptist movements among both white and black Americans” as representing this popular culture.¹⁶⁹ He adds, “American Protestantism has been skewed away from central ecclesiastical institutions and high culture: it has been pushed and pulled into its present

¹⁶⁷ Pew Research cites a “rapid growth in the number of unaffiliated adults who say religion is not important to them”; specifically, “In 2007, 16.1% of adults – 36.6 million people – described themselves as religious “nones.” And 57.5% of them said religion was “not too” or “not at all” important in their lives, yielding an estimate that 21.0 million adults were religious “nones” for whom religion was personally unimportant. By 2014, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population had grown to 22.8%, and the number of religious “nones” had ballooned to 55.8 million.” Concluding, Pew states, “...nearly two-thirds of the “nones” – 36.1 million adults – say religion is unimportant to them, an increase of roughly 15 million people in just seven years.” Pew Research Center, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious” Nov. 3, 2015. Additional Pew Research data will be incorporated and addressed in Chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁶⁸ Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 211-212. In comparing religious belief between British and American societies, Hatch writes, “Among working and lower-middle-class Americans, however, religion seems to be thriving... a striking increase over this time in the religious practices of working-class people... at a popular level America is more pious than it was two generations ago.”

¹⁶⁹ Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 3

shape by a democratic or populist orientation,”¹⁷⁰ and noting, “the theme of democratization is central to understanding the development of American Christianity.”¹⁷¹

Hatch’s statements present a significant point of entry to elements influencing the development of Christianity in the United States, and an understanding of these elements provides insight into how Christianity not only formed and functioned in the United States from its formative years, but also in how these same elements may be functioning today. Such insight into the early formation of Christianity in the United States with its religious aspirations and practices is essential to interpreting the changing landscape of evangelical American Christianity as it moves increasingly toward missional expressions.

2.2 Early Historical Influences

American Christianity developed alongside and in close relationship with American political aspirations during the British colonial period, predating the founding of the United States and generally linked to the arrival of the earliest settlers and their motivations for seeking a new world. Motivations for seeking the “new world” were both religious and economic,¹⁷² inspiring many to brave the dangerous crossing of the North Atlantic in small and barely seaworthy vessels in search of commercial

¹⁷⁰ Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 5.

¹⁷¹ Hatch defines “democratization” as the relationship between the cultural and religious history of the early American republic and the enduring structures of American Christianity.” See Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 3.

¹⁷² Faulker and Kepner explain, “In the colonization of America, religious, political, and economic motives were closely interwoven. Like the Spaniards, many Englishmen urged that the first object of settlement was “to preach and baptize into *Christian Religion*, and by propagation of the *Gospell* [sic], to recover out of the arms of the Divell [sic], a number of poore [sic] and miserable soules [sic], wrapt up unto death, in almost invincible ignorance.” Harold Faulkner and Tyler Kepner, *America: Its History and People* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishing), 1950, 15.

opportunity, or as part of a greater divine calling.¹⁷³ Although colonized in the 1500s by the French in present day Canada, and by the Spanish in Florida, Britain became the predominant colonial power, and the most recognizable group among early British colonists to North America were the Pilgrims. They were 104 Separatists¹⁷⁴ who landed in New England in 1620¹⁷⁵ seeking religious freedom from an England intolerant of non-conforming religious minorities,¹⁷⁶ and envisioning a modern day escape from Egypt to a Promised Land.¹⁷⁷ These and others following saw themselves as people with a holy calling to establish new lives in a new world “free from the opposition and ridicule they had faced in England.”¹⁷⁸ Gonzalez agrees adding, “Since the first landing of the

¹⁷³ Earlier settlements were established by the British in North America; in Virginia in 1585 and in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. Both were economic ventures, although the charter of Jamestown stated, “the religion now professed and established within our realm of England should be regularly practiced by the colonists and spread as much as they may amongst the savage people.” See Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution – A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, (New York, NY: HarperOne Publishing), 2007, 151.

¹⁷⁴ Gaustad and Schmidt describe the Separatists as sect of the English Puritans (those “insist[ing] on the need to restore the pew or practices and doctrines of the New Testament to the Church of England – see Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, 80), who envisioned “a radically new church model of independence from the state, a complete reformation... they “wanted to start all over again with a gathered body of believers who were free from state power and Royal control.” See Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 49.

¹⁷⁵ McGrath writes, “...the history of Protestantism in America is traditionally traced to the year 1620, when the *Mayflower* docked in New England.” Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution – A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, (New York, NY: HarperOne Publishing), 2007, 152.

¹⁷⁶ Faulkner and Kepner cite religious oppression as “one of the powerful motives which impelled Europeans to come to America... the persecution which dominant churches inflicted upon dissenting minorities.” See Faulkner and Tyler Kepner, *America: Its History and People*, 15.

¹⁷⁷ Justo Gonzalez adds, “Later immigrants regarded the United States as a promised land of freedom and abundance.” See Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2 – The Reformation to the Present Day*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers), 1985, 246. McGrath also supports this concept stating “England was the land in which they struggled... America would be the land in which they found freedom... expelled from their Egypt by a cruel pharaoh, they had settled in the promised land flowing with milk and honey.” See McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 153. To this Robert Miller adds, “The Europe on which the colonists turned their backs did not believe even in religious toleration, much less religious liberty;” It was nothing more than “the dream of a few persecuted sectaries or deep private thinkers.” Robert T. Miller. “Religious Conscience in Colonial New England”, *Journal of Church and State*, Autumn 2008, 661-676.

¹⁷⁸ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 152.

Mayflower pilgrims, the notion that the British colonies in the New World had been founded with divine assistance in order to fulfill a providential mission, was commonly accepted.”¹⁷⁹

As a collective element motivating many early travelers to North America, religious oppression led to a growing resistance to what many saw as “tyrannical authority.”¹⁸⁰ Gaustad and Schmidt assert, “Americans in the eighteenth century understood tyrannical authority to be all of one piece. Lordly bishops like lordly princes paid little attention to ordinary folk, [and] made few if any concessions to “majority will... Church and state had joined in a powerful alliance design to cramp or suppress [those] rights and liberties.”¹⁸¹ This resistance to authority would eventually become a significant element leading to the American Revolution, which was seen as “a struggle for religious no less than civil liberty.”¹⁸² To the Pilgrims and others following after them, “Liberty and religion were inseparable, and they came to America to pursue both.”¹⁸³ They saw themselves as “colonists for God, planting in his name. But it was also a formula for dissent.”¹⁸⁴

In the years leading up to the American war for independence, the concepts of religious and civil liberty entwined across the thirteen British colonies with “dissenters and deists, pietists and rationalists working together to abolish all vestiges of an

¹⁷⁹ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2 – The Reformation to the Present Day*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 246.

¹⁸⁰ Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today* (New York, NY: HarperCollins publishers, 2002), 121.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People*, (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1998), 41.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

established church, substituting in its place a full and free liberty.”¹⁸⁵ Emerging from this abolition of vestiges was the establishment of congregational autonomy and authority within local congregations, which “Reacting strongly against the rigid hierarchical structures of the European state churches, the American settlers opted instead for a democratic congregationalism. Local congregations made their own decisions.”¹⁸⁶

So pervasive was the pursuit of religious change across colonial American society that “Church authorities had few resources to restrain this surge of movements fueled by the passions of ordinary people,”¹⁸⁷ leading to “the unfettered exploration of religious possibilities that were simply unthinkable in England.”¹⁸⁸ This pursuit of democratic congregationalism led to the mingling of the concepts of “evangelical conversion and new democratic vocabularies and impulses, [that] could not be divorced from each other.”^{189, 190} Gaustad and Schmidt write, “At the end of the eighteenth century, freedom of religion was no tired cliché, but a prize of independence,”¹⁹¹ and “by the early decades of the nineteenth century... American believers routinely spoke of Christian and republican [political] values with a single voice.”¹⁹² Johnson believes the combining of religious and political elements was a significant factor in the American colonies’ war of independence from Britain, he writes,

¹⁸⁵ Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 123.

¹⁸⁶ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 153.

¹⁸⁷ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 154.

¹⁸⁹ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 7.

¹⁹⁰ Gonzalez interprets the change pursued by American Christianity in terms of progress, and “Part of such progress was leaving behind the dogmatic attitude of traditional Christianity, and espousing only “natural religion,” or, at best, “essential Christianity.” See Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2*, 240.

¹⁹¹ Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 139.

¹⁹² Noll, *America’s God*, 73

The revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the mind and hearts of the people: and change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. It was the marriage between the rationalism of the American elites touched by the enlightenment with the spirit of the Great Awakening among the masses, which enabled the popular enthusiasm thus aroused to be channeled into the political aims of the Revolution... Neither force could have succeeded without the other. The Revolution could not have taken place without this religious background.¹⁹³

The combination of religious and political thinking and expression coupled with the colonists' push for democratic congregationalism had a profound influence upon American Christianity leading to a unique understanding of how Christianity should work, at least in evangelical churches. This unique understanding produced a definition of Christianity that was actually a redefinition of European Christianity and seasoned the "soil" from which American evangelical Christianity would grow.

From its earliest arrival in North America, Christianity embarked on a radically new and different route of development from its European heritages. Woven into the fabric of American culture, this unique approach to Christianity, of individuality and populism spurning centralized authority and control, influenced the understanding and practice of religion across a wide expanse of people and territory, and contributed to the political formation of the country, even as a factor in the American colonies war of independence from Great Britain.¹⁹⁴ Supporting Hatch's identification of "democratic or populist orientation,"¹⁹⁵ Johnson adds that colonial Americans were individualistic and independent in their pursuit of religion, not depending on the Church as an authoritative

¹⁹³ Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People*, (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1998), 116-117.

¹⁹⁴ In their declaration of independence from Great Britain (1776), colonial representatives to the American Congress included references appealing to "God", "Creator", "Supreme Judge of the World", and divine Providence as support for their action. See *The Declaration of Independence*, Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration.

¹⁹⁵ Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 5.

institution, or the clergy as representatives of that authority, or any of the historical methods of instruction.¹⁹⁶ Hatch agrees with Johnson stating, “these movements empowered ordinary people to take their deepest spiritual impulses at face value rather than subjecting them to the scrutiny of orthodox doctrine and the frowns of respectable clergymen.”¹⁹⁷

With individualistic and independent ambitions, colonial Americans redefined Christianity during the formative stages of the nation, and present evangelical American Christianity is the offspring of that formative and redefining process. As such, it possesses similar characteristics identifiable from its heritage, and in related fashion, these characteristics are helping to fuel an apparent and current redefinition of American Christianity.

2.2.1 Influential Groups and Individuals

No single individual or group influenced the formation and definition of Christianity exclusively in colonial America or in the early years of the United States nation. Rather, it was the collective energies of distinct religious groups (denominations) and persuasive individuals united by a common dissatisfaction with European church history and influence¹⁹⁸ and a desire to revitalize church and religious practice in new and

¹⁹⁶ Johnson writes, “Hence Americans never belonged to the religious category who seek certainty of doctrine and through clerical hierarchy...: most Americans... believe[d] that knowledge of God comes direct to them through the study of Holy Writ. They read the Bible for themselves, assiduously, daily. Virtually every humble cabin in Massachusetts colony had its own Bible. Adults read it alone, silently. It was also read aloud among families, as well as in church, during Sunday morning service, which lasted from eight till twelve.” See Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People*, (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1998), 40.

¹⁹⁷ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 10.

¹⁹⁸ Noll qualifies this dissatisfaction as resulting in the rejection of “ecclesiastical tradition, inherited authority, and historical confessions... insist[ing] upon the Bible and born-again human conscience as the primary religious authorities.” see Mark A. Noll. *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 161.

different ways that ultimately produced a uniquely American approach to, and definition of Christianity. Table 2.1 presents the church denominations present in the American colonies in 1740.

Table 2.1 Church Denominations in 1740 Colonial America¹⁹⁹

Denomination	# of Churches	% of Total
Congregational	423	33.7
Anglican	246	19.6
Presbyterian	160	12.7
Baptist	96	7.6
Lutheran	95	7.6
Dutch Reformed	78	6.2
German Reformed	51	4.1
Quaker	ca. 50	4.0
German sectarians	ca. 30	2.4
Roman Catholic	27	2.1
Methodist	0	0
Total churches	1256	100.0

This common dissatisfaction encompassed more than simply an opinion of religion; it reflected a greater “mistrust of intellectual authorities” and “the use of one’s own senses” as forming the basis of “true knowledge,”²⁰⁰ leading to a growing desire for personal religious liberty. Noll expands on this independent and individualistic characteristic of early American thinking, stating, “most Americans were thus united in the conviction that people had to think for themselves in order to know science, morality, economics, politics, and especially theology.”²⁰¹ Hatch believes that this and the period

¹⁹⁹ Adapted from Table 9.1 Churches in the Thirteen Colonies, 1740 and 1776; see Noll. *America’s God*, 162. Noll presents a brief investigation of colonial American denominations in “Republicanism and Religion”, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 64-72.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

following (1780 to 1830) “left an indelible an imprint upon the structures of American Christianity as it did upon those of American political life.”²⁰²

A variety of groups arrived in the new world to seek religious or commercial opportunities, or simply to establish a new life. The following is a brief summary of groups and individuals that contributed to the religious focus of the American colonies and whose actions contributed to the formation of a uniquely American definition of Christianity.²⁰³

Recognized as the earliest group to arrive in the American colonies fleeing religious persecution,²⁰⁴ the Puritan “Pilgrims” arrived in 1620,^{205, 206} Separatists seeking freedom from “opposition and ridicule they had faced in England.”²⁰⁷ They brought with them concepts such as the congregational right to “determine its own beliefs and choose its own ministers.”²⁰⁸ McGrath contends this resulted in “a highly decentralized and... uncontrollable congregational church order, which licensed any individual congregation to revise Calvinist theology as it saw fit. And revise it they did.”^{209, 210}

²⁰² Hatch. *The Democratization Of American Christianity*, 6.

²⁰³ This brief review is intended as a sampling demonstrating individualistic and independent thinking and action evident from the earliest religious history of the United States, not as an exhaustive approach to early American religious groups and personalities.

²⁰⁴ See Faulkner and Kepner, “...the persecution which dominant churches inflicted upon dissenting minorities.” *America: Its History and People*, 15.

²⁰⁵ McGrath notes, the history of Protestantism in America is traditionally traced to the year 1620, when the *Mayflower* (carrying the Puritan “Pilgrims”) docked in New England. McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 152.

²⁰⁶ Gonzalez writes, “The Mayflower “pilgrims” eventually became a symbol of the flight from religious and political oppression into a land of promise” See Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2 – The Reformation to the Present Day*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 222.

²⁰⁷ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 152.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

²¹⁰ McGrath notes, “Between 1627 and 1640, some 4000 individuals made the hazardous crossing of the Atlantic Ocean and settled on the coastline of Massachusetts Bay. For these settlers, there was a clear

An outcast from the Puritans, Roger Williams founded the Providence colony in what is present day Rhode Island on the principle of religious freedom, and that “the rights of citizenship would not be abridged on the basis of one’s religious opinions and practices.”²¹¹ As a result, the Providence Colony became the desired destination for Baptists, Quakers, and others fleeing Puritan colonies,²¹² those whose religious beliefs and practices conflicted with Puritan theology, and evidence of an increasing desire among people to determine their religious beliefs apart from a denominational structure with which they disagreed. From there, Quakers were the predominant religious group in the Pennsylvania Colony,²¹³ and Baptists began to spread among all thirteen colonies, although they experienced persecution in many of their locations.²¹⁴ Gonzalez adds, “With the passage of time all [colonies] tended to follow the example of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, where religious freedom had existed from the beginning and was shown to be a viable option to the religious tensions that had repeatedly bled Europe.”²¹⁵

Among the religious groups present in 1740 colonial America, Methodism’s presence was negligible, but grew rapidly from Francis Asbury’s efforts, and as a reaction against British Anglicanism, ultimately leading to a splitting from British

alignment between the narrative of their journey and that of the Bible. England was the land in which they struggled under oppression; America would be the land in which they found freedom.” McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 153. The concept of freedom and the ability to define/redefine church concept, thought, process, and activity is a significant element influencing American Christianity.

²¹¹ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, 224.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 225.

²¹³ Pyle and Davidson expand the religious makeup of the Pennsylvania Colony stating, “Although the majority of Pennsylvania’s early settlers were English and Welsh Quakers, within a few years numerous faiths were represented in the colony. In none of the colonies at the end of the colonial period was there so great a variety of religious groups as there was in Pennsylvania.” See Ralph E. Pyle and James D. Davidson, “The Origins of Religious Stratification in Colonial America” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42:1 (2003) 57–75.

²¹⁴ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, 226.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

Methodism. Sent to the American colonies by John Wesley in 1771, Asbury is credited with the early and energetic growth of Methodist congregations, primarily in rural and frontier areas, and for laying the groundwork for a denomination with significant influence for nearly two centuries in the United States.²¹⁶ Table 2.2 presents denominational growth through 1790 for the religious identities presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.2 Denominational Growth in Colonial America by 1790²¹⁷

Denomination	# of Churches-1740	# of Churches-1790	% Increase
Methodist	0	712	71200%
Baptist	96	858	794%
Presbyterian	160	725	353%
Roman Catholic	27	65	141%
Congregational	423	750	77%
Anglican/Episcopal	246	170	-31%
Lutheran	95	249	162%
Quaker	ca. 50	375	650%
German Reformed	51	236	363%
Dutch Reformed	78	115	47%
Total churches	1256	4255	

Table 2.2 presents significant growth for all denominations present in 1790 colonial America, except for Anglicans who were closely associated with British loyalties, and were declining. With few additional settlers arriving from the Netherlands following the surrender of New Netherland to Britain in the later 1600's, the Dutch Reformed Church grew at the smallest rate, and Puritan Congregationalists, the largest denomination in

²¹⁶ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, 216. Noll adds, "Methodists represented a great People's movement everywhere on the rise in the early United States while America's hereditary reformed denominations had already entered into a long decline relative to the general culture." See Noll, *America's God*, 331.

²¹⁷ Adapted from Table 9.3 Growth in The Number of Churches from 1770 and 1790-1860; Noll. *America's God*, 166. Noll does not provide an explanation for the reordering of the denominations in his Table 9.3, or for the elimination of the German sectarians.

1740, were outpaced in percentage growth by all other denominations other than the previously mentioned Dutch and Anglicans. Religious growth was obvious across colonial America, but it was not an evolutionary process; rather, denominational growth resulted from an increased spiritual emphasis fueled by clergy “intent on bringing evangelical conversion to the mass of ordinary Americans”²¹⁸ and leading to occasions of heightened spiritual activity known as the Awakenings,²¹⁹ times “leading initially to religious renewal and subsequently to social change.”²²⁰ Johnson defines these times as “spiritual events... of vast significance both in religion and politics.”²²¹

Among ministers commonly associated with the Awakenings, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield are the most prominent, although John and Charles Wesley, along with Francis Asbury and others were certainly contributors. This limited investigation will briefly focus on the contributions Edwards and Whitefield as representative of the larger group of ministers.²²² Recognized as the “leading theologian in the colonies,”²²³ Edwards authored works that helped birth revival in New England,²²⁴ and was

²¹⁸ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 7.

²¹⁹ McGrath states, “the first of these religious revivals, traditionally known as the “Great Awakening,” took place in New England in 1734.” McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 155.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 110.

²²² McGrath states that although the great awakening is “often associated with Jonathan Edwards”, and “given a new sense of direction by George Whitfield,” it was “far too broad and deep to be dependent upon anyone individual.” McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 158.

²²³ Gonzalez, *The History of Christianity*, Vol. 2. 229. Johnson adds, “Edwards was a man of outstanding intellect and sensibility, the first major thinker in American history.” Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 110. McGrath references Edwards as “America’s greatest theologian to date.” McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 156.

²²⁴ Noll provides a brief recounting of Edwards’ written works in *America’s God*, 23–24.

instrumental in guiding “intense seasons of revival in 1734–1735 and again in 1740–1742” in his church at Northampton.²²⁵

Described as a “dissenting evangelical”²²⁶ and “a rhetorical and histrionic star of spectacular gifts,”²²⁷ Whitfield “pushed at the boundaries of accepted conventions”²²⁸ traveling from Boston to Savannah “igniting violent sheets of religious flame everywhere.”²²⁹ When criticized for preaching with emotional enthusiasm, Whitefield began preaching in open fields. Known for “fiery methods”²³⁰ to which Wesley objected, Whitefield became one of the first open-air preachers, thus ushering in the camp meeting prevalent in the Second Great Awakening at the end of the eighteenth century. Appealing equally to a broad range of religious persuasions,²³¹ Johnson claims it was Whitefield who “caused the Great Awakening to take off”²³² and at the time of his death in 1770, he is said to have been “equally well known from Georgia to New Hampshire.”²³³

While Edwards and Whitefield are perhaps the best known of colonial American minister-revivalists, they are not the only individuals influencing the spiritual climate in

²²⁵ Ibid., 23.

²²⁶ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 34.

²²⁷ Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 113.

²²⁸ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 133.

²²⁹ Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 113.

²³⁰ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 133..

²³¹ Johnson describes Whitefield’s appeal as reaching “Anglicans, fierce Calvinists, German pietists, Scotch-Irish, Dutch, even a few Catholics.” Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 113.

²³² Johnson, *A History of The American People*, 113.

²³³ Ibid., 116.

the early eighteenth century. Many other ministers and laypeople²³⁴ helped shape the spiritual sense of the time, further empowering populist influence, and resulting in periods of spiritual renewal and social change known as the Awakenings.²³⁵

2.2.2 Revivals and Awakenings

The desire for religious liberty among the colonial populace combined with fervent preaching from ministers such as Edwards, Whitefield, the Wesleys, Asbury, and others led to times of intense spiritual focus referred to as revivals or awakenings. Among a number of eighteenth century revivals, two receive the most attention: the First and Second Great Awakening, two separate revivals that produced “a more evangelical Calvinism out of the Puritan, congregational, Baptist, and Presbyterian traditions exported to the colonies from the old world.”²³⁶ Bosch states, “The Great Awakening began in Dutch reformed congregations (which had been influenced by the Dutch “second reformation”) in New Jersey, and from there it spread to other denominations,”²³⁷ moving geographically to “the countryside and frontier, among humble people, many of whom had little contact with structured religion at all,”²³⁸ and again fueling the populist element of early American Christianity. It is estimated that

²³⁴ Vanhoozer and Strachan write, “In this era, one need not be a member of the formal clergy to preach; one could emulate Whitefield, the tireless outdoor celebrity evangelist, and with Wesley claim the world is one’s parish.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan. *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 86-87.

²³⁵ See McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 155.

²³⁶ Noll, *America’s God*, 565.

²³⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 277. Johnson agrees stating, “In 1719 the German pastor of the Dutch reformed church, Theodore Frelinghuysen, led a series of revival meetings... The emphasis on leading a holy life without troubling too much about the doctrinal disputes which racked the 17th century.” See Johnson, *A History Of The American People*, 109.

²³⁸ Johnson, *A History Of The American People*, 109.

three out of four colonists participated in some way in the First Great Awakening,²³⁹ resulting in “new expressions of faith [from] ordinary men and women.”²⁴⁰ Johnson writes, “The Great Awakening... crossed all religious and sectarian boundaries... and turned what had been a series of European-style churches into American ones... and gave a distinctive American flavor to a wide range of denominations.”²⁴¹ A distinct product of the Awakenings was the explosive increase of Baptist and Methodist members resulting from circuit riders and traveling evangelists.²⁴²

Johnson identifies five important elements characterizing the Awakenings: “evangelical vigor, a tendency to downgrade the clergy, little stress on liturgical correctness, even less on parish boundaries, and above all an emphasis on individual experience,”²⁴³ and asserts, “it was in the 18th century that the specifically American form of Christianity – undogmatic, moralistic rather than creedal, tolerant, but strong, and all pervasive of society – was born, and that the Great Awakening was its midwife.”^{244, 245}

While a significant influence in colonial and early American Christianity, the First and Second Awakenings were not the only times of spiritual intensity to occur in the

²³⁹ Ibid., 115.

²⁴⁰ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 34.

²⁴¹ Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People*, (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1998), 116. Noll complements Johnson’s statement, adding, the awakenings “were important in themselves for quickening interest in religion. For the long term, they were even more important as recruiting devices for Methodists, the new “Christian” sects, local Baptist churches, and the Presbyterians. See Noll, *Americas God*, 181-182.

²⁴² Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan. *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 86-87.

²⁴³ Johnson, *A History of the American People*, 116

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 109.

²⁴⁵ David J Bosch offers an interesting perspective on the development of American theological thinking in the colonial and early years of the United States. See David J Bosch. *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission and Theological Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1980), 140-152.

United States. The twentieth century would witness additional awakenings adding to the continued development of American Christianity and fueling its redefinition.²⁴⁶

2.2.3 The Intertwining of Religion and Politics

Since colonial times, there has been a relationship between religion and politics that lasted unhindered until the later half of the twentieth century. Colonial charters declared the religious purposes of their colony and although imperfect in instances of favoring of one religion (denomination) over another, it appears that religion and politics (governments) worked hand-in-hand to establish and govern settlements in the new world. Nowhere is this better seen than in the Mayflower compact, a religious/political document constructed by the first Puritan settlers upon their arrival in 1620.

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony...²⁴⁷

The first Puritan settlers made no distinction in their founding document between religious and government responsibility and obligation. Noll notes, “In the thirteen

²⁴⁶ Times of spiritual intensity described by McLoughlin and Bass as the Third and Fourth Awakenings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

²⁴⁷ Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall. *The Mayflower Compact, 1620, The Sacred Rights of Conscience: Selected Readings on Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations in The American Founding*. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Publishing), 2009, 86.

colonies that became the United States, republican and Protestant convictions merged as they did nowhere else in the world.”²⁴⁸

Dreisbach and Hall maintain, “Most colonial Americans believed that church and state were separate institutions, yet they also thought they should support each other.”²⁴⁹ Thus, the predominant thinking in new world settlements and subsequent colonies jointly referenced religion and politics in their governing charters and documents. From this, religion enjoyed a prominent place in colonial and early American culture, asserting itself in political discussions, requiring observance and adherence to Sabbath observance, in some cases requiring political office holder to be a Christian, and even adopting forms of “republican and commonsense reasoning used by the nation’s founders... to justify independence and build a new nation.”²⁵⁰ In general, religious and political thought was frequently combined. Ministers in many churches (primarily in New England) “regularly preached on the theme of religious and political freedom, linking both with resisting English tyranny.”²⁵¹ This process of evangelical protestant alignment with “republican convictions and commonsense moral reasoning... gave a distinctly American shape to Christian theology.”²⁵² Hatch adds in agreement that this process had everything to do with “the incarnation of the church into popular culture.”²⁵³ During and following America’s war of independence, the national government reflected the common thinking that “the public prosperity of a society depended on the vitality of its religion” and the

²⁴⁸ Noll, *America’s God*, 73.

²⁴⁹ Dreisbach and Hall. *The Sacred Rights of Conscience*, 83.

²⁵⁰ Noll, *America’s God*, 161.

²⁵¹ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 160.

²⁵² Noll, *America’s God*, 11.

²⁵³ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 9.

new congress declared, “nothing less than a spirit of universal reformation among all ranks and degrees of our citizens,” would “make us a holy, that so we may be a happy people.”²⁵⁴

2.2.4 Federal and State Government Documents

That Christianity in America began and continued as a populist movement can be confirmed by the manner in which legislators of the former colonies, now self-declared states, constructed their government documents, specifically, their state constitutions in 1776. A precedent was already established in the chartering documents issued by England to the various groups wishing to relocate to, or conduct commerce in the new world. Robert Miller writes, “In practically every statement of purpose or plan drawn up, and in every charter issued as well as in the statements of those who participated in the migration to the New World, the missionary and religious purposes are obvious.”²⁵⁵ These religious purposes were carried forward and reflected in the constitutional documents of the first states. These state constitutions predate the Constitution of the United States by thirteen years (1776-1789), and provided a framework for the construction of the federal document.²⁵⁶ Table 2.3 presents the religious influence reflected in statements from a sampling of early state constitutions.

²⁵⁴ The United States Library of Congress, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic*. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel04.html>. Accessed July 10, 2015.

²⁵⁵ Robert T. Miller "Religious Conscience in Colonial New England." *Journal of Church and State*, Autumn 2008, 663.

²⁵⁶ *State Constitutions*, xiv.

Table 2.3 Religious Statements from Early State Constitutions²⁵⁷

Pennsylvania	“every member of the legislature shall subscribe to the following declaration: I do believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe the rewarder of the good, and the punisher of the wicked; and acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is to be given by inspiration.”
North Carolina	“No person who denying the being of a God was the truth of the protestant religion, or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testaments... should be capable of holding any office or place of trust in the civil government of the state.”
Delaware	“Every citizen who should be chosen a member of either house of the legislature... Should be required to subscribe to the following declaration: – I do profess faith in God the father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ his only son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God and blessed forever more...”
Maryland	“It is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to him, all persons professing the Christian religion are equally entitled to protection in the religious liberty.”
New Jersey	“That all persons professing a belief in the faith of any Protestant sect, and who should demean himself peaceably under the government, should be capable of being elected into any office a profit or trust, or of being a member of either branch of the legislature.”
New Hampshire	“That morality and piety, rightly grounded on evangelical principles, would give the best and greatest security to government, and would lay in the hearts of men the strongest obligation to do subjection...”
Georgia	“All the members of the legislature shall be of the protestant religion.”
Connecticut	“It being the duty of all men to worship the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Preserver of the Universe... No person shall, by law, be compelled to join or support, nor be classed with any association to any congregation church or religious institution.”
New York	“This convention doth further, in the name and by the authority of the good people of the state, ordain, determine, and declare that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever hereafter be allowed within the state to all mankind.”

Dreisbach and Hall note that among early state constitutions, three items are consistently apparent: documents generally reflect the phrase “in the year of our Lord”; the

²⁵⁷ Compiled from Dreisbach and Hall, *The Sacred Rights of Conscience*, 257–265.

observance of Christian Sabbath is stressed, and “countenance, encouragement, and protection” is afforded to the Christian religion.^{258, 259}

2.3 Intermediate Summary

The preceding sections of this chapter reveal a spiritual climate that seasoned not only religious concepts, but also political thinking and action in colonial America and the early United States. During this time, American Christianity became a populous movement where historic and traditional concepts of religious authority and practice were questioned and rejected in favor of a new ‘common man’ approach to religious interpretation and practice according to one’s own thinking. Lead by passionate and energetic figures, vast numbers of people responded to spiritual appeals, leading to new denominations and shaping a uniquely American approach to Christianity. Within this framework grew American Christianity, where everyday people took religion into their own hands, defining it according to their own understanding and priorities. While diminished by factors remaining to be examined in this chapter, this original climate casts a long shadow touching on the church in the United States today, and the seed of populist definition and redefinition are sprouting once again.

²⁵⁸ Dreisbach and Hall, *The Sacred Rights of Conscience*, 259. Dreisbach and Hall add, “The principal obtained by the foregoing inductive examination of our state constitutions is this: – the people of the United States have retained the Christian religion as the foundation of their civil, legal, and political institutions; while they have refused to continue a legal preference to any one of its forms over any other” (260).

²⁵⁹ For further investigation, Vincent Phillip Muñoz provides an in-depth examination of early state constitutions in “Church and State in the Founding-Era State Constitutions,” *American Political Thought: A Journal of Ideas, Institutions, and Culture*, Vol. 4 (Winter 2015). 1-39.

2.4 Present Influences

In spite of its unique beginning and relative appreciation among nearly all aspects of society for two hundred years, there are significant influences confronting and challenging American Christianity and the Church in the United States in the twenty-first century. In general, these challenges are multifaceted, with both negative and positive influences, and they are encompassed by an increasingly secular culture, which along with declining denominational influence, and the rise of new ministry understandings are resulting in a growing missional influence.

2.4.1 Secularism, Secularization, and Post-Christendom

The United States is an increasingly secular nation where religion no longer enjoys a primary position of respect in relation to other institutions of society, such as government, education, commerce, and the like.²⁶⁰ Swatos and Christiano express this understanding stating, “Religion’s influence on all aspects of life – from personal habits to social institutions – is in dramatic decline,” and citing the cause as “people have become or are becoming “less religious.”²⁶¹ Eisgruber counters Swatos and Christiano stating, “Viewed by comparison to Europe, Canada, or most other nations in the developed world, the United States is strikingly religious.”²⁶² Reflecting on this shift,

²⁶⁰ Eisgruber contends, “Religion and higher education were once highly interconnected in the United States; they now function as distinct social systems.” Christopher L. Eisgruber. “Secularization, Religiosity, and the United States Constitution.” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (2006): 445-472. <http://p2048-ezproxy.liberty.edu/ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com/ezproxy>. accessed September 23, 2016.

²⁶¹ William H. Swatos, Jr, and K. J. Christiano. “Secularization Theory: The Course of A Concept.” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 60 (3), (2009), 209-228. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/216771767?accountid=12085>. Accessed August 15, 2016.

²⁶² Christopher L. Eisgruber. “Secularization, Religiosity, and the United States Constitution.” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (2006): 445-472. <http://p2048->

Taylor notes that following the end of the Second World War “was a time in which American patriotism, religion, and sense of family values seemed to be in perfect lock step,”²⁶³ but concedes, “We no longer live in societies in which the widespread sense can be maintained that faith in God is central to the order of life we (partially) enjoy.”²⁶⁴ In describing the present “North American scene,” Keifert offers a somewhat resistant tone to Taylor’s description stating, “While Christianity in North America has undergone several disestablishment’s in the last 200 years, it is hard to see the present culture devoid of Christian influence... Indeed, most religious voices are growing in their influence on civil and public life, especially Christian voices.”²⁶⁵ Keifert’s view is not shared by all contributors to the missional discussion, with the majority of authors emphasizing the increasingly secular nature of American culture and society.

A variety of authors define secularism or secularization with distinct expressions, but unite in general agreement regarding its effect. Hickman expresses the view that, “Secularism... is the ascendancy of political control over the public activities of religious institutions... rendering religion a matter of individual choice rather than social

ezproxy.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy. accessed September 23, 2016.

²⁶³ Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 2007, 505. Bosch adds an interesting general note stating, “For many centuries Westerners had lived in the climate of Christendom, which operated on the basis of a symbiosis between church and society and in which there were, officially, no nonbelievers.” D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 28.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 531.

²⁶⁵ Patrick Keifert. *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing), 2006, 25. Keifert is correct that current American culture and society is not “devoid of Christian influence;” however, the trend is clearly evident that Christian influence is declining, the result of, and paving the way for the increasing secularization of society and culture as expressed by Taylor and others. It is difficult to see the growing influence of Christian voices in civil and public life as Keifert attests.

conscription.”²⁶⁶ For Taylor, secularization is “a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”²⁶⁷ Taylor believes “that the United States, as a whole is secularized,”²⁶⁸ and questions, what is it that takes “a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others?”²⁶⁹ The United States reflects a sobering study in secularization, especially in view of its formative years where Christianity exercised significant influence.

Secularization and the entrance into Post-Christendom are closely related, secularism having ‘paved the way’²⁷⁰ for the decline of Christendom, a time in the Western world where society and culture was characterized as the product of the Christendom era, where “the church was a dominant social institution, shaping culture rather than responding to cultural changes... perceive[ing] itself and perceived by others

²⁶⁶ Larry A. Hickman "Secularism, Secularization, and John Dewey." *Education and Culture* Vol. 25, no. 2 (2009): 21-33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5703/educationculture.25.2.21>. Accessed September 23, 2016. Eisgruber agrees, stating, “American religion has been excluded from social and political decision-making processes.” Christopher L. Eisgruber. "Secularization, Religiosity, and the United States Constitution." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (2006): 445-472. <http://p2048-ezproxy.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy>. accessed September 23, 2016.

²⁶⁷ Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 3.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Murray does not hold that secularization caused an end to Christendom, but presents a stimulating discussion on secularization and the decline in Christian belief leading to post Christendom, countering, “the political disintegration of Christendom can thus be perceived as a cause of secularisation,” and “whether the process was gradual or sudden and whether secularisation was a cause or consequence of the demise of Christendom... Spirituality and religious beliefs, in remarkably diverse forms, have flourished and we can now identify a counter-process of desecularisation challenging secular assumptions.” Stuart Murray. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (London: Churches Together In Britain and Ireland), 2006, 10-11.

as a bulwark of stability.”²⁷¹ The decline of Christendom and transition to Post-Christendom has produced a societal context where “familiar social structures... ideologies and ways of thinking have disappeared,”²⁷² producing “cultural turbulence,”²⁷³ and where “...central features of the Christian story are unknown and churches are alien institutions.”²⁷⁴ Keifert describes this as “the naked public square... [a place] devoid of spiritual practices and beliefs essential to public life.”²⁷⁵ Murray defines Post-Christendom as, “the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitely shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence,”²⁷⁶ a definition accurately reflecting the cultural shift in the United States.²⁷⁷

Referring to this shift as “the coming of the secular age,” Taylor addresses it as a shift in a society’s background and framework,²⁷⁸ stating, “An age or society would then be secular or not, in virtue of the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual.”²⁷⁹ This is important to note, for certainly while mainline denominations in the

²⁷¹ Stuart Murray. *Changing Mission: Learning From The New World Churches* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press), 2004, xv.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁷³ Stuart Murray. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (London: Churches Together In Britain and Ireland), 2006, 35.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1. Murray maintains that Post-Christendom does not mean post-Christian”; rather, it “does mean the Christian story is becoming unfamiliar,” and “the end... by which men and women, as individuals, construct their identities and their sense of “self.” Murray. *Post-Christendom*, 4-5.

²⁷⁵ Patrick Keifert. “The Return of the Congregation: Missional Warrants.” *Word & World*, Volume XX, Number 4. Fall 2000, 368-378, 370.

²⁷⁶ Murray. *Post-Christendom*, 19.

²⁷⁷ Bosch characterizes this time as, “The “post –“ phenomenon is not just a fad. We have truly entered into an epoch fundamentally at variance with anything we have experience to date.” D. J. Bosch, *Believing The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), 1995, 1.

²⁷⁸ Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 14.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

United States are declining, evidence pointing to a “search for the spiritual” is noticeable. Taylor clarifies his application of secularization to society stating, “The difference I’ve been talking about is one of the whole background framework in which one believes or refuses to believe in God.”²⁸⁰ Certainly there is evidence of Americans rejecting the idea of God and religion,²⁸¹ but there is equal evidence of religious interest demonstrated by growth in non-traditional or new-paradigm churches,²⁸² to which Keifert agrees stating, [secularization] “failed to erase spiritual yearning in people’s lives that takes shape in face-to-face community.”²⁸³

Taylor states, “Dominant religious forms... have been destabilized by the current cultural revolution,”²⁸⁴ and this can certainly be seen in the changing religious picture in the United States, but this changing picture also attests to an increase in interest in non-traditional forms of Christianity (see section 2.5). One aspect of Taylor’s cultural revolution may be seen in what Neuhaus describes as “vicarious religion,”²⁸⁵ where people avoid personal involvement in the church, but “want it to be there in time of need (usually associated with death and dying), or as an institution of moral continuity in the

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁸¹ See the various Pew Research reports referenced in this research as well as articles such as: Anugrah Kumar. “Tenn 'Atheist Church' Grows to 2 Services in 3 Months.” *The Christian Post*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/tenn-atheist-church-grows-to-2-services-in-3-months-114253/>; and Bradley Childs. “Much to Learn, and a Church for Atheists,” *Presbyterian Record*, January 2014, 40.

²⁸² See Table 2.6 for growth in non-denominational churches and section 2.5, New Forms and Models.

²⁸³ Patrick Keifert. “The Return of the Congregation: Missional Warrants.” *Word & World*, Volume XX, Number 4. Fall 2000, 368-378, 372.

²⁸⁴ Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 505.

²⁸⁵ Taylor, quoting Grace Davie, uses a different but similar term: “Christian nominalism,” defined by Davie as “believing without belonging.” Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 2007, 520.

society.”²⁸⁶ Neuhaus adds, “Vicarious religion also helps explain the death of mainline Protestantism in this country... from a concept of obligation to consumption.”²⁸⁷

Watson and Scalen also identify consumption or consumerism as an element of secularization into some evangelical churches, evidenced by “a consumer-based approach to religion...”²⁸⁸ where,

...churches in the southern United States have added McDonald’s restaurants and similar retail food establishments to their facilities, complete with drive-through windows. Food courts, bookstores, cafes, boutiques, and even banks have also become part of the worship experience. These developments are best viewed as a by-product of a fundamental paradigm shift in religious organization among evangelicals, that is, churches restructuring themselves according to a corporate business model... where “the primacy of the consumer, drives the church or religious organization to fashion a product that consistently meets consumer preferences.”²⁸⁹

Bosch agrees stating, “Denominationalism, particularly in the United States... [has] generated consumer Christians who shop around among churches for the best package deal they can get.”²⁹⁰ Quoting Bruce, Eisgruber suggests that certain changes show that “evangelicals have abandoned a lot of their social distinctiveness,”²⁹¹ of which the previous example may give evidence; however, Swatos and Christiano counter, “That

²⁸⁶ Richard John Neuhaus. "Secularizations." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, no. 190 (2009): 23-28. http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=vic_liberty&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA192309508&sid=summon&asid=59c1a22798be5094c003f58bf5cee359. Academic OneFile Accessed September 23, 2016.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ J. B. Watson, Jr., and Walter H. Scalen. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83, no. 3/4 (2008), pp. 171-180, 175.

²⁸⁹ Watson, Scalen. “Dining With The Devil,” 175.

²⁹⁰ D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 57.

²⁹¹ Christopher L. Eisgruber. "Secularization, Religiosity, and the United States Constitution." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (2006): 445-472. <http://p2048-ezproxy.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy>. accessed September 23, 2016.

people are more likely to want their religion à la cart does not necessarily mean that they are “less religious.”²⁹² Indeed Taylor insists that it is a pursuit of spiritual instincts that is motivating young people, who he believes are “looking for a more direct experience of the sacred, for greater immediacy, spontaneity, and spiritual depth... from a profound dissatisfaction with life encased entirely in the eminent order.”²⁹³ If Swatos and Christiano and Taylor are correct in their assessment, then secularism or secularization while concerning and distasteful to many, may actually be fueling or providing opportunity for greater spiritual experience for those disinterested in the institutional or traditional forms of American Christianity. The example offered by Watson and Scalen may not reflect a “more direct experience of the sacred,” but it demonstrates that younger believers or spiritual seekers are looking for more than what has been offered by institutional/traditional models of church in the United States, and some churches are attempting to meet them in their search. The question for churches employing such efforts described by Watson and Scalen is, will such efforts succeed in meeting the needs for those seeking more than what institutional/traditional Christianity offers?

Taylor refers to a “practitioners spirituality” that “is opposed to religion” and “reflects the rejection of... authority claims made by churches which see it as their mandate to preempt the search, or to maintain it within certain definite limits, and above all to dictate a certain code of behavior.”²⁹⁴ This is highly reflective of the early

²⁹² William H. Swatos, Jr, and K. J. Christiano. “Secularization Theory: The Course of A Concept.” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 60 (3), (2009), 209-228 (222). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/216771767?accountid=12085>. Accessed August 15, 2016.

²⁹³ Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 506.

²⁹⁴ Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 508.

American populace movement where the authority of the established churches was refused, and people chose rather to pursue an independent and individualistic approach to religious belief. Taylor maintains the “Christian faith is in the process of redefining and recomposing itself in various ways, from Vatican II to the charismatic movements... [creating] a quite new predicament,”²⁹⁵ and states, “We are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee,”²⁹⁶ lending weight and credibility to the concept that a redefinition of American Christianity is taking place.

2.4.2 Societal and Cultural Shifts

Societal and cultural shifts are also contributing to the redefinition of American Christianity. Mirroring and expanding on the concept of secularization, societal and cultural shifts reveal the pace and range of change taking place in the United States, and highlight the challenges facing American Christianity as it continues into the twenty-first century. In detailing his research into changing religious trends in the United States, Chaves states, “...more [has] changed than was widely known or appreciated, and more had changed than could be described in a single chapter.”²⁹⁷ Characterizing the change process as “slow moving – even glacial, Chaves also identifies denominational decline, and expands the elements contributing to shifts in American society and culture to include diversity, changes in religious belief, individual and family religious involvement, trends among congregations, the devaluation of the role of religious leaders, and the increasing polarization of traditional and nontraditional values. Summing his

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 513.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 535.

²⁹⁷ Mark Chaves. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2011, xi.

work, Chaves writes, “ It is difficult to see how the trends I have described could amount to good news for American religious institutions, but what about for American society as a whole? My assessment is mixed”²⁹⁸

Perhaps the significant shifts affecting American Christianity and the church in the United States may be linked to the changing demographics and values of the American population. Borg writes of shifts in relation to perceived injustices, stating, “We live in a time of conflict and change in the church... it is the product of our awareness of how Christianity has contributed to racism, sexism, nationalism, exclusivism, and other harmful ideologies.”²⁹⁹ Also seeing an emerging paradigm, he continues, “Three areas where emerging Christianity differs from tradition: Ordination of women, Gays and lesbians, and Christian exclusivism.”³⁰⁰ These elements add to the complexity of the changing environment facing Christianity in the United States.

Focusing primarily on demographics and changing perceptions and values, Jones writes of the declining presence of white Americans as percentage of the population, and how this decline requires a response on behalf of white Christianity in the United States. He states,

After a long life spending nearly 240 years, white Christian America – a prominent cultural force in the nations history Dash has died... [from] complications stemming from major demographic changes in the country, along with religious disaffiliation as many of its younger members began to doubt

²⁹⁸ Mark Chaves. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2011, 112.

²⁹⁹ Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith – How We Can Be Passionate Believers Today* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco), 2003, xii.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

WCA's continued relevance in a shifting cultural environment... plans for a public memorial service have not been announced.³⁰¹

Recounting various historical elements, Jones identifies white Christian America's failure to "adequately address [issues] such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights" as factors contributing to its decline as part of "the country's traditional cultural and religious core... [and] domain of white Protestants in America"³⁰² Jones focuses on several additional factors contributing to the decline of white Christian America citing the shrinking geographic locations where it is prominent,³⁰³ its shrinking political power,³⁰⁴ its opposition to gay rights and "marriage equality"³⁰⁵ and its historic opposition to acceptance of other races, primarily African-Americans.³⁰⁶

In addition to his previous contribution, Chaves also offers an interesting perspective on American congregational shifts focusing in a general fashion on the various elements present in congregational life, and offering a unique definition of congregations as "A social institution in which individuals who are not all religious specialist gather in physical proximity to one another, frequently and at regularly scheduled intervals, for activities and events with explicitly religious content and purpose."³⁰⁷ Along with Chaves, Ammerman et al state that congregations as "gathered

³⁰¹ Robert P. Jones. *The End of White Christian America* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster), 2016, 1-3

³⁰² Ibid., 30-31.

³⁰³ Ibid., 57.

³⁰⁴ Jones presents a comprehensive study of the decline of white Christian political power in *The End of White Christian America*, chapter 3 (79-110).

³⁰⁵ Jones. *The End of White Christian America*, 116.

³⁰⁶ Jones treatment of white Christian racial acceptance versus segregation/desegregation is compelling in *The End of White Christian America*, chapter 5 (147-195).

³⁰⁷ Mark Chaves. *Congregations in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2004, 1. Part of Chaves' intent appears to be the desire to illustrate the great diversity among American congregations and denominations. He states "there are at least thirty-one Pentecostal denominations in the United States,

communities have formed the bedrock of American religion.”³⁰⁸ The value of Chaves’ and Ammerman’s work is found in their presentation of the American congregation in its traditional and institutional form, an element that supports and connects with denominational life in the United States and provides a framework for discussion of denominational decline, and with the previously cited factors, presents a more fully formed understanding of the societal and cultural shifts influencing American Christianity and the Church in the United States.

2.4.3 Decline of Mainline Denominations

The second decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed a continued departure of Americans from mainline denominations, with 2014 data reflecting an 18.1% decline since 2007, a rate of decline faster than any other major Protestant group,³⁰⁹ “from approximately 41 million in 2007 to 36 million in 2014,”³¹⁰ and with mounting numbers of Americans choosing to leave these denominations over “increasing

twenty-one Baptist denominations, fourteen Methodist bodies, and nine Presbyterian bodies. Even smaller religious traditions sometimes generate multiple denominations: there are, for example, twelve Mennonite and six Quaker denominations in this country” (23).

³⁰⁸ Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S Dudley and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. (Nashville, TN: Abington Press), 1998, 7.

³⁰⁹ The Pew Research Center, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number Of U.S. Adults,” May 18, 2015. The Pew Research Center is a “nonpartisan fact tank” conducting research to “inform the public about issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world,” (The Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/about/>. Accessed September 23, 2016), and among many topics and areas, Pew has researched the current trends in religion in the United States producing specific data and observations for use by interested individuals and organizations. This section relies primarily upon three significant Pew studies, but includes as well additional Pew resources identified by citation. Those significant Pew resources are: “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” (Pew Research Center. “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” May 12, 2016), U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” (Pew Research Center, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” Nov. 3, 2015), and “Religion in Everyday Life” (Pew Research Center, “Religion in Everyday Life,” April 12, 2016).

³¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults,” May 18, 2015.

liberal theological stances,”³¹¹ what Keifert describes as “major identity confusion and tremendous disaffection among members.”³¹² Illustrative of the pervasiveness of this decline are reports highlighting specific data for the Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church [USA], and the Southern Baptist Convention,³¹³ with Pew Research noting that Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists all reflecting “similar rates of losses to gains (roughly 2-to-1).”³¹⁴ Citing the General Social Survey (GSS)³¹⁵, Stetzer adds, “according to the GSS, 28% of Americans identified with a mainline church in 1972. By 2014, that number had dropped to 12.2%.” This section presents data for each denomination related to the cause of its decline, and Table 2.2 presents a comparison of mainline denominational decline as a percentage of the U.S. adult population from 2007 to 2014.³¹⁶

³¹¹ Michael Gryboski. “Left Behind in the Mainline: Witnessing Within The Episcopal Church.” *The Christian Post*, December 31, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/left-behind-in-the-mainline-witnessing-within-the-episcopal-church-131783/>. Accessed May 15, 2015.

³¹² Patrick Keifert. *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era*, 25.

³¹³ The Southern Baptist Convention maintains it, “...is not a church. It is a set of ministries supported by a network of cooperating Baptist churches... a network of autonomous churches voluntarily banded together to engage in missions enterprises and ministry activities designed to fulfill the Great Commission” (<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/acloserlook.asp>, Accessed September 29, 2016); yet it is often referred to as a denomination.

³¹⁴ Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” (Full Report), May 12, 2015, 37.

³¹⁵ General Social Survey (GSS) “began in 1972, and is particularly helpful for tracking trends in religious belief and practice” and providing what Stetzer describes as “the nuanced reality of American religion.” Ed. Stetzer. “The State of The American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 230.

³¹⁶ Noting that multiple denominations employ the description “Methodist” and “Episcopal,” Pew Research qualifies both terms with the description “In the mainline tradition,” such as Anglican/Episcopalian in the mainline tradition, and “Methodist in the mainline tradition.” Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” (Full Report), May 12, 2015, 107-108.

**Table 2.4 Mainline Denominational Decline – 2007 – 2014:
% of US Adult Population in Mainline Traditions³¹⁷**

Mainline Protestant Churches	2007	2014
	18.1	14.7
Methodist	5.4	3.9
Baptist	1.9	2.1
Lutheran	2.8	2.1
Presbyterian	1.9	1.4
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.4	1.2
Nondenominational	0.9	1.0
Congregationalist	0.7	0.5
Restorationist	0.4	0.3
Anabaptist	<0.3	<0.3
Friends	<0.3	<0.3
Reformed	<0.3	<0.3
Other/Protestant non-specific	2.5	1.9

United Methodist Church membership has been declining and continues to wane across its United States base, falling from 7,481,383 members in 2011 to 7,390,691 at the end of 2012, and losing 4.5 million members overall since 1964.³¹⁸ The state of the UMC appears even more distressing from the viewpoint of Mark Tooley, President of the Institute on Religion & Democracy. A practicing Methodist, Tooley remarked “that he did not feel confident in the survival of the UMC in America... There is nothing in its U.S. policies that can or will reverse the decline in the near future.”³¹⁹ One area of encouraging news is UMC growth in Africa where the denomination reports gains of

³¹⁷ Adapted from Pew Research Center, “Mainline Protestants Make up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults,” *Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study*, June 4-September 30, 2014. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>. May 18, 2015. See also Eddie Gibbs presentation of mainline denomination numerical decline in Figure 1.1, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2000, 16.

³¹⁸ Michael Gryboski. “United Methodist Church Reaches Record Global Membership of 12.5 Million.” *The Christian Post*, Aug 19, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/united-methodist-church-reaches-record-global-membership-of-12-5-million-110998/>. Accessed August 19, 2016.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

220,000 members annually;³²⁰ however, rates of increase for Africa, and decrease for the U.S. indicate “African United Methodists may outnumber U.S. United Methodists within 8-10 years.”³²¹

Statistics released by the Presbyterian Church (USA) reveal that membership for the denomination has fallen below 2 million, and that the denomination has lost 20 percent of its membership since 2000.³²² In a statement belying the urgency of the denomination’s condition, a church spokesman stated, “the future of our church is our embrace of that sound theology that got us started, one that I am unapologetic for;”³²³ calling into question if the denomination currently maintains its “sound theology” or needs to return to (“embrace”) it once again.

Referred to as a “church in schism,”³²⁴ the Episcopal Church in the United States has been the subject of controversy, alienating conservatives by its increasingly “progressive stance on theological matters including salvation and sexual ethics,”³²⁵ and for ordaining an openly gay bishop in 2003.³²⁶ Since then, the denomination has faced legal challenges from break-away churches and dioceses, especially in South Carolina and Texas, and faces repeated legal conflicts with dozens of member churches over

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Michael Gryboski, “United Methodist Church Continues to Decline in America, but Gains in Africa,” *The Christian Post*, September 10, 2015. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/united-methodist-church-continues-to-decline-in-america-but-gains-in-africa-79384/>

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Michael Gryboski, “Left Behind in the Mainline: Witnessing Within The Episcopal Church.” *The Christian Post*, December 31, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/left-behind-in-the-mainline-witnessing-within-the-episcopal-church-131783/>. Accessed May 15, 2015.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

church property rights and ownership.^{327, 328} While specific membership data is not available for this research, Pew Research refers to the denomination as one of the “small religious groups that account for just 1% or 2% of the U.S. population”³²⁹ and citing data showing a decline in percentage of U.S. population representation from 1.4% in 2007 to 1.2% in 2014,³³⁰ outranked by Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians.³³¹

Once considered the largest Protestant denomination in the country, membership in the Southern Baptist Convention fell to less than 16 million members in 2012, “the fifth year the denomination experienced a large decrease among its members.”³³² By 2015, SBC membership had declined to “just under 15.5 million members, down from a peak of 16.3 million in 2003.”³³³ Intensifying the seriousness of the decline is the closing

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Two cases highlight the legal situations faced by the Episcopalian Church in the United States: “A South Carolina judge ruled that Bishop Mark Lawrence and 36 South Carolina parishes had the right to leave The Episcopal Church in 2012 and take with them \$500 million in property,” Ruth Moon, “Breakaway Anglicans Can Keep Churches Worth \$500 Million, Rules South Carolina Judge.” *Gleanings*, Christianity Today, February 5, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/february/breakaway-anglicans-can-keep-churches-500-million-south-car.html>. Accessed July 17, 2016; and a Texas “state court has sided with a group of breakaway Episcopalians, ruling that they can keep their property after leaving the national church in 2008 over sharp differences on homosexuality and the authority of Scripture.” Kevin Eckstrom. “Breakaway Episcopalians Win Texas Church Property Fight,” *Religion News Service*, Published in *National Catholic Reporter*, Mar. 4, 2015. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/breakaway-episcopalians-win-texas-church-property-fight>. Accessed on 07/17/2016.

³²⁹ Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” (Full Report), May 12, 2015, 6.

³³⁰ Pew Research Center, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults,” May 18, 2015, 2.

³³¹ See Table 2.4 Mainline Denominational Decline – 2007 – 2014: % of US Adult Population in Mainline Traditions.

³³² Jessica Martinez. “Southern Baptist Pastors Hope to Revitalize Hundreds of Churches in Decline.” *The Christian Post*, Apr 15, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/southern-baptist-pastors-hope-to-revitalize-hundreds-of-churches-in-decline-117912/> Accessed June 5, 2015.

³³³ Trevin Wax “What to Make of Southern Baptists’ Declining Numbers (A Commentary)”, *Religion News Service*, June 16, 2015. <http://religionnews.com/2015/06/16/make-southern-baptists-declining-numbers-commentary/>. Accessed February 7, 2016.

of 800 to 1000 SBC congregations each year,³³⁴ the failure to attract Millennials and younger age groups,³³⁵ and not measuring success in terms of winning new Christians.”³³⁶

In summary, rates of declining membership among mainline denominations show no lessening in their downward trends. A report highlighting the decline among Southern Baptists notes this decline is related to a disconnection from culture and, or Scripture,³³⁷ and other causes for mainline denominational decline include “aging memberships, falling birth rates, lack of theological clarity, and a shortage of new churches.”³³⁸ Stetzer adds, “Mainline Protestantism as a whole is hemorrhaging... If the current trajectory continues, some mainline denominations could cease to exist in the next 4 to 5 decades.”³³⁹ Along with this, Pew Research data presents an increasingly disturbing analysis noting that, “...young Americans rising into adulthood are significantly less likely to identify with mainline denominations.”³⁴⁰ Quantifying the decline, Pew Research cites, “Nearly one-in-five Americans (19%) were raised in the mainline

³³⁴ Jessica Martinez. “Southern Baptist Pastors Hope to Revitalize Hundreds of Churches in Decline.” *The Christian Post*, Apr 15, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/southern-baptist-pastors-hope-to-revitalize-hundreds-of-churches-in-decline-117912/> Accessed June 5, 2015.

³³⁵ Morgan Lee. “Southern Baptists Struggling to Attract Younger Generations, Says New Report” *The Christian Post*, May 25, 2014. : <http://www.christianpost.com/news/southern-baptists-struggling-to-attract-younger-generations-says-new-report-119739/> June 5, 2015.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Jessica Martinez. “Southern Baptist Pastors Hope to Revitalize Hundreds of Churches in Decline.” *The Christian Post*, Apr 15, 2014. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/southern-baptist-pastors-hope-to-revitalize-hundreds-of-churches-in-decline-117912/> Accessed June 5, 2015.

³³⁸ Ed. Stetzer. “The State of The American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 232.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Pew Research Center, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number Of U.S. Adults,” May 18, 2015.

tradition, but more than half of them (10.4% of all U.S. adults) have left the faith.”³⁴¹

Keifert offers a humorous depiction of “mainline Protestant denominations, describing them as having “become a cultural appendix. Like the appendix in the human body (no one knows what it is good for any longer...) these denominations are increasingly irrelevant in shaping the imagination of our civil life.”³⁴² While mainline denominations are experiencing decline, “Evangelicalism is showing the largest growth in the American religion... constituting the largest single religious tradition in the United States... with approximately “62 million US adults identifying with Evangelical Protestant denominations.”³⁴³

2.4.4 Discarding of Denominational and Traditional Labels

The transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century gave rise to the shift from recognizable denominational and traditional labels to more generic and less identifiable church names. While many churches have retained their denominational labels, such as <location> Baptist Church, or <location> Presbyterian Church, the trend toward specific descriptive names reflecting church purpose, spiritual theme, or simply a geographic location is noticeable, especially among new church plants. Two early and notable departures from denominational identification were the Willow Creek and Saddleback Churches.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Patrick Keifert. “The Return of the Congregation: Missional Warrants.” *Word & World*, Volume XX, Number 4. Fall 2000, 368-378, 375.

³⁴³ Ed. Stetzer. “The State of The American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 233. The use of the word “denominations” here may be confusing since evangelical churches seldom present themselves as associated with any denomination.

Established in 1975 by Bill Hybels, and officially named Willow Creek Community Church, this ministry located in South Barrington, Illinois, maintains ten locations around Chicago, and averages more than 25,000 worshippers each weekend.³⁴⁴ Hybels' motivation was to establish "a safe place where seekers can hear the very dangerous, life-changing message of Jesus Christ."³⁴⁵ The church is not associated with a denomination; however, in 1992 Hybels and the Willow Creek Church began Willow Creek Association, a resource to help "Christian leaders create thriving local churches that redeem their communities for Christ."³⁴⁶ While Willow Creek Association does not claim to function as a denomination, because of its longevity and success in ministry, it has attracted multiple hundreds of churches that voluntarily employ its principles and resources suggesting the Willow Creek Church has significant influence among associated churches, not unlike a denomination.

Located in Lake Forest, California and founded in 1980 by Rick Warren, Saddleback Valley Community Church, typically referred to simply as Saddleback Church has 17 locations, of which four are international,³⁴⁷ and averages 25,000+ worshippers each weekend.³⁴⁸ Warren's goal was to establish "a place where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated, and the confused can find love, acceptance, help, hope,

³⁴⁴ Information obtained through the Willowcreek website - <http://www.willowcreek.org/en/about/history>. Accessed September 17, 2016, and supported by *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 111.

³⁴⁵ McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 408.

³⁴⁶ Information obtained through the Willow Creek Association website - <http://www.willowcreek.com/about/>. Accessed September 17, 2016.

³⁴⁷ Saddleback Church operates four international locations: Berlin, Germany, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Hong Kong, China, and Manila, Philippines. <http://saddleback.com/visit/locations>. Accessed September 24, 2016.

³⁴⁸ *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 109, 111.

forgiveness, guidance, and encouragement.”³⁴⁹ Although originally associated with the Southern Baptist Convention, Saddleback’s relationship with the SBC has been questioned and disputed, and no reference to any relationship is visible on the ministry’s website.³⁵⁰

It is important to note that churches did not abruptly begin to discard denominational labels and connections in the later half of the twentieth century; rather, the change began slowly with Willow Creek and Saddleback churches as early examples, and is reminiscent of an earlier time in American history. It had been a practice since colonial times in the United States to refer to well known churches simply by their town or distinguishing name. Jonathan Edwards pastored a Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts, commonly referred to simply as Northampton Church. Established in 1683 and still in active use, the Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, Virginia was originally an Anglican Church for early English colonists of coastal Virginia.³⁵¹ It has been regularly referred to as Bruton Parish Church from its inception demonstrating that denominational labels were not always employed, but assumed when referencing a church in colonial America.

Finally, a nineteenth century example of a church without denominational name is Moody Church in Chicago, Illinois. Established in 1858 by Dwight L. Moody, Moody Church has never been associated with a denomination, and is referred to as “an

³⁴⁹ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 408.

³⁵⁰ Michale Faust. “Rick Warren Dispels Rumors, Says Church Committed to SBC” *Baptist Press*, August 24, 2005. <http://www.bpnews.net/21451/rick-warren-dispels-rumors-says-church-committed-to-sbc>. Accessed September 24, 2016.

³⁵¹ Visitors Leaflet, Bruton Parish Episcopal Church, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2005.

independent evangelical church.”³⁵² Table 2.5 presents a sampling of churches in the United States without denominational or traditional labels, demonstrating the twentieth to twenty-first century trend away from conventional naming descriptions.

Table 2.5 Churches Without Denominational or Traditional Labels³⁵³

Name	Location	Affiliation ³⁵⁴
12Stone Church	Lawrenceville, Georgia	Wesleyan
3Circle Church	Fairhope, Alabama	Southern Baptist
The Church of Eleven22	Jacksonville, Florida	Nondenominational
Crossroads	Cincinnati, Ohio	Nondenominational
Elevation Church	Matthews, North Carolina	Southern Baptist
Embrace Church	Souix Falls, South Dakota	United Methodist
Hope Fellowship	Frisco, Texas	Nondenominational
The Journey	Newark, Delaware	Nondenominational
Peoples Church	Salem, Oregon	Assemblies of God
Rockford First	Rockford, Illinois	Assemblies of God
The Village Church	Flower Mound, Texas	Southern Baptist
Next Level Church	Somersworth, New Hampshire	Nondenominational
Venue Church	Chattanooga, Tennessee	Nondenominational
Church of the Highlands	Birmingham, Alabama	Nondenominational
North Point Ministries	Alpharetta, Georgia	Nondenominational
The Summit Church	Durham, North Carolina	Southern Baptist
The Avenue Church	Waxahachie, Texas	Southern Baptist
Nineteen:Ten Church	Boerne, Texas	Nondenominational
The Bridge Church	Ottumwa, Iowa	Nondenominational
City Church	San Antonio, Texas	Nondenominational

Of the 100 fastest growing churches listed in the *Outreach Magazine* “Special Issue 2015,” only 13% are known by traditional or denominational names; the majority or

³⁵² <http://www.moodychurch.org/150th-anniversary/brief-history-moody-church/>. Accessed September 17, 2016.

³⁵³ Restated from “The 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America: The Outreach Magazine and Lifeway Research Annual Report.” *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 82. Table 2.5 is presented as a selection of churches for representation purposes.

³⁵⁴ “The 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America: The Outreach Magazine and Lifeway Research Annual Report” *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 80.

87% reflect a nontraditional naming convention.³⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that two of the 100 fastest growing churches for 2015 were associated with a mainline denomination considered as declining in the United States: the United Methodist Church. Table 2.6 presents information for these churches.

Table 2.6 Fastest Growing Mainline Denomination Churches³⁵⁶

Rank	Church	Attendance	# Growth	% Growth	Founded
10	Embrace Church	2114	687	48	2006
31	Cornerstone UMC	2282	427	23	1990

It is essential to distinguish that while the churches presented in Tables 2.5 and 2.6 have obtained a place of recognition in a national magazine for attendance growth, it does not necessarily signify that these churches embrace or represent a missional approach to ministry where focus has informed form and function.³⁵⁷

2.5 New Form and Models

A new and different expression of church has emerged in the transition from the twentieth to twenty-first century, and within the secularized, post Christian U.S.

³⁵⁵ Stetzer believes, “Soon, the largest evangelical denomination will be nondenominational.” Ed. Stetzer. “The State of The American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 233.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ The article “The 100 Fastest-Growing Churches” from Outreach Magazine dealt specifically with levels and rates of growth among churches in the United States and did not incorporate questions of missional concept or practice. Information from the article presented in this research is not intended to suggest that these churches embrace a missional concept or motivation, but as illustrative of current practice among churches in the United States. It is true that this practice is prevalent among missionally motivated churches.

culture.³⁵⁸ This new expression can be seen in a variety of expressions, but overall, reflects a sensitivity to the changing culture, and attempts to embrace an *incarnational* as opposed to an *attractional* expression of ministry, or as Frost and Hirsch explain, “living out the gospel *within* its cultural context rather than perpetuating an institutional commitment *apart from* its cultural context.”³⁵⁹ Guder adds, “The faith community can and should be formed in ways that relate to the culture in which the witness is to be carried out. There is no normative way to organize local congregations.”³⁶⁰ This new expression is the emerging *evangelical new paradigm missional* church, aligning itself with the mission of God, and seeing itself as sent into its surrounding culture.³⁶¹

2.5.1 The Emerging Evangelical New Paradigm Missional Church

Stuart Murray describes the challenge and opportunity facing the church; “Churches are alien institutions telling a story few know or understand. Some emerging churches are grappling with the paradigm shift involved in becoming truly missional.”³⁶² As “alien institutions,” churches have become increasingly marginalized, with denominational churches declining, and traditional models maintaining status quo at best

³⁵⁸ Guder asserts, “What we once regarded as Christendom is now a post-Constantinian, post-Christendom and even post-Christian mission field.” Darrell L. Guder. *Missional church: a vision for the sending of the church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1998, 7.

³⁵⁹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping Of Things To Come: Innovation And Mission For The 21st Century Church* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 2003, ix. Frost and Hirsch explain attractional as “an approach to Christian mission in which the church develops programs, meetings, services, and other “products” in order to attract unbelievers into the influence of the Christian” *Shaping*, 225. They explain incarnational as “the stance taken by the church... to go forth and enter into the lives of a host community,” *Shaping*, 228.

³⁶⁰ Darrell Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 147.

³⁶¹ Neil Cole offers an interesting interpretation on church models based on the Book of Acts in the New Testament, See Neil Cole. *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010), 99-113.

³⁶² Stuart Murray. *Church after Christendom* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 75.

and seeking ways to survive.^{363, 364} The emerging evangelical new paradigm missional church is different, seeing itself within God's mission (the *missio Dei*), and seeking "to reenter [the world] as a missionary presence... living adventurously as a subversive movement, realizing afresh its total reliance on the Lord."³⁶⁵ It sees its own context as their mission,³⁶⁶ understanding it is God's mission that sends the Church, and that "Mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation and to call people into a reconciled covenantal relationship with God,"³⁶⁷ or as Guder states, "The Church is neither the purpose or goal of the gospel, but its instrument and witness."³⁶⁸ The term missional emphasizes the "essential nature and vocation of the church" characterized within an ecclesiology that is biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological, and that can be practiced."^{369, 370}

While not using the term 'missional' explicitly in relationship to emerging churches, Gibbs and Bolger describe a church bearing distinct missional characteristics. They write, "...emerging churches are missional communities arising from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus who are seeking to be faithful in

³⁶³ Eddie Gibbs expounds on church marginalization in *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: University Press, 2000), 50-51.

³⁶⁴ Guder maintains, "...the Western church has tended to shape and fit the gospel into its cultural context and made the church's institutional extension and survival its priority." Guder. *Missional Church*, 5.

³⁶⁵ Eddie Gibbs. *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 51.

³⁶⁶ Guder. *Missional Church*, 7.

³⁶⁷ David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer. *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues In The Third Millennium*, Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 24.

³⁶⁸ Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

³⁶⁹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 11-12. Hirsch and Catchim believe ecclesiology is absolutely essential in the reconfiguration of ministry to suit a missional context but fear many "are unwilling to recalibrate the ecclesiology." Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim. *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice For The 21st Century Church* (San Francisco California: Jossey-Bass publishing, 2012), 7.

³⁷⁰ This brief definition is intended only as an introduction; a more detailed, in-depth discussion of the missional church is included in chapter 3.

their place and time,³⁷¹ reflecting agreement with the broader missional conversation. However, in attempting to assign it a place in American Christianity and among US churches, Gibbs and Bolger draw a distinction between the emerging missional church and evangelicals. They state, “...the label (evangelical) does not define [missional leaders] as it has for evangelical leaders in the past,”³⁷² and add “...emerging leaders sometimes struggle when asked to identify themselves. They may look back to what they are emerging *from* more than they look forward to what they are emerging *into*.”³⁷³ Furthering the discussion, Gibbs and Bolger appear to advocate for the dropping of descriptive church labels, or at least the evangelical label, writing, “Why is it important to label oneself as evangelical? Aren’t labels simply artificial divisions that make us feel safe or help to exert control?”³⁷⁴ and concluding, “...the ecclesiastical or theological label one decides to wear is of far less concern to emerging churches than how one relates to the gospel and culture.”³⁷⁵

In contrast to Gibbs and Bolger, Tickle asserts the emerging church “had its earliest proponents and energy in evangelicalism,”³⁷⁶ and Stetzer believes that the migration from institutional/traditional churches to emerging missional churches is indeed an evangelical movement.³⁷⁷ Richardson provides an important evaluation of the

³⁷¹ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 28.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁷³ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 28.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ Phyllis Tickle. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 92.

³⁷⁷ Stetzer writes, “... Overall evangelicalism is showing the largest growth in American religion... Many

emerging evangelical new paradigm missional church, and while not expressly linking it with evangelicals, draws sufficient comparisons between the two groups to show an intrinsic relationship.³⁷⁸

2.5.2 Emerging Missional Models

Multiple models or expressions may be found within the emerging evangelical new paradigm missional church. Hirsch and Catchim maintain that the emergence of these multiple models, described as “untraditional, post denominational, enormously diverse, experimental with form and styles, not beholden to the received traditions, decidedly countercultural” is evidence that Western Christendom is over.³⁷⁹ Supporting Hirsch and Catchim’s assertion, Murray provides examples of church models reflecting a missional purpose, presented in Table 2.7.

of the ‘Nones’ are attending nondenominational churches, [an] overlooked segment of the church... Soon the largest evangelical ‘denomination’ will be nondenominational,” and “More than one third of Americans are evangelical by self identification.” See Ed Stetzer. “The State of The American Church: When Numbers Point to a New Reality.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 230–237.

³⁷⁸ Rick Richardson. “Emerging Missional Movements: An Overview and Assessment of Some Implications For Mission(s)” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 37, No. 3, July 2013, 131-136.

³⁷⁹ Hirsch and Catchim. *The Permanent Revolution*, xv.

Table 2.7 Missional Church Models³⁸⁰

Seeker oriented church	‘belonging before believing’
Purpose driven Church	Five ecclesial purposes: worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry
Cell church	Network of small neighborhood churches meeting weekly and joining for corporate celebration
G-12 Cell church	Groups of 12, each of whom forms their own further group of 12
Clusters	Congregation-sized communities with a clear missional identity; offers a broader church experiencing greater intimacy
Café style church	Café format, seeker oriented, interactive, welcoming atmosphere
Work place church	Establish to respond to the demands of contemporary work patterns
Pub church	Integrated into the pub community, accepted as part of life
Club culture church	Offers affinity for those who share a love of dance, music and clubbing, hosting culturally appropriate events
Enterprise church	Building relationships, shared projects and enterprises

For the most part, Murray’s list of church models appears to share a missional motivation, but he cautions, “post-Christendom churches will be messy communities where belonging, believing, and behaving are in process rather than neatly integrated.”³⁸¹

Additional models or expressions gaining prevalence in the United States include Multi-Site, Organic, and Micro Churches.

2.5.2.1 Multi-Site Ministry

The seeds of the multi-site model were planted in the latter half of the 20th century with two churches commonly seen as pioneers in developing this concept: Willow Creek

³⁸⁰ Condensed and adapted from Stuart Murray. *Church After Christendom*, (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 75-80. “Seeker Oriented” and “Purpose Driven” are two descriptions that may not accurately reflect a missional motivation. “Seeker Oriented” is generally associated with Willow Creek Community Church, and “Purpose Driven,” with Saddleback Church, both of which began before the emphasis on missional churches, and continue with their established model and motivation, again, both reflecting the multi-site approach to ministry, which is highly attractational and in conflict with Hirsch and Frost’s emphasis on the incarnational element.

³⁸¹ Stuart Murray. *Church After Christendom*, (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 35.

Church (1975), and Saddleback Church (1980). Since beginning, both churches have developed additional campuses or sites apart from their primary location. Their advance into this model of ministry has led to more than 5000 churches in this category;³⁸² Table 2. 8 presents a small sampling of this model in the United States.

Table 2.8 Multi-site Churches with the Most Locations³⁸³

Name	Location	Sites	Attendance
Saddleback Church	Lake forest, California	14	25,031
Church of the Highlands	Birmingham, Alabama	11	30,807
NewSpring Church	Anderson, South Carolina	11	27,836
New Life Church	Conway, Arkansas	10	12,271
Woodside Bible Church	Troy, Michigan	10	8,262
12Stone Church	Lawrenceville, Georgia	9	16,657
Christ Fellowship Church	Palm Beach, Gardens Florida	9	21,516
Elevation Church	Matthews, North Carolina	9	17,569
The Crossing	Quincy, Illinois	9	7,027
Willow Creek Church	Chicago, Illinois	9	25,172

Murray includes the “seeker-sensitive” and “purpose driven” models in his list of missional churches, models easily identified with the Willow Creek and Saddleback Churches. Both of these churches have led the transition to the multi-site model (although not exclusively), a model that is minimally missional at best, reflecting a highly attractational and consumer-oriented form of ministry with occasional incarnational elements such as community projects. Regarding large multi-site ministries, McGrath asks, “So is this the future? A major transformation of the religious life of the United

³⁸² Stetzer writes, Numbering “more than 5000 churches... Multisite has joined a list of models and approaches that were once out of the mainstream and now is commonplace... Though I would not have guessed it ten years ago, it's normal now.” Ed Stetzer. “Multisite Evolution”. *The Exchange: Christianity Today*, June 18, 2013. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/june/multisite-evolution.html>. Accessed October 15, 2014.

³⁸³ Restated from “The 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America: The Outreach Magazine and Lifeway Research Annual Report.” *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 82. Table 2.8 is presented as a selection of churches for representation purposes.

States is underway,³⁸⁴ and claims this type of church is becoming “the new diocese, with large numbers of orbiting planets. They are more responsive to social change, easier to manage and cheaper to run than traditional denominations;”³⁸⁵ however, he adds, “the longer-term outcome, remains uncertain.”³⁸⁶ McGrath’s reference to “the new diocese” is interesting and probably true in describing the method in which multi-site churches function; unfortunately, McGrath’s statement does not account for the attractational and consumer-oriented nature of these large ministries, a feature that overshadows much of their activities. Multi-site churches are typically a variation of the traditional model, offering a variety of centrally located ‘programs’ appealing to the consumeristic culture of Americans,³⁸⁷ and into which some element of community involvement is added, not as the primary focus of the overall ministry, but as a function alongside other activities. Critiquing the multi-site ministry form in a negative fashion, J. D. Greear, himself a multi-site senior pastor states, “in the future we are going to see a small group of flashier and flashier mega-churches fighting for a larger piece of a rapidly shrinking pie of bored Christians...The key for the future is sending capacity not seating capacity.”³⁸⁸ Using

³⁸⁴ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 409.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 408 - 409.

³⁸⁶ McGrath makes an interesting and important point, stating, "As such groups become more established, they become more respectable. Their emerging leaders attend seminaries that become more liberal, with the result that the denomination themselves become more liberal in the next generation... [leading] to division within the denomination and the breaking away of groups to form more conservative or fundamentalist denominations." McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 409.

³⁸⁷ Bosch notes that ministry in the United States is characterized by “...consumer Christians who shop around among churches for the best package deal they can get.” See D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International), 1995, 57. Watson and Scalen add, “with the primacy of the consumer, each church or religious organization tries to fashion a product that consistently meets consumer preferences.” See J. B. Watson, Jr. and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches.” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83, no. 3/4 (2008), pp. 171-180, 175.

³⁸⁸ J. D. Greear. Thomas Road Baptist Church Refuel Conference. October 14, 2014. http://content.trbcmmedia.com/2014/refuel/20141014_10am.mp4. Accessed August 10, 2016.

Niemandt's description of incarnational, where "faith happens in every day life... [meaning] that being a church happens in the world,"³⁸⁹ the typical nature of multi-site churches as described previously disqualifies this model as a true missional expression.³⁹⁰

2.5.2.2 Organic Ministry

Reggie McNeal describes the organic church as "...decentralized, simple, not membership driven, synced with the normal life routines and patterns, not dependent on clergy, and focused on the spiritual development of the participants and the people they touch."³⁹¹ Neil Cole is most often associated with this model in the United States, and citing Matthew 16:18, emphasizes the centrality of Christ in organic churches, including specific emphasis on multiplication.³⁹² Typically, this model meets in homes; however, Cole's intent is to avoid the house church label, preferring the term 'organic churches,'³⁹³ and explaining, "church should happen wherever life happens." Cole states, "You shouldn't have to leave life to go to church."³⁹⁴ Ecclesia Communities in Lynchburg, Virginia operates as an organic ministry, meeting exclusively in homes with a multi-generational, multi-cultural attendance. Another example is the Oregon Public House in Portland, Oregon, a ministry sensitive to, and fashioned around its context, operating out

³⁸⁹ Niemandt adds the following elements as illustrating an incarnational emphasis: "1) a shift in focus from church to communities; 2) a shift from church life to real life – doing God's work in everyday life; 3) and shifts from the Christian life in the church to everyday life; and 4) a shift from church programs to living and participating in God's mission." CJP Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology," *Missionalia*, Vol. 38, Number 3, November 2010 ISSN 0256-9507. 397-413, 408.

³⁹⁰ Keifert offers a practical guide for church transformation in his *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era*. Allelon Publishers, 2006.

³⁹¹ Reggie McNeal. *Missional Renaissance: Changing The Scorecard For The Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2009), 57-58.

³⁹² Neil Cole. *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishing, 2005), 7-15, 22.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

of a pub. The Life in Deep Ellum ministry, in Dallas, Texas, may be an example of organic ministry, but prefers to use “cultural center” to describe itself in place of the word ‘church.’ This usage reflects the ministry’s contextual view and commitment to incarnational interaction with its community having identified the essential elements of its context as art, music, commerce, community, and faith, and positioning itself to relate in each area.

2.5.2.3 Micro Churches

Tampa Underground is “an agile network of small communities dedicated to mission,”³⁹⁵ located across Tampa, Florida. Like organic, the ministry is contextually sensitive and describes itself as “a community of missional communities... exist[ing] to serve those communities.”³⁹⁶ At present, this example appears unique within the United States context.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The development and formation of American Christianity may be unique from Christianity’s development in any other setting in the world. Hatch describes this development/formation process as a populist movement, citing “opposition to centralized authority, demands for a dispersal of power, along with a desire to mobilize ordinary people, ... [challenging] them to take responsibility for their destiny,” as elements resembling “a mass democratic movement.”³⁹⁷ What resulted was a uniquely American form of Christianity “reshaped by common people who molded it in their own image and

³⁹⁵ Paul J. Pastor. “The Life Subterranean: A Cutting-Edge Florida Church Network Read Discovers the Life Of Mission.” *Outreach Magazine*, July/August 2016, 66-72.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁹⁷ Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. 212.

threw themselves into expanding its influence.”³⁹⁸ This populist movement wanted its churches “in [its] own hands,” and became increasingly assertive, demanding a church that was unpretentious, and down to earth.”³⁹⁹ Hatch states, “It was this upsurge of democratic hope that characterized so many religious cultures in the early republic and brought Baptist, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and a host of other insurgent groups to the fore.”⁴⁰⁰

There is a correlation or parallel between the development/formation processes of Christianity in early America and the current activities of the emerging evangelical new paradigm missional churches in the United States. The current activities feeding a redefinition of Christianity spring from seeds sown centuries ago, and appear to be an inherent feature of American Christianity as it responds to changing cultural and societal drives. Just as in earlier years when significant leaders provided direction and influence leading to a redefined Christianity, significant voices, both national and international are providing direction and influence that is helping to fuel a present-day redefinition of American Christianity, and the redefinition is already underway. From the very simple departure from denominational and traditional labels, to the growing diversity of church models/expressions targeting communities and unique settings with incarnational ministry, American Christianity is being redefined around missional concepts that are helping churches respond to a secularized, Post Christendom culture. Just as in seventeenth and eighteenth century America, groups and individuals took matters into their own hands, so it is true today. American denominational leadership and

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 9

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

institutional/traditional churches are failing to change course resulting in declining membership and influence, while individuals and groups *are* responding to the need for change by applying missional principles and producing models (*forms*) of church that effectively reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARD A MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY SHAPED BY FOCUS, FORM, AND FUNCTION

3.1 Introduction

The outlook of traditional⁴⁰¹ religious leadership concerning the future of American Christianity and the overall state of the Church in the United States reflects two primary positions: concern, coupled with fear and doubt. Overall, this concern results from a sense of apprehension over the continued decline of denominational memberships and ineffective efforts across nearly all religious groups to re-engage younger generations who in increasing numbers are rejecting traditional religious experience and expressions of church. This concern has increased to fear and doubt among a number of mainline denominations with the forecast of an impending demise reflecting across traditional churches, an element identified consistently throughout the primary sources of this research, noted especially by Newbign, Bosch, Guder, Hirsch, Peterson, and Pew Research. Highlighting the seriousness of this situation and citing “unmistakable signs of decline,” Stetzer writes, “The polls are in, and the news is bad for the Church in America.”⁴⁰² Christianity is on the decline, Americans have given up on God, and the “Nones” – those who have no religious ties – are on the rise.”⁴⁰³ Cole addresses this

⁴⁰¹ Although they use “traditional” to describe the majority of churches in the U.S., Nell and Grobler also employ the insightful term “institutional” to describe these churches that are products of Christendom and operate as churches have in the United States since its founding. See Ian A Nell and Rudolph Grobler, “An Exploration of Fresh Expressions as Missional Church: Some Practical-Theological Perspectives” *NGTT DEEL* 55, NR 3 & 4, 2014, 747-768.

⁴⁰² Stetzer uses “Church” in its broadest sense applying the term across the majority of expressions of American Christianity. See Ed Stetzer. “The State of the American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 230.

⁴⁰³ Ed Stetzer. “The State of the American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” July 2016. *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 230. Stetzer expands his view with a seeming contradiction stating, “American religion is in a period of slow decline... None of this decline is happening fast, and levels of religious involvement in the United States continue to remain very high by world standards. But the signs

seriousness more urgently stating, “At this point our options are to change or die,”⁴⁰⁴ and Hirsch quantifies the depth of this urgency with his belief, “...the battle for the future of Christianity in the West will be worked out in America— ...If we fail right here, right now, in America, then I really fear the eventual passing of a vibrant biblical Christianity in Western contexts.”^{405, 406} The state of American Christianity and the Church in the United States is precarious, rendered so by the increasing secularization of American society, producing a post-Christendom, post-Christian culture. With the decline in religious interest increasing, if the Church in the United States will have any influence in the lives of twenty-first century Americans, then significant and immediate change is required.⁴⁰⁷

Beginning in the mid twentieth century with noted contributors such as Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch among others, a discussion regarding how Christianity functions and should function in the world developed into calls for a fundamental change in the understanding of mission, including how mission is defined, practiced, and continued.⁴⁰⁸ The Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement⁴⁰⁹ is one

of decline are unmistakable.” While Stetzer’s statement on religious involvement among Americans as “high by world standards” would find agreement among authors used in this research (See D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture*, 10), his description of denominational decline as “slow” will find disagreement among many of the same authors. See Ed Stetzer. “The State of the American Church: When Numbers Point To A New Reality.” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No.3, 230-237, 231.

⁴⁰⁴ Neil Cole. “Why We Cannot Afford to Stay Where We Are”, *100 Movements Blog*, July 26, 2016.

⁴⁰⁵ Alan Hirsch. *Fast Forward To Mission: Frameworks for a Life of Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2014, 42.

⁴⁰⁶ Similar to Stetzer’s use of “Church” in a broad application across multiple expressions (institutional, denominational, non-denominational, evangelical, etc) Cole and Hirsch also reference Christianity in the United States in a broad and inclusive manner.

⁴⁰⁷ Following the election of Donald Trump to the office of President of the United States, Alan Hirsch is increasingly pessimistic regarding the ability of the evangelical church to accomplish this needed change; Personal conversation with Alan Hirsch, November 19, 2016.

⁴⁰⁸ Darrell L. Guder writes, “Mission is... seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission... There is church because there is mission, not vice versa.”

example of such calls, with its desire “to link belief with praxis” within “a united statement from evangelicals globally; [shaping] agendas in Christian ministry...”⁴¹⁰

Evident across multiple continents including North America, calls for a fundamental change in concept and practice (what Bosch, Guder and others term “a paradigm shift”⁴¹¹) have taken root in the United States with individuals and groups beginning to redefine American Christianity in specific localities in a manner similar to actions seen in seventeenth and eighteenth century Colonial America and early United States, and reflecting elements of Fresh Expression as identified by Nell and Grobler.

To say that all participants in this change process recognize their participation in a paradigm shift or have as their goal the redefinition of American Christianity on a broad scale is too encompassing. Certainly, many authors *are* calling for substantive changes that will dramatically alter how the Church sees itself and operates, thus producing a

Darryl L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of The Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2000, 20. Guder also refers to the concept of ministry continuing as, “the continual conversion of the church [which] happens as the congregation hears, responds to, and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ in ever new and more comprehensive ways.” Guder. *Continuing Conversion*, 150.

⁴⁰⁹ Known formerly as The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the Lausanne Movement was formed following a 1974 “global congress to re-frame Christian mission in a world of political, economic, intellectual, and religious upheaval” held in Lausanne, Switzerland. “Its aim... to facilitate global collaboration in making Christ known to all people.” <https://www.lausanne.org/about-the-movement>, Accessed October 29, 2016.

⁴¹⁰ “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Vol. 35, no. 2 (04, 2011): 59-80, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/861354120?accountid=12085.167-168>. The Cape Town Commitment was produced following the Third Lausanne Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010.

⁴¹¹ Bosch and Guder use “paradigm shift” in the same manner as Gibbs uses “new-paradigm” churches. Each see the necessity for a transformed church to address a post-Christendom United States. David Bosch defines paradigm shift as, “...a time of deep uncertainty – and such uncertainty appears to be one of the few constants of the contemporary era and one of the factors that engender strong reactions in favor of hanging onto the enlightenment paradigm, in spite of signs from all quarters that it is breaking up.” See David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 1991, 349. Bosch also provides a detailed examination of major paradigms in the history of Christianity and identifies the emergence of a “Postmodern Paradigm” as necessary for the continued vitality of Christianity in the West. Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, 349.

paradigm shift that results in a renewed permeation of Christianity throughout the United States, but certain churches identified in this chapter have a more precise focus: ministry that identifies with its own particular location and context, and opens opportunities for demonstrations of an incarnational presence.⁴¹² Their motivation for approaching ministry as they do is to bring the reality of Jesus Christ (an incarnational presence) to where they are, and if asked, would agree that the United States has become a mission field itself that must experience a renewed sense of the reality of Christ, but again, their concentration is on their own locations and contexts specifically.^{413, 414} To accomplish their intent of an incarnational presence (bringing the reality of Christ to their contexts), these churches have embraced a contextual concentration (*focus*) to construct a ministry presence (*form*) unhindered by traditional religious concepts, creating opportunities for interaction and dialogue with people in their own settings (*function*). This approach is illustrative of, and demonstrates missional thinking and action.

3.2 What is Missional Ministry?

In discussing the meaning of missional ministry, Hirsch and Catchim write, “Clearly one of the biggest issues in the church today is the discussion about what it means to be missional. We believe that how we deal with this will determine the future

⁴¹² Stuart Murray uses the term “centrifugal approach”, defined as “we must ‘go’ to people instead of hoping they will ‘come’”. Missionaries into western culture will be the ‘seekers’! See Stuart Murray. *Changing Mission: Learning From The Newer Churches* (London: churches together in Britain and Ireland), 2006, 61.

⁴¹³ To this Darrell Guder writes, “Local” implies “place,” a “particular, identifiable place.” The basic unit of Christian community is formed and lives out its witness in particular places, where its members can gather regularly for worship and work,” and “The faith community can and should be formed in ways that relate to the culture in which the witness is to be carried out. There is no normative way to organize local congregations.” See Darryl L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2000, 145, 147.

⁴¹⁴ Tampa Underground is an exception to this statement, with ministry presences in Alabama, Illinois, Nebraska, Haiti, Hamburg, Germany, Ireland, and the Philippines in addition to their primary presence in Tampa, Florida. See Tampa Underground interview, Appendix C.

viability of the church in the West.”⁴¹⁵ A definition of what *missional* means would be helpful in understanding what it requires, or in identifying its presence; however, while a number of descriptions and explanations reflect similarities, these descriptions for *missional* ministry vary by author, and an agreeable definition across a majority of authors appears elusive. In addition, Roxburgh and Boren caution against relying on a definition simply because words have different meanings to different people, and demonstrate this point by the variety of meanings assigned to the words *mission* and *church*, especially when they are combined.⁴¹⁶ Also of concern is the tendency to use a definition to produce a standard model, a concept Murray warns against stating, “Let the mission context be primary, shaping the churches that emerge, rather than imposing models of church on communities.”⁴¹⁷ Further complicating efforts for a unified definition of *missional* is Guder’s statement regarding GOCN’s work on *Missional Church*; he writes,

The research team chose the term precisely because it was a relatively unknown word. We wanted to stimulate a theological conversation about the church... We needed, somehow, to find a way to talk about the fundamentally missional nature of the church without using terms freighted with all kinds of baggage. By proposing the term missional we wanted to claim the right to define what it means.⁴¹⁸

Guder’s statement provides an understanding for why multiple and varied definitions

⁴¹⁵ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim. *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for The 21st Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing), 2012, 7.

⁴¹⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren. *Introducing The Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How To Become One*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2009, 28–29.

⁴¹⁷ Stuart Murray. *Changing Mission: Learning from the Newer Churches* (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland), 2006, 26. Murray’s statement may be seen as supporting missional ministry constructed on the basis of focus and form.

⁴¹⁸ Darryl L. Guder. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2015, 63.

now exist, which hinders efforts for a cohesive definition agreeable to all. He adds, “Of course, since then the word has taken on so many meanings, any discussion must always begin with yet another clarification of terms,”⁴¹⁹ an element Van Gelder and Zscheile stress as well noting Roxburgh’s statement, “The word “missional” seems to have traveled the remarkable path of going from obscurity to banality in only one decade.”⁴²⁰ Indeed, Roxburgh presents the more abstract description of missional ministry among authors used in this research. His apprehension for defining *missional* ministry is evident with his use of the phrase “tactics and strategies to make it [a definition] real.”⁴²¹ He describes missional life as “discovered out on a wide, wild river... shaped by three powerful currents we call *mystery*, *memory*, and *mission*,” and adds “entering the missional waters is not about strategies for models; it is about working with the currents that shape our imagination of what God is doing in this world.”⁴²² Less abstract, but still in line with Roxburgh is Van Gelder and Zscheile’s explanation, which stresses that *missional* refers to “what the church is” as opposed to “what the church does”⁴²³ and concludes, “It is important to resist the common tendency to reduce missional church to a set of rules to follow, discrete characteristics, or summary principles. There is no model for what a missional church looks like.”⁴²⁴ Van Gelder and Zscheile expand their “no model” thesis by apparently allowing for an unlimited number of missional expressions,

⁴¹⁹ Darrell L. Guder. *Called To Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2015, 64.

⁴²⁰ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends in Shaping the Conversation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic) 2011, 1.

⁴²¹ Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren. *Introducing The Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How To Become One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2009, 36.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 39. Roxburgh’s description was considered too abstract to include in the selection of descriptions compiled and presented in Table 3.1.

⁴²³ Van Gelder and Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 9.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

stating, “Missional” displays an inherent elasticity that allows it to be understood in a variety of ways... demonstrated through each use by various faith relations to express an understanding of mission from within their own biblical and theological perspectives.”⁴²⁵

The positions presented by Roxburgh, Van Gelder and Zscheile raise an important question; What qualifies a church as a *missional* ministry? If their positions are an accurate description, then how may a missional church be recognized as such? If as they suggest, there are no identifying characteristics, practices, or even tendencies, then any ministry could claim to be a *missional* expression simply because it defined itself as such. Both Roxburgh, and Van Gelder and Zscheile’s descriptions are understandable in light of American Christianity’s love for reproducible examples and strategies that duplicate a methodology employed by another church, but perpetuate a failing Christendom approach to Christianity in a post-Christendom world; however, their vague descriptions offer little help in defining or explaining what *missional* is, especially to those for whom the term is new or unfamiliar. Roxburgh’s resistance to a definition for *missional* may reflect his efforts to distance the Church from practices (“tactics and strategies”) reminiscent of its privileged Christendom position, an understandable motivation if true; however, the abstract nature of Roxburgh’s description does more to hinder than help efforts to produce a concept where *missional* may be understood without confusion. In the same way Van Gelder and Zscheile’s description of *missional* as “what the church is” as opposed to “what the church does” in order to avoid “characteristics or summary principles”⁴²⁶ creates an apparent contradiction when compared to their focus on “Missional Practices of Church Life and Leadership,” where they state, “What does

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 149.

missional church look like in practice?” and “the logic of missional theology offers promising possibilities for matters such as congregational practices, leadership, structures, the starting a new congregations, and the renewal of existing ones.”⁴²⁷ These descriptions of congregational practices suggest the presence of identifiable characteristics whereby a missional church may be recognized, and Van Gelder’s description of the missional church “Exist[ing] as a community created by the spirit that is missionary by nature and being called and sent to participate in God’s mission in the world,” also suggests a definition.⁴²⁸ As presented, the positions of these authors leave *missional* vague and undefined, open to a variety of interpretations, and reinforces the need for a working definition of the term.

3.2.1 A Functional Understanding

To arrive at a functional understanding and meaning of *missional*, it seems necessary to construct a working definition for the term; however, Roxburgh and Van Gelder and Zscheile’s descriptions/positions do not provide a sufficient basis to construct such a definition; therefore, a more comprehensive approach utilizing a greater number of descriptions is required. Comparing a selection of descriptions for *missional* ministry employed by a greater number of authors used in this research produced a range of explanations reflecting each author’s use of specific terminology and revealing their individual focus. On the surface, the varied statements used in this comparison appear to lend credence to Roxburgh, Murray, and Van Gelder and Zscheile’s assertion that there is not, and [perhaps] should not be a standard description or definition of *missional*,

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 147. Missional Practices of Church Life and Leadership is the title of Chapter 6 in *The Missional Church in Perspective*.

⁴²⁸ Craig Van Gelder. *The Ministry of the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic) 2007, 73.

suggesting that the construction of an overall definition may be impossible. Yet, it seems reasonable that there should be elements that characterize a *missional* ministry, and that such elements producing characterizations would in fact form the basis of a definition, an endeavor this research has attempted.

While there is disparity across the selected authors' descriptions for the term *missional*, and a working definition for it obscure at least initially, there is no gap or inconsistency in their identification of that which underlies and supports missional ministry; each author agrees on the essential element of the *missio Dei*.⁴²⁹

3.2.2 Missio Dei

Essential to understanding and defining *missional* ministry is the mission of God or the *missio Dei*, an element which primary authors agree, forms the basis for Christianity's mission, and is understood as "the self-revelation of God as the One who loves the world..."⁴³⁰ Leading contributors to the missional dialogue explain *missio Dei* as centered in a Trinitarian missionary framework where God the Father sent the Son, and God the Father and Son sent the Spirit, and where the Trinity now sends the Church, clarifying mission not as "an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a

⁴²⁹ Bosch states emphatically, There is "...no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*." David J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International), 1995, 32. Niemandt agrees citing, "The classical formulation of *missio Dei* confirms that mission is God's way of sending forth." Cornelius JP Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology," *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 399. Finally, Van Gelder and Zscheille add, "The foundation for all mission – all "sending" – is the act of the triune God to enter the world in Christ, to suffer and die and be raised again. At heart, mission is about the *missio Dei*" Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheille. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 94.

⁴³⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

missionary God...⁴³¹ Bosch sees the *missio Dei* as “the overarching concept” defining God’s activities in the world, where “God’s salvific work precedes both church and mission,” and where mission is not subordinated “to the church nor the church to the mission, [but] both [are] taken up into the *missio Dei*.”⁴³² Supporting this, Newbigin states, “The mission is not ours, but God’s... We are not engaged in an enterprise of our own choosing or devising. We are invited to participate in an activity of God... through the presence of the Holy Spirit, participants in the Son’s loving obedience to the Father.”⁴³³ Niemandt adds, “The classical formulation of *missio Dei* affirms that mission is God’s way of sending forth... the participation of the church in the divine mission.”⁴³⁴ The resulting extension of these understandings is that “there is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people...”⁴³⁵ Van Gelder and Zscheile provide a concise application of *missio Dei* to twenty-first century ministry explaining that the concept of being sent is “the act of the Triune God to enter the world in Christ...” that the church does not send; rather, “it is God who sends the church...” and the church is called to be “a community of witness to the future God is creating;”⁴³⁶ a concept that many American churches are

⁴³¹ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-391. Bosch provides an extended and expanded explanation of *missio Dei* adding, “Since God’s concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of the *missio Dei*. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. Mission is God’s turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation... God’s own mission is larger than the mission of the church. The *missio Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate” (391).

⁴³² David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, 370.

⁴³³ Lesslie Newbigin. *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers), 1988, 83.

⁴³⁴ Cornelius J. P. Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology.” *Southern African Journal of Missiology* Vol. 38:3, November 2010, 397-412, 399.

⁴³⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

⁴³⁶ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic) 2011, 94-95.

seemingly unaware. The prevailing concept of *mission* or *missions* in most American churches is understood as reaching populations outside of the United States by supporting missionaries to other countries financially, and thinking this fulfills their mission responsibility; there is little thought of a larger, God-authored, God-centered mission in their own locations.⁴³⁷

Addressing God-centered mission as the future God is creating, Nikolajsen supports Bosch and Niemandt's participation statements by describing the Church's role as a sign of the kingdom, and stating, "Even though the church is a result of the *missio Dei*... the final and real goal of the *missio Dei*... is not the church, but the establishment of God's kingdom."⁴³⁸ Dreyer maintains that the *missio Dei* is the essence of what it means to be the Church, and therefore it is "the basis and point of departure for [all] congregational ministry."⁴³⁹ Sadly, many Churches in the United States appear to have little or no comprehension of their role in a mission outside of their own design, and are likely unaware of *a*, or *the*, mission of God, and if asked, may think that God's mission is simply to bring people to faith in Christ. As stated previously, many American churches self-interpret and understand mission as supporting missionaries to foreign people groups, or as goals to increase membership, giving, and ministry participation.

Highlighting *missio Dei* as the essential core of missional ministry, Van Gelder and Zschiele write, "The missional approach [to ministry] draws on a different biblical

⁴³⁷ Henry Blackaby was instrumental in helping Southern Baptist churches focus on mission with his statement, "Look for where God is working and join Him." See Henry Blackaby. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing), 1990.

⁴³⁸ Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, "Beyond Sectarianism: The Missional Church in a Post-Christendom Society." *Missiology*, vol. 41 no. 4, October 2013, 462-475, 469.

⁴³⁹ Dreyer, W.A. "Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 69(1), 2013. Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>, 4.

and theological understanding of God and God's mission, and is not simply another strategy to help congregations become relevant to any change in context."⁴⁴⁰

Recognizing and understanding the *missio Dei* as the underlying foundation and framework for *missional* ministry suggests that the development of a definition for the term *missional* is possible. Indeed, understanding the role of the *missio Dei* as essential to defining missional is in itself clarifying, as well as refreshing in light of American Christianity's penchant for a consumeristic and self-centered approach to ministry⁴⁴¹ where the Church exists for its own purposes and desires, sadly unaware of, or misinterpreting what its true mission is.⁴⁴² Guder addresses the "paradigm shift in twentieth-century missiology" as a movement "away from the maintenance of established Christianity as the church's purpose" to a "theocentric and ultimately Trinitarian understanding of mission..." and adds, "the church's gathered life is defined and oriented to its scattered life" reflecting the 'sent-ness' embodied in the *missio Dei*,⁴⁴³ thus

⁴⁴⁰ Van Gelder and Zscheille. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 8. They add, "...missional imagination is fundamentally about seeing the church in the world in light of the triune God's presence and activity" (148).

⁴⁴¹ Nieuwolf characterizes "Consumer Christianity [as] What can I get from God? It asks, What's in it for me? This leads us to evaluate our church, our faith, our experience and each other according to our preferences and wims." Nieuwolf believes "Consumer Christianity will die and a more selfless discipleship will emerge." Carey Nieuwhof. "10 Predictions About the Future Church and Shifting Attendance Patterns". *Christian Week*, January 25, 2016. <http://www.christianweek.org/10-predictions-future-church-shifting-attendance-patterns/> Accessed 3/19/2016

⁴⁴² Speaking to American Christian consumerism, Guder writes, "In North America... both members and those outside the church expect the church to be a vendor of religious services and goods." See Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1998, 84. Perrin, Kennedy, and Miller add, "Congregational memberships have become increasingly unstable... Americans have become more and more geographically mobile... with an increased cultural emphasis on individualism... breaking down the social, economic, and ascriptive nature of American religion... resulting in greater church "shopping," as Christians actively search for the church which best meets their needs." See Robin D. Perrin, Paul Kennedy, and Donald E. Miller. "Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where Are the New Evangelical Movements Getting their Numbers?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 1997), 71-80, 75.

⁴⁴³ Darrell L. Guder. *Called To Witness*, 99-100.

reinforcing its central place in defining mission for the Church. If the life of the church is defined in relation to its ‘sent-ness’ as a reflection of the *missio Dei*, then the construction of a working definition for “missional” ministry within the bounds of this research is necessary to provide a connective framework for the missional investigations included later in this chapter, and as a means to identify cohesion with *missio Dei* ‘sent-ness.’

3.2.3 Missional Descriptions for a Missional Definition

Before seeking to determine a working definition, it is important to note that defining the term *missional* is a concern for several authors. Alan Hirsch states, “I am concerned about the confusion surrounding the meaning of the word missional. Maintaining the integrity of this word is critical, because recovering a missional understanding of God and the Church is essential not only for the advancement of our mission, but, I believe, also for the survival of Christianity in the West.”⁴⁴⁴ Van Gelder and Zscheile share this concern, although from an opposite posture. In their admonition to resist reducing *missional* to rules, characteristics or principles; they state, “There is thus no how-to list or set of defining characteristics for the missional church, an approach often pursued in some of the current literature...”⁴⁴⁵

In the pursuit of a working definition, it is important to define *missional* carefully to avoid the confusion noted by Hirsch, and to not add to the perhaps spurious use of the term; however, the concerns of some authors do not reflect across the wider spectrum of

⁴⁴⁴ Alan Hirsch. “Defining Missional: The Word Is Everywhere, But Where Did It Come From and What Does It Really Mean?” *Leadership Journal*, September 11, 2015.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html>, Accessed October 9, 2015.

⁴⁴⁵ Van Gelder and Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 149. Van Gelder and Zscheile’s absence of a definition could lead to the use of *missional* simply as an adjective describing an activity, something they clearly state the term does not mean in their discussion of what a missional church is not. See *Missional Church in Perspective*, 92-93.

missional writing. Noting the difficulty in reducing a definition for *missional* to a simple form, Niemandt emphasizes three elements as central to defining the term, they are, 1) “...a reproducing community of authentic disciples, being equipped as missionaries sent by God, to live and proclaim His Kingdom in their world; 2) a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world, and 3) [that is] shaped by participating in God’s mission, which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world.”⁴⁴⁶ Although authors such as Roxburgh, Van Gelder and Zscheile oppose a definition for *missional*, the fact that each author provides descriptions that in essence define what *missional* is or does, requires at the least an attempt at constructing a working definition.

The process of constructing a working definition for *missional* within this research began with the collection of specific phrases from primary sources used to describe the term, and assembling these phrases in table form for use in comparing and identifying similarities as well as differences and contrasts within the authors’ concepts. Additionally, the process included a review of the responses to question 5 in the Significant Voices interview⁴⁴⁷ to identify similar expressions and connections between interviewees; however, the collected responses revealed more disparity than continuity, and because of the length of the responses, did not benefit the overall process. The information gathered from the primary sources provided a greater expectation of a definitive conclusion. Table 3.1 presents responses to question 5 of the Significant

⁴⁴⁶ C.J.P. Niemandt. “Acts for Today’s Missional Church”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), 2010. Art. #336, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.336 .

⁴⁴⁷ See Appendix B for responses to questions from the Significant Voices interview.

Voices interview, and Table 3.2 presents missional church descriptions used in the definition development process originating from primary sources employed in this research.

Table 3.1 Responses to Question 5 – Significant Voices Interview
How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Neil Cole	Right, the church is the presence of Jesus among his people pursuing his mission. There’s a tendency to define church according to our own expectations or experience, but the church is not a static institution; it begins and ends with a single question, “who is Jesus.” It’s all about Jesus and if it ever becomes about something else, then it stops being the Church. Jesus must be the sole focus, not a personality or methods or programs. And it’s important to see it as kingdom outpost representing God’s kingdom in its location.
Rod Dempsey	I mentioned it already, some words, incarnational, it starts with that. Relational. Yeah it’s kind of a clay term, a lot of people are trying to define it but if we try to look at it from the scriptures it’s not “come to us”, it’s “go to them”, incarnational versus missional versus attractional. But it’s simple, it’s relational. There’s a little acrostic that the group is using, I think this is from Jeff Vanderstelt, it’s B-L-E-S-S, so it’s beginning to pray for people, it’s listening to people, it’s eating with people, it’s serving people, and then eventually it reaches the point where we can share with people.
Darrell Guder	Well its defined in any number of ways depending on interpretation, but missional is essentially understanding the missionary nature of God and his missionary presence in the world through Christ, and the church seeing itself as being sent by God and participating in his mission.
Alan Hirsch	Ah, I would say that... missional church organizes itself around the central purpose of the mission of God in the world, that is God’s eternal purposes to redeem and change, and transform the world in Jesus Christ. When we make mission our primary organizing principle, the mission of God, not the missions that we dream up, but actually participating in what God is doing in the world, I think that is the central purpose of the church.
Ed Stetzer	I really don’t care if any person ever uses the word missional. I think there are black churches that have been living on mission for a long time. I think there are charismatic churches that have been living on mission a long time, Baptists, Lutherans, whatever. So to me the missional movement matters less to me than the missional impulse matters to me. However I think that with the shifting in culture that the appropriate response would be mission, missionary mindset, missionary thinking, and so I think if the most significant shift in the last few decades is the one that I indicated, then the shift to a missions mindset in this emerging, changing culture, emerging culture, that’s what’s already merged culture, I think that is pretty significant. Now again, I don’t care as much as the labels of it. <unclear> has written some amazing things about culture but I don’t think he’d know the word missional if I hit him in the head with it. But I think missional has some helpful things about how we deal

	<p>with modernity in the culture we find ourselves in. So I think that the idea that undergirds that is essential in the modern times we find ourselves in. I think bringing the ideas of Hirsch is good but seeing those as their ideas is really historically inaccurate. Those ideas emerged, at the Brandenburg missionary conference in the early part of last century, it really came to fruition. So it's not Hirsch, it's not Frost, it's not Christopher Wright, it's Bart, his mission really is the identity about himself. I would say ultimately it's Bart rightly interpreting the scriptures, which he didn't always do, but he did on this.</p>
<p>Craig Van Gelder</p>	<p>There's no clear definition, certainly not one that's shared with any sense of unanimity or any sense of consensus. That's why I like to take it back to God's mission and I know and I'm not uncomfortable using <i>missio Dei</i> although some prefer not to use that because of the controversy of the sixties. But God's mission changes the category, this goes back to your first question about success, the issue here is God's agency or human agency and missional ministry, the default invites this is what the church is supposed to do. It's supposed to be missional, it's supposed to connect with changing community; well that's true, but that's the fundamental... for me, that's not the fundamental meaning of mission. Mission is God's mission, the church discerns what God's up to and participates in joining God in that activity. That for me is the framework for which missional continues to make sense.</p>

Table 3.2 A Comparison of Missional Church Descriptions by Primary Authors

Bosch ⁴⁴⁸	Guder ⁴⁴⁹	Hesselgrave / Stetzer ⁴⁵⁰	Hirsch ⁴⁵¹	Newbigin ⁴⁵²	Niemandt ⁴⁵³	Van Gelder-Zscheile ⁴⁵⁴	Woodward ⁴⁵⁵
The Church is essentially missionary	The Church is a proclaiming community: its Apostolicity	The Church is Contextual – understanding itself as part of a larger context	The Church is Centered on Jesus: forms the true epicenter of an authentic Christian faith	It will be a community of praise: perhaps its most distinctive character	Missional congregations are aware of the context they are living in; answering the question: <i>Where are we?</i>	God is a missionary God who sends the Church into the world	The Church is a Learning Environment – Life transformation through Scripture
The Church is a pilgrim Church (finding itself in a diaspora situation)	The Church is a reconciling and reconciled community: it's Catholicity	The Church is Intentional – existing for the purpose of following Christ in mission	The Church is A Covenanted Community: a network of relationships formed around	It will be a community of truth	Scripture and prayer shape congregations as individuals and as a church as they engage in	God's mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God	The Church is a Healing Environment – where people can take off their masks and live

⁴⁴⁸ Adapted from David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 376-380.

⁴⁴⁹ Adapted from Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 255-264.

⁴⁵⁰ Adapted from David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer. *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2010), 24–25.

⁴⁵¹ Adapted from what Hirsch terms are “ways of identifying a faithful expression of church. Alan Hirsch. *Fast Forward To Mission: Frameworks for a Life of Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 46-47.

⁴⁵² Adapted from “The nature and Calling of the Church,” Paul Weston. *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 152–157.

⁴⁵³ Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology,” *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 397. Dr. Niemandt’s article examines “insights into the emerging missional ecclesiology of twelve congregations collaborating in the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC)” (“Five Years”), but has application to the broader and international missional discussion.

⁴⁵⁴ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 3-4.

⁴⁵⁵ Adapted from J R Woodward. *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of The World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 46–54.

			Jesus our Lord		forming a people of God; answering the question: <i>Whose are we?</i>		into their true selves in God
The Church is the sign and instrument of God's kingdom	The Church is a sanctifying community: its Holiness	The Church is Proclaiming – understanding itself as intentionally sent by God to announce the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ.	The Church is Worship: offering our lives back to God through Jesus.	The Church will be a community that does not live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighborhood	Missional congregations recognise God's actions directly around them as well as in the wider world; answering the question: <i>What is God doing?</i>	The missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized context	The Church is a Welcoming Environment – helping the community practice hospitality as a way of life
The Church is involved in the world (on earth, the seed in the beginning of God's kingdom)	The Church is a unifying community: its Unity	The Church is Reconciling – as a reconciling and healing presence in its context	The Church is Discipleship: following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him (Christlikeness)	The Church will be a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world	Missional congregations know how to discern and listen to God's specific call to them; They can answer the question: <i>How is God sending us?</i>	The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission	The Church is a Liberating Environment - people experience liberation from personal and social sins in spirit-transforming communities
The Universal Church finds its true existence in the local churches		The Church is Sanctifying – living out its truth and serving as a purifying influence	The Church is Mission: extending the redemptive purposes of God through the activities of his	The Church will be a community of mutual responsibility (opposed to individualism)	Missional congregations are a sign and a preview of the future that God intends for the whole world;		The Church is a thriving environment – where a strong discipleship ethos is developed and

			people in every sphere and domain of life		Answering the question: <i>How are we, as a church, currently living according to the pattern of God's future?"</i>		the multiplication of disciples, ministries and churches take place
		The Church is Unifying - embracing, and folding, gathering community receiving persons into its fellowship		The Church will be a community of hope			
		The Church is Transforming – as the “salt of the earth” living out and following biblical concepts of mission					

The identification of thematic elements continued with an evaluation of each author's statements, noting key terms used in expressing the specific intent of their statements, a process Yin refers to as "a disassembling procedure" where "compiled data is [broken] down into smaller fragments or pieces" and accompanied by assigning new labels, or "codes," to the fragments or pieces."⁴⁵⁶ For example, in David Bosch's statement, "The Church is essentially missionary" the word "missionary" was highlighted as the key or central element conveyed in the statement. The statement was "coded"⁴⁵⁷ using the term *missionary* and the term was added to a list of initial identifying codes.⁴⁵⁸ While interpreting Bosch's first statement was straightforward, not all of the authors' statements yielded to a quick identification of a descriptive term, requiring a more subjective interpretation.⁴⁵⁹ Another Bosch statement, "The Universal Church finds its true existence in the local churches" required a descriptive term not present in the original statement, but expressing a reasonable interpretation of its intent. In this case, the statement was interpreted using the term *contextual*, with this term also added to the list

⁴⁵⁶ Robert K. Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 178. Using Yin's explanation, this evaluative process followed Niemandt's research method as a general guide, (outlined in "Five Years of Missional Church" pg. 400), adapting Niemandt's steps to match specific needs of this research. Steps followed or adapted from Niemandt's process included: 1) identifying recurring expressions and themes, 2) identifying contradictions or disjunctions between statements, or words, 3) the initial coding of terms or phrases, 4) constructing unified groups from initial codes, and 5) the identification of thematic elements for use in constructing a definition of missional ministry. See Cornelius J. P. Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology." *Southern African Journal of Missiology* Vol. 38:3, November 2010, 397-412.

⁴⁵⁷ "Code" is the term also used by Atlas.ti a qualitative analysis program used in investigating the statements of primary authors employed in this research. In this program, descriptive "codes" classify statements for the purpose of identifying commonalities and disparities among research data. ATLAS.ti Copyright ©2016 by ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin.

⁴⁵⁸ A detailed description of the Missional Description-Definition process may be found in Appendix E.

⁴⁵⁹ Niemandt notes, "Interpretation was part of the interviewing process." See Cornelius J. P. Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology." *Southern African Journal of Missiology* Vol. 38:3, November 2010, 397-412, 400. Extreme care was exercised to use coding terms reflecting vocabulary associated with the missional discussion/dialogue, thus maintaining continuity of expression and avoiding the use of unrelated terminology in the evaluative process.

of initial identifying codes. Descriptive terminology could be found in most of the authors' statements, with each coded using terms from the statements themselves or using an interpreted descriptive term. Table 3.3 presents the terms used in the list of initial codes.

Table 3.3 Initial Codes⁴⁶⁰

1	●	Centered on Jesus
2	●	Contextual
3	●	Covenant Community
4	●	Discipleship
5	●	God's Kingdom
6	●	Healing
7	●	Hope
8	●	Incarnational
9	●	Intentional
10	●	Liberating
11	●	Local
12	●	Missionary
13	●	Mutual Responsibility
14	●	Pilgrim
15	●	Praise
16	●	Prayer
17	●	Proclaiming
18	●	Reconciling
19	●	Sanctifying
20	●	Sent
21	●	Transforming
22	●	Truth
23	●	Unifying
24	●	Welcoming
25	●	Worship

The second step in analyzing authors' descriptions required refining the twenty-five initial codes into a more cohesive or unified expression, a process of combining

⁴⁶⁰ The coding of descriptive elements also permitted the use of color coding; however, the use of color was found to be ineffective due to the high number of initial codes and the similarity of the various colors available to be used.

initial codes with common relationships and grouping each under a unified code. Yin refers to this process as “a reassembling procedure,” where the disassembled fragments are reorganized into different groupings using “substantive themes or codes” that may not have been present in the original investigation.⁴⁶¹ Table 3.4 presents the initial codes combined under unified codes.

Table 3.4 Unified Codes

Unified Code		Initial Code
1	Community	● Covenant Community
		● Mutual Responsibility
		● Truth
		● Unifying
		● Welcoming
2	Contextual	● Contextual
		● Local
3	Discipleship	● Centered on Jesus
		● Discipleship
		● Sanctifying
		● Transforming
4	God's Kingdom	● God's Kingdom
		● Proclaiming
		● Reconciling
5	Incarnational	● Healing
		● Hope
		● Incarnational
		● Liberating
6	Missionary	● Intentional
		● Missionary
		● Pilgrim
		● Sent
7	Praise-Worship	● Praise
		● Prayer
		● Worship

⁴⁶¹ Robert K. Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 179.

The third step in identifying thematic elements for use in constructing a working definition of *missional* ministry involved interpreting the reassembled data⁴⁶² and included the use of Atlas.ti, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis program.⁴⁶³ The authors' statements were copied into the program's workspace with each statement "coded" with the initial code (Table 3.3). Initial codes were subsequently grouped under unified or group codes (Table 3.4) with authors' individual statements reflected within each unifying code.⁴⁶⁴ The Atlas.ti program produced a variety of useful information with two reports especially helpful in revealing the percentage of unified group code use by author, and a code cloud illustration of predominant to least used codes. Table 3.5 presents the Ranking of Quotations by Group Code Within each Author, and Figure 3.1 presents the Code Cloud of Authors' Code Use.

⁴⁶² Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 179.

⁴⁶³ ATLAS.ti is a registered trademark of ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany.

⁴⁶⁴ Reports for each step are available in Appendix E.

Table 3.5 Ranking of Quotations By Unified Code Within Author⁴⁶⁵

	Bosch	Guder	Hesselgrave- Stetzer	Hirsch	Newbigin	Niemandt	Van Gelder- Zschiele	Woodward	Quotations
Community	0%	25%	14%	20%	33%	0%	0%	20%	15%
Contextual	20%	0%	14%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	7%
Discipleship	0%	25%	29%	40%	17%	20%	25%	40%	24%
God's Kingdom	20%	50%	29%	0%	0%	40%	25%	0%	20%
Incarnational	20%	0%	0%	0%	33%	20%	25%	40%	17%
Missionary	40%	0%	14%	20%	0%	0%	25%	0%	12%
Praise-Worship	0%	0%	0%	20%	17%	20%	0%	0%	7%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

⁴⁶⁵ The Code Document Table is a standard report generated by the Atlas.ti program, listed as the “Code Document Table” option under the Analysis menu.



Figure 3.1 Code Cloud of Authors' Code Use⁴⁶⁶

The final step of the process centered on drawing conclusions from the coded data results and the entire definition attempt. While the overall process was extremely beneficial in understanding and identifying each author's predominant areas of interest, the process yielded little agreement or continuity among the authors as a whole. Although informative, repeated attempts at the process failed to produce a significant difference in outcome and confirmed what was already apparent in each of the authors writings, that each viewed missional ministry in slightly different ways emphasizing areas considered more important and de-emphasizing other areas, producing results insufficient for a cohesive definition and not reflecting a discovered unity among the authors as a whole. This perhaps validates Roxburg, Van Gelder, Zscheile, and Murray's positions that a definition is ill-advised; however, in describing missional ministry, each

⁴⁶⁶ The Code Cloud with Colors is a standard report generated by the Atlas.ti program, listed as the "Code Cloud with Colors" option under the Code menu.

author is in essence defining missional ministry, whether intentionally or unintentionally, or by describing it in terms of “is” as opposed to “does.”⁴⁶⁷

3.2.4 A Proposed Missional Definition

If the definition of *missional* is unclear, then anything can be considered as such, thus emphasizing the need for a working definition. The concept of *missional*, *being missional*, or *ministering missionally* involves more than terminology or labels appended to a name or existing practice within a church,⁴⁶⁸ or as Murray succinctly states, “... ‘missional church’ is not about bolting mission onto institutional church: a fundamental reorientation is needed... [it] does not mean churches embracing mission more enthusiastically, but encountering afresh the missionary God.”⁴⁶⁹

With God’s mission as the foundation, backdrop, or binding element for what the church is and does, a working definition for the term *missional* should reflect the simplicity and clarity of the *missio Dei* and incorporate the minimal elements from research in a manner that avoids confusion. The minimal elements derived from this research process include: Community, Context, Discipleship, God's Kingdom, Incarnational, and Missionary,⁴⁷⁰ along with the following understandings: 1) *community* - groups of people united by faith in Jesus Christ and caring for one another; 2) *context* - the place of daily living and interaction with others; 3) *discipleship* – the continuing developmental process of spiritual growth; 4) *God’s Kingdom* – the presence of God in

⁴⁶⁷ Van Gelder and Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 9.

⁴⁶⁸ Roxburgh observes “an extreme problem: *missional church* has become a label used to describe practically everything a church does,” and presents a number of examples where missional is used incorrectly as a descriptive label. See Alan J. Roxburgh and Scott Boren. *Introducing The Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How To Become One*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2009 31–34.

⁴⁶⁹ Stuart Murray. *Church After Christendom* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 136-137.

⁴⁷⁰ See Table 3.5

the world establishing his reign; 5) *incarnational* – the presence of Christ in his followers, and 6) *missionary* – the identification with God’s plans and purposes. To substantiate and provide a sense of validity for these minimal elements, the process continued by comparing the minimal elements to GOCN’s Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church presented in Table 3.6.⁴⁷¹

Table 3.6 Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church⁴⁷²

1	The missional church proclaims the gospel
2	The mission of the church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus
3	The Bible is normative in this church’s life
4	The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord
5	The church seeks to discern God’s specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members
6	A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another
7	It is a community that practices reconciliation
8	People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love
9	The church practices hospitality
10	Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving in both God’s presence and God’s promise future
11	This community has a vital public witness
12	There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God

⁴⁷¹ Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church as defined by the Gospel in Our Culture Network. See Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 11–12. Frost and Hirsch add three principles to the GOCN list: “The missional church is *incarnational*, not *attractional*... the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don’t yet know him,” “The mission of the church is *messianic*, not dualistic, in its spirituality... Instead of seeing the world as divided between the sacred (religious) and profane (non-religious), like Christ it sees the world and God’s place in it as more holistic and integrated,” and “The missional church adopts an *apostolic*, rather than a hierarchal mode of leadership... it abandons the triangular hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a biblical, flat – leadership community...” See *Shaping*, 12.

⁴⁷² See Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 11–12.

GOCN's Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church did not provide the desired substantiation and validation. The construction of the "Twelve Hallmarks" presents an emphasis on a "does" versus an "is" concept for the Church, and the number of items included in its description stands in contrast to the simplicity and clarity desired in a description to avoid the concern expressed by Hirsch regarding confusion, and Van Gelder and Zscheile's admonition against using *missional* to describe an activity.⁴⁷³ Although one or two areas of agreement or similarity exist with GOCN's Twelve Hallmarks, the minimal elements and understandings produced by the research process finds greater levels of similarity with Niemandt's Emerging Missional Ecclesiology,⁴⁷⁴ a more simple expression of missional church identification presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Niemandt's Emerging Missional Ecclesiology⁴⁷⁵

Element	Application
"A missional church is a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world"	Mission – the church's true and authentic organizing principle
"The church is understood as being a community of people discerning what God is actively doing in the world around them and then participating in God's work."	Context – seeing and actively participating with God in their setting
"The church is a community gathered around Jesus Christ... to participate in his life and incarnate it into [their] context... missional churches are deeply connected to [their] community"	Incarnation – presenting Christ-empowered life to their context and surrounding world
"The future of the missional church depends on a differentiated and empirical, informed perspective on cultural context"	Future – looking for where God is leading and working.

⁴⁷³ See section 3.2.3.

⁴⁷⁴ Cornelius JP Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology," *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 411.

⁴⁷⁵ Niemandt compiled this data from research focused on twelve congregations of the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC). See Cornelius JP Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology," *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 411.

The relationships between the minimal elements derived from the research process for a working definition of *missional* were compared to the elements comprising Niemandt's Emerging Missional Ecclesiology looking for areas of agreement or similarity. Areas of primary, secondary, and tertiary similarity are presented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Minimal Missional Element Similarities with Niemandt's Emerging Missional Ecclesiology⁴⁷⁶

Element	Application	Primary Similarity	Secondary Similarity	Tertiary Similarity
“A missional church is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world”	Mission – the church’s true and authentic organizing principle	<i>missionary</i> – the identification with God’s plans and purposes	<i>community</i> - groups of people united by faith in Jesus Christ and caring for one another	<i>God’s Kingdom</i> – the presence of God in the world establishing his reign
“The church is understood as being a community of people discerning what God is actively doing in the world around them and then participating in God’s work”	Context – seeing and actively participating with God in their setting	<i>context</i> - the place of daily living and interaction with others	<i>community</i> - groups of people united by faith in Jesus Christ and caring for one another	
“The church is a community gathered around Jesus Christ... to participate in his life and incarnate it into [their] context... missional churches are deeply connected to [their] community”	Incarnation – presenting Christ-empowered life to their context and surrounding world	<i>incarnational</i> – the presence of Christ in his followers	<i>community</i> - groups of people united by faith in Jesus Christ and caring for one another <i>context</i> - the place of daily living and interaction with others <i>discipleship</i> – the continuing developmental process of spiritual growth	
“The future of the mission of church depends on a differentiated and empirical, informed perspective on cultural context”	Future – looking for where God is leading and working		<i>context</i> - the place of daily living and interaction with others	<i>God’s Kingdom</i> – the presence of God in the world establishing his reign

⁴⁷⁶ Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology,” *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 411. Niemandt compiled this data from research focused on twelve congregations of the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC).

A primary similarity between the minimal elements and Niemandt's emerging missional ecclesiology is evident with the following: *missionary* to "Mission," *context* to "Context," and *incarnational* to "Incarnation." *Community* occupies a secondary similarity across each of Niemandt's categories except for "Future," and *discipleship* and *context* also have a secondary relationship to "Incarnation," and "Future." *God's Kingdom* has no primary or secondary similarities with any category, but suggests a tertiary relationship with "Mission" and "Future." Noting these similarities, the minimal elements discovered in the research process are considered essential to producing a working definition for the term *missional*.

The minimal elements comprising the working definition process are fundamental to *missional* ministry, but by themselves represent only an academic identification and acknowledgment of the makeup of a *missional* mindset. To be *missional* in practice requires an implementation of these elements in specific ways, and in a manner that ultimately addresses *focus*, *form*, and *function*. To employ the identified minimal elements effectively, a church must discover and recognize the unique makeup of its setting/context (*focus*), interpreting this recognition to design and develop a response (*form*) suited to its environment, enabling incarnational interaction (*function*) within its setting/context where the *missio Dei* may be pursued consistently in ongoing opportunities and sub-contexts of the overall setting. This concept finds support in Niemandt's statement, "It is important for the church to recognise that contexts are always changing, precisely to be able to discern a pattern of how to live in our world," and citing Bosch, he stresses "the importance of reading the signs of the times..."

warning “of the tremendous risks involved due to the fact that it is an *interpreting exercise*.”⁴⁷⁷

With this concept in mind, ‘*missional*’ may be defined as the practice of living as an extension of God’s missionary presence in the world, discerning, understanding, and responding to changing contexts through incarnational relationships with others, emphasizing the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ to reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God.⁴⁷⁸ Support for this definition may be found in Niemandt’s concept of community life where he states, “The church is not just missional. The church is a missional community – that is, people who come together to live out the mission to which God has called them on earth.”⁴⁷⁹ Additional support may be derived from Hunsberger and Van Gelder; they state, “...the church must define itself in terms of the kingdom. The life and mission of the church are to be defined by participation in the mission of the triune God in all of creation... The Church then exist[s] within a cultural context with responsibility toward the context.”⁴⁸⁰

More than simply another interpretation, conceptual or methodological invention for twenty-first century Christianity, missional ministry operates from a greater

⁴⁷⁷ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, ‘Acts for today’s missional church’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #336, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.336.

⁴⁷⁸ Gibb’s adds “rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation.” Eddie Gibbs. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 2000, 51.

⁴⁷⁹ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, ‘Trends in missional ecclesiology’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198>. Niemandt adds, “In a missional church, the laity thinks Christianly about all matters, and works with Christian distinctiveness” demonstrating at least in part the “fundamental reorientation” referred to by Murray; see Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology,” *Missionalia* Vol. 38:3 (Nov 2010) 397-412, 407, and Stuart Murray. *Church After Christendom* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press), 2004, 136-137.

⁴⁸⁰ George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder. *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1996, 285.

foundation, that of a missional ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is how the church understands and conducts itself in its relationship with God (worship), as a community of believers in Christ (discipleship), and in ministry toward the world (evangelism). Unfortunately, ecclesiology in the United States has been heavily influenced by Christendom, producing a concept where “institutional extension and survival [became] its priority”⁴⁸¹ rather than the pursuit of God’s mission. With the writings of Newbigin, Bosch, Guder, Niemandt, Roxburgh, Van Gelder and others, attention has turned to understanding ecclesiology in light of the *missio Dei*, which frames *missional* ecclesiology as the basis for missional ministry.

3.2.5 Missional Ecclesiology

Guder asks, “What would an understanding of the church (an ecclesiology) look like if it were truly missional in design and definition?”⁴⁸² Multiple authors emphasize the changing dynamics of twenty-first century life and its impact on Western Christianity, with Bosch stating, “We live in a world fundamentally different from that of the 19th century, let alone earlier times. The new situation challenges us, across the board, to an appropriate response.”⁴⁸³ Indeed, churches in the United States have struggled with what equates to an appropriate response, a situation to which Dilley retorts, “Churches of course are right to worry. They’ve been losing young people like me for years,” and adds, “Our complaints against the church know no bounds: We don’t like the politics. We want

⁴⁸¹ Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of The Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing) 1998, 5.

⁴⁸² Guder. *Missional Church*, 7.

⁴⁸³ Bosch *Transforming Mission*, 193.

authenticity and openness. We demand a particular worship aesthetic...⁴⁸⁴ a statement many might interpret as reflecting the consumeristic mind of the American Christian.⁴⁸⁵

Dilley reflects what many authors have identified as a crisis in American Christianity when she states, “Across America today, thousands of clergy and congregations—even entire denominations—are running scared, desperately trying to convince their youth that faith and church are culturally relevant, forward-looking, and alive.”⁴⁸⁶ In responding to this crisis scenario, many evangelical churches have chosen to adopt a more relaxed atmosphere where casual clothing is preferred over traditional Sunday dress, with coffee bars offering free coffee in the foyer, and with worship music reflecting the cultural tastes of those attending, even employing secular music as a tool in preaching sermons.⁴⁸⁷ In addition, this relaxed atmosphere has lead some churches to address the meaning of membership in an effort to reconcile changing church attendance practices of Christians in the United States. Describing this shift, Kinneman writes, “Active church attenders used to be those who attended three to four weekends per month. Today that's been reduced to just one or two weekends per month. Crammed calendars, kids' sports, endless entertainment options, and expanding weekend schedules

⁴⁸⁴ Andrea Palpant Dilley. “Dude, Do Young Adults Really Want a Relevant Church?” <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-artic...a-palpant-dilley-young-adults-really-want-a-relevant-church.html>. Accessed April 11, 2014.

⁴⁸⁵ Dilley’s article traces her search for authentic Christianity in the United States and reveals her apparent return to the more formal and liturgical church of her youth. See Andrea Palpant Dilley. “Dude, Do Young Adults Really Want a Relevant Church?” <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-artic...a-palpant-dilley-young-adults-really-want-a-relevant-church.html>. Accessed April 11, 2014.

⁴⁸⁶ Andrea Palpant Dilley. “Dude, Do Young Adults Really Want a Relevant Church?” <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-artic...a-palpant-dilley-young-adults-really-want-a-relevant-church.html>. Accessed April 11, 2014.

⁴⁸⁷ In 2014, Pastor Perry Noble of NewSpring Church, Anderson, SC, used Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven” (1971) to add interest to his sermon series on Heaven.

are making church increasingly optional.”⁴⁸⁸ NewSpring Church is one example where church membership and responsibility has been addressed by changing the terminology. Membership at NewSpring is referred to as “ownership,” a semantic change stressing the importance of participation, but not extending responsibilities of polity or decision making to the general congregation.⁴⁸⁹ Most churches in the United States maintain the traditional membership concept even as attendance patterns continue to shift, demonstrating the continuing struggle to connect with current generations’ declining interest in tradition-based Christianity as a whole.⁴⁹⁰ Against this backdrop of shifting values and importances, many churches in the United States are seeking quick solutions to present challenges while the problem is actually much deeper: an incorrect ecclesiology.

Niemandt defines ecclesiology as the “theological discipline that seeks to understand and define the church... It is the discussion of what the church is called to be and to do – its nature, its purpose, its hopes, its structure and practices.”⁴⁹¹ In its relation to the missional discussion, Niemandt continues, “missional ecclesiology does this [define the Church] from a missional point of view where the Church is understood as a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to

⁴⁸⁸ David Kinnaman. “Reaching Churchless America: Examining the Unchurched” *Leadership Journal*, October 2014. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2014/october/reaching-churchless-america.html>. Accessed 12/9/2014.

⁴⁸⁹ NewSpring describes ownership as, “...getting plugged into our church means becoming an Owner. This is because when you own something, you are invested in it. You do whatever it takes to grow and improve it... Ownership expectations at NewSpring includes serving, giving, and participating in biblical community.” <https://newspringnetwork.com/questions/next-steps>.

⁴⁹⁰ Stetzer presents an interesting discussion on church membership in “Membership Matters: 3 Reasons for Church Membership.” *The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/july/membership-matters-3-reasons-for-church-membership.html>, Accessed July 10, 2015.

⁴⁹¹ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, ‘Trends in missional ecclesiology’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. [h p://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198).

testify to and participate in Christ's work." Therefore, the problem faced by American Christianity is not one of congregational consumerism, likes or dislikes, etc.; these and other elements characterizing American Christianity and facing the Church in the United States have emerged from an incorrect ecclesiology fostered in a uniquely American setting engendered through a populist/individualistic approach to faith and belief. It appears that perhaps for the first time in American history, the Church in general, and the evangelical new paradigm missional church more specifically, has begun to address the weakness in its fabric, namely, the absence of a defining identity and motivation that is truly scriptural, which can only be seen when its ecclesiology is missional.

Bosch's answer to the changing dynamics affecting the Church in the West is a paradigm shift, one that rejects a "piecemeal and ad hoc" response "to single issues" [consumerism, likes, dislikes, attendance, etc.] in favor of "transformational hermeneutics... which transforms us first before we involve ourselves in mission to the world."⁴⁹² Such a transformational hermeneutic emerges from understanding God as a missionary God (*missio Dei*),⁴⁹³ and interpreting Scripture through this lens, produces a missional ecclesiology. Guder concurs stating, "we now agree that one must read Scripture from a missional hermeneutic,"⁴⁹⁴ and "read[ing] the Bible using a missional hermeneutic enables us to recognize in the scriptural testimony not only the content of our message, but the way in which that message is to be made known. The Bible gives us

⁴⁹² Bosch *Transforming Mission*, 193.

⁴⁹³ Dreyer agrees, stating, "Central to missional ecclesiology is the theological concept of the *missio Dei*." See Dreyer, W.A., 2013, 'Missional ecclesiology as basis for a new church order: A case study', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>.

⁴⁹⁴ Guder. *Missional Church*, 11.

both the what and the how of missional obedience.”⁴⁹⁵ Guder’s position is that a transformational or missional hermeneutic is essential to a missional ecclesiology. Dreyer also addresses the element of transformation, describing it as a “shift in focus, from congregational maintenance to openness to the world and participation in God’s mission and God’s kingdom,” but drives the argument deeper describing missional ecclesiology as the DNA of congregations, determining “the way in which a congregation... (as the people of God, the family of the Father, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit) is present in the world.”⁴⁹⁶ That the DNA of the Church is indeed a missional ecclesiology supports Niemandt’s statement that, “The church is mission and participates in God’s mission because it cannot do otherwise. This is the very reason why the church exists.”⁴⁹⁷ Therefore, correct ecclesiology is essential to the faithful participation of the Church in the mission of God, and since the mission of God is the mission of the Church (“Mission does not belong to the church, it is not something people do – it is a characteristic of the Triune God”⁴⁹⁸), then once again, the only correct ecclesiology is a missional ecclesiology.

A missional ecclesiology is *the* correct ecclesiology for the Church because it rests upon the *missio Dei* and is informed by a missional hermeneutic of Scripture, which Guder characterizes as “the warrant for the church’s mission, instructing and guiding these mission communities by engaging their situations, their challenges, and their

⁴⁹⁵ Guder. *Missional Church*, 223.

⁴⁹⁶ Dreyer, W.A., 2013, ‘Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>.

⁴⁹⁷ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, ‘Trends in Missional Ecclesiology’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. [h p://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198).

⁴⁹⁸ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, ‘Trends in Missional Ecclesiology’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. [h p://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198).

struggles.”⁴⁹⁹ Niemandt agrees, adding, “In a missional ecclesiology, the church is not a building or an institution, but a community of witnesses, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify and participate in Christ’s work.”⁵⁰⁰ Therefore *missionality*, that is, missional living and ministry is what emerges from missional ecclesiology, which informs the Church of its essential missionary nature,⁵⁰¹ and guides its undertaking of God’s mission, not its own, through an incarnational presence that discerns, understands, and responds to its context, and ultimately testifies to the presence of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁰²

3.2.6 Intermediate Summary

In the previous sections inquiry efforts have attempted to demonstrate an understanding of an essential element of this research, namely, what does it mean to be missional and upon what does being missional rest or find support. Much has been written by esteemed authors who have made significant contributions to the missional discussion, and while finding occasions of agreement, a full harmony across all authors could not be achieved in this research, necessitating an attempt to reconcile their varied perspectives and produce an understanding with which to guide an investigation of ministries used as examples in the sections following. This reconciliation was

⁴⁹⁹ Guder. *Missional Church*, 223.

⁵⁰⁰ Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, “Trends in Missional Ecclesiology”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198>, 3.

⁵⁰¹ Bosch presents a striking statement regarding the missionary nature of the Church: “...there cannot be church without an intrinsic missionary dimension... The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning.” D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International), 1995, 32.

⁵⁰² Nikolajsen states, “Even though the church is a result of the *missio Dei*, “the final and real goal of the *missio Dei*... is not the Church, but the establishment of God’s kingdom...” Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, “Beyond Sectarianism: The Missional Church in a Post-Christendom Society.” *Missiology*, vol. 41 no. 4, October 2013, 462-475, 469.

accomplished, at least in part, through an analytical process of comparing authors' statements, identifying common elements, and reducing the resultant data to its simplest expression to produce the definition for *missional* presented in section 3.2.4. Further examination attempted to ground this definition in an understanding of missional ecclesiology, itself springing from the mission of God and the depiction of God's Trinitarian missionary nature (section 3.2.5). The combined attempts produced an understanding with which to examine and evaluate ministries used in this research, the process to which this research now turns.

3.3 Missional Investigations

It is reasonable to assume that most churches in the United States are not missionally aware or missionally focused. Denominations continue to decline, and the institutional/traditional church appears at a loss to cope within the post-Christendom environment. Nell and Grobler reference the challenges faced by the Institutional Church as it struggles to maintain a presence in a post-modern, post-denominational, post-Christian culture, stating, "The result of this [struggle] is that there is always a search for new ways of expressing being the church that explore methods in which to connect with people in a fast-changing world. As it becomes clearer that the traditional church ministry is not attractive to many people anymore, the need for new ways of being church is becoming very urgent."⁵⁰³ Nell and Grobler's statement is true; however, it is not embraced across a majority of institutional/traditional churches. Recalling the statistics of the 100 fastest growing churches listed in *Outreach Magazine's* "Special Issue 2015," only two churches were part of a denomination (see Table 2.6), and the declining

⁵⁰³ Ian A Nell and Rudolph Grobler, "An Exploration of Fresh Expressions as Missional Church: Some Practical-Theological Perspectives" *NGTT DEEL* 55, NR 3 & 4, 2014, 747-768.

memberships of American denominations attest that overall they are unsuccessful in this “search for new ways of being the church.” Cheryl Peterson is one denominational voice drawing attention to the need for an ecclesiological change when she writes, “The point here is not, “do these things, and then you will be the church,” but rather, “you are the church so be the church!” The question “who is the church?” leads not to a prescribed set of activities, but to a re-discovery and reclamation of (or better yet, *a being reclaimed by*) the biblical identity that God has bestowed on the church as a Spirit-breathed people.”⁵⁰⁴ This statement reflects Peterson’s acknowledgment that denominational ministry must change to avert further decline.

A casual observation reveals that many American churches continue to maintain an unchanged traditional paradigm, evidenced by Sunday morning gatherings of congregations at a usual time, at a central location, in a building of recognized church architecture, and with age related, gender specific, or program oriented ministries. However, a more thorough investigation reveals exceptions to this observation, exceptions that stand out and call attention to a redefining process almost exclusively within the evangelical church in the United States. These exceptions to the traditional paradigm churches reflect what Dreyer identifies as a reformation; quoting Niemandt, he states,

The reformation of the church which is needed in the 21st century, leaves nothing untouched and requires changes at the deepest levels of the church (Niemandt 2007:52). Adaptive change begins with a new understanding of what it means to be a church. Adaptive change is about changing the hearts and minds of individual congregants as well as the church collectively.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ Cheryl M. Peterson. *Who Is The Church? An Ecclesiology for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 2013, 143.

⁵⁰⁵ Dreyer, W.A., 2013, ‘Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>.

Nell and Grobler's statement addressing new ways of being church can be seen in the rise of non-traditional ministries. While not always self-identifying as missional, organic, or by other descriptive terms, several ministries included in this research demonstrate the adaptive change cited by Dreyer, while others do not. The following sections provide an introduction and initial examination of these ministries in preparation for a more critical examination in Chapter 4.

3.3.1 Life in Deep Ellum – Dallas, Texas

3.3.1.1 Overview

In describing the outworking or presence of a missional ministry in its context, Frost writes, “A truly incarnated church joins God’s mission in the redemption of the poor and the institution of godly justice, which leads to renewed neighborhoods,”⁵⁰⁶ and offers the following examples of incarnational church activity: 1) Community Building – neighbors living together, supporting one another; 2) Voluntary Simplicity – modeling lifestyles that free up resources for others needs; 3) Sustainable Business –churches working together providing opportunities for others; 4) Buying Local –encouraging a sound local economy; and 5) Holistic Wellness – supporting physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational health.⁵⁰⁷ The Life in Deep Ellum ministry reflects Frost’s concept in many ways, and Table 3.9 presents a snapshot of the Life in Deep Ellum ministry gleaned from the research interview. Following the table information, an observations section provides further details regarding the ministry.

⁵⁰⁶ Michael Frost. *The Road To Missional: Journey To The Center Of The Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books), 2011, 134.

⁵⁰⁷ Frost. *The Road To Missional*, 134-135.

Table 3.9 Life in Deep Ellum Snapshot⁵⁰⁸

Overview	
• Established	Late 90's, early 2000's
• Locations	1
• Focus	“The marginalized of Dallas” “The people of Deep Ellum” 2 square mile area of downtown Dallas, Texas
• Form	“Cultural Center”
• Function	“Arts, Music, Commerce, Community”
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God's Missionary Presence	“The thing with the missional crowd is that all these methodologies are so extraordinarily different, but the same heart is behind it. I mean it's a missionary heart” “...we had to stop being pastors and start being missionaries”
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	“I think that over time we just kind of realized that to reach this context we had to think very differently.” “We wanted... to be able to define ourselves via a conversation so we changed a lot of our terminology and even still I don't call our building a church, our building isn't a church, our building is a cultural center”
• Incarnational relationships	“We are actually empowered by our community to be the friends of people outside the faith” “We're trying to help the neighborhood... So an example would be a community partner...”
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	“For us working is not building of a church, it's building a community that is deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them”
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	“ My wife and I want to do our part to help, help share our story and see the kingdom of God advance in new ways” “I think there's a lot of value in being a cross cultural experience in... In the sense of multiple cultures that are expressing Christianity and are intersecting with getting a more beautiful expression of what the kingdom is.”

⁵⁰⁸ Information used in this table may be found in the Life in Deep Ellum interview located in Appendix C.

3.3.1.2 Observations

The Life in Deep Ellum ministry reflects all of the minimal elements used in constructing the working definition of a missional ministry. Under the heading, Missional Definition Criteria, Table 3.9 presents interview material substantiating the relationship between missional practice at Life in Deep Ellum and the minimal elements of the working definition found in Table 3.9.

Deep Ellum exists in an urban environment described by leader Joel Triska⁵⁰⁹ as “a pocket of downtown Dallas... a place where the marginalized of Dallas gathered... a lot of like bars, saloons, jazz, and all that kind of stuff... very condensed, has a very unique culture.” Referring to its presence as a cultural center, Life in Deep Ellum identifies with its context in specific ways as an interpretation of the significant elements influencing daily life. Following an estimated one thousand street interviews, Triska states, [the interviews] “helped us compile the data down into four strengths and those strengths are art, music... commerce is the word we use, but [it] just basically means entrepreneurship and community. So art, music, commerce and community became the pillars for our cultural center.”⁵¹⁰ To these four items, Life in Deep Ellum adds faith, stating, “we’re not going to lie about who we are, but we also wanted to be very intentional about our ambiguity... especially [for] those who have been hurt by the church...” and including, “I don’t call our building a church, our building isn’t a church, our building is a cultural center, we have a church that meets here because church is people not a building, so that’s the language we use.” With this concept in mind, Triska

⁵⁰⁹ Joel Triska does not refer to himself as pastor, choosing instead the title, Resident Philosopher.

⁵¹⁰ Quoted material used in this section is extracted from the Life in Deep Ellum interview; the interview in its entirety is located in Appendix C.

adds, “One of the first things we tell people is what we had to stop doing was stop being pastors and start being missionaries.

Life in Deep Ellum is an incarnational ministry fully integrated into the fabric of its context, and using its facilities to support various needs present in the community. Triska states, [we are] “upfront and authentic to our intentions in the neighborhood, which are basically to serve with no strings attached... we allow our space to be offered in a very discounted format in return for both of our common ground in terms of what the organization is trying to accomplish and what we’re trying to help the neighborhood with.” He states the ministry’s objective as, “For us working is not building of a church, it’s building a community that is deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them... we are linking arms for the good in our community.” Ministry in this context has not been easy; Triska describes the process as being hard and taking longer; “it doesn’t happen quickly and thankfully Deep Ellum and the mercy of God taught us to be patient, to just struggle through... There are things that are challenging us to constantly focus and refocus.” Demonstrating humility and commitment to their task, Triska states, “My wife and I want to do our part to help, help share our story and see the kingdom of God advance in new ways.”

3.3.2 Tampa Underground – Tampa, Florida

3.3.2.1 Overview

Also located in an urban environment, Tampa Underground is unique from other ministries in this research in that it refers to itself as a network of micro-churches existing across the city of Tampa, Florida, and assisting in other cities of the United States, and locations around the world. Although present in multiple cities domestically and

internationally, the Tampa Underground interview focused exclusively on the Tampa, Florida locations. Table 3.10 presents a snapshot of the Tampa Underground ministry assembled from the research interview.

Table 3.10 Tampa Underground Snapshot⁵¹¹

Overview	
• Established	2006
• Locations	Multiple (domestic/international)
• Focus	Greater Tampa, Florida “places in every major city”
• Form	“A network of micro churches”
• Function	“We exist to serve” “Being sent” “Empowerment and mobilization”, Coaching,” “Everything that we do need to empower, needs to serve the ministry”
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God’s Missionary Presence	“We are basically a church for missionaries”
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	“We exist to empower those small expressions of the church in every dark corner, in every place where the gospel as needed”
• Incarnational relationships	“Jesus is Lord” “There are groups of people that have not heard, have not seen, don’t know” “What we see happening is that call to go to reach every little community”
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	“Underground, it is a church, and it’s a community of missionaries” “We are this multi ethnic expression of the church”
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	“If a word were used to describe what we do it is to empower kingdom missionaries”

⁵¹¹ Information used in this table may be found in the Tampa Underground interview located in Appendix C.

3.3.2.2 Observations

As seen previously in the Life in Deep Ellum ministry, Tampa Underground also fulfills all criteria of the missional working definition with specific statements from the interview supporting the various elements of the definition (see the Missional Definition Criteria section of Table 3.10).

Founded in 2006, the concept for Tampa Underground was inspired by a nine months visit to Manila, Philippines by fifty individuals from Tampa that had become disenchanted with the typical United States model church. Their motivation was “to really see like what is Jesus doing outside of our context... and so they basically uprooted their families, quit their jobs and raised money to go, basically work[ing] under the missionaries that were there.”⁵¹² This transformative venture helped to shape the thinking of this group as they returned to the United States and formed the Tampa Underground ministry, stating, “Mission is really the thing that drove us because it’s what we saw was really lacking in the western church.” Ten years later, Tampa Underground defines its approach as, “we exist to empower those small expressions of the church in every dark corner, in every place where the gospel is needed. That’s really what differentiates us, is that smaller church approach,” and “if a word were used to describe what we do it is to empower kingdom missionaries.” Tampa Underground is a thoroughly outward-focused ministry.

Enmeshed in and attuned to its context, Tampa Underground is an incarnational ministry seeking to assist small groups of people meeting as churches across the city. With emphasis on coaching, leader development, and financial services among others,

⁵¹² Quoted material used in this section is extracted from the Tampa Underground interview; the interview in its entirety is located in Appendix C.

along with a 50,000 square foot facility available for various uses, Tampa Underground offers “services that exist to help micro churches do what they’re doing. So we’re kind of like a non-profit that actually serves those ministries. Everything that we do needs to empower, needs to serve the ministry...” They believe, “God has designed every person to be engaged in some sort of mission, some sort of calling and I think that’s really what we see is that not happening in our context and so we are basically a church for missionaries.” Seeking to keep pace with the contextual progression in their city, Tampa Underground expresses its current focus: “I think one of the bigger driving changes right now is really trying to navigate what does multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation look like for our church.”

Tampa Underground is perhaps the most missionally-aware and motivated ministry included in this research, with a desire to impact Tampa, Florida and other cities with an approach that typifies Frost and Hirsch’s statement calling for a revolution.⁵¹³ They state, “Our paradigm is that there is no one paradigm. We believe in contextualized structures with revolutionary content.” To accomplish this, the ministry commits to “to live a life free from clutter and the allure of materialism. We affirm that every believer and every community of believers has a responsibility to renounce the sins of its own people. As North Americans we renounce the slavery and idolatry of materialism by embracing a simple lifestyle.”

⁵¹³ See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing), 2003, 3.

3.3.3 The Oregon Community – Portland, Oregon

3.3.3.1 Overview

Frost and Hirsch write of Christians in Bradford England, transforming a pub into a Center for Christian activity stating, “the Willis’s and their staff (all Christians) have set about creating a loving, welcoming environment, where locals are cared for, listen to, and ministered to.”⁵¹⁴ Frost and Hirsch’s characterization is illustrative of the Oregon Community in Portland, Oregon, and their pub ministry. Unfortunately, all attempts to interview the leadership of the Oregon Community failed. Established interview appointments were cancelled on several occasions and an interview was never accomplished.

Table 3.11 The Oregon Community Snapshot

Overview	
• Established	
• Locations	1
• Focus	
• Form	Pub Ministry
• Function	
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God’s Missionary Presence	
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	
• Incarnational relationships	
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	

⁵¹⁴ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 10–11.

3.3.4 NewSpring Church – Anderson, South Carolina

3.3.4.1 Overview

Unlike previous examples, NewSpring Church in Anderson, South Carolina reflects little of the missional definition criteria. A multi-site ministry, NewSpring Church operates seventeen campuses across major population centers of the state, with the Anderson campus as the primary site from which Sunday sermons are broadcast to the other campuses via the internet. Table 3.12 presents a snapshot of the NewSpring Church ministry gleaned from the research interview.

Table 3.12 NewSpring Church Snapshot⁵¹⁵

Overview	
• Established	2000
• Locations	Multi-site (17 campuses)
• Focus	“Our focus... is very specific, to reach our state (South Carolina)... 3.8 million people that don’t go to church every Sunday” “Our focus is the state” “Our focus as a church is how we do church now”
• Form	“...the form doesn’t matter as long as the effectiveness and the focus stays the same”
• Function	“NewSpring Church must be one church that meets in a lot of places” “There’s really just five main ministries; we do church, we do kids, students, we do guest services and we do ‘next steps’; that’s what we do. Those are our functions”
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God’s Missionary Presence	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Incarnational relationships	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	No Direct or Indirect Mention

⁵¹⁵ Information used in this table may be found in the NewSpring Church interview located in Appendix C.

3.3.4.2 Observations

A multi-site ministry, NewSpring Church is essentially an institutional/traditional church operating with twenty-first century methodology within an attractional paradigm. Although espousing small group ministry, NewSpring's primary focus is the large group gathering on Sundays where attendance typically exceeds 1,000 congregants at multiple service times. The church meets at established locations (depending on residence within the state), at specific times, and offers ministry programs for children and youth in addition to the large group gathering. The church is popular with a variety of age groups, perhaps attracted by their excellent facilities, casual atmosphere, cultural music style, and ministry elements.

Described in the interview as “Jesus focused, people focused, specifically [to] unchurched or dechurched people...” and wanting “to be a church where people meet Jesus; you don’t have to know Jesus before you show up...”⁵¹⁶ NewSpring is successful in reaching these targeted groups reflected a missional focus to some degree; however, it is through attractional methods as opposed to incarnational ministry.⁵¹⁷ NewSpring’s interpretation of focus appears to be a broad understanding of “unchurched and dechurched people” within a statewide context expressed as, “Our focus right now is very specific to reach our state... 3.8 million people that don’t go to church every Sunday.” The church does not appear to relate function to focus as seen in their statement, “Our focus is South Carolina, but the form doesn’t matter as long as the effectiveness and the

⁵¹⁶⁵¹⁶ Quoted material used in this section is extracted from the NewSpring interview; the interview in its entirety is located in Appendix C.

⁵¹⁷ NewSpring Church was ranked the third largest church in the United States in Outlook Magazine’s “Special Issue 2015” with an average weekly attendance of 27,836. See “The 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America: The Outreach Magazine and Lifeway Research Annual Report” *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2015, 111.

focus stays the same.” Function is interpreted as the ministries offered by the church; “There’s really just five main ministries; we do church, we do kids, students, we do guest services and we do next steps, that’s what we do. Those are our functions. We replicate these in different venues, types and styles, different cities, utilizing technology to connect people through a common message.”⁵¹⁸

Several statements made during the interview are of special note. The statement was made, “we build a church by sending believers out to make a difference in whatever world they’re in... As a matter of fact, the church really is only making an impact if it’s happening somewhere other than the campus;” however, the church has no external focus other than youth activities offered during the summer. The second statement referenced mission, expressed as, “...making sure we’re getting better at accomplishing the mission,” but this is contrasted against a non-specific expression of mission, or broadly defined as “unchurched and dechurched” people. Last, the statement was made that, “Our job is to connect people to Jesus and connect them to other believers and I think if we continue to own that as what our responsibility is as opposed to our responsibility is “church” we’ll have a much better chance of surviving in whatever lies ahead.” This statement reveals a link to traditional or institutional thinking where a defensive rather than offensive posture is assumed and survival or continuance is of great importance.

Summarizing, NewSpring Church is contextual only in the broadest sense, declaring their focus to be large population groups within the state. During the interview, there was no mention of a missionary concept to ministry or helping believers to envision themselves as part of a missionary presence, as well as no mention of incarnational

⁵¹⁸ Interview with Executive Pastor Shane Duffey, NewSpring Church, Anderson, South Carolina, August 16, 2016.

ministry either by the use of the term or by description of activity. Finally, there was no mention of community or reference to representing the Kingdom of God, leading to the conclusion that NewSpring is an inwardly focused, attractional church, not operating from or within a missional concept of ministry.

3.3.5 Ecclesia Communities – Lynchburg, Virginia

3.3.5.1 Overview

Ecclesia Communities is three house church groups meeting throughout the city of Lynchburg, Virginia united by a common understanding of ministry and led by a team of elders responsible for the communities as a whole. Table 3.13 presents a brief view of the Ecclesia Communities ministry assembled from the research interview.

Table 3.13 Ecclesia Communities Snapshot⁵¹⁹

Overview	
• Established	2013
• Locations	3
• Focus	“to bring believers to maturity in Christ” “we spur people to be engaged in the faith”, engaged in actions”
• Form	“A network of house churches” “Highly relational networks”
• Function	“a practice of training people”
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God’s Missionary Presence	“we’re called to be ambassadors” (Indirect Mention)
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Incarnational relationships	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	“People are the church” “Church is related to family” “allows us to function relationally”
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	No Direct or Indirect Mention

⁵¹⁹ Information used in this table may be found in the Ecclesia Communities interview located in Appendix C.

3.3.5.2 Observations

The interview with the Ecclesia Communities revealed a primarily inward focus with a seeming preoccupation with structure, concepts, and practices. The ministry defines itself as “a network of house churches who are committed to Christ and one another...” and “coming together in different ways and expressions throughout the week, not just on a Sunday service.”⁵²⁰ Principal elements addressed during the interview were maturity, service, and family as seen in the following statements: We want “to bring believers to maturity in Christ, it’s about bringing about maturation;” “we are to serve one another, we’re to be people of service... service within the body of Christ,” and “it’s do you know how to live as the church, that is as family. Do you know how to live as the church as a functioning member within the household of God?” These and other statements create a sense of inward focus, and lacking in incarnational emphasis.

Addressing focus as part of the interview, Ecclesia stated, “Focus influences everything we do... I mean, it drives everything,” yet the interview provided little evidence if any of an external focus, reinforcing the inwardly attentive appraisal of the ministry. Some responses in the interview process were confusing, such as the following statement during the discussion of focus and form: “We have these core values and practices which are very biblical, but it’s like there’s a focus, there’s a drive behind, we have scripture informing us, but then it’s like when it comes to this actual focus, form, like one of the focuses we don’t want too many people, we don’t want a larger space besides the all gathering.” It appears that focus and form in Ecclesia’s perspective is substantially related to how the ministry operates internally.

⁵²⁰ Quoted material used in this section is extracted from the Ecclesia Communities interview; the interview in its entirety is located in Appendix C.

During the interview, there was no direct or indirect reference to context, incarnational relationships, or Kingdom presence. God’s missionary presence was referenced only indirectly by the statement, “we’re called to be ambassadors;” however, it is not clear that a sense of missionary presence is integral to the Ecclesia ministry, and statements mentioning “family” and “functioning relationally” may infer a reference to community. In summary, it appears that Ecclesia Communities’ may use missional language and employ aspects of missional ministry, but operates essentially as an inwardly focused, attractional ministry (although not overtly), not fully embracing a missional concept of ministry.

3.3.6 Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Lynchburg, Virginia

3.3.6.1 Overview

Bosch writes,

“It belongs to our missionary mandate to ask questions about the use of power in our societies, to unmask of those that destroy her life, to show concern for the victims of society while at the same time calling to repentance those who have turned them into victims, and to articulate God’s active wrath against all that distorts and diminishes human beings and all that exploits, squanders, and disfigures the world for selfishness, breathe, and self-centered power.”⁵²¹

Lighthouse Community Fellowship fulfills many of Bosch’s ideals and Table 3.14 presents a view of Lighthouse Community Fellowship collected from the research interview.

⁵²¹ D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 34.

Table 3.14 Lighthouse Community Fellowship Snapshot⁵²²

Overview	
• Established	2011
• Locations	1
• Focus	“Poverty individuals”, “homeless people”, “human trafficking”, “strangers” The “raw underbelly in Lynchburg” “Bringing God’s beauty to desperate lives”
• Form	Community Center Downtown Urban Presence
• Function	“We have a business that exists to provide revenue for the ministry” “...serving meals to children” “In the course of a year over 10,000 people will receive groceries from us”
Missional Definition Criteria	
• Extension of God’s Missionary Presence	No Direct or Indirect Mention
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	“You don’t get to choose who your neighbors are, you just deal with the ones you have” “The evolving needs of the people we serve”
• Incarnational relationships	“We want people to know we do care about them” “We try to love people in tangible ways”
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	“We have Charismatics, Baptists, Presbyterians and Anglicans and Methodists, you name it and they’re here and... we serve together; ...on any given Sunday we have black and white and Asian, educated and uneducated, homeless and rich, all sitting together and worshipping the Lord together.” “We’re about shining the light of the gospel, shining the light of truth into people’s lives”
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	“We’re in this for the kingdom” (indirect response)

3.3.6.2 Observations

Like Life in Deep Ellum and Tampa Underground, Lighthouse Community

Fellowship is an urban ministry, calling itself a community center, and serving the needs

⁵²² Information used in this table may be found in the Lighthouse Community Fellowship interview located in Appendix C.

of the poor and destitute. Housed in a deteriorating Civil War era building (1865), Lighthouse has no paid staff, and relies on the volunteers to accomplish its mission, described by Pastor Mitchell⁵²³ as “loving your neighbor.” He states, “Jesus said love God, love your neighbor and you don’t get to choose who your neighbors are, you just deal with the ones you have.”⁵²⁴ Mitchell refers to Lighthouse as “an accidental church that was created by virtue of the fact that we had a community center going here and we were just sharing the love of Christ with people.” An eclectic group, the Lighthouse staff, volunteers, and those that attend come from a variety of backgrounds; identified as,

...Charismatics, Baptists, Presbyterians and Anglicans and Methodists, you name it and they’re here and they all have their baggage and their issues and we serve together. We have on any given Sunday, we have black and white and Asian, educated and uneducated, homeless and rich, they’re all sitting together and worshipping the Lord together; probably the most diverse congregation in Lynchburg on Sunday morning.

During the interview, few of the terms identified in the Missional Definition criteria were used, yet their thematic presence was obvious. Although not mentioned, the Lighthouse ministry is incarnational, seeking to care about people “in tangible ways” and seeking to minister to whoever “walks through the door.” Awareness of their context is evident with their reference to it as “the soft underbelly of Lynchburg” comprised of “poverty individuals [and the] homeless;” people Mitchell sees as “diamonds in the rough.” He states, “We haven’t tried to target any particular demographic or any particular kind of person. We [just] open the door and we let them come in.”

⁵²³ The author of this research has maintained a professional relationship with Pastor Mitchell since 2006, having served together on the faculty of Liberty University Theological Seminary, as well as having a personal friendship during the same time.

⁵²⁴ Quoted material used in this section is extracted from the Lighthouse Community Fellowship interview; the interview in its entirety is located in Appendix C.

Also not used in the interview, but apparent by description is community; Lighthouse values community life for those who participate in its ministry. Mitchell relates, “I preach on Sunday of course, but then the more important thing that happens is what happens at dinner when I can sit down, and that’s usually where it [relationships] really happens.” The element of missionary presence was not referenced, yet it is difficult to not interpret the Lighthouse ministry as anything but missionary in essence. Mitchell’s use of “soft underbelly” suggests an uninviting environment into which few ministries would venture, but it is in this context that Lighthouse ministry has chosen to minister, seeking as Mitchell states, to bring “the beauty of God,” and “shine the light of the gospel... the light of truth into people’s lives.” The lone exception to the Missional Definition Criteria is the Kingdom of God. Mitchell references this indirectly with his statement regarding their motivation as “we’re in this for the Kingdom.”

The Lighthouse Community Fellowship is a thoroughly outward focused ministry, in tune with their context and living incarnationally among the lowest strata of society inspired by kingdom motivation. As such, it is a valid expression of missional ministry.

3.3.7 Intermediate Summary

The process of evaluating ministries used in this research by investigating for the minimal elements comprising a missional definition was beneficial in that it confirmed that a definition for the term missional could be produced and tested by confirming the presence or absence of the elements. The final step in this process involved combining Tables 3.9 through 3.14 into a cohesive expression for all ministries. Table 3.15 presents the combined comparison of missional elements among the ministries used in this research.

Table 3.15 Comparison of Missional Elements Among Research Ministries

Missional Criteria	Ministry					
	Life in Deep Ellum	Tampa Underground	The Oregon Community	NewSpring Church	Ecclesia Communities	Lighthouse Community Fellowship
Ministry:						
• Focus	Incarnational	Incarnational		Attractional	Attractional	Incarnational
• Form	Derived from and supports focus	Derived from and supports focus		Derived from and supports focus	No apparent relationship to focus	Derived from and supports focus
• Function	Emanates from form	Emanates from form			No apparent relationship to form	Emanates from form
Missional Definition Criteria:						
• Extension of God's Missionary Presence	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
• Contextual discernment, understanding, and response	Yes	Yes		No	Partial	Yes
• Incarnational relationships	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
• Community life of disciples of Jesus Christ	Yes	Yes		No	Partial	Yes
• Revealing the Kingdom of God	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
Missional Ministry?	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes

3.4 Missiology Shaped by Focus, Form, and Function

It is the premise of this research that a relationship exists or should exist between a ministry's focus, form, and function. A ministry's *focus* (informed by its context) should influence its *form*, which in turn enables the ministry to *function* in specific ways to fulfill its ministry goals, which should ultimately be the fulfillment of the minimal elements comprising the missional definition (missionary presence, contextual discernment, incarnational relationships, community life, and Kingdom revelation). That this relationship exists among churches defined as missional should be obvious; however, this research proves that not all churches claiming to be missional, are in fact missional in their thinking and ministry practices, and that the relationship between *focus*, *form*, and *function* should not be presumed. Finally, the relationship between *focus*, *form*, and *function* can be considered as a test of true missional.

3.4.1 Initial Observations

All ministries examined in this process define or think of themselves as missional. Each has unique features and a presence in their location that has attracted a degree of attention on the local or national level, and each are considered in some fashion as examples of what ministry should be, at least principally. The ministries are varied in their settings, organization, and approach to ministry, yet when asked, each considers itself a missional ministry. The research process expanded an initial question (Is it possible that missional ministries can look and function differently, yet share the elements that define missional) by asking, how many missional elements must be present to qualify a ministry as missional, and more importantly, do these elements support a relationship between focus, form, and function as described in the previous

section? Answering these questions required a careful examination of each ministry's responses to Ministry Leaders Interview questions.⁵²⁵

3.4.2 The Evaluation Process

Each ministry's responses were evaluated by looking for the presence of the minimal elements defining missional ministry (Missional Definition Criteria), and noting any occurrences for presentation. The assembled occurrences were presented in table format for each ministry as shown in Table 3.9 through 3:14. The evaluation process required flexibility in interpreting response statements. Where identical terms were present, the evaluation was accomplished easily; however, the absence of identical terms required a flexible interpretive approach giving responses the widest possible latitude of application to the minimal elements.

3.4.3 Discovered Understandings

The evaluation process produced interesting results and concluded with preliminary answers to the three questions identified in section 3.4.1. In answering the first question, it appears that missional ministries can look and function differently while sharing the elements of the missional definition criteria. This may be seen by comparing the Life in Deep Ellum, Tampa Underground, and Lighthouse Community Fellowship ministries. These ministries share similarities, but each is distinct in ministry specifics, while at the same time incorporating all of the elements of the missional definition criteria. The same is not true for NewSpring Church and Ecclesia Communities. While considering themselves as missional ministries, little agreement could be found with the

⁵²⁵ The Ministry Leaders Interview questions are located in Appendix A, with the individual responses by ministry located in Appendix C.

missional definition criteria, therefore leading to the conclusion that these ministries were not missional and could not be used in answering the first question.

The second question addresses how many missional elements must be present to qualify a ministry as missional? Answering this question is a subjective exercise. There are five elements comprising the missional definition criteria, and these have been referenced as minimal elements in previous sections. Each element highlights a specific area with no overlap between elements. As such, it would seem reasonable that all elements would be required to define a ministry as missional. Table 3.14 presents this determination in the final row of the table.

Question 3 is important to the overall purpose of this research: Do the minimal elements support a relationship between focus, form, and function? Using the three missional ministries as examples, the results of this portion of the research appear to support such a relationship. Each of these ministries are fully informed by their individual settings, having discerned the unique makeup of their contexts, and using this understanding to construct a ministry form in response. In a missional ministry, form (what we need for ministry) is seen as the response to focus (what we see in our context), demonstrating a strong relationship between the two. This focus-to-form relationship is evident in all three missional ministries. The same dependent relationship exists between form and function, with form (what we need for ministry) supporting function (what we do in ministry). Again, this form-to-function relationship is evident in all three ministries designated as missional in this research.

3.4.4 The Continuing Process

While this research has been fruitful in its investigation of missional descriptions and exploration of the foundation of missional ecclesiology to produce a working definition for the term *missional*, and using this definition to explore select ministries to validate the research exploring the relationship between missional focus, form, and function, this research is not yet complete. Further analysis is needed to determine if this *focus-to-form-to-function* relationship is indeed redefining American Christianity and the Church in the United States. This portion of the research continues in Chapter 4.

3.5 Chapter Summary

The research of this chapter has vigorously pursued an understanding of missiology, investigating the positions of significant voices (individuals) contributing to the missional discussion, seeking to understand their positions and views, collecting, examining, and categorizing their descriptions of the term *missional* to produce a cohesive working definition whereby *missional* may be understood. This definition is, “The practice of living as an extension of God’s missionary presence in the world, discerning, understanding, and responding to changing contexts through incarnational relationships with others, emphasizing the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ to reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God.”⁵²⁶

Further, this research has sought to fully explore missional ecclesiology and locate it in relationship to missional ministry. The process has been rewarding, but even more, it has been confirming that missional ministry emerges from an understanding of

⁵²⁶ See section 3.2.4.

what it means to be *missional*, and that the concept of being missional is anchored in a missional ecclesiology. It is the position of this research that the only correct ecclesiology is missional ecclesiology, rooted in the understanding that God is a missionary God, and as the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son sent the Spirit, so the Church is sent by the Trinity as a missionary presence in the world.

In addition, this chapter's research included an investigation of five ministries in the United States having the appearance of missional ministry, interviewing leaders of the ministries to evaluate for a missional understanding and presence in their ministries using the missional description elements developed as part of the chapter's earlier research process.⁵²⁷ The research data was assessed as described in section 3.4 and concluded that it is possible for ministries to embrace and employ the elements that define missionality, yet look and function differently, but that all missional elements must be present to qualify a ministry as missional, and that these elements support the relationship between focus, form, and function.

The larger question remains; is missional focus, form, and function redefining American Christianity and the Church in the United States? Answering this question requires utilizing and interpreting the interview sources of research employed in this endeavor together in a cohesive manner. This is the objective of Chapter 4.

⁵²⁷ An investigation of six ministries was attempted; however, repeated efforts to conclude an interview with the Oregon Community were unsuccessful resulting in five completed ministry interviews.

CHAPTER 4: A SHIFTING AND EVOLVING ENVIRONMENT: SOIL FOR CHANGE AND REDEFINITION?

4.1 Introduction

What does the current state of American Christianity and the Church in the United States indicate, and what does the future hold? Are they undergoing a redefinition or does the current landscape simply reveal attempts to respond to a shifting and changing environment with the latest ideas of what might work to restore the vitality lost with the passing of Christendom?⁵²⁸ Addressing twenty-first century Western church ministry in a post-Christendom world, Murray expresses sobering and even unsettling thoughts. Asking the question, “How do we imagine the church’s near future?”⁵²⁹ Murray answers candidly, “we anticipate survival, not revival... not expecting restoration of former glories, the renewal of Christendom or the rapid and painless transition to a new era of triumphant progress. We are hoping to survive and incarnate the story of Jesus faithfully in whatever culture emerges.”⁵³⁰ Even more frank is Cole’s assessment of American Christianity; he states, “These are significant days. There has never been a time in all of history like now. Change is the order of the day and it's rapid... Our ecclesial structures must shift... If we are to survive and even thrive in these days, change is essential.”⁵³¹ At

⁵²⁸ Murray refers to this as “clutching at straws in new programs... wishful thinking and claims that post Christendom means unprecedented opportunity.” See Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press) 2004, 283.

⁵²⁹ Murray. *Post-Christendom*, 283.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁵³¹ It is interesting to note the differing perspectives among authors addressing missional ministry and the future of Western Christianity. Both Murray and Cole reference survival, perhaps questioning the continued existence of the Church. Dreyer takes an alternate view stating that the church, “undertakes [its] mission without regard for its own agenda or survival.” See W. A. Dreyer, 2013, “Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>.

this point our options are to change or die.”⁵³² Added to these statements is Stetzer’s belief that twenty-first century America is witnessing “...the demise of casual and cultural Christianity,” and that Christians in the US “will increasingly be neighbors with Americans who are more disconnected from organized religion from a shared religious memory”⁵³³ describing an environment perhaps never before seen in the history of the United States. Murray, Cole, and Stetzer’s statements, while direct and perhaps unsettling, provide a fitting frame for the current condition of the American Christianity and the Church in the United States, revealing at a minimum each author’s uncertainty regarding the future of each. To answer the initial question of this chapter, ‘What does the current state and future hold for American Christianity and the Church in the United States?’ it is necessary to construct a reasoned conclusion to the question based on the research data.

4.2 Research Data – Significant Voice Interviews

Assessing the current and future states of American Christianity and the Church in the United States requires an appraisal from informed and qualified sources, a selection of individuals actively addressing the missional dialogue through scholarship, ministry practice, and/or university instruction. A group of seven individuals were approached to participate in this portion of the research as ‘Significant Voices,’ (recognized authorities)

⁵³² Neil Cole. “Why We Cannot Afford to Stay Where We Are.” *100 Movements Blog*, July 26, 2016. <http://100movements.com/why-we-cannot-afford-to-stay-where-we-are>. Accessed August 10, 2016.

⁵³³ Ed Stetzer. “The State of the American Church: When Numbers Point to a New Reality.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 230–237. Stetzer identifies three categories distinguishing those who profess Christianity in the United States: “Cultural Christians – ...people who believe themselves to be Christians simply because their culture tells them they are;” “Congregational Christian’s – those who have a church home they grew up in and perhaps where they were married, visiting occasionally;” and “convictional Christians – ... people who are actually living according to their faith,... Who would say they have met Jesus, he change their lives, and orient their faith in him” (Stetzer. “The State of the American Church”).

with six agreeing to contribute their views. This group represents a strong example of the qualifications desired for participation, and includes six authors with a combined total of nearly fifty published volumes and numerous articles focused on the missional discussion, four of which are full-time university professors, with the remaining two as visiting faculty at a variety of institutions. Additionally, four of the six individuals serve as pastor/ministers in current church ministry. Each participant was interviewed individually and invited to respond candidly to the questions of the Significant Voices Interview Instrument.⁵³⁴

In conducting the interviews, all participants were asked to respond to the same ten questions in the same order, with each question read exactly as typed. Clarification of a question was given when requested by the interview participant; however, explanations were kept brief purposefully to avoid leading or biasing the participant's response in any way.⁵³⁵ Although listed sequentially in the interview instrument, the interview questions are divided into four categories as shown in Table 4.1 to investigate specific areas pertinent to the research.

⁵³⁴ Individuals participating in the Significant Voices interview process may be found in Table 1.2.

⁵³⁵ The Significant Voice Interview instrument may be found in Appendix A, with responses for each participant located in Appendix B.

Table 4.1 Significant Voice Interview Questions by Category

Category	Question #	Question
Current State	2	What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?
	3	What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?
	6	Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?
Future State	7	What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?
	8	What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?
	10	What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21 st century United States?
Missional Understanding /Perception	1	How do you define success for the church in the United States?
	4	How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?
	5	How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?
Focus, Form, Function	9	How should focus influence form and function in the 21 st Century church in the United States?

The following sections address and evaluate data collected from the Significant Voices portion of the research, speaking to questions 1 through 8, and 10 individually, assessing, interpreting, and making application either to the current or future state of American Christianity, or the missional understanding of the Church in the United States.⁵³⁶ Additionally, the compiled and interpreted data is used to construct a reasoned answer to the initial question of this chapter.

⁵³⁶ Question 9 from the Significant Voice interview is associated with and addressed in Chapter 5.

4.2.1 The Current State of American Christianity and the Church in the US

Focusing on the current state of American Christianity and the Church in the United States, questions 2, 3, and 6 of the interview instrument were intended to discover individual and collective identifications of elements producing change across the American religious landscape (question 2), the isolation of the primary cause(s) of such change (question 3), and perceptions of optimism, pessimism, or uncertainty about the current state of the Church in the United States (question 6). Tables 4.2 through 4.4, and Figures 4.1 through 4.8 present the interpreted data from each of these questions.

4.2.1.1 Elements Producing Change

The responses to question 2 (significant elements producing change in the church in the United States) were interpreted and coded according to the predominate theme expressed by each participant, producing 22 initial codes reflecting the change producing elements derived from all statements. This data is presented in Table 4.2 by participant and according to frequency of occurrence (percentage), combined for all participants, and Figure 4.1 presents the initial coded data for question 2 in graphic form. Once identified, the initial codes were further grouped into code groups using an interpretive process of identifying similarities across the initial codes, and producing four groups whereby the data compiled from question 2 may be understood.⁵³⁷ The four code groups are: Negative Influencing Elements, Negative to Neutral Influencing Elements, Neutral to Positive Influencing Elements, and Positive Influencing Elements, and are also shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2.

⁵³⁷ This is the same process used in grouping the initial codes presented in Table 3.2 and supported by Yin's statement included as part of footnote 437 on page 117.

Table 4.2 Code Chart - Responses to Significant Voice Interview Question 2⁵³⁸

What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Group Code	Initial Code	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Total	Group Total
Negative Influencing Elements	Civil Religion	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	8%	52%
	Compromises with Western Culture	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Crisis of identity	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	
	Decline	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Decline of Western Christendom	0%	0%	17%	25%	0%	0%	12%	
	Failure, Plateau, Crisis	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Lack of Solutions	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	
	Rise of the "Nones"	20%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	
Negative-Neutral Influencing Elements	Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic, and Ambiguous	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	8%
	"De-Centered"	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	
	Holy Spirit Disruptions	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	4%	

⁵³⁸ Table information included as part of this chapter presents 'Significant Voice' interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall research interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question, and to present the interviewees' statements in as concise manner as possible. The interview responses presented in each Table were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

Neutral-Positive Influencing Elements	Holy Spirit Disruptions ⁵³⁹	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	4%	16%
	Mergers	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Multi-site Approach	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Need for New Methodology	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	
Positive Influencing Elements	Being a Christian	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	24%
	Missio Dei	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Missional Church Discussion	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Renewal of Relationships	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Retro-fitting Model	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Reworking Theology	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	4%	
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

⁵³⁹ Regarding Holy Spirit Disruptions, Niemandt writes, “Studying missional churches presupposes an expectation that the unbound nature and unpredictability of the Spirit’s presence and activity associated with the Spirit, will cut across human expectations and never cease to surprise students of ecclesiology.” See Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, ‘Trends in missional ecclesiology’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1198, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198>.

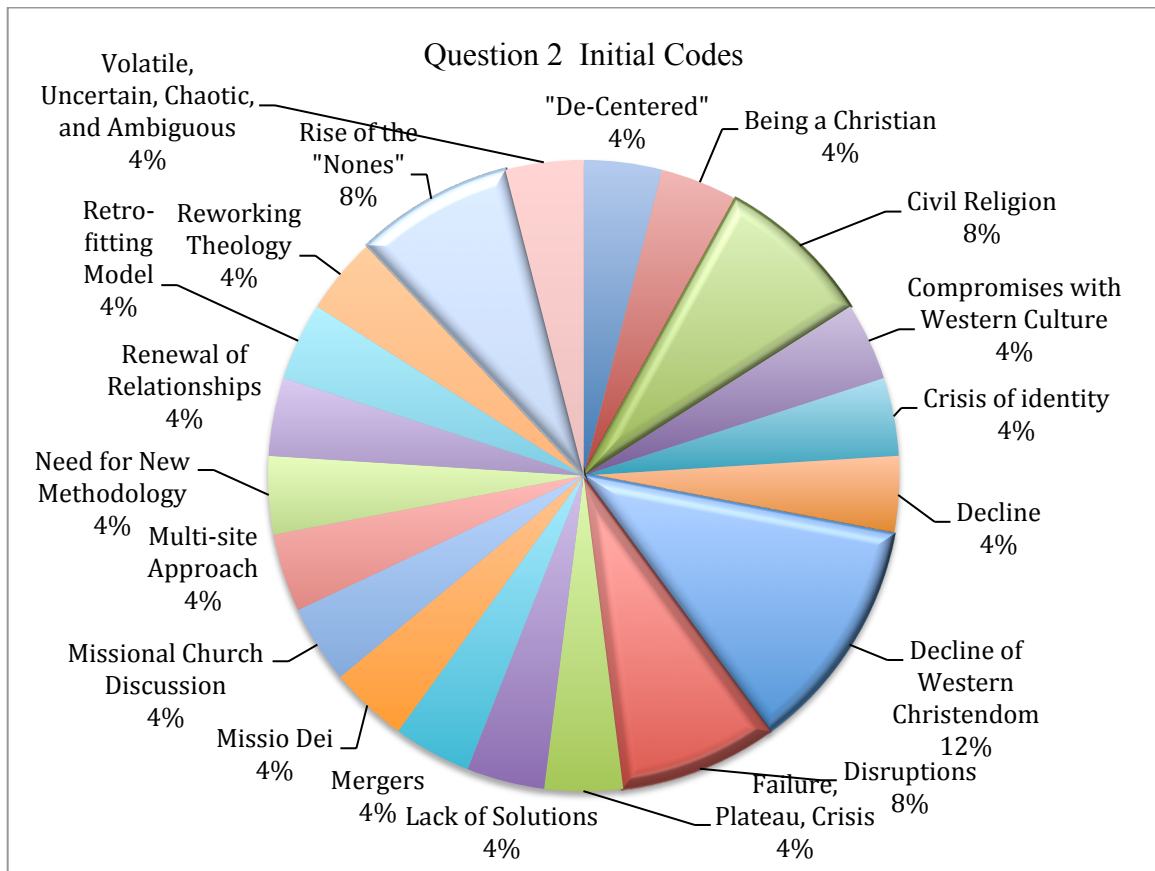


Figure 4.1 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Initial Codes

The data collected from question 2 revealed a wide variety of responses with little agreement across the significant voice participants. No single element was identified by all participants, and only two elements were shared by more than one respondent. Individually, Cole and Dempsey both identified the “rise of the Nones” as an element, and did Guder and Hirsch in identifying the “Decline of Western Christendom.” All other elements were mentioned only once, and by only one participant. The disparity of responses was unexpected in the research and was reminiscent of the attempt to unify the definitions of the term *missional* offered by authors presented in Table 3.2. Each of the participants in the Significant Voices interviews are individuals with substantial

contributions to the missional discussion, and each has a particular perspective as demonstrated in the coding of their responses to the question (Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1). With their unique perspectives, it is difficult to isolate major change elements common to all participants based on the initial coded elements alone (Table 4.2, Figure 4.1), requiring another basis for identifying elements producing change in American Christianity and the church in the United States today.

That the majority of elements identified in the responses to question 2 were mentioned only once by only one of the participants, required an additional step in coding the initial codes by groups in an attempt to produce and identify change elements in a broader understanding or context. The participants' individual statements were reviewed an additional time to ensure the first interpretation was identified correctly and aligned with the participant's intent when making the statement. During this review, the initial code was reevaluated within the context of the participant's overall statement, whether primarily positive or negative. Of the 22 initial codes, nine were identified as clearly negative, and six as distinctly positive, leaving six initial codes not clearly classified as either positive or negative, but having a lesser intensity of positive or negative expression. The remaining six codes were reevaluated again within the context in which they were stated resulting in two additional groups: change elements that are Negative-to-Neutral in their influence, and elements that are a Neutral-to-Positive influence. Thus, the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today must be understood in terms of four classifications or code groups: Negative Influencing Elements, Negative-Neutral Influencing Elements, Neutral-Positive Influencing Elements, and Positive Influencing Elements. These groups should be interpreted as

follows: The Negative Influencing Elements are those elements or influences clearly exerting a negative influence; Negative-Neutral Influencing Elements are items with some negative influence, but not clearly as negative as seen in the negative influencing elements group, and also possessing somewhat neutral qualities. The Neutral-Positive Influencing Elements are those with neutral qualities, but also leaning toward a positive influence, and the Positive Influencing Elements, which exhibit clearly positive influences. Figure 4.2 presents the four code groups as a whole with the percentage of the initial elements comprising each group. Figures 4.3 through 4.6 present the individual code groups in more detail, identifying the initial elements comprising each group along with their individual percentage of mention.

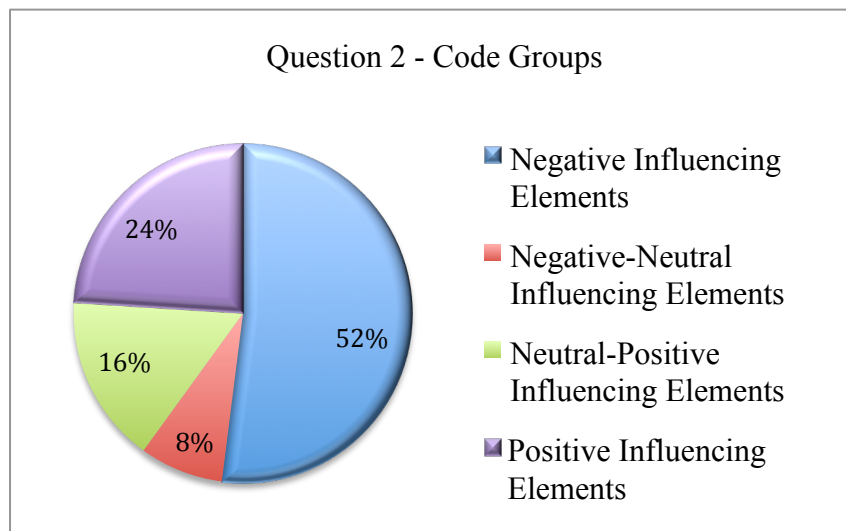


Figure 4.2 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Group Codes

From Figure 4.2 the following understandings can be recognized: more than half of the change elements identified (60%) are negative in their influence upon American Christianity and the church in the US, with the remaining number (40%) exerting a positive influence. Of the negative elements, 52% are clearly negative and 8% are

negative to neutral in their influence, which when combined equal the 60 % referenced earlier. The positive elements are composed of 24% that are clearly positive and 16% that are neutral to positive in their influence, and when combined equal the previously mentioned 40%. Thus, negative influences outweigh positive influences by a factor of 1.5 to 1.

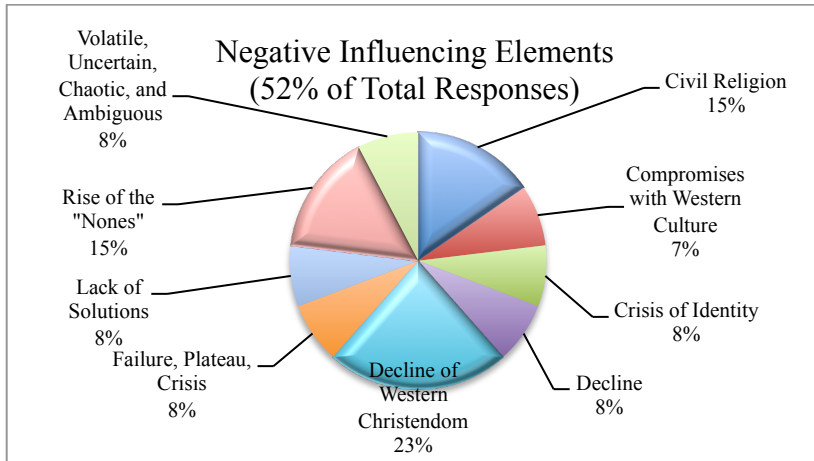


Figure 4.3 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Negative Influencing Elements

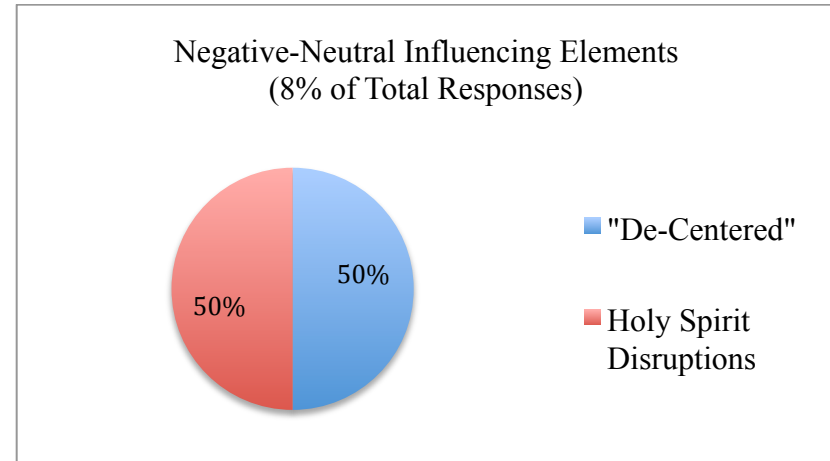


Figure 4.4 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Neutral-Negative Influencing Elements

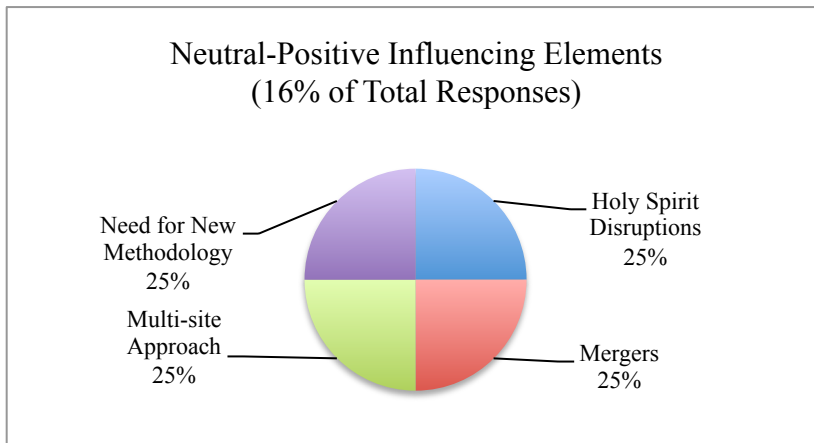


Figure 4.5 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Neutral-Positive Influencing Elements

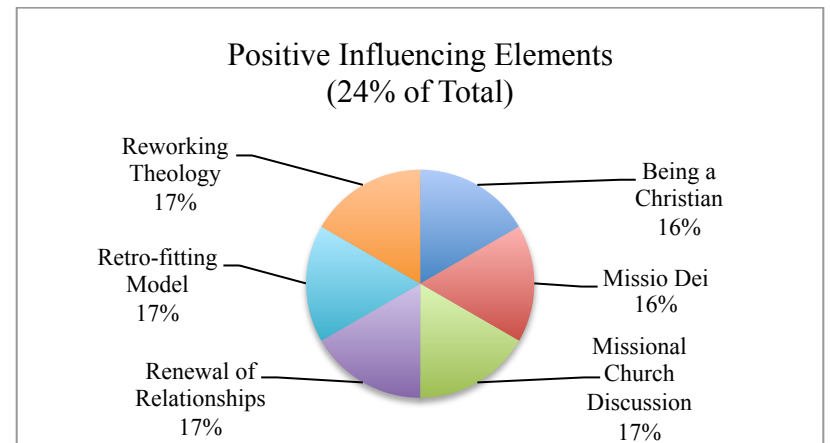


Figure 4.6 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 2 – Positive Influencing Elements

From Figures 4.3 through 4.6 it may be seen that the change facing the church in the United States today is clearly negative and composed of a variety of individual elements, of which the “Decline of Western Christendom” (12%), and the “Rise of the Nones” (8%) are the primary features, followed by “Civil Religion” (cultural Christianity) (8%). Combined, these three elements equal 28% of the total or more than one-quarter of all influences mentioned. “Holy Spirit Disruptions” also equaled 8% of the total influences mentioned, but was referenced in both a positive and negative context, thus diluting its effect upon data results except to add equally to both the Negative-Neutral and Neutral-Positive groups. The remaining items are weighted equally at 4% each. The positive influences upon the church are less pronounced, with each element weighted at 4%. It is interesting to note that of all the participants, Guder alone identified the “*missio Dei*” and the “Missional Church Discussion” as elements producing change in the church; a higher rate of mention was expected.

4.2.1.2 The Most Significant Element Producing Change

Responses to question 3 (“What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned”) were interpreted and coded in the same manner as applied in the interpretation of question 2, and produced 10 initial codes reflecting the participants’ impression of the most significant element mentioned in question 2. The answers to question 3 are problematic in that they do not reflect the previous answers provided in question 2 despite efforts to guide participants to their previous answers, although without influencing or biasing the participants. Similar to question 2, the responses to question 3 were “stand-alone” answers with no answer repeated by any other participant. Since all responses to the question were unique, the distribution of answers were

weighted equally across the participants, providing no clear indication of the most significant element producing change in the church in the United States. Table 4.3 presents the coded responses to question 3.

Table 4.3 Code Chart - Responses to Significant Voice Interview Question 3
 What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Total
Biblical Christianity Fading	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	10%
Change for the Better	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Decline of Books, Blogs	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Denominations Transitioning	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	10%
Lack of Learning	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Political Correctness	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Responding to What God is Doing	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Secular Culture	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	10%
Technology	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	10%
Weak Maturity	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

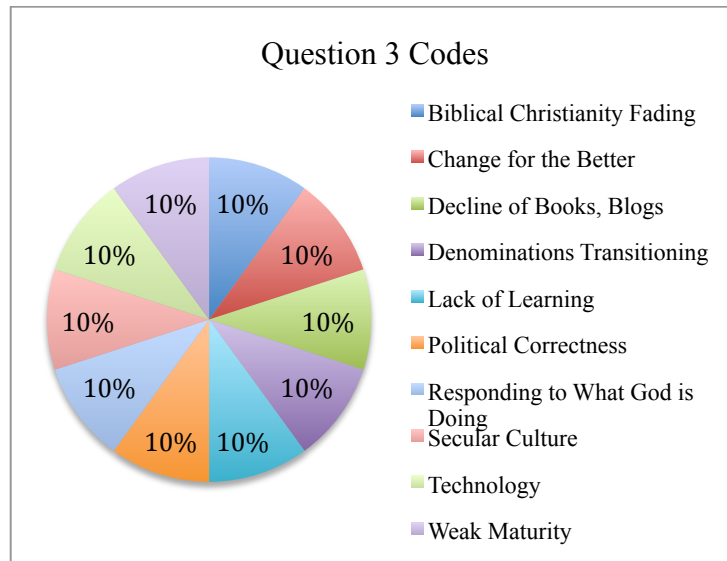


Figure 4.7 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 3 – Codes

4.2.1.3 Optimism, Pessimism, or Uncertainty

Question 6 is the final inquiry into the current state of American Christianity and the church in the United States, asking participants to respond to, “Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?” Again, the same interpretive process was employed as used previously in questions 2 and 3, and Table 4.4 presents the combined interpretation of responses grouped by code. Figure 4.8 presents the interpretation in graphic form.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ The process of interpreting responses to Question 6 of the Significant Voices interviews involved the use of the Atlas.ti Qualitative Research program where each response was interpreted and coded/classified according to “optimistic,” “pessimistic,” “mixed optimism/pessimism,” or “uncertain.” Responses were gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016, and were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question to present the interviewees’ statements in a concise manner. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B. The interview responses presented in Appendix B were not modified from the original interview. Actual responses to each question may be found in the Significant Voices Interview Responses Combined by Question table also located in Appendix B.

Table 4.4 Code Chart - Responses to Significant Voice Interview Question 6

Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals
Optimistic	33%	100%	0%	0%	50%	100%	44%
Pessimistic	33%	0%	50%	67%	17%	0%	28%
Mixed Optimism / Pessimism	33%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	11%
Uncertain	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	0%	17%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The responses to question 6 were not as expected, with only two participants selecting one of the available options as their singular response, and with the remaining participants choosing to distribute their answers across multiple available options. Two of the participants chose two of the available response options, and the remaining two participants chose to incorporate three of the available options in their response to the question. The overall response to question 6 is reminiscent of the statements from Murray, Cole, and Stetzer included in the introduction to this chapter, revealing a uncertain view on the current state of the church in the United States; however, the interpreted outcome of this question presents a different picture.

The anticipated agreement between Guder and Van Gelder was not present although both actively participate in the GOCN and contributed to *Missional Church*. The agreement expected between Cole and Hirsch is partially apparent, but mediated by Cole's incorporation of "optimistic" (33%) in his response compared to Hirsch's combined "pessimistic" (67%) / "uncertain" (33%) response. Hirsch and Stetzer were the only participants to select "uncertain" as part of their answer, which in the case of Hirsch

presents a clear indication of his inclination since he did not select either “optimism” response. This aspect is somewhat present also in Guder’s selection of both “pessimistic” and “mixed optimism/pessimism” for his response; however, answers combining three of the available responses confuse the data. The selection of either “optimistic,” “pessimistic,” “mixed optimism/pessimism,” along with “uncertain” appears to skew the interpretation of this question. Cole’s selection of “optimistic,” “pessimistic,” and “mixed optimism/pessimism” is comprehensible, but perhaps would have been better expressed by selecting only “mixed optimism/pessimism,” and would have been in keeping with his statement included in the introduction to the chapter. Stetzer’s selection of “optimistic,” “pessimistic,” and “uncertain” is confusing; it is difficult to interpret such a combined response. If the responses to question 6 are viewed in conjunction with the interpretation of question 2, then an indication of negative or pessimism is discernable, providing an expected pessimistic/mixed optimism/pessimism, and uncertain complexion to the future of the church in the US; however, the evaluated responses to the question do not suggest such a finding, with the highest percentage of answers indicating an optimistic view (44%) of the current state of the church in the US, and only 28% indicating a pessimistic view. If the “mixed optimism/pessimism” view were divided in half (11% / 2) and added to both the optimistic and pessimistic totals, the results would be optimistic view (50%), and pessimistic view (34%), further leaning the results in favor of optimism, and suggesting a clear indication of optimism about the current state of the church in the United States. The outstanding 17% for “uncertain” remains unchanged. Figure 4.8 presents the results for question 6 as recorded from the participants answers, and Figure 4.9 presents the adjusted results applying half of the “mixed optimism/pessimism”

percentage to both the “optimistic” and “pessimistic” results to produce a restated interpretation to the question.

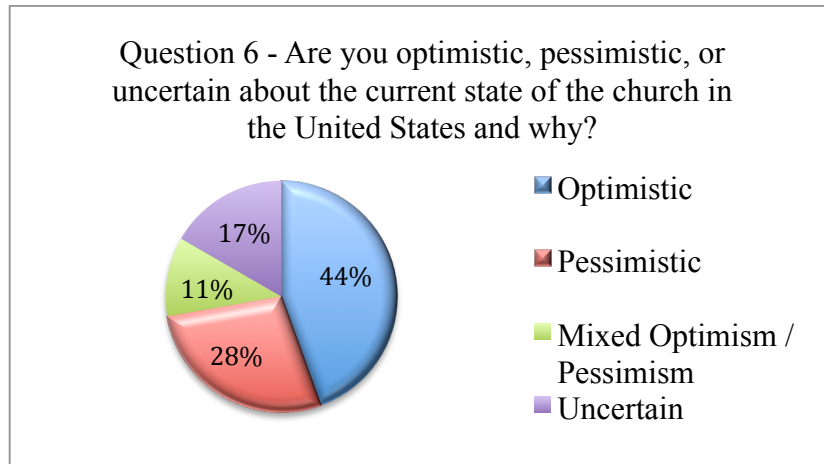


Figure 4.8 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 6

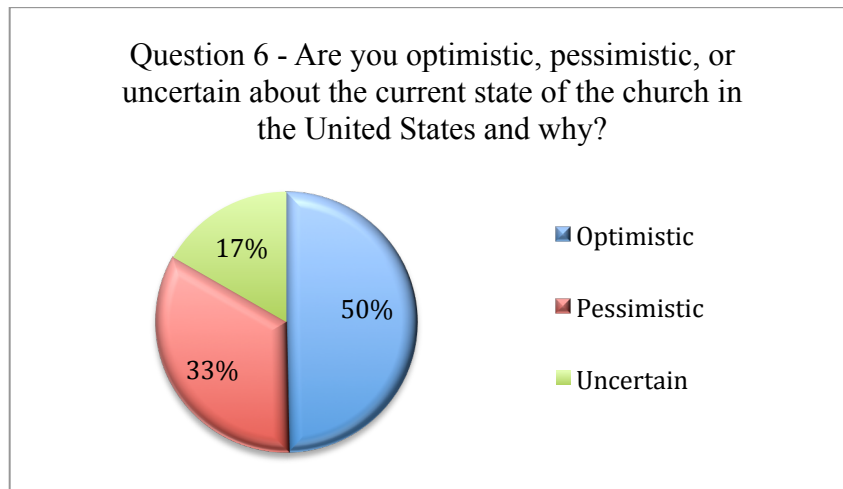


Figure 4.9 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 6 Adjusted for Mixed Optimism/Pessimism

It was hoped that question 6 would contribute to a consensus among participants in determining an overall perception of the current state of American Christianity and the church in the US; however, the responses clearly indicate a prevailing optimistic

perception among the interviewees, an unexpected result, and one that does not coincide with the responses to questions 2 and 3.

4.2.1.4 Interpretation of Combined Responses

Questions 2, 3, and 6 were designed to gain the perspective of the significant voice participants on the current state of American Christianity and the church in the United States; however, the results of question 2 are complicated by results of question 3 where answers did not reflect the products of the previous question, and by the results of question 6 that suggest an overall positive view of the current state. Additionally, the question 6 results do not agree with the many volumes authored by the participants in which they call for change, and the introductory statements of Murray, Cole, and Stetzer where they are plainly drawing attention to the shifting nature of the current state.

The overall objective of the first section of the interview (questions 2, 3, and 6) was to research and determine essential elements with which to understand the current state of the American Christianity and the church in the United States and to construct an inclusive opinion among the participants. The responses to question 2 overwhelmingly identify elements projecting a negative influence, an outcome that finds agreement with the majority of sources used in this research. That the responses to question 3 do not compliment question 2, and the responses to question 6 appear to contradict the same, diminishes, but does not negate the conclusion produced by the question 2 responses, especially in that the responses to question 2 find agreement with the sources authored by the participants. Additionally, the responses to question 3, while not reflecting the responses to question 2, are not invalid, but suggest the severity of the post-Christendom condition of the United States. The overall results of question 6 cannot be reconciled with

the results of questions 2 and 3; however, a reasonable conclusion to the first section of the interview should determine that change is necessary to counter the current state of decline and disinterest in American Christianity and the church in the United States.

4.2.2 Future State of American Christianity and the Church in the US

Questions 7, 8, and 10 of the Significant Voices Interview Instrument were constructed to discover the participants' perception of the future of American Christianity and the church in the US. In similar fashion to questions 2, 3 and 6, question 7 begins the focus on the future state by asking interview participants to consider and respond to, "What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?" This question is an attempt to build upon the responses of the previous questions (2, 3, and 6) and provide a supposition regarding the future based on perceptions of the current state. Question eight continues the inquiry by asking participants to forecast the predominant church model in the next 25 years, and question 10 concludes the investigation regarding the future by asking respondents to address "What does the future appear to hold for American Christianity and the church in the 21st-century United States. The combined responses were expected to reveal meaningful insight from the participants on the future of the American Christianity and the church in the United States.

4.2.2.1 The Next 5 to 10 to 25 Years

The responses to question 7 reinforced the interpreted data from questions 2 and 3 suggesting participants in the Significant Voices interview envision change for American Christianity and the church in the US, albeit their responses were varied and challenging to interpret. In no category did participants agree fully; total agreement was closest in two codes: those responses coded as "Transitioning," and those coded as "Uncertain,"

each with five out of six participants agreeing. The disparity in responses increased from this point with two participants' statements coded as "Different Influence," and two other statements coded "Reclaiming-Recovering," each with two different participants statements. Finally, one participant's statement was coded "Replacing Error." Table 4.5 presents the responses of the Significant Voice participants to interview question 7 ("What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?") in percentage of frequency mentioned, and Figure 4.10 presents the information in graphic form.

Table 4.5 Code Chart - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 7⁵⁴¹

What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals
Different Influence	33%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	10%
Reclaiming-Recovering	0%	50%	0%	25%	0%	40%	20%
Replacing Error	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Transitioning	33%	0%	50%	50%	25%	40%	35%
Uncertain	33%	50%	0%	25%	50%	20%	30%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁵⁴¹ Table 4.2 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees' statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.5 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

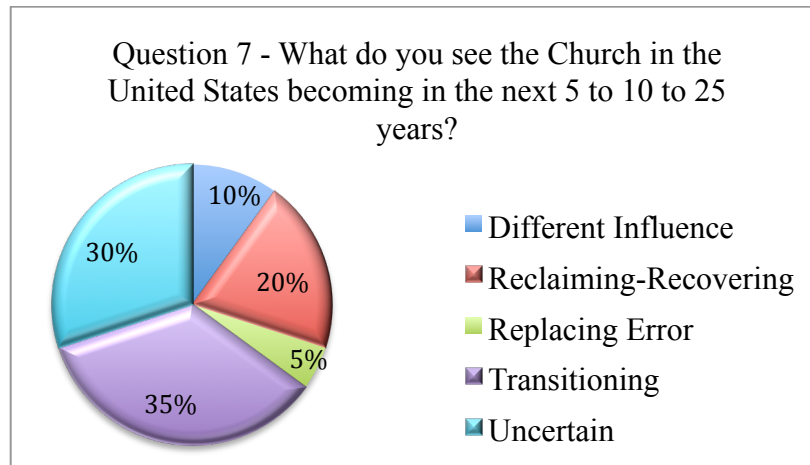


Figure 4.10 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 7

While both “Transitioning” and “Uncertain” represented five statements each from five of the six participants (the same five participants in each code), “Transitioning” represented the highest concentration of responses based upon the total number of responses by each participant and the number of statements applicable to the code. Together, “Transitioning” and “Uncertain” represent 65% of all responses, indicating the areas of greatest agreement among participants. “Reclaiming-Recovering” and “Different Influence” follow with 20% and 10% of responses respectively, and “Replacing Error” represents 5% of all responses with a single statement.

As a whole, the participants’ responses were fairly easy to evaluate and code, and one participant’s responses clearly demonstrate this challenge. His responses were: “It’s hard to tell,” coded “Uncertainty,” “The traditional model will have less and less influence on society as a whole,” coded “Different Influence,” and “Growth in nontraditional or organic expressions of the church,” coded “Transitioning.” Other statements were more difficult, such as, “It depends on the seminaries, on pastors, on the

controlling philosophy of what is a church, what is a pastor, what is a disciple, the centrality of the life of Christ in the disciple; If we can recover that, I think the church has a great 5, 10, 25 years.” This statement was divided into two statements, with the bulk of the statement coded as “Reclaiming-Recovering,” and the remainder (“If we can recover that, I think the church has a great 5, 10, 25 years”) coded as “Uncertainty.” The overall understanding of the responses to question 7 favors a position of change and vagueness on behalf of the participants when endeavoring to forecast what the church will become in the next five to ten to twenty-five years.

4.2.2.2 Predominant Church Model in the Next 25 Years

Responses to question 8 (“What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?”) were reminiscent of question 3 where participant responses did not match the intent of the question. The question was asked with the hope of identifying a specific future model, and the lack of specific response may suggest a hesitancy on behalf of participants to project anything more than a broad characterization, or any characterization at all. Table 4.6 presents the responses to question 8 in percentage of frequency mentioned, and Figure 4.11 presents the information in graphic form.

Table 4.6 Code Chart - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 8⁵⁴²

What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals
Caution	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	100%	13%
Diversity	33%	67%	25%	33%	60%	0%	39%
Necessity	0%	33%	25%	17%	0%	0%	13%
Survival	67%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	13%
Uncertainty	0%	0%	25%	50%	20%	0%	22%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

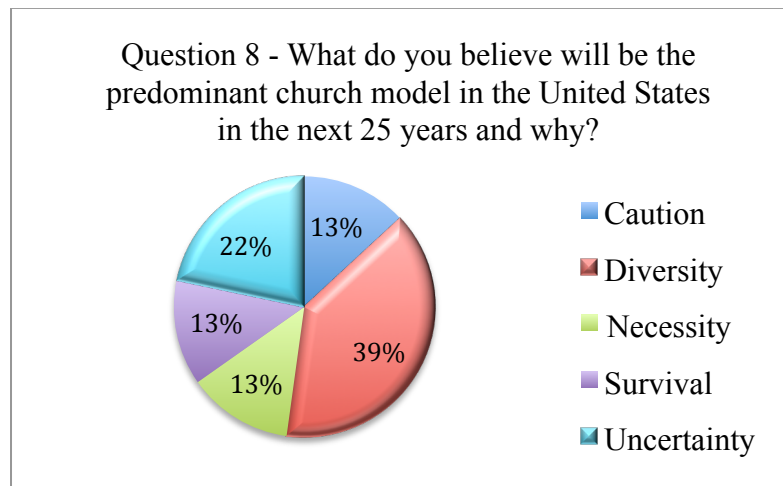


Figure 4.11 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 8

As with question 7, the responses to question 8 varied in the degree of difficulty to code. The following examples demonstrate statements that were relatively easy to

⁵⁴² Table 4.8 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees' statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.8 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

interpret: “I don’t know that there will be a predominant church model;” “I’m not sure I could make a judgment on that;” “Its hard to see a standard form of the church;” “Its very hard to see at this stage that far into the future,” and “We’re going into a far more unstable age, and I just can’t see the economic model working.” Each of these statements was coded as “Uncertainty.” The statements following display a more complex effort to code the participants’ intent: “the model in the future will not be ‘come to our church we’ve got the biggest or the best, we’ve got the brightest or the fanciest;” “You won’t have casual Christians, it just leaves room for the passionate follower of Christ;” “A mixed economy;” “I’m really cautious, this is part of that success thing,” and “Models unfortunately invite replication without contextualization,⁵⁴³ thinking that the form itself will produce the result.” Each of these statements were difficult to code, and the transcript and recoding of the interviews were reviewed several times to determine the participants’ intent as nearly as possible. The first two statements were coded “Diversity,” and the remaining three coded as “Caution.”

It appears the majority of participants were reluctant to identify a specific type as the predominant model in the next twenty-five years, although Stetzer believes the “mega church will increase and be a significant player,” as well as “smaller to mid-size churches will still probably be predominant models,⁵⁴⁴ and Cole stated, “Tampa Underground and organic church movements... are going to be probably the only expression that flies in

⁵⁴³ Guder states, “To be faithful to its calling, the church must be contextual, that is, it must be culturally relevant within a specific setting... It is important, then, for the church to study it context carefully and to understand it. See Darrell L. Guder ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 18.

⁵⁴⁴ See Stetzer’s responses to the Significant Voices interview questions in Appendix B.

the coming days.”⁵⁴⁵ Aside from Stetzer and Cole, no other models were mentioned creating a challenge to maintain continuity in coding. The codes presented in Table 4.6 were determined to be the best method of expressing a cohesive coded representation of the responses to the question.

4.2.2.3 Perceived Future into the Twenty-First Century

Question 10 is the final inquiry of the future state section of the interview and addresses, What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States? All but one of the participants’ responses were strong with a clear emphasis in one area or direction. Table 4.7 presents the responses to question 10 in percentage of frequency mentioned by participant, and Figure 4.12 presents a graphic illustration of the total responses.

Table 4.7 Code Chart - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 10⁵⁴⁶

What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals
Challenges	100%	0%	80%	0%	0%	14%	31%
Deconstruction / Reconstruction	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	29%	18%
Immigration	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	14%	17%
Incarnational	0%	50%	20%	0%	0%	14%	17%
Uncertain	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	29%	17%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁵⁴⁵ See Cole’s responses to the Significant Voices interview questions in Appendix B.

⁵⁴⁶ Table 4.7 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees’ statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.7 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

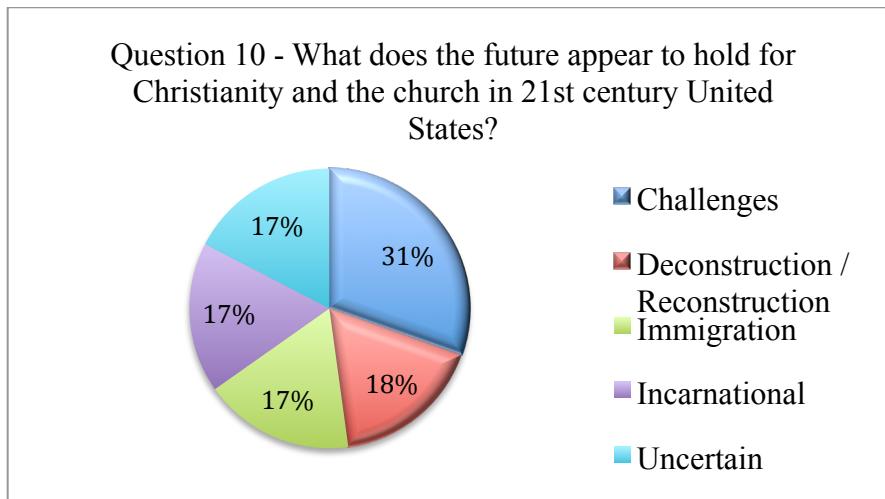


Figure 4.12 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 10

Unlike questions 7 and 8, the responses to question 10 were fairly forthright and less difficult to code. Three participants focused their responses in a single area or specific topic, while two participants divided their responses across two areas. Van Gelder was alone in identifying multiple areas in his responses; however, all participants' responses reflected a cohesiveness across themes resulting in the codes identified in Table 4.7. Other than the code "Challenges" (31% of the total), all responses were weighted nearly equal (17-18%), demonstrating a continuity of opinion among the group as seen in the number of responses each code received. Three participants identified "Challenges," and another three participants identified "incarnational;" the remaining codes were each identified in at least two participants' responses. No code was identified by only one participant, which increased confidence in the data as opposed to other questions where single codes were the product of one participant's focus.

Summarizing, the participants foresee a future that is both negative and positive, with challenges and uncertainty for American Christianity and the church in the United States, characterized by emphases on evaluation and rebuilding, incorporating an incarnational presence, and addressing significant societal elements. Their collective responses are reflective of Murray's insights where he states, "As decline continues and the churches influence wanes, some may despair... If we negotiate this turbulent period and emulate previous generations who discovered the capacity of Christian faith to survive cultural shifts, we may discover fresh opportunities for witness and service in whatever post-Christendom becomes."⁵⁴⁷

4.2.2.4 Interpretation of Combined Responses

Gibbs believes the church "cannot hope to regain its previous central position.... The church will need to re-enter as a missionary presence with an apostolic stance, living adventurously as a subversive movement, realizing afresh its total reliance on the Lord."⁵⁴⁸ The combined responses of the participants to questions 7, 8, and 10 appear to agree with Gibbs, especially their responses to question 10; however, viewed individually, the responses to the future section seem to lack an emphasis or strength in identifying an exceptional value related to the question. This is seen primarily in questions 7 and 8 where the broad codes of "Transitioning" and "Uncertainty" (question 7), and "Diversity" and "Uncertainty" (question 8), represent the majority of participant responses, leaving an unexpected impression of hesitation or reluctance to identify

⁵⁴⁷ Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 283-284.

⁵⁴⁸ Eddie Gibbs. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 51.

specific information from those who have contributed in a significant manner to the missional discussion.

It is true that the future is “cloudy” and not easily discerned, yet some participant responses suggest an inclination to speculate with a sense of confidence about certain future elements, as seen in Hirsch’s response to question 7, (in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years, there will be) “further moves toward founding a new movement or form of Christianity,” and in Stetzer’s response to the same question, “the church in the US... will look a lot like the pacific northwest where it’s not a substantive presence.”⁵⁴⁹ Again, as in question 7, viewing question 8 by itself further obscures an interpretation to the section as a whole with the majority of participants unable to identify a specific church model as predominant in the United States in the next 25 years, and resulting in broad coding labels that provide little more than a general definition to an interpretation of the responses to the question. Conversely, when the responses to question 10 are added to those of questions 7 and 8, a sense of understanding and direction does form in interpreting responses addressing the future state of American Christianity and the church in the United States.

As mentioned previously in addressing question 10 responses, the participants foresee a future that is both negative and positive, with challenges and uncertainty, characterized by specific emphases, and in agreement with Murray’s statement on decline, despair, and discovery.⁵⁵⁰ These responses provide understanding to the interpretation of questions 7 and 8 within the overall section. The Significant Voice participants view the future as uncertain and with multiple areas of change, and appear

⁵⁴⁹ Transcripts of each Significant Voice interview are located in Appendix B.

⁵⁵⁰ See footnote 499, and Murray, *Post Christendom*, 283-284.

hesitant to project into that environment what they see the church becoming or any model as the predominant type.

4.2.3 Missional Understanding and Perception in American Christianity and the Church in US

The third section of the Significant Voices interview (questions 1, 4, and 5) sought to discover participants' views on the understanding of missional ministry by the church in the United States, but in hindsight, the section was constructed poorly, becoming the weak portion of the Significant Voices interviews. Question 1 asked participants to define success for the church in the United States, while question 4 addressed the importance of missional ministry, and question 5 asked participants to define or interpret missional ministry. The following sections present and interpret the data from each question.

4.2.3.1 Defining Success

Question 1, "How do you define success for the church in the United States?" was asked to gain the participants' perspective on American Christianity's, especially evangelical Christianity's focus on success, hoping to characterize a perceived significant difference in how missional churches assess their effectiveness. Guder addresses this penchant for continuing greater accomplishment, typically measured in what Stetzer refers to as "nickels, noses, or numbers,"⁵⁵¹ writing, "In the entrepreneurial voluntarism⁵⁵² of North America, the values and assumptions of the competitive market

⁵⁵¹ Stetzer's complete statement was, "most people would see that as nickels, noses or numbers, financial metrics, baptisms, conversions." See Stetzer's complete response to Question 1 in the transcript of his interview located in Appendix B.

⁵⁵² Van Gelder explains "voluntarism" as originating from the Anabaptists "...over against the European state churches... The Anabaptists conceived of the church primarily in terms of being a gathered social community of persons who possess the freedom to associate and the right to govern their own affairs," and

can take over the church and make it into a business,”⁵⁵³ and Watson and Scalen describe the lengths to which some churches have gone in their efforts to attract increasing numbers of attenders; they write,

In some cases, this process has occurred in a literal fashion; several churches in the southern United States have added McDonald's restaurants and similar retail food establishments to their facilities, complete with drive-through windows. Food courts, bookstores, cafés, boutiques, and even banks have also become part of the worship experience. These developments are best viewed as a byproduct of the fundamental paradigm shift in religious organization among evangelicals, that is, churches restructuring themselves according to a corporate business model.⁵⁵⁴

The business model referenced by Guder, and Watson and Scalen reflects the degree to which consumerism has become entwined in American Christianity, causing churches to reach for a variety of new and different methods to attract and retain members and attenders, and as a result, promoting an altered concept of success.⁵⁵⁵ In their responses to the question, Guder and Van Gelder reflected similar viewpoints answering, “the term

adding, voluntarism was “one of the more unique features of the emerging American society by the early 1800s.” See Craig van Gelder. *The Ministry of The Missional Church: A Community Led by The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 75-76. Guder provides a present application of the term with, “local congregations... made up of people who choose to come together in a particular Christian community” See Darrell L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of The Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 146.

⁵⁵³ Darrell L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of The Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 147.

⁵⁵⁴ J. B. Watson and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches.” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83. No. 3/4 (2008), 171-180.

⁵⁵⁵ Watson and Scalen identify the prevalence of consumerism in American Christianity with their statement, “With the primacy of the consumer, each church or religious organization tries to fashion a product that consistently meet consumer preferences,” (See J. B. Watson and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches.” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83. No. 3/4 (2008), 171-180.) creating what Guder describes as “...a pervasive focus on the benefits that are churches are supposed to provide their members,” (See Darrell L. Guder. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2015, 107.) and resulting in what Perrin, Kennedy and Miller describe as, “...greater church shopping as Christians actively search for the church which best meet their needs” (See Robin D. Perrin, Paul Kennedy and Donald E. Miller. “Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where are the New Evangelical Movements Getting their Numbers?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar. 1997), 71-80.

success doesn't help us, I would prefer to use faithfulness" (Guder), and "Success is problematic when it comes to thinking missionally... "we've been living in a culture of organizational success basically as the driving missiology for the church" (Van Gelder). Hirsch was similar in his response, although not quite as strong as Guder and Van Gelder, stating, "You can have a whole lot of success in terms of numbers, and be fundamentally inauthentic, that to me is not a success."

The responses of all participants generated a large number of items defining/describing success for the church. Table 4.8 presents the responses to question 1 in percentage of frequency mentioned by participant using both initial and group codes, and Figure 4.13 through 4.17 present detailed graphic illustrations of the total responses followed by an interpretation of the responses to the question in group form.

Table 4.8 Code Chart - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1⁵⁵⁶

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Group Code	Initial Code	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals
Identification	Capacity to Reflect Jesus	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	5%
	Christlikeness	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	5%
	Representation	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Visible	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Witness that Points to Jesus	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Continuation	Faithfulness	25%	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	24%
	Finishing Well	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Fruitfulness	25%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	10%
	Healthy	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Living Consistent with what God has Made it to Be	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	5%
	Succession	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Transcends Time and Culture	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
	Walking Worthy	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Influence	Impact Outside the Church	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	5%
	Joining Jesus on His Mission	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	5%
	Transformation in Society	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	5%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁵⁵⁶ Table 4.8 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees' statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.8 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

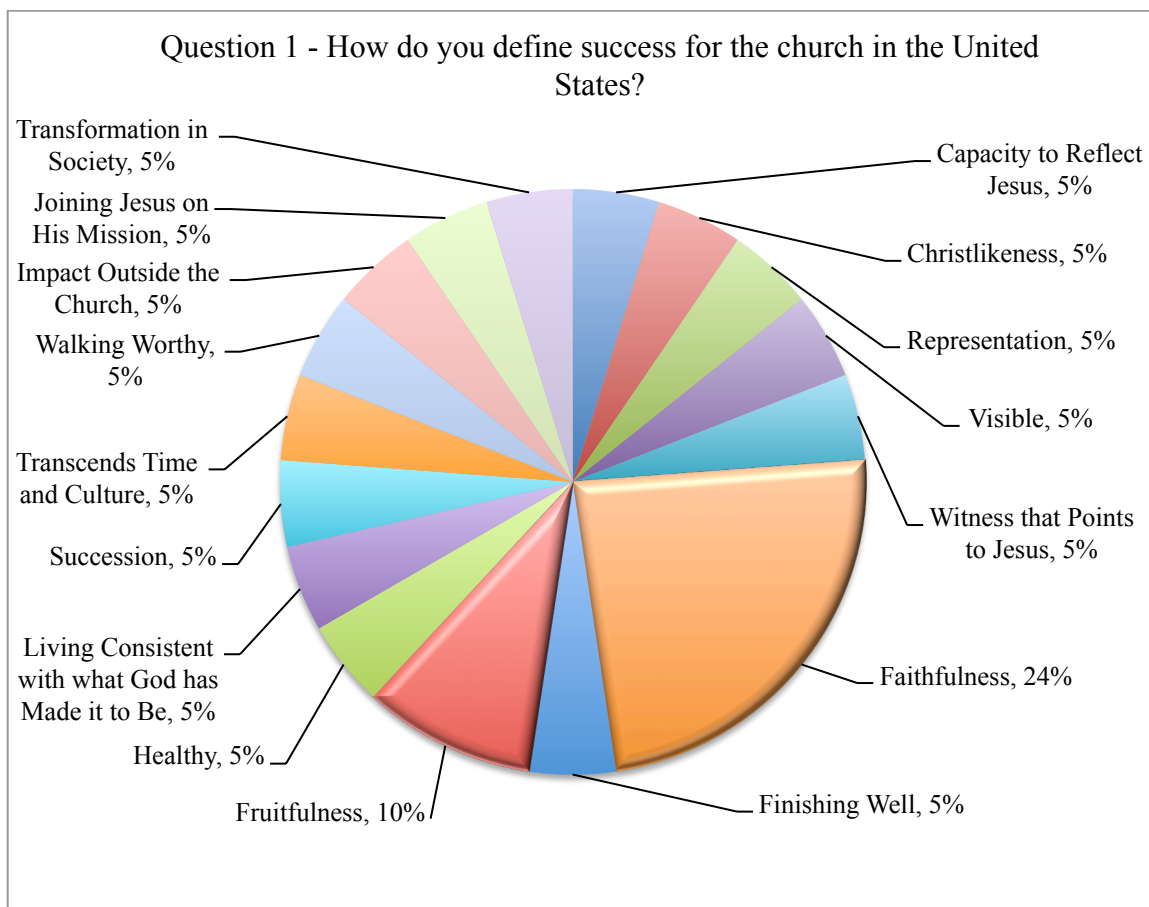


Figure 4.13 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1 – Initial Codes

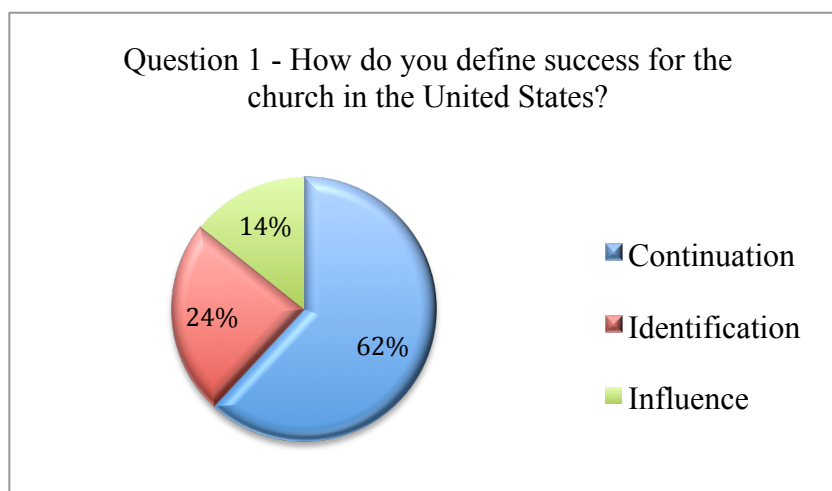


Figure 4.14 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1 – Code Groups

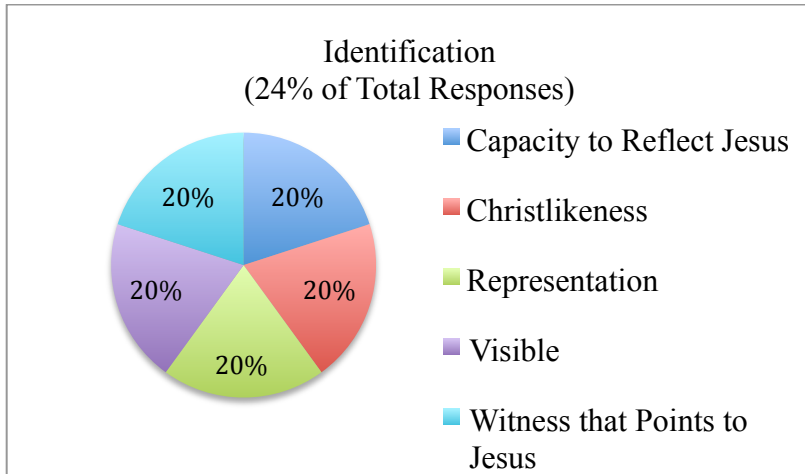


Figure 4.15 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1 – Identification

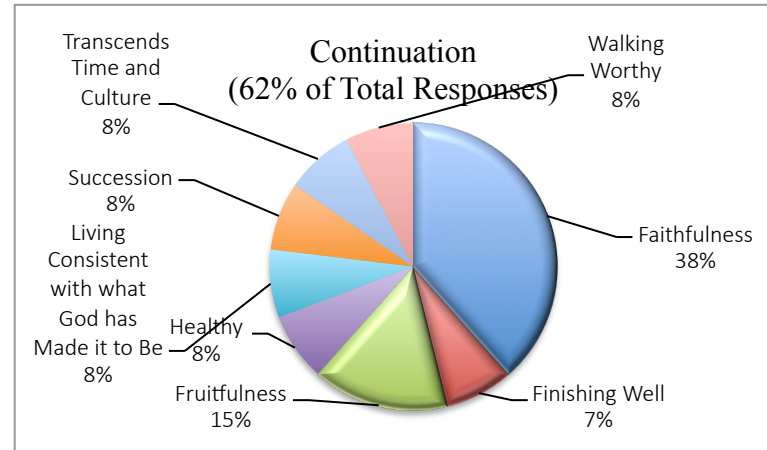


Figure 4.16 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1 – Continuation

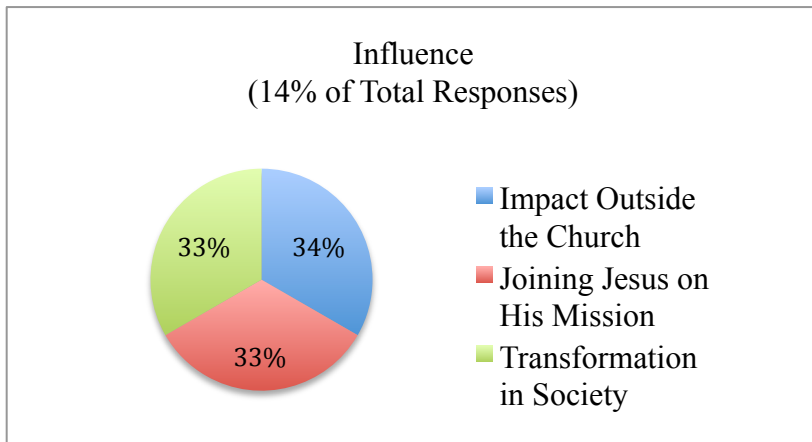


Figure 4.17 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1 – Influence

The responses to question 1 spanned a variety of topics requiring a reassessment of the initial codes to identify similarities with which to employ group codes. Three groups were identified as representative of themes or concepts uniting responses: Identification (24% of all responses), Continuation (62% of all responses), and Influence (14% of all responses). The Identification and Influence group codes were balanced in their makeup, comprised of equally weighted elements. In contrast, the makeup of Continuation was varied with two areas, Faithfulness and Fruitfulness comprising 53% of the group with all other areas weighted nearly equally. It may be surprising that the Influence group was the least percentage of the total. While comprised of elements that may find agreement among evangelical churches, these elements may also reflect a success concept imagined by many churches in the United States, in that successful churches will have an effect outside the church, by joining Jesus on mission and having an impact outside of the church resulting in the transformation of society. This concept is not present collectively through the participants' responses to question 1.⁵⁵⁷

Participation in this question revealed several interesting notes. Cole's responses were entirely within the Continuation group as were Van Gelder's, highlighting their focus on faithfulness and fruitfulness. Guder was nearly the same as Cole and Van Gelder with the majority of his statements coded to Continuation, but also with a statement coded to Identification. In this question, Cole, Guder and Van Gelder project a unity of thinking regarding success, an expected result for Guder and Van Gelder, and interesting note for Cole. Stetzer's responses were coded similarly to Guder with the

⁵⁵⁷ Hirsch and Stetzer were the exclusive contributors to the elements comprising the Influence group, with two statements from Hirsch and one statement from Stetzer. No other participant's statements could be coded to this group.

majority of responses coded to Continuation, but with one statement coded to Influence. Dempsey and Hirsch represented the greater range of coded statements with multiple statements coded between Identification and Continuation for Dempsey, and Identification and Influence for Hirsch. It is interesting to note that Hirsch was the sole participant without a response that could be coded to the Continuation group.

4.2.3.2 Importance of Missional Ministry

Question 4, “How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?” was an attempt to obtain the Significant Voice participants’ perception of how missional ministry should be viewed by churches across the United States, and to provide insight into the level of missional understanding present in the country. The question was poorly conceived and simply reinforced information available in the writings of the participants, missing an opportunity to gain valuable insights through a better constructed question. Still the participants’ responses provided information that may be applied in the overall research. Table 4.9 presents the responses to question 4 in percentage of frequency mentioned by participant using codes evident in their statements, and Figure 4.18 presents the responses in a graphic illustration followed by an interpretation of the responses to the question.

Table 4.9 Code Chart – Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 4⁵⁵⁸

How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

Code	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Total
God’s Mission	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	11%
Secular Culture	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	11%
The Core	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%
The DNA	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%
The Key	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	23%
The Organizing Principle	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%
The Way for the church that has lost its way	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	11%
There is No Other Way to Renew the Church	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	11%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

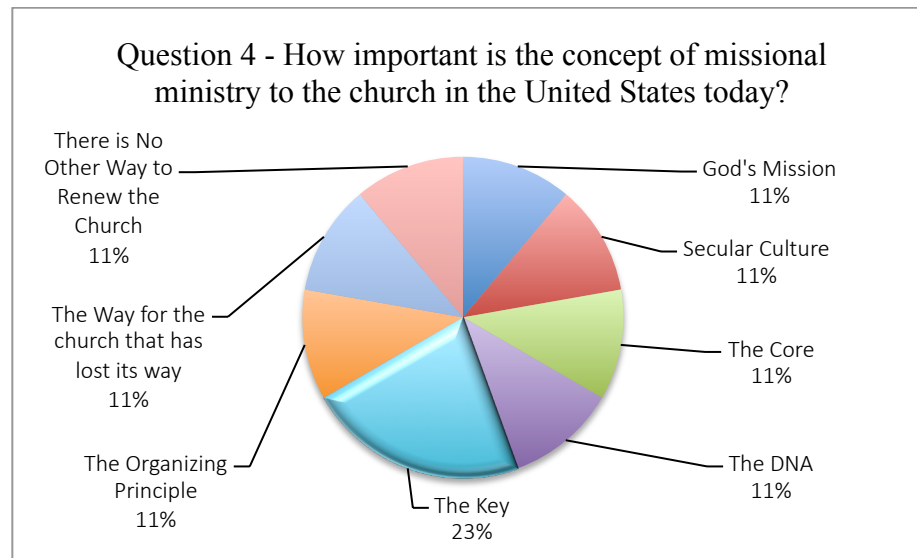


Figure 4.18 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 4

⁵⁵⁸ Table 4.9 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees’ statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.9 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

Responses to the question reflected a general consensus across all participants, except for the statement about secular culture, which seemed to not fit the question. Statements coded individually as “The Core,” “The DNA,” “The Key,” and “The Organizing Principle” all reflected a unity that might have fit a group code of Essential. Other statements (“God’s Mission,” “The Way for the church that has lost its way,” and “There is No Other Way to Renew the Church”) could be classified as a group described as Motivation.

4.2.3.3 Defining Missional Ministry

As in question 4, question 5 “How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?” proved to reinforce information already available in the participants’ writings, and was used previously in an attempt to define the term *missional* in chapter two, but proved of little help in that process. As with all questions used in the interviews, Questions 4 and 5 were developed at the beginning of the research process and did not make a significant contribution to the missional understanding section of the Significant Voices interview. In hindsight, the interview instrument would have benefitted from a greater review process prior to engaging participants in interviews.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁹ A colleague, Dr. Gina Barker provided the following as an explanation for ineffective interview questions in qualitative research: “the terminology normally used as it relates to your question is pretesting or pilot-testing a research instrument. Interestingly, while considered a best practice in quantitative research, this topic is rarely addressed in qualitative research. Since most qualitative designs use a semi-structured or unstructured interview protocol that allows the interviewer to use probing techniques and follow-up questions to obtain “data saturation,” meaning sufficient—and often redundant—amounts of data, the assumption is that an “ineffective” interview question gets corrected, revised, and expanded upon in the data collection phase. When using a structured protocol or hired interviewers, this may not happen.” From an email conversation with Dr. Gina Barker, February 27, 2017 at 10:52 AM; used with permission. Yin suggests, “Pilot studies help to test and refine one or more aspects of a final study—for example, its design, fieldwork procedures, data collection instruments, or analysis plans. In this sense, the pilot study provides another opportunity to practice.” See Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research From Start To Finish*, (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 37.

While the data gained from questions 4 and 5 did not accomplish the intent of the research concept, it was beneficial in contributing to the overall sense of research focus as opposed to simply excluding the results of the questions. To this Yin states, “negative instances are in fact to be highly cherished as ways of buttressing a study, even if leading to modifications to its original premises.”⁵⁶⁰ Table 4.10 presents the responses to question 5 in percentage of frequency mentioned by participant using codes evident in their statements, and Figures 4.19 through 4.26 present the responses in graphic illustrations followed by an interpretation of the responses to the question.

⁵⁶⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research From Start To Finish*, (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 39.

Table 4.10 Code Chart - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5⁵⁶¹

How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Group Code	Initial Code	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Total	Group Total
About Jesus	It’s all about Jesus	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	9.375%
	Jesus - Sole Focus	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Presence of Jesus	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
God's Kingdom	A kingdom outpost	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	9.375%
	Representing God’s kingdom in its location.	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Sent by God	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
God's Mission	God's missionary presence through Christ	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	25.000%
	God’s eternal purposes	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	God’s mission	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	6.250%	
	<i>Missio Dei</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	
	Redeem, Change, And Transform The World In Jesus Christ.	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	The Mission Of God In The World	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Understanding The Missionary Nature Of God	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	

⁵⁶¹ Table 4.10 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees’ statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 4.10 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

Incarnational	Connect with changing community	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	12.500%
	Incarnational	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6.250%	
	Relational	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
Missionary Mindset	Missional Impulse	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3.125%	12.500%
	Missionary Mindset	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3.125%	
	Missionary Thinking	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3.125%	
	Missions Mindset	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3.125%	
Participating	Discerns What God's Up To	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	15.625%
	Not Static	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Participates In Joining God	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	
	Participating In His Mission	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Participating In What God Is Doing In The World	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	3.125%	
Undefined	How We Deal With Modernity	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3.125%	15.625%
	No Clear Definition	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	
	No Unanimity Or Consensus	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	
	Not Attractional	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.125%	
	Not One That's Shared	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	3.125%	
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The number of initial codes identified for question 5 produced a pool too large to show in a single graphic illustration; thus, responses are shown by group code and individual responses within each group code (Figures 4.19 through 4.26). Using the protocol followed in investigating and interpreting previous questions, the initial codes were grouped by group codes based upon common themes or concepts embodied in the individual statements. Seven group codes were identified (Figure 4.19), representing four tiers or levels of emphasis, with God's Kingdom representing the majority of participants' responses (24%) defining/interpreting the meaning of missional ministry. The second and third tiers of response were nearly equal in their frequency of mention (13% and 16% respectively) and identified as Incarnational, Missionary Mindset, Participating, and Undefined (those statements having no relationship to an overall concept, definition, or interpretation of the term missional). That 16% of responses could not be grouped with an identifiable contribution to the term is troubling and diminishes the value of the data produced by question 5, leaving only 84% of the data as contributing to the research, and reinforcing the previously acknowledged need for pre-testing interview questions.

The responses revealed a range of focus for most participants with their statements distributed across a variety of groups, and revealing thinking influenced by several elements. Van Gelder demonstrated the greatest diversity of response with statements categorized to four group codes, although 33% of his responses were categorized in the Undefined group. No participant's total responses were exclusive to one group code; however, the responses of Dempsey, Hirsch, and Stetzer were coded to the least number of groups (two). 25% of Dempsey's responses were assigned to

Undefined, as were 20% of Stetzer's responses. Only Dempsey, Stetzer, and Van Gelder had responses coded as Undefined.

Another interesting observation from the question 5 data is code groups comprised of responses from only one or two participants, revealing the participant's "tight" view in answering the question. The group, "About Jesus" was constructed exclusively from Cole's responses (51% of his total statements), as is "Missionary Mindset," which was constructed exclusively from Stetzer's responses (80%). Two groups were constructed from the statements of only two participants, "God's Kingdom" and "Incarnational." "God's Kingdom" represents the statements of Cole and Guder (34% and 25% respectively), and "Incarnational" represents the statements of Dempsey and Van Gelder (75% and 11% respectively). The remaining groups were constructed from the statements of three or more participants.

There is a close relationship between the groups "Missionary Mindset" and "God's Mission" with the difference in interpretation centering on the focus of the participant's response. The statements of Guder, Hirsch, and Van Gelder comprise the group "God's Mission," which focus on the person of God and aspects of his missionary efforts, thus centering the attention of the group on the person of God. In contrast, Stetzer's statements, which comprise the "Missionary Mindset" group, focus on the thinking or recognition of Christians in response to God's mission. Thus two distinct code groups emerge. Please see Figures 4.20 through 4.26 for the initial codes forming the seven code groups used to interpret question 5.

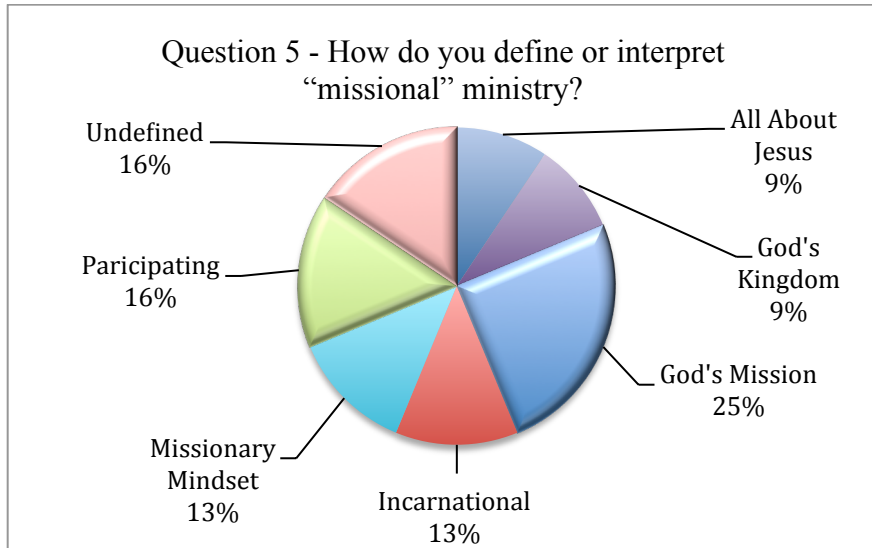


Figure 4.19 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - Code Groups

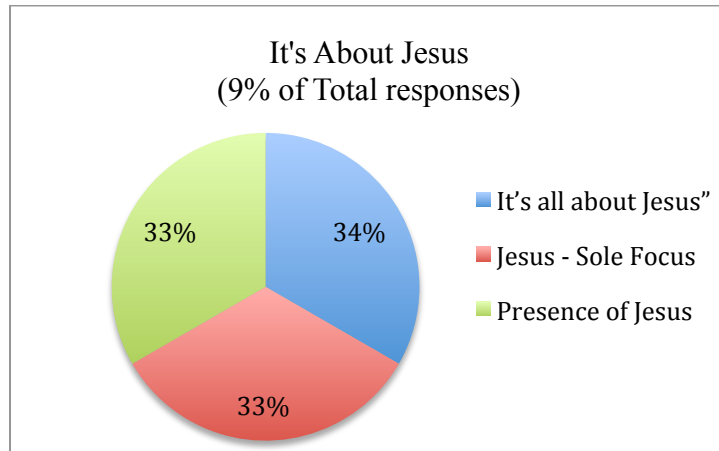


Figure 4.20 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 – It's About Jesus

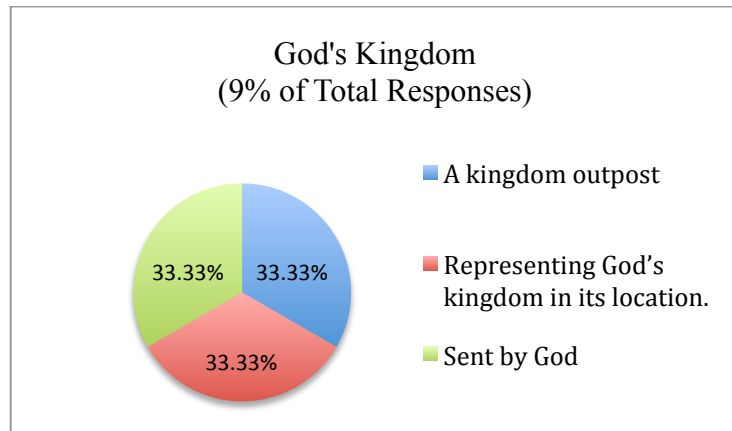


Figure 4.21 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - God's Kingdom

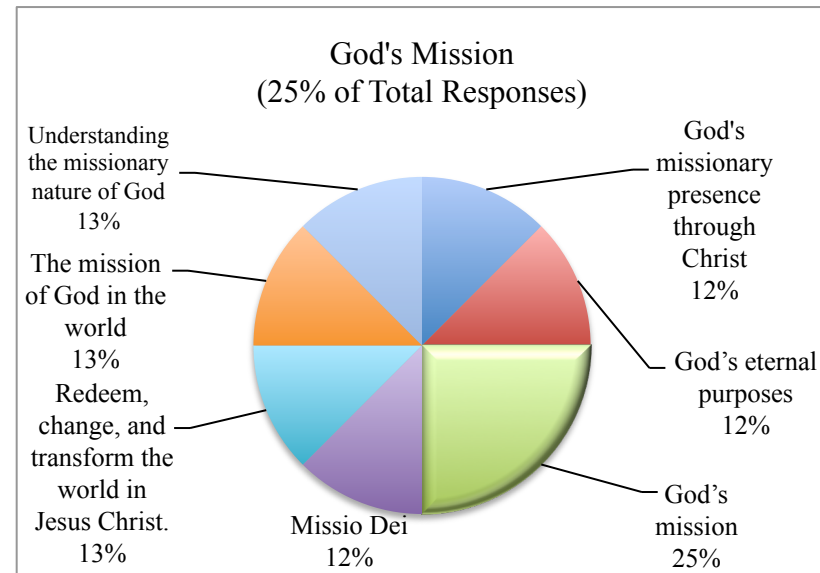


Figure 4.22 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - God's Mission

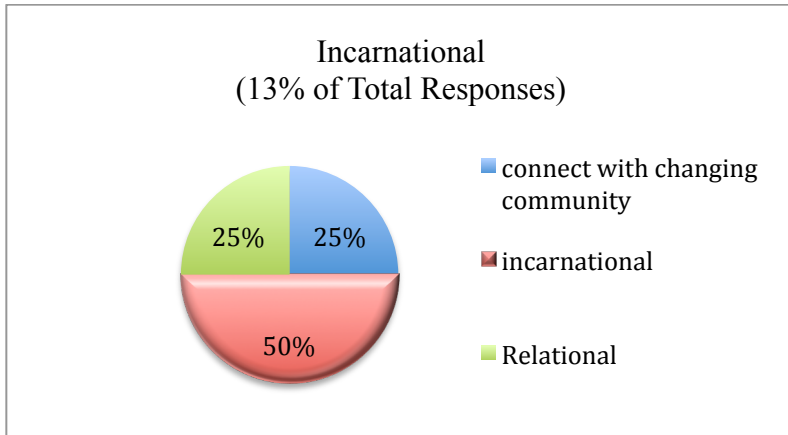


Figure 4.23 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - Incarnational

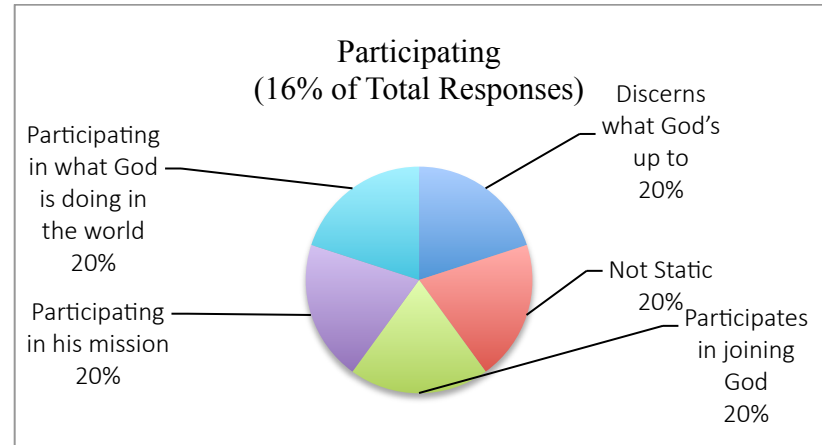


Figure 4.24 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - Participating

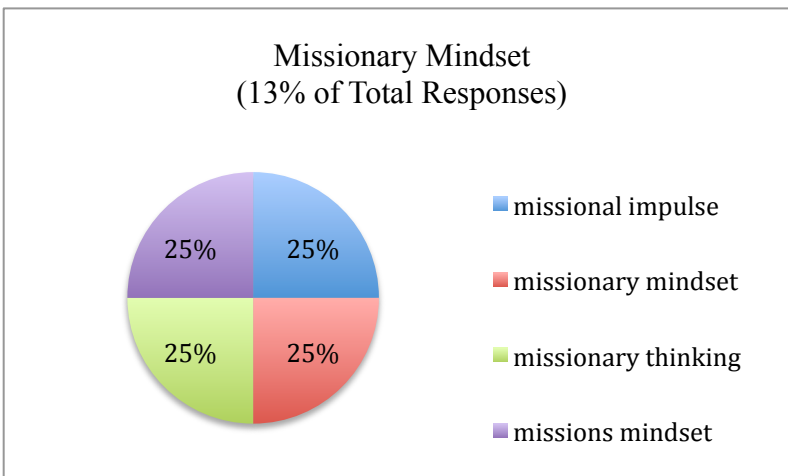


Figure 4.25 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - Missionary Mindset

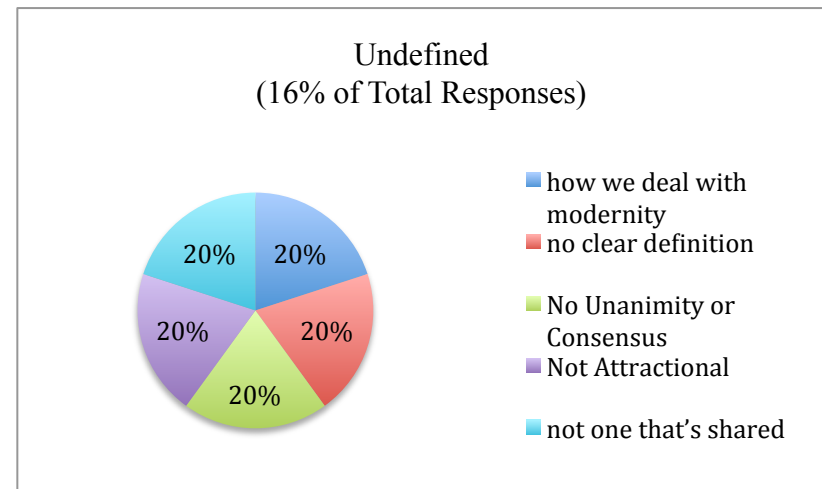


Figure 4.26 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 5 - Undefined

4.2.3.4 Interpretation of Combined Responses

Questions 1, 4, and 5 constitute the portion of the Significant Voices interview focused on missional understanding, and while questions 4 and 5 did not contribute the anticipated value of data, an important contribution was realized from the section as a whole. The missional understanding section was comprised of three sub-sections or aspects: defining success for the church, the importance of the concept of missional ministry to the church, and the definition of missional ministry. Collectively, the participants interacted well with each question and identified important aspects related to each inquiry. Perhaps the most significant responses to the subject of success and the church is Van Gelder's statement, "Success is problematic when it comes to thinking missionally... we've been living in a culture of organizational success basically as the driving missiology for the church," and Guder's statement, "the term success doesn't help us, I would prefer to use faithfulness."⁵⁶² That the church in the United States is success-oriented with an emphasis on growing memberships and budgets is an understatement. Numerous "how-to" books have been written detailing growth factors and techniques designed to have every church overflowing with people and finances. With such an abundance of resources available, one would expect to see a noticeable influence of Christianity upon American society, and yet denominations continue to decline and attractional ministries continue to contribute to the consumer-driven appetites of American people.

Responses to question 4 (the importance of missional ministry), and question 5 (defining missional ministry) revealed a general continuity of thinking among the

⁵⁶² Transcripts of all participants' responses to the Significant Voices Interview instrument is located in Appendix B.

participants with each question producing thoughtful answers and yielding data contributing to the overall interpretation of the section. While a variety of opinions for each question was evident, participants' responses evidenced common themes/positions when coded and grouped in the interpretation process leading to the following conclusions: that missional ministry is the “Core,” “DNA,” “Key” and “Organizing Principle” of rightly motivated ministry, and that missional ministry is defined by its focus on “God’s Mission” and his “Kingdom” resulting in Christians “Participating” in “Incarnational” ministry with a “Missionary Mindset.”

4.3 Interpretation of Significant Voice Data

The value of the Significant Voices interviews is immense, beginning with the personal benefit to the researcher by informing and reforming concepts to produce a clarified understanding of the missional movement and aspects of its working in churches in the United States. The kindness extended by the Significant Voices interview participants was heartfelt, with each gracious in their responses, and taking time to formulate meaningful answers, and while not every answer found the expected target of the question, the interaction with these notable personalities has value far beyond this research. The greater value by far is the benefit of the Significant Voices data to this research. Each question and each section produced a respected and weighty contribution because of its sources.

The intent of the Significant Voices interviews was to discover important information related to the current and future states of American Christianity, the understanding and perception of missional ministry in the United States, and the relationship and role of focus, form, and function to the twenty-first century church in the

United States from those with the greatest understanding of the topics. Three areas of the Significant Voices interviews will be addressed in this section, with the final section (focus, form, function) addressed in Chapter 5.

The Significant Voices assessment of the current state of American Christianity and the church in the United States is one of qualified optimism, acknowledging the presence of both positive and negative elements influencing change in the church in the United States and envisioning continued change, yet unable to present a singular view of a primary element producing such change. In light of the changing environment identified by the participants, optimism outweighs pessimism regarding the current state and dwarfs uncertainty, but the collective Significant Voices view does not reflect the intensity of the statements opening this chapter, where perceptions of the current state of the church and Christianity in the West is one of uncertainty facing pessimism and focusing on survival.⁵⁶³

Adding to the perceived condition of the current state, the assessment of the future state of American Christianity and the church in the US is less than clear among the Significant Voices, creating at best an imprecise or undefined picture, but not completely obscuring a general expectation of the continued effects of post-Christendom. Their responses to what the church in the US will become in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years reflected a continued diversity of opinion coalescing to an overall generic expression of transition and different influence, a description readily apparent in the United States, but lacking a sense of precision expected from those having studied the church in the US and with insights capable of foreseeing more than the general descriptions collected from

⁵⁶³ See Murray, Cole, and Stetzer's statements regarding the current state of Christianity in the West in the Introduction (4.1) to Chapter 4.

responses to the questions. A specific predominate model for the church in the US in the next twenty-five years was not identified, and responses projected generally mixed views on the future of the church in the twenty-first century, albeit with “Challenges” as the primary feature. These assessments, together with the appraisal of missional understanding and perception among churches in the US, continues and adds to the interpretation of the Significant Voices data in presenting the church in the United States as transitioning and challenged, preoccupied with success, substituting other elements in place of a missional impetus/motivation (characterized as the “DNA,” “Key,” and “Core” of ministry),⁵⁶⁴ and without a clear concept of the meaning of the term *missional*, nor its place as the essential foundation for ministry.

In interpreting the data, the research process relied heavily upon Yin as a qualitative research source, endeavoring to evaluate/interpret in a manner consistent with accepted practices. Yin states, “A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied.”⁵⁶⁵ Acknowledging the stature of those participating in the Significant Voices interviews, this research has undertaken to maintain the highest level of integrity, recording, transcribing, and presenting data with the greatest accuracy possible. Addressing the validity of the research, transcripts of the interviews were returned to the participant interviewed for review and to ensure accuracy. Participants were helpful in identifying incorrect and inaccurate transcriptions, and corrections were made to reflect the participant’s intent in their statements.

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted items are expressions used by Significant Voice participants in responding to question 4, and may be found in Table 4.9.

⁵⁶⁵ Yin, *Qualitative Research From Start To Finish*, 78.

At times the evaluative/interpretive process presented difficulties in arriving at clear and reasonable conclusions. To this, Yin states,

Report research procedures and data as transparently as possible, some data will always fall outside of an analysis and also not get reported. On the surface, this occurs because it is impossible to analyze all the data that have been collected. Similarly, the full reporting of all data is confined by the space available in a journal article. Larger works, such as books or dissertations, still have their limits.⁵⁶⁶

This research has endeavored to present findings from the Significant Voices data as specifically and transparently as possible, while being aware of Yin's position regarding generalizations, in which he states,

...any given study (qualitative or not) can only collect a limited amount of data, involving limited numbers of data collection units. Yet, most studies can derive greater value if their findings and conclusions have implications going beyond the data collected—that is, the extent to which the findings can be “generalized” to other studies and other situations. The more that research of any kind is generalizable in this fashion, the more that the research may be valued.⁵⁶⁷

With Yin's explanation in mind, this research process has endeavored to balance specific findings and generalized expressions of the findings to achieve the greatest value and application of data, not only to this investigation, but also to subsequent research explorations should they arise.

In summary, the Significant Voices data, while optimistic in its view of the current setting for the church in the US, belies an atmosphere of uncertainty for how the church will navigate the changes and challenges it faces. Perhaps the greater significance of this data is in the disparity of responses among participants in the Significant Voices interviews. While occasions of consistent view exist, they are infrequent, and do not

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 98.

illuminate a consistency of opinion/thought one might expect among those at the forefront of the missional discussion.

Finally, the collected and interpreted data from the Significant Voices interviews enables an answer to the opening question of the chapter, “What does the current state and future hold for American Christianity and the Church in the United States?” The findings gleaned from the research data show clearly an increasingly desperate landscape across the United States where the former favorance and acceptance of Christianity has diminished to its lowest levels since the founding of the nation, and where increasing numbers of people are rejecting expressions of traditional (institutional) religion, resulting in the previously cited decline of denominations, and increase of the religiously unaffiliated “Nones.” This interpretation of data recalls the intensity of Gibbs’ statement referencing “...a missionary challenge... more urgent and radical than it has been for many generations,”⁵⁶⁸ especially when pairing it with the survival statements of Murray, Cole, and Stetzer. The climate for Christianity in the United States is tenuous unless specific action is taken, but realizing that no action will restore the “former glories” as expressed by Murray.⁵⁶⁹ Yet, in this disturbing scenario is an opportunity for change, beginning with “a deep examination of [the church’s] very identity/nature and discover what it means to be a missional church,” and to “live as an alternative community in the world.. embody[ing] Jesus’ mission and patterns in its own actions in the world.”⁵⁷⁰ This

⁵⁶⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2000, 11.

⁵⁶⁹ See Murray’s statement regarding “not expecting restoration of former glories, the renewal of Christendom or the rapid and painless transition to a new era of triumphant progress;” footnote 484, Murray. *Post-Christendom*, 284.

⁵⁷⁰ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheille. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 2011, 50.

opportunity for change, while obvious to those engaged in efforts to transform the church and American Christianity, must be viewed in context with both historic and contemporary calls for change to understand the depth and extent of the change needed.

4.4 Calls for Change

The call for change in the Western church (and by application to this research, the church in the United States) is not a recent development, but one that finds its foundation in the mid twentieth century among recognized authorities, and among experts spanning the twenty-first century. Through thorough investigations and analyses, these authorities have framed the current setting of the church in the West against the backdrop of history to show not only the need for change, but also specific elements of change.

It is difficult to limit the individuals referred to as authorities and experts, the list of contributors to the discussion for change is lengthy; however, any discussion of these names must begin with Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin might rightly be considered as the grandfather of missional discussion, and is considered by many as the primary authority speaking to the subject, with perhaps the earliest contribution of books and articles. Close behind Newbigin is David Bosch, an authority in his own right, and equally significant in calls for change in his volumes *Transforming Mission*, *Witness to the World* and *Believing in the Future*. Beyond Newbigin and Bosch, the list continues with contributors such as Stuart Murray, Darrell L. Guder, Craig Van Gelder, Alan Hirsch, Neil Cole, Alan Roxburgh, Eddie Gibbs, Nelus Niemandt, W. A. Dreyer, and many others who while not agreeing in every detail, are united in calling for change in how the church understands its mission and seeks to fulfill it.

Dreyer calls for change that results in “a new church order,”⁵⁷¹ perhaps to combat what Goheen describes as a “crippled church” that has “...accommodated itself to its culture and has not been sufficiently critical of the idolatrous currents that shape it.”⁵⁷² This “new church order” envisioned by Dreyer results from what he terms as a “reformation... which is needed in the 21st century... [that] leaves nothing untouched and requires changes at the deepest levels of the church... [beginning] with a new understanding of what it means to be a church. Adaptive change is about changing the hearts and minds of individual congregants as well as the church collectively.”⁵⁷³ Dreyer’s statement finds agreement with Newbigin’s assertion that, “The most important contribution which the Church can make to a new social order is to be itself a new social order.”⁵⁷⁴

With application to Dreyer’s call to change the hearts and minds of congregations and churches, Niemandt drives the discussion to a deeper motivational factor, stating, “the church will have to learn to look differently at the world – with a hermeneutic of love, one that expects to see the living God’s works of love in this world,”⁵⁷⁵ a change at the deepest level of human understanding. Dreyer demonstrates agreement with

⁵⁷¹ Dreyer, W.A. “Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 69(1), 2013. Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>, 5.

⁵⁷² Michael W. Goheen, “The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America.” *Missiology*, October 2002 Vol. 30, No. 4, 479-490.

⁵⁷³ Dreyer, W.A. “Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 69(1), 2013. Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>, 5.

⁵⁷⁴ Lesslie Newbigin. *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1991, 80. It is interesting to note that Newbigin’s use of “new social order” is similar to Dreyer’s phrase “new church order” and appears reasonable to assign a comparable interpretation.

⁵⁷⁵ Nelus Niemandt. “Developing Missional Congregations: Council for World Mission Africa Region Assembly.” https://www.academia.edu/8028751/Developing_missional_congregations_paper_delivered_at_the_Council_for_World_Mission_African_Assembly. Accessed October 20, 2014.

Niemandt referencing this deep level change in his statement, “Writing a new church order is therefore not a question of superficial and cosmetic changes, but rather based on a deep and fundamental transformation of our understanding of the church, its mission and the way ministry should be structured,”⁵⁷⁶ an understanding shared by McNeal in his call to leaders to, “...come to grips with a new way of seeing and understanding church. Nothing less than a total conversion from the institutional model will suffice.”⁵⁷⁷

The calls for change in the Western church are not the pleas of threatened individuals fearing extinction; rather, they are in many ways prophetic voices drawing attention to the need for the church to return to its divine design and participate in the mission of God (the *missio Dei*). Newbigin expresses this thought succinctly stating,

The church is the bearer to all nations of a gospel that announces the kingdom, the reign, and the sovereignty of God. He calls men and women to repent of their false loyalty to other powers, to become believers in the one true sovereignty, and so to become corporately a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the sovereignty of the one true and living God overall nature, all nations in all human lives.⁵⁷⁸

Bosch writes with similar energy declaring, “The issue is not to talk more about God in a culture that has become irreligious, but how to express, ethically, the coming of God's reign, how to help people respond to the real questions of their context, how to break with the paradigm according to which religion has to do only with the private

⁵⁷⁶ Dreyer, W.A. “Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study”, *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 69(1), 2013. Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>, 5.

⁵⁷⁷ Reggie McNeal. *Missional Renaissance: Changing The Scorecard For The Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing), 2009, 58.

⁵⁷⁸ Lesslie Newbigin. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. (Grand Rapids. MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1997 124.

sphere,⁵⁷⁹ a paradigm Nikolajsen restates as, “the church must be a servant community... [helping to] care for its neighbors. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Give help to victims of disasters. Struggle against injustice and oppression and participate in creating good, just orders in society.”⁵⁸⁰

There are more calls for change than can be addressed in one short section; however, any treatment of calls for change would be incomplete without referencing three additional sources, *The Cape Town Commitment*,⁵⁸¹ *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*,⁵⁸² and Vatican II,⁵⁸³ major ecclesial documents also calling for change in the church.

It is impossible to adequately summarize all three documents in this section, yet a brief description provides sufficient validation of the documents as missional expressions. *The Cape Town Commitment* of The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization is an attempt “To bring a fresh challenge to the global Church to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching - in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas.”⁵⁸⁴ As such, it highlights the following major points: to

⁵⁷⁹ D. J. Bosch. *Believing In The Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International), 1995, 35.

⁵⁸⁰ Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen. “Beyond Sectarianism: The Mission of Church in a Post-Christendom Society.” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 41 (4), 2013, 462-475, 466.

⁵⁸¹ Officially titled: *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action of The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization* Cape Town, 16-25 October 2010.

⁵⁸² Officially titled: *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. The WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), WCC 10th Assembly at Busan, Republic of Korea, in 2013.

⁵⁸³ Vatican II is the name given to the Second Vatican Council and the documents produced by the council between 1962-1965. The primary document used in this research is *Ad Gentes. On The Mission Activity Of The Church*. Vatican Council, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, November 18, 1965, p 3. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁵⁸⁴ Lausanne Movement. “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 35, no. 2 (04, 2011): 168.

Repent of our blindness to the continuing presence of so many unreached peoples in our world and our lack of urgency in sharing the gospel among them; Renew our commitment to go to those who have not yet heard the gospel, to engage deeply with their language and culture, to live the gospel among them with incarnational love... [keeping] evangelism at the centre of the fully-integrated scope of all our mission.⁵⁸⁵

As expressed, *The Cape Town Commitment* is a document influencing the missional discussion.

Two statements characterize *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* as a missionally-focused document from the World Council of Churches. It states, “Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope,”⁵⁸⁶ and “Our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal, and communal, but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour.”⁵⁸⁷ The focus of the document is intentionally missional.

Finally, Vatican II uses the same missional language reflecting a missional thrust. Of the documents comprising Vatican II, *Ad Gentes. On The Mission Activity Of The Church* is the primary document reflecting this missional emphasis with the following statements reflective of the overall document: “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature... from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit...;”⁵⁸⁸ “it is

⁵⁸⁵ “The Cape Town Commitment” 208-209.

⁵⁸⁶ *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. The WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), WCC 10th Assembly at Busan, Republic of Korea, in 2013. 4.

⁵⁸⁷ *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. 11.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ad Gentes. On The Mission Activity Of The Church*. Vatican Council, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, November 18, 1965, p 1. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm, Accessed September 14, 2016.

plain that missionary activity wells up from the Church's inner nature...;”⁵⁸⁹ “Since the whole Church is missionary... the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God...,”⁵⁹⁰ and “The missionary spirit must under all circumstances be preserved in religious communities. It should be adapted, accordingly, as the nature of each community permits, to modern conditions so that the preaching of the Gospel may be carried out more effectively in every nation.”⁵⁹¹

The three documents combined with the previous statements from the authorities/experts demonstrate and reinforce the calls for change in how Christianity views and approaches its missionary responsibility, but by now, many of these statements and documents are decades old; is there evidence of change among churches in the US in response to their calls?

4.5 Evidence of Change Leading to Redefinition

Niemandt writes, “A missional church understands that there must be a willingness to cross whatever threshold and face whatever barrier for the sake of the gospel. Being a risk-taking community is part and parcel of the identity of a missional church.”⁵⁹² Although small in comparison to the number of churches in the United States, there is evidence of threshold-crossing, barrier-facing, and risk-taking change occurring in specific places in the US, among churches that have begun to answer the

⁵⁸⁹ *Ad Gentes. On The Mission Activity Of The Church.* Vatican Council, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, November 18, 1965, p 3. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ad Gentes. On The Mission Activity Of The Church.* 35.

⁵⁹¹ *Perfectae Caritatis. Decree On The Adaptation And Renewal Of Religious Life.* Vatican Council, Proclaimed By His Holiness Pope Paul VI On October 28, 1965, p 5. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁵⁹² Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, ‘Acts for today’s missional church’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #336, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.336.

calls addressed previously, and supporting Niemandt's depiction of the missional church. Of the five churches examined in this research, three evidenced the elements discovered during the construction of a working definition for the term *missional* (Chapter 2), and these churches further fit the model expressed in Niemandt's description of a missional church.⁵⁹³ These churches are Life in Deep Ellum, Dallas, Texas, Tampa Underground, Tampa, Florida, and Lighthouse Community Fellowship, Lynchburg, Virginia. To document these ministries as legitimate evidences of churches pursuing change, it is necessary to incorporate several additional elements along with Niemandt's depiction of the missional church to arrive at a fully formed picture.

Frost and Hirsch address "cultural shifts" and their effect upon missional churches; they write, "When there are megashifts in a culture, there tends to be a reconceptualization of the church. The more profound the cultural shift, the more thorough is the shift in the church's notion of itself."⁵⁹⁴ The United States is in the midst of perhaps its greatest cultural shift since the founding of the nation. Among others, major elements contributing to this shift include Immigration, LGBTQ rights, and Liberal versus Conservative political views, producing a nation fractured as never before; but have these 'shift elements' produced a corresponding "reconceptualization of the church"? Certainly not on a large scale, but the three churches from the research mentioned earlier have a far different understanding (conceptualization) of their contexts than most churches. The element of reconceptualization must be added to the criteria when seeking to identify churches answering the call for change.

⁵⁹³ The three churches mentioned as part of this section will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁵⁹⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21 Century Church*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 15.

Frost emphasizes incarnational living, and although addressed previously as part of the defining process for the term *missional*, a criteria for assessing change in response to call must include an incarnational presence. Frost states, “Truly incarnational Christians live in the neighborhoods where they’re serving God. They are deeply concerned about partnering with the unfurling of God’s kingdom so they do know who lives there and cultural and social expressions are present.”⁵⁹⁵ Again, this is a primary descriptor of the three churches included in this section. Each is deeply embedded in its setting (neighborhood), and familiar with the cultural and social expressions and associated needs. The element of incarnational living must be addressed when seeking to identify churches answering the call for change.⁵⁹⁶

Finally, and similar in part to Frost, McNeal emphasizes the Kingdom element, adding, “The missional emphasis involves connecting with people where they live and deploying them as kingdom agents in their natural settings and establish relational networks.”⁵⁹⁷ McNeal and Cole agree on this kingdom presence, with Cole drawing attention to “Every disciple is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture.”⁵⁹⁸ As with the two previous elements added to Niemandt’s

⁵⁹⁵ Michael Frost. *The Road To Missional: Journey To The Center Of The Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2011), 134.

⁵⁹⁶ Richardson adds, “Missional leaders tend to emphasize incarnational forms of ministry, no professional clergy, and the church scattered rather than gathered. Here missional leaders are providing a way forward for all of us.” See Rick Richardson. “Emerging Mission All Movements: An Overview and Assessment Of Some Implications For Mission(s)” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 37, No. 3, July 2013, 131-136.

⁵⁹⁷ Reggie McNeal. *Missional Renaissance: Changing The Scorecard For The Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2009), 59.

⁵⁹⁸ Neil Cole. *Church 3.0: Upgrades For The Future of The Church*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2010), 47.

criteria, the three churches evidence a kingdom presence in their locations. Thus the elements comprising the criteria for identifying churches answering the call for change are: a commitment to cross thresholds, face barriers, and take risks, and a reconceptualization of identity, along with an incarnational and kingdom presence. The following is a brief examination of the three churches mentioned previously to determine evidence of an answered call for change, and if such change suggests a process of redefinition for American Christianity and the church in the United States.

4.5.1 Crossing Thresholds, Facing Barriers, Taking Risks

Each of the churches reviewed in this section (Life in Deep Ellum, Tampa Underground, and Lighthouse Community) have instances where responding to a threshold, barrier, or risk defined their ministry, and demonstrated a motivational factor.⁵⁹⁹ This motivational factor can be attributed to a call to be different, to change from a previous understanding, or to become something more than they were previously. Common to Deep Ellum and Tampa Underground was the desire to truly understand contextual ministry motivating the leaders of both ministries to explore, investigate, and benefit from non-American models. The leaders of both churches studied contextualization in the Philippines, with Tampa's leaders spending nine months working with missionaries in Manila, and citing mission as, "the thing that drove us because it's what we saw was really lacking in the western church, in traditional churches and so that was really the motivator."⁶⁰⁰ The leaders of Deep Ellum continued to Copenhagen,

⁵⁹⁹ Recall Niemandt's "threshold" statement; see Niemandt, C.J.P., 2010, 'Acts for Today's Missional Church', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #336, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.336.

⁶⁰⁰ Interview with Leann Theivagt – Communications Director, Tampa Underground, Conducted on December 8, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

Denmark and “to northern Europe studying how northern and western Europe were responding post-Christendom culture.”⁶⁰¹ Commitment to missional ministry appears to have been a primary element with the leaders of Tampa stating, “everything was on the table and we were able to look at Christianity as we knew it, the traditional things as we knew it, the scriptures, and we were able to look at that and say what do we want to define us as a movement,” and “We left the church not because we didn’t love it but because we did love it and we wanted to return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture.”⁶⁰² Returning to Dallas and encountering ongoing thresholds, barriers, and risks, Joel and Rachel Triska state, “our context wouldn’t let us try any traditional methods... it’s hard, it takes longer, it doesn’t happen quickly and thankfully Deep Ellum and the mercy of God taught us to be patient, to just struggle through.”⁶⁰³

Although not as pronounced as Deep Ellum and Tampa, the account of Lighthouse Community Fellowship is the same. Faced with challenges and few answers, Mitchell stated,

We stepped into the vacuum... we’re open to the stranger... so we’ve been open to receive whatever God opens up to us... We have a certain number of poverty individuals, homeless people... They are people who are homeless because they choose to be and they have a different set of concerns and issues... The people we serve can’t possibly sustain or support [the ministry] in any way”⁶⁰⁴

Facing extreme financial challenges and other ministry related challenges (providing food

⁶⁰¹ Interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, Life in Deep Ellum, conducted on September 28, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁰² Interview with Leann Theivagt – Communications Director, Tampa Underground, Conducted on December 8, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁰³ Interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, Life in Deep Ellum, conducted on September 28, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Dan Mitchell, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, conducted on November 30, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

for meals, clothing, a center to minister to victims of human trafficking) Mitchell started a business to provide revenue for the ministry, enabling Lighthouse to feed urban schoolchildren through the weekend and supply groceries for more than 10, 000 people a year.⁶⁰⁵

While many ministries face challenges of multiple types, by their actions, these ministries have demonstrated a refusal to continue ministry as it has always been done, exhibiting a clear commitment to cross thresholds, face barriers, and take risks, characteristics not only of missional churches, but of churches heeding a call to change.

4.5.2 A Reconceptualization of Self

Responding to a call to change requires not only meeting challenges, but also a willingness to reconceptualize or adjust the church's notion of itself.⁶⁰⁶ This trait is evident as well in the three ministries that are the subject of this section. Joel and Rachel Triska recounted,

we were like deep into the neighborhood in that way and I think over that time we just kind of realized that to reach this context we had to think very differently... I think what has enabled us at Life at Deep Ellum to go in such a different direction is there was a long and painful process of God redefining for us what it means for a church to work in our community... we had to stop being pastors and start being missionaries... if our context changes we're not going to continue to be married to what our original manifestation was. There are things that are challenging us to constantly focus and refocus.⁶⁰⁷

In the same way, the leaders of Tampa Underground related the following:

⁶⁰⁵ Mitchell remarked, "we started with trying to reach out to the children in the area, discovered that they were hungry, [that] they hadn't eaten by Sunday, they hadn't eaten since Friday when they were in school so we started feeding them." Interview with Dan Mitchell, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, conducted on November 30, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁰⁶ See Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 15.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, Life in Deep Ellum, conducted on September 28, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

It's not that we want to create this large thing that will build up our ego in some way... we exist to empower those small expressions of the church in every dark corner, in every place where the gospel is needed... We're not a black church, we're not a white church, we are this multi ethnic expression of the church... The other thing that really defined us is we thought what do we consider church? That's the big question... We have an ecclesial minimum which basically for us if there's worship, if there's community, if there's mission, if there's these three things, we call that church.⁶⁰⁸

Finally, Mitchell related the following regarding the process of change (reconceptualizing) experienced in his ministry, he stated, “we try to love people in tangible ways... we want people to know that we do care about them and that's a non-negotiable... Every person that comes through the door is a unique individual and they have a whole new different set of concerns.” Mitchell related that Lighthouse reevaluates purpose and method based on “the evolving needs of the people we serve.”⁶⁰⁹

This second element (reconceptualization), like the first, is an obvious feature among the three churches, further qualifying them as ministries responsive to calls for change.

4.5.3 Incarnational and Kingdom Presence

The final element completing the criteria for evaluating ministries responsive to calls for change is the combination of two related items from Frost and McNeal, that of an incarnational and Kingdom presence. Again, all three ministries exhibit this characteristic quality. Joel and Rachel Triska related,

Our intentions in the neighborhood are basically to serve with no strings attached... My wife and I want to do our part to help, help share our story and see

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with Leann Theivagt – Communications Director, Tampa Underground, Conducted on December 8, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Dan Mitchell, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, conducted on November 30, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

the kingdom of God advance in new ways.... Our methodology is not determined by what we think is cool, our methodology is cool by listening to the community. We are actually empowered by our community to be the friends of people outside of the faith... we are linking arms for the good in our community.... multiple cultures that are expressing Christianity getting a more beautiful expression of what the kingdom is.⁶¹⁰

In a similar fashion, Tampa Underground leadership stated,

What we do is to empower kingdom missionaries... we do exist to serve... Everything that we do needs to empower, needs to serve the ministry... to help these smaller micro churches that are doing unique things in their unique context. One of the bigger driving changes right now is really trying to navigate what does multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation look like for our church.⁶¹¹

Lastly, Mitchell recounted,

We're all about shining the light of the gospel, shining the light of truth into people's lives and in that process, God does His work... Jesus said love God, love your neighbor, and you don't get to choose who your neighbors are, you just deal with the ones you have. We were just sharing the love of Christ with people... we try to love people in tangible ways... serving about 250 children every week and again it's being there and engaged with their lives. We want people to know that we do care about them and that's a non-negotiable.⁶¹²

From this brief investigation it is possible to conclude that there are criteria for assessing answered calls for change, and that the three churches examined in this section exhibit the criteria proposed by contributors to the missional discussion. While the combined elements or characteristics comprising the criteria do not imply or represent a consensus on behalf of the contributors, they do draw upon each contributor's knowledge and expertise regarding the missional movement, and therefore serve to present a strong

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, Life in Deep Ellum, conducted on September 28, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶¹¹ Interview with Leann Theivagt – Communications Director, Tampa Underground, Conducted on December 8, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

⁶¹² Interview with Dan Mitchell, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, conducted on November 30, 2016. A complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

measurement with which to assess a church's willingness to respond to the calls for change prevalent across the missional discussion, and to determine if such change is underway.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter continued the research evaluation and interpretation process begun in Chapter 3 focusing specifically on the data accumulated through the Significant Voice interviews and seeking to determine if the shifting and evolving environment in the United States is a soil for change and redefinition. Centering exclusively on the responses of the Significant Voice participants, this process sought to arrive at definite conclusions regarding the current and future states, and the missional understanding and perception in American Christianity and the church in the United States from the perspective of recognized authorities of the missional movement.

The questions of the Significant Voices Interview instrument were combined in logical groupings to address each of these areas, and responses to the questions forming these groupings were investigated, evaluated, and interpreted in a manner consistent with the intent of the participant, without the imposition of interpretive bias. The findings were informative and revealing in their content, proving areas of similarity and disparity among the participants, and at times producing conclusions conflicting with major sources used in the research. The process concluded with a combined interpretation of the Significant Voices data yielding a valuable contribution to the overall intent of the research.

Using the Significant Voices research as foundational support, the chapter continues with a brief summary of calls for change in western Christianity from leading figures in the missional discussion, and questioning if such change is apparent among churches in the United States. A proposal of criteria necessary to assess a response to such calls was developed from contributors to the missional discussion and the criteria elements were applied to churches in this research determined to have met the missional definition developed in Chapter 3, seeking to discover if these churches have been or are responsive to such calls. The investigation concluded that these churches have responded to the calls for change, and that it is reasonable to conclude that a change process has begun among churches in the US and indicating a soil rich in potential for redefinition. However, an important question remains unanswered; does such a change process suggest a redefinition for American Christianity and the church in the United States? The answer to this question is the focus of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: THE REDEFINITION OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY FROM A MISSIONAL FOCUS, FORM, AND FUNCTION

5.1 Introduction

The traditional/institutional interpretation and understanding of the focus, form, and function of Christianity and the Church in the United States evolved from an European influenced colonial period and is the product of unique features occurring through the early development of the American nation.⁶¹³ Largely a populist movement pushing back against the European Church-State concept, the development of Christianity in the United States can be seen primarily in the rise of American denominationalism, with voluntary associations (*Voluntarism*) characterizing church participation since the early 1700s, and continuing to today as a principal feature for both denominational and non-denominational churches,⁶¹⁴ where the focus is nearly always directed internally, form is expressed in program-based ministries, and where an attractional function seeks to serve the desires of religious consumers.⁶¹⁵

From its colonial beginning, American Christianity continued essentially unchanged until the early twentieth century, when with the advent of the first world war, the American church as a whole entered periods of change that continue to the present.

⁶¹³ These early developments are generally referred to as the “Great Awakenings” and are addressed in summary fashion in a latter section of this introduction.

⁶¹⁴ Quoting Robert Baird (1798-1863) “Voluntarism” (voluntary religious associations) is defined as “the distinguishing feature of religion in America in the early decades of the nineteenth century... representing an energy and self-reliance that extended itself “in every direction with an all-powerful influence,” and “Unaided by the state and undirected by any supreme ecclesiastical authority [Voluntarism] came to be the distinguishing feature of religion in America,” defined by Baird as “an energy and self-reliance” not dependent upon state assistance.” See Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 139.

⁶¹⁵ Guder links institutional continuance with consumerism; “The institutional viability of our churches appears to be linked to their capacity to meet the religious needs of their members.” See Darrell L. Guder. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2015, 123.

Roxburgh offers an interesting analysis of these periods of change citing the time span covered, an overall description, and the primary factor(s) influencing the change.

Roxburgh's analysis is presented in Table 5.1 Periods of Change Encountered by the North American Church.

Table 5.1 Periods of Change Encountered by the North American Church⁶¹⁶

Period	Description	Explanation
1914-1945	Church as Consolidation and Expansion of Denominationalism	Growth fueled by European immigration, with educated clergy.
1950s-1970s	Church as Corporate Denomination	The height of Denominationalism, the suburbanization of culture, postwar cradle-to-grave programs, franchise-based, run by managers and professionals.
1970s-2000s	Church as rationalized technical success	The era of religious winners and losers, mainline churches fail to grasp cultural shifts of the 60s, evangelicals and charismatics win the culture wars in terms of growth, technical, rational approaches to adjust, renew, and fix the church.
1990s-2000s	Awakening to the shifts in culture	Gradual recognition that the culture has shifted, new methods of being the church, the emergent/emerging movement, the missional church, change is mostly in form rather than substance.

Each of Roxburgh's periods represent a time of significant change across the overall American religious landscape and summarizes the effect of the change(s) upon the landscape, including the closing days of Christendom and the advent of post-

⁶¹⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2011, 47. Roxburgh's identification of periods of church development and expression begin with 1914 or the approximate start of conflict leading to the first world war and does not include a description for the periods prior to that date. It is reasonable to conclude that denominationalism was the predominate expression or form of Christianity from the colonial period to 1914, and Roxburgh's description for 1914 - 1945 could apply in a general fashion to the colonial period up to 1914.

Christendom, although few people understood the true meaning of the change at the transition from the twentieth to twenty-first century.⁶¹⁷ Roxburgh highlights the period of the 1950s-1970s as “the height of Denominationalism” with “cradle to grave programs... run by managers and professionals.”⁶¹⁸ This period witnessed the rise of ministry specialists: Associate Pastors, Executive Pastors, Youth Pastors, Children’s Pastors, and Men’s and Women’s Program Directors along with a variety of other positions (the managers and professionals) fueling the consumerist appetites of American Christians. Roxburgh’s presentation of the changes characterizing North American Christianity is essentially correct, but also general in that it omits significant elements that should be included to present a more accurate and complete historical picture, and provide a basis for understanding the current transition underway in the United States.

Bass, McLoughlin, and Tickle reference the Great Awakenings in the religious history of the United States, elements Roxburgh does not mention, and like Roxburgh, describes each as a significant time of change affecting the American Church as a whole, with each awakening occurring within a specific range of time and with unique features.⁶¹⁹ Bass and McLoughlin present the greatest detail on the awakenings, noting not only the traditionally agreed upon First and Second Great Awakenings, but adding a Third and Fourth Great Awakening as well.⁶²⁰ While many American evangelicals may

⁶¹⁷ Guder, Murray, Newbigin, Van Gelder and others state that the Western Church has been slow to recognize the need for a response to changing cultural dynamics.

⁶¹⁸ Roxburgh. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 47.

⁶¹⁹ Roxburgh writes from an overall North American perspective, not an exclusively United States viewpoint, whereas Bass and McLoughlin do. Tickle’s perspective is between Roxburgh and Bass and McLoughlin, reflecting aspects of both.

⁶²⁰ McLoughlin presents a separate chapter for each “Awakening” in *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1980, and Diana Butler Bass provides a thorough

be familiar with the First and Second Great Awakenings, Bass and McLoughlin identify the Third Great Awakening as occurring between 1890 and 1920, an occurrence typically unknown or not readily apparent to American evangelicals. In doing so, they document the elements of this awakening clearly, making a compelling case for its inclusion.⁶²¹

Along with the Third Great Awakening, both Bass and McLoughlin identify a fourth and current awakening, beginning approximately in the 1960s.⁶²² Bass suggests this Fourth Great Awakening has “unfolded in two distinctive periods with an interlude in between... from 1960 to 1980...” and “the Fourth Great Awakening 2.0, beginning around 1995 and continuing to today.”⁶²³ While Bass and McLoughlin employ the description, “Fourth Great Awakening,”⁶²⁴ Tickle uses an alternate description, “a giant rummage sale,”⁶²⁵ creating a mental picture of discarding things no longer needed; she writes,

From time to time the only way to understand what is currently happening to us as 21st century Christians in North America is to first understand that about every 500 years the church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale... We are living in and through one of those 500 year sales. ...about every 500 years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at

treatment of the “Awakenings” in *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and The Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne), 2012, 26-37.

⁶²¹ McLoughlin explains, “Most historians, although they note a serious ideological shift in American culture between 1890 and 1920, do not describe that period (as I shall here) as America’s third great awakening.” See William G. McLaughlin. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1980, 7.

⁶²² McLoughlin identifies five awakenings in American history, identifying the arrival of the Puritans (early 1600’s) as The Puritan Awakening, and then adding the first through fourth Great Awakenings for a total of five. See William G. McLoughlin. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1980, 24.

⁶²³ Diana Butler Bass *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and The Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne), 2012, 241.

⁶²⁴ See Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 30, and McLoughlin. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 179.

⁶²⁵ Phyllis Tickle. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books) 2008, 16.

that time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur...⁶²⁶

Although using different terminology, Roxburgh, Bass, McLoughlin, and Tickle agree this current period is a time of significant change in North America and the United States, with Roxburgh writing,

The argument of this book is that we have entered a world for which the churches of North America are woefully unprepared. These churches are, in fact, seeking to address this new, unthinkable world strategy shaped in the twentieth Century... The dilemma of using outdated methods to meet a current challenge is now facing Christian life in the West... We have entered an unthinkable world where we need a different kind of church.⁶²⁷

To this Bass adds,

We do live in a time of change; this is a time of endings. Instead of arguing for a worldwide paradigm shift, I argue here for something less grandiose and more historically discreet. Ours is a time of awakening, even a great awakening, in line with other such periodic awakenings in North American history, a time of cultural revitalization and reorientation rather than a time of a religious apocalypse.⁶²⁸

By combining Bass, McLoughlin, and Tickle's descriptions with those of Roxburgh, a clearer picture of change across United States religious history emerges; the combined elements of which are presented in Table 5.2 Combined Periods of Change In American Religious History.

⁶²⁶ Tickle. *The Great Emergence*, 16-17.

⁶²⁷ Roxburgh. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 11, 16.

⁶²⁸ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 31.

Table 5.2 Combined Periods of Change in American Religious History⁶²⁹

Period	Description	Explanation
1610-1640	The Puritan Awakening ⁶³⁰	Puritan belief and culture as the significant religious influence in pre-colonial America.
1730-1760	The First Great Awakening	“The end of European styles of church organization [creating] an experiential, democratic, pan-Protestant community of faith called Evangelicalism.” ⁶³¹
1800-1830	The Second Great Awakening	“... ended Calvinist theological dominance [initiating] new understandings of free will [resulting] in a voluntary system for church membership and benevolent work.” ⁶³²
1890-1920	The Third Great Awakening	“two distinctive manifestations: the social gospel movement... the Pentecostal movement [and] inspired new forms of mission work.” ⁶³³
1914-1945	Church as Consolidation and Expansion of Denominationalism	Growth fueled by European immigration, with educated clergy.
1950s-1970s	Church as Corporate Denomination	The height of Denominationalism, the suburbanization of culture, postwar cradle-to-grave programs, franchise-based, run by managers and professionals.
1960s-1990? ⁶³⁴	The Fourth Great Awakening ⁶³⁵	Begun with the Jesus Movement in the 1960s. ⁶³⁶

⁶²⁹ Combined from: Alan J. Roxburgh. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2011, 47; Diana Butler Bass. *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and The Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne), 2012, 29-37, and William G. McLoughlin. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1980.

⁶³⁰ The Puritan Awakening is unique to McLoughlin among authors and sources in this research.

⁶³¹ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 29.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ibid., 30.

⁶³⁴ McLoughlin. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* was originally published in 1978 and only theorizes toward the 1990s without the benefit of the last 35 years activity.

⁶³⁵ Comprised of “...two distinctive periods with an interlude in between... from 1960 to 1980...” and “the Fourth Great Awakening 2.0, beginning around 1995 and continuing to today.” See Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 241.

1970s-2000s	Church as rationalized technical success	The era of religious winners and losers, mainline churches fail to grasp cultural shifts of the 60s, evangelicals and charismatics win the culture wars in terms of growth, technical, rational approaches to adjust, renew, and fix the church.
1990s-2000s	Awakening to the shifts in culture	Gradual recognition that the culture has shifted, new methods of being the church, the emergent/emerging movement, the missional church, change is mostly in form rather than substance. “We are living in and through one of those 500 year [rummage] sales.” ⁶³⁷

The historical “Awakenings” form a major element in both Bass and McLoughlin’s works (a slightly lesser element in Tickle’s), and contribute important strength to their interpretation of the current change in American Christianity; therefore, it is essential to understand the nature of an awakening and how such a nature may be influencing the present-day religious landscape of the United States. Quoting McLoughlin, Bass provides an informative definition for an awakening, stating, “Awakenings begin when old systems break down, in “periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when we lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions, and the authority of our leaders in church and state,” and adds, “The end of the old opens the way for the new.”⁶³⁸ Bass further states, “An awakening is holy geography. Awakenings imply new awareness, inner transformation, a change of heart and mind, and a reordering

⁶³⁶ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 32. Bass adds, “the 1970s where the beginning of the end of older forms of Christianity, and now, decades later, we are witnessing the end of the beginning,” (7).

⁶³⁷ Tickle. *The Great Emergence*, 16.

⁶³⁸ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 29.

of priorities, commitments, and behavior,”⁶³⁹ a description/characterization recognizable in the writings of authors employed as primary contributors to this research.

Bass and McLoughlin’s definition certainly appears to describe many of the current shifts in the United States, including those associated with Christianity and the Church. It is true that “old systems” are breaking down and “cultural distortion and personal stress” are visible across social, political, economic, educational and religious structures. Multiple issues across each of these domains are causing many Americans to question or “lose faith in the legitimacy” of that which was unquestioned a generation ago, and certainly “the authority of our leaders in church and state” is at stake,⁶⁴⁰ thus, Bass and McLoughlin’s definitions accurately describe current shifts in religious thinking and understanding in the United States. To this Frost and Hirsch add, “We feel that we are living in an incredibly urgent time that can be described as the greatest spiritual awakening in the history of Western culture, and the message of the church is not even getting any airplay.”⁶⁴¹ Combined, these statements emphasizing the changing nature of Christianity in North America and especially the United States provide additional support to the concept that a redefinition of American Christianity is in process, but how is this redefinition occurring?

5.2 The Missional Movement in the United States

Bosch writes, “Whenever the church allows herself to be conformed to the world to such an extent that she abandons or neglects dynamic elements which belong to her

⁶³⁹ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 95.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁴¹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 16.

essence, all kinds of corrective counter-currents begin to develop.”⁶⁴² The missional movement in the United States is a “corrective counter-current,” reflecting Bass’ “new awareness, inner transformation, change of heart and mind, reordered priorities, commitments and behavior,”⁶⁴³ and is the vehicle of the redefinition of American Christianity. Bass’ description may be viewed as the result rising from the growing discontent identified by Roxburgh among North American Christians regarding participation in the traditional/institutional church (as seen in the growth of the ‘Nones’), a discontent that most certainly is fueling a correction; he writes of many conversations stating,

After 40 years of leadership in all kinds of church contexts, I have never heard or felt such a level of disconnectedness with the existing churches as I do now...there was a longing to be part of something that called for a deep involvement in gospel living, but there was also a sadness because they sense that, across the whole range of church systems, this involvement just couldn’t be found.⁶⁴⁴

Tickle echoes Roxburgh’s sentiments stating, “Christianity is no longer either socially or inherently attractive to the culture at large nor, by extension, are its symbols,”⁶⁴⁵ and apparently agreeing with Bosch’s “corrective counter-current” continues, “What has happened in our lifetime seems to be more than just another semi millennial shift. It

⁶⁴² David J Bosch. *Witness To The World: The Christian Mission In Theological Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1980), 26-27.

⁶⁴³ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 29.

⁶⁴⁴ Roxburgh. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 16.

⁶⁴⁵ Tickle. *Emergence Christianity: What It Is, Where It is Going, and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2012), 203.

seems instead to be more akin to the great transformation of 2000 years ago... a great and monumental shift.”⁶⁴⁶ Finally, Cole adds a condemnation with,

Church, as we have known it, is mostly removed from influence in society. A misguided extractational approach to our world, where we extricate new adherents from their non-Christian web of relationships to join our separated community, has only succeeded in extracting us from any positive influence... I believe we have forfeited a true gospel spirituality for a false one that depends on our own effort and displays our own strength (or lack thereof). Wanting to be appealing to the world we have become the opposite.⁶⁴⁷

Roxburgh, Tickle, Cole, Hirsch and Frost (and others) would agree that Bosch’s “corrective counter-current” is needed and underway in the United States; the influence of Christianity and the Church has waned and become ineffective producing a climate ripe for “corrective counter-current” action in response to what American Christianity has become. This is the missional movement.

As mentioned previously, American Christianity and the Church in the United States developed in relationship to the unique factors connected to the history of the nation, but those factors were not isolated from the greater influence of Christendom in which American Christianity and the Church in the US existed, and where they came to reflect a social and political relationship that sacrificed the dynamic elements belonging to her essence as mentioned by Bosch. Nowhere is this more evident than in the 2016 presidential election where evangelicals, operating primarily as a political entity with political objectives were actively courted by the Republican Party to support its nominee, and are credited with “propel[ing] the Republican nominee to victory.”⁶⁴⁸ However, this

⁶⁴⁶ Tickle. *Emergence Christianity*, 209.

⁶⁴⁷ Neil Cole. “Breaking the Stained Glass Curtain” *100 Movements*, <http://100movements.com/breaking-the-stained-glass-curtain/>. Accessed May 24, 2016.

⁶⁴⁸ Emily McFarlan Miller. “Can Evangelicals Unite After the 2016 Election” *Religion News Service*, November 16, 2016. <http://religionnews.com/2016/11/16/can-evangelicals-unite-after-after-the-2016->

political activity and support has perhaps become the proverbial ‘straw that broke the camel’s back’ prompting widespread and notable resignations from the evangelical ranks.⁶⁴⁹ Addressing evangelicals as a whole, Skye Jethani writes,

... look at what you have become— little more than a political identity with a pinch of impotent cultural Christianity. You’ve become a category for pollsters rather than pastors, a word of exclusion rather than embrace. Yes there are still godly, admirable leaders under your banner, but many are fleeing your camp to find a more Christ honoring tribe. When more people associate you with a politics of hate than a gospel of love something is terribly wrong. I take no joy in saying it, but like Esau you have sold your birthright for a bowl of soup. You have exchanged the eternal riches of Christ to satisfy a carnal appetite for power.⁶⁵⁰
...the word evangelical has become a political identity rather than a theological one.⁶⁵¹

In addition, the leadership of Fuller Theological Seminary issued a statement following the election results: “To whatever degree and in whatever ways Fuller Theological Seminary has contributed or currently contributes to the shame and abuse now associated with the word “evangelical,” we call ourselves, our board of trustees, our faculty, our staff, our students, our alumni, and our friends to repentance and transformation.”⁶⁵²

election/#. Accessed November 23, 2016. Miller’s article states, “...81 percent of white evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump for president, a candidate she described as “representing all of the things Jesus stood against — lust for money, sex and power.” And their vote propelled the Republican nominee to victory.”

⁶⁴⁹ Emily McFarlan Miller. “Can Evangelicals Unite After the 2016 Election” *Religion News Service*, November 16, 2016. <http://religionnews.com/2016/11/16/can-evangelicals-unite-after-after-the-2016-election/#>. Accessed November 23, 2016.

⁶⁵⁰ Skye Jethani. “4 Open Letters to Trump’s America” *Skypejethani.com*, <http://skyejethani.com/4-open-letters-to-trumps-america/>. Accessed December 1, 2016. Skye Jethani is a pastor, author, speaker, and consultant, and is best known as the managing and senior editor of Leadership Journal and as the Director of Mission Advancement for Christianity Today. See <https://skyejethani.com/about/>.

⁶⁵¹ Skye Jethani. “Farewell “Evangelical,” Hello #CommonGoodChristian” *Skypejethani.com*, <http://skyejethani.com/common-good-christian/>. Accessed December 1, 2016.

⁶⁵² Emily McFarlan Miller. “Can Evangelicals Unite After the 2016 Election” *Religion News Service*, November 16, 2016. <http://religionnews.com/2016/11/16/can-evangelicals-unite-after-after-the-2016-election/#>. Accessed November 23, 2016. The complete Fuller statement is available at <http://fuller.edu/communication/post-election-evangelical--a-statement-from-mark-labberton-and-richard-mouw/>.

The political activities of American evangelicalism clearly demonstrate a neglect and even an abandonment of the dynamic elements belonging to the essence of the Church.⁶⁵³ Therefore, the current environment in the United States where the decline of American denominations along with the dissatisfaction of growing numbers of Christians with the traditional/institutional church, combined with the increasing rejection of the label and practices of American evangelicalism within a clearly post-Christendom setting, has given rise to the missional movement as a “corrective counter-current” which is redefining American Christianity and the Church in the United States in specific and tangible ways.

5.2.1 Missional Focus, Form, Function

Emphasizing the importance of understanding missional ministry, Guder writes, “Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the Gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church.”⁶⁵⁴ As a “corrective counter-current,”⁶⁵⁵ the missional movement recognizes the priority of the *missio Dei*, and that the church does not have a mission, but the mission of God has the Church.⁶⁵⁶ While insufficient to produce a full understanding of missional

⁶⁵³ The earliest prominent political activities of American evangelicals can be traced to the US presidential election of 1980 where the Moral Majority under the leadership of Jerry Falwell gathered evangelicals to carry Ronald Reagan to victory. This researcher was a student at Liberty Baptist College led by Jerry Falwell (now Liberty University) during the 1980 election process and witnessed the political activities of evangelicals in the 1980’s.

⁶⁵⁴ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Theological Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1998, 6. Niemandt supports and expands Guder’s description, adding, “A missional church is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organises its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world.” See Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology.” *Missionalia*, 38:3 (Nov 2010), 397-412.

⁶⁵⁵ Bosch. *Witness To The World*, 26-27.

⁶⁵⁶ Moltmann states, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on

ministry, Guder's statement is essential in establishing where missional ministry must begin, and Van Gelder and Zscheile provide additional important information, stating the missional church is "...a habit of mind and heart, a posture of openness and discernment, and a faithful attentiveness to the Spirit's presence and to the world that God so loves,"⁶⁵⁷ an important factor supporting Van Gelder's admonition against techniques and strategies.⁶⁵⁸ Frost and Hirsch provide a description with more development, emphasizing,

It will place a high value on communal life, more open leadership structures, and the contribution of all the people of God. It will be radical in its attempts to embrace a biblical mandate for the life of locally-based faith communities... adventurous, playful, and surprising... gather for sensual – experiential – participatory worship, and be deeply concerned for matters of justice seeking and mercy bringing.⁶⁵⁹

Finally, Dreyer's description returns the understanding of the missional church full cycle to its genesis factor,

Missional ecclesiology demands more of the church than deciding which community service projects to undertake or setting congregational priorities for the coming year. Missional ecclesiology is a way of understanding the church. It begins with the *Missio Dei* – God's own 'self sending' in Christ by the Spirit to redeem and transform creation. In a missional ecclesiology, the church is not a building or an institution, but a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ's

its way" and further, "The church participates in [the various activities of God]." Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 64-65. Additionally, Peterson quotes Bosch stating, "It is not that the church has a mission, God's mission has a church." See Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 85.

⁶⁵⁷ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 149.

⁶⁵⁸ Van Gelder states, "This is the problem with American pragmatism. If there's one characteristic of the American church, it's pragmatic. It loves technique, it thrives on strategy, and it loves to be instrumental." Excerpted from an interview with Craig Van Gelder, October 24, 2016. A transcript of the interview is available in Appendix B.

⁶⁵⁹ Frost and Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things To Come*, 22.

work.⁶⁶⁰

Each of these descriptions provide an important reflection on missional ministry, and clearly distinguish missional churches from the prevailing institutional model; however, more specific identification of essential missional elements is required to demonstrate how missional churches are helping to redefine American Christianity in specific and tangible ways.

The working definition for the term ‘missional’ constructed in chapter two states it is ‘the practice of living as an extension of God’s missionary presence in the world, discerning, understanding, and responding to changing contexts through incarnational relationships with others, emphasizing the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ to reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God.’ This working definition finds agreement in Van Gelder’s concept of missional ‘self-understanding’ where he writes, “The church’s self understanding of being missional is grounded in the work of the Spirit of God, who calls the church into existence as a gathered community, equips and prepares it, and sends it into the world to participate fully in God’s mission.”⁶⁶¹ Van Gelder’s statement is important because it embodies the recognition of the essential element: the *missio Dei* (“God’s mission”), and links all activity in relation to it, thus reinforcing the *missio Dei* as the primary motivational factor for existence as a church.⁶⁶² Complimenting Van Gelder, Guder brings another vital recognition to the forefront in understanding missional

⁶⁶⁰ W. A. Dreyer, 2013, “Missional Ecclesiology as Basis for a New Church Order: A Case Study”, *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1368, 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1368>.

⁶⁶¹ Craig van Gelder. *The Ministry of The Missional Church: A Community Led by The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2007, 85.

⁶⁶² This does not minimize other important factors for existence as a church such as worship, prayer, and gospel proclamation (see Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 52, and Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, 201), but provides perspective for the *missio Dei* as the primary meaning and motivation for existence as a church.

practice (Van Gelder's missional 'self-understanding'), stating, "... A truly missional church cannot function with a false division between thought and action, being and doing,"⁶⁶³ in other words, Guder asserts that action emerges from and reflects what is believed, and if such action does not reflect belief as expressed, then the church is operating with a false division (how it acts does not reflect what it believes). To this Van Gelder adds, [missional churches] "in being true to their missional identity... can never function primarily as an end within themselves... can never be satisfied with maintaining primarily a functional relationship to their contexts and communities..."⁶⁶⁴ Both Guder and Van Gelder believe missional churches must operate from a basis of foundational belief (*missio Dei*), that action must reflect that belief, and such action represents more than a self-serving relationship with their contexts (setting).

When combined, Guder and Van Gelder's statements expose an underlying cause for the dilemma faced by the institutional/traditional church in the United States today, and provide understanding for why growing numbers of people are no longer interested in traditional American Christianity, and for the rise of the missional movement as a "corrective counter-current."⁶⁶⁵ While there are certainly exceptions, generally, the institutional/traditional church in the US reflects what Guder and Van Gelder warn against. In many ways these churches are disconnected from their communities (contexts) and have become "...an introverted body primarily concerned with its own internal affairs and institutional life... an institution that channels grace to its members

⁶⁶³ Darrell L. Guder. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 2015, xv.

⁶⁶⁴ van Gelder. *The Ministry of The Missional Church*, 93.

⁶⁶⁵ See Bosch. *Witness To The World*, 26-27.

for their own eternal benefit... a vendor of religious goods and services”⁶⁶⁶ that has lost its orientation into the world. The concept of the *missio Dei* appears to be an unknown element in many churches, and while professing intellectual belief in mission, their actions speak otherwise, creating an environment of which few are interested in what they offer and where the missional movement as a “corrective counter-current”⁶⁶⁷ has emerged. To the institutional/traditional church, Goheen offers a terse prescription:

... a recovery of our “missional” nature means that we are to be oriented to the world and to remain true to our identity as a participant in God's mission. It is only as the church is a faithful embodiment of the kingdom in the midst of the surrounding culture, but set over against culture's idolatry, that its life and words will bear compelling and appealing testimony to the good news that in Jesus Christ a new world has come and is coming. The challenge is for the church to take up this role and leave behind its self interested preoccupation and its sinful accommodation to its cultural story.⁶⁶⁸

While Goheen's prescription presents the correct recognition and response to the current environment, it is doubtful that institutional/traditional churches can modify or discard a model that has been in place for more than two-hundred years, action that would be disruptive and distasteful to those attending these churches, especially if corrective action reduces or discontinues the consumer-oriented approach to ministry, which it must if institutional/traditional churches will successfully regain an “identity as a participant in God's mission.”⁶⁶⁹ New missional churches are more suited to be “corrective counter-

⁶⁶⁶ Michael W. Goheen. *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 306.

⁶⁶⁷ See Bosch. *Witness To The World*, 26-27.

⁶⁶⁸ Goheen. *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 306.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

currents,” demonstrating missional ministry in specific and tangible ways and as a result, redefining American Christianity and the Church in the United States.⁶⁷⁰

Although recognizable in multiple expressions⁶⁷¹ (large, small, urban, suburban, rural, denominational, independent, single location, multi-site, etc.), the Church as an entity exists essentially in two forms in the United States, the historic, institutional/traditional model associated with Christendom, and the paradigm-shifting, emerging missional model associated with the transition from the twentieth to twenty-first century with a developing generation of ministry leaders.⁶⁷² The institutional/traditional church model is readily identifiable in the expressions mentioned previously, where their organizational structure, leadership approach, polity, and practices reflect a Christendom concept of ministry. Collectively, these ministries operate with what Hirsch characterizes as an attractional (versus incarnational) methodology,⁶⁷³ appealing (or attempting to appeal) to the consumeristic appetites of the population, and expecting Christendom era methods to produce similar results in a post-Christendom world with little or no regard to context (*focus*), and an appropriate response

⁶⁷⁰ Van Gelder and Zscheille state, “Starting new congregations with a missional imagination and posture is easier than reorienting existing ones.” See Van Gelder and Zscheille. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 161. Encouraging a generation of church planters at Liberty Baptist College (now Liberty University), Dr. Jerry Falwell would state, “It is easier to give birth than to raise the dead.”

⁶⁷¹ Van Gelder and Zscheille employ the term “expression” as inclusive of various forms, models or representations of church.

⁶⁷² To this, Bosch writes, “...in the field of religion, a paradigm shift always means both continuity and change, both faithfulness to the past and boldness to engage the future, both constancy and contingency, both tradition and transformation.” See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 366. He also states, “The transition from one paradigm to another is not abrupt. A new paradigm has its trailblazers, who still operate in the old.” See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 188. There are instances where institutional churches are attempting to blend missional practices; however, in such cases, the institutional nature of the church is the primary influencing factor, and any attempts at missional ministry are rendered as items on the church’s overall agenda as opposed to the agenda itself, contrasting Murray’s statement that, “Mission is not an agenda item – it *is* the agenda.” See Stuart Murray. *Church After Christendom* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press), 2004, 137.

⁶⁷³ See Chapter 1, footnote 85

to that context (*form*), that enables incarnational ministry (*function*). Goheen writes, “The problem with the post-Christendom church is that it continues to maintain many of the characteristics and attitudes of the Christendom church, but at the same time has lost its place of formative power within culture,”⁶⁷⁴ reflecting a popular American explanation for insanity, that is, ‘doing the same things, but expecting different results.’

The developing missional church operates differently, reflecting the influence of a number of ‘significant voice’ concepts, although not always attributing their operational approach exclusively or directly to a specific author or voice. Roxburgh and Boren identify missional operation as “not about doing church in a better way, nor is it about the church itself...or strategies or models...”⁶⁷⁵ rather, “Entering the missional waters... is about working with the currents that shape our imagination of what God is doing in this world.”⁶⁷⁶ Missional churches identified in this research value and emphasize a context (*focus*) interpreted response (*form*) to their setting enabling an incarnational approach (*function*) for their ministry, where “what God is doing” is central to everything they do.

Before engaging missional focus, form and function as part of the missional movement in the United States, it is necessary to address the remaining question of the Significant Voice interviews (9). Data collected through the Significant Voice interviews was interpreted and presented in Chapter 4 of this research, except for Question 9, ‘How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?’ The interpretation for question 9 was reserved for this chapter where focus,

⁶⁷⁴ Michael W. Goheen “The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America.” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXX, No.4, October 2002.

⁶⁷⁵ Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 72.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

form, and function are essential to the content. Question 9 sought to solicit interview participants' views on the relationship of focus, form, and function to missional ministry, and Table 5.3 presents the coded data from this question using both initial and group codes, and Figures 5.1 through 5.4 present the interpreted data in graphic form.

Table 5.3 Code Chart – Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 9⁶⁷⁷

How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

Code Group	Initial Code	Cole	Dempsey	Guder	Hirsch	Stetzer	Van Gelder	Totals	Grp Total
Evaluation	Assessment	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	4%	28%
	Inherited Perspectives	43%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%	
	NT Concepts	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	
Correction	Adjustment	29%	67%	25%	20%	50%	0%	28%	36%
	Direction	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	4%	
	Enablement	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
Character	Being	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	4%	36%
	Community	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	4%	
	Contextual	0%	0%	0%	20%	50%	25%	12%	
	Identity	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	4%	
	Incarnation	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	0%	8%	
	Missionary	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	4%	
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁶⁷⁷ Table 5.3 presents interviewee responses gathered as part of the overall interview process conducted from July 20, 2016 through November 11, 2016. Responses were edited to eliminate extraneous statements that did not pertain completely to the question and to present the interviewees' statements in a concise manner. The interview responses presented in Table 5.3 were not modified from the original interview. A full transcript of interviewee responses may be found in Appendix B.

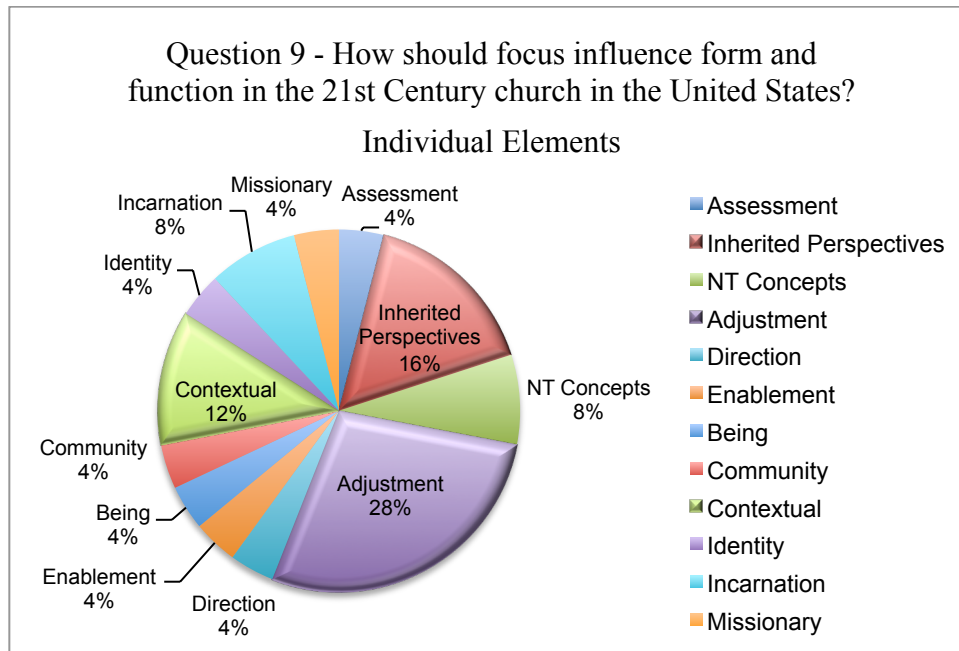


Figure 5.1 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 9 - Initial Codes

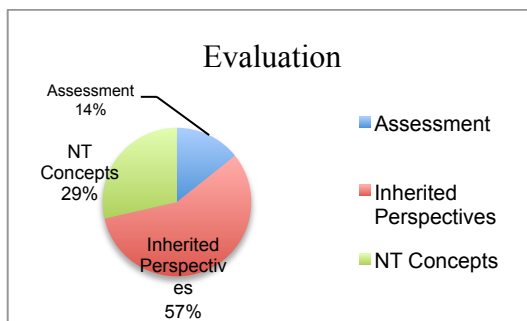


Figure 5.2 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 9 – Evaluation

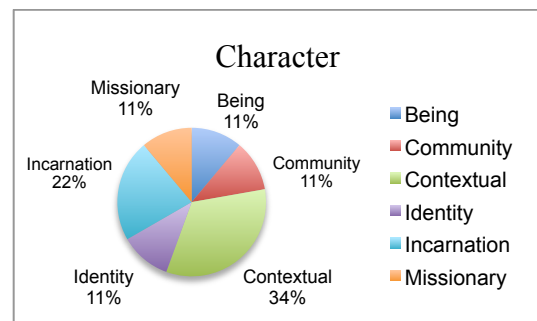


Figure 5.3 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 9 – Character

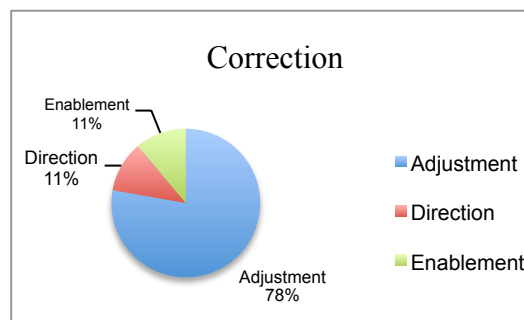


Figure 5.4 Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 9 – Correction

Responses to question 9 revealed a slight range of interpretation among participants, with some answers reflecting an association with models of church, and others, with the health of the church; however, several participants interpreted the question as intended, associating it with the context in which the church exists and the response to that context. Select responses to the question include the following:

We're not imaginary, we are there as real people, real community and the great challenge for us is to organize ourselves so that we are enabled to serve our calling. In other words, the institution is not an end in itself, the institution is the servant of our calling and that means it can and should change. I think we need sunset laws in all of church structures to ask ourselves is the way we are going about what we're doing actually faithful to our calling and relevant to our context.⁶⁷⁸

Oh I think that's a huge issue, I put that under the rubric of incarnational mission... going in the way of Jesus, as the father has sent me, so send I you... the father sent the Son through incarnation, and is the patent for how we engage the world... We literally become little "Jesuses" [sic]. So I think its critical, we need to see that we're in a missional environment now. We have to adopt a missionary stance in relationship to our context. That requires that we need to learn to be contextual... myriad new ways, lots of them... Innovation.⁶⁷⁹

I think underneath focus I would put the word identity, what has the spirit of God created? When the church comes into existence the spirit of God takes up residence in that community of faith and the spirit of God brings a certain kind of energy in life and perspective, it's the holy in the midst of the human, that's the identity. What has God created the church to be? What is the being that informs the doing? So the thing I would adjust to your question would be to back up one step and talk about essence or identity and then in light of that what is our particular focus in terms of this context. That's what the church does. Our being informs our doing. If you don't focus you're probably not going to go anywhere. You have to translate this is what God has created the church to be, now what are we going to do in this context.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ Excerpted from an interview with Darrell L. Guder, November 11, 2016. A transcript of the interview is available in Appendix B.

⁶⁷⁹ Excerpted from an interview with Alan Hirsch, October 11, 2016. A transcript of the interview is available in Appendix B.

⁶⁸⁰ Excerpted from an interview with Craig Van Gelder, October 24, 2016. A transcript of the interview is available in Appendix B.

For the participants highlighted, the question appeared to evoke a sense of heightened interest adding to the perceived value of this portion of the research. Responses were focused and weighty, demonstrating the participants' perceived interest in the question. Overall, responses were coded with initial codes (Figure 5.1), and then collected in code groups reflecting an interpreted common characteristic. These common characteristics are 'Evaluation' (Figure 5.2), 'Character' (Figure 5.3), and 'Correction' (Figure 5.4). The code group 'Evaluation' reflects a consensus among respondents that a church must assess and address inherited perspectives in light of the New Testament concept of the church. 'Correction' reflects the consensus that a church must adjust to know and enable direction, and 'Character' reflects agreement regarding the nature and presence of a church in its context. All of the code groups were within a general range: 28% - 36% of total responses, with Correction and Character each representing 36% for a combined total of 76% of total responses.

The responses to question 9 support the supposition that focus, form, and function are essential elements to missional ministry in the twenty-first century. Further, this research reasons that these elements are already employed in the three churches determined to be missional ministries as a result of the interview investigation/evaluation presented in Chapter 3. In addition, responses to the Ministry Leaders Interview questions for these churches validate the presence of a focus-to-form-to-function relationship. Before addressing the presence of this relationship in each of the churches, it is important to understand each element individually.

5.2.1.1 Missional Focus – Investigation

In contrast to the traditional/institutional model of church that defaults to an

inward focus, missional churches are focused outward toward their communities, their contexts. This is derived from their understanding of themselves “as a gathered community, equip[ed] prepare[d], and [sent] into the world to participate fully in God’s mission.”⁶⁸¹ Recall that Van Gelder’s concept of ‘self-understanding is grounded in the essential element of the *missio Dei*, and links all of a church’s activity to it. Therefore, to participate in God’s mission, a church *must* begin by focusing on its context to which its activity will be directed, to investigate it, know its unique features, and prepare to enter it incarnationally. This investigative focus process is seen clearly in Niemandt’s concept of missional focus, that “as a community of people... the church *discerns* what God is actively doing in the world around them and then participates in God’s work,”⁶⁸² again the emphasis on God’s work – God’s mission (*missio Dei*). Dreier agrees, identifying a critical aspect of missional focus, namely, that a church must emerge from its sheltered protection and investigate its context by “...venturing onto its neighborhood streets... [being] attentive to God’s presence and activity within the community... [asking] “How is God present and active within this community?” [and] What might God be calling us to be and to do here?”⁶⁸³

It is doubtful that a church can be a missional expression without a focus to its context. So important is this aspect that Niemandt attaches the future of the missional church to its practice, writing, “The future of the missional church depends on a differentiated and empirical, informed perspective on culture and context. The church is a

⁶⁸¹ See Van Gelder. *The Ministry of The Missional Church*, 85.

⁶⁸² Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology.” *Missionalia*, 38:3 (Nov 2010), 397-412, 411.

⁶⁸³ Dreier, Mary Sue Dehmlow. “Missional Congregations in Civil Society: An Imagination for God’s World.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, Vol. 54, No. 2, Summer 2015, 151-161.

community of people who look to discover what God is actively doing in the world, and then participates in God's work."⁶⁸⁴ Missional focus is the investigative inquiry of a church into its context in preparation to join God in his mission where they are; it is the informed knowledge of the church's mission field.

5.2.1.2 Missional Form – Interpretation

If missional focus involves a church's investigation into its context, then missional form addresses the interpretation of that investigation enabling the church to respond to its context in the most effective manner. Missional form results from an informed missional focus; the two are directly linked. In the institutional/traditional church, form is nearly always interpreted in two ways: how a church building is constructed, and how it operates (usually as a program-driven ministry). Missional form does not apply to either of these concepts; rather, Frost and Hirsch clearly identify the relationship between focus and form when they state, "The church by its very nature has an indissoluble relationship to the surrounding cultural context. This relationship defines the practical nature of its mission."⁶⁸⁵ This "practical nature of its mission" begins with its form, how it positions itself to respond to its "cultural context." Guder also identifies the relationship between focus and form, writing, "... the faith community can and should be *formed* in ways that relate to the culture in which the witness is to be carried out. *There is no normative way to organize local congregations,*"⁶⁸⁶ to which Roxburgh and Boren add their agreement, "Missional is a way of being the church that

⁶⁸⁴ Cornelius JP Niemandt. "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology." *Missionalia*, 38:3 (Nov 2010), 397-412, 411.

⁶⁸⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 16.

⁶⁸⁶ Darrell L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of The Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 147.

can be expressed in *many different forms*, traditions, structures, and sizes.”⁶⁸⁷ Clearly there is consensus among the leading voices in the missional discussion on this matter.

Bosch addresses the concept of “Inculturation;” the means by which belief is positioned for introduction to a context. He writes, “The Christian faith never exists except as “translated” into a culture,”⁶⁸⁸ and supports his assertion with, “it should therefore come as no surprise that in the Pauline churches Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Thracians, Egyptians, and Romans were able to feel at home.”⁶⁸⁹ Inculturation requires an informed perspective, available only upon an investigative venturing into the neighborhood as Dreyer points out. However, Gibbs is careful to note that “The church must resist the temptation to define itself by its culture,”⁶⁹⁰ a position to which Bosch agrees, stating a church must be, “contextual (a focus on the right interpretation of contextualization)... but also countercultural (a focus on communicating an alternative culture).”⁶⁹¹

Again, missional form has nothing to do with building architecture or how a church operates (polity, programs, etc.). It is how a church responds to its informed focus, positioning itself for an incarnational presence in its context. Guder rejects the concept of a model as a formula for producing or reproducing a succession of missional

⁶⁸⁷ Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 49.

⁶⁸⁸ Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, 458.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Eddie Gibbs. *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 221.

⁶⁹¹ David J. Bosch. *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 55-60.

churches,⁶⁹² and states, “a missional ecclesiology for North America will resist all attempts at uniformity of structure in favor of a missional unity in diversity,”⁶⁹³ and reinforces the concept that “every organizational expression of the missional church must understand itself as witness to the reign of Christ and the firstfruits of that kingdom.”⁶⁹⁴

5.2.1.3 Missional Function – Incarnation

A missional focus (investigation) combined with a missional form (interpretation) prepares the church for missional function, specifically, incarnation in its context. Having investigated its context (focus) and interpreted what it has learned about its setting in terms of a response (form), a church is prepared to enter its context incarnationally, that is, bringing the presence of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Absent is the internally focused, attractional, consumer oriented approach to ministry; in its place are people living out their faith in Christ intentionally in their community with an eternal purpose.⁶⁹⁵ Niemandt presents a concise expression of a missional focus and form resulting in a missional function:

The church is a community gathered around Jesus Christ in order to participate in his life and incarnate it into the context in which he has placed them. This also means that missional churches are deeply connected to the community. Where community members live their daily lives, they are learning the way in which to easily, naturally, and routinely embody, demonstrate, and announce God’s life and reign for the sake of the world around them.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹² Guder, *Called to Witness*, 138.

⁶⁹³ Guder, *Missional Church*, 268.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁶⁹⁵ Niemandt describes this intentional living: “In the incarnational church, faith happens in everyday life. A missional understanding of being a church means that being a church happens in the world.” See Cornelius JP Niemandt. “Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology.” *Missionalia*, 38:3 (Nov 2010), 397-412.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

While not utilizing the term ‘missional function,’ the primary authors used in this research agree that there is but one way for a church to live, and that is incarnationally within its particular context. Guder states this principle clearly, “There is but one way to be the church, and that is incarnationally, within a specific concrete setting,”⁶⁹⁷ and Van Gelder and Zscheille add a combined present-future emphasis with, “The calling of the church is to be a community of witness to the future God is creating.”⁶⁹⁸ Finally, Frost and Hirsch address the continuous nature of incarnational function, adding, “A church makes this mission its priority and perpetually asks itself, “what has God called us to be and do in our current cultural context?”⁶⁹⁹

Each of the aspects noted by these authors are best seen as the product of a missional focus and form, where an investigated and informed knowledge of context produces an interpreted form providing a presence in the context, and enabling effective incarnational function.

5.2.2 Intermediate Summary

It is apparent through this research that a relationship exists between focus, form, and function as applied to churches in the United States. Institutional/traditional churches exhibit a particular approach to ministry that typically reveals an inward, self-serving focus, a non-contextual form, and programmatic function. True missional churches are motivated by a different drive, the *missio Dei*, and see themselves as extensions of God’s presence and kingdom in their communities. As such, they are

⁶⁹⁷ Guder. *Missional Church*, 11-12.

⁶⁹⁸ Van Gelder and Zscheille. *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 94.

⁶⁹⁹ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come*, 7.

keenly aware of their contexts (*focus*), and have positioned themselves (*form*) to become part of their communities, where they can live daily as incarnational representations (*function*) of Christ and the Kingdom of God. This concept is an obvious feature in the three ministries determined to be missional churches through this research, that is, Life in Deep Ellum, Dallas, Texas, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, Lynchburg, Virginia, and Tampa Underground, Tampa, Florida.

It is important to note that not every church that considers itself to be a missional expression is indeed missional in its approach to ministry. As noted in Chapter 3, both NewSpring Church and Ecclesia Communities identify with the term missional and consider themselves as missional in their approach to their ministry (Ecclesia more than NewSpring), yet in comparing each ministry with the working definition for *missional* derived from this research, both fail to demonstrate missional evidences, and should be considered as institutional/traditional ministries or blended models of church ministry at best.

A question related to the overall subject of redefinition concerns the rise of the emerging, non-institutional expressions of church and methods of communicating/demonstrating Christianity. As noted previously (Chapter 2), the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century witnessed not only the rapid decline of denominational memberships, but also the rise of church ministries that eschew traditional defining labels, and embrace a non-traditional approach to church ministry. It seems reasonable to conclude that the rise of these emerging church expressions is indeed a response to, movement away from, and rejection of the institutional/traditional church; however, both traditional and not-traditional models of

church ministry can reflect the influence of Christendom, and therefore, a claim of a redefinition of American Christianity cannot rely solely upon a church that looks and acts differently from the historically recognized model. *Conversly*, does the identification of alternate expressions of church that *are* missional in their ‘self-understanding’ and approach to ministry support a finding that a redefinition is occurring in American Christianity and the church in the United States? One additional step in the examination of the data is required to arrive at such a conclusion. In the following sections, each of the three missional churches will be examined to ascertain their understanding and approach to ministry in their contexts, and to determine if a redefinition is indeed occurring, and if so, how?⁷⁰⁰ These are emerging churches where missional focus, form, and function determine how ministry proceeds.

5.3 Current Missional Focus, Form and Function

Bosch writes, “In the case of each paradigm change... there remained a creative tension between the new and the old. In the end it was always consciously or unconsciously, one of reform not a replacement.”⁷⁰¹ Certainly Bosch is correct in a general sense, but in the three examples examined in this research, the ministry concepts bear little or no resemblance to the institutional/traditional church, and appear to indicate a movement to replace, not reform the church. The following three churches have no denominational connection, existing as independent churches exhibiting emerging characteristics and operating as missional expressions.

⁷⁰⁰ This examination uses the responses of each ministry to the Ministry Leaders Interview, and each question of the interview is evaluated and expressed in graphic form following the examination of each ministry.

⁷⁰¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 367.

5.3.1 Life in Deep Ellum – Dallas, Texas

Addressing the rise of new church communities, Bolger writes,

These communities are deeply connected to the people in their contexts. The leaders have many conversations with the unchurched. They locate themselves in a space, within the culture, be it a café, a pub, a public building, or a home, rarely in a church building. The community is made up of people with whom they interact every day as part of their network of relationships. The new community is simple in its structure.⁷⁰²

Bolger’s description fits the Life in Deep Ellum ministry perfectly. Led by Joel and Rachel Triska, Life in Deep Ellum is missionally focused, has a developed missional form, and functions with missional intent in a two-square mile condensed neighborhood of downtown Dallas, Texas. As a neighborhood, Deep Ellum is known for its diversity, an “anti-institutional kind of a place,” “a very entertainment district where the bars were open all night, music venues, the streets were just crowded with all kinds of people... where the marginalized of Dallas gathered.”⁷⁰³ The Life in Deep Ellum ministry was originally established by a “group of fundamental Christians” in “the late 90s or early 2000s,” but “the church service had little to no impact on the actual context there.” Assuming the ministry following the departure of the first pastor, the Triskas relate, “we just kind of realized that to reach this context we had to think very differently.”

Joel and Rachel Triska understand the need for contextual ministry (missional focus) as a result of their foreign study and preparation. They remarked,

We went on a study trip to northern Europe studying how northern and western Europe were responding to post-Christendom culture... [Copenhagen Christian

⁷⁰² Ryan K. Bolger. *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 354.

⁷⁰³ Unless otherwise noted, quoted material in this section is excerpted from an interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, conducted on September 28, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

Cultural Center] and it's very different than what we do, but it was kind of the inspiration... they were engaging with a lot of the asylum seekers from the middle east; they were engaging the new age culture there, they were trying to do some very different things because they were forced to by their context... We studied abroad at the Philippines as well so a lot of our personal story is studying contextualization.

5.3.1.1 Evidence of Missional Focus

Contextualization is a significant factor in the Triskas' concept of ministry,⁷⁰⁴ and in moving Life in Deep Ellum to a contextual ministry, they employed an investigative approach utilizing street interviews, and “asking people stuff like, what would you miss if Deep Ellum disappeared?”⁷⁰⁵ They learned that “Deep Ellum is like a little pocket of post Christendom.” The “1000 surveys helped us compile the data down into four strengths: art, music, commerce (entrepreneurship) and community - the pillars for our cultural center. Joel and Rachel Triska state, “Our methodology is not determined by what we think is cool, our methodology is cool by listening to the community,” evidence that the Life in Deep Ellum ministry is guided by a missional focus.

5.3.1.2 Evidence of Missional Form

The Triskas state, “our context wouldn't let us try any traditional methods,” therefore, in response to their investigative missional focus, they determined an approach that would most closely mirror their context, choosing not to use or emphasize the word “church.” They state, “Our building isn't a church, our building is a cultural center, we have a church that meets here because church is people not a building, so that's the

⁷⁰⁴ Joel and Rachel Triska state, “A missional focus “is central” to ministry. See the Life in Deep Ellum interview transcript located in Appendix C.

⁷⁰⁵ The Triskas conducted approximately 1000 street interviews in attempting to discern the nature and elements comprising their context. See the Life in Deep Ellum interview transcript located in Appendix C.

language we use.” They also realized that they “...had to stop being pastors and start being missionaries... We wanted to be able to define ourselves via a conversation, so we changed a lot of our terminology... I wanted our titles to say not so much what we did, but who we are.”

The realizations gleaned from their missional focus helped the Triskas visualize and implement an essential form where missional function could be pursued. They opened “a coffee shop with a community aspect where we have music shows... Our main space can host concerts and all kinds of community events... we have an art gallery [and] space that we lease out to local entrepreneurs in partnership.⁷⁰⁶ The Triskas believe “functionality is relationships, so I would say that like the form will absolutely hinder or encourage what we do.”

5.3.1.3 Evidence of Missional Function

Missional function is the incarnational presence of Christ in a community through his followers, and the missional focus and form of the Life in Deep Ellum ministry enables a vibrant missional function. Joel and Rachel Triska state, “When we’re talking about form and function there’s contact... [we want] to be the friends of people outside of the faith... We are linking arms for the good in our community... Our intentions in the neighborhood are basically to serve with no strings attached... building a community that

⁷⁰⁶ Seeing itself as a Cultural Center built upon four “pillars” (Art, Music, Commerce, and Community), Life in deep Ellum reflects an approach reminiscent of an aspect of the Cape Town Commitment, which states, “Art in its many forms is an integral part of what we do as humans and can reflect something of the beauty and truth of God. Artists at their best are truth-tellers and so the arts constitute one important way in which we can speak the truth of the gospel. Drama, dance, story, music and visual image can be expressions both of the reality of our brokenness, and of the hope that is centred in the gospel that all things will be made new. In the world of mission, the arts are an untapped resource. We actively encourage greater Christian involvement in the arts.” See “Cape Town Commitment”, KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology / Vol. V. No. 1 (2011), pp. 165-224, 194.

is deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them.” Joel Triska added, “My wife and I want to do our part to help, help share our story and see the kingdom of God advance in new ways.” Incarnational ministry is the result of a missional focus and form at Life in Deep Ellum.

5.3.1.4 Section Summary

Life in Deep Ellum is conclusively a missional ministry where missional focus informs form and enables missional function. Is it redefining Christianity and the church in the United States? Perhaps not, but it has redefined Christianity and the church in downtown Dallas, Texas. The Triskas offer these final words,

God is redefining for us what it means for a church to work in our community... people aren't projects to us... context will drive everything... We just need to be open to and aware of how God wants us to respond. Our contexts, the social needs around us deeply impact what it means and looks like to love our neighbor [and] challenging us to constantly focus and refocus. If our context changes we're not going to continue to be married to what our original manifestation was. ...incarnational also means to be flexible. We want to be an active part of this neighborhood, community, and to be that light that reveals God, meeting the needs of Deep Ellum and drawing people to Jesus Christ.

5.3.1.5 Ministry Leaders Interview – Graphic Representations

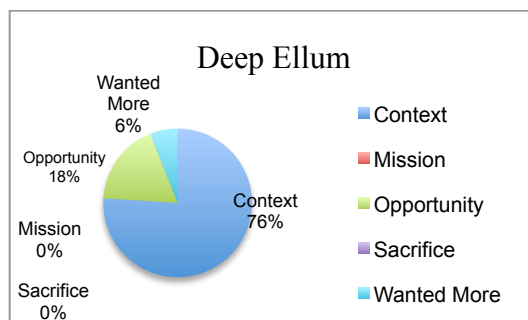


Figure 5.5 Deep Ellum Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

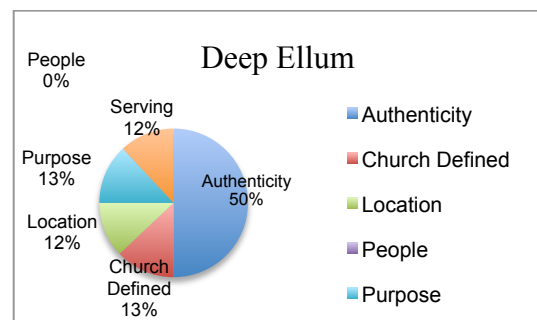


Figure 5.6 Deep Ellum Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Table 5.4 Deep Ellum Question 3 - What authors have influenced you (the leadership team) most and why?

Code	Deep Ellum	Total
Alan Hirsch	25%	22%
David Bosch	0%	11%
Gene Getz	0%	11%
Gustavo Gutierrez	0%	11%
Hugh Halter	25%	11%
Lesslie Newbigin	25%	11%
Michael Frost	25%	11%
Wolfgang Simpson	0%	11%
Quotations	100%	100%

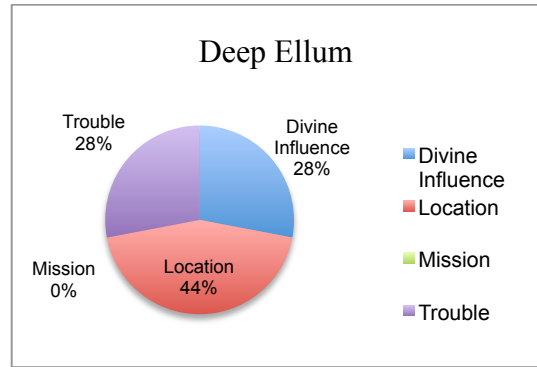


Figure 5.7 Deep Ellum Question 4 - What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Table 5.5 Deep Ellum Question 5 - How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

Ministry	Years
Deep Ellum	7

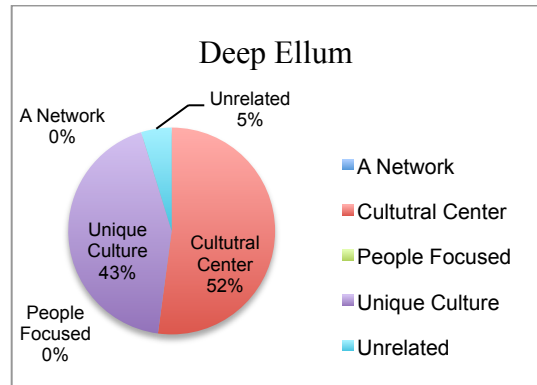


Figure 5.8 Deep Ellum Question 6 - How do you describe your church?

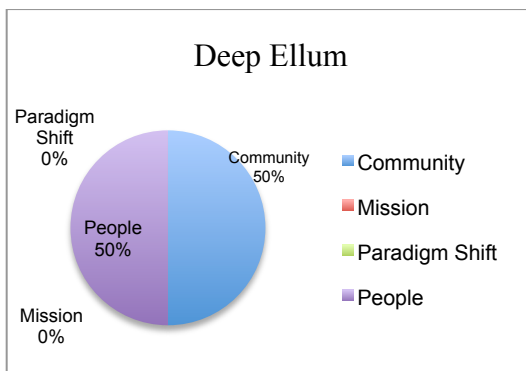


Figure 5.9 Deep Ellum Question 7 - What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

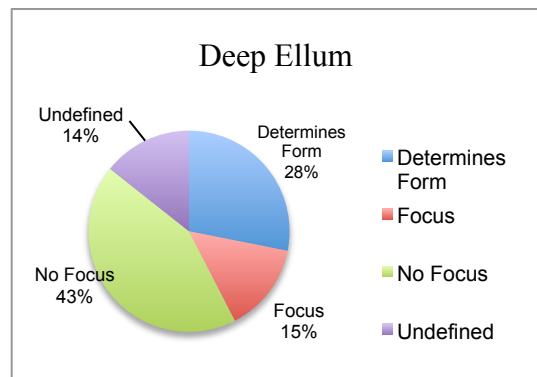


Figure 5.10 Deep Ellum Question 8 - How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

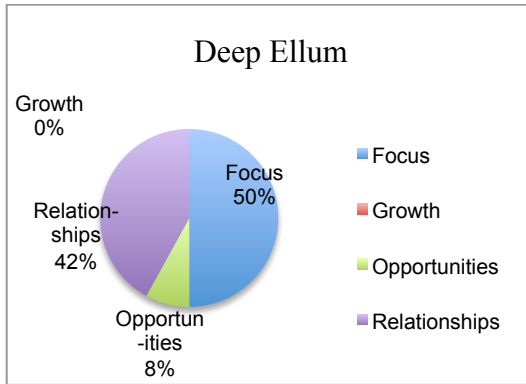


Figure 5.11 Deep Ellum Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in you ministry?

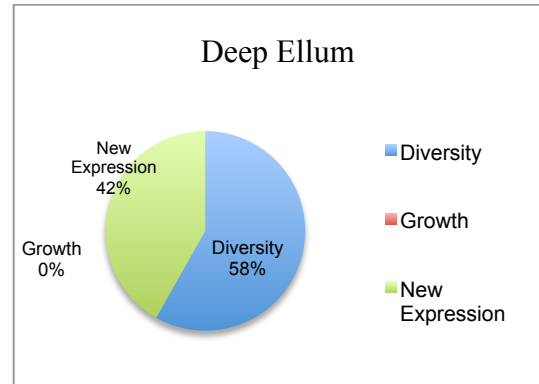


Figure 5.12 Deep Ellum Question 10 - How has Life in Deep Ellum changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

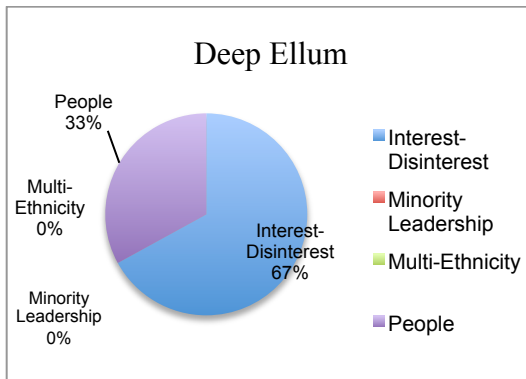


Figure 5.13 Deep Ellum Question 11 - What elements have driven or are driving change in your ministry?

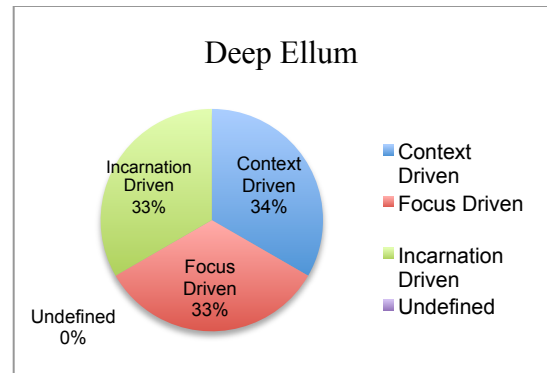


Figure 5.14 Deep Ellum Question 12 - How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

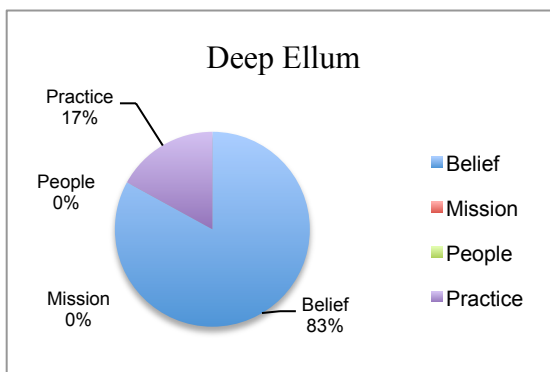


Figure 5.15 Deep Ellum Question 13 - What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

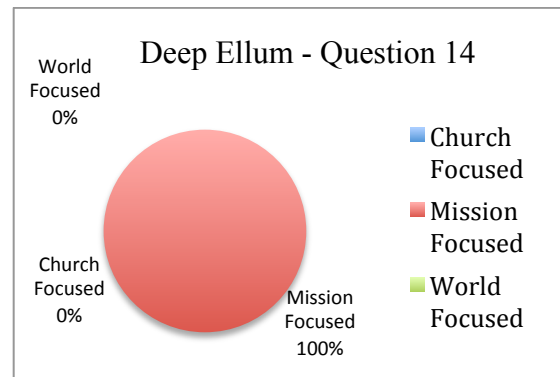


Figure 5.16 Deep Ellum Question 14 - What do you want your ministry to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

5.3.2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Lynchburg, Virginia

Dr. Daniel Mitchell is the pastor of Lighthouse Community Fellowship, a small church in the heart of downtown Lynchburg, Virginia.⁷⁰⁷ He likes to characterize ‘Lighthouse’ as “an accidental body/church that was created by virtue of the fact that we had a community center going here.”⁷⁰⁸ The Lighthouse ministry did not begin with the intent of starting a church; rather, it began with a desire to help the impoverished and neglected people of the city. Dr. Mitchell recalls, “We were just sharing the love of Christ with people and they were getting saved... They were wanting to hang out on Sunday together and we suddenly came to the realization that we actually had a church on our hands, not that we intended to start one.” At 74 years of age, Dr. Mitchell is an unlikely candidate to begin a new ministry, and yet he confesses, “I’m a composite of my whole life, I’m 74 years old, and I’ve been in ministry for over 50 years, [which] has included pastoral ministry and primarily teaching and administration.” Dr. Mitchell has led the Lighthouse ministry since 2011.

5.3.2.1 Evidence of Missional Focus

In a sense, Lighthouse Community Fellowship began as a community center with a missional focus, having identified people with needs they would try to meet. While ‘missional’ necessarily includes a spiritual motivation that is nearly always associated with church ministry, it is reasonable to conclude that Christians can be missional when

⁷⁰⁷ This researcher enjoys a professional and personal relationship with Dr. Mitchell, having served together on the seminary faculty of Liberty University from 2006 to 2015. The Ministry Leaders Interview with Dr. Mitchell was conducted without regard to the prior or existing relationship or influence of the same.

⁷⁰⁸ Unless otherwise noted, quoted material in this section is excerpted from an interview with Dr. Daniel Mitchell, conducted on November 30, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

acting in concert with one another to demonstrate the love of God to those in need, although they are not acting in the capacity as a church. The activities of Lighthouse were missionary and incarnational in nature, the result of a focused investigation of their context.

Lighthouse Community Fellowship operates from a missional focus in that they have investigated their context to determine its nature and discover where God has prepared opportunities. Mitchell relates the general conclusion of their investigation: “We have a certain number of poverty individuals, homeless people... The homeless are a homogenous bunch, and they are diamonds in the rough... We have an opportunity to find some of these people. They are people who are homeless because they choose to be and they have a different set of concerns and issues... We open the door and we let them come in, like the good neighbor policy. Jesus said love God, love your neighbor, and you don’t get to choose who your neighbors are, you just deal with the ones you have.”

In a general sense, Lighthouse focuses on the forgotten people of Lynchburg, including the homeless, alcoholics, teen runaways, and others, but they have also focused on the worst of human degradation, sex trafficking. Mitchell describes the story,

One of the most serious scandals regarding human trafficking, one of the biggest cases that was broken in the state of Virginia was right here in Lynchburg... The police officer who was tasked with going undercover, becoming part of this group, called his superior to say I can’t do this... these are 13 year old children, some of those girls were in his Sunday school, they were in his church and they were being trafficked... So you don’t leave that alone. You have to do something whether you’re qualified or not.

Mitchell’s investigation has provided a sharp focus into his context and opened unparalleled opportunities to serve.

5.3.2.2 Evidence of Missional Form

Lighthouse is a church that uses a community center as its form. The ministry is open most days each week requiring facilities capable of feeding the hungry, counseling, and providing clothing. Describing their form, Mitchell states, “We have a unique set up here; we are actually three things. We have a business; we have a beverage line that’s being marketed in the Far East, we have a gasifier project that creates electricity out of rubbish; we have a number of other projects going.” He adds, “We have a business that exists to provide revenue for ministry. It costs us \$150,000 a year just to keep the lights on in this building. The people we serve can’t possibly sustain that or support it in any way.

The form Lighthouse employs is unusual and unlike most forms in the United States, but it is in response to the missional focus and permits Lighthouse to have a missional function. Without this form, it is doubtful Lighthouse could function in its context.

5.3.2.3 Evidence of Missional Function

As mentioned previously, a missional form is the interpretation of or response to a missional focus, and enables specific missional function, an incarnational presence to a context. From its form as a community center, Lighthouse operates incarnationally; Mitchell relates, “We try to love people in tangible ways... We’re all about shining the light of the gospel, shining the light of truth into people’s lives and in that process, God does His work.” Mitchell describes a few of the ways Lighthouse functions: “We started trying to reach the children in the area and discovered they were hungry, [by Sunday] they hadn’t eaten since Friday when they were in school, so we started feeding them...”

“Tomorrow we will provide groceries to about 250 people... In the course of the year well over 10,000 people will receive groceries from us.” Mitchell states that these and other tangible efforts have “given us entry into the community that didn’t exist when we started, [it] just opens the door.” With certainty, missional focus and form have opened the door for missional function for Lighthouse Community Fellowship in Lynchburg, Virginia

5.3.2.4 Section Summary

From its small vantage point and obscurity, one can hardly declare that Lighthouse Community Fellowship is redefining American Christianity and the Church in the United States; however, like Life in Deep Ellum, Lighthouse *is* redefining Christianity and the church in the dark neighborhoods of downtown Lynchburg, Virginia. Mitchell restates, “We try to love people in tangible ways.. The evolving needs of the people we serve... we want people to know that we do care about them and that’s a non-negotiable.”

5.3.2.5 Ministry Leaders Interview – Graphic Representations

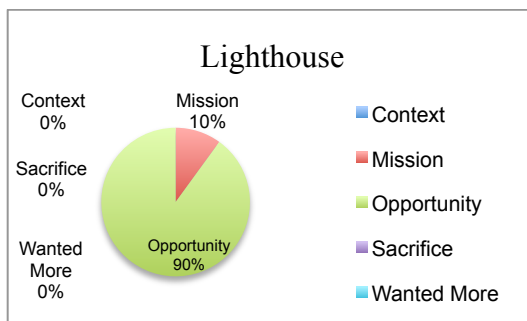


Figure 5.17 Lighthouse Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

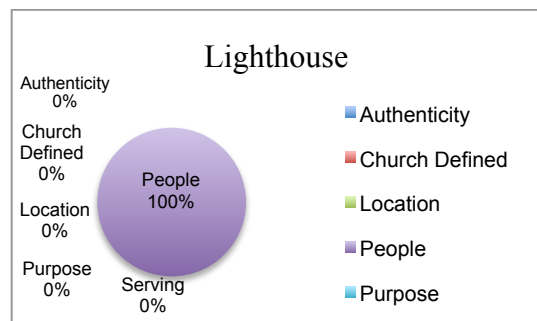


Figure 5.18 Lighthouse Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Table 5.6 Lighthouse Question 3 - What authors have influenced you (the leadership team) most and why?

Code	Light-house	Total
Alan Hirsch	0%	22%
David Bosch	0%	11%
Gene Getz	100%	11%
Gustavo Gutierrez	0%	11%
Hugh Halter	0%	11%
Lesslie Newbigin	0%	11%
Michael Frost	0%	11%
Wolfgang Simpson	0%	11%
Quotations	100%	100%

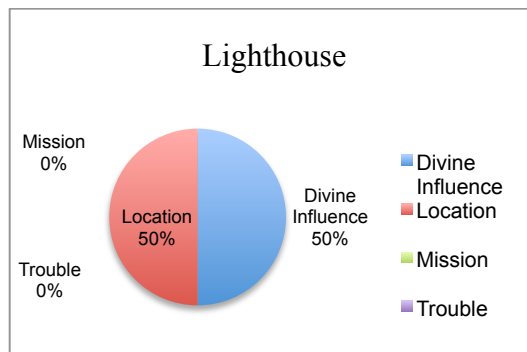


Figure 5.19 Lighthouse Question 4 - What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Table 5.7 Lighthouse Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

Ministry	Years
Lighthouse Community Fellowship	5

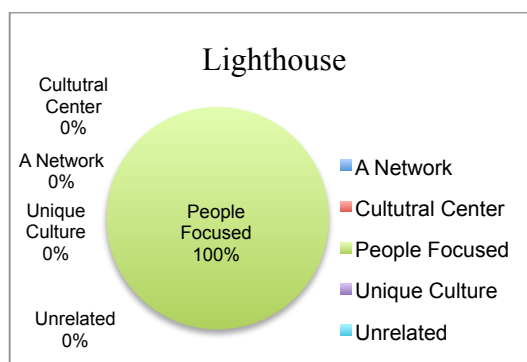


Figure 5.20 Lighthouse Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

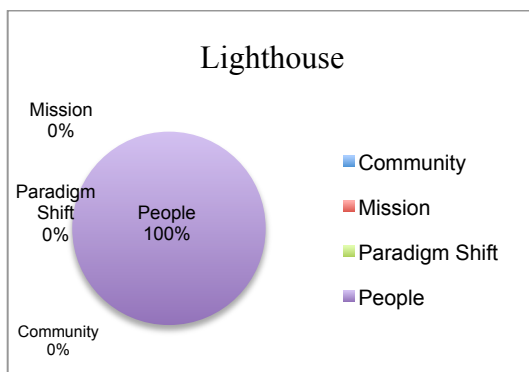


Figure 5.21 Lighthouse Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

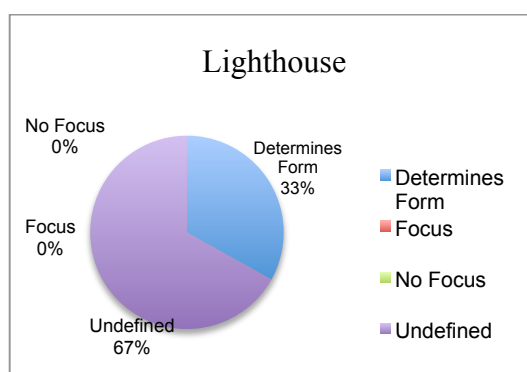


Figure 5.22 Lighthouse Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

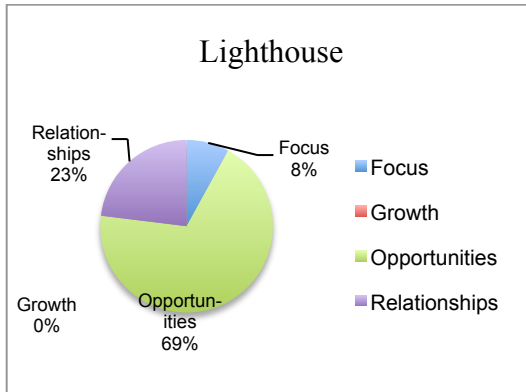


Figure 5.23 Lighthouse Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

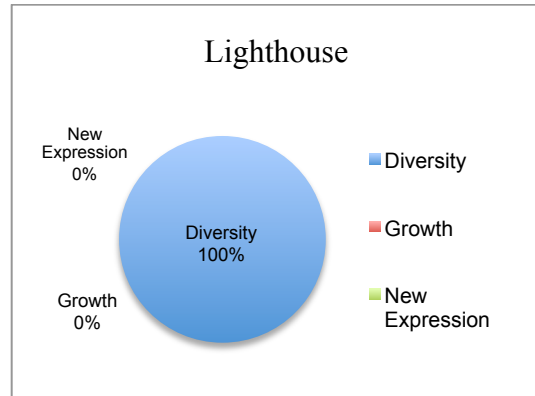


Figure 5.24 Lighthouse Question 10 - How has Lighthouse changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

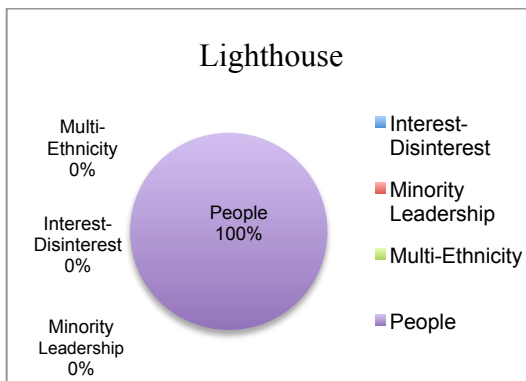


Figure 5.25 Lighthouse Question 11 - What elements have driven or are driving change in your ministry?

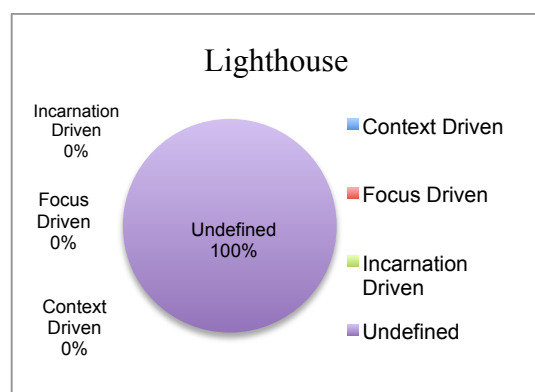


Figure 5.26 Lighthouse Question 12 - How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

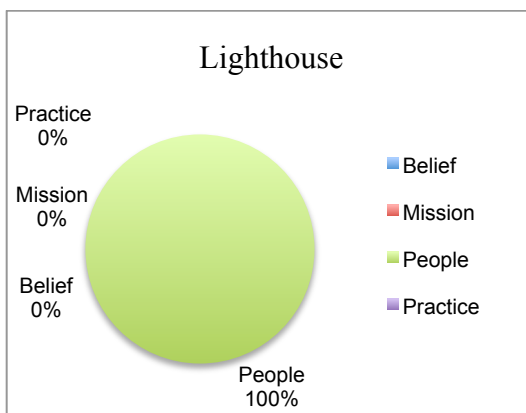


Figure 5.27 Lighthouse Question 13 - What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

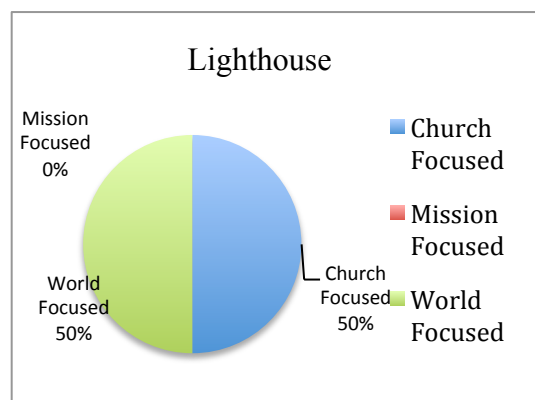


Figure 5.28 Lighthouse Question 14 - What do you want your ministry to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

5.3.3 Tampa Underground – Tampa, Florida

Bolger writes concerning the process that often precedes new ministries and states,

Those who start new communities often express frustration and dissatisfaction with Christian life as they previously knew it... they needed some time to rethink everything they thought they knew about church... these pioneers gained skills in leadership through actually leading the new initiative, from planning to implementation.⁷⁰⁹

Bolger’s description mirrors the process that led to the creation of the Tampa Underground ministry, which was formed in 2006 when “50 people from the Tampa Bay area really decided to... they were a little bit just feeling like there was something more than just sitting in pews and middle class Christianity that they were experiencing in traditional churches.”⁷¹⁰ Leann Theivagt, Communications Director for Tampa Underground explained, “They were wanting to really see, like what is Jesus doing outside of our context, and so they spent about 9 months in Manila... uprooted their families, quit their jobs and raised money to go... [and] worked under the missionaries that were there,” noting what they saw as “lacking in the western church, in traditional churches” mission was their “motivator.” Theivagt continued in more detail, “We left the Church not because we didn’t love it, but because we did love it and we wanted to return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture. We weren’t seeing that sort of passion and attention to what the Bible was actually commanding of us as followers of Him.” Before leaving for Manila, “a core team really prayed about ten different cities where it was just really marginalized abject poverty.” One of their reasons for going was

⁷⁰⁹ Bolger. *The Gospel After Christendom*, 353.

⁷¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, quoted material in this section is excerpted from an interview with Leann Theivagt – Communications Director for Tampa Underground, conducted on December 8, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

to see Christ followers in a totally opposite context from what we're used to." This was a transformative time for this group; "Everything was on the table and we were able to look at Christianity as we knew it, the traditional things as we knew it, the scriptures, and we were able to look at that and say what do we want to define us as a movement. During those 9 months in the Philippines we came up with our core values: it's Jesus is Lord, The Poor, The Lost, The Whole World, Contextualization, Zeal and Contemplation."

The leaders of Tampa Underground are pioneers in the truest sense. Upon their return to Tampa they established Tampa Underground, a ministry to bring Christ to their city and the world.

5.3.3.1 Evidence of Missional Focus

Tampa Underground's missional focus is expressed clearly in their "Manifesto," which identifies their core values, one of which is "Contextualization," and states,

We will not trust in franchising or empire building through paradigm propagation. Rather we will value the empowerment of every microchurch community to contextualize the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel to the people they hope to reach. Our paradigm is that there is no one paradigm. We believe in contextualized structures with revolutionary content. Learning from the ministry of Jesus we will not try to bring surface transformation (to culture or structures) but rather contextualize our structures to what people can and will understand, so that the revolutionary message of the kingdom and the liberating work of the Holy Spirit will be received.⁷¹¹

A review of their website reveals Tampa Underground is thoroughly familiar with their context and has identified multiple people groups and elements at work in their context,

⁷¹¹ Tampa Underground. "Our Manifesto" <http://tampaunderground.com/our-story-index/#our-manifesto>. Accessed December 8, 2016.

and providing evidence of a contextual interpretation supporting a missional focus (investigation).⁷¹²

5.3.3.2 Evidence of Missional Form

Placing high value on contextualization, Tampa Underground’s missional form is a response to their missional focus, and is immediately evident not only in type of expression, but also in their use of terminology. Form is expressed as “micro-church” and “network” enable Tampa Underground to meet and respond to a variety of sub-contexts within the overall context of the city of Tampa, Florida. Theivagt states, “as soon as they came back, they started a group of house churches in different neighborhoods... a network of micro churches... smaller micro churches that are doing unique things in their unique context.” This neighborhood-based, context-driven missional form consists currently of “...about 150 different little initiatives that are all throughout our city.” Tampa Underground’s contextual investigation (missional focus) has produced an interpreted response (missional form) that enables incarnational ministry (missional function).

5.3.3.3 Evidence of Missional Function

A missional focus supported by a missional form provides for incarnational interaction (missional function) with a church’s context, and Tampa Underground’s incarnational interaction is clearly evident. Theivagt describes Tampa’s activities as, “we exist to serve... What we do is to empower kingdom missionaries, the people of God in

⁷¹² A brief list of people groups and elements identified in their context include: geographically located (neighborhood) house churches, men and women’s initiatives based on need (abuse, sex industry, human trafficking, pregnancy, incarceration, drug abuse, new fathers, etc), Arts (dancing, music, theater, worship, etc), and Campus ministries. See <http://tampaunderground.com/microchurches-index/#microchurches-beta2>.

their context in their city... We emphasize the life and ministry of Jesus by prioritizing those who have not yet heard and believed the good news... Everything that we do needs to empower needs to serve the ministry... we are basically a church for missionaries.”

There is substantial evidence that Tampa Underground is a network of churches pursuing missional function.

5.3.3.4 Section Summary

Like Life in Deep Ellum and Lighthouse Community Fellowship, Tampa Underground is unquestionably a missional ministry; where missional function proceeds from a missional form that is a response to a missional focus, but unlike Deep Ellum and Lighthouse, Tampa Underground is redefining Christianity, both in Tampa, Florida and the United States, and in places around the world. Concluding the interview, Theivagt offered this final description: “We strive to follow the Spirit of God as he leads... We’re not a black church, we’re not a white church, we are this multi-ethnic expression of the church... trying to navigate what does multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation look like for our church... We want to have different underground hubs throughout the US and throughout the world... We’re in Nebraska and Alabama... We’re also in 10 different cities throughout the world... Hamburg, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, the Philippines, Illinois... We want to have places in every major city that people can be able to get to.” Ambitious statements, but Tampa Underground is already at work. Finally, Theivagt stated, “We’re trying to really help, reform and love the Church and it’s out of love for the church... I think we want to work with American and western churches to really help them if they’re open to that of course.”

5.3.3.5 Ministry Leaders Interview – Graphic Representations

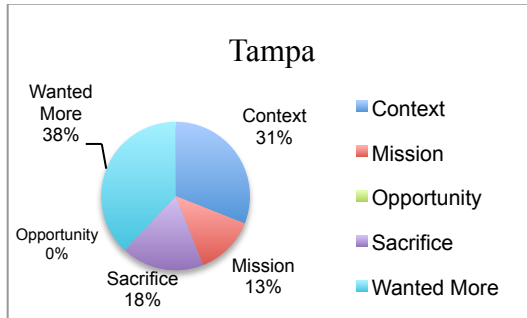


Figure 5.29 Tampa Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

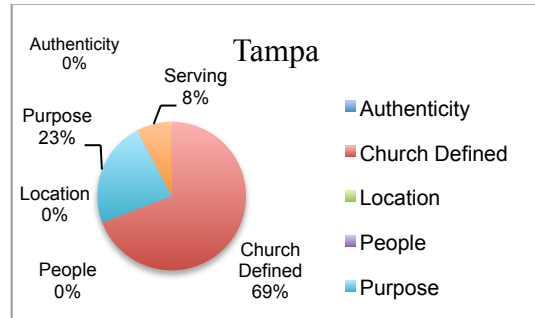


Figure 5.30 Tampa Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Table 5.8 Tampa Question 3 - What authors have influenced you (the leadership team) most and why?

Code	Tampa	Total
Alan Hirsch	25%	22%
David Bosch	25%	11%
Gene Getz	0%	11%
Gustavo Gutierrez	25%	11%
Hugh Halter	0%	11%
Lesslie Newbigin	0%	11%
Michael Frost	0%	11%
Wolfgang Simpson	25%	11%
Quotations	100%	100%

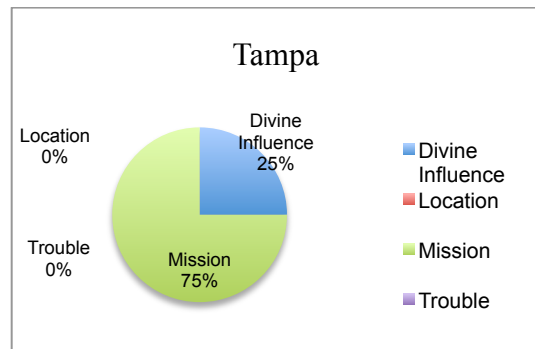


Figure 5.31 Tampa Question 4 - Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Table 5.9 Tampa Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

Ministry	Years
Tampa Underground	10

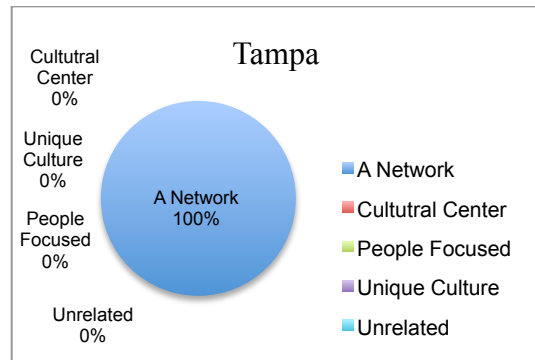


Figure 5.32 Tampa Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

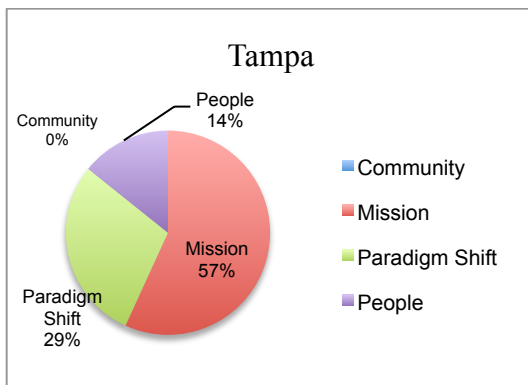


Figure 5.33 Tampa Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

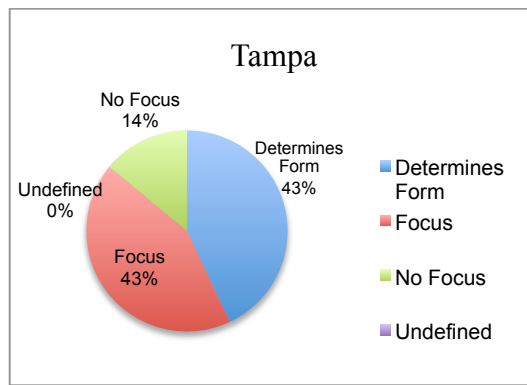


Figure 5.34 Tampa Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

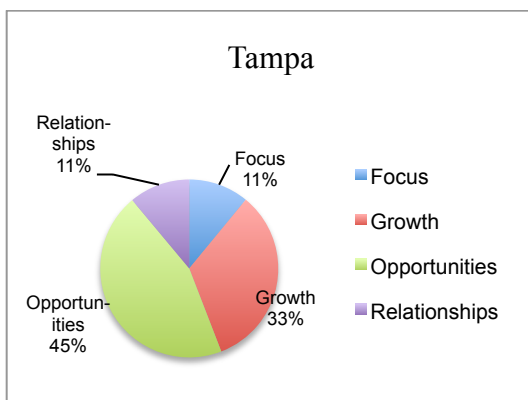


Figure 5.35 Tampa Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

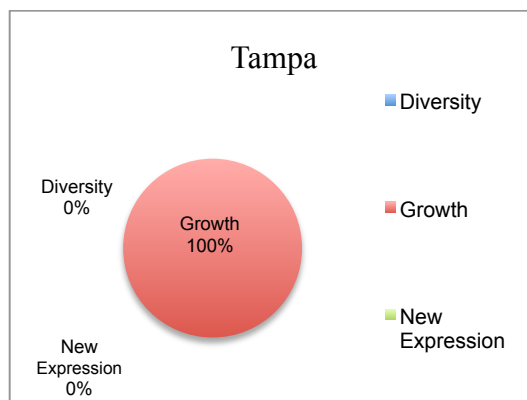


Figure 5.36 Tampa Question 10 - How has Tampa Underground changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

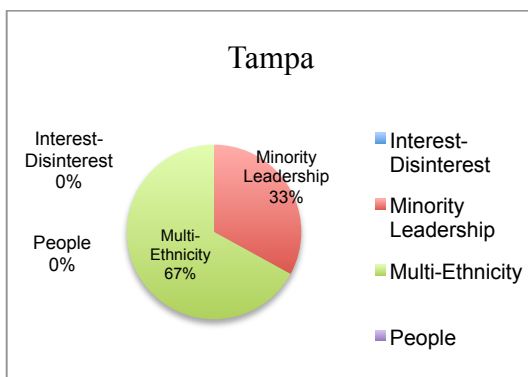


Figure 5.37 Tampa Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your ministry?

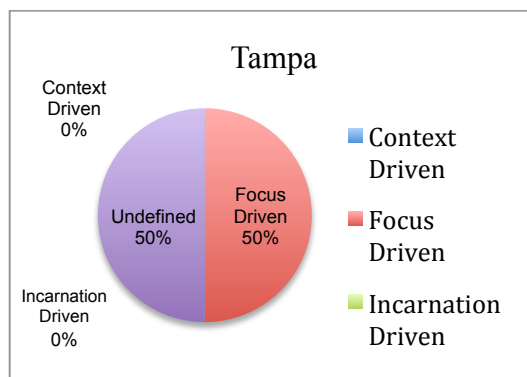


Figure 5.38 Tampa Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

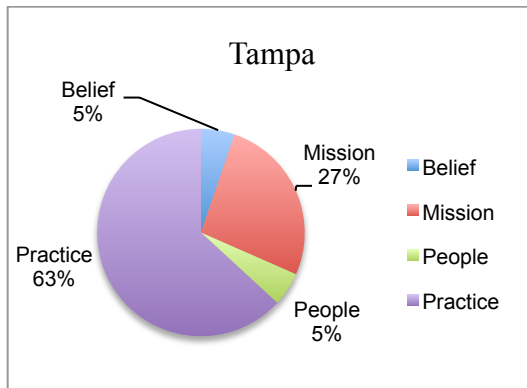


Figure 5.39 Tampa Question 13 - What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

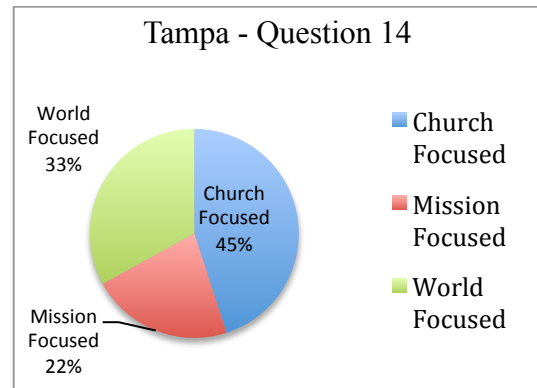


Figure 5.40 Tampa Question 14 – What do you want your ministry to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

5.4 Redefinition from Missional Focus, Form, and Function

This research began with a desire to explore and answer the question, is a redefinition of American Christianity resulting from a missional focus, form, and function? Six churches were selected to research; five participated in the research process, and three were determined to be missional expressions of the Church according to the working definition developed and presented in Chapter 2. All are located in the United States, but the three missional churches are distinct from each other. One is large with 150 “micro” (house) churches, one is very small in the heart of a medium-sized rural/suburban town, and one is situated in a two-square mile neighborhood of a major city. Each has a distinct context and challenges, but all are thriving. Why?

Deep Ellum, a two-mile square neighborhood of downtown Dallas, Texas is being influenced by Joel and Rachel Triska and the incarnational ministry of Life in Deep Ellum. Downtown Lynchburg, Virginia is noticing the incarnational presence of

Lighthouse Community Fellowship, while Tampa Underground is crisscrossing Tampa, Florida with Christians living the missionary presence and Kingdom of God.

These churches may not be well known or experience much notoriety, but each is approaching ministry as few or perhaps no institutional/traditional church does, and each *is* redefining Christianity in their specific location. Each operates from a missional perspective resulting from contextual knowledge, that is, information specific to their location gained through investigative efforts and a sincere desire to understand the unique construct of their setting; this is a missional focus. This knowledge is essential to avoid repeating a classic mistake of Christendom, that there is but one way to “do” church regardless of the context of the setting. In turn, this missional perspective produced a specific construct, a missional form particularly suited to the unique aspects identified from their missional focus. For Life in Deep Ellum, it is a “cultural center” that incorporates music, art, commerce, and community. For Lighthouse Community Fellowship, it is a community center where the homeless, alcoholics, teen runaways, children, men and women find help, hope and “the beauty of God,” and for Tampa Underground, it is the micro church: a network of neighborhood-based house churches on the front lines, meeting people where they live.

This missional focus and form energizes (gives life to) missional function, an incarnational presence, where as Hirsch characterizes, “we actually become little Jesuses,”⁷¹³ and the Kingdom of God is revealed by the acts and efforts of these churches. For the people in these settings (Dallas, Lynchburg, Tampa), and within the ministry influence of these churches, Christianity *looks* and *feels* different, both for those

⁷¹³ Excerpted from an interview with Alan Hirsch, October 11, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix B.

ministered to, and for those ministering, and there is no going back. The Triskas, Mitchell, and leaders of Tampa Underground have made significant life changing decisions based on a missional understanding that God is a missionary God, and as the Father sent the Son, and together they sent the Spirit, so the Trinity sends the Church; there is no turning back. As Mitchell said, "...the tables have turned on me... I think time is right. I have been guilty of despair at times when I realize what has happened to western culture, quasi-Christian culture, it's gone dead, but that shouldn't stop the cause of the gospel and those are the times that we've done our best."⁷¹⁴ As a result, the people influenced by these churches have a redefined understanding of Christianity and the Church, and they like it. Doors are opening in Dallas as the Triskas and Life in Deep Ellum are helping to solve neighborhood transportation challenges.⁷¹⁵ Doors are opening as well for Mitchell and Lighthouse Community Fellowship with the greater Lynchburg community,⁷¹⁶ and incredible doors are opening for Tampa Underground both domestically and internationally.

⁷¹⁴ Excerpted from an interview with Dr. Daniel Mitchell, conducted on November 30, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

⁷¹⁵ Rachel Triska stated, "I've probably been spending a minimum of 5 maybe as much as 10 hours a week on working with the city on some pretty major urban transit projects and that's been, I mean some of it has been outside of work hours but a lot of it has been in work hours because that's something that we value. On a functional level the question is do we want an above grade, or subway? Well if we do above grade, then that's cutting Deep Ellum off from the rest of the central business district. If we're able to bring in the subway then that keeps us connected to the central business district which again brings us back to the function of wanting to be about connecting and building relationships and God has invited us to look at that. Excerpted from an interview with Joel and Rachel Triska, conducted on September 28, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

⁷¹⁶ Mitchell stated, "we're in conversation with the community to figure out ways to help them do what they do. On Martin Luther King Day it's the first time I confess I stood with a room primarily of black people, hands across the aisle joined hands and sang we shall overcome. It was an amazing thing that I have never done that is an indictment against me I guess, it was a wonderful thing to be invited to be a part of it. Excerpted from an interview with Dr. Daniel Mitchell, conducted on November 30, 2016. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix C.

Is American Christianity being redefined by missional focus, form, and function?

Without a doubt! The locations may be diverse, the ministries obscure, and the process slow, but a redefinition is taking place. It begins when churches like Life in Deep Ellum, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, and Tampa Underground embrace the missional approach to ministry, utilizing a missional focus, where a contextual investigation reveals the unique features of the church's setting, and this knowledge informs a missional interpretation to produce a form that aids and enables a missional/incarnational function. American Denominations are dying, the 'Nones' are rising, significant voices are speaking into the missional conversation, and people are listening. The redefinition of American Christianity is underway!

5.5 Important Questions

While it is apparent that a redefinition of American Christianity is occurring, the research questions forming an integral part of this study deserve to be addressed in summary fashion.

5.5.1 Contributing Elements

The initial research question asked "What elements have contributed and continue to contribute to the process producing change among churches in the United States and a redefinition of American Christianity?" Doubtless, the increasing secularization of the nation is the primary element fueling the change process in the United States. Recall that Taylor defines secularization as "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood

to be one option among others...,”⁷¹⁷ and while not completely secularized, indeed the United States is now a highly secularized society with increasing numbers of people choosing to live without religion or religious affiliation.⁷¹⁸ This growing secularization is closely associated with the transition to post-Christendom, the former having paved the way for the transition characterized by Murray as “The culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitely shaped by the Christian story, and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.”⁷¹⁹ Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this post-Christendom “decline in influence” is the corresponding decline in American denominationalism, seen with every major denomination experiencing a hemorrhage of dramatic proportion.⁷²⁰

Along with secularization, post-Christendom and denominational decline, the rise of emerging churches is also a significant contributing element in the change process at work in the United States. These are churches that “remove modern practices of Christianity, not the faith itself,”⁷²¹ or what Tickle characterizes as “a whole new form of Christianity...”⁷²² In addition, the rejection of the ‘Evangelical’ label is a growing trend with “the label not defin[ing] [emerging] leaders as it has for evangelical leaders in the

⁷¹⁷ Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age*, 3 (also presented in footnote 251).

⁷¹⁸ See footnote 5 regarding The Pew Research Center findings in *Religion & Public Life, U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious*. Nov 15, 2015.

⁷¹⁹ Stuart Murray. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press), 2004, 19 (also presented in footnote 9).

⁷²⁰ See Stetzer’s statement and forecast presented in footnote 309.

⁷²¹ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 29.

⁷²² Tickle. *Emergence Christianity*, 36.

past.”⁷²³ These items combined with the rise of the missional discussion begun by Newbigin and continued by Bosch, Guder, Van Gelder and others, are the elements that have contributed and continue to contribute to the change process among churches in the United States and the redefining of American Christianity.

5.5.2 Ecclesiological Challenges

In light of the changes contributing to the redefinition of American Christianity, research question two asked, “What ecclesiological challenges are produced by this change and redefinition?” Underlying the missional movement is a missional ecclesiology centered on the *missio Dei*, the missionary activity of God; no other element or influence is more critical to missional meaning and purpose. The acceptance (i.e. comprehension, embrace, and pursuit) of the *missio Dei* represents the fundamental ecclesiological challenge since it requires a revision of a church’s understanding of its reason for existence, and the reordering of its priorities and activities around God’s mission.⁷²⁴ It requires a church to address Guder’s “false division between thought and action, being and doing,”⁷²⁵ as well as moving away from functioning “primarily as an end within themselves.”⁷²⁶

Tickle raises the question, “Where is now the authority?” and asks, “Where is the list of the authorized definitions of good and bad, right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable? Who determines these things and then interprets them on the basis of

⁷²³ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 36.

⁷²⁴ See Van Gelder’s concept of missional ‘self-understanding’ cited in footnote 608.

⁷²⁵ Darrell L. Guder. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), xv. See the discussion of the topic cited in footnote 611.

⁷²⁶ van Gelder. *The Ministry of The Missional Church*, 93. See the discussion of the topic cited in footnote 612.

what?⁷²⁷ Addressed within an overall focus of “potential struggles,”⁷²⁸ these questions appear to have an element of ecclesiological connection, but also appear more to reflect a denominational influence, an element of declining influence in the United States. As such, they are secondary to and dwarfed in importance by the primary ecclesiological element, the *missio Dei*. Without a recognition and ordering of church life to the mission of God, little else matters.

5.5.3 The Influence of Focus, Form, and Function and Underlying Concepts

The third and fourth research questions addressed “How does focus influence form and function in missional churches in the United States?” and “What concepts underlie a missional focus, form, and function?” The close relationship between the two questions requires a combined response to arrive at a cohesive understanding.

There is a direct correlation between missional focus, form and function, and in their dynamic relationship, each positions a church to engage its context in a manner where they may live as an extension of God’s missionary presence in the world, discerning, understanding, and responding to changing contexts through incarnational relationships with others... and where the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ can be emphasized, and the Kingdom of God revealed.⁷²⁹ Contextualization is the element uniting focus, form, and function, and is the process where a church studies and understands the factors and elements comprising its context, enabling it to respond in a manner congruent to the context. Without a contextual understanding, a church has little

⁷²⁷ Tickle. *Emergence Christianity*, 205.

⁷²⁸ This is the sub-title of Chapter 22, “Future Pressure.” See Tickle. *Emergence Christianity*, 201-209.

⁷²⁹ This is an adjusted restatement of the working definition for the term ‘missional’ from Chapter 2.

hope of communicating in an effective manner to its setting.

A missional focus results from an intentional/purposeful inquiry into the context in which the church is situated, where the church sincerely desires to know and understand the various elements comprising its setting, such as seen in the 1000 street interviews conducted by Life in Deep Ellum. The concept underlying missional focus is that of *investigation*, an inquiry process providing information and understanding for use in constructing a missional form, the direct product of missional focus.

Underlying the concept of missional form is *interpretation*; missional form interprets the missional focus (investigation), and determines the best presentation (form) of the church in the community so that its actions will be received favorably, such as the cultural center at Life in Deep Ellum, the community center at Lighthouse Community Fellowship, and the micro-church network form employed by Tampa Underground.

Finally, missional function is derived from the missional form interpreted from the missional focus, and enables an incarnational presence in the context surrounding the church. *Incarnation* is the underlying concept of missional function, and enables the church to live as an extension of God's missionary presence, emphasizing the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ, and revealing the Kingdom of God.

5.5.4 Differences

Again addressing missional focus, form, and function, research question five asked, "Can differences in focus, form, and function, be considered missional although distinct in practice or approach?" The goal of missional focus, form and function is to enable the church to live incarnationally in its context, and since multiple contexts exist

in nearly every location, it is reasonable to conclude that a unique and distinct context will produce a unique and distinct missional focus, thus generating an interpretation (missional form) uniquely suited to the context/setting. Van Gelder warns against generic and standard forms emphasizing, “Models unfortunately invite replication without contextualization, thinking that the form itself will produce the result, and they miss the fact at the center of the heartbeat of it, the Spirit: the Spirit in the community, that’s formed the community, to share it, to shape it, to engage it, *context* it [emphasis added].”⁷³⁰ It is to be expected that unique contexts will produce unique investigative results (missional focus), requiring interpretations (missional forms) uniquely suited to their context, and therefore enabling an incarnational presence (missional function) ideally corresponding to the same context. Therefore, differences in focus, form, and function can be missional although distinct in practice or approach.

5.5.5 Ability to Face Change and the Future

The final research question asked, “How well are churches in the United States positioned to weather the changing cultural climate, and what does the future appear to hold for American Christianity and churches in the United States? The cultural climate in the United States has and is changing without question, and the ability of churches to endure/survive such a changing climate is directly related to a church’s “self-understanding” as described by Van Gelder, that is, understanding themselves to be either extensions of God’s missionary involvement in the world (missional/incarnational), or as institutional/traditional expressions (attractional/consumer oriented). Only one “self-understanding” will lead to successful navigation of cultural change. Declining

⁷³⁰ Excerpted from an interview with Craig Van Gelder, October 24, 2016, answer to question 8. A transcript of the complete interview is available in Appendix B.

denominational churches will not be able to navigate the changing cultural environment without a wholesale shift “self-understanding” for the entire denomination, action not taken to date and considered unlikely.⁷³¹ This decline along with increasing numbers of people who are unaffiliated with religion (‘Nones’),⁷³² and the increasing abandonment of the term ‘evangelical’ and American evangelicalism among the millennial generation⁷³³ is creating an environment where only those churches willing to make a radical departure from the institutional/traditional expression of church will be able to navigate the changing cultural climate in the US.

Thankfully, there are churches making such a change. This change is a radical departure from the ‘business-as-usual’ institutional/traditional expression of church, and can be seen in churches such as Life in Deep Ellum, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, and Tampa Underground. Although small in number, they are an indication of the response to the cultural change occurring in the United States, representative of an unknown and potentially greater number of churches. As well, they imply that American Christianity is indeed being redefined by the missional movement, that is, churches with a missional focus, form and function, engaging their contexts incarnationally as extensions of God’s missionary presence in the world.

⁷³¹ Recall that Cheryl Peterson forecasts the demise of the ELCA by 2046 if dramatic change is not engaged by the denomination, and states denominational churches “have lost a certain cultural and social position within American society and are becoming “sideline churches” (Peterson, *Who is the Church?* 2).

⁷³² Bass quantifies this group, “In the United States, some 30 percent of adults consider themselves “spiritual but not religious.” See Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 66.

⁷³³ Bass writes, “... most evangelical loss stems from the defection of young people, who increasingly identify Christianity (not just evangelical religion, but Christianity as a whole) as anti-homosexual, judgmental, hypocritical, out of touch with reality, overly politicized, insensitive, exclusive, and dull.” See Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 81.

Regarding the current cultural climate, Tickle writes, “Christianity is no longer either socially or inherently attractive to the culture at large nor, by extension, are its symbols,”⁷³⁴ and characterizing the current period as “a time of enormous upheaval, a time in which essentially every part of it is reconfigured.”⁷³⁵ To this Bass adds, “Western Christendom has ended; a “Christian America” survives as mythic memory and political slogan.”⁷³⁶ Both Tickle and Bass describe a cultural climate far different from any previous time in American history and the radical departure from the institutional/traditional expression of church (as seen in the missional churches of this research), appears to be equally as different from any previous church/religious change in American history, and suggests that the redefinition identified in this research involves a de-Americanization of Christianity and the church in the United States.

5.6 The De-Americanization of Christianity and the Church

Christianity as it formed in colonial and early America was a redefinition of understanding and practice of religion, but was it also a missional movement? Probably not. The redefinition of that time combined religious and political motivations that were so closely intertwined that they were nearly impossible to separate. The redefinition currently underway in the United States is different from its earlier example in that it has no political ties or aspirations, involves the decline and expected deterioration of American denominations (while the former aided their development), and includes an emerging form of church illustrative of Van Gelder’s description, “...the church is

⁷³⁴ Tickle. *Emergence Christianity*, 203.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷³⁶ Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, 81.

always forming and reforming,” and “is always in need of reforming.”⁷³⁷ In addition, Newbigin, Bosch, and others advocate for a more ecumenical approach, a concept counter to the more individualistic ways of American Christianity. With all things considered, the current redefinition suggests the de-Americanization of Christianity in the United States.

American Christianity is moving away from a Christendom understanding of Christianity and an American model of church ministry. Recall Cole’s statement, “These are significant days. There has never been a time in all of history like now, change is the order of the day and it is rapid... [there are] dramatic shifts occurring in our time that merit our immediate attention and demand that we think differently about who we are as church in these days.”⁷³⁸ Guder adds a similar thought, writing, “We may welcome the disestablishment of our traditional structures and the rapidly changing shape of our denominations as a God-given opportunity to shape ourselves for God’s mission.”⁷³⁹

Research suggests that the missional movement in the United States as represented by Life in Deep Ellum, Lighthouse Community Fellowship, and Tampa Underground, are examples of Cole’s ‘thinking differently’ and Guder’s “disestablishment of traditional structures,” but they are as well, representations of an increasingly de-Americanized Christianity and churches in the US, but what does the process of de-Americanization include? The following serves as an initial investigation into the concept of de-Americanization.

⁷³⁷ Van Gelder. *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 56.

⁷³⁸ Neil Cole. “Why We Cannot Afford to Stay Where We Are”, *100 Movements Blog*, July 26, 2016. Cited previously in footnote 1.

⁷³⁹ Darrell L. Guder. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of The Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1998, 268.

Watson and Scalen address what they term as the “McDonaldization” of churches in the United States, their characterization of the use of corporate business principles to direct and cause the growth and development of churches. They write of “churches restructuring themselves according to a corporate business model... where the principles of the fast food restaurants are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world.”⁷⁴⁰ They continue, “...the modern church’s intoxication with corporate business culture, self-improvement perspectives, and pop culture is part of a larger trend, namely, secularization... [where] interest in other-worldly or idealistic religious ideas is replaced by greater emphasis on material success and other pragmatic concerns.”⁷⁴¹ In their descriptions, Watson and Scalen have identified the unbridled result of attractional and consumer driven ministry, where ‘the ends justify the means,’ and there is a persistent pursuit of methods to maintain and generate increasing numbers of people, budgets, and programs.⁷⁴² Along with business practices and principles for growth, the de-Americanization of Christianity and churches in the United States requires the rejection of consumerism, a feature incompatible with missional function (incarnational interaction within context), and the “entrepreneurship-generated vigorous competition for members among local churches.”⁷⁴³ Eugene Peterson writes, “The vocation of pastor has been replaced by strategies of religious entrepreneurs with

⁷⁴⁰ J. B. Watson and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches.” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83. No. 3/4 (2008), 171-180.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² Answering question 1 of the Significant Voice Interview, “How do you define success for the church in the United States?” Stetzer responded, “Well I think currently, most people would see that as nickels, noses or numbers, financial metrics, baptisms, conversions as well...” a recognition of the attractional, consumer driven, business influenced American model of church. Excerpted from an interview with Ed Stetzer, August 4, 2016. A transcript of the interview is available in Appendix B.

⁷⁴³ J. B. Watson and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. “Dining With The Devil: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches.” *International Social Science Review*, Vol. 83. No. 3/4 (2008), 171-180.

business plans... I love being an American... [but] I don't love the rampant consumerism that treats God as a product to be marketed."⁷⁴⁴ The missional churches examined in this research are incarnational ministries motivated by the *missio Dei*, not business principles for corporate success.

Newbigin called for “a declericalized, lay theology,”⁷⁴⁵ and Eugene Peterson again relates, “The most insidious image of all is that of the pastorate as professional career: “American pastors, without really noticing what was happening, got our vocations re-defined in terms of American careerism.”⁷⁴⁶ The missional churches highlighted in this research are training “declericalized” lay leaders for ministry.

Lastly, Newbigin called for an openness to learn from other cultures, stating, “We cannot faithfully discharge a missionary responsibility to our own people unless we are willing to listen for what the living God says to us through his servants in other cultures.”⁷⁴⁷ The leaders of Life in Deep Ellum and Tampa Underground demonstrate this principle, each having studied at length outside the United States, learning how Christianity and churches in non-American cultures were accomplishing the mission of God.

The redefinition of American Christianity begun by the missional movement in the United States is as Bosch states, a “corrective counter-current” redefining not only understandings and practices of Christianity, but also is stripping away and releasing

⁷⁴⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachen. *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 10.

⁷⁴⁵ Lesslie Newbigin. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel in Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman's Publishing), 1986, 142.

⁷⁴⁶ Vanhoozer and Strachen. *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 10.

⁷⁴⁷ Newbigin. *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 147.

Christianity from uniquely American concepts, freeing it to participate in God's mission as opposed to its own.

5.7 Chapter Summary

While some may characterize the missional movement in the United States as a fledgling effort, missional churches are transforming their contexts with incarnational ministry developed from a missional focus, form, and function. The specific contexts as cited in this research attest to the transformative power of an incarnational presence. The churches presented in this chapter have been determined to be missional ministries by comparison to the working definition constructed in chapter 3, and also in an examination of their ministry philosophy and understandings as presented in the same chapter, but even more so in their practices of a missional focus, form, and function as presented in chapter 5. While seemingly small, the full strength of the missional movement is difficult to measure, yet the examples presented in this chapter suggest strongly that missional churches are deeply entrenched in and committed to their contexts, and as such, may be challenging to locate and identify from outside the context itself; however, they are redefining American Christianity through incarnational presences resulting from a missional focus, form, and function.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The objective of this research has been to determine if a redefinition of American Christianity is occurring in the United States resulting from the development and presence of emerging new paradigm missional churches and their emphasis on the relationship between focus, form, and function, or how an intentional emphasis on context (focus), informs ministry form to enable ministry function. It has been important to determine if such a redefinition is occurring to project on the future vitality of the emerging church in the twenty-first century United States amid the present changing and challenging environment (social, political, economic, religious, etc.). Through careful inquiry, investigation, and interpretation of a variety of elements related to the question, this research has determined that a redefinition of American Christianity is indeed at work in the United States.

In researching the possibility of a redefinition of American Christianity, it has been valuable and profitable to draw upon, compile, and utilize data from a variety of sources. Of immeasurable value have been the personal conversations with significant primary authorities contributing to the current missional discussion, including Darrell Guder, Craig Van Gelder, Alan Hirsch, Neil Cole, Rod Dempsey, and Ed Stetzer, along with their published contributions to the topic. These along with the published works of pioneers such as Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, and Stuart Murray, and other significant individuals in the missional discussion including Ryan Bolger, Eddie Gibbs, CJP Niemandt, Alan Roxburgh and others, have provided a rich and full foundation and framework with which to explore the redefining influence of missional focus, form, and function upon American Christianity. Also of great value and importance have been the

personal conversations and interactions with ministry leaders, gathering and evaluating information related to their ministries that helped refine and define understandings and concepts of ministry practices in ‘real-world’ settings. Collectively, information from these sources add significant support for a redefinition of American Christianity.

Overall, the method leading to the conclusion that a redefinition of American Christianity is in process required the blending of research data from four primary sources, specifically, historical influences: the historical elements contributing to the current setting; present influences: the understanding and defining of missional ministry for comparison with actual ministries in specific settings; developed/developing scholarly thought: the collected contributions, interviews, and reflections from primary authorities, and current evidences: Interviews and specific missional practices from ministry leaders emphasizing intentional focus, form, and function. Each of these sources contribute significantly to the overall research, and when combined, provide the data and evidence necessary to determine a finding that an increasing redefinition of American Christianity is in process.

Among the elements realized through the research process, several items contribute important ‘seasoning’ or ‘flavor’ to the overall research findings as seen in the following points. First, American Christianity formed in relationship and response to a populist movement of colonial citizens resisting the established European state church concept in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, and while perhaps dormant as an active element for generations, this populist element resurfaced in the twentieth century in the form of emerging new paradigm missional churches resisting the established denominational and institutional/traditional model of church, choosing

instead to organize and operate around principles discovered and interpreted on their own.

Second, the term ‘*missional*’ lacks a cohesive definition and suffers from a general over application to a variety of uses producing multiple and inconsistent interpretations. To counter this influence, this research has produced a working definition for the term by investigating and compiling multiple interpretations from primary authorities to achieve a unified definition, and for use in evaluating churches participating in this research.

Third and coinciding with the previous item, not all churches considering themselves as missional ministries are indeed missional. The broad application of the term has produced numerous examples of churches using *missional* to describe their various activities, yet these churches frequently lack essential missional features. A missional ministry consciously seeks to live as an extension of God’s missionary presence in the world (embodying the essential element of the *missio Dei*), to discern, understand, and respond to its contexts through incarnational relationships with others, emphasizing the community life of disciples of Jesus Christ to reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, missional focus, form, and function are the key factors behind the redefinition of American Christianity and an essential forecaster of the future vitality of the emerging missional church in the United States. Missional churches investigate and strive to understand the makeup of their contexts, interpreting this knowledge to produce a form where the church can function with an incarnational presence within its context. Where employed, a missional focus, form and function is redefining American

Christianity.

In summary, this research has attempted to identify elements at work that are contributing to the redefinition of American Christianity, and are influencing factors on the future vitality of the missional church in the United States. The previously mentioned items are part of this redefinition process, progressing in the midst of post-Christendom denominational decline and rejection of the institutional/traditional church, and in spite of the growth of the unaffiliated ‘*Nones*,’ and the increasingly unpopular and discarded evangelical label hijacked by the religious-political right. Encouraged by the continuing contributions of the significant voices and with a new generation of leaders, missional focus, form, and function is progressing slowly, but moving steadily forward, transforming lives and neighborhoods, and in the process, redefining American Christianity itself.

As this research concludes, it is important to identify additional areas to pursue and further efforts that should proceed following this research. Certainly, every attempt should be made to follow the progress of the three missional churches identified in this research, to observe and report on their continued development in their settings, especially if and how they re-evaluate their contextual focus and the effect that may have on their form and function. It would be interesting to observe and chronicle their influence on other ministries noting their influence in exporting and developing other missional churches, and of course to see the new developments (missional ministries) as they begin and grow. Additionally, efforts should be undertaken to research the theologies/missional ecclesiologies of the significant voice participants in this research, either individually or as a group, but especially of Darrell Guder, Craig Van Gelder, and

Alan Hirsch, and also other contributors from which this research has benefitted, including CJP Niemandt whose contributions to the missional discussion helped to bring clarity and focus to this research.

God is a missionary God, and with the Spirit's help, the missional movement is bringing new life and purpose to American Christianity, nothing short of a redefinition!

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

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“Significant Voice” Research Instrument

Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity

“Significant Voices” Research

Terms defined for this research...

Focus – refers to the underlying motivational element driving a ministry’s existence.

Form – refers to the particular expression of church ministry resulting from its focus, such as: Traditional, Multi-venue, Organic, etc. without regard to a “bricks and mortar” design

Function – refers to the methodology a church employs to pursue ministry; this may be:

A variation of “*Come and See*” or “*Go and Tell*” and include:

a “programed” approach (church programs [ministries])

Small groups

“Missional Communities,” or other approaches

Future – refers to the prospects for continued existence and influence in the United States for the remainder of the 21st Century

-
1. How do you define success for the church in the United States?
 2. What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?
 3. What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?
 4. How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?
 5. How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?
 6. Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?
 7. What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?
 8. What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?
 9. How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?
 10. What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

Thank you for your participation in this research

David W. Hirschman

u15029973@tuks.co.za, dwhirschman@gmail.com

Ministry Leader Research Instrument

Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity

Ministry Leaders Research

Terms defined for this research...

Focus – refers to the underlying motivational element driving a ministry’s existence.

Form – refers to the particular expression of church ministry resulting from its focus, such as: Traditional, Multi-venue, Organic, etc. without regard to a “bricks and mortar” design

Function – refers to the methodology a church employs to pursue ministry; this may be:

A variation of “*Come and See*” or “*Go and Tell*” and include:
a “programed” approach (church programs [ministries])
Small groups
“Missional Communities,” or other approaches

Future – refers to the prospects for continued existence and influence in the United States for the remainder of the 21st Century

About Yourself

1. What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?
2. How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?
3. What authors have influenced you most and why?
4. What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

About Your Church Ministry Specifically

5. How long have you led this ministry?
6. How would you describe your church?
7. What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?
8. How does focus influence the form of your ministry?
9. What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

10. How has your church changed since beginning or from the start of your leadership?
11. What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?
12. How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?
13. What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?
14. What do you want your church to become or become more of as you continue?

Thank you for your participation in this research
David W. Hirschman
u15029973@tuks.co.za
dwhirschman@gmail.com

Focus Group Survey Instrument

The aim of this work, *Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity*, is to capture and express a cohesive account of the rapidly developing missional church movement in the United States. The transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century has witnessed significant change in ministry practice not seen since the founding of the nation, and presents evidence substantiating that a redefinition of American Christianity is taking place.

Instructions

- 1 This survey anonymous and consists of 17 questions about you, your church, and the church in the United States.
- 2 Please include your church location.
- 3 Your answers should reflect your personal interpretation of each question; there are no incorrect answers!
- 4 Please complete the Informed Consent at the bottom of the survey

Thank you for your help in this research.

David W. Hirschman

PhD Research Student

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Survey Questions

1. Please provide your church location.
2. How long have you participated in your church?
 Less than 1 year
 1-2 years
 3-5 years
 6-10 years
 more than 10 years
3. What attracted you to your church?
4. What keeps you participating in your church?
5. What defines success for a church?
6. What are the significant elements producing change in your area?
7. What is the most significant element of those mentioned in Question 6?
8. What is your understanding of "missional" ministry?
9. What should a 21st Century US church value?
10. How would you describe your church?
11. How has your church changed since you began participating in it?
12. What elements have or are driving change in your church?
13. How has your church influenced your understanding of what ministry focus should be?
14. How has your church influenced your understanding of how ministry focus affects ministry form (model)?

15. How has your church influenced your understanding of how ministry focus and form influences ministry function (method)?
16. How do you see your church changing in the next 1 - 5 years?
17. What do you want your church to be or become as you continue to participate?

18. Informed Consent



LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Title of The Study:

Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity

Researcher:

David W. Hirschman, PhD research student, University of Pretoria
dwhirschman@gmail.com, u15029973@tuks.co.za

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study due to your experience and knowledge in the research area, namely Missional Christianity in the United States. Each participant must receive, read, understand and sign this document before the start of the study. If a child is 7-17 years and is requested to partake in a research study, the parent/legal guardian must give consent. Children from 7-17 years are also required to sign an assent form.

- **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study is to seek to answer the greater question of missional presence of the Church in the United States; is the Church missional regardless of its focus, form or function, and within current changes, which form represents the most biblical expression of missional ministry today. The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participant's names will be used in the final publication.
- **Duration of the study:** The study will be conducted over a period of six months and its projected date of completion is September 2016.
- **Research procedures:** The study is based on the literary contributions and ministry activities of current leading individuals in missional Christianity in the United States. Personal interviews will be conducted at a time and place convenient for these individuals
- **What is expected of you:** Replies to interview questions that reflect the participant's knowledge, experience, and involvement with the research topic.
- **Your rights:** Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however,

choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.

- **Confidentiality:** All information will be treated and kept confidential. All participants will be kept anonymous; No personal identification or personally identifiable information will be included in the final electronic or written form of the data compiled through this research. Only the researcher and authorized faculty of the University of Pretoria will have access to the raw data. Relevant data will be destroyed, should you choose to withdraw.

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research. I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions. In addition, I confirm that I have the authority/consent from the governing board, denomination, or congregation of the church to participate in interviews on behalf of the relevant governing board, denomination, or congregation.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: David W. Hirschman

Date: September 2016

Contact number of the Researcher:

Dwhirschman@gmail.com, u15029973@tuks.co.za

___ Agree

___ Disagree

Thank you for your participation in this research

David W. Hirschman

u15029973@tuks.co.za

dwhirschman@gmail.com

Informed Consent Form



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Theology
Department Science of Religion and Missiology

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Title of The Study:

The Redefinition of American Christianity: An Examination of Focus, Form, and Function of the Church in the United States as a Missional Expression with a View Toward Future Vitality

Researcher:

David W. Hirschman, PhD research student, University of Pretoria
dwhirschman@gmail.com, u15029973@tuks.co.za or (434) 262-3030

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study due to your experience and knowledge in the research area, namely Missional Christianity in the United States. Each participant must receive, read, understand and sign this document *before* the start of the study. If a child is 7-17 years and is requested to partake in a research study, the parent/legal guardian must give consent. Children from 7-17 years are also required to sign an assent form.

- **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study is to seek to answer the greater question of missional presence of the Church in the United States; is the Church missional regardless of its focus, form or function, and within current changes, which form represents the most biblical expression of missional ministry today. The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participant's names will be used in the final publication.
- **Duration of the study:** The study will be conducted over a period of six months and its projected date of completion is September 2016.
- **Research procedures:** The study is based on the literary contributions and ministry activities of current leading individuals in missional Christianity in the United States. Personal interviews will be conducted at a time and place convenient for these individuals
- **What is expected of you:** Replies to interview questions that reflect the participant's knowledge, experience, and involvement with the research topic.
- **Your rights:** Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.
- **Confidentiality:** All information will be treated and kept confidential. All participants will be kept anonymous; No personal identification or personally identifiable information will be included in the final electronic or written form of the data compiled through this research. Only the researcher and authorized faculty of the University of Pretoria will have access to the raw data. Relevant data will be destroyed, should you choose to withdraw.



WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research. I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions. In addition, I confirm that I have the authority/consent from the governing board, denomination, or congregation of the church to participate in interviews on behalf of the relevant governing board, denomination, or congregation.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact number of the Researcher:

dwhirschman@gmail.com, u15029973@tuks.co.za or (434) 262-3030

VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT *(Only applicable if respondent cannot write)*

I, the researcher, have read and have explained fully to the respondent, named _____ and his/her relatives, the letter of introduction. The respondent indicated that he/she understands that he/she will be free to withdraw at any time.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: SIGNIFICANT VOICE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

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Interview with Neil Cole

October 13, 2016

Neil Cole is an experienced church planter, author, artist and pastor, as well as a former Ocean Lifeguard for Los Angeles County Beaches. He is credited as a key catalyst in the organic church movement and is founder of *Church Multiplication Associates (CMA)*, which has helped to start tens of thousands of churches in 50 states and 50+ nations in only 17 years.

Neil is also an international speaker and has authored *Organic Church, Cultivating a Life For God, TruthQuest, Search and Rescue, Organic Leadership, Church 3.0, Journeys to Significance, Primal Fire, One Thing* and co-authored *Church Transfusion* with Phil Helfer, *Raising Leaders for the Harvest*, and *Beyond Church Planting* with Dr. Robert Logan and *Organic Church Planters' Greenhouse* with Paul Kaak. Most recently, Neil has written a novel.

Neil has a Bachelors degree in fine art from California State University Long Beach ('84) and a M.Div. degree from Grace Theological Seminary ('89). He has served as adjunct faculty at Wheaton College in the Masters in Missional Church course. His wife, Dana is an elementary school teacher in South Los Angeles.

Neil and Dana have been married 34 years. They live in Long Beach, California and have three grown children Heather, Erin and Zach.⁷⁴⁸

Introduction

DWH: Thank you for this interview Neil. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Neil Cole: "Sure"

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Ok, so success for me is... it's three things, faithfulness to what He's asked us to do, fruitfulness in what He's asked us to do, and finishing well.

So, what that means for church is succession more than success, and most churches don't think that way. We oftentimes are left hanging when a prominent leader is disqualified, or retires or dies, and have no real good alternative plan; that's not success.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Well, you can answer that one of two ways, Dr. Hirschman. You can talk about the positive affects, and the negative affects. I think that there is a ground swell of movement towards understanding that church attendance on Sunday should not make one a Christian. So the positive side of that is we're seeing a renewal of people meeting in relationships, in homes, and things like that; the kinds of things I write about, and talk about. On the flip-side, people will talk about the rise of the "Nones," those that are not

⁷⁴⁸ The biographical information was supplied by Mr. Cole in an email as part of the validation of his interview on January 11, 2017.

affiliated, which is the fastest growing religious affiliation in America. Most people would say that's a bad thing. I'm not sure the science is there to say it's all a bad thing yet. So there's also a dramatic shift. I think probably the timing of it seems to indicate that perhaps it is tied into this, where churches themselves are taking steps to try and corral this, and there's two predominant ways. One is what they call mergers, so many churches come together to become a larger church to accommodate people, and a second one is the multi-site city or venue approach where they start to grow by simply having multiple services provided. So I think all of that is a step for the church to try and to keep people and still grow, and yet not, even though they're bound by property or staff or something. So I think that those trends are happening too, I don't think they're all negative or all positive.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

I'm an author, so I'm not liking this, but I think that books are less and less having an influence over God's people. I don't think they have the attention span to read them. I think people are going to blogs, but even blogs are becoming less and less of interest to people, so now it's going to video things that have to be short. It's kind of a sad thing to see, but consumption of new ideas is rapidly decreasing. When they do seek information, they seek information that already verifies what they think they already know, so there isn't any learning going on, there's only a combative nature of two polarizing ideas. That's just not true for the elections, for red and blue states, or Fox News, or NBC; it goes deeper than that. It's Reformed versus Pentecostal; there isn't really an openness to learning from the other side, there's only a reinforcing of what you already think you know, and it reveals a shallowness in our minds, in our lack in growth and learning. Maturity is weak, and so I think all of that is at play, and when I travel around the world, around the country especially, I see more and more of just shallow ideas, and people are not open to a different idea; they've already got their minds made up.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

Okay, so I want to talk about the concept of missional. I think it's part of the fabric of the DNA of the actual ecclesia. So it is not simply a division of church, it is the core to the being of church. That's not necessarily true for the terminology of missional, which gets a lot of play, but doesn't actually produce a lot. There's a lot of people talking about missional, but what they really mean is a new sermon series that's going to reach out to their community, and it's not really changing anything. So I think the concept of apostolic, being sent and sending, is a core DNA principle of ecclesia, and should be at the very fabric of every disciple, every group, every meeting, and every plan. However, it's not, and so what we have is a mutated form of ecclesia, of a church that has missions as a sub-division that you can opt in to or not opt in to. So that's a mutation, that's not an actual healthy form of church. So my feeling is it's core to the fabric of the DNA of the church, and it's been lost.

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Right, so the church is the presence of Jesus among his people pursuing his mission. There's a tendency to define church according to our own expectations or experience, but the church is not a static institution; it begins and ends with a single question, “who is Jesus.” It's all about Jesus, and if it ever becomes about something else, then it stops being the Church. Jesus must be the sole focus, not a personality or methods or programs. And its important to see it as a kingdom outpost representing God's kingdom in its location.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

Oh yeah, all of the above. I think that if we are waiting for the current state of the institutional Constantinian model of church to survive, then I would be very pessimistic. I think it's extremely fragile and within a few years we will see, and the world will see how fragile it is. I think it's tied into a donations-based function that keeps everything afloat, and as soon as Congress decides to pull the tax exempt status or parsonage allowance, or property taxes, all those perks, and that's not even persecution, that's simply a complication, it will destroy a large percentage of churches in America. So in that regard I am highly pessimistic. At the same time, I am very optimistic because I think the Church has thrived under hostile regimes more than friendly regimes. So I believe God is already preparing the true Church for what is to come, and when it comes, we will see the church in its health in America unlike any time in human history, and it will be a beautiful thing. So I'm both pessimistic and optimistic depending on what you mean by church.

I am very optimistic. I have friends that are so discouraged by the election cycle, and I understand that, I am too, but I do think that the worse these things get in our nation, the more the true Church will shine. I don't want to see the deterioration of our nation, but at the same time, I do want to see the kingdom of God thrive, and I have no illusions that the two things are the same thing.

Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

Like I said before, it's hard to tell. I certainly think the traditional model that we're all familiar with will have less and less influence on society as a whole. I'm really expecting growth in nontraditional or organic expressions of the church.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

As we see things progressing, and with the idea that we have the traditional model, which is kind of a single location that meets at a specific place, at a specific time. And then we have these multi campus, multi venues; also we have some new emerging things. I think that the cosmos, the world system is not neutral, and it's not on our side, and I don't think that it's going to remain the way it is. It will go from bad to worse. I think that's pretty much historically accurate in every nation of the world. So, what we're

experiencing as far as freedoms and liberties, what we're seeing as far as prosperity right now, is not going to remain. I think it will be taken from us, so the established local church that is property-based, clergy-based and Sunday-based, program-based, will not survive in my opinion. Tampa Underground and organic church movements, and things like that are going to be probably the only expression that flies in the coming days. I think you will see, before all that happens, many of these established churches merging and pulling resources to survive as an institution. And so some will have to compromise their message to survive, and many will have to become leaner to survive, and all of those things will be mandates that won't fix the church; they will only delay the inevitable. So that's why Alan and I and others are working to produce a more missional mindset among even the established churches so that when core things are taken from them, they can still survive.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

I would suggest that most of us have inherited a point of view of church that we could question for many, many years, if not decades. We just assumed it was true. What will be necessary is for focus to address the New Testament, and ask the question what is ecclesia in the New Testament? And I think we need to be courageously vulnerable in doing so. What I mean by that is many pastors spend their lives in the New Testament, so when they do a series on church they see their model of church in the New Testament, but they have to use examples that are not prescriptive, but descriptive, and are not truly a match with their model. For instance, the Jerusalem Church in the porticos of Solomon, met in public, and then they also met from house to house. So they'll say there it is, that's our model. Well that's not their model at all. They were preaching the good news, they were preaching the gospel in the temple to Jews for salvation, and then they were bringing the church in to the house, and it only happened for a short period of time and then persecution came and they could no longer do that. So to say that how the church was back then is the way our church is now, is false. Or if they go to chapter 20 of Acts and they look at Paul taught them in the school of Tyrannus, publicly and then house to house, and they'll say there it is, public service and they have the house to house. No, the School of Tyrannus was not a Sunday morning worship service. So what we do is, we read our model into the New Testament because that's all we have, that's our baseline of understanding. In order for focus to come into clarity, you have to be willing to be courageously vulnerable with your model and say everything is up for grabs. And if it's not in the New Testament, I'm willing to say it's not biblical and therefore it doesn't make it wrong, but it also doesn't give itself a biblical mandate. I think that's where it has to start; you have to have that conversion-like experience where you're open and transparent and vulnerable, and you say I'm willing to surrender everything for what is truth. If you don't have that experience, then you'll just simply continue what you're doing, reinforcing what you're doing, and all that follows will just be built on that false paradigm.

There's a chapter in *Church 3.0* where I look at the variety of models in the New Testament, and how they went from very centralized to much more de-centralized with each iteration, and so there's a variety of New Testament models. But the current Sunday

morning worship service, staff-led local church with a building at that address model is nowhere to be found in the New Testament.

You know, where 98% of all money that comes in gets spent on itself and maintaining its programs. That's just not a New Testament model, never was, and never will be, but there are varieties of models. If you look at Jerusalem, it gets better. There's a better model in Antioch than Jerusalem. And then Antioch birthed something that's better than Jerusalem. So I think probably the best model in the New Testament for us to look at is likely the Ephesians model. It just so happens that there's probably more biblical revelation looking at the Ephesians model than any other model, even the Jerusalem church.

You've got three chapters in Acts devoted to it. You've got the book of Ephesians written to it. You've got 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy written to someone there on the theme in Ephesus. You've got letters that Paul wrote from Ephesus while he was there including the Corinthian letters, and then you've got Jesus himself writing a letter to the Ephesian church and likely John of the Epistles. It could be the chosen lady and her children at the Ephesian church and the church of Asia minor where John spent a good deal of time so you'd have a ton of Bible revelation looking at that particular model, and that's not where most of us look. Most of us look to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is a very unhealthy model. It starts off with a bang, but by the end of Acts, the leaders of the Jerusalem church are looking to kill the author of half the New Testament.

So it's not a healthy model. They never fulfilled the great commission except by accident. God had to bring persecution to make it happen. I always laugh at the idea that the Apostle Paul is more responsible for church planting before he was saved than all the other apostles combined.

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

That's a good question. There are a couple of items, things that could and probably will have a significant impact on the church if they happen, and I think they will although I can't give you a specific time frame. If the government removes the tax-exempt status of churches and or the charitable contribution tax deduction, it will have a significant impact on the church in the United States. You know a lot of churches are in debt and any action that touches the church's finances will have a dramatic affect. I can't be sure but I believe these items will play a role in the future.

Thank you

Interview with Dr. Rod Dempsey

July 20, 2016

Dr. Rod Dempsey is a church planter, author, discipleship pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church, university professor (Liberty University), and conference speaker. His books include: *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups* (Liberty University Press, 2016, coauthored with Dave Earley), *Disciple Making Is... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (B & H Academic, 2013, coauthored with Dave Earley), *The Pocket Guide to Leading a Small Group: 52 Ways to Help You and Your Small Group Grow* (Touch Publications, 2007, coauthored with Dave Earley), and *Building Churches of Dynamic Faith* (Word Publishing, 2005, coauthored with Jerry Falwell).

Introduction

DWH: Thank you for this interview Dr. Dempsey. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Dr. Dempsey: “That will work”

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Well that’s a great question and I believe you have to go to the controlling metaphor that the apostle Paul uses in the New Testament to help us understand how to define success.

If you take a look at what Paul is saying to the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, to the church at Ephesus, to the church at Colossae, he is describing and explaining the church in a form, an illustration, that transcends time and it transcends cultures and it’s easily understandable by a lot of different people because everybody, a little play on words here, everybody has a body. So Paul is making it clear that when Jesus talked about in Matthew 16 I will build my church, Paul picks up on that and there’s different metaphors that are used in the New Testament of course the church is a building by Peter, the church is a family by others and Peter again, the church is an army, the church is a kingdom, all of those different metaphors that are used but the controlling metaphor, and I think Paul is making this case, because he doesn’t write just in passing, he writes entire chapters about this and then he goes on to explain what it’s like.

So when he says in Ephesians 1:23 that the church is his body he doesn’t say the church is *like* a body and so when he’s trying to talk to these different churches in different places with different cultures and different backgrounds, I think he’s trying to answer the mystery of what *is* a church, so whenever we’re trying to answer the question what defines success for a church, you have to accurately define what *is* a church, and so based upon that... alright if we start off with that premise, the church is his body which Paul is saying, then what defines success for a church is very simply a successful church is a *healthy* church.

A successful church is a healthy, visible representation of the body of Christ.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Well there's several. One significant element is failure, plateau, and crisis. Underneath that umbrella is 85% of the churches in North America have either plateaued or are in decline. The other statistic under that is the fastest growing segments of the population identified in surveys are the "nones", nonreligious, nonaffiliated.

The other elements that are producing change in the United States is a group of people that are working hard at *retro-fitting* a model and that is the missional movement people and there's several branches of that from exponential to verge to future travelers to forge a network and this is a group of missiologists who are trying to take a look and see what hasn't been done historically down through church history and then what is being done in other cultures across the world where the church is not just maintaining but the church is thriving and the missional expression of the church, one way of saying it is the church, we usually say the church has a mission, but the people that are producing positive change in the United States are the people who are saying not that the church has a mission, but the mission has a church. And so you have these two rails, you have failure and decline and plateau on one rail, on the other rail you have a group of people who are looking at it and saying look we've got to change what we measure, we have to change how we approach this and we got to change what is basically is the driver's seat or the engine of the church which has to be mission.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

For negative change... Negative is the political correctness. Bonhoeffer, if you studied Bonhoeffer in the 1930's, prior to the 40's, the Lutheran church in Nazi Germany, they faced a decision of whether or not they were going to stand up to the Aryan nation and the thousand year reich and they had a choice to make and that choice was whether or not they were going to be joining with the state and the political correctness which has many different forms, whether speech or LGBT agenda or the gender neutral thing, there is a growing opposition to the church because the state wants to control the church much in the same way that the rise of Nazism under Adolph Hitler wanted to control the church so that they could control the message. So that is the most significant element on the other side is the political correctness and controlling the language and then basically forcing the church to adopt the same terms, and to not only adopt them and say that they are okay but that the church must comply and be in absolute agreement with them so that's the negative change.

The positive change is there is a group and I've already mentioned who they are, of ministry practitioners and missiologists and people who have spent a lot of time looking at the state of the church and these are practitioners as well because there's a group of people that are also saying hey look we can change the church for better, it is what it is, we've inherited it, but they are seriously having conferences, coalescing with networks so they're working hard to change it.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

I mentioned that I call it the *organizing principle*. John 20:21, Jesus said As the Father has sent me, even so send I you. So what he is telling us there, Jesus is telling us there, is in the same manner that He came to us, through the incarnation, Philippians 2 describes this, He humbled Himself, He became obedient, He was under the Father's authority even to the point of death, and that's what Paul's eluding to, Galatians 2:20, I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ who lives in me, so the idea of missional and incarnation, there's a bunch of stuff being written now about the importance of understanding the incarnation for not just the average person in their own personal life but for understanding how the church should work. So if we adopt the incarnation missional expression of Jesus that the motivation that Christ came to us was because of love, that's the motivation. The form as to how He came to us is humility, serving, loving, simple relational evangelism as it were and the church has got to adopt that stance as far as, especially the church in the United States, in aggressive, hostile, anti-Christian environment, we cannot counteract the hostile Christian environment through apologetics. It's got to be through love, through serving, not through an academic approach. Now apologetics is important of course but for awhile though we kind of thought that may be the way to go about it but it has to be showing and sharing.

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

I mentioned it already, some words, incarnational, it starts with that. Relational. Yeah it's kind of a clay term, a lot of people are trying to define it but if we try to look at it from the scriptures it's not come to us, it's go to them, incarnational versus missional versus attractional. But it's simple, it's relational. There's a little acrostic that the group is using, I think this is from Jeff Vanderstelt, it's B-L-E-S-S, so it's beginning to pray for people, it's listening to people, it's eating with people, it's serving people, and then eventually it reaches the point where we can share with people.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

Well by and large I'm an optimist; however, all the numbers are going against us right now. From a realistic point of view, I know that by the grace of God, God can change things around but also pessimistic in the sense of if you look in the Bible, whenever the nations, any nation turns its back on God, shakes its fist in the face of God, and willingly goes against the principles that God has established like the ten commandments, that nation has always experienced judgment. Now that's the United States. The church as far as that goes, the church is Jesus, Jesus always wins. Optimistic.

Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

It depends. It depends on the seminaries, it depends on pastors, it depends on what is going to hold the field so to speak in regard to the idea of the controlling philosophy of what is a church, the definitions of what is a church and then not only the definition of what is a church but what does a church do and how does a church function. And all of

the terms, what is a church, what is a pastor, what do the saints do, what is a disciple, and Bonhoeffer again went through this and he had to elevate the idea of a follower of Christ to the point where and the Puritans and the Pietists they did the same thing, any time the church gets in trouble and begins to be influenced by the society, it's the result of losing the high standard, the view that Christ in you, the hope of glory, that's the attraction. It's Christ in us, not the building, not the programs, it is the purity of the vitality of the centrality of the life of Christ in the disciple and when we lose that then the church always runs into problems. If we can recover that, I think the church has a great 5, 10, 25 years.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

Well I think it was Stetzer who said that crisis clarifies. We're moving into a crisis stage but clarity will be the result. For the last 5, 10, 15, 25 years we've been promoting the church as based upon a consumeristic business model and we've produced consumers of religious goods and services. So the model in the future will not be come to our church we've got the biggest or the best, we've got the brightest or the fanciest. It will be a part of the body of Christ.

I think that will be the predominant church model because in the crisis, in the tearing down of these vestiges it's almost like a house of cards, the oppression will be so clear that you won't have casual Christians, and I think that will be a term that will go by the wayside, which means it just leaves room for the passionate follower of Christ.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

I talk a lot about this, you know that I've done this for awhile, is that you start off with the wrong premise you end up with the wrong conclusion. For example if you think the church is a building or it's a place for a time then you're going to operate that church that way. If you think of the church as a body and you want it to be healthy then you're going to do church fundamentally a different form as you understand its function.

In regard to even the roles of the pastor, if you see the role of the pastor as an overseer of the health of his body, the form of that, then the pastor or the elders, which I prefer plural, they're going to look at their job as not being managing budgets, buildings, programs, and they won't be the big shots either, it won't be bodies, buildings, bucks and big shots, laugh out loud, it will be that we are going to seriously take care of the health of his body which means your forms are going to be different, you're going to connect to the head, you're going to connect people to each other, you'll connect them to the mission.

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

We look through a glass darkly, I would imagine if you had this conversation 50 years ago in England, or Europe, or wherever the church was in Europe at that time, you might have said we want to change but the church historically has always wrestled with the priesthood of the believers and the division of clergy and saint so long as we keep in the DNA in the church, that has to be totally deconstructed, and then deconstructed not to the

point where it's so organic where you don't have any 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1 overseers but it has to be constructed to the point where the average saint in the church understands that his or her role needs to connect to Jesus through the spiritual disciplines and formation, they see their role to connect to each other and use their gifts from Ephesians 4 to build each other up and they see their role to become the hands and feet of Jesus in an incarnational missional expression to a community and then that community could not imagine what the community would be like without the visible incarnational missional expression of the body of Christ.

Thank you

Interview with Dr. Darrell Guder

November 11, 2016

Dr. Darrell L. Guder is the senior and perhaps most significant contributor to the missional dialogue in the United States. He holds the PhD from the University of Hamburg (“Project Team Members” *Missional Church*, Eerdmans, 1998) and is the “Henry Winters Luce Professor Emeritus of Missional and Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary” (jacket cover *Called to Witness*, Eerdmans, 2015), and the author/editor of *Missional Church*, and author of *Called to Witness*, and the *Continuing Conversion of the Church*, among other volumes.

Introduction

DWH: Thank you for this interview Dr. Guder. It’s an honor to speak with you and I appreciate your willingness to help me.

Dr. Guder: “You’re very welcome”

DWH: I’ve read your book *Missional Church* and it has been very influential in my research pursuits. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Dr. Guder: “I am glad to help”

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Faithfulness, faithful witness. In other words going right back to the fruit argument in the new testament, what is the fruit of the life, witness and activity of the church in the world and if it is witness that points to Jesus Christ as the Lord who’s bringing in the kingdom of God and who is enlisting us to be a part of that wonderful process then I would say we should talk about I think the term success doesn’t help us but I would prefer to use faithfulness. As I’m continuing to grapple with this theme I would add faithfulness almost as an alternative way of talking about it the Pauline use of worthiness, walking worthy of our calling. Philippians 1:27, Let your public witness be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Finding what constitutes worthiness and how in fact our biblical formation for witness is what brings about worthy witness is the great challenge. This is particularly an issue in the west because we look back over centuries of compromises and reductionisms and distortions of the gospel of the church’s calling which I think are aptly described as unworthy of the gospel. But the confusion of the church with its distinctive calling as God’s people embedded within the course of human affairs and being used by God as instruments in that human history really does create a lot of issues when we look, this is in western and eastern Christendom, because I think orthodoxy with its compromises with culture has a great challenge to deal with just as we do in the west.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Well I think the decline of western Christendom in its largest sense. The challenge is presented by civil religion as what the new people think is what Christianity is all about. Civil religion is very much reacting to the decline, it’s a change that they can’t cope with

and I think the compromises that we have made with western culture going back to Constantine continue to haunt us and require that we engage them, we have to understand what the history has been about in order to understand what the mission field like today and how did it get there. The missional church discussion becomes absolutely essential and that's why I find it useful to say that this overarching understanding of the mission of God, the *missio Dei* guides the conversation although it also requires constant clarification.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

The work of the Holy Spirit, not because I think the work of the Holy Spirit is so enormously diverse from one culture to the next and a great deal of what we're describing today is how to go into a particular context and discover that Jesus Christ really does have all authority in heaven and earth and is present and at work in ways that we should enjoy so I don't think there is any single thing that I would point to. Having just come back from Europe I'm reminded that God's way of working in history almost always includes the element of surprise. Nobody would have ever expected that one of the major forces for missional renewal would be the Church of England with the fresh expressions focus. Nobody would have ever expected that Pope John the 23rd would lead a council that brought about a revolution of the church's understanding of commission. Those are two examples that I think point to the fact that you can't just isolate to one single factor. I think it is the work of the Holy Spirit and certainly not something that we're strategizing or generating but we are respondents to God's initiatives and the great question is how do we respond to what God is already doing.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

I think if it is properly defined, it identifies key issues that we must be concerned about, the first being the church exists for God's mission and is the instrument of God's mission and I think ministry is a loaded term because it has come to mean clerical, it really refers to the church as an organization with castes, the laity and the clergy, and this is the reason I'm constantly pointing out that in the translation of the *Church Dogmatics* by Barth towards the end of the work where Barth has used the word service consistently all through the work it suddenly starts being translated as ministry which clericalizes the argument and I think that is a very false reading that needs to be corrected. But if we understand ministry as the service of God and that it is the carrying out of the mandate to be Christ's witness then missional service is my preferred term, is like a key way of talking about who we are and what we're for.

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Well its defined in any number of ways depending on interpretation, but missional is essentially understanding the missionary nature of God and his missionary presence in the world through Christ, and the church seeing itself as being sent by God and participating in his mission.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States?

I would say all of the above, I think we're in a very sad passage because of our divisiveness, our failure to work through our struggles without dividing. I mean I think we have to argue Christianly but not draw a line in the sand and we're doing that. But at the same time I'm constantly reminding myself and others of the story of Jesus asleep in the boat because I think it's in there to remind the disciples and us that the boat is not going to sink but we're in a very stormy passage. So it's frightening and it's intimidating and it leads people I think to strike out for shallow solutions and not engage in the struggle at the level of truly bearing Christ's cross and following Him.

Question 7 - What do you see the church in the United States becoming in the next 5, 10, to 25 years?

I think we're seeing a process of a disintegrating or a diminishing of inherited structures politics and a replacement of these inherited politics within legal organizational institutional ramifications with networks that are characterized by consensus around priorities, mutual accountability, creativity, as I said before, exploring what God is already doing and engaging what God is already doing as sent witnesses. I think that denominations as we've known them are rapidly changing, some folks talk about the church ultimately ending up either being catholic or Pentecostal, there's truth in that I think but it's probably also simplifies what is much more complex. What I'm particularly fascinated with is where vitality emerges in the least likely of places. Like the fresh expressions move in England, like the forming of new congregations on the continent to the rapid expansion in the United States of what I call post Christendom western indigenous communities. They're just literally popping up all over the place. Now they're sending students to Princeton Seminary, forcing people who have no classic church socialization coming in because they want to be formed, they want to become biblical theological servants of Christ, they want to plant churches and I think we're going to see more and more of that.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in 25 years from now?

I'm not sure I could make a judgment on that, I think it's going to continue to be what Archbishop Rowan Williams calls a mixed economy, a vital, vibrant church can exist in the form of house churches, neighborhood communities, community centers, cathedrals, mega churches, what looked like mainline congregations to turn out deeply committed to Christ carrying out authentic ministries. I think we're going to see a great diversity. The challenge is for us to recognize and glory in the diversity and ensure that in our diversity which I think primarily missionally useful, it's what it takes to reach the great diversity of our culture, we need as many contextualized forms of church since we have distinctive cultures in which God is sending us but in all that the world sees communities of Christians who do things differently but are still united.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form, the form the church takes and its function in the United States today?

Well I think the great challenge and I think we actually see this being worked out very concretely in the New Testament communities is to organize ourselves as real communal communities. We're not imaginary, we are there as real people, real community and the great challenge for us is to organize ourselves so that we are enabled to serve our calling. In other words, the institution is not an end in itself, the institution is the servant of our calling and that means it can and should change. I think we need sunset laws in all of church structures to ask ourselves is the way we are going about what we're doing actually faithful to our calling and relevant to our context.

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

Well I think we're going to be more and more marginalized; I think we're going to be more and more a minority group within our society, we're going to have more and more challenges to deal with the many, many ways of the Christendom legacy makes it hard for the gospel to be seen and heard. Mackay contributed to the discussion back in the 1920's, the focus of what the churches need to earn the right to be heard. Young Life picked up that theme that's where I first encountered it but it actually goes back to Mackay who was a great friend of Young Life in the 30's and 40's. And I think earning the right to be heard is, dealing with all of the stereotypes and distortions of the gospel which are a part of our western legacy in order to be heard as the gospel is ushered in ways worthy of itself, that's what our challenges are. Our society is full of people who are inoculated former Christians and they're the hardest people in the world to reach out to. I think it calls for sacrificial formation of friendships that become a place in which God's love becomes so clear that a hearing is created again for the gospel.

Thank you

Interview with Alan Hirsch

October 11, 2016

Alan Hirsch is a clarion voice calling attention to the need for change in the Church. He is an author, conference speaker, and movement leader speaking into the missional discussion in the United States and around the world. His published works include, *The Forgotten Ways* (Brazos, 2006), *The Shaping of things to Come* (Baker, 2013), *The Permanent Revolution* (Jossey-Bass, 2012), *On the Verge* (Zondervan, 2011), among others.

DWH: Thank you for this interview Alan, I appreciate your willingness to help me and it's an honor to speak with you.

Alan Hirsch: "Sure Dave"

DWH: Your books have been extremely helpful and I've enjoyed them very much. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Alan Hirsch: "No problem"

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

I think that success must be measured in terms of our capacity to reflect and understand the purposes and person of our founder, Jesus. I think the ultimate assessment of the church's viability and authenticity is going to be its Christlikeness, being formed in Christ. More in terms of the gospel, impact would be another way of interpreting transformation in society. That would incorporate a whole lot of things concerning the church and its mission. But I think ultimately it's going to depend upon Jesus as my Lord and savior. I guess I would push it down Dave to the issue of Christlikeness. By the way, because you can have a whole lot of success in terms of numbers, and be fundamentally inauthentic, that to me is not a success. A missional church must measure its success by impact outside the church, not just inside.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Well, I think the fact that we are increasingly experiencing ourselves as being de-centered. I think the American church has largely presumed its relationship before the culture; and the assumption of the privileged religion of America, and I think that is no longer the case; and we're having to grapple with the fact that we are no longer the only or the major player anymore in terms of religion. And were having to rework our theology in light of that. I think that's a big thing, but more that that we're living in a world, America very much a part of it, that is being described as VUCA by social theorists – Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic, and Ambiguous. In those conditions, the inherited church just doesn't have the repertoire of solutions to cope with it, what's facing it, so that's a huge crisis. It's a crisis of identity, and of capacity as well. I think we need to work who we are again, and then work on new methodology.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

And then of course most of our thinking has come from European format; we think we're following the biblical format, but really, we all get our church from Europe and its been deeply impacted by European form, to some degree we all follow the European form. And I believe the European form is facing its own theological and missional bankruptcy in that it's about finished, its just about gone in Europe. Biblical Christianity is fading out very, very fast. And I think it's a huge problem.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

Well I think missional is the way for the church that has lost its way to find itself again. I would say that there is you know no Plan B for those who think that missional is just a fad. For one, I think that would be to dismiss that mission derives from God, and the church derives from mission, the mission of God in the world. That would to forget one of our most fundamental stories. I think it's the only way which we're going to have a new and fruitful engagement with our world. And we have to learned how to engage in a way that fits the changing context. If we refuse to engage, in other words, we refuse to do mission, then I think we must continue to decline, you know, there's no way of renewing the church, I don't think there's a plan B bro. I cannot see it coming another way

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Ah, I would say that... missional church organizes itself around the central purpose of the mission of God in the world, that is God's eternal purposes to redeem and change, and transform the world in Jesus Christ. When we make mission our primary organizing principle, the mission of God, not the missions that we dream up, but actually participating in what God is doing in the world, I think that is the central purpose of the church.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

If you asked me a year ago I would have said very optimistic, but right now I'm very down, I am deeply and profoundly depressed and distressed about this last election and its impact on the evangelical church... I think we've basically blown the brand. It's going to set us back. And actually, I predict that it will split the broad evangelical movement; there has to be a parting of the ways... I think its done real damage, I really do. I know I feel it and I'm very committed to evangelicalism. There's a whole generation where I think this has been the final straw. I think we'll see some sort of kick to define a new movement coming out of this, I think it will happen. On the whole, a year ago it seemed very positive, but we've shown our colors, we're exposed as being unable to see the world as Jesus sees it, or to affirm the world that Jesus call us to affirm... we're putting up walls and not building bridges, I can't see it as the gospel, I think we've violated something so deeply of our responsibility to present Christ. We've not done that in this last election.

Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

I think there will be definitely further moves toward founding a new movement or form of Christianity. I think there's been a great advance in the last ten years, and I expect that that will continue, in spite of our recent debacle. Christianity is bigger than that, maybe the clarification will be a good thing, So I hope that we will see some viability of concept, in healthy transforming movements that can really impact being birthed in the next 10-15 years, that will be missional, incarnational forms. I think it will change us, I think we are seeing a historic shift in consciousness regarding the Ephesians 4 typology in our day. Its remarkable, Its exciting, I think it holds the promise for a huge amount of health reintroducing the church to a far more dynamic form of Christ-based ministry you know. I'm very hopeful on that score. I do think that cultural Christianity needs to be isolated.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

It's very hard to see at this stage that far into the future. It's hard to see a standard form of the church. I can see the contemporary mega church as being the most vigorous form of church, I think we're going into some really, really tricky economic and environmental... VUCA! That's it. We're going into a far more unstable age, and I just can't see the economic model working, I can't see it [the contemporary mega church] appealing to many people, it's losing ground right as we speak... It's trying to reach the declining 40% of the American population... There's more mega churches in America than ever before and there's less Christians in America than ever before... the math doesn't work. So, we have to find new forms... I just see it in 25 years it will be a very different church. There will be continuity, but there will also be a lot of discontinuity; the conditions are going to require it.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

Oh I think that's a huge issue, I put that under the rubric of incarnational mission... going in the way of Jesus, as the father has sent me, so send I you... the father sent the Son through incarnation, and is the patent for how we engage the world... We literally become little "Jesuses" [sic]. So I think it's critical, we need to see that we're in a missional environment now. We have to adopt a missionary stance in relationship to our context. That requires that we need to learn to be contextual... myriad new ways, lots of them... Innovation,

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

I'm not sure, as I said before it's a volatile world, things are changing and it's hard to see clearly what will unfold.

Thank you

Interview with Dr. Ed Stetzer

August 4, 2016

Dr. Ed Stetzer is the Billy Graham Distinguished Endowed Chair for Church, Mission, and Evangelism at Wheaton College, and an author, church planter, researcher, and pastor in the United States. He has been a significant contributor to Southern Baptist research and planning, and has recently assumed the pastorate of the historic Moody Church in Chicago, Illinois.

DWH: Thank you for taking time for this interview Dr. Stetzer, I'm honored to speak with you and I appreciate your willingness to help me.

Dr. Stetzer: "No problem, I've got several hours on the road and this is a good time."

DWH: With your permission, I will be recording this interview and will have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Dr. Stetzer: "Thanks, I appreciate that."

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Well I think currently, most people would see that as nickels, noses or numbers, financial metrics, baptisms, conversions as well I would think, and of course the church I think mainline protestants are defined different than evangelicals and different than Pentecostals.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Depends upon, who is answering the question. I think success can be defined by most people as have we joined Jesus on His mission faithfully, but I would also add have we joined Jesus on His Mission in fruitful ways. So I want to be both faithful to the mission, but fruitful in the mission.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

In cultural shifts, the culture is becoming more secular, Christians have lost their home field advantage so that's a big part of it, so there's one. I'd say another is that the church, Robert Jones new book, *The End of White Christian America*, actually is one of the few books with scary titles who actually makes some sense. It's the idea that the multi-cultural shifts have been evident, have been ongoing and significant so I think that the white middle class church is probably got some tough times coming forward. I think that technology has been a game changer I mean to the place where multi-site, online, all these sort of things I think it's hard to underestimate that, so those are all the things I would put down there.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

I would probably say the first one. I think the dramatic shifts in culture in the last couple of decades I think probably, you know everyone, this is the biggest cultural change ever, no it's not, certainly in our lifetime this is pretty stunning. I mean even the sixties counter culture was just that, it was a counter culture. Now it's become, the main stream culture has shifted, so I would say cultural shift, more secular, <unclear> that kind of stuff.

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

I really don't care if any person ever uses the word missional. I think there are black churches that have been living on mission for a long time. I think there are charismatic churches that have been living on mission a long time, Baptists, Lutherans, whatever. So to me the missional movement matters less to me than the missional impulse matters to me. However I think that with the shifting in culture that the appropriate response would be mission, missionary mindset, missionary thinking, and so I think if the most significant shift in the last few decades is the one that I indicated, then the shift to a missions mindset in this emerging, changing culture, emerging culture, that's what's already merged culture, I think that is pretty significant. Now again, I don't care as much as the labels of it, <unclear> has written some amazing things about culture but I don't think he'd know the word missional if I hit him in the head with it. But I think missional has some helpful things about how we deal with modernity in the culture we find ourselves in. So I think that the idea that undergirds that is essential in the modern times we find ourselves in. I think bringing the ideas of Hirsch is good but seeing those as their ideas is really historically inaccurate. Those ideas emerged, at the Brandenburg missionary conference in the early part of last century, it really came to fruition. So it's not Hirsch, it's not Frost, it's not Christopher Wright it's Bart, his mission really is the identity about himself. I would say ultimately it's Bart rightly interpreting the scriptures which he didn't always do but he did on this.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

I am none of the above, I am accurate about the state of the church in the United States. I think that, you mean the future, I think the current state of the church is pretty steady, it's about people that are made relatively steady for decades, all the statistical gobbledygook that says the church is dying or declining or depression or whatever just is bad math, however I think for the future, the culture has become more secular but the church hasn't collapsed, evangelicals have actually grown which formed the church. Mainline Protestantism, if I was a mainline protestant and had based my future on that, I'd be in despair. If I was an evangelical I'd still say there are a lot of challenges ahead so it's hard to answer that question. I don't mean to be a jerk but I'm sort of a researcher so precision matters. So for me, I think the current state of the church is that the sky isn't falling but the ground is shifting and I think we've got to get new grounding, new legs to stand the new ground and I think that's where mission helps us.

Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

Yeah, my predictions 5-10 is rocky, I think 10-20 years is rocky, I think some of your friends are not helping that I may add, but that's another story but I think 20-25 years I think the church in the US, and by the church I mean the Evangelical wing will look a lot like the pacific northwest where it's a substantive presence, it's I don't know, actively involved, it's maybe 10 percent to 16 percent of the population which is a chunk of people, that's not a small number but partly not use as a threat to the society it's largely doing it's thing reaching some people but society is post Christian so I think 20 years from now, after the culture war is sort of over and lost I think actually it's probably going to be easier to be a Christian in our culture than it is now where the reason that it's controversial is there's still a perception that some people think we're going to take back over and suppress their new found rights, we just don't see that numerically, I just don't see that statistically, I'm not saying it wouldn't be a good thing if laws are reflective of biblical morality. So I'll give you an example, the last prime minister of Canada, his name was Stephen Harper, and he was/is an evangelical Christian, went to an alliance church, local ward, and he was elected and it wasn't controversial because no one thought he was going to turn back the clock on progressivism that is Canada. I think once we get there, I think this 2016 election season is kind of a gasp, maybe a last gasp, once we get there I think that being a Christian on the margins when you don't have the levers of power actually is going to be the easier than the current culture level we're in. I'm not saying that it's good, I'm just saying it's going to be easier.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

You know I don't know that there will be a predominant church model, I think if current trends continue, the mega church will have increased substantially, the number of mega churches doubles every ten years, I don't know that <unclear> so I think a lot of the evangelical Christian commitment will consolidate into healthy larger churches, I think probably an underclass.....

If current trends continue the mega church will double every ten years, so it will be a significant player, I think the smaller to mid-size churches will still probably be predominant <unclear>, I think the question is what does some of these alternative ecclesiological communities look like, what they call in the UK <unclear> fresh expressions at Oxford, what will those fresh expressions look like, what will emerge. But I would say, Phyllis Tickle wrote a book The Great Emergence a few years ago, kind of at the peak of the emerging church stuff, what she said was that every 500 years there's this huge shift and we're now upon this huge shift and then you know 3 years later nobody thinks that, everyone thinks probably Phyllis is no longer with us, but she was a great religious writer, the emerging church kind of flamed out but every generation thinks this is the biggest shift ever and it's just not. Now what could happen, and I think will happen, is that different models of church will learn to thrive in different <unclear> and adjust to their new cultural reality. Because the future is already here, I mean the future is in Australia, the future is in the UK, they don't look that different than us so but I think a more engaged missional driven perspective will emerge, think that will be us.

Mainline Protestantism will continue its march towards death, Roman Catholicism will continue its slow decline unless bolstered by immigration, historic African American churches will continue their relative steady but struggle with the next generation, evangelicalism will continue to diversify and probably continue to grow slight generically while losing a percentage of the population as a whole as the population grows.

Now I've written 4,000 words on that in Evangelical Missions Quarterly Journal it's part of an access statistically if you're so inclined, I've actually put it on the blog, so there's a series of articles called The Future of the Church.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

If you follow Hirsch's model, our Christology shapes our missiology, which shapes our ecclesiology. Now Hirsch and I have disagreed on that and he has subsequently modified his view in the new edition of The Forgotten Ways. Now do you have the new edition, the one I wrote the forward to? Okay cause it's not published yet, if he hasn't given it to you, he should because you don't want to build it on his earlier kind of ecclesiology view. Okay so if you're with Alan, it's his to give but he's got a new version, I wrote the forward to it, I think it's a more robust ecclesiology than he had before. So your thesis is around focus, I do think that a more Christological, Jesus shaped mission will lead to more ecclesiological, missional forms that are more missiologically shaped and driven than they were before.

So I think the issue is, I don't think ecclesiology starts with a subzero proposition that basically Christology leads to missiology leads to ecclesiology, I think there are things that the New Testament describes that the church gives that are trans-cultural, that are trans-national, trans-time so the church is certain things so with that I wrote about a missional matrix I called it which largely was influenced by Hirsch but what I would say is that my concern is you are right to say that our focus could affect our forms and our functions I think is the word you used, I would also be careful not to base it on early Hirsch because I think that alone is not ecclesologically sound if building on that premise alone that our focus was going to shape all those things. I think we have a deposited body of scripture that's inspired, inerrant, if the sole focus is Jesus but I think that that's key to mention and say.

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

In two places, the influx of Latino migration has caused Catholicism not to collapse; there is this large trough of Catholicism there that has been replaced by Latino immigration.

Whereas evangelicalism is increasing, Latino, Asian, African-Americans tend to believe more like evangelicals, so yeah certainly migration these things matter a lot for the future of primarily evangelicals and Catholics. Historic mega churches obviously that's a different category and mainline protestants haven't had a lot break through there either.

Thank you

Interview with Dr. Craig Van Gelder

October 24, 2016

A major contributor to the missional discussion especially concerning denominations in the United States, Dr. Craig Van Gelder is an author, speaker and “professor of congregational mission and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.” His published works include *The Ministry of the Missional Church* (Baker, 2007), *The Missional Church in Perspective* (Baker Academic, 2011), and *The Missional Church and Denominations* (Eerdmans, 2008) among others

DWH: Thank you for this interview Dr. Van Gelder, it’s an honor to speak with you, and I very much appreciate your willingness to help me in my research

Dr. Van Gelder: “I’m glad you asked me”

DWH: I have really appreciated your books; they have been very helpful in guiding my thinking about the missional movement. I’ve enjoyed them very much. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and have it transcribed for use in my research. I will send a copy for your review first, if that is agreeable.

Dr. Van Gelder: “Thank you, I appreciate that”

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Yeah I stopped at your first question, I don’t think the right category is success. Success is problematic when it comes to thinking missionally. It introduces by default human agency is the primary activity for shaping and defining and strategizing for church so I think a church can be effective, I think a church can be faithful, I think a church has to live consistent with what God has made it to be, for me the category is success, I’m taking exception to your terms but actually it spills over into the rest of your questions. I think the success equation emerged largely in North America, in the US, from the sixties onward, strategic long range planning, strategic planning, church effectiveness, etc., and we’ve been living in a culture of organizational success basically as the driving missiology for the church. For me the missional conversation comes right across that and deconstructs it in terms of being the primary focus.

Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Producing change or leading the change, disruption. I think disruption today is huge across the spectrum in terms of denominations, judicatories, as well as congregations and cultural disruptions obviously. But also I’m under the persuasion, it may very well be, this is a little hypothetical but it has biblical support, I am under the persuasion that God the Spirit may be disrupting the church inviting it in a fresh and new way to reengage and understand the issue here is not church and culture, the issue here is gospel and culture. Refocus the question around how are we to be faithful to the gospel and what kind of community of faith does the gospel form in relationship to this change in context.

Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

Denominations. I'm actually cautiously optimistic. They've been through five different stages at least in the US history. I think they're in the midst of a transition and morphing one more time into probably much more networking than institutional structures and a lot of the ones that really double down in institutional structures are not going to survive well, if at all, but become much more relational, and network, and other kinds of ways of connecting.

Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

Well you read probably *The Missional Church in Perspective* book? The one I co-authored; it's a map of what has happened to that word in the last twenty years, how it's being used, I think if I used the category missional ministry then I think I mean it's gone everywhere and it's kind of every place and it's been used up in many ways and we're kind of past the cycle. The publishers no longer will publish titles that include missional for the most part. About ten years ago they quit publishing books that use emergence. Publishers are on the front edge of this kind of stuff. I think missional in some ways in terms of missional ministry has been used up, but I'm going to argue for it, in my writings continue to argue for it, I'll probably take this one to my grave. Missional has a very different understanding in a portion of the conversations those that think about the church missiologically, think about ecclesiology. This is God's mission and how important is the concept of God's mission in the church today. That's where they're growing.

Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

There's no clear definition, certainly not one that's shared with any sense of unanimity or any sense of consensus. That's why I like to take it back to God's mission and I know and I'm not uncomfortable using *missio Dei* although some prefer not to use that because of the controversy of the sixties. But God's mission changes the category, this goes back to your first question about success, the issue here is God's agency or human agency and missional ministry, the default invites, this is what the church is supposed to do, it's supposed to be missional, it's supposed to connect with changing community, well that's true, but that's the fundamental issue for me; that's not the fundamental meaning of mission. Mission is God's mission, the church discerns what God's up to and participates in joining God in that activity. That for me is the framework for which missional continues to make sense.

We also talk about the Spirit of God is already out ahead of us in the neighborhoods in which we live and our task is to discern what God's up to and join Him. It's always provisional; I mean who can say that this is God. But on the other hand when you see things and hear certain things, I mean God's at work and we want to join in that. That's participating in His mission. This is the problem with American pragmatism. If there's one characteristic of the American church, it's pragmatic. It loves technique, it thrives on strategy, and it loves to be instrumental.

Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

Cautiously optimistic. I think there are really some interesting things happening and beginning to emerge or in the midst of the new. The Spirit is generating all kinds of interesting things. It will have to go through a period of shake out but I think there's some real stirring going on that will challenge all of our previous categories. So I'm cautiously optimistic, do we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear and join in what God might be doing. Because it's going to require a lot of letting go, a lot of grieving and death to the things that no longer work, it's going to be very painful. It's like Israel being taken out of the land and taken to Babylon, it's very similar to that.

Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

This goes back to the previous question in some ways, I think we're in the midst. We're in the midst, and I think this is part of your thesis, we're in the midst of that change. It's a fundamental change transition time in which the old is in liminality; the old won't hold and we don't know clearly what the future holds or what's going to emerge in the future. So the way that I speak about church in the past, that's my career, I did strategic planning, those categories just don't work anymore and so the way I would talk about that I think we're going to have a church that is much more discerning and alert to pneumatology, to the spirit of God, we're going to reclaim a Trinitarian understanding of mission which invites the church into a relational as well as also engaging in mission, I think those are some of the characteristics that are going to be there as this goes forward.

Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

I'm really cautious, this is part of that success thing, models unfortunately invite replication without contextualization, thinking that the form itself will produce the result and they miss the fact at the center of the heartbeat of it, the Spirit; the Spirit in the community, that's formed the community, to share it, to shape it, to engage it, [and] context it.

Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

Yeah I like the way that you frame that and I like also the examples that you've chosen for study; I think that will be really fruitful. Those are clear indications that the spirit of God is doing something new. I think underneath focus I would put the word identity, what has the Spirit of God created? When the church comes into existence, the Spirit of God takes up residence in that community of faith and the Spirit of God brings a certain kind of energy in life and perspective; it's the holy in the midst of the human, that's the identity. What has God created the church to be? What is the being that informs the doing? So the thing I would adjust to your question would be to back up one step and talk about essence or identity and then in light of that what is our particular focus in terms of this context. That's what the church does. Our being informs our doing. If you don't

focus, you're probably not going to go anywhere. You have to translate this to what God has created the church to be, now what are we going to do in this context?

My most memorable example of that is when Robert Schuller built his first church building once he got past the drive in and on Sunday mornings this big glass door would open and he would preach inside to the people seated and outside to the cars parked. All over the country within the next ten years, in the 1970's there were these little drive in churches church popping up. Well they weren't located at the corner of two major interstates like he was. Anyway it's a prime example of wanting to replicate success by trying to replicate the model.

Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

Well I think obviously as I just said, there's going to be a lot of change, a lot of death, there's going to be lots of rebirth and new birth, we're just in the middle of that right now. I think this is a period of transition where it's hard to really map clearly. We have a tendency to want to know what's the new and the next and it's not clear yet. So I think there's some emerging practices, there are some emerging things that give me hope like some of the examples you mentioned are good examples of that. But I'm very optimistic because God is God and the gospel is the gospel and the church is the church and the spirit is the spirit of God and the spirit of God is the agency by which that comes into existence within culture and context. So I think the future, although it will go through pain, I think the promise is quite a different story. I think the equivalent of what happened in the persecution in Acts 8 and the result of the rise of the church in Antioch, it was a time of pain and suffering and transition and confusion, they had to re-theologize the gospel, they had to add a Greek perspective, they had to decide what the gospel was because Jerusalem church included circumcision, it's that kind of a transition that we're going through but I am cautiously optimistic that the future, the church is going to be there, I believe the spirit of God will be present. I think the third world, the global south, the majority church in the global south offers some clues. I don't think we can yet see clearly, but the beginning edges are appearing, and that's where there is going to be a lot of the energy as well as the new forms that come into existence within our context. The cultural change by demographics and immigration is a huge part of all that.

Thank you

Significant Voice Interview Responses Combined by Question

Question 1 - How do you define success for the church in the United States?	
Cole	<p>Ok, so success for me is... <i>it's three things, <u>faithfulness to what He's asked us to do, fruitfulness in what He's asked us to do, and finishing well.</u></i></p> <p>So, what that means for church is succession more than success, and most churches don't think that way. We oftentimes are left hanging when a prominent leader is disqualified, or retires or dies, and have no real good alternative plan; that's not success.</p>
Dempsey	<p>Well that's a great question and I believe you have to go to the controlling metaphor that the apostle Paul uses in the New Testament to help us understand how to define success.</p> <p>If you take a look at what <i>Paul</i> is saying to the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, to the church at Ephesus, to the church at Colossae, he is <i>describing and explaining the church in a form, an illustration, that transcends time and it transcends cultures</i> and it's easily understandable by a lot of different people because everybody, a little play on words here, everybody has a body. So Paul is making it clear that when Jesus talked about in Matthew 16 I will build my church, Paul picks up on that and there's different metaphors that are used in the New Testament of course the church is a building by Peter, the church is a family by others and Peter again, the church is an army, the church is a kingdom, all of those different metaphors that are used but the controlling metaphor, and I think Paul is making this case, because he doesn't write just in passing, he writes entire chapters about this and then he goes on to explain what it's like.</p> <p>So when he says in Ephesians 1:23 that the church is his body he doesn't say the church is <i>like</i> a body and so when he's trying to talk to these different churches in different places with different cultures and different backgrounds, I think he's trying to answer the mystery of what <i>is</i> a church, so whenever we're trying to answer the question what defines success for a church, you have to accurately define what <i>is</i> a church, and so based upon that... alright if we start off with that premise, the church is his body which Paul is saying, then what defines success for a church is very simply <i>a successful church is a healthy church. A successful church is a healthy, visible representation of the body of Christ.</i></p>
Guder	<p><i>Faithfulness, faithful witness.</i> In other words going right back to the fruit argument in the New Testament, what is the fruit of the life, witness and activity of the church in the world and if it is <i>witness that points to Jesus Christ as the Lord who's bringing in the kingdom of God and who is enlisting us to be a part</i> of that wonderful process then I would say we should talk about I think the term success doesn't help us but I would prefer to use faithfulness. As I'm continuing to grapple with this theme I would add faithfulness almost as an alternative way of talking about it the Pauline use of worthiness, walking worthy of our calling. Philippians 1:27, Let your public witness be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Finding what</p>

	<p>constitutes worthiness and how in fact our biblical formation for witness is what brings about worthy witness is the great challenge. This is particularly an issue in the west because we look back over centuries of compromises and reductionisms and distortions of the gospel of the church's calling which I think are aptly described as unworthy of the gospel. But the confusion of the church with its distinctive calling as God's people embedded within the course of human affairs and being used by God as instruments in that human history really does create a lot of issues when we look, this is in western and eastern Christendom, because I think orthodoxy with its compromises with culture has a great challenge to deal with just as we do in the west.</p>
Hirsch	<p>I think that <u>success must be measured in terms of our capacity to reflect and understand the purposes and person of our founder, Jesus</u>. I think the ultimate assessment of the church's viability and authenticity is going to be its <u>Christlikeness, being formed in Christ</u>. More in terms of the gospel, impact would be another way of interpreting <u>transformation in society</u>. That would incorporate a whole lot of things concerning the church and its mission. But I think ultimately its going to depend upon Jesus as my Lord and savior. I guess I would push it down Dave to the issue of <u>Christlikeness</u>. By the way because you can have a whole lot of success in terms of numbers, and be fundamentally inauthentic, that to me is not a success. <u>A missional church must measure its success by impact outside the church, not just inside</u>.</p>
Stetzer	<p>Well I think currently, <u>most people would see that as nickels, noses or numbers, financial metrics, baptisms, conversions</u> as well I would think, and of course the church I think mainline protestants are defined different than evangelicals and different than Pentecostals.</p>
Van Gelder	<p><u>Success is problematic when it comes to thinking missionally</u>. It introduces by default human agency is the primary activity for shaping and defining and strategizing for church so I think a church can be effective, I think a church can be faithful, I think <u>a church has to live consistent with what God has made it to be, for me the category is success</u>, I'm taking exception to your terms but actually it spills over into the rest of your questions. I think the success equation emerged largely in North America, in the US, from the sixties onward, strategic long range planning, strategic planning, church effectiveness, etc and we've been living in a culture of organizational success basically as the driving missiology for the church. For me the missional conversation comes right across that and deconstructs it in terms of being the primary focus.</p>
<p>Question 2 - What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?</p>	
Cole	<p>Well, you can answer that one of two ways, Dr. Hirschman. <u>You can talk about the positive affects, and the negative affects</u>. I think that there is a ground swell of movement towards understanding that church attendance on Sunday should not make one a Christian. <u>So the positive side of that is we're seeing a renewal of people meeting in relationships, in homes, and things like that</u>; the kinds of things I write about, and talk about. On the flip-side,</p>

	<p>people will talk about <u>the rise of the “Nones,” those that are not affiliated, which is the fastest growing religious affiliation in America</u>. Most people would say that’s a bad thing. I’m not sure the science is there to say it’s all a bad thing yet. So there’s also <u>a dramatic shift</u>. I think probably the timing of it seems to indicate that perhaps it is tied into this, where churches themselves are taking steps to try and corral this, and there’s two predominant ways. One is what they call <u>mergers, so many churches come together to become a larger church to accommodate people, and a second one is the multi-site city or venue approach where they start to grow by simply having multiple services</u> provided. So I think all of that is a step for the church to try and to keep people and still grow, and yet not, even though they’re bound by property or staff or something. So I think that those trends are happening too, I don’t think they’re all negative or all positive.</p>
Dempsey	<p>Well there’s several. <u>One significant element is failure, plateau, and crisis</u>. Underneath that umbrella is <u>85% of the churches in North America have either plateaued or are in decline</u>. The other statistic under that is <u>the fastest growing segments of the population identified in surveys are the “nones”, nonreligious, nonaffiliated</u>. The other elements that are producing change in the United States is a group of <u>people that are working hard at retro-fitting a model and that is the missional movement</u> people and there’s several branches of that from exponential to verge to future travelers to forge a network and this is a group of missiologists who are trying to take a look and see what hasn’t been done historically down through church history and then what is being done in other cultures across the world where the church is not just maintaining but the church is thriving and the missional expression of the church, one way of saying it is the church, we usually say the church has a mission, but <u>the people that are producing positive change in the United States are the people who are saying not that the church has a mission, but the mission has a church</u>. And so you have these two rails, you have failure and decline and plateau on one rail, on the other rail you have a group of people who are looking at it and saying look we’ve got to change what we measure, we have to change how we approach this and we got to change what is basically is the driver’s seat or the engine of the church which has to be mission.</p>
Guder	<p>Well I think <u>the decline of western Christendom in its largest sense</u>. The challenge is presented by civil religion as what the new people think is what Christianity is all about. <u>Civil religion is very much reacting to the decline, it’s a change that they can’t cope with</u> and I think the compromises that we have made with western culture going back to Constantine continue to haunt us and require that we engage them, we have to understand what the history has been about in order to understand what the mission field like today and how did it get there. <u>The missional church discussion becomes absolutely essential and that’s why I find it useful to say that this overarching understanding of the mission of God, the missio Dei guides the conversation although it also requires constant clarification</u>.</p>
Hirsch	<p>Well, I think the fact that <u>we are increasingly experiencing ourselves as</u></p>

	<p><i>being de-centered. I think the American church has largely presumed its relationship before the culture; and the assumption of the privileged religion of America, and I think that is no longer the case; and we're having to grapple with the fact that we are no longer the only or the major player anymore in terms of religion. And were having to rework our theology in light of that. I think that's a big thing, but more that that we're living in a world, America very much a part of it, that is being described as VUCA by social theorists – Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic, and Ambiguous. In those conditions, the inherited church just doesn't have the repertoire of solutions to cope with it, what's facing it, so that's a huge crisis. It's a crisis of identity, and of capacity as well. I think we need to work who we are again, and then work on new methodology.</i></p>
Stetzer	<p>Depends upon, who is answering the question. <i>I think success can be defined by most people as have we joined Jesus on His mission faithfully,</i> but I would also add have we joined Jesus on His Mission <i>in fruitful ways.</i> So I want to be both faithful to the mission, but fruitful in the mission.</p>
Van Gelder	<p><i>Disruption.</i> I think disruption today is huge across the spectrum in terms of denominations, signatories, as well as congregations and cultural disruptions obviously. But also I'm under the persuasion, it may very well be, this is a little hypothetical but it has biblical support, <i>I am under the persuasion that God the Spirit may be disrupting the church inviting it in a fresh and new way to reengage and understand the issue</i> here is not church and culture, <i>the issue here is gospel and culture.</i> Refocus the question around how are we to be faithful to the gospel and what kind of community of faith does the gospel form in relationship to this change in context.</p>
<p>Question 3 - What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?</p>	
Cole	<p>I'm an author, so I'm not liking this, but I think that <i>books are less and less having an influence over God's people. I don't think they have the attention span to read them.</i> I think people are going to blogs, but <i>even blogs are becoming less and less of interest to people,</i> so now it's going to video things that have to be short. It's kind of a sad thing to see, but <i>consumption of new ideas is rapidly decreasing. When they do seek information, they seek information that already verifies what they think they already know, so there isn't any learning going on,</i> there's only a combative nature of two polarizing ideas. That's just not true for the elections, for red and blue states, or Fox News, or NBC; it goes deeper than that. It's Reformed versus Pentecostal; <i>there isn't really an openness to learning from the other side, there's only a reinforcing of what you already think you know, and it reveals a shallowness in our minds, in our lack in growth and learning. Maturity is weak,</i> and so I think all of that is at play, and when I travel around the world, around the country especially, I see more and more of just shallow ideas, and people are not open to a different idea; they've already got their minds made up.</p>
Dempsey	<p>For negative change... <i>Negative is the political correctness.</i> Bonhoeffer, if you studied Bonhoeffer in the 1930's, prior to the 40's, the Lutheran church in Nazi Germany, they faced a decision of whether or not they were going to</p>

	<p>stand up to the Aryan nation and the thousand year Reich and they had a choice to make and that choice was whether or not they were going to be <u>joining with the state and the political correctness which has many different forms, whether speech or LGBT agenda or the gender neutral thing, there is a growing opposition to the church because the state wants to control the church</u> much in the same way that the rise of Nazism under Adolph Hitler wanted to control the church so that they could control the message. So that is the most significant element on the other side is the political correctness and controlling the language and then basically forcing the church to adopt the same terms, and to not only adopt them and say that they are okay but that the church must comply and be in absolute agreement with them so that's the negative change.</p> <p><u>The positive change is there is a group and I've already mentioned who they are, of ministry practitioners and missiologists</u> and people who have spent a lot of time looking at the state of the church and these are practitioners as well because there's a group of people that are also <u>saying hey look we can change the church for better</u>, it is what it is, we've inherited it, but they are seriously having conferences, coalescing with networks so they're <u>working hard to change it</u>.</p>
Guder	<p><u>The work of the Holy Spirit</u>, not because I think the work of the Holy Spirit is so enormously diverse from one culture to the next and a great deal of what we're describing today is how to go into a particular context and discover that Jesus Christ really does have all authority in heaven and earth and is present and at work in ways that we should enjoy so I don't think there is any single thing that I would point to. Having just come back from Europe I'm reminded that God's way of working in history almost always includes the element of surprise. Nobody would have ever expected that one of the major forces for missional renewal would be the Church of England with the fresh expressions focus. Nobody would have ever expected that Pope John the 23rd would lead a council that brought about a revolution of the church's understanding of commission. Those are two examples that I think point to the fact that you can't just isolate to one single factor. <u>I think it is the work of the Holy Spirit and certainly not something that we're strategizing or generating but we are respondents to God's initiatives and the great question is how do we respond to what God is already doing.</u></p>
Hirsch	<p>And then of course <u>most of our thinking has come from European format</u>; we think we're following the biblical format, but really, we all get our church from Europe and its been deeply impacted by European form, to some degree we all follow the European form. <u>And I believe the European form is facing its own theological and missional bankruptcy in that its about finished, its just about gone in Europe. Biblical Christianity is fading out very, very fast. And I think it's a huge problem,</u></p>
Stetzer	<p><u>In cultural shifts, the culture is becoming more secular</u>, Christians have lost their home field advantage so that's a big part of it, so there's one. I'd say another is that the church, Robert Jones new book, The End of White Christian America, actually is one of the few books with scary titles who</p>

	<p>actually makes some sense. It's the idea that the multi-cultural shifts have been evident, have been ongoing and significant so <i>I think that the white middle class church is probably got some tough times coming forward</i>. I think that <i>technology has been a game changer</i> I mean to the place where multi-site, online, all these sort of things I think it's hard to underestimate that, so those are all the things I would put down there.</p>
Van Gelder	<p><i>Denominations</i>. I'm actually cautiously optimistic they've been through five different stages at least in the US history. I think <i>they're in the midst of a transition and morphing one more time into probably much more networking than institutional structures</i> and a lot of the ones that really double down in institutional structures are not going to survive well if at all but <i>they're more much more relational, and network and other kinds of ways of connecting</i>.</p>
<p>Question 4 - How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?</p>	
Cole	<p>Okay, so I want to talk about the concept of missional. <i>I think it's part of the fabric of the DNA of the actual ecclesia. So it is not simply a division of church, it is the core to the being of church</i>. That's not necessarily true for the terminology of missional, which gets a lot of play, but doesn't actually produce a lot. There's a lot of people talking about missional, but what they really mean is a new sermon series that's going to reach out to their community, and it's not really changing anything. So <i>I think the concept of apostolic, being sent and sending, is a core DNA principle of ecclesia, and should be at the very fabric of every disciple, every group, every meeting, and every plan</i>. However, it's not, and so <i>what we have is a mutated form of ecclesia, of a church that has missions as a sub-division that you can opt in to or not opt in to. So that's a mutation, that's not an actual healthy form of church</i>. So my feeling is <i>it's core to the fabric of the DNA of the church, and it's been lost</i>.</p>
Dempsey	<p>I mentioned that I call it <i>the organizing principle</i>. <i>John 20:21, Jesus said As the Father has sent me, even so send I you</i>. So what he is telling us there, Jesus is telling us there, is in the same manner that He came to us, through the incarnation, Philippians 2 describes this, He humbled Himself, He became obedient, He was under the Father's authority even to the point of death, and that's what Paul's eluding to, Galatians 2:20, I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ who lives in me, so the idea of missional and incarnation, there's a bunch of stuff being written now about the importance of understanding the incarnation for not just the average person in their own personal life but for understanding how the church should work. So <i>if we adopt the incarnation missional expression of Jesus that the motivation that Christ came to us was because of love</i>, that's the motivation. The form as to how He came to us is humility, serving, loving, simple relational evangelism as it were and the church has got to adopt that stance as far as, especially the church in the United States, in aggressive, hostile, anti-Christian environment, <i>we cannot counteract the hostile Christian environment through apologetics. It's got to be through love, through serving, not through an academic approach</i>. Now apologetics</p>

	is important of course but for awhile though we kind of thought that may be the way to go about it but <u>it has to be showing and sharing.</u>
Guder	I think if it is properly defined, it identifies key issues that we must be concerned about, the first being <u>the church exists for God's mission and is the instrument of God's mission</u> and I think <u>ministry is a loaded term because it has come to mean clerical</u> , it really refers to the church as an organization with castes, the laity and the clergy, and this is the reason I'm constantly pointing out that in the translation of the <i>Church Dogmatics</i> by Barth towards the end of the work where Barth has used the word service consistently all through the work it suddenly starts being translated as ministry which clericalizes the argument and I think that is a very false reading that needs to be corrected. But <u>if we understand ministry as the service of God and that it is the carrying out of the mandate to be Christ's witness then missional service is my preferred term, is like a key way of talking about who we are and what we're for.</u>
Hirsch	Well I think <u>missional is the way for the church that has lost its way to find itself again.</u> I would say that there is you know no Plan B for those who think that missional is just a fad. For one, I think that would be to dismiss that mission derives from God, and the church derives from mission, the mission of God in the world. That would to forget one of our most fundamental stories. <u>I think it's the only way which we're going to have a new and fruitful engagement with our world. And we have to learned how to engage in a way that fits the changing context. If we refuse to engage, in other words, we refuse to do mission, then I think we must continue to decline, you know, there's no way of renewing the church,</u> I don't think there's a plan B bro. I cannot see it coming another way
Stetzer	<u>I would probably say the first one.</u> I think the dramatic shifts in culture in the last couple of decades I think probably, you know everyone, this is the biggest cultural change ever, no it's not, certainly in our lifetime this is pretty stunning. I mean even the sixties counter culture was just that, it was a counter culture. Now it's become, <u>the main stream culture has shifted, so I would say cultural shift, more secular,</u> <unclear> that kind of stuff.
Van Gelder	Well you read probably the missional church in The Perspective book? The one I co-authored, it's a map of what has happened to that word in the last twenty years, how it's being used, I think if I used the category missional ministry then I think I mean it's gone everywhere and it's kind of every place and it's been used up in many ways and we're kind of past the cycle. The publishers no longer will publish titles that include missional for the most part. About ten years ago they quit publishing books that use emergence. Publishers are on the front edge of this kind of stuff. I think missional in some ways in terms of missional ministry has been used up, but I'm going to argue for it, in my writings continue to argue for it, I'll probably take this one to my grave. Missional has a very different understanding in a portion of the conversations those that think about the church missiologically, think about ecclesiology. <u>This is God's mission and how important is the concept of God's mission in the church today.</u> That's where

	they're growing.
Question 5 – How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?	
Cole	Right, so the church is the presence of Jesus among his people pursuing his mission. There's a tendency to define church according to our own expectations or experience, but <i>the church is not a static institution; it begins and ends with a single question, “who is Jesus.” It's all about Jesus</i> , and if it ever becomes about something else, then it stops being the Church. Jesus must be the sole focus, not a personality or methods or programs. And <i>its important to see it as a kingdom outpost representing God's kingdom in its location.</i>
Dempsey	I mentioned it already, some words, <i>incarnational, it starts with that. Relational.</i> Yeah it's kind of a clay term, a lot of people are trying to define it but if we try to look at it from the scriptures <i>it's not come to us, it's go to them, incarnational versus missional versus attractional.</i> But it's simple, it's relational. There's a little acrostic that the group is using, I think this is from Jeff Vanderstelt, it's B-L-E-S-S, so <i>it's beginning to pray for people, it's listening to people, it's eating with people, it's serving people, and then eventually it reaches the point where we can share with people.</i>
Guder	Well its defined in any number of ways depending on interpretation, but <i>missional is essentially understanding the missionary nature of God and his missionary presence in the world through Christ, and the church seeing itself as being sent by God and participating in his mission.</i>
Hirsch	Ah, I would say that... <i>missional church organizes itself around the central purpose of the mission of God in the world</i> , that is God's eternal purposes to redeem and change, and transform the world in Jesus Christ. When we make mission our primary organizing principle, the mission of God, not the missions that we dream up, but actually <i>participating in what God is doing in the world</i> , I think that is the central purpose of the church.
Stetzer	I really don't care if any person ever uses the word missional. I think there are black churches that have been living on mission for a long time. I think there are charismatic churches that have been living on mission a long time, Baptists, Lutherans, whatever. So to me the missional movement matters less to me than the missional impulse matters to me. However I think that with the shifting in culture that <i>the appropriate response would be mission, missionary mindset, missionary thinking</i> , and so I think if the most significant shift in the last few decades is the one that I indicated, then the shift to a missions mindset in this emerging, changing culture, emerging culture, that's what's already merged culture, I think that is pretty significant. Now again, I don't care as much as the labels of it, <unclear> has written some amazing things about culture but I don't think he'd know the word missional if I hit him in the head with it. But I think <i>missional has some helpful things about how we deal with modernity in the culture we find ourselves in.</i> So I think that the idea that undergirds that is essential in the modern times we find ourselves in. I think bringing the ideas of Hirsch is good but seeing those as their ideas is really historically inaccurate. Those ideas emerged, at the Brandenburg missionary conference in the early part of

	<p>last century, it really came to fruition. So it's not Hirsch, it's not Frost, it's not Christopher Wright it's Bart, his mission really is the identity about himself. I would say ultimately it's Bart rightly interpreting the scriptures which he didn't always do but he did on this.</p>
Van Gelder	<p>There's no clear definition, certainly not one that's shared with any sense of unanimity or any sense of consensus. That's why I like to take it back to God's mission and I know and I'm not uncomfortable using <i>missio Dei</i> although some prefer not to use that because of the controversy of the sixties. But God's mission changes the category, this goes back to your first question about success, the issue here is God's agency or human agency and missional ministry, the default invites, <u><i>this is what the church is supposed to do, it's supposed to be missional, it's supposed to connect with changing community</i></u>, well that's true but that's the fundamental for me, that's not the fundamental meaning of mission. <u><i>Mission is God's mission, the church discerns what God's up to and participates in joining God in that activity.</i></u> That for me is the framework for which missional continues to make sense.</p> <p>We also talk about <u><i>the spirit of God is already out ahead of us in the neighborhoods in which we live and our task is to discern what God's up to and join Him.</i></u> It's always provisional; I mean who can say that this is God. But on the other hand when you see things and hear certain things, I mean God's at work and we want to join in that. That's <u><i>participating in His mission.</i></u> This is American pragmatism, if there's one characteristic of the American church, it's pragmatic. It loves technique, it thrives on strategy, and it loves to be instrumental.</p>
<p>Question 6 - Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?</p>	
Cole	<p>Oh yeah, all of the above. I think that <u><i>if we are waiting for the current state of the institutional Constantinian model of church to survive, then I would be very pessimistic.</i></u> I think it's extremely fragile and within a few years we will see, and the world will see how fragile it is. I think it's tied into a donations-based function that keeps everything afloat, and as soon as Congress decides to pull the tax exempt status or parsonage allowance, or property taxes, all those perks, and that's not even persecution, that's simply a complication, it will destroy a large percentage of churches in America. So in that regard I am highly pessimistic. <u><i>At the same time, I am very optimistic because I think the Church has thrived under hostile regimes more than friendly regimes.</i></u> So I believe God is already preparing the true Church for what is to come, and when it comes, we will see the church in its health in America unlike any time in human history, and it will be a beautiful thing. <u><i>So I'm both pessimistic and optimistic depending on what you mean by church.</i></u></p> <p><u><i>I am very optimistic.</i></u> I have friends that are so discouraged by the election cycle, and I understand that, I am too, but I do think that the worse these things get in our nation, the more the true Church will shine. <u><i>I don't want to see the deterioration of our nation, but at the same time, I do want to see the kingdom of God thrive, and I have no illusions that the two things are the same thing.</i></u></p>

Dempsey	<p>Well <u>by and large I'm an optimist; however, all the numbers are going against us right now</u>. From a realistic point of view, I know that by the grace of God, God can change things around but also pessimistic in the sense of if you look in the Bible, whenever the nations, any nation turns its back on God, shakes its fist in the face of God, and willingly goes against the principles that God has established like the ten commandments, that nation has always experienced judgment. Now that's the United States. The church as far as that goes, <u>the church is Jesus, Jesus always wins</u>. <u>Optimistic</u>.</p>
Guder	<p><u>I would say all of the above, I think we're in a very sad passage because of our divisiveness, our failure to work through our struggles without dividing</u>. I mean I think we have to argue Christianly but not draw a line in the sand and we're doing that. But at the same time I'm constantly reminding myself and others of the story of Jesus asleep in the boat because I think it's in there to remind the disciples and us that the boat is not going to sink but we're in a very stormy passage. So <u>it's frightening and it's intimidating and it leads people I think to strike out for shallow solutions and not engage in the struggle at the level of truly bearing Christ's cross and following Him</u>.</p>
Hirsch	<p><u>If you asked me a year ago I would have said very optimistic, but right now I'm very down, I am deeply and profoundly depressed and distressed about this last election and its impact on the evangelical church...</u> I think we've basically blown the brand. Its going to set us back. And actually I predict that it will split the broad evangelical movement; there has to be a parting of the ways... I think its done real damage, I really do. I know I feel it and I'm very committed to evangelicalism. There's a whole generation where I think this has been the final straw. <u>I think we'll see some sort of kick to define a new movement coming out of this</u>, I think it will happen. On the whole, a year ago it seemed very positive, but we've shown our colors, <u>we're exposed as being unable to see the world as Jesus sees it, or to affirm the world that Jesus call us to affirm...</u> we're putting up walls and not building bridges, I can't see it as the gospel, I think we've violated something so deeply of our responsibility to present Christ. We've not done that in this last election.</p>
Stetzer	<p><u>I am none of the above</u>, I am accurate about the state of the church in the United States. I think that, you mean the future, <u>I think the current state of the church is pretty steady</u>, it's about people that are made relatively steady for decades, <u>all the statistical gobbledygook that says the church is dying or declining or depression or whatever just is bad math</u>, however I think for the future, <u>the culture has become more secular but the church hasn't collapsed, evangelicals have actually grown</u> which formed the church. Mainline Protestantism, <u>if I was a mainline protestant and had based my future on that, I'd be in despair. If I was an evangelical I'd still say there are a lot of challenges ahead</u> so it's hard to answer that question. I don't mean to be a jerk but I'm sort of a researcher so precision matters. So for me, <u>I think the current state of the church is that the sky isn't falling but the ground is shifting</u> and I think we've got to get new grounding, new legs to stand the new ground and I think that's where mission helps us.</p>

Van Gelder	<p><i>Cautiously optimistic. I think <u>there are really some interesting things happening and beginning to emerge or in the midst of the new.</u> The spirit is generating all kinds of interesting things. It will have to go through a period of shake out but I think there's some real stirring going on that will challenge all of our previous categories. So I'm cautiously optimistic, <u>do we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear and join in what God might be doing?</u> Because <u>it's going to require a lot of letting go, a lot of grieving and death to the things that no longer work, it's going to be very painful.</u> It's like Israel being taken out of the land and taken to Babylon, it's very similar to that.</i></p>
<p>Question 7 - What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?</p>	
Cole	<p>Like I said before, <i>it's hard to tell.</i> I certainly think <u>the traditional model that we're all familiar with will have less and less influence on society as a whole. I'm really expecting growth in nontraditional or organic expressions of the church.</u></p>
Dempsey	<p>It depends. <u>It depends on the seminaries, it depends on pastors, it depends on what is going to hold the field so to speak in regard to the idea of the controlling philosophy of what is a church,</u> the definitions of what is a church and then not only the definition of what is a church but what does a church do and how does a church function. And all of the terms, <u>what is a church, what is a pastor, what do the saints do, what is a disciple,</u> and Bonhoeffer again went through this and he had to elevate the idea of a follower of Christ to the point where and the Puritans and the Pietists they did the same thing, any time the church gets in trouble and begins to be influenced by the society, it's the result of losing the high standard, the view that Christ in you, the hope of glory, that's the attraction. It's Christ in us, not the building, not the programs, it is the purity of the vitality of the centrality of the life of Christ in the disciple and when we lose that then the church always runs into problems. <u>If we can recover that, I think the church has a great 5, 10, 25 years.</u></p>
Guder	<p><u>I think we're seeing a process of a disintegrating or a diminishing of inherited structures politics</u> and a replacement of these inherited politics within legal organizational institutional ramifications <u>with networks that are characterized by consensus around priorities, mutual accountability, creativity,</u> as I said before, exploring what God is already doing and engaging what God is already doing as sent witnesses. I think that denominations as we've known them are rapidly changing, some folks talk about the church ultimately ending up either being catholic or Pentecostal, there's truth in that I think but it's probably also simplifies what is much more complex. What I'm particularly fascinated with is where vitality emerges in the least likely of places. Like the fresh expressions move in England, like the forming of new congregations on the continent to the rapid expansion in the United States of what I call post Christendom western indigenous communities. They're just literally popping up all over the place. Now they're sending students to Princeton Seminary, forcing people who have no classic church socialization coming in because they want to be</p>

	<p>formed, they want to become biblical theological servants of Christ, they want to plant churches and I think we're going to see more and more of that.</p>
Hirsch	<p><i>I think there will be definitely be further moves toward founding a new movement or form of Christianity.</i> I think there's been a great advance in the last ten years, and I expect that that will continue, in spite of our recent debacle. Christianity is bigger than that, maybe the clarification will be a good thing, So <i>I hope that we will see some viability of concept, in healthy transforming movements</i> that can really impact being birthed in the next 10-15 years, <i>that will be missional, incarnational forms.</i> <i>I think it will change us, I think we are seeing a historic shift in consciousness regarding the Ephesians 4 typology in our day.</i> Its remarkable, Its exciting, <i>I think it holds the promise for a huge amount of health reintroducing the church to a far more dynamic form of Christ-based ministry</i> you know. <i>I'm very hopeful</i> on that score. I do think that cultural Christianity needs to be isolated.</p>
Stetzer	<p>Yeah, my predictions <i>5-10 is rocky, I think 10-20 years is rocky,</i> I think some of your friends are not helping that I may add, but that's another story but <i>I think 20-25 years I think the church in the US, and by the church I mean the Evangelical wing will look a lot like the pacific northwest where it's a substantive presence,</i> it's I don't know, actively involved, it's maybe 10 percent to 16 percent of the population which is a chunk of people, that's not a small number but partly not use as a threat to the society it's largely doing it's thing reaching some people but society is post Christian so <i>I think 20 years from now, after the culture war is sort of over and lost I think actually it's probably going to be easier to be a Christian in our culture than it is now</i> where the reason that it's controversial is there's still a perception that some people think we're going to take back over and suppress their new found rights, we just don't see that numerically, I just don't see that statistically, I'm not saying it wouldn't be a good thing if laws are reflective of biblical morality. So I'll give you an example, the last prime minister of Canada, his name was Stephen Harper, and he was/is an evangelical Christian, went to an alliance church, local ward, and he was elected and it wasn't controversial because no one thought he was going to turn back the clock on progressivism that is Canada. I think once we get there, I think this 2016 election season is kind of a gasp, maybe a last gasp, once we get there <i>I think that being a Christian on the margins when you don't have the levers of power actually is going to be the easier than the current culture level we're in.</i> I'm not saying that it's good, I'm just saying it's going to be easier.</p>
Van Gelder	<p>This goes back to the previous question in some ways, I think we're in the midst. We're in the midst, and I think this is part of your thesis, <i>we're in the midst of that change. It's a fundamental change transition time in which the old liminality, the old won't hold and we don't know clearly what the future holds or what's going to emerge in the future.</i> So the way that I speak about church in the past, that's my career, I did strategic planning, those categories just don't work anymore and so the way I would talk about that <i>I think we're going to have a church that is much more discerning and alert to</i></p>

	<p><i>pneumatology, to the spirit of God, we're going to reclaim a Trinitarian understanding of mission</i> which invites the church into a relational as well as also engaging in mission, I think those are some of the characteristics that are going to be there as this goes forward.</p>
<p>Question 8 - What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?</p>	
<p>Cole</p>	<p>As we see things progressing, and with the idea that we have the traditional model, which is kind of a single location that meets at a specific place, at a specific time. And then we have these multi campus, multi venues; also we have some new emerging things.</p> <p>I think that the cosmos, the world system is not neutral, and it's not on our side, and I don't think that it's going to remain the way it is. It will go from bad to worse. I think that's pretty much historically accurate in every nation of the world. <i>So, what we're experiencing as far as freedoms and liberties, what we're seeing as far as prosperity right now, is not going to remain.</i> I think it will be taken from us, so <i>the established local church that is property-based, clergy-based and Sunday-based, program-based, will not survive</i> in my opinion. <i>Tampa Underground and organic church movements, and things like that are going to be probably the only expression that flies in the coming days. I think you will see, before all that happens, many of these established churches merging and pulling resources to survive as an institution.</i> And so <i>some will have to compromise their message to survive, and many will have to become leaner to survive,</i> and all of those things will be mandates that won't fix the church; they will only delay the inevitable. So that's why <i>Alan and I and others are working to produce a more missional mindset among even the established churches so that when core things are taken from them, they can still survive.</i></p>
<p>Dempsey</p>	<p>Well I think it was Stetzer who said that crisis clarifies. <i>We're moving into a crisis stage but clarity will be the result.</i> For the last 5, 10, 15, 25 years we've been promoting the church as based upon a consumeristic business model and we've produced consumers of religious goods and services. So <i>the model in the future will not be come to our church we've got the biggest or the best, we've got the brightest or the fanciest.</i> It will be a part of the body of Christ.</p> <p>I think that will be the predominant church model because in the crisis, in the tearing down of these vestiges it's almost like a house of cards, the oppression will be so clear that <i>you won't have casual Christians, and I think that will be a term that will go by the wayside, which means it just leaves room for the passionate follower of Christ.</i></p>
<p>Guder</p>	<p><i>I'm not sure I could make a judgment on that,</i> I think it's going to continue to be what Archbishop Rowan Williams calls a mixed economy, <i>a vital, vibrant church can exist in the form of house churches, neighborhood communities, community centers, cathedrals, mega churches,</i> what looked like mainline congregations to turn out deeply committed to Christ carrying out authentic ministries. <i>I think we're going to see a great diversity.</i> The challenge is for us to recognize and glory in the diversity and ensure that in</p>

	<p>our diversity which I think primarily missionally useful, it's what it takes to reach the great diversity of our culture, <u>we need as many contextualized forms of church since we have distinctive cultures</u> in which God is sending us but in all that the world sees communities of Christians who do things differently but are still united.</p>
Hirsch	<p><u>Its very hard to see at this stage that far into the future. Its hard to see a standard form of the church. I can see the contemporary mega church as being the most vigorous form of church,</u> I think we're going into some really, really tricky economic and environmental... VUCA! That's it. We're going into a far more unstable age, and <u>I just can't see the economic model working,</u> I can't see it [the contemporary mega church] appealing to many people, it's losing ground right as we speak... Its trying to reach the declining 40% of the American population... There's more mega churches in America than ever before and there's less Christians in America than ever before... the math doesn't work. <u>So we have to find new forms... I just see it in 25 years it will be a very different church. There will be continuity, but there will also be a lot of discontinuity; the conditions are going to require it.</u></p>
Stetzer	<p>You know <u>I don't know that there will be a predominant church model,</u> I think if current trends continue, <u>the mega church will have increased substantially,</u> the number of mega churches doubles every ten years, I don't know that <unclear> so <u>I think a lot of the evangelical Christian commitment will consolidate into healthy larger churches,</u> I think probably an underclass.....</p> <p><u>If current trends continue the mega church will double every ten years, so it will be a significant player, I think the smaller to mid-size churches will still probably be predominant models.</u> I think the question is what does some of these alternative ecclesiological communities look like, what they call in the UK fresh expressions at Oxford, what will those fresh expressions look like, what will emerge. But I would say, Phyllis Tickle wrote a book The Great Emergence a few years ago, kind of at the peak of the emerging church stuff, what she said was that every 500 years there's this huge shift and we're now upon this huge shift and then you know 3 years later nobody thinks that, everyone thinks probably Phyllis is no longer with us, but she was a great religious writer, <u>the emerging church kind of flamed out</u> but every generation thinks this is the biggest shift ever and it's just not. Now what could happen, and <u>I think will happen, is that different models of church will learn to thrive in different contexts and adjust to their new cultural reality.</u> Because the future is already here, I mean the future is in Australia, the future is in the UK, they don't look that different than us so but I think a more engaged missional driven perspective will emerge, think that will be us. Mainline Protestantism will continue its march towards death, Roman Catholicism will continue its slow decline unless bolstered by immigration, historic African American churches will continue their relative steady but struggle with the next generation, evangelicalism will continue to diversify and probably continue to grow slight generically while losing a percentage of</p>

	<p>the population as a whole as the population grows. Now I've written 4,000 words on that in Evangelical Missions Quarterly Journal it's part of an access statistically if you're so inclined, I've actually put it on the blog, so there's a series of articles called The Future of the Church.</p>
Van Gelder	<p><i>I'm really cautious</i>, this is part of that success thing, <i>models unfortunately invite replication without contextualization, thinking that the form itself will produce the result</i> and they miss the fact at the center of the heartbeat of it, the spirit, the spirit in the community that's formed the community to share it, to shape it, to engage it, context it.</p>
<p>Question 9 - How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?</p>	
Cole	<p>I would suggest that most of us have inherited a point of view of church that we could question for many, many years, if not decades. We just assumed it was true. What will be necessary is for focus to address the New Testament, and ask the question what is ecclesia in the New Testament? And I think we need to be courageously vulnerable in doing so. What I mean by that is many pastors spend their lives in the New Testament, so when they do a series on church they see their model of church in the New Testament, but they have to use examples that are not prescriptive, but descriptive, and are not truly a match with their model. For instance, the Jerusalem Church in the porticos of Solomon, met in public, and then they also met from house to house. So they'll say there it is, that's our model. Well that's not their model at all. They were preaching the good news, they were preaching the gospel in the temple to Jews for salvation, and then they were bringing the church in to the house, and it only happened for a short period of time and then persecution came and they could no longer do that. So to say that how the church was back then is the way our church is now, is false. Or if they go to chapter 20 of Acts and they look at Paul taught them in the school of Tyrannus, publicly and then house to house, and they'll say there it is, public service and they have the house to house. No, the School of Tyrannus was not a Sunday morning worship service. So what we do is, we read our model into the New Testament because that's all we have, that's our baseline of understanding. In order for focus to come into clarity, you have to be willing to be courageously vulnerable with your model and say everything is up for grabs. And if it's not in the New Testament, I'm willing to say it's not biblical and therefore it doesn't make it wrong, but it also doesn't give itself a biblical mandate. I think that's where it has to start; you have to have that conversion-like experience where you're open and transparent and vulnerable, and you say I'm willing to surrender everything for what is truth. If you don't have that experience, then you'll just simply continue what you're doing, reinforcing what you're doing, and all that follows will just be built on that false paradigm.</p> <p>There's a chapter in <i>Church 3.0</i> where I look at the variety of models in the New Testament, and how they went from very centralized to much more decentralized with each iteration, and so there's a variety of New Testament</p>


	<p>models. But the current Sunday morning worship service, staff-led local church with a building at that address model is nowhere to be found in the New Testament.</p> <p>You know, where 98% of all money that comes in gets spent on itself and maintaining its programs. That's just not a New Testament model, never was, and never will be, but there are varieties of models. If you look at Jerusalem, it gets better. There's a better model in Antioch than Jerusalem. And then Antioch birthed something that's better than Jerusalem. So I think probably the best model in the New Testament for us to look at is likely the Ephesians model. It just so happens that there's probably more biblical revelation looking at the Ephesians model than any other model, even the Jerusalem church.</p> <p>You've got three chapters in Acts devoted to it. You've got the book of Ephesians written to it. You've got 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy written to someone there on the theme in Ephesus. You've got letters that Paul wrote from Ephesus while he was there including the Corinthian letters, and then you've got Jesus himself writing a letter to the Ephesian church and likely John of the Epistles. It could be the chosen lady and her children at the Ephesian church and the church of Asia minor where John spent a good deal of time so you'd have a ton of Bible revelation looking at that particular model, and that's not where most of us look. Most of us look to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is a very unhealthy model. It starts off with a bang, but by the end of Acts, the leaders of the Jerusalem church are looking to kill the author of half the New Testament.</p> <p>So it's not a healthy model. They never fulfilled the great commission except by accident. God had to bring persecution to make it happen. I always laugh at the idea that the Apostle Paul is more responsible for church planting before he was saved than all the other apostles combined.</p>
Dempsey	<p>I talk a lot about this, you know that I've done this for awhile, is that you start off with the wrong premise you end up with the wrong conclusion. For example if you think the church is a building or it's a place for a time then you're going to operate that church that way. If you think of the church as a body and you want it to be healthy then you're going to do church fundamentally a different form as you understand its function.</p> <p>In regard to even the roles of the pastor, if you see the role of the pastor as an overseer of the health of his body, the form of that, then the pastor or the elders, which I prefer plural, they're going to look at their job as not being managing budgets, buildings, programs, and they won't be the big shots either, it won't be bodies, buildings, bucks and big shots, laugh out loud, it will be that we are going to seriously take care of the health of his body which means your forms are going to be different, you're going to connect to the head, you're going to connect people to each other, you'll connect them to the mission.</p>
Guder	<p>Well I think <i>the great challenge</i> and I think we actually see this being worked out very concretely in the New Testament communities <i>is to</i></p>

	<p><u>organize ourselves as real communal communities</u>. We're not imaginary, we are there as real people, real community and the great challenge for us is to organize ourselves so that we are enabled to serve our calling. In other words, <u>the institution is not an end in itself, the institution is the servant of our calling and that means it can and should change</u>. I think we need sunset laws in all of church structures to ask ourselves is the way we are going about what we're doing actually faithful to our calling and relevant to our context.</p>
Hirsch	<p>Oh <u>I think that's a huge issue, I put that under the rubric of incarnational mission</u>... going in the way of Jesus, as the father has sent me, so send I you... the father sent the Son through incarnation, and is the patent for how we engage the world... <u>We literally become little "Jesuses"</u> [sic]. So I think its critical, <u>we need to see that we're in a missional environment now</u>. <u>We have to adopt a missionary stance in relationship to our context</u>. That requires that <u>we need to learn to be contextual... myriad new ways, lots of them... Innovation</u>.</p>
Stetzer	<p>If you follow Hirsch's model, our Christology shapes our missiology which shapes our ecclesiology. Now Hirsch and I have disagreed on that and he has subsequently modified his view in the new edition of The Forgotten Ways. Now do you have the new edition, the one I wrote the forward to? Okay cause it's not published yet, if he hasn't given it to you, he should because you don't want to build it on his earlier kind of ecclesiology view. Okay so if you're with Alan, it's his to give but he's got a new version, I wrote the forward to it, I think it's a more robust ecclesiology than he had before. So <u>your thesis is around focus</u>, I do think that <u>a more Christological, Jesus-shaped mission will lead to more ecclesiological, missional forms that are more missiologically shaped and driven than they were before</u>.</p> <p>So I think the issue is, I don't think ecclesiology starts with a subzero proposition that basically Christology leads to missiology leads to ecclesiology, I think there are things that the New Testament describes what the church gives that are trans-cultural, that are trans-national, trans-time so the church is certain things so with that I wrote about a misional matrix I called it which largely was influenced by Hirsch but what I would say is that my concern is <u>you are right to say that our focus could affect our forms and our functions</u> I think is the word you used, I would also be careful not to base it on early Hirsch because I think that alone is not ecclesologically sound if building on that premise alone that our focus was going to shape all those things. I think we have a deposited body of scripture that's inspired, inerrant, if the sole focus is Jesus but I think that that's key to mention and say.</p>
Van Gelder	<p>Yeah <u>I like the way that you frame that</u>, and I like also the examples that you've chosen for study; I think that will be really fruitful. Those are clear indications that the spirit of God is doing something new. I think <u>underneath focus I would put the word identity, what has the spirit of God created?</u> When the church comes into existence the spirit of God takes up residence in that community of faith and the spirit of God brings a certain kind of energy</p>

	<p>in life and perspective, it's the holy in the midst of the human, that's the identity. What has God created the church to be? What is the being do that informs the doing? So the thing I would adjust to your question would be to back up one step and <u>talk about essence or identity and then in light of that what is our particular focus in terms of this context.</u> That's what the church does. <u>Our being informs our doing. If you don't focus you're probably not going to go anywhere.</u> You have to translate this is what God has created the church to be now what are we going to do in this context.</p> <p>My most memorable example of that is when Robert Schuller built his first church building once he got past the drive in and on Sunday mornings this big glass door would open and he would preach inside to the people seated and outside to the cars parked. All over the country within the next ten years, in the 1970's there were these little drive in churches church popping up. Well they weren't located at the corner of two major interstates like he was. Anyway it's a prime example we want to replicate success so we aren't replicating the model.</p>
<p>Question 10 - What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?</p>	
Cole	<p>That's a good question. There are a couple of items, things that could and probably will have a significant impact on the church if they happen, and I think they will although I can't give you a specific time frame. <u>If the government removes the tax-exempt status of churches and or the charitable contribution tax deduction, it will have a significant impact on the church in the United States.</u> You know <u>a lot of churches are in debt and any action that touches the church's finances will have a dramatic affect.</u> I can't be sure but I believe these items will play a role in the future.</p>
Dempsey	<p><u>We look through a glass darkly,</u> I would imagine if you had this conversation 50 years ago in England, or Europe, or wherever the church was in Europe at that time, you might have said we want to change but the church historically has always wrestled with the priesthood of the believers and the division of clergy and saint so long as we keep in the DNA in the church, that has to be totally deconstructed, and then deconstructed not to the point where it's so organic where you don't have any 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1 overseers but it has to be constructed to the point where <u>the average saint in the church understands that his or her role needs to connect to Jesus through the spiritual disciplines and formation, they see their role to connect to each other and use their gifts from Ephesians 4 to build each other up and they see their role to become the hands and feet of Jesus in an incarnational missional expression to a community</u> and then that community could not imagine what the community would be like without the visible incarnational missional expression of the body of Christ.</p>
Guder	<p><u>Well I think we're going to be more and more marginalized; I think we're going to be more and more a minority group within our society, we're going to have more and more challenges to deal with</u> the many, many ways of the Christendom legacy makes it hard for the gospel to be seen and heard. Mackay contributed to the discussion back in the 1920's, the focus of what</p>

	<p>the churches need to earn the right to be heard. Young Life picked up that theme, that's where I first encountered it but it actually goes back to Mackay who's a great friend of Young Life in the 30's and 40's. And I <u>think earning the right to be heard is, dealing with all of the stereotypes and distortions of the gospel which are a part of our western legacy</u> in order to be heard as the gospel is ushered in ways worthy of itself, that's what our challenges are. Our society is full of people who are inoculated former Christians and they're the hardest people in the world to reach out to. I think it calls for sacrificial formation of friendships that become a place in which God's love becomes so clear that a hearing is created again for the gospel.</p>
Hirsch	<p><u>I'm not sure</u>, as I said before <u>it's a volatile world, things are changing and its hard to see clearly what will unfold.</u></p>
Stetzer	<p>In two places, <u>the influx of Latino migration has caused Catholicism not to collapse</u>; there is this large trough of Catholicism there that has been replaced by Latino immigration.</p> <p>Whereas <u>evangelicalism is increasing, Latino, Asian, African American, tend to believe more like evangelicals</u>, so yeah certainly migration these things matter a lot for the future of primarily evangelicals and Catholics. Historic mega churches obviously that's a different category and mainline protestants haven't had a lot break through there either.</p>
Van Gelder	<p>Well I think obviously as I just said, <u>there's going to be a lot of change, a lot of death, there's going to be lots of rebirth and new birth</u>, we're just in the middle of that right now. I think <u>this is a period of transition where it's hard to really map clearly</u>. We have a tendency to want to know what's the new and the next and it's not clear yet. So I think there's some emerging practices, there are some emerging things that give me hope like some of the examples you mentioned are good examples of that. But I'm very optimistic because God is God and the gospel is the gospel and the church is the church and the spirit is the spirit of God and the spirit of God is the agency by which that comes into existence within culture and context. <u>So I think the future although it will go through pain I think the promise is quite a different story.</u> I think the equivalent of what happened in the persecution in Acts 8 and the result of the rise of the church in Antioch, it was a time of pain and suffering and transition and confusion, they had to re-theologize the gospel, they had to add a greek perspective, they had to decide what the gospel was because Jerusalem church included circumcision, it's that kind of a transition that we're going through but <u>I am cautiously optimistic that the future, the church is going to be there, I believe the spirit of God will be present.</u> I think the third world, the global south, the majority church in the global south, I don't think we can yet see clearly but the beginning edges of it that's <u>[there's] going to be a lot of the energy as well as the new forms that come into existence within our context.</u> The cultural change by demographics and immigration is a huge part of all that.</p>

Validation Examples

From: **Guder, Professor Darrell** darrell.guder@ptsem.edu 
Subject: Re: Pretoria Research Interview
Date: January 7, 2017 at 7:49 AM
To: David W. Hirschman, dwhirschman@gmail.com

PG

Saturday, January 7, 2017

Dear Mr. Hirschman,

Thank you for sharing your transcript of our interview. As always in such instances, I am appalled at the dreadful quality of the English that one speaks! I hope that you can draw something useful and understandable out of these comments. It would take a lot of time and work to edit it, and I don't intend to do that.

In question four, "casts" should be rendered as "castes" — as in Indian castes.

In question eight, reference is to Archbishop Rowan Williams.

Om question 10, both "unclear" terms are the name "Mackay," the president of Princeton Seminary from 1936-1959.

I wish you every success!

Darrell Guder

From: "David W. Hirschman," <dwhirschman@gmail.com>
Date: Friday, January 6, 2017 at 8:08 PM
To: Darrell Guder <darrell.guder@ptsem.edu>
Cc: "u15029973@tuks.co.za" <u15029973@tuks.co.za>
Subject: Re: Pretoria Research Interview

Dear Dr. Guder,

Thank you very much for participating in my University of Pretoria research: *Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the Church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity*. Attached is a transcript of your interview conducted on November 11, 2016. If you would, please review the transcript for the purpose of validation, defined as:

"Respondent validation—to obtain feedback from the people studied, to lessen the misinterpretation of their self-reported views... both to corrections and changes that will increase the validity of a study" Robert K. Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 79.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the transcript, kindly respond with your approval, or with needed corrections, changes, or adjustments. I appreciate your help; your interview contributed valuable information to the overall study.

Many thanks,
Dave

From: **Craig Van Gelder** cvangeld@luthersem.edu 
Subject: Re: Research Interview Validation
Date: January 7, 2017 at 3:26 PM
To: David W. Hirschman, dwhirschman@gmail.com



Greetings, David. I have worked through the transcription and have offered a few edits/changes in the attached file, with which I sign off on this as being an adequate representation of our conversation.

Craig

Craig Van Gelder, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor of Congregational Mission
Luther Seminary
66205 East Barlow Trail Rd
Rhododendron, OR 97049
(H) 503.622.7627

On Fri, Jan 6, 2017 at 7:50 PM, David W. Hirschman, <dwhirschman@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Van Gelder,

Thank you very much for participating in my University of Pretoria research: *Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the Church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity*. As promised, attached is a transcript of your interview conducted on October 24, 2016. If you would, please review the transcript for the purpose of validation, defined as:

*“Respondent validation—*to obtain feedback from the people studied, to lessen the misinterpretation of their self-reported views... both to corrections and changes that will increase the validity of a study” Robert K. Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 79.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the transcript, kindly respond with your approval, or with needed corrections, changes, or adjustments. I truly appreciate your help; your interview is an invaluable contribution to the overall study.

Many thanks,
Dave

David W. Hirschman,
dwhirschman@gmail.com
u15029973@tuks.co.za

On Oct 25, 2016, at 8:29 PM, Craig Van Gelder <cvangeld@luthersem.edu> wrote:

Attached is a signed copy of the consent form for your IRB.

Craig Van Gelder, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor of Congregational Mission
Luther Seminary
66205 East Barlow Trail Rd
Rhododendron, OR 97049
(H) [503.622.7627](tel:503.622.7627)
<IRB Form for Interview by David H.pdf>



Responses
edited.docx

Dr. Craig Van Gelder – Validation Corrections

Question 1:

“I think the category is success?” Should read: “I don’t think the right category is success.”

“missional conversation comes right across” Should read: “missional conversation cuts right across”

Question 2:

“signatories” Should be: “judicatories”

Question 3:

“optimistic they’ve” Should be: “optimistic. They’ve”

“but they’re more much” Should be: “but become more much”

Question 4:

“the missional church in perspective” Should be: “The Missional Church in Perspective”

Question 5:

“fundamental for me” Should be: “fundamental issue for me”

“This is American pragmatism, if there’s one” Should be: “This is the problem with American pragmatism. If there’s one ...”

Question 6:

“The spirit” Should be: “The Spirit ...”

Question 7:

“in which the old liminality” Should be: “in which the old is in liminality”

Question 8:

“the spirit, the spirit in the community” Should be: the Spirit, the Spirit in the community”

Question 9:

“being do that” Should be: “being that”

“translate this is what God” Should be: “translate this to what God”

“Anyway it’s a prime example we want to replicate success so we aren’t replicating the model.” Should be: “Anyway it’s a prime example of wanting to replicate success by trying to replicate the model.”

Question 10:

“future although it will go through pain I think” Should be: “future, although it will go through pain, I think”

“I think the third world, the global south, the majority church in the global south, I don’t think we can yet see clearly but the beginning edges of it that’s going to be a lot of the energy as well as the new forms that come into existence within our context.” Should be:

“I think the third world, the global south, the majority church in the global south offers some clues. I don’t think we can yet see clearly, but the beginning edges are appearing and that’s where there is going to be a lot of the energy as well as the new forms that come into existence within our context.”

APPENDIX C: MINISTRY LEADER INTERVIEW RESPONSES

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Interview with Life in Deep Ellum, Dallas, Texas

Joel Triska – “Resident Philosopher”

September 28, 2016

Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

Well, I need to give you some history first. My wife and I have been here for 7 years but we are not the founding pastors. And so the founding pastor is a guy named Tony, I’m going to say we a lot even though my wife and I weren’t here in the early inception, but was mostly because we were kind of part of the story and we owned the story even though we weren’t here yet. Well in the late 90’s, early 2000’s this group of fundamental Christians came into Deep Ellum, where there were no churches and tried to get things established, some sort of presence, street evangelistic kind of tactics. It was back in the day where Deep Ellum at that time was a very entertainment district where the bars were open all night, music venues, the streets were just crowded with all kinds of people, and so these early evangelists go out and just try to build relationships with people and they started a church, met in bars and they eventually got their own space and opened it up and it was basically a traditional church plant. They came from a Pentecostal faith tradition, like with the flags of the nations up on the stage, I’ve only seen pictures of this place, had a Plexiglas podium, they all dressed in business casual and it was just a bunch of young people commuting from the suburbs to go to this church and then maybe a token homeless guy here and there sprinkled in there and then at the stroke of noon they would all disperse back to their places and it took awhile for us to realize that we were not connecting. We had this church service that had little to no impact on the actual context there. At the same time though we had a coffee shop we had purchased that was pre-existing in Deep Ellum so it was already in the fabric of the neighborhood and we took ownership of it and it was right next door to a condom shop which is kind of an adult novelty store, so we were like deep into the neighborhood in that way and I think over that time we just kind of realized that to reach this context we had to think very differently.

So at the time my wife and I, both of us went to Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and we studied abroad at the Philippines as well so a lot of our personal story is studying contextualization. And so we went on a study trip which is where we connected with the founding pastor where we went on a study trip to northern Europe studying how northern and western Europe were responding post-Christendom culture. So like what do you do in a post modern culture, 10, 15, 20 years down the road from where America is going to be one day and so there was an example in Copenhagen called the Copenhagen Christian Cultural Center and it’s very different than what we do but it was kind of the inspiration. They had more of a public space, they had a restaurant that was there, they were engaging with a lot of the asylum seekers from the middle east; they were engaging the new age culture there, they were trying to do some very different things because they were forced to by their context and so from there my wife and I went back to graduate from seminary and stayed in contact with them and with Tony and so he called us and

asked if we would come down to join the team and we really wrestled with that and decided we did and in the meantime we got this great building in Deep Ellum.

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

It's interesting like in the beginning, in the early days we were really sensitive about not putting up walls with the community. We didn't want them to see us just as a church because it's a very anti-institutional kind of a place and of course if they asked us we would be quite honest we're not going to lie about who we are but we also wanted to be very intentional about our ambiguity so that we especially those who have been hurt by the church, they're going to immediately put you in a box, so we wanted to delay that assumption and be able to define ourselves via a conversation so we changed a lot of our terminology and even still I don't call our building a church, our building isn't a church, our building is a cultural center, we have a church that meets here because church is people not a building so that's the language we use. Rachel and I used to just call ourselves the executive directors and then over time the community began to accept us as a church because they knew a lot in their minds they had this concept but they put a little asterisk by it in their minds, you guys aren't like those other churches. When that started developing we felt like we were able to be a little more upfront and authentic to our intentions in the neighborhood which are basically to serve with no strings attached and our title resident philosopher, my wife and I both have our MDivs, we co-pastor together, a lot of our skills and our job descriptions overlap and have shifted over the years, so for us I wanted our titles to say not so much what we did but who we are and so my wife and I I'm more the philosopher one and she's more the practitioner one and since we really are striving to kind of innovate and create something new we always find that language is one of the easiest ways to kind of like jar people, you know they go wait this is different, I need to pay a little more attention instead of act like I know exactly what these guys are doing.

You know it's funny, Rachel and I, we're about to have lunch this week with Reggie McNeal, do you know who he is? So he comes to a leadership network which is actually near Dallas over here and I guess somehow he found out about us and wants to get lunch. I'll be quite honest with you, Rachel and I we've had lunches like this with lots and lots of people from the you know kind of the evangelical voices from people, there was a day early Rachel and I were... like we want to help be a voice in evangelical America and we've had so many conversations with mega-churches that they're stuck in models that they can't switch, so we would get discouraged by it and so we're going to go in and talk with Reggie, tell our story to him but we're quite content with being anonymous. You know we're quite content if no one else ever knows who we are because we think that will mess up what God is doing, when they start to market what we're doing. My wife and I want to do our part to help, help share our story and see the kingdom of God advance in new ways.

Question 3 – What authors have influenced you most and why?

That's an interesting question. I'll be honest that Rachel and I were... we just had our heads down doing what we knew to do for so long that I think... I used to be a youth pastor at a big mega church so I was very well versed in the church growth stuff. Still one of my favorite people who has influenced my life is John Ortberg, people like that, Willow Creek and all those guys and I even got into the emergent crowd back in the day, I used to write and blog stuff like that, but since we've been here we haven't had time to theorize about stuff right so we were just doing stuff and making mistakes and learning from our mistakes and it wasn't until about maybe a year and a half ago that Rachel and I kind of just through some connections started reconnecting to the church at large and found out about specifically this missional movement that there were lots of people doing what we were doing or at least trying innovative ways to connect with the growing population of the religious "Nones." So we got in contact with Alan Hirsch we actually got to meet him; they came over to our space, we showed them what we were doing and have been able to foster a relationship with him, and I don't know if you know who Hugh Halter is? Hugh Halter is he's kind of in that missional crowd, he wrote a book BiVo about being a bi-vocational missionary, he's now the president of what's called Forge which is kind of the Alan Hirsch initiative here in the United States. And then Michael Frost and all those guys. So I would say, I don't know that I would say that they were like people that we followed but people that we were in alignment with. The thing with the missional crowd is that all these methodologies are so extraordinarily different but the same heart is behind it. I mean it's a missionary heart. If I were to point to anyone who equally influenced my thinking it would be the same guy that all missional people point to which is Lesslie Newbigin.

Question 4 - Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

One of the first things we tell people is what we had to stop doing was stop being pastors and start being missionaries. That sounds kind of cliché and I think a lot of ministers in America get that on a certain level, but the real hard part about it is I don't think we could have done if we weren't in a place like Deep Ellum. Deep Ellum is like a little pocket of post Christendom in a big huge red state you know, but our context wouldn't let us try any traditional methods. I mean my wife and I were very tempted to go back to what we knew because it's hard, it takes longer, it doesn't happen quickly and thankfully Deep Ellum and the mercy of God taught us to be patient, to just struggle through, what ended up happening, the founding pastor had moral failure right before Rachel and I got here so we kind of had to reboot the whole thing and so it too two or three years of financial struggle and trying to help the handful of people who stayed, help them heal, kind of rebuilt our reputation in the neighborhood.

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

For about seven years

Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

It started off as a very traditional kind of church plant in the area of Deep Ellum. Deep Ellum is kind of a pocket of downtown Dallas, just on the other side of the highway is downtown, it's got really neat history and kind of the art and music scene. Going back a long time ago in the early 1900's blacks played and then early immigrants from Europe so it's kind of the place where the marginalized of Dallas gathered, so there's a lot of like bars, saloons, jazz, and all that kind of stuff.

So we have this great empty warehouse but what were we going to do with it, it's kind of this blank canvas and so what we did is we did a what's called a strengths assessment of the community of Deep Ellum. Deep Ellum is only a couple square miles, it's not huge but it's very condensed, has very unique culture they call kind of a petri dish, has very well defined boundaries, and so this what's called strengths assessment means it's kind of a sociological approach, not looking at the weaknesses of the community, but what are the strengths of the community. So we partnered with Baylor University in Waco and with their sociological program they helped us come up with the questions and we did about 1,000 street interviews asking people stuff like, what would you miss if Deep Ellum disappeared, what do you think are the strengths and from those about 1,000 surveys it helped us compile the data down into four strengths and those strengths are art, music, commerce is the word we use but just basically means entrepreneurship and community. So art, music, commerce and community became the pillars for our cultural center and determined how we would renovate this building. So we renovated it around those pillars which is why we have a coffee shop with a community aspect where we have music shows out of there. Our main space can host concerts and all kinds of community events, we have an art gallery, we have space that we lease out to local entrepreneurs in partnership kind of ways and so that's why we do what we do. Basically to help people, churches from all over come and look at our space, sometimes they get a little enamored like that's really cool you got all this stuff, it looks really cool. One of the first things we try to explain to them, I know it is cool but it's cool because we're in Deep Ellum and Deep Ellum is cool, we're just trying to connect. If we were in west Texas we'd have a rodeo. Our methodology is not determined by what we think is cool, our methodology is cool by listening to the community.

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

I think I would say the people of Deep Ellum... we were lecturing one time in a doctoral level class and the last question they asked us... we weren't lecturing, it was more of a Q&A, and the last question they asked us was what do you call the non believers, do you call them pre Christians, what do you call them? I didn't mean to sound cheeky but they have names, and I call them by their name. I think that's an indicator of just us/them ministry has become as opposed to there's this great humanity that Jesus came to rescue and redeem and we're supposed to be part of that process for people who are believers and who aren't believers.

Who was Jesus known to hang out with? He wasn't called the friend of the really good people. He was the friend of tax collectors and sinners and the thing that we appreciate about being at Life at Deep Ellum we are actually empowered by our community to be the friends of people outside of the faith. We don't have to worry about board members getting upset because you were in a bar. It's just a nonissue. I think it's becoming more of a nonissue in a lot of other communities as well I hope.

Also, we allow our space to be offered in a very discounted format in return for both of our common ground in terms of what the organization is trying to accomplish and what we're trying to help the neighborhood with. So an example would be a community partner, there's a group called DaVerse Lounge and DaVerse Lounge is an under 21 spoken word event, we've been partnering with them for seven years now, this is our 7th year, so the guy who founded it, his name is Will Richey and he's a good friend of mine now, he started this a long time ago and he partners with an after school program here in Dallas, they're the ones who fund it, and we give them significant discounts, rent our building out, use all our sound systems, we hire staff, we do a lot of events up here so in many ways we operate like an event venue so we're used to like hiring staff and working with caterers and all that kind of stuff as well so we do that with them and that partnership and partnerships like that that we have defined how well we are linking arms for the good in our community.

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

Well I think it's central. I think the difficulty is that everyone thinks that it should be, but most people tend to reverse engineer it. A lot of churches I know kind of do it you know without even recognizing it subconsciously. So they have their form that they don't question that they just assume of what church means and because of those forms that they've committed to their focus is then determined for them. So that's why so many churches no matter how different they say they are they're all doing the same thing providing a religious experience that looks very similar to ten other churches within a square block of them.

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

I guess, please correct us if we're not reading your words correctly. So when I think of form I think of kind of the strategies of sorts that we have and the way that those end function, I think for us the way those end up functioning is relationships building over around areas of commonalities so sometimes that's around planning events with other organizations, sometimes that's having coffee and just learning about each other's stories. So for us that functionality is relationships so I would say that like the form will absolutely hinder or encourage what we do.

Or when we're talking about form, function and there's contact, I think one of the reasons why there's a lack of diversity and expression the types of church is how we're measuring success and the vast number of churches have the same measure for success, which is what's the size of my congregation, what's the size of my building, what's the

size of my building, and when your form and function are being driven by this one understanding of what it means to be successful in ministry I think that has a huge bearing on those two issues, and so when you're talking about form and function they're kind of encapsulated in the question of where Americans are pragmatic does this work. But when does this work, how are we defining our understanding of what it does it mean to work or not work. I think that is what has enabled us at Life at Deep Ellum to go in such a different direction is there was a long and painful process of God redefining for us what it means for a church to work in our community and God has been really clear with that. For us working is not building of a church, it's building a community that is deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them.

I mean it's in what our staff does, it's in what our board asked us to do. I've probably been spending a minimum of 5 maybe as much as 10 hours a week on working with the city on some pretty major urban transit projects and that's been, I mean some of it has been outside of work hours but a lot of it has been in work hours because that's something that we value. On a functional level the question is do we want an above grade, or subway? Well if we do above grade, then that's cutting Deep Ellum off from the rest of the central business district. If we're able to bring in the subway then that keeps us connected to the central business district which again brings us back to the function of wanting to be about connecting and building relationships and God has invited us to look at that. In this instance on a very macro-level of how does urban development play into that.

Question 10 - How has Life in Deep Ellum changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

One of the things that Rachel and I are getting more and more into is diversity. It started out, and part of that is because we are in an urban environment and our environment is diverse, albeit extraordinarily segregated in Dallas, but like trying to measure not just ethnic diversity but social economic diversity, vocational and generational diversity and doing our very best to try to create a culture where people aren't just being drawn into the consumeristic model that most churches strive for.

I think Joel's already mentioned it but one of the things that one of our community members once said and it resonated and it has become one of our mantras, at life at Deep Ellum nobody fits, everybody belongs. So it's this idea that when I've set across from church planting experts in seminary and when they ask me what kind of church I wanted to plant I get really passionate and excited and start describing this multi-generational, multi-ethnic, socio-economically diverse community and the guy I'm sitting across from said you can't do that. You know that's not the kingdom of heaven, I mean there's some truth to you attract what you are I get that but I think when we become just so one dimensional in our expression of culture and the church, we're really missing something. I think there's a lot of value in the church being a cross cultural experience and not cross-cultural meaning secularly oriented but cross cultural in the sense of multiple cultures that are expressing Christianity are intersecting with getting a more beautiful expression of what the kingdom is. And that's far more believable for outsiders to see when you

walk into community and you go oh they're not all here because they're all just like each other.

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

The growth of the “Nones.” I would see that as one of the most significant challenges because there's not this sea of people who are loyal to large religious organizations or organized religion. Most people are quite comfortable pursuing a religion that is disconnected to anything established. Pursuing a spirituality that's disconnected from anything established.

I would also say relationships with people outside of their congregation. I think that what Joel and I experienced working at mega churches was all our relationships were internal. We sat around the table with a bunch of other pastors who only had meaningful relationships with other Christians trying to figure out what questions non Christians were asking and how do we connect with them and we weren't really doing that in our personal lives. Life in Deep Ellum it's pretty 50/50 in our world, we have just as many relationships with people outside of our congregation, meaningful relationships as we do inside of our congregation, and those people aren't projects to us.

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

Who knows, context will drive everything. We just need to be open to and aware of how God wants us to respond. I think, yeah, I mean absolutely, the context drives change. We had a shooting here in Dallas in July and the social issues have rushed to the forefront so we are not a reactionary congregation but this was so clear, clearly a local issue in the history of Dallas, in the relationships we have built, here in Dallas there's a North Dallas and a South Dallas and one is white and one is black. So I would say our contacts the social needs around us deeply impact what it means and looks like to love our neighbor. Does that make sense?

There are things that are challenging us to constantly focus and refocus. We still do what we do in the way that we do it except that sometimes we look like what we look like because of our context and if our context changes we're not going to continue to be married to what our original manifestation was. Like be incarnational also means to be flexible.

I guess in my perspective what produces change is when we're forced to realize that what we are trying to accomplish isn't happening so for obviously you know Alan Hirsch so you know all the study and research he's done so as culture shifts and we recognize that our Baptist methodologies are ineffective in reaching anyone who's not already predisposed to like those methods or want those methods then we're forced to change. But for us innovation happened because we were in Deep Ellum and none of those traditional things would have worked. Well it wasn't working and it would have been counter productive. Having a place where you literally have to let go of those kind of

assumed methodologies is where innovation can take place and change. Honestly, I notice here where we're at in Texas and a lot of the Midwest churches change a lot slower because the culture isn't as post-modern as you get on the coast.

Question 13 – What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

Doctrinally, we keep the main thing the main thing. We use the term, we describe ourselves, the congregation as creedal meaning that what we hold to is the most basic unifying doctrine of the church which is the Apostles Creed; we use scripture for how we practice that in daily life, that's the only statement of faith that we ask people to hold to if they're going to be a covenant partner in our congregation and that will never change. We will never ask people to sign on to more and I don't see a time when we would hold to anything less than that. That for me is non-negotiable because its created an environment where we have Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and people without a faith background and Baptists and Pentecostals all worshipping in the same congregation.

Question 14 - What do you want Life in Deep Ellum to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

I'm not sure how to answer that, I mean, we want to be an active part of this neighborhood, community, and to be that light to reveals God, meeting the needs of Deep Ellum and drawing people to Jesus Christ.

Thank you

Interview with Tampa Underground, Tampa, Florida

Leann Theivagt – Communications Director

December 8, 2016

Question 1 – What defines and motivates Tampa Underground?

Well I think to answer that question I have to tell you a little bit about our story. It was about actually 10 years ago in 2006 that basically 50 people from the Tampa Bay area really decided to... they were a little bit just feeling like there was something more than just sitting in pews and the middle class Christianity that they were experiencing in traditional churches. They were reading the Bible for themselves and they were wanting to really see like what is Jesus doing outside of our context, and so they spent about 9 months in Manila. So they basically uprooted their families, quit their jobs and raised money to go, basically working under the missionaries that were there. There's some Filipino pastors that we know there that are basically working in and out the slums, doing really great work there, so we just said can we come and shadow you and learn from you and experience ministry and mission in a different context. So I think the idea to have a different kind of church where you see not only engaged in scripture and in worship and in community, but also in mission. I think mission is really the thing that drove us because it's what we saw was really lacking in the western church, in traditional churches; so that was really the motivator. Of course the biblical example is of Jesus as the motivator, but I think just the idea we weren't seeing that in traditional churches. We weren't seeing that sort of passion and attention to what the Bible was actually commanding of us as followers of Him.

So Brian Sanders, he's our founder and executive director. He basically... he and a few other key leaders that were part of that core team really prayed about ten different cities where it was just really marginalized, abject poverty. We prayed and Brian actually visited a couple other cities. He went to a place in Brazil, he went to a place in Africa, he went to the Philippines just to kind of see if this is the place... if this is the place where we should be spending this much time and I think what really kind of tipped the scale was that Asia is such a different culture from western culture. It's eastern, and so the way that they do everything is really completely different. I think it was really to see Christ followers in a totally opposite context from what we're used to [seeing].

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates Tampa Underground translate into your approach to ministry?

Basically, while that group of 50 was there, we were working with pastors day in and day out, seeing how they were doing ministry, understanding what it looked like and then at night we would get together and really have debriefing sessions where we would talk. Everything was on the table and we were able to look at Christianity as we knew it, the traditional things as we knew it, the scriptures, and we were able to look at that and say what do we want to define us as a movement? When we strip down everything, these are the key values that we really have, and that's when we came up with the Manifesto. During those 9 months in the Philippines we came up with our 18 different core values and I can send you a list of those. To give you a basis, it's Jesus, The Poor, The Lost, The Whole World, Contextualization, Zeal and Contemplation. I mean, there's just a list

of them, and also the reason why, and then the biblical explanations and the biblical references as to why we believe in these things. I think that's what defined us as being different. The other thing that really defined us is, we thought, what do we consider church? That's the big question. What is church actually? Not that we came up with this ourselves; people have been using this for centuries, but we have an ecclesial minimum, which basically for us is, if you are a church, if there's worship, if there's community, if there's mission, if there's these three things, we call that church and so that really defined us to have these smaller micro churches that are doing unique things in their unique context, and they're specifically called by God to do that. They are incorporating worship, they are incorporating mission, they are incorporating community, and so that's really a church. So we exist to empower those small expressions of the church in every dark corner, in every place where the gospel is needed. That's really what differentiates us, is that smaller church approach.

Question 3 – What authors have influenced you (the leadership team) most and why?

There definitely are some. I may have to get with Brian just to get a better list of that. I know people like Alan Hirsch, those sort of people have really influenced us but I do think we're kind of like at a peer level with people that are in that sort of thinking. Others would be David Bosch - *Transforming Mission*, Wolfgang Simpson - *Houses that Change the World*, Alan Hirsch - *The Shaping of Things to Come*, and Gustavo Gutierrez – *The Power of the Poor in History*

Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

I think... like our first and simplest is, that Jesus is Lord. I mean I know that's kind of a difficult answer, but I guess we really believe in... I think empowerment is probably the biggest thing. The reason why I'm saying Jesus is Lord is because really, if God is calling someone to do something, then they should do that, but our goal is to empower them to do that thing. If a word were used to describe what we do, it is to empower kingdom missionaries. I think what influences us the most is the idea of empowerment and mobilization.

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

We're hitting our ten-year mark right now. They took that trip to the Philippines in 2006, and so right now we're hitting about our ten-year mark. Really, as soon as they came back, they started a group of house churches in different neighborhoods... so yeah, about ten years now.

Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

It's a network of micro churches; so each is involved in worship, community, and missions, but as far as how I would describe our non-profit... We do exist to serve, but Underground... it is a church and it's a community of missionaries, but we do actually have services that exist to help micro churches do what they're doing. So, we're kind of like a non-profit that actually serves those ministries. Everything that we do needs to empower, needs to serve the ministry. We actually have 6 different core services that

anyone who comes into our network, anyone that joins or starts something out of our network has access to these so I can just go over those as well. We have a coaching department, so if you're trying to figure out where do I need to grow in this ministry, where are my strengths and weaknesses, we have really experienced coaches that will work with ministries to help them think through questions, think through what their next step is. We have a facilities department, so we have a huge 50,000 square foot building right now that occupies about 50 different ministries and all of our staff as well as just co-op space that people can use.

If people need to rent a facility, if they need to rent a room or have space to have a meeting, they want an office here, they want to use our wifi or printing, all of that is available to them. We have a finance department, so a lot of times people are getting in donations for things that they're doing. They have people who want to support them, and so we offer really good financial services so that people can run their donations through our movement. They can get 5013c status, they can give tax donor tax deductions, and we're able to have integrity with money, and with all of that. If someone is really busy doing ministry to addicts and they're not super great at their accounting or their payroll, we'll take care of that, we want them to do what they feel called to do. We also have a media department, so as much as people might need something to communicate what they're doing, a video, a business card, a flyer, a logo, anything like that, a website; we actually will create and help micro churches maintain those forms of media. And then we also have a really robust training department. The training department exists to work with micro churches. They can train leaders, they can help people discover their calling, they can train people that are brand new into following Jesus.

We have all these resources; they are totally free to be used. A lot of them are online, [and] they're really accessible for people to use inside their micro church. We also have a ton of different events so the Underground itself has conferences and different seminars, we have a summer institute where people take seminary level courses, just a ton of different events that we run as an organization to really further that work and to serve. That's a little bit of an idea how our non-profit and the staff that we have exist to do that work primarily for micro churches.

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

I'm trying to think of the best way to answer that. I think Brian recently wrote an article that's like we're the church for the 20 percent and basically in a traditional church. I'm not sure if this is exactly the answer to the question, but tell me, point me in the right direction. In the traditional western church you have about 80 percent of the people that are just really observing. They're coming and they're sitting and they're taking it in, and you have about 20 percent of the people that are actually either actively engaged in serving, or mission, or whatever that may be, and so we have kind of a saying that we don't have any spectators here. What we see is that there are people that have missional hearts, and actually God has designed every person to be engaged in some sort of mission, some sort of calling, and I think that's really what we see. We are basically a church for missionaries, for that movement, so that when people come in, if they're not really interested in doing something, or if they're not interested in being activated, [then] they're not really going to feel super comfortable here, because that's how we operate. It

is through mission. The lack of that too in the western church is why we are the way that we are.

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

Again, in the western church, people have the idea of mega church; they want to grow and build something that's large. Really, how we function is in micro churches, and the reason why we believe in that, the reason why we decide not... (even our groups that are 20 or 30 people will split into two different groups) is because we really think that there are groups of people that have not heard, have not seen, don't know, and for us, we're always sending. I think the function is being sent, because if we don't send, we don't just want to grow on ourselves and have numbers, or increase salaries or income. You really do want to spread because I think that's what we see in scripture; that's what we see happening; that call to go to reach every little community. If they're able to reach women in prostitution here, then we also want to create that in St. Pete or in Gainesville.

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

It's not that we want to create this large thing that will build up our ego in some way; we want to spread it out, to spread so that really the people that are getting affected by these issues, which are the lost, the poor, are able to have access to us, to the people of God in their context in their city. We also empower a lot of people to go do different things, or we send them from our movement. We do have about 150 different little initiatives that are all throughout our city. We're also in 10 different cities throughout the world and we have other movements as well, so we're trying to advance that, not by moving upward, but horizontally, sort of like by spreading. So I think that answers the question for you.

Question 10 - How has Tampa Underground changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

Yeah, really that is in number and growth, not that we have grown large like the last question, but we have spread out. I remember when we first really started, we only had about 7 home churches, and then a couple years later we had about 50 different initiatives throughout the city. And then we had about 100, and then we had about 120. Now we have about 150, so its really grown over the years. Then of course, we're in different cities; so we're in Nebraska and Alabama, we're in Hamburg, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, the Philippines, and Illinois, so there's different cities now that we're in. We either sent people there or people that have the same heart as us... say I want to start something like that, so I think that we've increased in our amount of influence not just in influencing we have all these different ministries that affect all these different groups of people, but influence in the world. This is a different kind of church, this is a different way to do church. I think that people are really starting to be interested... like what they're doing in that mega church thing is not necessarily working and they're just kind of feeding the beast. They're not really seeing growth or actual real disciples coming out of that so I think we've really changed the influence. We really are kind of organizationally shy, so I think these first 10 years we really wanted to just test this approach, wanted to see does this even work? Can we mobilize people? Are there even this many missional people in Tampa? What does it even look like? So we really actually just this past year now since

we're now just 10 years old, decided to start talking more about it; start really getting our story out there. Even an interview like this, we probably wouldn't have taken, just because we're shy, we don't really know if it is working yet, but now that we do feel like we've tested it and proved that concept we can really share. Actually, Brian is writing the story of the Underground; he's kind of writing a book on that now and trying to get that out there and published.

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

Yeah, I mean I think initiative has always been a driving change for us because it's not so much existent in other traditional church settings as much as we feel like it should be. But I think one of the bigger driving changes right now is really trying to navigate what does multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation look like for our church? We are actually made up of about 60 percent minority leadership, and then it's about 70 percent women that are a part of our group of leaders in our movement. We're trying to navigate what it looks like to have something that's not typically a white male face, and so I think that again, that's even a traditional western church model, that mega church model is kind of a white cultured church. We're not a black church, we're not a white church, we are this multi ethnic expression of the church. So what has gotten us to this place of movement won't be what takes us into the next season, and I think really the driving thing is unity, and family, and feeling that connection, and even in all the turmoil of the world, like being able to still stand. It just reminds me of the scripture, they will be able to know who you are by how you love each other. That's something that we're discovering and working through right now that's driving change in the midst of what we're doing right now.

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

I'm not sure, we strive to follow the Spirit of God as he leads, not sure

Question 13 – What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

Probably what is expressed in our Manifesto⁷⁴⁹

Jesus - The way of Jesus is our way. Before and in all things we value Jesus as the image of the invisible God. We long to worship Jesus by imitating his life and ministry. Both our theology and praxis is relentlessly Christological. He is our model, mentor, hero, mediator, savior, judge, king and ruler of all. All of our values flow from what we understand about his character, concerns, and the practices of his ministry.

The Poor - We will remember the poor because we believe that God does. We believe that they are central to his mission in the world. It is our conviction that God is always on the side of those who have no one on their side. For that reason we believe the church

⁷⁴⁹ This was referenced, but not discussed in the interview. The manifesto was copied from the Tampa Underground website and inserted for use in this transcript. See <http://tampaunderground.com/our-story-index/#our-manifesto>.

should also stand on the side of the poor, and in so doing stand in solidarity with the heart and work of God. Jesus' own ministry is our model. We welcome all people but prioritize the poor in our ministry concern, allocation of resources and advocacy. We do this, not because the rich and middle class are less important to God, but because they already have access to resources and are able to advocate their own cause. It is our belief that the church should therefore prioritize and remember those who have less, and access to less, so that in all things there might be equality.

The Lost - We value lost people because they are spiritually poor. We believe the good news of the kingdom is the most important commodity with which the church and the people of God have been entrusted. For this reason we will engage the lost. We believe that the church should not expect lost people to come and find them, but that we are called and sent to "seek and save that which was lost". Again, we will emphasize the life and ministry of Jesus by prioritizing those who have not yet heard and believed the good news. This is our first and most important task, even in our ministry to the poor and the lost (who could be considered the spiritually poor). They are our first concern

The Whole World - While we understand that our most transforming ministry will take place where we are planted and in our own city, we commit ourselves to the mission of God to reach the whole world. We believe that Jesus came as the savior, not of one people, but of the whole world. We value the world because we believe that God is a global God. We assume responsibility for the world, not because we believe we can reach it alone, but because we accept the mandate of the great commission and the heart of God to love and sacrifice for the discipleship of the whole world. We accept this apostolic mandate to send and be sent into every part of the world and our place in partnership with the global church.

Culture and Ethnicity - Similarly, we affirm that every culture and ethnicity, while imperfect, reflects the mosaic of God's own image and together we better glorify and serve the God of creation. We value every people, language and culture in our city and in the world. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ was meant to demonstrate the power of the gospel through reconciliation, unity, and the beauty of a multi-ethnic community. For that reason we do not just admire multi-ethnic communities, but purpose to become one. We do not believe in being color blind. Rather, we hope to accept and include the beauty and wisdom of every culture in our city and in our communities.

Contextualization - We will not trust in franchising or empire building through paradigm propagation. Rather we will value the empowerment of every microchurch community to contextualize the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel to the people they hope to reach. Our paradigm is that there is no one paradigm. We believe in contextualized structures with revolutionary content. Learning from the ministry of Jesus we will not try to bring surface transformation (to culture or structures), but rather contextualize our structures to what people can and will understand, so that the revolutionary message of the kingdom and the liberating work of the Holy Spirit will be received.

Zeal and Contemplation - We will value the paradox of exuberance and zeal in worship, community life, and evangelism while at the same time whole heartedly pursuing the rhythm and profound importance of silence and solitude for personal contemplation and

rest. We affirm seasons of zeal and charismatic expression of the greatness and majesty of God along with seasons of silence and stillness before God. We value each and both together. We hope for a fusion of the two in a life of zeal, lived ablaze and unashamed for God, and contemplation, lived in deep awareness and quiet appreciation for God.

Simplicity - We commit to live a life free from clutter and the allure of materialism. We affirm that every believer and every community of believers has a responsibility to renounce the sins of its own people. As North Americans we renounce the slavery and idolatry of materialism by embracing a simple lifestyle. We do not believe that money or things are in themselves evil or to be avoided, but that the love of money and things is one of the greatest perils facing western Christianity in our time. We willingly use material things and wealth for the service of the kingdom, but not for personal fulfillment or inappropriate luxury. In so doing we again value the poor who have less, justice in living for equality and personal holiness in pursuing a whole hearted devotion to God.

Sharing and Giving - Because we value community and simplicity, we commit ourselves to both sharing and giving. We will share because it promotes relationship and breaks the bondage of possessiveness. We believe the western doctrine of personal property is imperfect and needs to be tempered with the more biblical value of generosity and sacrifice. In sharing what we have with others we confess that God is the true owner and that we are only stewards in his vineyard. We will also give, because in giving we destroy the grip of materialism over our hearts because we release the resource, wealth, or possession completely into the control of another. For that reason we will pursue relentless generosity and the holding of all things in common. For this reason we encourage our people to give as often and as generously as they can, and to consider themselves stewards of the rest. Likewise, the collective finances of the church and ministries should set an example in this regard.

Each Other - We commit ourselves to each other. We believe that God calls us into his mission together, never alone. We value mission and ministry done in community. We believe that God did not intend for us to be alone, and that isolation, fear of each other, and spiritual competition are cancers in the church. We believe that moral and theological failures, controlling leadership, and many of our emotional struggles stem from a lack of community. We value free, committed and loving friendship. Whenever possible we will lead through teams and the sharing of life at every level with trusted friends who are an extension of the grace and presence of God in our lives.

Kingdom Mission - We will do mission because we are sent people. We believe that the church is not the church until it is engaged in the mission for which God has called it into His marvelous light. We crave healing, discipleship and intimacy with God. But we believe that all of these things come in large part through obedience to the mission. We believe that healing comes through offering healing to others, that discipleship does not primarily take place in a lecture but through doing. We believe that intimacy with God comes from being in his presence and through submission to His will, by doing what He is doing. Since we believe that the life of Jesus and the early church demonstrate that God himself is with the lost and the poor of the earth, proclaiming the good news of His kingdom, we also believe that when we co-labor with Him as workers in that harvest field, we not only bring the kingdom into that place, but that we also experience the deepest and truest intimacy with God.

Humility - We commit to pursue humility as one of the chief virtues. We expect it in leadership, in community and relationships, in our theology, in the contextualization of our mission, in our prayer, and even in our appraisal of ourselves and others. We are convinced that humility is necessary for following Jesus as an individual and as an organization. In individuals we hope for humility in all our relationships and leadership roles. As an organization we hope to be a flexible learning organization, looking always to refine our commitments and expand our understanding and revelation of God and His call upon us. We believe in the living prophetic word of God, that it can be heard and obeyed, yet we also believe that we are flawed listeners and should always listen and follow with humility.

Biblical Justice - We will live for the biblical concept of justice. We have to take a prophetic stand against all kinds of evil, not only spiritual, but also societal. All sin and injustice is the enemy of the church and the kingdom of God. The search for the kingdom of God is also a search for justice. They are the same longing. In the kingdom we find ultimate justice, and biblical justice is more than just punishment for wrongdoing and oppression, it is also the restoration of wholeness, equality, and peace between people and with God. Our value of justice is a call to seek the welfare of every person in our city and in the world that we can influence. It is to hope and work for the kingdom of God to come to bear on the place where we are. For that reason, our value of justice will mean action in the places where we have power, as well as the pursuit of justice in the proclamation of the kingdom wherever we have voice.

Passion - With Jesus as our model, we want our lives to be characterized by passion. In the most surface sense it means that we should be moved by our relationship with God, and maintain a high level of dedication in all we do for Him. In a deeper sense it means that we value suffering and sacrifice. We see Jesus' willingness to suffer for the lost and the hopeless as a model for all who would come after Him, and that we likewise are to take up our cross and to walk the way of suffering. Not seeking pain or persecution, but not shrinking back from it either. We are convinced that the clearest expression of the gospel is love, and that love is forever re-defined by Jesus in His death for us. We value the kind of radical faith that expects every believer to be ready and willing to suffer and sacrifice for Jesus, His name and His kingdom. We realize that this value is not mainstream, and that it contradicts the cultural current of prosperity and the idea that in all things God wants to give us personal success. We denounce this idea and affirm that the kingdom will not be built through selfish ambition, but through passionate, sacrificial love.

Prayer and Dependence on God - We commit ourselves to live a life of prayer because we believe that only God can accomplish what He calls us to do and that God should receive the glory. For this reason, we believe the church should be committed to night and day pray for the world, the coming of the kingdom and a deeper revelation of God. Without prayer and dependence on God for all things we are destined to either fail or become conceited in our success. We value constant prayer because we desire to know God, to deepen our understanding and revelation of his love for us and the world. We value prayer because we believe we are all called to the ministry of intercession and we want to see his kingdom come. We believe that can only happen if we ask the Lord of the harvest to send us and other laborers in to the harvest field.

MicroChurches - We affirm microchurch as the most basic expression of the church and therefore, our ecclesiology is simple. When believers work together in sincere worship, and genuine community to accomplish a part of the mission of God, they are the church. Worship, community and mission then are the ecclesial minimum. We encourage biblically appointed leadership, sacramental worship, the pursuit of the gifts of the Spirit and giving, but these are desired and not required to be considered a microchurch. We believe that these churches also need the larger network, leadership and resources of a city wide church to strengthen, empower and help direct the microchurch expression. We gather for worship, training, and as leadership primarily to strengthen and supply the microchurches in their labor to obey Jesus and proclaim the good news of the Kingdom to their mission field. We believe the larger church expression exists to serve the smaller and not the other way around.

The Bible - We trust the authority, reliability and truth of all Scripture. In humility, we acknowledge we do not fully understand God and the world he made. For that reason we rely on the bible to be the rule of our faith, teaching us what we do not know, challenging and leading us away from our misconceptions, self deceptions, and convenient ideas about life and God. We don't choose the parts of the bible we prefer or want to believe, obey or understand; instead we submit to all of Scripture believing it reveals the truth that is beyond us. We believe that Jesus is the word of God and for that reason we don't just obey Scripture, we love it. Because, like a mirror it shows us who we really are, and like a window it opens our lives to the beauty, wonder, and love of the God we long to know.

Empowerment - We affirm the priesthood of all believers. We affirm that each person who has given their life in surrender to Jesus and his cause has a unique calling from Jesus to fulfill in mission and in the church. We believe that this is only possible by the Spirit of God living in and working through each and every believer. It is the Spirit of God that empowers. Therefore, we work towards empowering each and every believer to hear and fulfill the calling of Jesus on their life. This value of empowerment is expressed in all spiritual gifts and callings for all people regardless of race, gender or age for the sake of Jesus' mission and for the equipping of all believers towards their maturity.

Question 14 – What do you want Tampa Underground to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

What we want to really see and become more of is we want to have different underground hubs throughout the US and throughout the world. We want to have places in every major city that people can be able to get to if they're like we want to be part of something underground. And we're really getting those requests now, but we're not in every major city, we're not in every major area, and so we want to really have hubs that our people, our DNA is in different cities and internationally as well. We're trying to really spread our movement out across the world and in different places, and then we're also really working on church consulting. Brian is going to be doing this in his area, but a lot of churches come to us and say, we really want to move our people toward mission and how do we do that? How do we get our people engaged in a way that your people are engaged? So we're trying to really help, reform and love the Church, and it's out of love for the church. We left the church not because we didn't love it, but because we did love it, and we wanted to return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture. And

so I think we want to work with American and western churches to really help them if they're open to that of course. I think expansion, church consultation and reformation, and of course we're trying to grow our local movement as well. So we're always trying to grow, trying to partner with other people here and grow in mission places as well.

Thank you

Interview with NewSpring Church, Anderson, South Carolina
Executive Pastor Shane Duffey
August 7, 2016

Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

Very simply, I want to experience the best life God has to offer and create opportunities for other people to do the same.

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Well I mean it starts with how does it translate from my life. I want to know and follow Jesus, I want to be someone how absolutely believes in His promises, I want to understand how he has gifted me and then I want to use those things to show others how to do the same thing. Because ultimately whether it's in life or in ministry leadership, my job is to follow Jesus. Understand who I am and how He has gifted me and use that to create opportunities wanting people to know and follow Jesus and discover their gifts and utilize that to know other, it kind of just goes on and on.

Question 3 – What authors have influenced you most and why?

Sure there's lots, John Piper and R C Sproul probably helped me understand God in the Bible more than any other authors that I've read. Phillip Yancey, one of my very favorites, he helped me understand practical grace and probably a little bit about prayer too, John Ortberg helped me understand me and how God designed me. Dallas Willard, the things I read that I can actually understand, would be, now he really helped me I think probably more than all those other guys, helped me understand living in and by the Spirit. Helped me understand that Jesus brought the kingdom with Himself when He came, He didn't tell us about a kingdom He wants to get us to and then this may throw a curve ball to you but the last person is Rob Bell. I love Rob Bell for multiple reasons because he has helped me see that there are different ways to see and consider the gospel and how it applies to God and us. I even love reading Brian McClaren. The reason I love those guys is one, Rob Bell is a phenomenal writer to me, super clear, now you may not necessarily agree with everything that he says but what I love about it is his take is unique and it helps me, considering all the other authors I mentioned, it helps me to get out of that box. I love to be out of that box and see things differently and realize that I am not God and my understanding of things could be flawed. So one I'm being open to the idea that there's a different way to see who God is, how He's designed us and at times even what scripture says about things so that's why he's in the mix.

I think those authors are important because prior to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, there was almost a standard line, that if you are a follower of Christ, you believe this, you act this way, you go towards these things, and now all the sudden we have these voices that make us uncomfortable yet but they cause us to think like why am I doing this. When you read somebody if it's only reaffirming what you already believe, then what's the point. And I think too many in vocational ministry and probably

those in whatever level academic ministry, that's all they do and so I just don't want to be in that camp. I want to be open to understanding to the possibility that there may be a different way to see things.

Question 4 - Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

This is going to sound like the super Christian answer but for me honestly how Jesus interacted with everybody He interacted with when He was on earth. That has influenced me, it's where I've learned the most. So the quick answer is that or Him. Also by making a lot of mistakes, so I want to make sure when I don't do it right I pay attention to that and then do something different the next time. So see, Jesus influences me by how He treats people but also I mean we go and do and I'm never going to image bear that perfectly, mimic that perfectly, but when I do realize what I've done didn't work then I want to be quick to change, I don't want to get stuck in a rut of getting the same result with the same activity.

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

Eleven and a half years.

Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

NewSpring is Jesus focused, people focused, specifically unchurched or dechurched people focus. We want to be a church where people meet Jesus, you don't have to know Jesus before you show up, and we want to be a church where people can be equipped to grow in their walk, connecting to other people. I'd also describe our church... we definitely are a multi-site church. Some may think we're progressive in our methods but we're very orthodox I think in our views of the Bible or in our theology... Seeing the unchurched and dechurched meet Jesus, creating environments where anyone and everyone can walk in and not feel like they're different. You know they feel like they're received and included and can find a place.

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

Our focus right now is very specific to reach our state, even today's service, 3.8 million people that don't go to church every Sunday. When you know your focus you also know what you don't do. It may be more about what you're not going to do than what you are going to do because we talked about the mission and reaching people and all that kind of stuff, every church would say that, at least I hope they would, but because our focus is the state and I think in a lot of ways our focus as a church is how we do churches now. We don't have a lot of programs, we don't do gathering four nights a week, there's a lot of things we don't do because of our focus so it helps us to say simple, it helps us to say hopefully helps us to grow a healthy staff and volunteer culture where people don't feel like every night of the week there's something going on at the church. I think it helps us understand kind of where people are. Everybody's calendar is full so to put something else on the church or something from the church on the calendar would challenge things and so if we're able though to be focused on hey if we can connect you to Jesus, whether

it's in a service or through a conversation or we can get you around people that will help do life with you, so many more of those other things are going to happen. Where the church is making an impact every single day of the week whether you are here or not. As a matter of fact, the church really is only making an impact if it's happening somewhere other than the campus, you know on Sundays or any other day of the week, and so we want to draw a crowd to build a church and we know that those two things can happen simultaneously. They're not in competition, but we build a church by sending believers out to make a difference in whatever world they're in. So that helps us know what not to do. So I would say for the purpose of focus, knowing what you're not supposed to do is probably more important than what you are supposed to do.

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

Our focus is South Carolina, but the form doesn't matter as long as the effectiveness and the focus stays the same.

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

They're definitely connected because just like our mission is the great commission, we also need to be followers of the great commandment. So both of those things have to work together at the same time and so how can we help people love God and love others and at the same time be goers, proclaimers of the gospel and builders of disciples. So when we started the church, when the church was only in Anderson, South Carolina and we saw people getting involved and energizing and doing the very things that we had hoped for at a pace or impact that none of us would have ever predicted we really thought isn't this great, we're going to have to build a bigger building in Anderson, South Carolina and then we got wind of this idea of multi-site church via video and we thought that was a crazy idea because who's going to go watch a video right? And so one thing leads to another and we dip our toe in the water and we see that works and so then we start saying okay what we're doing, the state of South Carolina, because it's our focus, whether you're in Charleston, or in Greenville, or in Myrtle Beach or Anderson, yeah there are slight differences in those areas, in those communities, the reality is that we're still in South Carolina. So what works in Anderson will work in Myrtle Beach and so we just said okay if this is working can we replicate it in a way that doesn't diminish its impact or change its focus so we say we want to be one church that meets in a lot of places. NewSpring church must be one church that meets in a lot of places, we don't want to be a bunch of NewSpring churches so it's important. Can we replicate ministry, Kids Ministry, Student Ministry, Next Steps Ministry environment in the church, in different venues, types and styles, different cities, utilizing technology to connect people through a common message. So the answer so far has been yes, and so the reason we did it was to say hey if the Lord is using what we're doing and it seems to be connecting with a large number of people then let's try it Greenville, 25 minutes away and then we tried it in Florence and it seems to work down there which is 3 hours away and then as opportunities arose and we felt led we started more campuses, again in high schools, some in living rooms, some in permanent buildings that we started from the ground up but the vision of the church as a whole and then the smaller visions of each ministry, because there's really just five main ministries, we do church, we do kids, students, we do guest services and we do next steps, that's what we do. Those are our functions, yeah

that's what we do. Ultimately, we saw that if we cannot lose sight of the mission and we cannot diminish the DNA or the vision of this church then why not replicate it until we see there's a time where that's not happening. You see if there's a breakdown in vision, if there's a breakdown in DNA, if there's a breakdown in impact, then we'd have to be okay with it. NewSpring church, multi-site through technology the way we do today, if we see in five years time that it's not working then we have to change or we'll die. So there may come a day when we'll have seventeen NewSpring churches and we start from there and figure something else out or become something totally different than we are now as long as it seems to be working and not degrading the experience or the impact then we'll still be doing.

Question 10 - How has NewSpring Church changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

Well the philosophy and vision hasn't changed. I think that's probably the main reason we're still doing what we're doing and have seen a new level of impact that some would see as positive because we've always had the same focus and the only thing that has changed over time is we went from a church that was in one spot, to two, to three, to where we are... functionally, vision, philosophically, our willingness to do pretty much anything short of sin to connect people to who Jesus is, has not changed.

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

I think it's primarily the method of how churches connect people to Jesus and other people. What we say is we want to marry the message but date the method. The message of the gospel is what we don't want ever to depart from and we don't want to dumb it down and we don't want to sterilize it. But the method of how we communicate it is something that we should date, it should be something that's disposable to some degree. If it's something ineffective and I think in the church today there's more churches today that are willing to embrace that reality.

I think the churches that are willing to embrace change are the ones that are still making it and I think the other thing too, significant elements that are going to produce change, is I think though there are denominations, they are still there, I think they still serve at some level of purpose I suppose, but the reality is the churches that are willing to erase those differences, whatever they may be, are the ones that are still around. Most of the bigger churches that I've been exposed to, all have some denominational affiliation, all of them, but very few of them carry that as a banner, and almost diminish it to the point that it's nonexistent because what they're for is common ground with other churches that are more committed to the big "C" church than they are their denomination. And so if push came to shove I think churches that are going to make a difference are the ones that say hey I'll forsake my denomination to carry the banner of the church Jesus is trying to build as opposed to the other way around, which I think there's many now and I know in the past thought that the denomination banner is the thing that lead the way.

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

Yeah in the next 1-5 years I don't think it will change at all. I think for us what's going to shift, internally what's going to shift slightly is we've got to become more focused on being a better more effective church than being a bigger church. Because we've grown so fast and spread out so quickly that it would be real easy for us to think that you can just build it, they'll show up. We've had some indicators of the last few years that that's not true. So what will change the next 1-5 years is a more intense desire or attention paid to making sure that we are becoming a better church, not necessarily bigger. We'll let bigger worry about itself. So internally that's probably, that's not going against the mission, I think that it's just making sure we're getting better at accomplishing the mission, but as far as all the other stuff, I don't see a big drastic change in the church over the next 1-5 years. I've got a son who does ministry in Europe, well actually he's in India right now, I've had the opportunity to spend time over there and it's extraordinarily different there. So I could see a day when the American culture will eventually become indifferent to the church. I think right now we're still alive in the south, there's some level of acceptance to the church in general. We're not facing against people who are literally indifferent to the church, I think we're facing in the south, an equally challenging problem, we're faced with the challenge that people feel like because they have some affiliation with the church at some point, that them and God are okay, but at some point I would imagine that our culture will trend potentially in the direction where it's in Europe right now, and so that can create a lot of change.

Question 13 – What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

I'm becoming more and more okay with the fact that we're not in the church business, we're in the connection business. Our job is to connect people to Jesus and connect them to other believers and I think if we continue to own that as what our responsibility is as opposed to our responsibility is "church" we'll have a much better chance of surviving in whatever lies ahead. I think like any business that thinks it's you know, Blockbuster thought it was in the video business but really they were in the entertainment business and they just lost sight of how to stay in it and so as a church I want us to make sure we don't lose sight of the business we're in. Ultimately it's loving people the way Jesus did and being useful in connecting people to Jesus and other people... having a group of people that are unified around common belief and behavior.

Question 14 - What do you want NewSpring Church to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

As I said before, we want to become better, better at accomplishing the mission.

Thank you

Interview with Ecclesia Communities, Forest, Virginia

Pastor Scott Macleod

December 1, 2016

Question 1 – What defines you motivates the leadership at Ecclesia Community in regards to your ministry efforts?

Starting with a singular and then moving into the collective part of it is really feeling and being a part of something and so part of the motivation with Ecclesia has been in the past I never felt like I was fully engaging my faith through the platforms that were provided to me, that we would call things like worship services, church services. Where I had found out that I had been motivated was through highly relational networks and so to answer your question more directly what motivates me is being in proximity with other believers where there's a lot of intentionality and accessibility. I think that the motivation for me to be doing this particular expression of the church is the idea that the people are the church of God. The thrust for me, the motivation for me is to be the church instead of going to church. I was in one of Dr. Wheeler's classes, August 2013, my first semester in seminary and he had a picture up and it was a picture like a church building in the background with a few people gathered in front of it and he said notice the building behind the church. So it's this idea that we are the church and I remember thinking I don't know fully what that means but there's something to that and just a season of prayer, even starting to question this idea of I go to this place on a Sunday, say some hellos, shake some hands and say see you all next week. I can just remember thinking like I think church is supposed to look a little different.

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Several ways, I would say one is we had to start at a basic level of actually looking at our language and how we use our language. So before we get right into how we do something in our approach of it is really start to dissect our language. So for instance, it's already been brought up here, it's basically physically and grammatically impossible to go to church and it's like what are the repercussions for that then. And so well intended, but the ignorance is shown when we say things like where do you go to church. It's like man can you imagine what people like Jesus and Peter and Paul and others if you asked them hey where do you go to church? Just the dumbfounded look of "I don't understand what you're saying," and so a part of it is actually kind of snapping ourselves out of church and for us this approach to ministry first of all understanding that we are the church. We're people, therefore it can't be this timeframe, this event, this place but it is this living organism, the body of Christ, and so ministry is another thing too. We had to actually stop ourselves for a moment and say we believe that we've been taught that ministry for the most part is this vocational thing or this you make a cognitive decision and it's like I am now *doing* ministry, or I've crossed this boundary and it's like I'm not doing business anymore, I'm doing *ministry*. Where ministry, the simplest form of the word is service and we are to serve one another, we're to be people of service and so before it even gets into approach, it's like man what are we actually saying? What are the definitions to the words we're using and how are we using them? Are we using them

correctly or not? What do they imply? What are the responsibilities and obligations, the requirements? Once we start to kind of dissect that, one of the things that we say a lot is, there's an old saying that says language determines culture. Well we've kind of added our own on there; we say language and action determine culture. So once we get some of our language correct then we start to look at our action and then ultimately that affects and determines and defines and motivates how we approach this idea of service within the body of Christ, within the kingdom. Because then it starts to influence how you view your vocation no matter what it is. Either we're called to be ambassadors or we're not; well some of us are kind of paid, or on a staff, so it's like definitely fundamental issues first before moving into approach.

Just really coming at it from a relational standpoint, it's asking our methodology of gathering, of looking at ministry... how does that allow us to function relationally with one another and how does it inhibit it especially coming from a background where it was hey how you doing on Sunday? We'll see you next Sunday. So that's a question I ask myself a lot. Is or are these structures and methods or lack of them positively affecting our opportunities to create spaces to be present with one another, high relationships. And that comes down to action and language as well.

Language is a good place to start for us because basically over the past 2 years I've seen that as the starting point and it almost allows for a legitimacy of these other actions as a people. Like what I mean by that is instead of saying this particular form and way of doing church is the only thing that we deem legitimate, assessing our language, who we are in Christ actually I think expands it and says who we are as a people, whether we're at Liberty University, out and about in the community, picking up groceries, doing whatever, it's like we are still the church of God and that's one aspect. Smaller maybe spontaneous gatherings, it's like the church is coming together even in those situations, and so I think it gives legitimacy and validates our coming together in different ways and expressions throughout the week, not just on a Sunday service.

Question 3 – What authors have influenced you most and why?

I would say within the context of at least what we're talking about here honestly Paul, Jesus, Peter, mainly all of the New Testament writers and then even moving backwards into the Old Testament. But first I would say the scriptures have influenced and this has been something since when I was a college student, 21 years old, and came to faith. Outside of scriptures I would say first and foremost, I'm not a huge fan of him but probably about 10 years ago I met Frank Viola and I just want again to say I know he's changed a lot over the years but I met him, he gave me some of his books but his first rendition of *Pagan Christianity* before he got involved with George Barna and redid it. I think something like that was, even though I think he was still a little toxic at that point, but it was enough of a 'snap out of things,' very direct questions, very direct answers, he had it footnoted, which some things... a lot of his stuff is accurate, some of it wasn't but I needed something that direct to help me get my thoughts going and so I would say Frank Viola was very early stages. After that Alan Hirsch has been very helpful, a guy named Steve Atkerson who wrote *House Church*, Wolfgang Simson, Roger Gehring his book *House Church*, very technical, a lot of original language stuff, a lot of German, all that

stuff, then a lady named Christina Poole, professor. Outside of that I would say Stanley Hauerwas has been very influential, C.S. Lewis. Also Newbigin; when I read *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, *Foolishness to Greeks* and I even have his reader, what was interesting was you know after all those years in India, 40 years or whatever it was, I think what helped him is when he came back to the US he saw such a dichotomy and as he's articulating that in his works I remember *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* was really compelling.

Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Honestly I believe the Holy Spirit has been the most influential. I would say I don't know that I can narrow it down to one if I had to; I could, but I don't really want to narrow it to one thing, but I'll say going to seminary here and then being a part of the Center for Ministry Training. I've always said that I went back to seminary and I think it was a combination of things within the CMT itself that affected and I guess influenced my approach to ministry. So the culture we had, and so the things that I've learned in seminary I think I was given a space to actually question those things, and to quote you actually, you stood up at a seminary chapel and said we're doing a really good job of training seminarians for a 1980's ministry, and so honestly that has stuck in my brain forever, take that and the space created at the CMT, with these people, you know the church of God is therein the workplace, so that space created a safe zone if you will for me to ask hard questions and to say is that really the best way, is that really the right way. I gave me time I think too to think and to pray and along with that the experiences that I had in ministry were forming some of those thoughts and decisions.

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

It's been two and a half years.

Question 6 – How do you describe Ecclesia Community?

I would lead with at least one word, family. it's also a network of house churches who are committed to Christ and one another. A network of simple churches who are synergistic in relationship and catalytic in movement. The idea of growing smaller, valuing synergy, there's a certain functioning that can happen with smaller gatherings. But then also valuing the larger gathering which we have that as a part of our monthly.

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

I would say first and foremost to bring believers to maturity in Christ, it's about bringing about maturation. Then we've tried to articulate that into like some core. I would say also platform maybe is a word. Maybe not platform, maybe space, I don't know what it is. Like we have these core values and practices which are very biblical but it's like there's a focus, there's a drive behind, we have scripture informing us, but then it's like when it comes to this actual focus, form. Like one of the focuses we don't want too many people, we don't want a larger space besides the all gathering. What I'm trying to describe, I'll say it this way, first it's maturation in Christ period. But then it's like you're providing opportunities or spaces for what we would say every member

functioning. It's like you're now in a place where you have the ability to live out gifts, talents, relational things, is that space, opportunities, I don't know.

I would add I know we kick around this word often, a rethinking as well. I think that's part of the interaction that we have with one another. We like people to rethink certain words obviously it's like okay what is the church, what is ministry, what does it look like to be part of what we say is the household of God, so we have trainings in place, we do things intentionally to cause people to stop and say this is not what I'm used to, I haven't seen this and so I would say rethinking is definitely there.

Also creating a space for people to like engage their faith, be action oriented rather than come to this event, listen, and head out. We spur people on to be engaged in the faith, engaged in actions.

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

I think focus drives, would you agree with the fact that we are heavily focus driven and it is defining our form?

Focus influences everything we do. When we first came together there were probably about 12-15 people and we had asked these questions, what, where, when, how, why; basically the questions we were trying to find answers to. Where have you learned the most about your faith or where have you engaged your faith the most and as we were asking these questions these common denominators started coming up and it basically turned into our four core values and from those core values came practices. One of them was first we read in scripture that church is related to a family, a household and we each valued our families and it's like how does that work within the church. Another one too was every member functioning; we see this functionality going on, ambassadorship and ministers and all this stuff. And then it was also disciple making and the last one was prayer. We prayed through this, talked through this stuff, looked at scripture and it's like our focus became family and what are the implications of family, every member functioning and what are those implications and same thing with disciple making, what does that look like. And then also prayer, we see something different when Paul talks about how he's been praying for the saints compared to I've got a swollen ankle can we pray for it; not a bad thing, but there's the riches of His glory, it's like, man when was the last time that you prayed for that? So focus, I mean, it drives everything. It's something that we go back to and it's always dictating our form and there's been times when we've been squeezed. There's been times that I believe we felt the pressures of form coming on and then we have to revert back to focus and say hold on, original intent, someone would comment and say what was our original intent.

I would say we're even... I don't know a step beyond that where it's like form for us is the essence of these core values more so than saying hey these smaller groups, it's do you know how to live as the church, that is as family. Do you know how to live as the church as a functioning member within the household of God? And then same thing do you know the form, what it is to make disciples in a multitude of ways, different platforms and spaces and what not, and then same thing, the form of prayer unlike most of us have

been taught or heard or what is written down and somebody reads out but what does prayer look like. I would say form for us are these, they're cognitive yet they work themselves out. If I understand what family is I can either just talk about it or I will actually live as family and you will see the fruit of that. So I would say way beyond all that is then thinking through group form but it's like ultimately are we helping and one of the words we use is replicate, people that understand, that type of form more so than structural form I would say in a way, organizational form.

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

We talk about family; families eat together so every time we come together we have a meal.

Question 10 - How has Ecclesia Community changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

I think the almost two and a half years that we've been together I see the need for a little bit more definition, not saying that being organic is without organization, but a little bit more definition. I know that's very broad but I think reality sets in and people have experiences and baggage that they bring to this particular form or expression of church and that has to be worked through and it's not as clean cut and as easy as I thought it was going to be. So we've had to put certain things in place I would say, definitely had our share of frustrations with the structures and the systems that naturally emerged.

We're working towards highly organized, yet de-centralized so there's always a tension. I would say that it's changed considerably. I think starting with ideals, values we've learned to live into those over these last two and half years and there have been things when we set up our values we weren't aware of the practices that would come out of those values as well. So some of them we had enough foresight, but then others it's like man what is this whole new thing that has emerged out of us or because we've had this focus and these forms are taking place new forms take place as well.

So to give you an example, I guess initially I thought and with my personality if it's wide open that is everyone's dream opportunity and I think what I mistakenly did was neglect people's personalities, their skill sets and even their gifts. So I'm more apostolic in nature and so like a wide open opportunity it's like my brain is already kind of working, it's like piecing things together so how would I operate in here. Others, they get there and they're just standing there, they're like I have no idea where to start, what to do. So I think with the values like every member functioning, I just expected every member to function without direction if you will, without guidance but I think two and a half years down the road it's like some people need a seed planted. It's like you have the ability and the opportunity to do this, would you like to and that's all it takes, yeah absolutely I will do it. We heard people say I was never asked or I didn't know I could do that or fill in the blank and so those are some of the things I think we had to work through.

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

Size and space, yes that would definitely be it. When we set out to do things we basically, and part of this was based off of when you look at the writings of the letters and what scholars have come up with, when this letter was written it might have gone to 15 people or Hebrews maybe up to 40 people, whatever they're basing this off of, but at least going off of scholarship but then also modern understanding of small group dynamics, 6-8 people, that's where it's like man a certain amount of space, intimate space, and then it's like one you get up to 25, so combining those two together we had set out and said okay it would be nice for people to be in a group 25 people or under because even then it's been difficult for one person to manage relationships in a crowd of 25 people and so yes could we fill up the space, absolutely, would we want to, no or at least have the pressure of continuing to replicate.

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

I guess a couple things, I know the world will change in next year, 2 and a half, 5 years, but I think possibly part of the trouble that the American Church finds itself in is it hasn't changed you know since Constantine, and so I also know that the ministry of Ecclesia Communities will change as well, but I'm not sure how.

Question 13 – What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

Man so again I'm going to say a practice of training people to speak and hear in a certain way. We've made it a practice and people now call themselves out, and "oh I didn't mean to say that" and they'll retrain their mind, and through retraining their mind it trains other areas of actually doing. Definitely language again, the practice of meeting in smaller groups, the practice of an all gathering within a 4-6 week window where all the groups come together. That's good for celebration and health and people to get outside of their smaller groups and see something a practice of eating together.

The practice of the Lord's Supper as part of a full meal. Hospitality, the practice of hospitality; Service, as a community in the city serving the city. A practice of what we kind of call Matthew 18-ish culture; the idea of community responsibility versus a finger pointing and waiting on others; teaching one another.

The last thing is a very simple practice, but because we meet predominantly in homes and we share a meal we make a mess. So we like to have people clean up after and that's washing the dishes, that's taking out the trash, that's vacuuming, that's sweeping, that's the whole package as far as a family goes so that's something that I think if it were removed would be in some serious trouble; because we can create a hurricane in somebody's house.

Question 14 - What do you want the Ecclesia Community to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

Well it would go back to this maturation, I mean I want them to become more of but more like Christ. I want people to be more like Christ and Christ is “hey I came to serve not be served” and I know we quote that and sermonize it, but what does that really look like when you’ve stripped apart a lot of the systems and the spotlights and the you’re the pastor, The church has a cost, not just discipleship but being a part of the church has a high cost and I just hope that people are understanding it but willing to pay the cost.

Also, embracing the ordinary so particularly with the American church; like we have this celebrity culture, we glorify and idolize these key people and we set ourselves up for failure when we say that is the ideal Christian life and then you look to yourself and you say but I’m pretty ordinary, I’m pretty normal. I think what we’re trying to do and I think a lot of our form and function aid in this is like to see ordinary acts of service as legitimate acts of ministry. People embracing the ordinariness of Christianity and I think along with that people embracing the actual place where they live.

A lot of these practices that we really try to hone in on are practices that require people to forgive, to be hospitable, not to sue people, go see someone if you have offense or what have you and so it’s like all of these things are showing a watching world and I would even say first and foremost there are people within the church that we have a thing that we talk about where it’s like one, the gospel people receive it and they become a believer, but then it’s like a daily reception of the gospel and so there’s a watching church as well that I believe are still receiving the gospel or the gospel is still becoming real in their lives and so this love element to me is critical. Why is it then if we have the best technology currently in history you’re able to record things in a multitude of ways, get them out there in a multitude of ways, we all have access to the scriptures like we’ve never had ever and have multiple translations with notes, commentaries, books, tv, airplanes, cars, seminaries, bible schools, more than we’ve ever had, why is it that we find that those tools are not working as well as you might think they are and so for us it’s like hey let us be knowledgeable, seek after wisdom, all of these things but really love that’s how people are going to know us and I think it’s a drastic change for most though to try to figure out like what does that look like to love one another, and therefore people are saying wait a minute he’s not just an ass of a neighbor who works at Liberty but then as soon as I take a step in his yard he get offended because I stepped on his grass which I’ve had somebody bring that up and it’s like no actually they’re caring, they’re hospitable, they’re nice, they’re kind. Love is the lynch pin and it’s hard and it’s difficult and it’s impossible without the Holy Spirit.

Thank you

Interview with Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Lynchburg, Virginia
Dr. Dan Mitchell - Pastor
November 30, 2016

Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

I think I'm a composite of my whole life, I'm 74 years old, I've been in ministry for over 50 years, and that ministry has included pastoral ministry and primarily teaching and administration. I'm presently pastoring what we call the Lighthouse Community Fellowship which is an accidental body church that was created by virtually the fact that we had a community center going here and we were just sharing the love of Christ with people and they were getting saved and they were wanting to hang out on Sunday together and we suddenly came to the realization that we actually had a church on our hands. Not that we intended to start one, we wanted our people to get healthy and get plugged in to other churches in Lynchburg. As you know Lynchburg has I'm told about 600 individual congregations, so why do we need another one? Well I don't know why we need another one but we kind of do so I was tagged by the team to pastor that fellowship church because there really wasn't anybody else in the mix that was qualified to that. But at my age, doing what I do is a return almost full circle to where I began. I began in a very small rural community church, yeah Brandywine was one of the early ministries that I had, but growing up we were in a little bedroom community of Boston and when we had ministry we met together, we didn't have paid staff, youth pastors, a music person, we just had the pastor and I remember as a teenager being called on to lead the youth program and things like that so it was more peer leadership than it was anything else. In one sense I feel like I've just kind of come all the way around from either a formalized ministries that characterized Dallas grads to Jerry Falwell and Thomas Road, but how does one characterize these big box ministries, they're very slick and people... they're reaching people that resonate with that and God is using them, but there's a raw underbelly in Lynchburg that is missed and it's missed in every city where our graduates go and do their swat analysis. They're after a certain demographic and typically it's a demographic that looks like them, talks to them, smells like them and so... but there's a soft underbelly, I showed you the picture up there of the invisible lady, these people are in this ball there, we know they're there because the stats tell us and we read articles in the newspaper of people who keep track of these stats but that's all it is it's a statistic.

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

We have a certain number of poverty individuals, homeless people but you don't have newly minted preachers going out and targeting the homeless. The homeless are a homogenous bunch and there are diamonds in the rough out there, you have stories like Sam who quit school at 15, hooked up with a bunch of train hoppers, ended up in Lynchburg living in the woods with this group of people and angry about what happened to one of her friends who last she heard was talking about the Lighthouse, so who are you people and what do you do, we're like come on in, are you hungry, want a cup of coffee, we'd love to get to know you too. Sam got saved, she got so turned on to the things of

the Lord and she began to think about her own life and she was a precocious kid but she goes down to Dunbar and she earns her GED in a very short space of time, did it on her own. She now works as a nurse down at Avanti, she got a practical nursing certificate, and she's enrolled at the community college in an RN program so her long-term goal is to be a nurse and she'll do a great job of it. So, it's like these are diamonds in the rough they really are and so we have an opportunity to find some of these people. They are people who are homeless because they choose to be and they have a different set of concerns and issues but in our case, we haven't tried to target any particular demographic or any particular kind of person. We open the door and we let them come in. It's sort of like the good neighbor policy, Jesus said love God, love your neighbor and you don't get to choose who your neighbors are, you just deal with the ones you have. So we're open to that, we're open to the stranger; it makes it quite interesting. The two people you just met earlier, Phil in particular; Phil is just whacked out of his head. I don't know what is going on with Phil but he grew up on the back side of Candler's Mountain in a little Baptist church, King James Only, hell fire and brimstone, he used to talk like sound bites of statements preachers might say, you never knew if you were getting a full... he's in his right mind but whether it's finally getting off drugs or what but we couldn't give up on him and run him off, I had to confront him a few times with some of his ways, so we have people that are in recovery, we have a CR group here and so I think what motivates me in all of this is the fact that God is developing in me gifts and sensitivities that I couldn't find any other way and that's exciting. The artwork that I'm doing, I just finished one the other day and I looked back at it and I thought wow. I started doing a picture of Mount Everest and I'm particularly fascinated with Mount Everest. This is what I've done so far, but what fascinates me is this, you know this lone cow at the base of the mountain and you have this amazing peak up here, this is the last one I did, a lighthouse. I've got about 30 or more lighthouses, I'd like to do about 100 of them, but this is Peggy's Cove. I do these things and I wonder what the deal is. But it's really an overflow and so these become ways to raise funds for what we do here and I've sold more than 40 of them. That's a God thing, I've been told that a new painter, a new artist can look for 5-6 years before they sell one and pretty much the same length of time before they have their first show but in my case I've had 2 in the first year so it's a God thing and I don't know where God is taking that but I feel like I'm being used. I resonated with what Erick Thomas said last night, his whole theme was we're just ordinary people who have been given an extraordinary gift in the Holy Spirit and we're called upon to do extraordinary things not because it's in us but we have Him in us and I feel that way like wow okay so this is not me, it really isn't. What motivates me, what drives me to get up at 4:00 in the morning and paint on canvas is I guess an overflow. Kind of like they used to tell us back in the day, you don't preach from the study, you preach from the overflow and so what motivates me is a people of ministry.

Question 3 – What authors have influenced you most and why?

It wasn't a scholar that has got me where I am. There are people who have influenced me, maybe latterly have influenced me, people like Gene Getz. Gene Getz was a man who liked to think out of the box, liked to go for broke, you know plan to fail if you have to go do it and I was with him when we started the Fellowship Bible Church in Richardson, Texas. Part of that initial nucleus, that was an exciting thing and I think I

learned to be willing to function out of the box, do something that makes a difference no matter what. Now in his case he had these three lenses that he liked to use and he had it mapped out, he was one of these systematicians so he had it all mapped out and he took us all through the team, took us through his philosophy on weekly events. We met in a guy's home and he taught us what he was up to and then we launched and on the opening day, we had 125 people. The following Sunday we had 250 and the following Sunday we maxed out the property and within the first 6 months we had planted another church. So, we had a Sunday morning church and then we had a Sunday night church and we still used the same property, same facility. So, it was exciting to see that. I think he influenced me. I remember having the conversation with a fellow classmate down in Dallas and he was one of these new testament scholars he wanted to give his life to scholarship and new testament studies and I told him that in my first year of seminary I had to drop out, I didn't have the funds to continue, didn't have a job and so my first year I was fairly tied up in Dallas trying to make ends meet and raise money to go to school but in that year it was sort of a wilderness experience for me and when I came back I had moved from a commitment to doing an old testament major to doing something more practical at the masters level which at that time was a Christian Ed program which had a different definition than that nomenclature suggests now but we had this conversation and I told him you know I think I've changed, I think I have a whole new appreciation for because I'd been working in some churches at the time too and I said I think I would like to spend some time in the practical area to finish off my masters and he was very cool in his response. He said well you know a people oriented ministry is a salutary objective. I've often thought about that, oh Carl give me a break and Carl graduated from Dallas, went out and failed in his ministry, failed in his marriage and I think he runs a B&B now. So I think those are the people who have influenced me significantly. People who are grounded; I'm the first guy in my family that went on into higher education into things I'm doing and it's pretty heavy. There's a certain pride factor that's associated with a professor at this university blah, blah and that's not where it's at. I think God has opened this door for me to have some joy at the end of life and to be closer to the ground, closer to the fire.

Question 4 - Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

All I can say is that I was driving down 12th Street in the direction of the Lighthouse and I was what they say on the internet, I was a lurker, I was lurking, I was checking on things and I just had this overwhelming sense that I needed to be down here. It was just a calm and it was that I had my eyes opened, the woman walking crossing the street I now saw and I knew her name and I discovered that, you know I used to think I had stuff that was of great value to these people and I needed to bring it to them and what I found is they have greater gifts to give to me. So, the tables have turned on me.

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

I would say 5 years.

Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

It's a, well it's a lighthouse. You know the Lighthouse was a name that was given to us by one of the men whose lives was transformed. He went out of here one day and said you know this place is a lighthouse and the name stuck. I think it's a good, I mean it's why we haven't gotten rid of the name because that's kind of what we envision what we do. We're all about shining the light of the gospel, shining the light of truth into people's lives and in that process, God does His work. I preach verse by verse now, that's fun if you've never tried that you should. It's just fun because it keeps me focused, I can preach in the moment by going verse by verse. When we got started on 1 Corinthians, I went through John and we went to 1 Corinthians, and I said to somebody if I don't have and be careful how you quote this, if I don't have a bunch of weddings to do before I get through this book I will be very disappointed and I will feel like a failure. Well we got through chapter 7 and no weddings. We got into chapter 11, now there were 3 in particular that I was after, before I got to 11 there was 1 who was we're going to do this but we have some paperwork to take care of but then there were these other 2 and we got into chapter 11 and chapter 11 isn't talking about marriage per se but it is saying if you're doing something presumptuously and you're taking the Lord's supper you put yourself in jeopardy and so I preached that of course as it reads and so now I did one wedding 2 weeks ago, the other one is promised before Christmas so that's my 3, those are the three I knew were shacking up so anyway. It's fun to see the Spirit and the Word do its work and I'm just very relaxed at what I do here. I don't have fancy outlines, I don't even try, I just let God speak through me.

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

The beauty of God I would say right now.

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

Well it includes art rather profusely. I average 2 or 3 a week, I've got a warehouse full of them. I need to somehow figure out a way to sell them and get them out of my way. I'm going to be bringing more over here because there's wall space. The form of my ministry is a one on one kind of thing more so than it's a populous thing. I preach on Sunday of course but then the more important thing that happens is what happens at dinner when I can sit down and that's usually where it really happens I'll often times I won't get anything to eat at all because I'm engaged with these people. They're not running through the parking lot because most of them lost their license a long time ago and they're not going anywhere. Besides that in many cases they don't have a place to go to eat so they stay and I get a chance to speak into their lives. It's a wonderful thing to be able to do that.

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

Okay, let me speak more explicitly to form. We have a unique set up here; we are actually three things. We have a business; we have a beverage line that's being watched in the Far East, we have a gasifier project that creates electricity out of rubbish; we have a number of other projects going. We are involved, I hesitate to tell you some of the things

we're involved in, but we have a business that exists to provide revenue for ministry. It costs us \$150,000 a year just to keep the lights on in this building. The people we serve can't possibly sustain that or support it in any way and so the idea was, this was Martha and Finny, the idea was to have a business that could sustain ministry and then enable that ministry to do whatever walks through the door. So, that's basically what we have. What we started with trying to reach out to the children in the area discovered that they were hungry, they hadn't eaten by Sunday they hadn't eaten since Friday when they were in school so we started feeding them and then they would be like can we bring some food home, my sister's hungry so we started sending food home. Martha and Finny began to buy groceries out of their own pocket and they were feeding a dozen or more families when they finally realized that because they are a 501c3 they could get food for pennies on the dollar over at the food bank so that's where we got this relationship with the food bank. Tomorrow we will have food distribution and we will provide groceries to about 250 people. In the course of the year, it's well over 10,000 people that will receive groceries from us. That in turn has given us entry into the community that didn't exist when we started, just opens the door. We don't just hand groceries to them, we ask them to come and take a number, have some breakfast, refreshments, or something, and while they're waiting, we're getting into their lives. We want to know who they are, what has brought them to this situation, so we've been open to receive whatever God opens up to us. Sometimes that has been a little bit beyond ~~unclear~~ so Abigail House, we're not qualified to run that thing but there are people who are seriously at risk in the absence of anything else we desperately need to be doing something to help so we're open to that. We stepped into the vacuum; we call it the holes in the gospel. So one of the most serious scandals regarding human trafficking, one of the biggest cases that was broken in the state of Virginia was right here in Lynchburg. Here's how it happened, the police officer who was tasked with going undercover, becoming part of this group, called his superior to say I can't do this and his superior said what do you mean you can't do this, he said these are 13 year old children what? I've talked to James Coleman and some of those girls were in his Sunday school, they were in his church and they were being trafficked, children so you don't leave that alone. You have to do something whether you're qualified or not. So, we have built some relationships with other places, networked with people and ours is kind of like a triage so we bring them in and we try to get them located where they can be long term. Some of them are doing wonderfully, so we've always been open. We have about 14-15 different ministries that are presently active. The Lighthouse kids is serving about 250 children every week and again it's being there and engaged with their lives. So, we're doing something with those kids every day. So that's the form, we have this open door that swings both ways and we're in conversation with the community to figure out ways to help them do what they do. On Martin Luther King Day it's the first time I confess I stood with a room primarily of black people, hands across the aisle joined hands and sang we shall overcome. It was an amazing thing that I have never done that is an indictment against me I guess, it was a wonderful thing to be invited to be a part of it. So we celebrated in Martin Luther King territory here, we celebrate him and I drew a portrait of him that we had hanging here on the walls during the month of February. So, that's the form and the function then is that we do it what we're told to do and we just don't say no. So, whatever it is, if God opens the door for it then we'll go through that door and engage it.

Question 10 - How has Lighthouse changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

The beginning, what made it happen for me was that well for one thing I had people praying that I would throw in my hat so you know that was happening but and you want to know how it's changed? I think it changes almost every day. It changes in terms of my understanding of what it is to serve Christ in a tangible way. It's not like preparing lectures and grading papers and all of that. Every person that comes through the door is a unique individual and they have a whole new different set of concerns and so I think, here's what I think may highlight the difference between my career at Liberty and what I am doing now. At Liberty, I have had a long career. I had the privilege of being at Liberty during the most exciting years, now it's another building. Back in the day, that was an exciting thing. So, I had a career and I was paid for my services. I've pastored before and was paid for my services. I'm a volunteer; nobody gets a dime serving here. We get other benefits; we get free lunch if we want. You know there's freedom in that because it isn't about who signs my check, it's I'm serving Christ here and the focus of that reality comes home all the time when I realize I'm not having to answer to anyone but the Lord and we're all in that same situation here. When we have conflicts and issues to resolve as we obviously will have and do it's much easier to go straight to the heart of an issue because nobody's job is being threatened, if I want to I can walk away, it won't cost me anything more than whatever. That's true with all of us and that's a hard lesson for a lot of people to internalize. We've had some issues with professionals recently who I think had hidden agendas and thought maybe somehow they were going to make the Liberty cash cow for themselves or something I don't know but they never got it, never understand what this is about so we're in this for the kingdom and we're not wanting to build a "big box lighthouse" downtown, we want to partner with people who are engaged and if we can work with them, our doctrinal statement is very strident, and I'm the theologian but I wrote this thing, and my focus was on what we agree on, not what we disagree about. So we have charismatics, Baptists, Presbyterians and Anglicans and Methodists, you name it and they're here and they all have their baggage and their issues and we serve together. We have on any given Sunday we have black and white and Asian, educated and uneducated, homeless, and rich, they're all sitting together and worshipping the Lord together. Probably the most diverse congregation in Lynchburg on Sunday morning and so that's what we're about. We're interested in working with anybody, remember back in the day the Moral Majority? Jerry Falwell would join hands with what he called *co-belligerents*. We can't agree on what we believe but we can agree on what we hate. Remember John's word to the Ephesians, you have the right kind of hate but the wrong kind of love. Well we're just the opposite, we're not after co-belligerents, we're not after what people hate, we're after what people love and we agree on love. Calvin had it that the cognitive was about knowing the mind, knowing, the will was about loving. I will do what I love and so that's what we're after. We had this girl come in here some time ago and she was Mormon atheist, I guess those things go together, and lesbian, very angry young lady. She hung out with us for 6 months and we did nothing but love her, we didn't argue about her Mormonism, we didn't argue about her lesbianism or anything of a sort, we just invited her to be a part of our family and God touched her in that context. She stayed with us about 6 months and in that time though she had been away from home for 6 years we convinced her to go home because her

family had no idea where she was or what she was doing and that would be an agonizing thing to have a teenage daughter just disappear like that so we convinced her to go back to Atlanta but before she left we have this open mic thing and sometimes we invite people to say what they want to say and this is her last Sunday and she said I have something to say. She got up and came all the way down to the front and she said when I came here I was angry and I was an atheist and she said I now know there's a God because I have seen Him here at the Lighthouse. And she paused for a few minutes and said that's all I have to say and she went on. I'm happy that we got that far with her. The last chapter is yet to be written and where that goes only God knows but we did our job, we introduced her to the living God.

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

The evolving needs of the people we serve.

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

Not sure.

Question 13 – What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

Yeah we try to love people in tangible ways, we break the rules. Like Sarah makes it a point to hug her girls and the counselors would say don't touch your clients like that, you don't do that. Well these girls don't know what a hug is until we hug them. The real deal so if we have to we break the rules and yeah we want people to know that we do care about them and that's a non-negotiable.

Question 14 - What do you want Lighthouse to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

I want it to become a multiplier. I would like us to infect other ministries somehow. I was asked to speak at an Indian Church of God conference up in Connecticut last year. So we're, Finny was there and he was with his Indian friends but there were 1500 Indians, up into the third generation, so there's grandmom and mom and kids, three generations and they started basically moving in 50 years. Alright so here they are and they're singing all these songs in Malawi, and they're preaching in Malawi, and they are all doing their thing together and looking for mates for their children, the whole deal, and so the theme that conference was prophecy so I preached on that text John to Ephesus, I said you do have the right kind of love, you love God greatly but you've forgotten the other half of that and you've come to America and God has actually brought you here to be missionaries, you guys have so much, you have such rich families and such a rich heritage and you're protecting that but I said you have been called to be a missionary to a nation that is dying and your neighbors are going to hell and what are we doing about that? That was my challenge to them to say come on, Malawi, who's going to hear that. You know you've got to break the ties with the homeland and you've got to adopt a new country. I get on to Finny all the time because he still has culture in him than he realizes, every once in awhile I say Finny don't die on that hill, you're in America deal with it. So

I would love for the philosophy of the Lighthouse to be transported elsewhere, multiplied. I think time is right. I have been guilty of despair at times when I realize what has happened to western culture, quasi-Christian culture, it's gone dead but that shouldn't stop the cause of the gospel and those are the times that we've done our best.

Thank you

Validation Examples

From: **David W. Hirschman**, dwhirschman@gmail.com
Subject: **Re: Life in Deep Ellum Interview**
Date: **February 15, 2017 at 10:27 AM** ~
To: **Joel Triska** joel@nandeeplum.com

Dear Joel,

Thank you for your great help in my research. Your participation in the research process has been instrumental in helping me conclude the overall project. Attached is a copy of your interview for review; please feel free to identify anything you would like changed or adjusted, and if you would, please reply that you have reviewed the transcript. One question that has come to light that was not asked a part of the interview process is, Does Life in Deep Ellum consider itself evangelical? Please let me know when you can. Again, I appreciate your help immensely.

Blessings,
Dave
David W. Hirschman,
dwhirschman@gmail.com

PDF

Deep Ellum
Transcript.pdf

From: **Underground Network** info@tampaunderground.com
Subject: **Re: Research Interview**
Date: **March 14, 2017 at 3:24 PM**
To: **David Hirschman** u15029973@tuks.co.za

Hello David,

Theologically the Underground is orthodox and evangelical. Thank you for asking and thank you for the interview.

Leann Theivagt
tampaunderground.com


On Thu, Mar 9, 2017 at 5:12 PM, David Hirschman <u15029973@tuks.co.za> wrote:
Dear Leann,

Thank you for your great help in my research. Your participation in the research process has been instrumental in helping me conclude the overall project. Attached is a copy of your interview for review; please feel free to identify anything you would like changed or adjusted, and if you would, please reply that you have reviewed the transcript. One question that has come to light that was not asked a part of the interview process is, Does Tampa Underground consider itself evangelical? Please let me know when you can. Again, I appreciate your help immensely.

Blessings,
Dave

This message and attachments are subject to a disclaimer. Please refer to <http://www.it.up.ac.za/documentation/governance/disclaimer/> for full details.

David W. Hirschman
Student - PhD Science of Religion and Missiology
u15029973@tuks.co.za

From: **David W. Hirschman**, dwhirschman@gmail.com 
Subject: Interview Transcript Validation
Date: January 10, 2017 at 1:31 PM
To: dmitchell@Liberty.edu



Dear Dr. Mitchell,

Thank you very much for participating in my University of Pretoria research: *Missional Perspectives and the Future Vitality of the Church in the United States: How Missional Focus, Form, and Function are Redefining American Christianity*. As promised, attached is a transcript of your interview conducted on November 30, 2016. If you would, please review the transcript for the purpose of validation, defined as:

“Respondent validation—to obtain feedback from the people studied, to lessen the misinterpretation of their self-reported views... both to corrections and changes that will increase the validity of a study” Robert K. Yin. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2011, 79.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the transcript, kindly respond with your approval, or with needed corrections, changes, or adjustments. I truly appreciate your help; your interview is an invaluable contribution to the overall study.



Research
Intervi...ell.pdf

Many thanks,
Dave

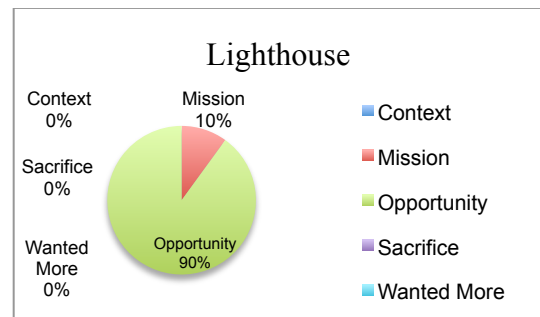
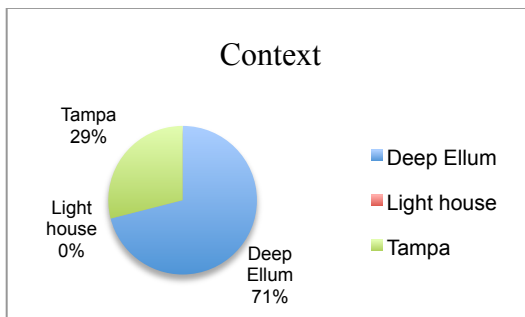
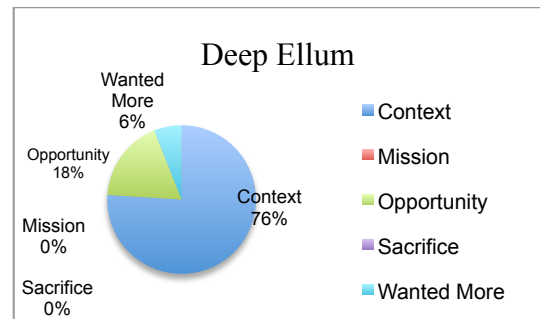
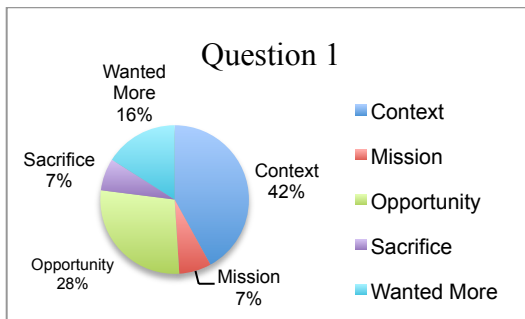
David W. Hirschman,
dwhirschman@gmail.com
u15029973@tuks.co.za

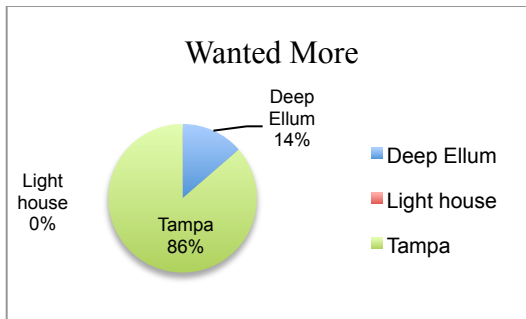
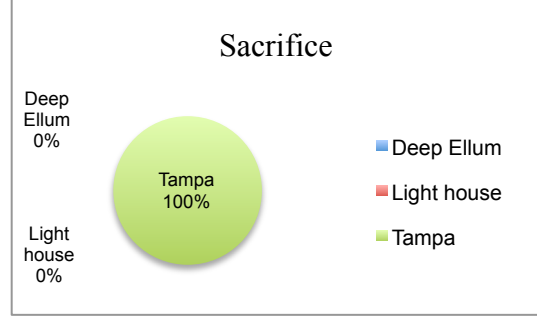
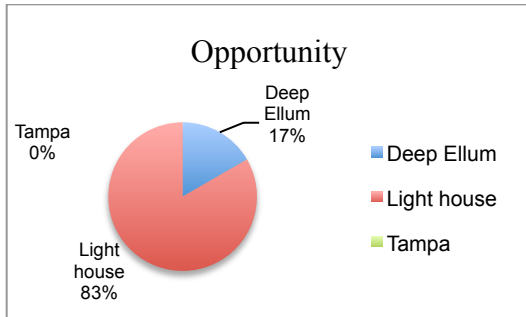
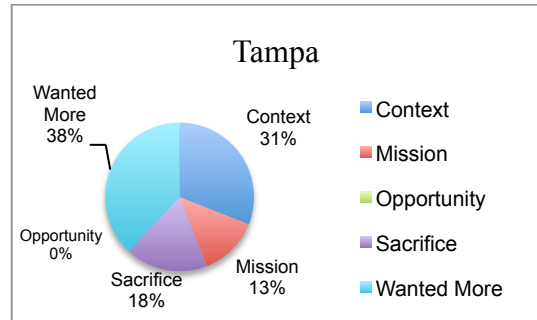
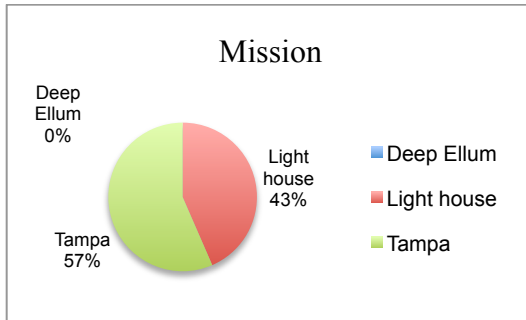
Ministry Leaders Interpreted and Illustrated Responses

Question 1 – What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light house	Tampa	Total
Context	a different culture from western culture	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	Copenhagen Christian Cultural Center - the inspiration.	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	Deep Ellum [is] a very entertainment district	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	engaging the new age culture	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	engaging with a lot of the asylum seekers	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	how northern and western Europe were responding post-Christendom culture.	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	our personal story is studying contextualization.	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	streets were just crowded with all kinds of people,	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	they spent about 9 months in Manila	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	They were forced by their context	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	to reach this context we had to think very differently.	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	to see Christ followers in a totally opposite context from what we're used to.	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	Trying to do some very different things	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	we studied abroad at the Philippines	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	we went on a study trip to northern Europe	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
we were not connecting.	6%	0%	0%	2.33%	
where it was just really marginalized abject poverty	0%	0%	6%	2.33%	
worked under the missionaries that were there.	0%	0%	6%	2.33%	
Mission	mission is really the thing that drove us	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	that was really the motivator	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	we were just sharing the love of Christ with people	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
Opportunity	(people) were getting saved	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	bars were open all night, music venues,	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	created by a community center	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	I'm 74 years old,	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	I'm a composite of my whole life,	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	I've been in ministry for over 50 years,	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	included pastoral ministry	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
	Lighthouse Community Fellowship is an accidental body	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
primarily teaching and administration.	0%	10%	0%	2.33%	

	Started a church	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	we had a coffee shop we had purchased	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	we suddenly came to the realization that we actually had a church on our hands.	0%	10%	0%	2.33%
Sacrifice	Quit their jobs	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	raised money to go	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	Uprooted their families	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
Wanted More	a core team really prayed about ten different cities	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	feeling like there was something more than just sitting in pews and middle class Christianity - experiencing in traditional churches.	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	in 2006 - 50 people from the Tampa Bay	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	little to no impact on the actual context	6%	0%	0%	2.33%
	wanting to really see like what is Jesus doing outside of our context	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	We weren't seeing that sort of passion and attention to what the Bible was actually commanding of us as followers of Him.	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	what we saw was really lacking in the western church, in traditional churches	0%	0%	6%	2.33%
	Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%



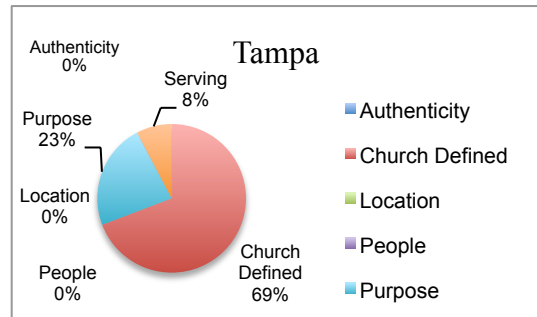
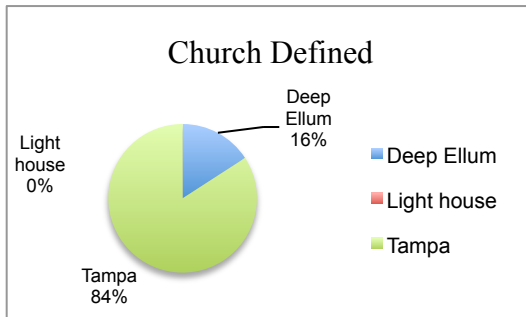
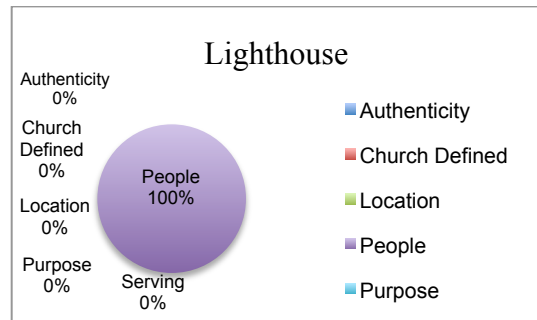
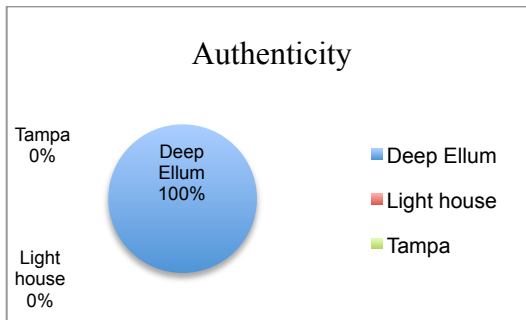
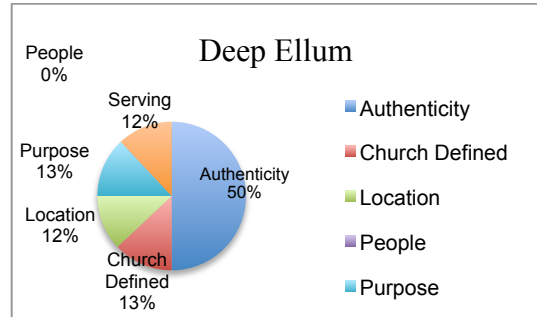
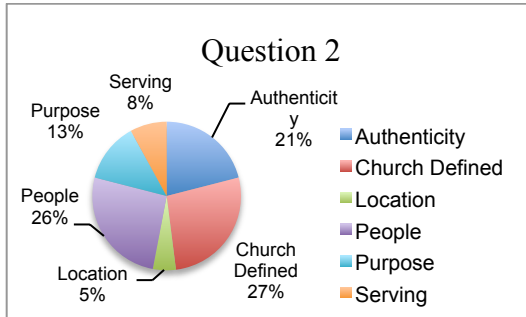


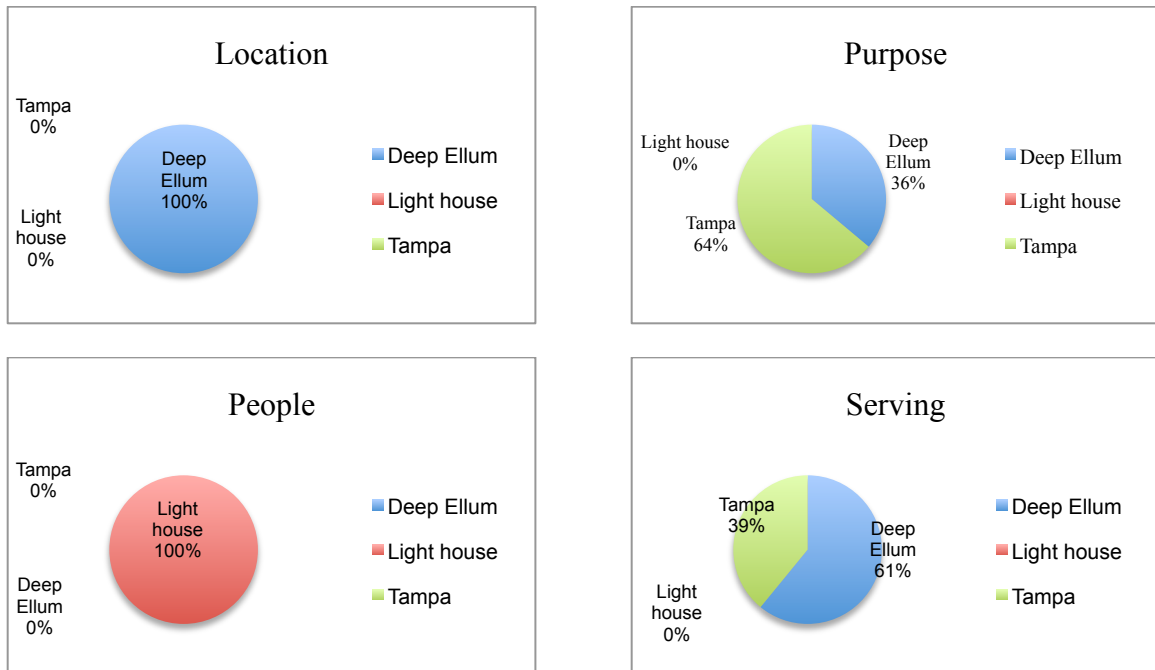
Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 1

Question 2 – How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light house	Tampa	Total
Authenticity	(knowing us) may will mess up what God is doing,	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	Intentional ambiguity	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	Self Definition	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	The language we use	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	Titles say who we are	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	We changed our terminology	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	We're quite content if no one else ever knows who we are	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
We're quite content with being anonymous.	6%	0%	0%	2.56%	
Church Defined	During those 9 months in the Philippines we came up with our 18 different core values	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	Ecclesial Minimum	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	Everything was on the table	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	Mega-churches are stuck in models that they can't switch,	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	our building is a cultural center	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	That really defined us to have these smaller micro churches	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	The scriptures	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	The traditional things as we knew it	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	We thought what do we consider church; that's the big question	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	We were able to look at Christianity as we knew it	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
We were able to look at that and say what do we want to define us as a movement.	0%	0%	8%	2.56%	
Location	A very anti-institutional kind of a place	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	We have a church that meets here because church is people	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
People	(The homeless are) diamonds in the rough	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	Homeless people	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	Jesus said love God, love your neighbor and you don't get to choose who your neighbors are	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	Poverty individuals	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	The homeless are a homogenous bunch	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	They are people who are homeless because they choose to be	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	They have a different set of concerns and issues	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	We have an opportunity to find some of these people	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	We open the door and we let them come in	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
	We're open to the stranger	0%	10%	0%	2.56%
Purpose	In every dark corner	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	In every place where the gospel is needed.	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	See the kingdom of God advance in new ways	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	We exist to empower those small expressions of the	0%	0%	8%	2.56%

	church				
	We want to be a voice in evangelical America	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
Serving	Doing unique things in their unique context	0%	0%	8%	2.56%
	Our intentions are to serve	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
	Serve with no strings attached	6%	0%	0%	2.56%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%





Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 2

Question 3 What authors have influenced you (the leadership team) most and why?

Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Alan Hirsch	25%	0%	25%	22%
David Bosch	0%	0%	25%	11%
Gene Getz	0%	100%	0%	11%
Gustavo Gutierrez	0%	0%	25%	11%
Hugh Halter	25%	0%	0%	11%
Lesslie Newbigin	25%	0%	0%	11%
Michael Frost	25%	0%	0%	11%
Wolfgang Simpson	0%	0%	25%	11%
Quotations	100%	100%	100%	100%

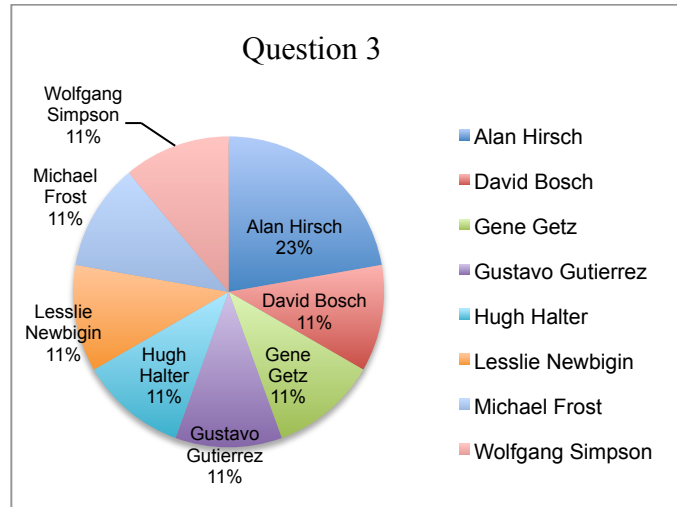
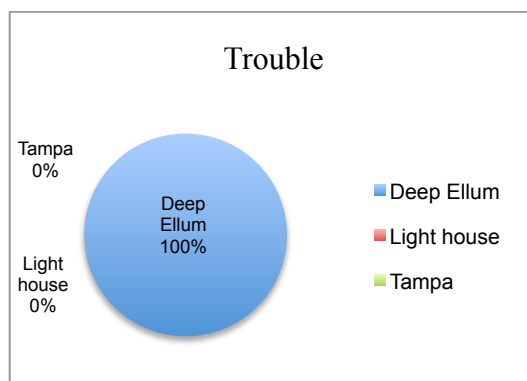
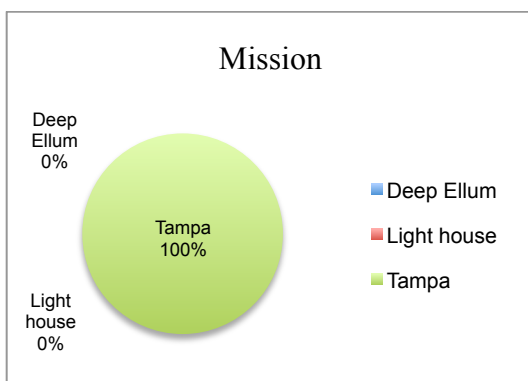
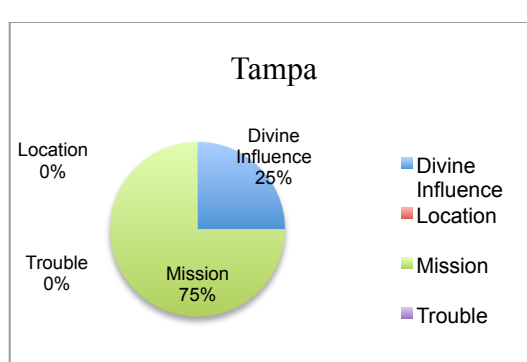
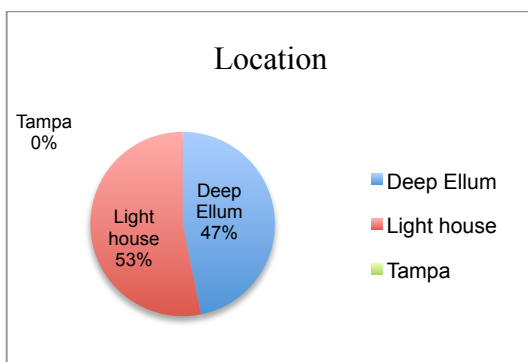
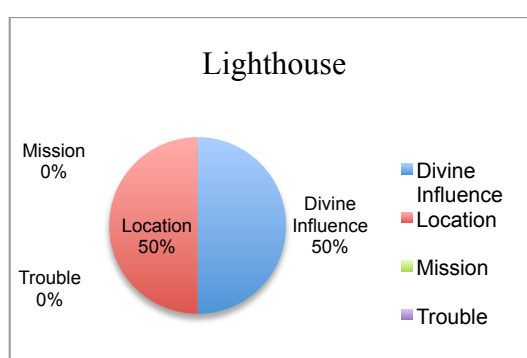
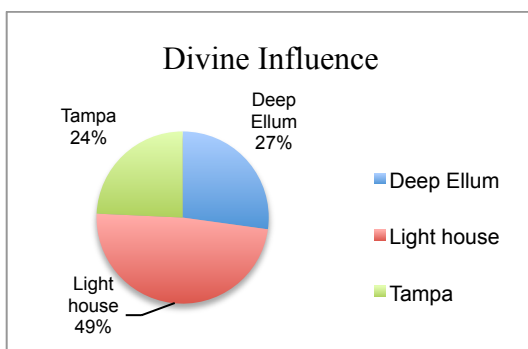
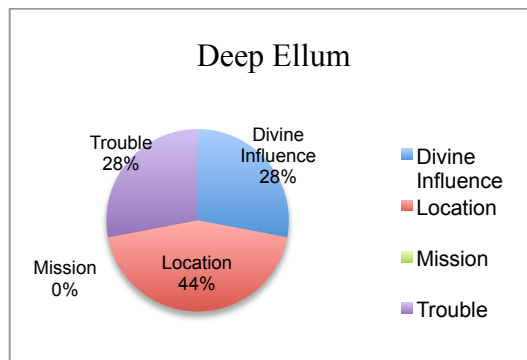
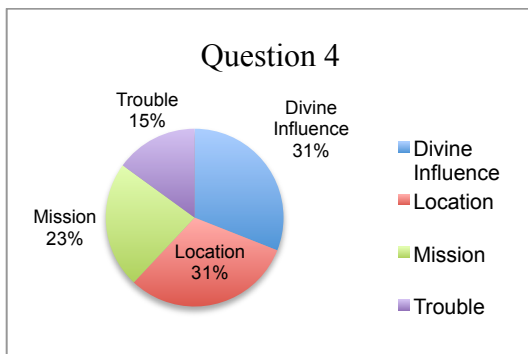


Illustration of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 3

Question 4 - Question 4 – What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light house	Tampa	Total
Divine Influence	Divine Direction	0%	50%	0%	8%
	Jesus is Lord	0%	0%	25%	8%
	start being missionaries	14%	0%	0%	8%
	stop being pastors	14%	0%	0%	8%
Location	a little pocket of post Christendom	14%	0%	0%	8%
	Context	14%	0%	0%	8%
	Location	14%	50%	0%	15%
Mission	Empower Kingdom Missionaries	0%	0%	25%	8%
	Empowerment	0%	0%	25%	8%
	Empowerment and Mobilization	0%	0%	25%	8%
Trouble	Difficulty and Struggle	14%	0%	0%	8%
	Financial Struggle	14%	0%	0%	8%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%



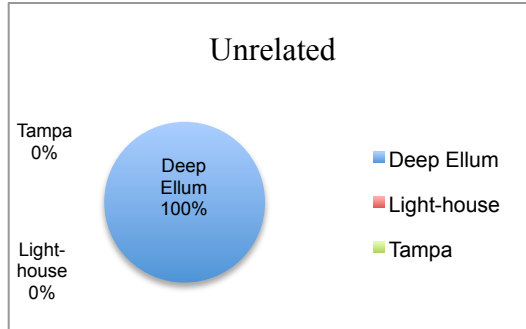
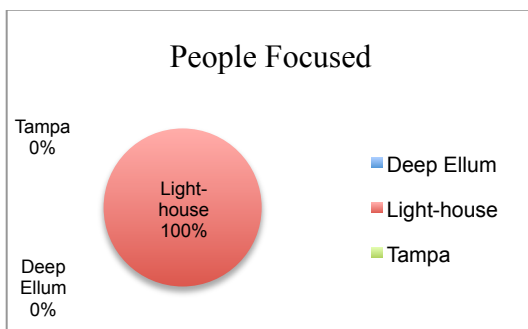
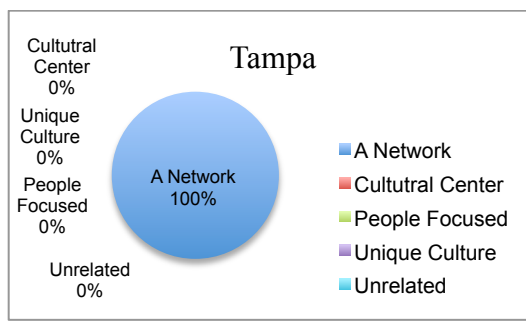
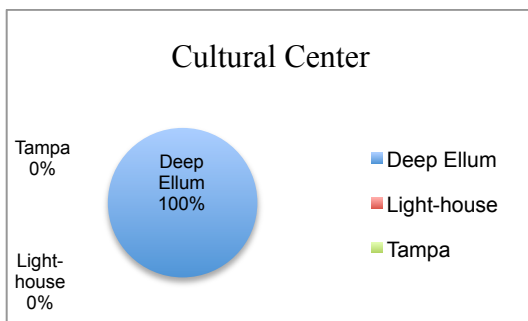
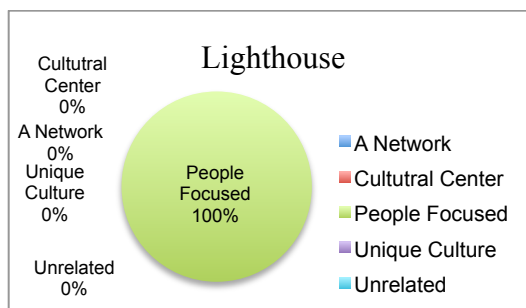
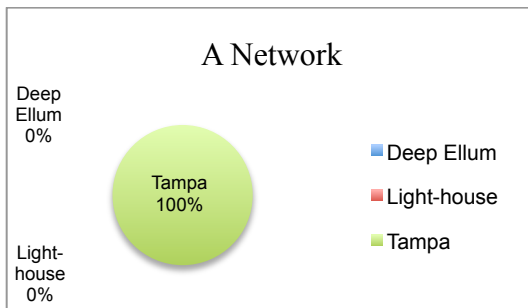
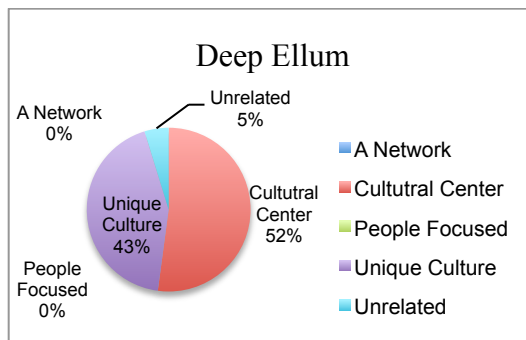
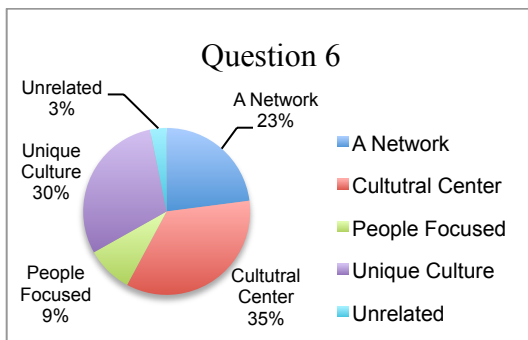
Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 4

Question 5 – How long have you (the leadership team) led this ministry?

Ministry	Years
Deep Ellum	7
Lighthouse Community Fellowship	6
Tampa Underground	10

Question 6 – How do you describe your church?

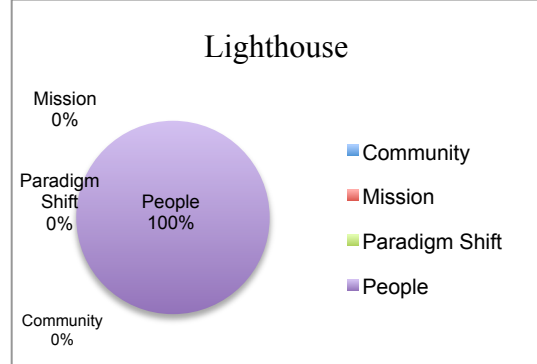
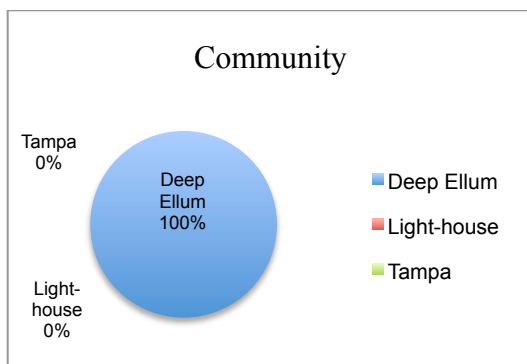
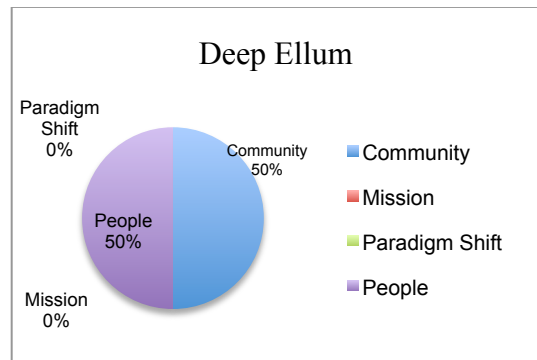
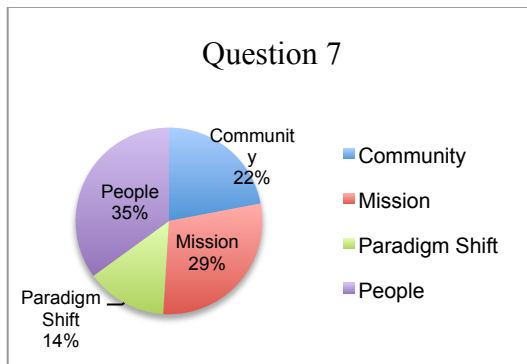
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
A Network	a church, and it's a community of missionaries,	0%	0%	14%	3%
	a network of micro churches	0%	0%	14%	3%
	each is involved in worship, community and missions	0%	0%	14%	3%
	Everything that we do needs to empower	0%	0%	14%	3%
	exist to help micro churches do what they're doing.	0%	0%	14%	3%
	needs to serve the ministry, we do exist to serve	0%	0%	14%	3%
Cultural Center	a coffee shop with a community aspect	5%	0%	0%	3%
	four strengths	5%	0%	0%	3%
	host concerts and all kinds of community events,	5%	0%	0%	3%
	our methodology is determined by listening to the community	5%	0%	0%	3%
	pillars for our cultural center	10%	0%	0%	6%
	to help people	5%	0%	0%	3%
	we have an art gallery	5%	0%	0%	3%
	we have music shows out of there	5%	0%	0%	3%
	we have space that we lease out to local entrepreneurs	5%	0%	0%	3%
we renovated the building around those pillars	5%	0%	0%	3%	
People Focused	in that process, God does His work.	0%	33%	0%	3%
	shining the light of truth into people's lives	0%	33%	0%	3%
	We're all about shining the light of the gospel	0%	33%	0%	3%
Unique Culture	a pocket of downtown Dallas	5%	0%	0%	3%
	bars, saloons, jazz,	5%	0%	0%	3%
	blacks and early immigrants from Europe	5%	0%	0%	3%
	Deep Ellum is only a couple square miles	5%	0%	0%	3%
	The art and music scene.	5%	0%	0%	3%
	the marginalized of Dallas	5%	0%	0%	3%
	very condensed	5%	0%	0%	3%
	very unique culture	5%	0%	0%	3%
we did about 1,000 street interviews	5%	0%	0%	3%	
Unrelated	Unrelated	5%	0%	0%	3%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%

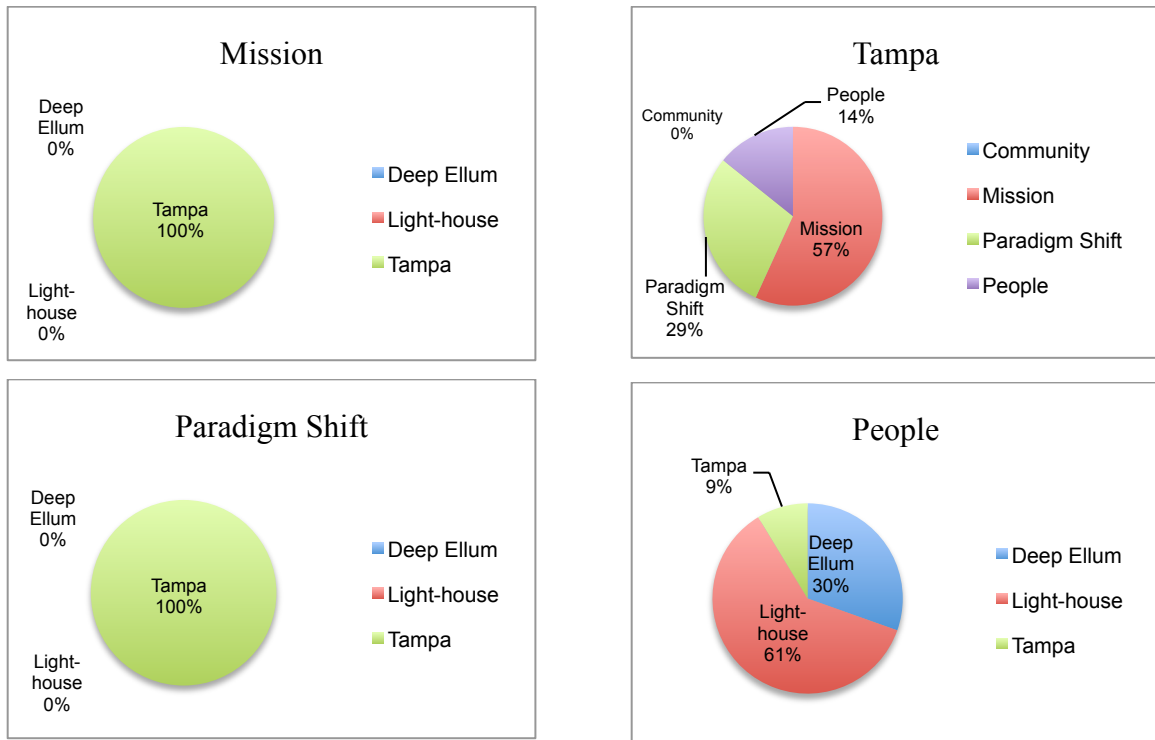


Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 6

Question 7 – What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Lighthouse	Tampa	Total
Community	Supported Focus	17%	0%	0%	7%
	Supporting the Community	33%	0%	0%	14%
Mission	Church for missionaries	0%	0%	14%	7%
	No spectators	0%	0%	14%	7%
	People involved in mission	0%	0%	14%	7%
	We're the church for the 20 percent	0%	0%	14%	7%
Paradigm Shift	Traditional Church - 20% involved	0%	0%	14%	7%
	Traditional Church - 80% observers	0%	0%	14%	7%
People	Church for people in traditional church	0%	0%	14%	7%
	Empowered to be friends with people	17%	0%	0%	7%
	Our People	17%	0%	0%	7%
	The beauty of God	0%	100%	0%	7%
	The process for people	17%	0%	0%	7%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%

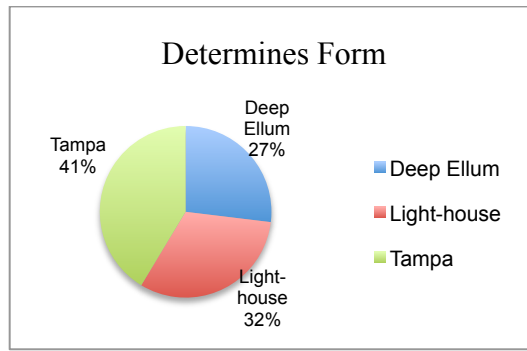
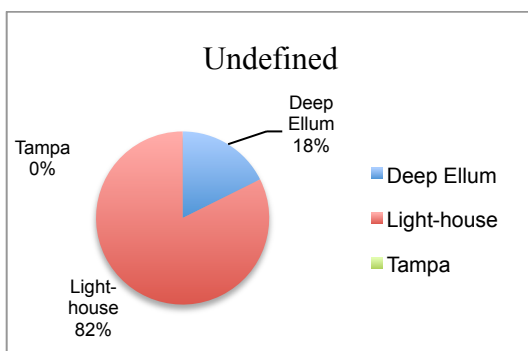
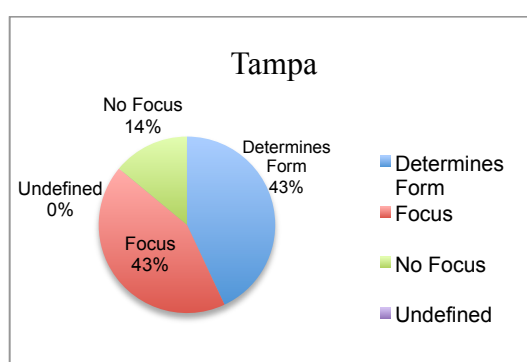
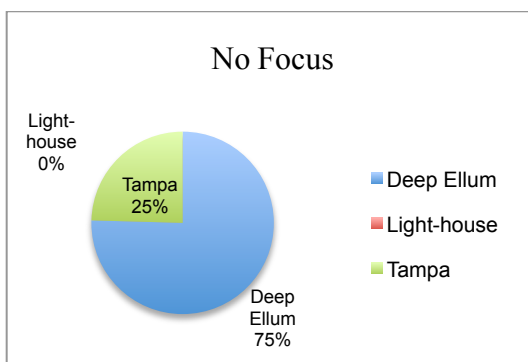
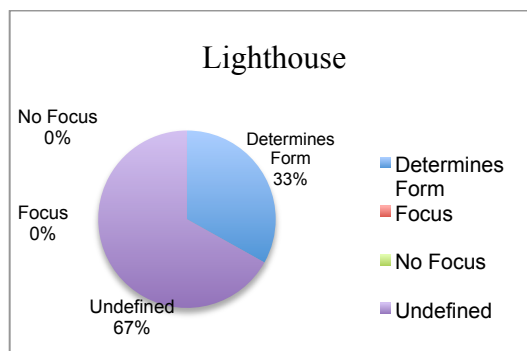
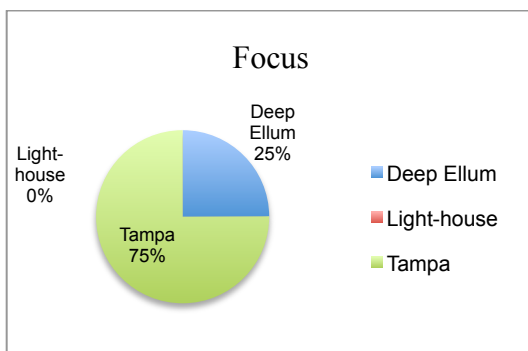
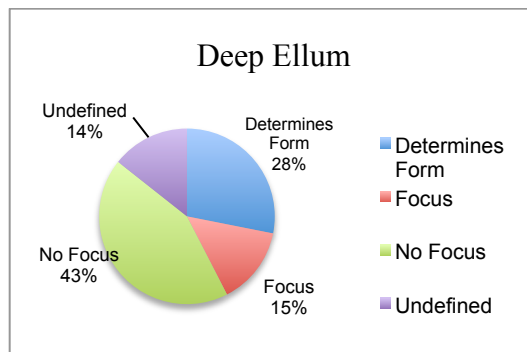
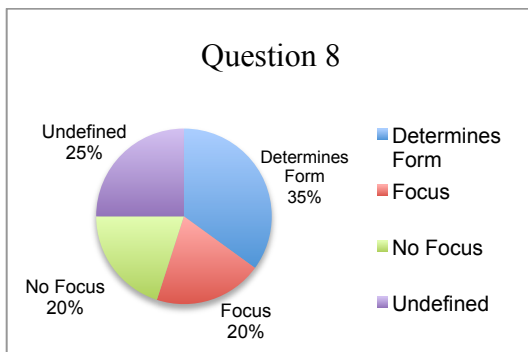




Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 7

Question 8 – How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

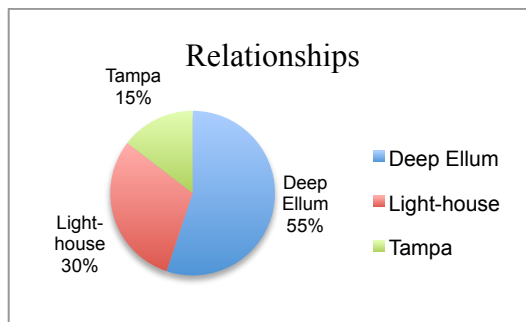
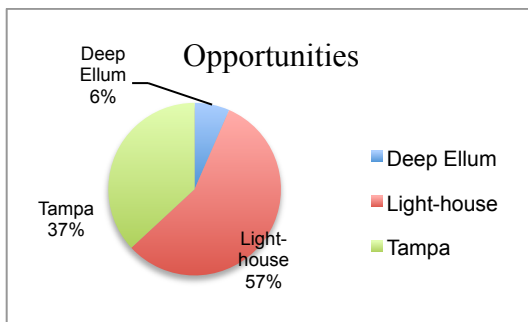
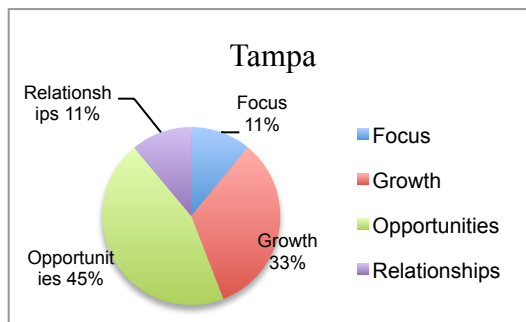
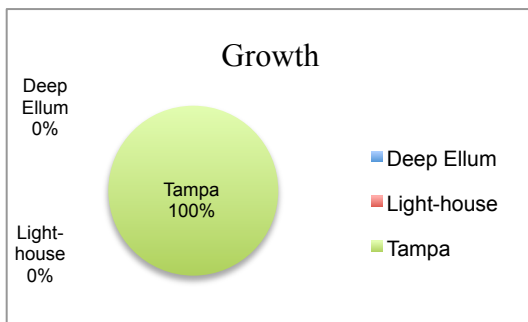
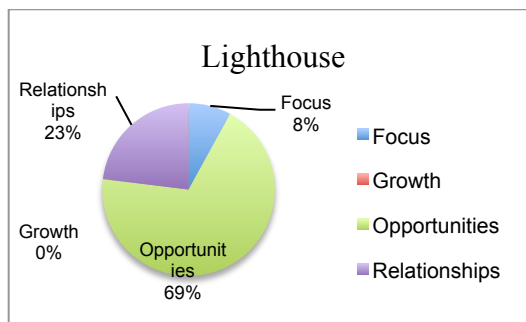
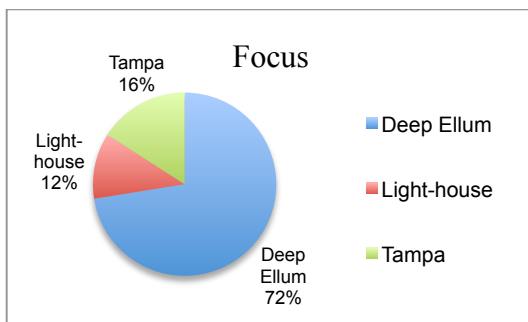
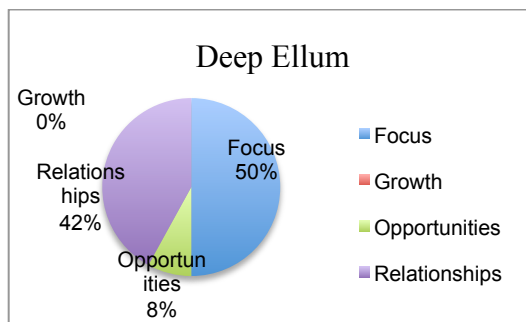
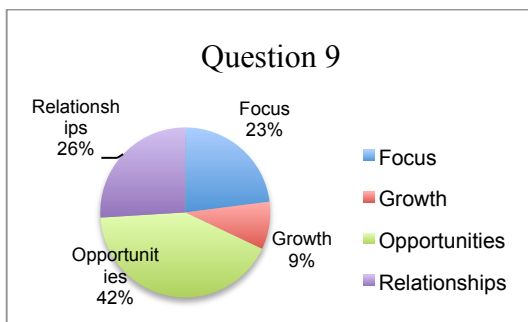
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Determines Form	Engaged with People	0%	17%	0%	5%
	Expanding Vision	0%	0%	14%	5%
	Focus Determined by Form	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Micro Churches	0%	0%	14%	5%
	most people tend to reverse engineer it.	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Scriptural Growth	0%	0%	14%	5%
	Speak into Lives	0%	17%	0%	5%
Focus	it's central	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Motivation	0%	0%	14%	5%
	Reach Every Community	0%	0%	14%	5%
	Unreached People	0%	0%	14%	5%
No Focus	Assumed Definition	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Existing Unquestioned Form	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Providing Similar Religious Experience	14%	0%	0%	5%
	Traditional Thinking	0%	0%	14%	5%
Undefined	Undefined	14%	67%	0%	25%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%



Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 8

Question 9 - What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

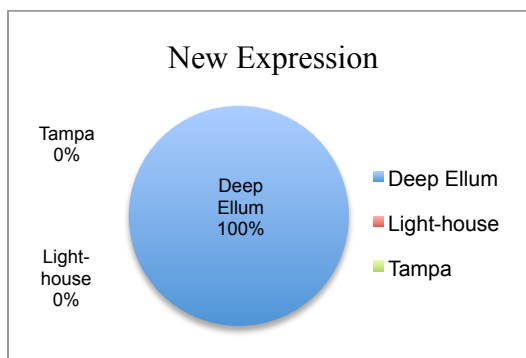
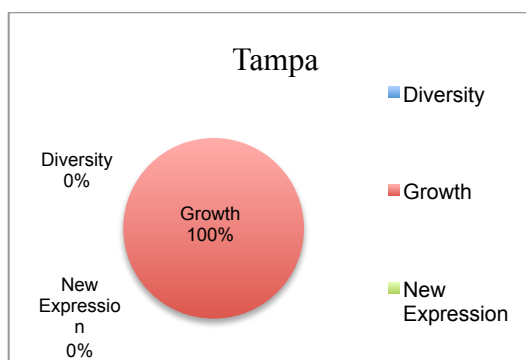
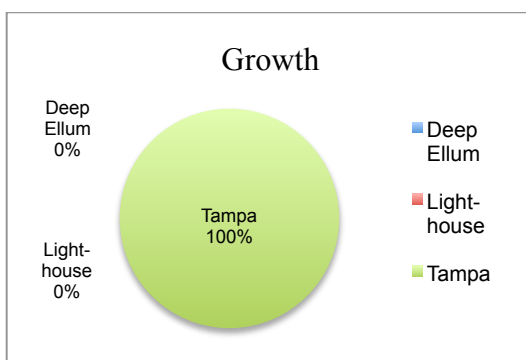
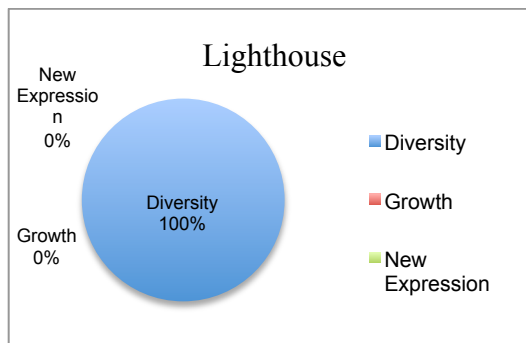
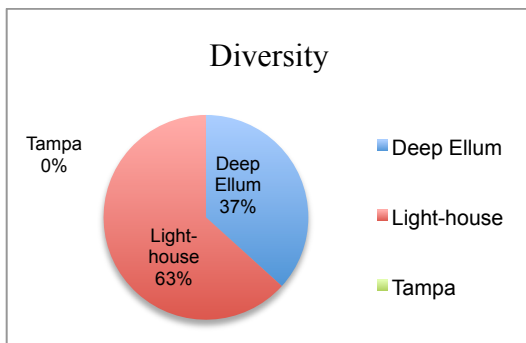
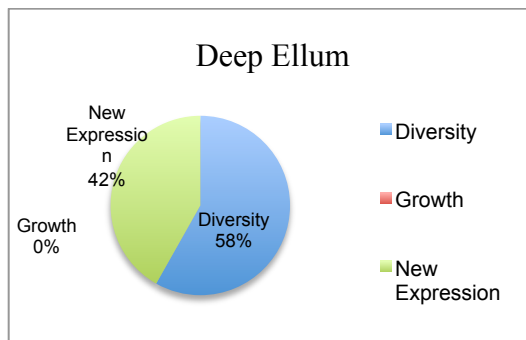
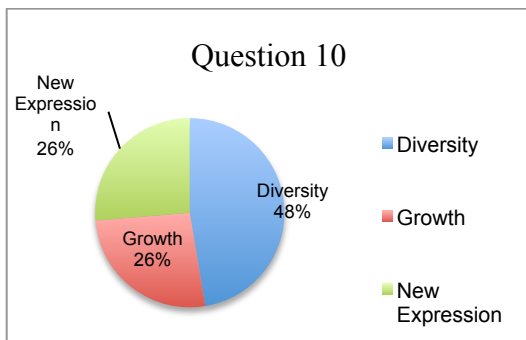
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Focus	End Function	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Form Hinders or Encourages what we do	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Form supports Function	0%	8%	0%	3%
	God's Redefining to Work in our Community	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Measure of Success	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Not Self-Centered	0%	0%	11%	3%
	Not the building of a Church	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Strategies	8%	0%	0%	3%
Growth	Creates Growth	0%	0%	33%	9%
Opportunities	Creates Opportunities	0%	23%	11%	12%
	Feeding Children	0%	8%	0%	3%
	Food Distribution	0%	15%	0%	6%
	Involved in the Community	8%	8%	0%	6%
	Opens doors into the Community	0%	15%	33%	15%
Relationships	Connected to People	0%	23%	11%	12%
	Contact	8%	0%	0%	3%
	deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them	8%	0%	0%	3%
	it's building a community	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Learning about each other's stories	8%	0%	0%	3%
	Relationships	8%	0%	0%	3%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%



Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 9

Question 10 - How has Life in Deep Ellum changed since beginning, or from the start of your leadership?

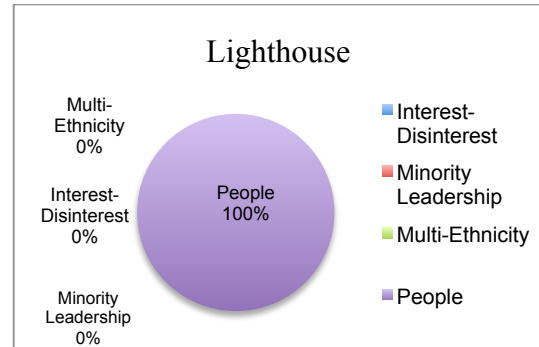
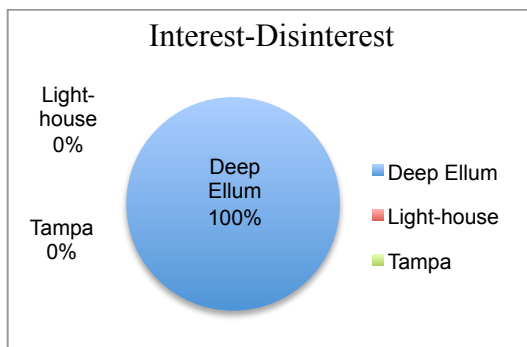
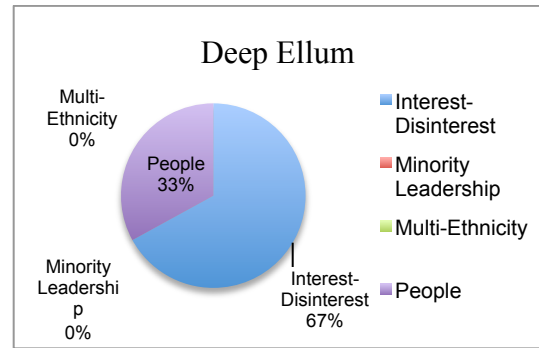
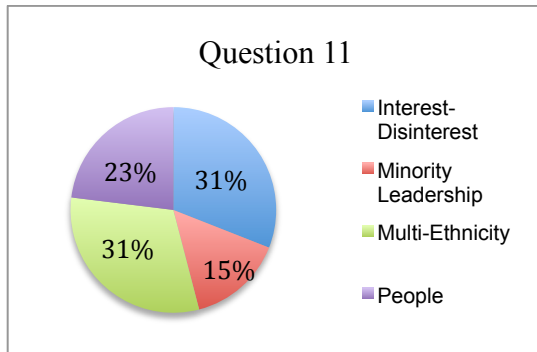
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Diversity	different set of concerns	0%	50%	0%	5%
	Diverse Environment	8%	0%	0%	5%
	diversity	8%	0%	0%	5%
	Every person that comes through the door is a unique individual	0%	50%	0%	5%
	multi-generational, multi-ethnic, socio-economically diverse community	8%	0%	0%	5%
	multiple cultures that are expressing Christianity	8%	0%	0%	5%
	social, economic diversity	8%	0%	0%	5%
	urban environment	8%	0%	0%	5%
	vocational and generational diversity	8%	0%	0%	5%
Growth	in number and growth,	0%	0%	20%	5%
	its really grown over the years.	0%	0%	20%	5%
	we have spread out	0%	0%	20%	5%
	We're in Nebraska and Alabama	0%	0%	20%	5%
	We're in Hamburg, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, the Philippines, Illinois	0%	0%	20%	5%
New Expression	a more beautiful expression of what the kingdom	8%	0%	0%	5%
	Church as a Cross-Cultural Experience	8%	0%	0%	5%
	Culture opposed to Consumerism	8%	0%	0%	5%
	everybody belongs	8%	0%	0%	5%
	Opposed to One Dimensional Church Culture	8%	0%	0%	5%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%

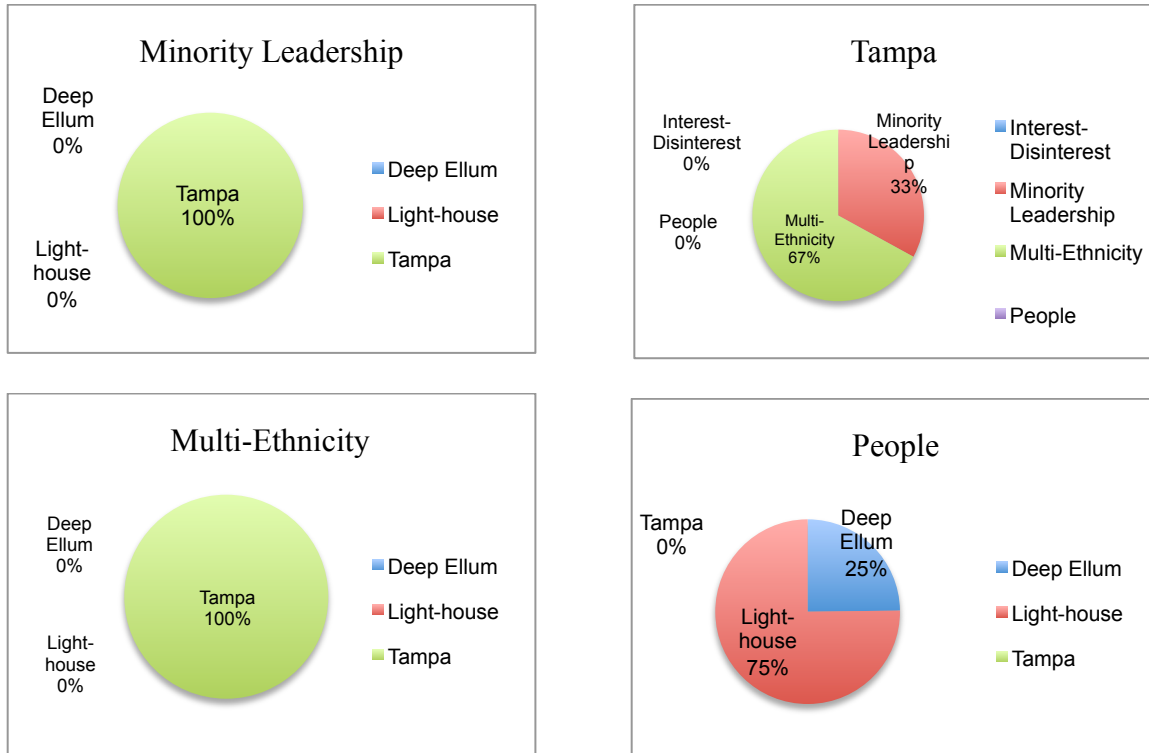


Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 10

Question 11 – What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

Code Groups	Initial Codes	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Interest-Disinterest	Disinterest in Organized Religion	17%	0%	0%	8%
	Interest in "Disconnected" Religion	17%	0%	0%	8%
	Interest in "Disconnected" Spirituality	17%	0%	0%	8%
	The growth of the “Nones.”	17%	0%	0%	8%
Minority Leadership	60 percent minority leadership	0%	0%	17%	8%
	70 percent women in Leadership	0%	0%	17%	8%
Multi-Ethnicity	Initiative driving change	0%	0%	17%	8%
	Navigate something that’s not typically a white male face	0%	0%	17%	8%
	Navigating multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation	0%	0%	17%	8%
	We are this multi ethnic expression of the church	0%	0%	17%	8%
People	needs of the people we serve	0%	100%	0%	8%
	people aren’t projects	17%	0%	0%	8%
	relationships with people outside of our congregation	17%	0%	0%	8%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%

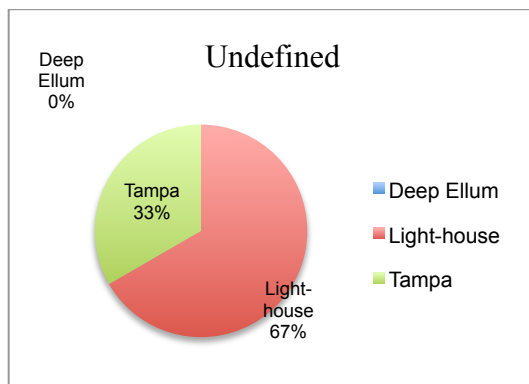
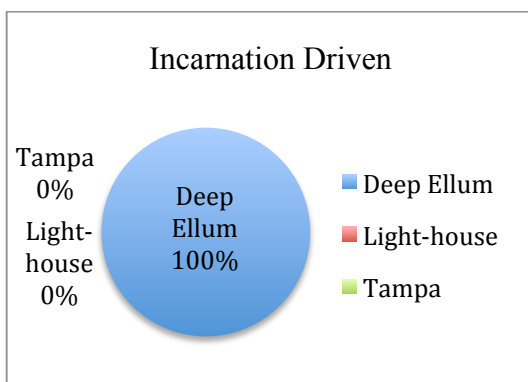
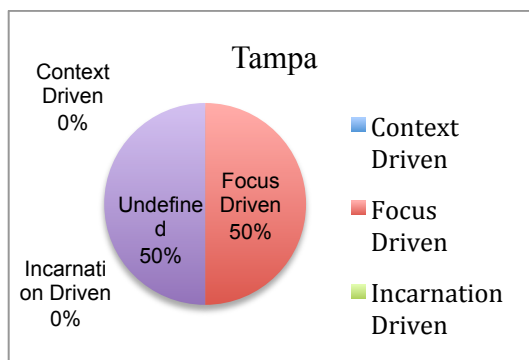
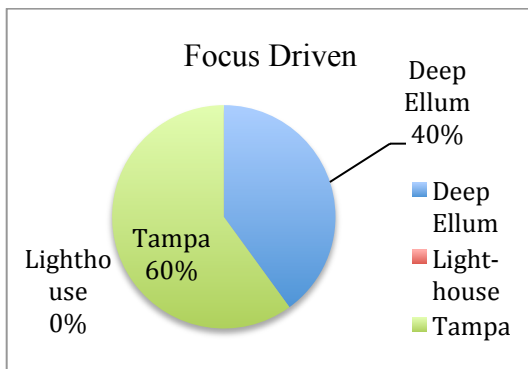
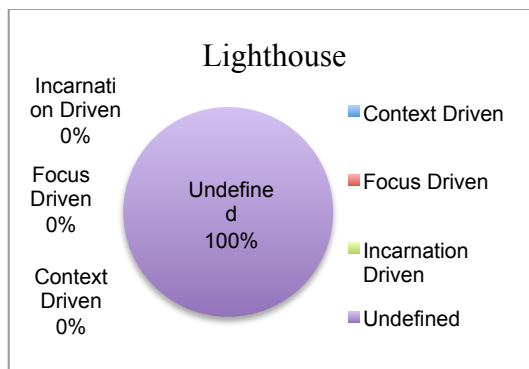
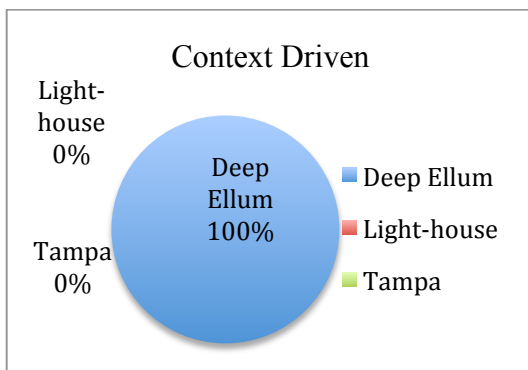
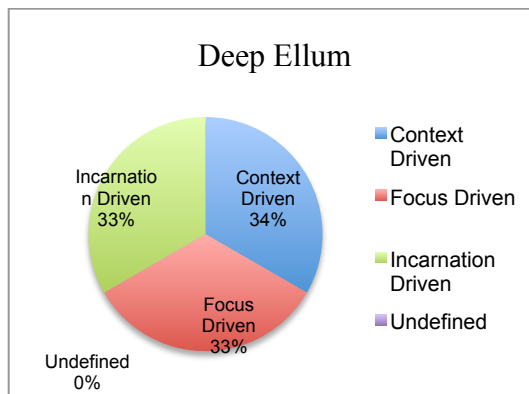
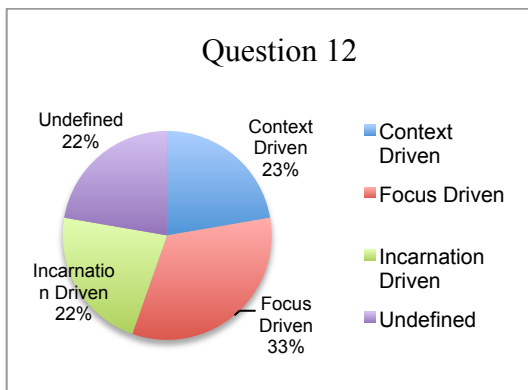




Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 11

Question 12 – How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

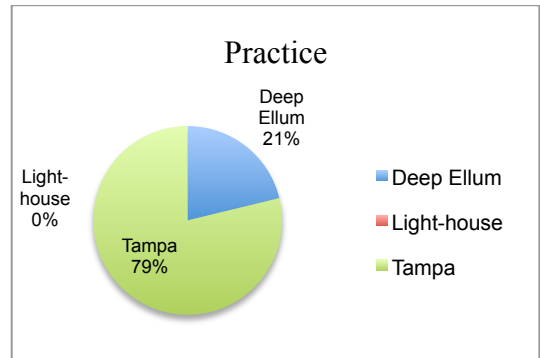
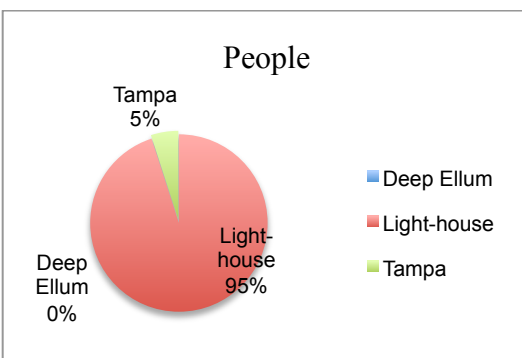
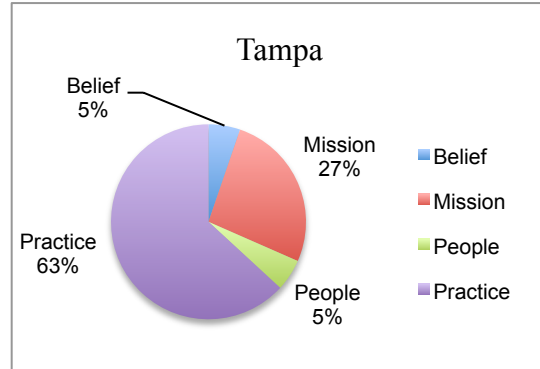
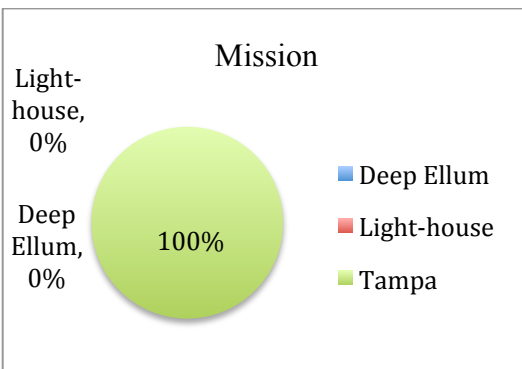
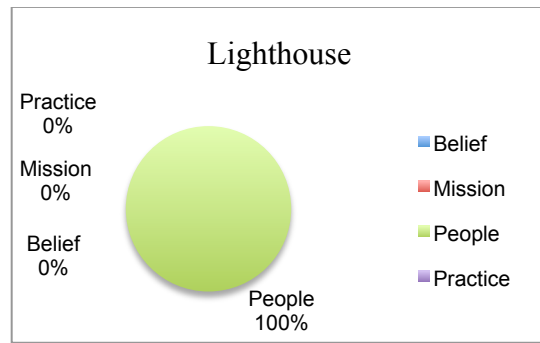
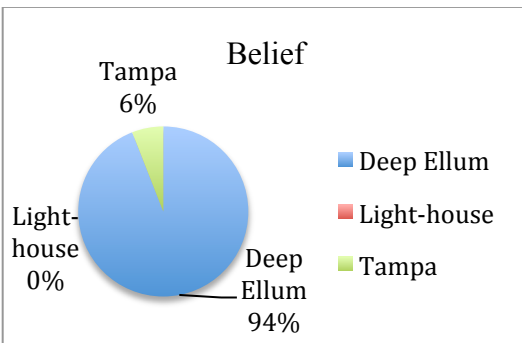
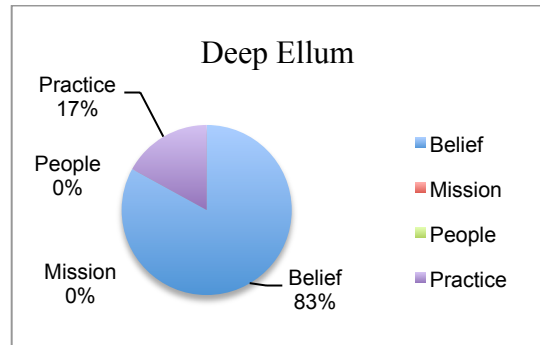
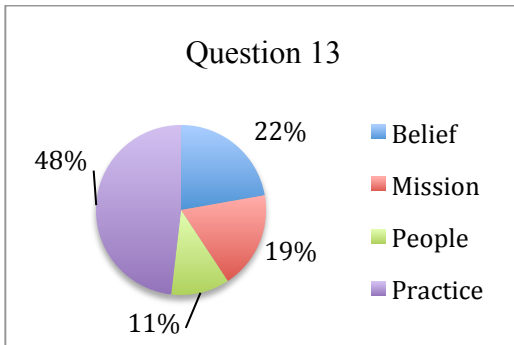
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Totals
Context Driven	Context Changes	17%	0%	0%	11%
	Context will drive everything.	17%	0%	0%	11%
Focus Driven	Challenged to constantly focus and refocus	17%	0%	0%	11%
	Follow God's Spirit	0%	0%	50%	11%
	We need to be open to and aware of how God wants us to respond.	17%	0%	0%	11%
Incarnation Driven	Incarnational also means to be flexible	17%	0%	0%	11%
	Love our neighbor	17%	0%	0%	11%
Undefined	Undefined	0%	100%	50%	22%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%



Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 12

Question 13 - What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

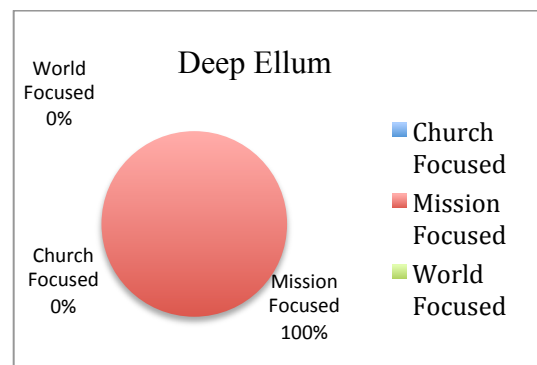
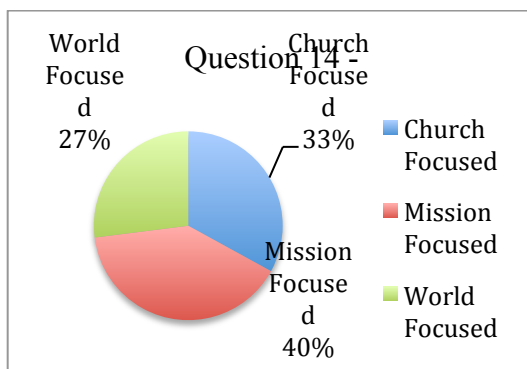
Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Light-house	Tampa	Total
Belief	Basic Unifying Doctrine	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
	Creedal	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
	Doctrine - the Main Thing	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
	Scripture - practice for Daily Life	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
	The Apostle's Creed	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
	We trust the authority, reliability and truth of all Scripture.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
Mission	We affirm microchurch as the most basic expression of the church	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	we affirm that every culture and ethnicity, while imperfect, reflects the mosaic of God's own image	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	we commit ourselves to the mission of God to reach the whole world.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We will do mission because we are sent people	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We will value the empowerment of every microchurch community	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
People	Care about people	0%	50%	0.00%	3.70%
	Love people in tangible ways	0%	50%	0.00%	3.70%
	We value lost people	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
Practice	The way of Jesus is our way	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We affirm seasons of zeal and charismatic expression of the greatness and majesty of God along with seasons of silence and stillness before God.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We affirm the priesthood of all believers.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	we commit ourselves to both sharing and giving.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We commit ourselves to each other	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We commit ourselves to live a life of prayer	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We commit to live a life free from clutter and the allure of materialism.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We commit to pursue humility	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We want our lives to be characterized by passion	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We will live for the biblical concept of justice.	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We will remember the poor	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	We will value the paradox of exuberance and zeal in worship, community life, and evangelism	0%	0%	5.26%	3.70%
	Wholistic Environment	17%	0%	0.00%	3.70%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%

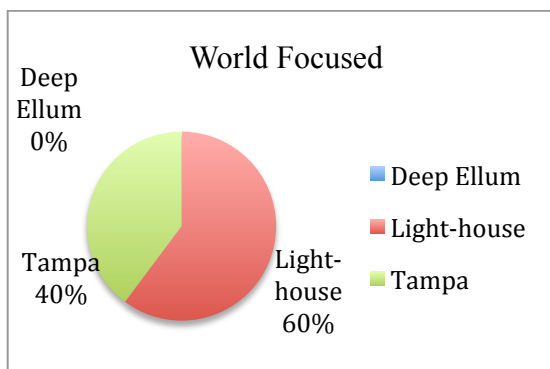
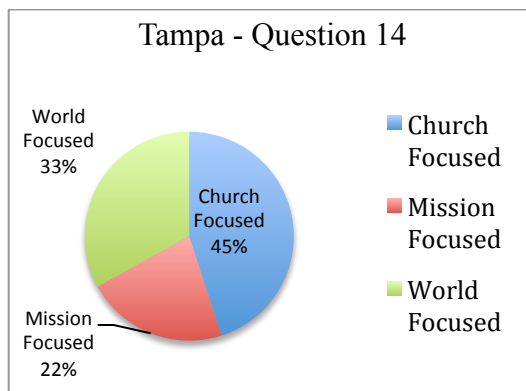
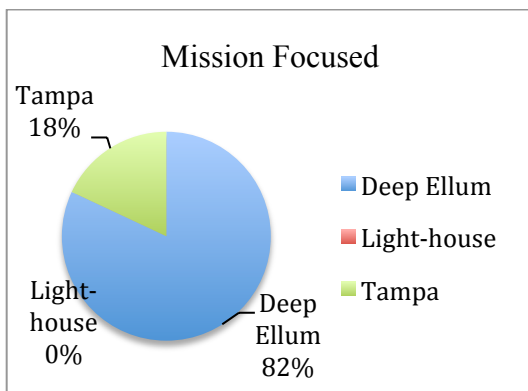
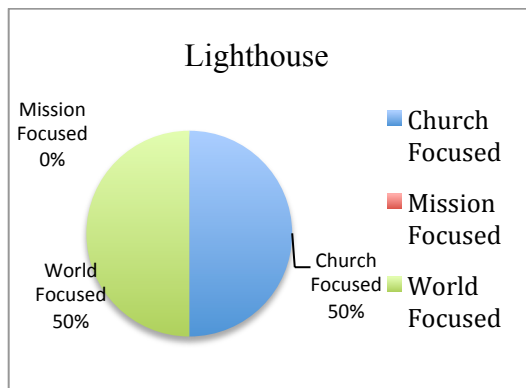
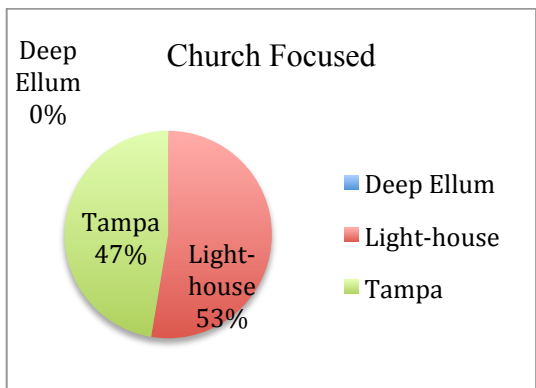


Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Response to Question 13

Question 14 – What do you want your ministry to become or become more of as you continue into the future?

Code Group	Initial Code	Deep Ellum	Lighthouse	Tampa	Total
Church Focused	help, reform and love the church	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	infect other ministries	0%	50%	0%	6.67%
	love for the church	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	work with American and western churches to really help them	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
Mission Focused	Active in Neighborhood Community	25%	0%	0%	6.67%
	Be Light that reveals God	25%	0%	0%	6.67%
	Different hubs in the US and around the World	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	drawing people to Jesus Christ	25%	0%	0%	6.67%
	Meeting Needs	25%	0%	0%	6.67%
move our people toward mission	0%	0%	11%	6.67%	
World Focused	A Multiplier	0%	50%	0%	6.67%
	our DNA in different cities and internationally	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	places in every major city	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
	spread our movement out across the world and different places	0%	0%	11%	6.67%
Quotations		100%	100%	100%	100%





Combined Illustrations of Ministry Leaders Responses to Question 14

APPENDIX D: ATLAS.ti RESEARCH REPORTS

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ATLAS.ti Report - Missional Descriptions for a Definition

Initial Codes Identified

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Oct 22, 2016

Codes (25)

- Centered on Jesus
 - Contextual
 - Covenant Community
 - Discipleship
 - God's Kingdom
 - Healing
 - Hope
 - Incarnational
 - Intentional
 - Liberating
 - Local
 - Missionary
 - Mutual Responsibility
 - Pilgrim
 - Praise
 - Prayer
 - Proclaiming
 - Reconciling
 - Sanctifying
 - Sent
 - Transforming
 - Truth
 - Unifying
 - Welcoming
 - Worship
-

ATLAS.ti Report - Missional Descriptions for a Definition

Initial Code Designation Grouped by Author

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Oct 22, 2016

1 Bosch

Used Codes:

- God's Kingdom
- Incarnational
- Local
- Missionary
- Pilgrim

5 Quotations:

- ☞ 1:1 The Church is essentially missionary: ● **Missionary**
 - ☞ 1:3 The Church is the sign and instrument of God's kingdom: ● **God's Kingdom**
 - ☞ 1:4 The Church is involved in the world: (on earth, the seed in the beginning of God's kingdom) ● **Incarnational**
 - ☞ 1:5 The Universal Church finds its true existence in the local churches: ● **Contextual**
 - ☞ 1:6 The Church is a pilgrim Church (finding it self in a diaspora situation): ● **Pilgrim**
-

2 Guder

Used Codes:

- Proclaiming
- Reconciling
- Sanctifying
- Unifying

4 Quotations:

☞ 2:1 The Church is a proclaiming community: its Apostolicity: ● **Proclaiming**

☞ 2:2 The Church is a reconciling and reconciled community: its Catholicity:
● **Reconciling**

☞ 2:3 The Church is a sanctifying community: its Holiness: ● **Sanctifying**

☞ 2:4 The Church is a unifying community: its Unity: ● **Unifying**

3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer

Used Codes:

- Contextual
- God's Kingdom
- Intentional
- Proclaiming
- Reconciling
- Sanctifying
- Transforming
- Unifying

7 Quotations:

☞ 3:1 The Church is Contextual – understanding itself as part of a larger context:
● **Contextual**

☞ 3:2 The Church is Intentional – existing for the purpose of following Christ in mission: ● **Intentional**

☞ 3:3 The Church is Proclaiming – understanding it's self as intentionally sent by God to announce the Kingdom of God in Christ: ● **God's Kingdom**, ● **Proclaiming**

☞ 3:4 The Church is Reconciling – as a reconciling and healing presence in its context: ● **Reconciling**

☞ 3:5 The Church is Sanctifying – living out it's truth and serving as a purifying influence: ● **Sanctifying**

☞ 3:6 The Church is Unifying - embracing, and folding, gathering community receiving persons into its fellowship: ● **Unifying**

☞ 3:7 The Church is Transforming – as the “salt of the earth” living out and following biblical concepts of mission: ● **Transforming**

4 Hirsch

Used Codes:

- Centered on Jesus
- Covenant Community
- Discipleship
- Missionary
- Worship

5 Quotations:

☞ 4:1 The Church is Centered on Jesus: forms the true epicenter of an authentic Christian faith: ● **Centered on Jesus**

☞ 4:2 The Church is A Covenanted Community: a network of relationships formed around Jesus our Lord: ● **Covenant Community**

☞ 4:3 The Church is Worship: offering our lives back to God through Jesus: ● **Worship**

☞ 4:4 The Church is Discipleship: following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him (Christlikeness): ● **Discipleship**

☞ 4:5 The Church is Mission: extending the redemptive purposes of God through the activities of his people in every sphere and domain of life: ● **Missionary**

☞ 5 Newbiggin

Used Codes:

● Discipleship ● Hope ● Incarnational ● Mutual Responsibility ● Praise ● Truth

6 Quotations:

☞ 5:1 It will be a community of praise: perhaps it's most distinctive character: ● **Praise**

☞ 5:2 It will be a community of truth: ● **Truth**

☞ 5:3 The Church will be a community that does not live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighborhood: ● **Incarnational**

☞ 5:4 The Church is will be a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world: ● **Discipleship**

☞ 5:5 The Church is will be a community of mutual responsibility (opposed to individualism): ● **Mutual Responsibility**

☞ 5:6 The Church is will be a community of hope: ● **Hope**

☞ 6 Niemandt

Used Codes:

● Contextual ● Discipleship ● God's Kingdom ● Incarnational ● Prayer

5 Quotations:

☞ 6:1 Missional congregations are aware of the context they are living in; answering the question: *Where are we?*: ● **Contextual**

☞ 6:2 Scripture and prayer shape congregations as individuals and as a church as they engage in forming a people of God; answering the question: *Whose are we?*:
● **Discipleship** ● **Prayer**

☞ 6:3 Missional congregations recognise God's actions directly around them as well as in the wider world; answering the question: *What is God doing?*: ● **God's Kingdom**

☞ 6:4 Missional congregations know how to discern and listen to God's specific call to them; They can answer the question: *How was God sending us?*: ● **Incarnational**

☞ 6:5 Missional congregations are a sign and a preview of the future that God intends for the whole world; answering the question: *How are we, as a church, currently living according to the pattern of God future?*: ● **God's Kingdom**

7 Van Gelder-Zschiele

Used Codes:

- Discipleship
- God's Kingdom
- Incarnational
- Missionary
- Sent

4 Quotations:

☞ 7:1 God is a missionary God who sends the Church into the world: ● **Missionary**
● **Sent**

☞ 7:2 God's mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God: ● **God's Kingdom**

☞ 7:3 The missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized context: ● **Incarnational**

☞ 7:4 The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission: ● **Discipleship**

8 Woodward

Used Codes:

- Discipleship
- Healing
- Liberating
- Welcoming

5 Quotations:

☞ 8:1 The Church is a Learning Environment – Life transformation through Scripture: ● **Discipleship**

☞ 8:2 The Church is a Healing Environment – where people can take off their masks and live into their true selves in God: ● **Healing**

☞ 8:3 The Church is a Welcoming Environment – helping the community practice hospitality as a way of life: ● **Welcoming**

☞ 8:4 The Church is a Liberating Environment - people experience liberation from personal and social sins in Spirit transforming communities: ● **Liberating**

☞ 8:5 The Church is a thriving environment – where a strong discipleship ethos is developed and the multiplication of disciples, ministries and churches take place:
● **Discipleship**

ATLAS.ti Report - Missional Descriptions for a Definition

Initial Codes Combined by Unifying Code Group

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Oct 27, 2016

⊞ Community

5 Members:

- **Covenant Community**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

🗨 4:2 The Church is A Covenanted Community: a network of relationships formed around Jesus our Lord

- **Mutual Responsibility**

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Newbiggin.docx

🗨 5:5 The Church is will be a community of mutual responsibility (opposed to individualism)

- **Truth**

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Newbiggin.docx

🗨 5:2 It will be a community of truth

- **Unifying**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Guder.docx 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx

🗨 2:4 The Church is a unifying community: its Unity

🗨 3:6 The Church is Unifying - embracing, and folding, gathering community receiving person's into its fel...

- **Welcoming**

Used In Documents:

📄 8 Woodward.docx

🗨 8:3 The Church is a Welcoming Environment – helping the community practice hospitality as a way of life

⊞ Contextual

2 Members:

- **Contextual**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx 📄 6 Niemandt.docx

- ☞ 3:1 The Church is Contextual – understanding itself as part of a larger context
- ☞ 6:1 Missional congregations are aware of the context they are living in; answering the question: Where a...

- **Local**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Bosch.docx
 - ☞ 1:5 The Universal Church finds its true existence in the local churches
-

📦 **Discipleship**

4 Members:

- **Centered on Jesus**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
- ☞ 4:1 The Church is Centered on Jesus: forms the true epicenter of an authentic Christian faith.

- **Discipleship**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx 📄 5 Newbigin.docx 📄 6 Niemandt.docx
- 📄 7 Van Gelder-Zschiele.docx 📄 8 Woodward.docx
- ☞ 4:4 The Church is Discipleship: following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him (Christlikeness)
- ☞ 5:4 The Church is will be a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise...
- ☞ 6:2 Scripture and prayer shape congregations as individuals and as a church as they engage in forming a...
- ☞ 7:4 The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in...
- ☞ 8:1 The Church is a Learning Environment – Life transformation through Scripture
- ☞ 8:5 The Church is a thriving environment – where a strong discipleship ethos is developed and the multi...

- **Sanctifying**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Guder.docx 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx
- ☞ 2:3 The Church is a sanctifying community: its Holiness
- ☞ 3:5 The Church is Sanctifying – living out it's truth and serving as a purifying influence

- **Transforming**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx

☞ 3:7 The Church is Transforming – as the “salt of the earth” living out and following biblical concepts...

⊞ God's Kingdom

3 Members:

- **God's Kingdom**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Bosch.docx 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx
- 📄 6 Niemandt.docx 📄 7 Van Gelder-Zschiele.docx

- ☞ 1:3 The Church is the sign and instrument of God's kingdom
- ☞ 3:3 The Church is Proclaiming – understanding it's self as intentionally sent by God to announce the com...
- ☞ 6:3 Missional congregations recognise God's actions directly around them as well as in the wider world;...
- ☞ 6:5 Missional congregations are a sign and a preview of the future that God intends for the whole world;...
- ☞ 7:2 God's mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God

- **Proclaiming**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Guder.docx 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx

- ☞ 2:1 The Church is a proclaiming community: its Apostolicity
- ☞ 3:3 The Church is Proclaiming – understanding it's self as intentionally sent by God to announce the com...

- **Reconciling**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Guder.docx 📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx

- ☞ 2:2 The Church is a reconciling and reconciled community: its Catholicity
 - ☞ 3:4 The Church is Reconciling – as a reconciling and healing presence in its context
-

⊞ Incarnational

4 Members:

- **Healing**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 8 Woodward.docx

- ☞ 8:2 The Church is a Healing Environment – where people can take off their masks and live into their true...

- **Hope**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Newbigin.docx

- ☞ 5:6 The Church is will be a community of hope

- **Incarnational**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Bosch.docx 📄 5 Newbigin.docx 📄 6 Niemandt.docx 📄 7 Van Gelder-Zschiele.docx

☞ 1:4 The Church is involved in the world (on earth, the seed in the beginning of God's kingdom)

☞ 5:3 The Church will be a community that does not live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns...

☞ 6:4 Missional congregations know how to discern and listen to God's specific call to them; They can answer...

☞ 7:3 The missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern...

- **Liberating**

Used In Documents:

📄 8 Woodward.docx

☞ 8:4 The Church is a Liberating Environment - people experience liberation from personal and social send...

📄 **Missionary**

4 Members:

- **Intentional**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Hesselgrave-Stetzer.docx

☞ 3:2 The Church is Intentional – existing for the purpose of following Christ in mission

- **Missionary**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Bosch.docx 📄 4 Hirsch.docx 📄 7 Van Gelder-Zschiele.docx

☞ 1:1 The Church is essentially missionary

☞ 4:5 The Church is Mission: extending the redemptive purposes of God through the activities of his people...

☞ 7:1 God is a missionary God who sends the Church into the world

- **Pilgrim**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Bosch.docx

☞ 1:6 The Church is a pilgrim Church (finding it self in a diaspora situation)

- **Sent**

Used In Documents:

📄 7 Van Gelder-Zschiele.docx

☞ 7:1 God is a missionary God who sends the Church into the world

📁 Praise-Worship

3 Members:

- **Praise**

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Newbigin.docx

🗨️ 5:1 It will be a community of praise: perhaps it's most distinctive character

- **Prayer**

Used In Documents:

📄 6 Niemandt.docx

🗨️ 6:2 Scripture and prayer shape congregations as individuals and as a church as they engage in forming a...

- **Worship**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

🗨️ 4:3 The Church is Worship: offering our lives back to God through Jesus.

ATLAS.ti Report - Significant Voice Responses to Interview Question 1

How do you define success for the church in the United States?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 10, 2017

⊞ Continuation

8 Members:

- Faithfulness

3 Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:1 faithfulness “Ok, so success for me is... it’s three things, faithfulness to what He’s asked us to do, fruitfulness in what He’s asked us to do, and finishing well.”

📄 3 Guder.docx

☞ 3:1 faithfulness “the term success doesn’t help us but I would prefer to use faithfulness.”

☞ 3:2 Faithfulness “Faithfulness, faithful witness”

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 5:2 faithfully “most people would see that as nickels, noses or numbers, financial metrics, baptisms, conversions

☞ 5:3 faithful “I think success can be defined by most people as have we joined Jesus on His mission faithfully,”

- Finishing Well

1 Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:3 finishing well “Ok, so success for me is... it’s three things, faithfulness to what He’s asked us to do, fruitfulness in what He’s asked us to do, and finishing well.”

- Fruitfulness

2 Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:2 fruitful “Ok, so success for me is... it’s three things, faithfulness to what He’s asked us to do, fruitfulness in what He’s asked us to do, and finishing well.”

☞ **5 Stetzer.docx**

☞ 5:4 fruitful “I would also add have we joined Jesus on His Mission in fruitful ways. So I want to be both faithful to the mission, but fruitful in the mission.”

- **Healthy**

1 Used In Documents:

☞ **2 Dempsey.docx**

☞ 2:2 healthy “what defines success for a church is very simply a successful church is a healthy church. A successful church is a healthy, visible representation of the body of Christ.”

- **Living Consistent with what God has Made it to Be**

1 Used In Documents:

☞ **6 Van Gelder.docx**

☞ 6:1 live consistent with what God has made it to be “a church has to live consistent with what God has made it to be, for me the category is success,

- **Succession**

1 Used In Documents:

☞ **1 Cole.docx**

☞ 1:4 succession “What that means for church is succession more than success, and most churches don’t think that way. “

- **Transcends Time and Culture**

1 Used In Documents:

☞ **2 Dempsey.docx**

☞ 2:1 transcends “look at what Paul is saying to the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, to the church at Ephesus, to the church at Colossae, he is describing and explaining the church in a form, an illustration, that transcends time and it transcends cultures”

- **Walking Worthy**

1 Used In Documents:

☞ **3 Guder.docx**

☞ 3:4 walking worthy “faithfulness almost as an alternative way of talking about it the Pauline use of worthiness, walking worthy of our calling.”

◇ Identification

5 Members:

- **Capacity to Reflect Jesus**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **4 Hirsch.docx**

- 🗨️ 4:1 capacity to reflect “success must be measured in terms of our capacity to reflect and understand the purposes and person of our founder, Jesus.”

- **Christlikeness**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **4 Hirsch.docx**

- 🗨️ 4:2 Christlikeness “the ultimate assessment of the church’s viability and authenticity is going to be its Christlikeness, being formed in Christ.”

- **Representation**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **2 Dempsey.docx**

- 🗨️ 2:4 representation “A successful church is a healthy, visible representation of the body of Christ.”

- **Visible**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **2 Dempsey.docx**

- 🗨️ 2:3 visible A successful church is a healthy, visible representation of the body of Christ.”

- **Witness that Points to Jesus**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **3 Guder.docx**

- 🗨️ 3:5 witness that points to Jesus “witness that points to Jesus Christ as the Lord who’s bringing in the kingdom of God and who is enlisting us to be a part of that wonderful process”

◇ Influence

3 Members:

- **Impact Outside the Church**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **4 Hirsch.docx**

☞ 4:4 impact outside the church “A missional church must measure its success by impact outside the church, not just inside.”

- **Joining Jesus on His Mission**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- ☞ **5 Stetzer.docx**

- ☞ 5:1 joined Jesus on His mission “I think success can be defined by most people as have we joined Jesus on His mission faithfully,”

- **Transformation in Society**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- ☞ **4 Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:3 transformation in society “the ultimate assessment of the church’s viability and authenticity is going to be its Christlikeness, being formed in Christ.” “transformation in society”

ATLAS.ti Report - Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 2

What are the significant elements producing change in the church in the United States today?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 10, 2017

⊞ Negative Influence

9 Codes:

- **Civil Religion**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **3 Guder.docx**

- ☞ 3:2 “The challenge is presented by civil religion as what the new people think is what Christianity is a...

- ☞ 3:4 “Civil religion is very much reacting to the decline, it’s a change that they can’t cope with”

- **Compromises with Western Culture**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **3 Guder.docx**

- ☞ 3:3 “the compromises that we have made with western culture going back to Constantine continue to haunt...”

- **Crisis of identity**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **4 Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:7 “It’s a crisis of identity, and of capacity as well

- **Decline**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **2 Dempsey.docx**

- ☞ 2:8 “85% of the churches in North America have either plateaued or are in decline.”

- **Decline of Western Christendom**

- 2 Used In Documents:**

- 📄 **3 Guder.docx**

- ☞ 3:1 “Well I think the decline of western Christendom in its largest sense.”

📄 4 **Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:2 “I think the American church has largely presumed its relationship before the culture; and the assum...
- ☞ 4:3 “we’re having to grapple with the fact that we are no longer the only or the major player anymore in...

- **Failure, Plateau, Crisis**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 2 **Dempsey.docx**

- ☞ 2:7 “One significant element is failure, plateau, and crisis.”

- **Lack of Solutions**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 4 **Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:6 “In those conditions, the inherited church just doesn’t have the repertoire of solutions to cope wit...

- **Rise of the "Nones"**

2 Used In Documents:

📄 1 **Cole.docx**

- ☞ 1:3 “On the flip-side, people will talk about the rise of the “Nones,” those that are not affiliated, wh...

📄 2 **Dempsey.docx**

- ☞ 2:5 “the fastest growing segments of the population identified in surveys are the “nones”, nonreligious,...

- **Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic, and Ambiguous**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 4 **Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:5 “we’re living in a world that is being described as VUCA by social theorists – Volatile, Uncertain,...

⊗ **Neutral-Negative Influence**

2 Codes:

- **"De-Centered"**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 4 **Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:1 “we are increasingly experiencing ourselves as being de-centered.”

- **Disruptions**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 6 Van Gelder.docx**

- ☞ 6:1 Disruption. I think disruption today is huge across the spectrum in terms of denominations, signato...

- ☞ 6:2 “I am under the persuasion that God the Spirit may be disrupting the church inviting it in a fresh a...

⊗ **Neutral-Positive Influence**

- 4 Codes:**

- **Disruptions**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 6 Van Gelder.docx**

- ☞ 6:1 Disruption. I think disruption today is huge across the spectrum in terms of denominations, signato...

- ☞ 6:2 “I am under the persuasion that God the Spirit may be disrupting the church inviting it in a fresh a...

- **Mergers**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 1 Cole.docx**

- ☞ 1:4 “there’s two predominant ways: mergers, so many churches come together to become a larger church to...

- **Multi-site Approach**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 1 Cole.docx**

- ☞ 1:5 “one is the multi-site city or venue approach where they start to grow by simply having multiple ser...

- **Need for New Methodology**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 4 Hirsch.docx**

- ☞ 4:8 “I think we need to work who we are again, and then work on new methodology.”

◇ **Positive Influence**

6 Codes:

- **Being a Christian**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **1 Cole.docx**

☞ 1:1 “I think that there is a ground swell of movement towards understanding that church attendance on Su...

- **Missio Dei**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **3 Guder.docx**

☞ 3:6 “this overarching understanding of the mission of God, the missio Dei guides the conversation althou...

- **Missional Church Discussion**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **3 Guder.docx**

☞ 3:5 “The missional church discussion becomes absolutely essential”

- **Renewal of Relationships**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **1 Cole.docx**

☞ 1:2 “we’re seeing a renewal of people meeting in relationships, in homes, and things like that”

- **Retro-fitting Model**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **2 Dempsey.docx**

☞ 2:4 “people that are working hard at retro-fitting a model and that is the missional movement”

- **Reworking Theology**

1 Used In Documents:

📄 **4 Hirsch.docx**

☞ 4:4 “And we’re having to rework our theology in light of that.”

ATLAS.ti Report - Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 3

What is the most significant element of those previously mentioned?

Codes

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Dec 12, 2016

10 Codes:

- **Biblical Christianity Fading**

1 Used In Documents:

 **4 Hirsch.docx**

☞ 4:1 “Biblical Christianity is fading out very, very fast. And I think it's a huge problem”

- **Change for the Better**

1 Used In Documents:

 **2 Dempsey.docx**

☞ 2:1 “political correctness - joining with the state and the political correctness which has many different...

☞ 2:2 “The positive change - ministry practitioners and missiologists and people... saying hey look we can c...

- **Decline of Books, Blogs**

1 Used In Documents:

 **1 Cole.docx**

☞ 1:1 “I think that books are less and less having an influence over God’s people. I don’t think they have...

☞ 1:2 “consumption of new ideas is rapidly decreasing. When they do seek information, they seek information...

☞ 1:3 “there isn’t really an openness to learning from the other side, there’s only a reinforcing of what...

- **Denominations Transitioning**

1 Used In Documents:

 **6 Van Gelder.docx**

☞ 6:1 “Denominations... they’re in the midst of a transition and morphing one more time into probably much...

- **Lack of Learning**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 1 Cole.docx**

- ☞ 1:1 “I think that books are less and less having an influence over God’s people. I don’t think they...

- ☞ 1:2 “consumption of new ideas is rapidly decreasing. When they do seek information, they seek information...

- ☞ 1:3 “there isn’t really an openness to learning from the other side, there’s only a reinforcing of what...

- **Political Correctness**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 2 Dempsey.docx**

- ☞ 2:1 “political correctness - joining with the state and the political correctness which has many different...

- ☞ 2:2 “The positive change - ministry practitioners and missiologists and people... saying they look we can c...

- **Responding to What God is Doing**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 3 Guder.docx**

- ☞ 3:1 “I think it is the work of the Holy Spirit and certainly not something that we’re strategizing...

- **Secular Culture**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 5 Stetzer.docx**

- ☞ 5:1 “cultural shifts, the culture is becoming more secular”

- ☞ 5:2 “I think that technology has been a game changer”

- **Technology**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 5 Stetzer.docx**

- ☞ 5:1 “cultural shifts, the culture is becoming more secular”

- ☞ 5:2 “I think that technology has been a game changer”

- **Weak Maturity**

- 1 Used In Documents:**

- 1 Cole.docx**

- ☞ 1:1 “I think that books are less and less having an influence over God’s people. I don’t think they hav...

☞ 1:2 “consumption of new ideas is rapidly decreasing. When they do seek information, they seek information...”

☞ 1:3 “there isn’t really an openness to learning from the other side, there’s only a reinforcing of what...”

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 4

How important is the concept of missional ministry to the church in the United States today?

Codes

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Jan 9, 2017

8 Codes:

- **God's Mission**

Used In Documents:

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

☞ 6:1 “This is God’s mission and how important is the concept of God’s mission in the church today.”

- **Secular Culture**

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 5:1 the main stream culture has shifted, so I would say cultural shift, more secular,

- **The Core**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:2 “So it is not simply a division of church, it is the core to the being of church.”

- **The DNA**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:1 “I think it’s part of the fabric of the DNA of the actual ecclesia.”

- **The Key**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Guder.docx

☞ 3:1 “if it is properly defined, it identifies key issues that we must be concerned about”

☞ 3:2 “if we understand ministry as the service of God and that it is the carrying out of the mandate to b...

- **The Organizing Principle**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

☞ 2:1 “I call it the organizing principle; John 20:21, Jesus said As the Father has sent me, even so send...”

- **The Way for the church that has lost its way**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

☞ 4:1 “missional is the way for the church that has lost its way to find itself again.”

- **There is No Other Way to Renew the Church**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

☞ 4:2 “If we refuse to engage, refuse to do mission, then I think we must continue to decline, you know...”

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 5

How do you define or interpret “missional” ministry?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Mar 12, 2017

🔍 About Jesus

3 Codes:

- **It’s all about Jesus”**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:3 It’s all about Jesus”

- **Jesus - Sole Focus**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:4 Jesus must be the sole focus

- **Presence of Jesus**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

☞ 1:1 “the church is the presence of Jesus among his people pursuing his mission.”

◇ God's Kingdom

3 Codes:

- a kingdom outpost

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx
- 🗨️ 1:5 a kingdom outpost

- representing God's kingdom in its location.

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx
- 🗨️ 1:6 representing God's kingdom in its location.

- sent by God

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Guder.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:3 sent by God
-

◇ God's Mission

7 Codes:

- God's missionary presence through Christ

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Guder.docx
- 🗨️ 3:2 missionary presence in the world through Christ"

- God's eternal purposes

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
- 🗨️ 4:2 God's eternal purposes

- God's mission

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:4 God's mission
- 🗨️ 6:7 God's mission

- missio Dei

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:5 missio Dei

- redeem and change, and transform the world in Jesus Christ.

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
- 🗨️ 4:3 redeem and change, and transform the world in Jesus Christ.

- **The Mission of God in the World**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
- 🗨️ 4:1 the mission of God in the world

- **Understanding the Missionary Nature of God**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Guder.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:1 understanding the missionary nature of God
-

📁 **Incarnational**

3 Codes:

- **Connect with Changing Community**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:6 connect with changing community

- **Incarnational**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Dempsey.docx
- 🗨️ 2:1 incarnational
- 🗨️ 2:3 incarnational

- **Relational**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Dempsey.docx
 - 🗨️ 2:2 Relational
-

📁 **Missionary Mindset**

4 Codes:

- **Missional Impulse**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
- 🗨️ 5:1 missional impulse

- **Missionary Mindset**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
- 🗨️ 5:2 missionary mindset

- **Missions Mindset**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
- 🗨️ 5:4 missions mindset

- **Missionary Thinking**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
 - 🗨️ 5:3 missionary thinking
-

📁 Participating

5 Codes:

- **Discerns what God's up to**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:8 discerns what God's up to

- **Not Static**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx
- 🗨️ 1:2 not a static institution

- **Participates in joining God**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:9 participates in joining God

- **Participating in his Mission**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Guder.docx
- 🗨️ 3:4 participating in his mission

- **Participating in What God is Doing in the World**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
 - 🗨️ 4:4 participating in what God is doing in the world
-

📁 Undefined

5 Codes:

- **How we Deal with Modernity**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
- 🗨️ 5:5 how we deal with modernity

- **No Clear Definition**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:1 no clear definition

- **No Unanimity or Consensus**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:3 unanimity or any sense of consensus.”

- **Not Attractional**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Dempsey.docx
- 🗨️ 2:4 not attractional.”

- **Not one that’s Shared**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
- 🗨️ 6:2 not one that’s shared

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices Responses to Interview Question 6

Are you optimistic, pessimistic, or uncertain about the current state of the church in the United States and why?

Codes

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Jan 27, 2017

Codes (4)

- **Mixed Optimism / Pessimism**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx 📄 3 Guder.docx
- 🗨️ 1:3 I’m both pessimistic and optimistic depending on what you mean by church.
- 🗨️ 3:3 I would say all of the above,

- **Optimistic**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx 📄 2 Depmsey.docx 📄 5 Stetzer.docx 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

☞ 1:2 At the same time, I am very optimistic because I think the Church has thrived under hostile regimes...

☞ 2:3 The church is Jesus, Jesus always wins. Optimistic.

☞ 2:4 I'm an optimist; however, all the numbers are going against us right now.

☞ 5:1 I think the current state of the church is pretty steady,

☞ 5:2 All the statistical gobbledygook that says the church is dying or declining or in depression or what...

☞ 5:3 The culture has become more secular but the church hasn't collapsed, Evangelicals have actually grow...

☞ 6:1 Cautiously optimistic.

☞ 6:2 I think there are really some interesting things happening and beginning to emerge or in the midst o...

● Pessimistic

Used In Documents:

☞ 1 Cole.docx ☞ 3 Guder.docx ☞ 4 Hirsch.docx ☞ 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 1:1 If we are waiting for the current state of the institutional Constantinian model of church to survive...

☞ 3:2 I think we're in a very sad passage because of our divisiveness, our failure to work through our...

☞ 4:1 If you asked me a year ago I would have said very optimistic, but right now I'm very down, I am deep...

☞ 4:3 we're exposed as being unable to see the world as Jesus sees it, or to affirm the world that Jesus c...

☞ 5:4 If I was a mainline protestant and had based my future on that, I'd be in despair.

● Uncertain

Used In Documents:

☞ 4 Hirsch.docx ☞ 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 4:2 I think we'll see some sort of kick to define a new movement coming out of this...

☞ 5:5 If I was an evangelical, I'd still say there are a lot of challenges ahead so it's hard to answer th...

☞ 5:6 I think the current state of the church is that the sky isn't falling but the ground is shifting and...

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 7

What do you see the Church in the United States becoming in the next 5 to 10 to 25 years?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 3, 2017

◇ Influence

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

- the traditional model will have less and less influence on society as a whole.

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- being a Christian on the margins when you don't have the levers of power actually is going to be the easier than the current culture level we're in.

◇ Reclamation-Recovery

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

- the centrality of the life of Christ in the disciple If we can recover that, I think the church has a great 5, 10, 25 years.

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- the promise for a huge amount of health reintroducing the church to a far more dynamic form of Christ-based ministry

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- we're going to have a church that is much more discerning and alert to pneumatology
- we're going to reclaim a Trinitarian understanding of mission

◇ Replacement

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Guder.docx

- a replacement of these inherited polities... with networks that are characterized by consensus around priorities, mutual accountability, creativity

◇ Transition

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

- growth in nontraditional or organic expressions of the church.

📄 3 Guder.docx

- we're seeing a process of a disintegrating or a diminishing of inherited structures and polities

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- a historic shift in consciousness regarding the Ephesians 4
- further moves toward founding a new movement or form of Christianity.

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- the church in the US... will look a lot like the pacific northwest where it's not a substantive presence,

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- It's a fundamental change transition time
 - we're in the midst of that change.
-

🔍 Uncertainty

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

- It's hard to tell.

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

- It depends on the seminaries, on pastors, on the controlling philosophy of what is a church, what is a pastor, what is a disciple,

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- some viability of concept, in healthy transforming movements... that will be missional, incarnational forms.

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- 5-10 is rocky, 10-20 years is rocky,
- 20 years from now, it's probably going to be easier to be a Christian in our culture than it is now

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- we don't know clearly what the future holds or what's going to emerge
-

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 8

What do you believe will be the predominant church model in the United States in the next 25 years and why?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 4, 2017

⊞ Caution

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Guder.docx
 - a mixed economy
 - 📄 6 Van Gelder.docx
 - I'm really cautious, this is part of that success thing,
 - models unfortunately invite replication without contextualization, thinking that the form itself will produce the result
-

⊞ Diversity

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Cole.docx
 - Tampa Underground and organic church movements... are going to be probably the only expression that flies in the coming days.
 - 📄 2 Dempsey.docx
 - the model in the future will not be 'come to our church we've got the biggest or the best, we've got the brightest or the fanciest.
 - you won't have casual Christians... it just leaves room for the passionate follower of Christ.
 - 📄 3 Guder.docx
 - we're going to see a great diversity... house churches, neighborhood communities, community centers, cathedrals, mega-churches,
 - 📄 4 Hirsch.docx
 - I can see the contemporary mega church as being the most vigorous form of church,
 - in 25 years it will be a very different church. There will be continuity, but there will also be a lot of discontinuity
 - 📄 5 Stetzer.docx
 - different models of church will learn to thrive in different contexts and adjust to their new cultural reality.
 - if current trends continue, the mega church will have increased substantially... so it will be a significant player
 - smaller to mid-size churches will still probably be predominant models.
-

⊞ Necessity

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Dempsey.docx

- For the last 5, 10, 15, 25 years we've been promoting the church as based upon a consumeristic business model... produce[ing] consumers of religious goods and services.

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- we have to find new forms...

📄 3 Guder.docx

- we need many contextualized forms of church since we have distinctive cultures
-

🔗 Survival

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

- you will see many of these established churches merging and pulling resources to survive... many will have to become leaner to survive"
- "the established local church that is property-based, clergy-based and Sunday-based, program-based, will not survive"

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- evangelical Christian commitment will consolidate into healthy larger churches,
-

🔗 Uncertainty

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- I don't know that there will be a predominant church model,

📄 3 Guder.docx

- I'm not sure I could make a judgment on that,

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- Its hard to see a standard form of the church.
 - Its very hard to see at this stage that far into the future.
 - We're going into a far more unstable age, and I just can't see the economic model working,
-

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 9

How should focus influence form and function in the 21st Century church in the United States?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 9, 2017

📦 Evaluation

3 Codes:

- **Assessment**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Guder.docx

🗨️ 3:4 I think we need... to ask ourselves is the way we are going about what we're doing actually faithful t...

- **Inherited Perspectives**

Used In Document:

📄 1 Cole.docx

🗨️ 1:2 I would suggest that most of us have inherited a point of view of church that we could question for...

🗨️ 1:5 But the current Sunday morning worship service, staff-led local church with a building at that address...

🗨️ 1:6 what we do is, we read our model into the New Testament because that's all we have, that's our baseline...

Used In Document:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

🗨️ 2:1 "you start off with the wrong premise you end up with the wrong conclusion."

- **NT Concepts**

Used In Document:

📄 1 Cole.docx

🗨️ 1:1 What will be necessary is for focus to address the New Testament, and ask the question what is eccle...

🗨️ 1:4 I look at the variety of models in the New Testament, and how they went from very centralized to muc...

📦 Correction

3 Codes:

- **Adjustment**

Used In Document:

📄 1 Cole.docx

🗨️ 1:3 you have to have that conversion-like experience where you're open and transparent and vulnerable, a...

☞ 1:7 In order for focus to come into clarity, you have to be willing to be courageously vulnerable with y...

Used In Document:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

☞ 2:2 “If you think of the church as a body and you want it to be healthy then you’re going to do church f...

☞ 2:3 “In regard to even the roles of the pastor, if you see the role of the pastor as an overseer of the...

Used In Document:

📄 3 Guder.docx

☞ 3:3 the institution is not an end in itself, the institution is the servant of our calling and that mean...

Used In Document:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

☞ 4:3 I think its critical, we need to see that we’re in a missional environment now.”

Used In Document:

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 5:1 a more Christological, Jesus-shaped mission will lead to more ecclesiological, missional forms that...

● **Direction**

Used In Documents:

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

☞ 6:4 “If you don’t focus you’re probably not going to go anywhere.”

● **Enablement**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Guder.docx

☞ 3:2 the great challenge for us is to organize ourselves so that we are enabled to serve our calling.

📦 **Character**

6 Codes:

● **Being**

Used In Document:

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

☞ 6:2 “What is the being that informs the doing?... Our being informs our doing.”

- **Community**

Used In Document:

☞ 3 Guder.docx

☞ 3:1 the great challenge... is to organize ourselves as real communal communities.

- **Contextual**

Used In Document:

☞ 4 Hirsch.docx

☞ 4:5 “That requires that we need to learn to be contextual... myriad new ways, lots of them... Innovation.”

Used In Document:

☞ 5 Stetzer.docx

☞ 5:2 you are right to say that our focus could affect our forms and our functions

Used In Document:

☞ 6 Van Gelder.docx

☞ 6:3 “this is what God has created the church to be, now what are we going to do in this context.”

- **Identity**

Used In Documents:

☞ 6 Van Gelder.docx

Quotations:

☞ 6:1 “I think underneath focus I would put the word identity, what has the spirit of God created?... What...”

- **Incarnation**

Used In Documents:

☞ 4 Hirsch.docx

☞ 4:1 I think that’s a huge issue, I put that under the rubric of incarnational mission... going in the way...

☞ 4:2 “the father sent the Son through incarnation, and is the patent for how we engage the world... We lite...”

- **Missionary**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

🗨️ 4:4 “We have to adopt a missionary

ATLAS.ti Report

Significant Voices - Responses to Interview Question 10

What does the future appear to hold for Christianity and the church in 21st century United States?

Codes

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 4, 2017

📁 Challenges

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Cole.docx

- “a lot of churches are in debt and any action that touches the church’s finances will have a dramatic affect.”
- “If the government removes the tax-exempt status of churches and or the charitable contribution tax deduction, it will have a significant impact on the church in the United States.”

📄 3 Guder.docx

- “churches need to earn the right to be heard... dealing with all of the stereotypes and distortions of the gospel which are a part of our western legacy”
- “I think we’re going to be more and more a minority group within our society,”
- “Well I think we’re going to be more and more marginalized”
- “we’re going to have more and more challenges to deal with the many, many ways of the Christendom legacy makes it hard for the gospel to be seen and heard.

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- “There are a couple of items, things that could and probably will have a significant impact on the church if they happen, and I think they will although I can’t give you a specific time frame.
- “there’s going to be a lot of change, a lot of death,”

◇ Deconstruction / Reconstruction

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

- “it has to be constructed to the point where the average saint in the church understands that his or her role needs to connect to Jesus... to connect to each other and use their gifts from Ephesians 4 to build each other up”
- “the church historically has always wrestled with the priesthood of the believers and the division of clergy and saint; that has to be totally deconstructed”

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- “there’s going to be a lot of the energy as well as the new forms that come into existence”
- “there’s going to be lots of rebirth and new birth”

◇ Immigration

Used In Documents:

📄 5 Stetzer.docx

- “evangelicalism is increasing”
- “Latino, Asian, African American, tend to believe more like evangelicals”
- “the influx of Latino migration has caused Catholicism not to collapse; there is this large trough of Catholicism there that has been replaced by Latino immigration.”

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- “The cultural change by demographics and immigration is a huge part of all that.”

◇ Incarnational

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Dempsey.docx

- “an incarnational missional expression to a community
- “the visible incarnational missional expression of the body of Christ.”

📄 3 Guder.docx

- “calls for sacrificial formation of friendships that become a place in which God’s love becomes so clear that a hearing is created again for the gospel.”

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- “I believe the spirit of God will be present.”
-

📄 **Uncertain**

Used In Documents:

📄 4 Hirsch.docx

- “it’s a volatile world, things are changing and its hard to see clearly what will unfold.”
- “I’m not sure”

📄 6 Van Gelder.docx

- “I am cautiously optimistic that the future the church is going to be there,”
- “it’s not clear yet.”

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 1

What defines you and motivates you in regards to your ministry efforts?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

☒ Context

18 Codes:

- **a different culture from western culture**
 - ☒ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **Copenhagen Christian Cultural Center - the inspiration.**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **Deep Ellum [is] a very entertainment district**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **engaging the new age culture**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **engaging with a lot of the asylum seekers**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **how northern and western Europe were responding post-Christendom culture.**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **our personal story is studying contextualization.**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **rying to do some very different things**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **streets were just crowded with all kinds of people,**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **they spent about 9 months in Manila**
 - ☒ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **They were forced by their context**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **to reach this context we had to think very differently.**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **to see Christ followers in a totally opposite context from what we're used to.**
 - ☒ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **we studied abroad at the Philippines**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **we went on a study trip to northern Europe**
 - ☒ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **we were not connecting.**

- ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
 - **where it was just really marginalized abject poverty**
 - ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
 - **worked under the missionaries that were there.**
 - ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
-

◇ Mission

3 Codes:

- **mission is really the thing that drove us**
 - ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
 - **that was really the motivator**
 - ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
 - **we were just sharing the love of Christ with people**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
-

◇ Opportunity

12 Codes:

- **(people) were getting saved**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **bars were open all night, music venues,**
 - ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **created by a community center**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **included pastoral ministry**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **I'm 74 years old,**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **I'm a composite of my whole life,**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **I've been in ministry for over 50 years,**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **Lighthouse Community Fellowship is an accidental body**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **primarily teaching and administration.**
 - ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
- **Started a church**
 - ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx

- **we had a coffee shop we had purchased**
▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
 - **we suddenly came to the realization that we actually had a church on our hands.**
▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 01.docx
-

Ⓢ Sacrifice

3 Codes:

- **raised money to go**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
 - **quit their jobs**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
 - **uprooted their families**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
-

Ⓢ Wanted More

7 Codes:

- **a core team really prayed about ten different cities**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **feeling like there was something more than just sitting in pews and middle class Christianity - experiencing in traditional churches.**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **in 2006 - 50 people from the Tampa Bay**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **little to no impact on the actual context**
▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 01.docx
- **wanting to really see like what is Jesus doing outside of our context**
3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **We weren't seeing that sort of passion and attention to what the Bible was actually commanding of us as followers of Him.**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx
- **what we saw was really lacking in the western church, in traditional churches**
▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 01.docx

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 2

How does what defines and motivates you translate into your approach to ministry?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

Authenticity

8 Codes:

- **(knowing us) may will mess up what God is doing,**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **Intentional ambiguity**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **Self Definition**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **The language we use**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **Titles say who we are**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **We changed our terminology**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **We're quite content if no one else ever knows who we are**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **we're quite content with being anonymous.**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
-

Church Defined

11 Codes:

- **During those 9 months in the Philippines we came up with our 18 different core values**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
- **Ecclesial Minimum**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
- **everything was on the table**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
- **the scriptures**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
- **Mega-churches are stuck in models that they can't switch,**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx

- **our building is a cultural center**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **that really defined us to have these smaller micro churches**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **the traditional things as we knew it**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **we thought what do we consider church; that's the big question**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **we were able to look at Christianity as we knew it**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **we were able to look at that and say what do we want to define us as a movement.**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
-

📍 Location

2 Codes:

- **A very anti-institutional kind of a place**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **We have a church that meets here because church is people**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
-

📍 People

10 Codes:

- **(The homeless are) diamonds in the rough**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **homeless people**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **Jesus said love God, love your neighbor and you don't get to choose who your neighbors are**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **poverty individuals**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **The homeless are a homogenous bunc**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **They are people who are homeless because they choose to be**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
- **they have a different set of concerns and issues**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx

- **we have an opportunity to find some of these people**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
 - **We open the door and we let them come in**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
 - **we're open to the stranger**
 - ▢ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 02.docx
-

📦 Purpose

5 Codes:

- **in every dark corne**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **in every place where the gospel is needed.**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **See the kingdom of God advance in new ways**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
 - **we exist to empower those small expressions of the church**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
 - **We want to be a voice in evangelical America**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
-

📦 Serving

3 Codes:

- **doing unique things in their unique context**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 02.docx
- **Our intentions are to serve**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx
- **Serve with no strings attached**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 02.docx

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 3

What authors have influenced you most and why?

Codes

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

○ **Alan Hirsch**

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 03.docx
 - 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 03.docx
-

○ **David Bosch**

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Gene Getz**

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Gustavo Gutierrez**

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Hugh Halter**

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Lesslie Newbiggin**

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Michael Frost**

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 03.docx
-

○ **Wolfgang Simpson**

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 03.docx

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 4

What has influenced your approach to your ministry the most?

Code Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

⊞ Divine Influence

- **Divine Direction**

- 📄 **2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 2:2 I just had this overwhelming sense that I needed to be down here.

- **Jesus is Lord**

- 📄 **3 Tampa Underground - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 3:1 Jesus is Lord

- **start being missionaries**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 1:1 start being missionaries

- **stop being pastors**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 1:2 stop being pastors

⊞ Location

- **a little pocket of post Christendom**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 1:4 a little pocket of post Christendom

- **Context**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 1:5 our context wouldn't let us try any traditional methods.

- **Location**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 1:3 I don't think we could have done if we weren't in a place like Deep Ellum.

- 📄 **2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 04.docx**

- 🗨 2:1 I was driving down 12th Street in the direction of the Lighthouse

- 🗨 2:2 I just had this overwhelming sense that I needed to be down here.

⊞ Mission

- **Empower Kingdom Missionaries**

- 📄 **3 Tampa Underground - Question 04.doc**

- 🗨 3:3 what we do it is to empower kingdom missionaries.

- **Empowerment**

- 📄 **3 Tampa Underground - Question 04.docx**

- 🗣️ 3:2 empowerment is probably the biggest thing

- **Empowerment and Mobilization**

- 📄 **3 Tampa Underground - Question 04.docx**

- 🗣️ 3:4 I think what influences us the most is the idea of empowerment and mobilization.

🔍 **Trouble**

- **Difficulty and Struggle**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗣️ 1:6 it's hard, it takes longer, it doesn't happen quickly and thankfully Deep Ellum and the mercy of God...

- **Financial Struggle**

- 📄 **1 Deep Ellum - Question 04.docx**

- 🗣️ 1:7 two or three years of financial struggle

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 5

How long have you led this ministry?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

🔍 **Deep Ellum**

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 05.docx

For about seven years

🔍 **Lighthouse Community Fellowship**

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 05.docx

I would say 5 years.

🔍 **Tampa Underground**

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 05.docx

2006

ATLAS.ti Report – Ministry Leaders – Question 6

How would you describe your church?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

⊞ A Network

- **a church, and it's a community of missionaries,**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **a network of micro churches**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **each is involved in worship, community and missions**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **Everything that we do needs to empower**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **exist to help micro churches do what they're doing.**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **needs to serve the ministry,**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
 - **we do exist to serve**
 - ▢ 3 Tampa Underground – Question 06.docx
-

⊞ Cultural Center

- **a coffee shop with a community aspect**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **four strengths**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **host concerts and all kinds of community events,**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **our methodology is determined by listening to the community**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **pillars for our cultural center**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **to help people**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **we have an art gallery**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
- **we have music shows out of there**
 - ▢ 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx

- **we have space that we lease out to local entrepreneurs**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **we renovated the building around those pillars**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
-

🔍 **People Focused**

- **in that process, God does His work.**
📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Question 06.docx
 - **shining the light of truth into people’s lives**
📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Question 06.docx
 - **We’re all about shining the light of the gospel**
📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship – Question 06.docx
-

🔍 **Unique Culture**

- **a pocket of downtown Dallas**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **bars, saloons, jazz,**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **blacks and early immigrants from Europe**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **Deep Ellum is only a couple square miles**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **the art and music scene.**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **the marginalized of Dallas**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **very condensed**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **very unique culture**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
 - **we did about 1,000 street interviews**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
-

🔍 **Unrelated**

- **Unrelated**
📄 1 Deep Ellum – Question 06.docx
-

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 7

What is the primary focus of your ministry? Important secondary focuses?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 22, 2017

Community

- **Supported Focus**

- 1 Deep Ellum - Question 07.docx

- 1:4 We don't have to worry about board members getting upset because you were in a bar. It's just a non...

- **Supporting the Community**

- 1 Deep Ellum - Question 07.docx

- 1:6 we are linking arms for the good in our community.

- 1:7 we allow our space to be offered in a very discounted format

Mission

- **church for missionaries**

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- 3:8 church for missionaries

- **No spectators**

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- 3:6 so we have kind of a saying that we don't have any spectators here.

- **People involved in mission**

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- 3:7 What we see is that there are people that have missional hearts and actually God has designed every...

Paradigm Shift

- **Traditional Church - 80% observers**

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- 3:5 in the traditional western church you have about 80 percent of the people that are just really observers...

- **Traditional Church 20% involved**

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- 3:4 and you have about 20 percent of the people that are actually either actively engaged in serving or...

◇ People

- **Church for people in traditional church**

- ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 07.docx

- ☞ 3:2 basically in a traditional church

- **Empowered to be friends with people**

- ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 07.docx

- ☞ 1:3 we are actually empowered by our community to be the friends of people outside of the faith.

- **Our People**

- ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 07.docx

- ☞ 1:1 the people of Deep Ellum...

- **The beauty of God**

- ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 07.docx

- ☞ 2:1 The beauty of God

- **The process for people**

- ▣ 1 Deep Ellum - Question 07.docx

- ☞ 1:2 we're supposed to be part of that process for people who are believers and who aren't believers.

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 8

How does focus influence the form of your ministry?

Codes grouped by Code groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

◇ Determines Form

- **Engaged with People**

- Used In Documents:**

- ▣ 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 08.docx

- ☞ 2:3 Often times I won't get anything to eat at all because I'm engaged with these people.

- **Expanding Vision**

- Used In Documents:**

- ▣ 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx

- ☞ 3:7 if they're able to reach women in prostitution here then we also want to create that in St. Pete or...

- **Focus Determined by Form**

Used In Documents:

- 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 1:6 because of those forms that they've committed to their focus is then determined for them.

● **Micro Churches**

Used In Documents:

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
- 3:2 Really how we function is in micro churches

● **most people tend to reverse engineer it.**

Used In Documents:

- 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 1:2 most people tend to reverse engineer it.

● **Scriptural Growth**

Used In Documents:

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
- 3:5 You really do want to spread because I think that's what we see in scripture,

● **Speak into Lives**

Used In Documents:

- 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 08.docx
- 2:5 Besides that in many cases they don't have a place to go to eat so they stay and I get a chance to s...

◇ **Focus**

● **it's central**

Used In Documents:

- 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 1:1 it's central

● **Motivation**

Used In Documents:

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
- 3:4 we don't just want to grow on ourselves and have numbers or increase salaries or income.

● **Reach Every Community**

Used In Documents:

- 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
- 3:6 that call to go to reach every little community

- **Unreached People**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:3 we really think that there are groups of people that have not heard, have not seen, don't know and f...
-

📦 **No Focus**

- **Assumed Definition**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 🗨️ 1:5 they just assume of what church means

- **Existing Unquestioned Form**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 🗨️ 1:4 So they have their form that they don't question

- **Providing Similar Religious Experience**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 🗨️ 1:7 providing a religious experience that looks very similar to ten other churches within a square block...

- **Traditional Thinking**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 08.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:1 In the western church people have the idea of mega church, they want to grow and build something tha...
-

📦 **Undefined**

- **Undefined**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 08.docx
- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 08.docx
- 🗨️ 1:3 A lot of churches I know kind of do it you know without even recognizing it subconsciously.
- 🗨️ 2:1 I preach on Sunday of course but then the more important thing that happens [afterward]
- 🗨️ 2:2 what happens at dinner when I can sit down and that's usually where it really happens
- 🗨️ 2:4 They're not running through the parking lot because most of them lost their license a long time ago...
- 🗨️ 2:6 It's a wonderful thing to be able to do that.

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 9

What is the relationship between form and function in your ministry?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

📦 Focus

- **End Function**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

🗨️ 1:1 when I think of form I think of kind of the strategies of sorts that we have and the way that those...

- **Form Hinders or Encourages what we do**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

🗨️ 1:4 I would say that like the form will absolutely hinder or encourage what we do.

- **Form supports Function**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx

🗨️ 2:2 The people we serve can't possible sustain that or support it in any way

- **God's Redfining to Work in our Community**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

🗨️ 1:7 I think that is what has enabled us at Life at Deep Ellum to go in such a different direction is the...

- **Measure of Success**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

🗨️ 1:6 the vast number of churches have the same measure for success, which is what's the size of my congre...

- **Not Self-Centered**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 09.docx

3:1 It's not that we want to create this large thing that will build up our ego in some way,

- **Not the building of a Church**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

☞ 1:8 For us working is not the building of a church

- **Strategies**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

☞ 1:1 when I think of form I think of kind of the strategies of sorts that we have and the way that those...

📦 **Growth**

1 Codes:

- **Creates Growth**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 09.docx

☞ 3:8 we're also in 10 different cities throughout the world

☞ 3:9 and we have other movements as well

☞ 3:10 we're trying to advance that not by moving upward but horizontally sort of like by spreading.

📦 **Opportunities**

- **Creates Opportunities**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 09.docx

☞ 2:10 We stepped into the vacuum;

☞ 2:11 one of the most serious scandals regarding human trafficking, one of the biggest cases that was brok...

☞ 2:12 We have about 14-15 different ministries that are presently active.

☞ 3:7 We do have about 150 different little initiatives that are all throughout our city,

- **Feeding Children**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx

☞ 2:3 we started feeding them

- **Food Distribution**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx

☞ 2:4 Tomorrow we will have food distribution and we will provide groceries to about 250 people.

☞ 2:5 In the course of the year, it's well over 10,000 people that will receive groceries from us.

- **Involved in the Community**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx
- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx
- 🗣️ 1:11 working with the city
- 🗣️ 2:1 We are involved

● Opens doors into the Community

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx
 - 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 09.docx
 - 🗣️ 2:6 That in turn has given us entry into the community that didn't exist when we started, just opens the...
 - 🗣️ 2:9 so we've been open to receive whatever God opens up to us
 - 🗣️ 3:4 to the people of God in their context in their city.
 - 🗣️ 3:5 the lost, are the poor, are able to have access to us,
 - 🗣️ 3:6 We also empower a lot of people to go do different things or we send them from our movement.
-

🔗 Relationships

● Connected to People

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 09.docx
- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 09.docx
- 🗣️ 2:7 we ask them to come, have some breakfast, refreshments, or something, and while they're waiting, we'...
- 🗣️ 2:8 We want to know who they are, what has brought them to this situation,
- 🗣️ 2:13 serving about 250 children every week and again it's being there and engaged with their lives.
- 🗣️ 3:2 we want to spread it out, to spread so that really the people that are getting affected by these iss...

● Contact

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx
- 🗣️ 1:5 when we're talking about form, function there's contact,

● deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx
- 🗣️ 1:10 deeply connected to and relating in meaningful ways to the community around them

● it's building a community

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

☞ 1:9 it's building a community

- **Learning about each other's stories**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

☞ 1:2 sometimes that's having coffee and just learning about each other's stories.

- **Relationships**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 09.docx

☞ 1:3 for us that functionality is relationships

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 10

How has your church changed since beginning or from the start of your leadership?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

📁 Diversity

- **different set of concerns**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 10.docx

☞ 2:2 different set of concerns

- **Diverse Environment**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx

☞ 1:3 Environment is diverse

- **diversity**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx

☞ 1:1 diversity

- **Every person that comes through the door is a unique individual**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 10.docx

☞ 2:1 Every person is a unique individual

- **multi-generational, multi-ethnic, socio-economically diverse community**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx

☞ 1:8 A multi-generational, multi-ethnic, socio-economically diverse community

- **multiple cultures that are expressing Christianity**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:11 multiple cultures expressing Christianity

- **social, economic diversity**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:4 social, economic diversity

- **urban environment**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:2 urban environment

- **vocational and generational diversity**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
 - 🗨️ 1:5 vocational and generational diversity
-

📦 Growth

- **in number and growth,**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 3:1 in number and growth,

- **its really grown over the years.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 3:3 its really grown over the years.

- **we have spread out**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 3:2 we have spread out

- **We're in Nebraska and Alabama**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 3:4 in Nebraska and Alabama

- **We're in Hamburg, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, the Philippines, Illinois**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 3:5 We're in Hamburg, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, the Philippines, Illinois

📁 New Expression

- **a more beautiful expression of what the kingdom**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:12 a more beautiful expression of the kingdom

- **Church as a Cross-Cultural Experience**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:10 church being a cross cultural experience

- **Culture opposed to Consumerism**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:6 create a culture where people aren't just being drawn into the consumeristic model that most churches...

- **everybody belongs**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:7 everybody belongs

- **Opposed to One Dimensional Church Culture**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 10.docx
- 🗨️ 1:9 when we become just so one dimensional in our expression of culture and the church, we're really...

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 11

What elements have driven or are driving change in your church ministry?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

📁 Interest-Disinterest

- **Disinterest in Organized Religion**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx
- 🗨️ 1:2 there's not this sea of people who are loyal to large religious organizations or organized religion.

- **Interest in "Disconnected" Religion**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx

☞ 1:3 Most people are quite comfortable pursuing a religion that is disconnected to anything established.

- **Interest in "Disconnected" Spirituality**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx

☞ 1:4 Pursuing a spirituality that's disconnected from anything established.

- **The growth of the "Nones."**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx

☞ 1:1 Growth of the "Nones."

📁 **Minority Leadership**

- **60 percent minority leadership**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:3 60 percent minority leadership

- **70 percent women in Leadership**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:4 70 percent women

📁 **Multi-Ethnicity**

- **Initiative driving change**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:1 Initiative driving change

- **Navigate something that's not typically a white male face**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:5 navigate what it looks like to have something that's not typically a white male face

- **Navigating multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:2 navigate what does multi-ethnicity and racial reconciliation

- **We are this multi ethnic expression of the church**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 11.docx

☞ 3:6 we are this multi ethnic expression of the church

◇ People

- **needs of the people we serve**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 11.docx
- 🗨️ 2:1 needs of the people we serve

- **people aren't projects**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx
- 🗨️ 1:6 people aren't projects

- **relationships with people outside of our congregation**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 11.docx
- 🗨️ 1:5 relationships with people outside of our congregation

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 12

How do you see your ministry changing in the next 1, 2.5, and 5 years?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

◇ Context Driven

- **Context Changes**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
- 🗨️ 1:5 if our context changes we're not going to continue to be married to what our original manifestation...

- **context will drive everything.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
 - 🗨️ 1:7 context will drive everything.
-

◇ Focus Driven

- **Challenged to constantly focus and refocus**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
- 🗨️ 1:4 There are things that are challenging us to constantly focus and refocus.

- **Follow God's Spirit**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 12.docx
- 🗨️ 3:2 we strive to follow the Spirit of God as he leads

- **We need to be open to and aware of how God wants us to respond.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
 - 🗨️ 1:2 We just need to be open to and aware of how God wants us to respond.
-

📦 **Incarnation Driven**

- **Incarnational also means to be flexible**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
- 🗨️ 1:6 Like be incarnational also means to be flexible

- **Love our neighbor**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 12.docx
 - 🗨️ 1:3 our contacts the social needs around us deeply impact what it means and looks like to love our neigh...
-

📦 **Undefined**

- **Undefined**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 12.docx
 - 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 12.docx
 - 🗨️ 2:1 Not sure.
 - 🗨️ 3:1 I'm not sure,
-

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 13

What non-negotiable practices characterize your ministry?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

📦 **Belief**

- **Basic Unifying Doctrine**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 1:3 meaning that what we hold to is the most basic unifying doctrine of the church

- **Creedal**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 1:2 We use the term, we describe ourselves, the congregation as creedal

- **Doctrine - the Main Thing**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 1:1 Doctrinally, we keep the main thing the main thing

- **Scripture - practice for Daily Life**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 1:5 we use scripture for how we practice that in daily life,

- **The Apostle's Creed**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 1:4 which is the Apostles Creed

- **We trust the authority, reliability and truth of all Scripture.**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 3:22 We trust the authority, reliability and truth of all Scripture.

📁 Mission

- **We affirm microchurch as the most basic expression of the church**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 3:21 We affirm microchurch as the most basic expression of the church

- **we affirm that every culture and ethnicity, while imperfect, reflects the mosaic of God's own image**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 3:8 we affirm that every culture and ethnicity, while imperfect, reflects the mosaic of God's own image

- **we commit ourselves to the mission of God to reach the whole world.**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 3:7 we commit ourselves to the mission of God to reach the whole world.

- **We will do mission because we are sent people**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx

🗨️ 3:16 We will do mission because we are sent people

- **we will value the empowerment of every microchurch community**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:9 we will value the empowerment of every microchurch community
-

📁 People

- **Care about people**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 2:2 we want people to know that we do care about them and that's a non-negotiable.

- **Love people in tangible ways**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 2:1 we try to love people in tangible ways, we break the rules.

- **We value lost people**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
 - 🗨️ 3:4 We value lost people
-

📁 Practice

- **we commit ourselves to each other**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 3:15 e commit ourselves to each other

- **The way of Jesus is our way**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 3:6 The way of Jesus is our way

- **We affirm seasons of zeal and charismatic expression of the greatness and majesty of God along with seasons of silence and stillness before God.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 3:12 We affirm seasons of zeal and charismatic expression of the greatness and majesty of God along with...

- **We affirm the priesthood of all believers.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗨️ 3:23 We affirm the priesthood of all believers.

- **we commit ourselves to both sharing and giving.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:14 we commit ourselves to both sharing and giving.

- **We commit ourselves to live a life of prayer**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:20 We commit ourselves to live a life of prayer

- **We commit to live a life free from clutter and the allure of materialism.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:13 We commit to live a life free from clutter and the allure of materialism.

- **We commit to pursue humility**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:17 We commit to pursue humility

- **we want our lives to be characterized by passion**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:19 we want our lives to be characterized by passion

- **We will live for the biblical concept of justice.**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:18 We will live for the biblical concept of justice.

- **We will remember the poor**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:5 We will remember the poor

- **We will value the paradox of exuberance and zeal in worship, community life, and evangelism**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 3:10 We will value the paradox of exuberance and zeal in worship, community life, and evangelism

- **Wholistic Environment**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 13.docx
- 🗣️ 1:6 an environment where we have Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and people without a faith backgrou...

ATLAS.ti Report - Ministry Leaders - Question 14

What do you want your church to become or become more of as you continue?

Codes Groups

Report created by David W. Hirschman on Feb 23, 2017

⊞ Church Focused

- **help, reform and love the church**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 3:6 help, reform and love the church

- **infect other ministries**

Used In Documents:

📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 2:2 infect other ministries

- **love for the church**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 3:7 love for the church

- **return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 3:8 return it to its more true form of what we see in scripture

- **work with American and western churches to really help them**

Used In Documents:

📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 3:9 work with American and western churches to really help them

⊞ Mission Focused

- **Active in Neighborhood Community**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 1:1 active part of this neighborhood, community

- **Be Light that reveals God**

Used In Documents:

📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 14.docx

🗨️ 1:2 be that light to reveals God

- **Different hubs in the US and around the World**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 3:1 different underground hubs throughout the US and throughout the world

- **drawing people to Jesus Christ**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 1:4 drawing people to Jesus Christ

- **Meeting Needs**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 1 Deep Ellum - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 1:3 meeting the needs

- **move our people toward mission**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 3:5 move our people toward mission

🔍 World Focused

- **A Multiplier**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 2 Lighthouse Community Fellowship - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 2:1 I want it to become a multiplier.

- **our DNA in different cities and internationally**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 3:3 our DNA in different cities and internationally

- **places in every major city**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 3:2 places in every major city

- **spread our movement out across the world and different places**

Used In Documents:

- 📄 3 Tampa Underground - Question 14.docx
- 🗨️ 3:4 spread our movement out across the world and different places

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