FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

GROWING
A DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH

Volume Two

by

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September 2021

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PART SIX:
CHURCH MPLEMENTATION OF VISION FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

I. FOUNDATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In the Great Commission Christ commanded his disciples to

> go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. – (Matthew 28:19-20)

The task of the Great Commission is more than simply a call to evangelize. But rather, it sets forth a process which encompasses pre-conversion, conversion, and post conversion experiences. A disciple-making church (i) must not only lead people to Christ, (ii) influence them to identify with and become active members of the local church and (iii) teach, encourage, guide, equip support and instruct them in all the things the Bible has taught so that they can grow into mature Christians, i.e., disciples of Christ.

The stronger more vibrant churches tend to be those who purposefully follow God's lead in multiple areas of church life rather than just one or two.[1198] Too many churches have become "niche" churches specializing in one particular, not necessarily basic, purpose (such as good fellowship, or good Bible study or good counseling). In doing so, they have missed Christ's call as a whole. Churches need to be called back to what Christ has commanded them to do,[1199] i.e., *grow in intimacy with God through the practice of spiritual disciplines (including prayer, spending time with God's word), worship, Christian fellowship, serving others, and evangelism).*

> There is no single key to church health and church growth; there are many keys. The church is not called to do one thing; it is called to do many things. That is why balance is so important. .... [B]alancing... the New Testament purposes brings health to the body of Christ, the church.[1200]

Balancing these purposes works toward all church members embracing fundamental mission of leading people to growing more Christ like in their thoughts, feelings and actions, i.e., becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ.

There are five structural components in a effective church's ministry: (i) mission, (ii) vision, (iii) model, (iv) programming, and (v) alignment. In structuring a church for disciple-

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[1198] Paul Braoudakis (Editor), *An Inside Look at Willow Creek Community Church* 25 (2000).
[1199] *Id.* at 157.
[1200] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 128-29 (1995).

making, it is important to understand the relationship between these components, starting with mission.[1201]

A. MISSION

Mission must be the nonnegotiable imperative for a disciple-making church.[1202] Predicated on Jesus' expression of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, the recommended mission for FRCC, as discussed in PART TWO, Section II. above, sets forth the foundational purpose, that is, encouraging, equipping and supporting persons in growing toward a more Christ-like life through the process of pursuing four relationships; (i) connecting with God, (ii) connecting with other believers, (iii) connecting with others through serving, and (iv) connecting with those outside the faith. The process of growing in one's discipleship is the pursuit of these four relationships. To be an effective disciple-making church, we need to be passionate about our mission and structure our church in a manner to accomplish it.

B. VISION

Vision is what a local church perceives to be its contribution to the overarching mission of the church at large.[1203] The recommend Mission Statement for FRCC incorporates the fundamental elements of vision i.e., leading and moving people in connecting in four different, albeit related, getting connected relationships.

The current FRCC Vision for the Future of Our Church fleshes out the fundamental vision with more specificity. This vision statement is attached as Appendix C. Given the passage of 15 years since its adoption and the new recommended Mission, a review and possible updating of the Vision Statement and the Statement of the Core Values of Our church (attached as Appendix D) should be considered. Such reconsideration should generate widespread attention and greater understanding by the congregation as to what we as a church and what they as followers of Christ are to be about.

C. MODEL

A church *model* is essentially the framework a church chooses and creates to advance its mission and specific vision. The model serves as the organizational principle under which programming operates. The model encompasses all of the programming of the church. At Andy Stanley's highly successful North Point Community Church, the model adopted and utilized is the *small group* model. All that is done is designed to funnel people into small groups.[1204] Based upon all that has expressed in this resource book concerning the benefits and role of small groups, the recommendation here is that Fox River structure its disciple-making efforts on small groups in which not only relationships and Christian fellowship can best develop, but also where other aspects of spiritual formation in growing toward a more Christ-like life can be fostered.

[1201] Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* 286 (2012).
[1202] *Id.* at 286.
[1203] *Id.*
[1204] *Id.* at 287.

D. PROGRAMMING

Our *programming* should be chosen or created to facilitate and utilize the small group model which, in turn, facilitates working toward achieving the church's mission and vision. When considering programs, whether ongoing or new, commence with the question what is the best way to foster the vision which is embraced in our mission. Small groups play a fundamental role leading people to grow in following Christ. This is the critical concept to keep front and center in developing a strategy for continuation of, change in, or adding to what we are doing as Christ's church.[1205]

> [E]valuate programming on the basis of how well it serves our goal to involve members and attendees in [small] group life. A program must be a group, prepare people for group life, or serve as an *easy, obvious, and strategic step into a group.*[1206]

No item in a church's menu of programs should ever be off limits for consideration and debate. Review and evaluation should be on-going to enhance efforts to advancing the mission of the church.[1207]

E. ALIGNMENT[1208]

To be an effective disciple-making church, the various components of the church need to be in alignment. Congregations are like crews rowing a boat. In an eight-man crew, the individual rowers exert themselves not only individually, but also in sync with each other. If one rower errs and catches his oar in the water, it can throw off the other rowers. The boat is out of sync. In the context of a church, which involves more people and things going on, alignment is more complicated.

A church has members, non-members, friends of the church and staff. It offers worship, Christian education, youth, music, etc. It has pastor(s), professional and/or volunteer staff,

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[1205] *Id.* at 288. The Groups Model calls for dealing with such questions as what us the best way to assimilate adults into small groups, to find and train group leaders, to assimilate children and teenagers into groups, to introduce newcomers to group life, and to introduce seekers and returners to group life? *Id.* at 289.

[1206] *Id.*

[1207] A programming resource for FRCC, which deserves consideration, is a small group series, entitled "Doing Life Together," based upon Rick Warren's book *Purpose Driven Life*. There are studies (guide booklets) covering God's purposes for our lives – Christian fellowship, worship, discipleship, service, and evangelism. Each topical study consists of 6 sessions. A small group can elect to do one or more of the topical sessions. Experience demonstrates that often, a group will evolve into an on-going close-knit fellowship. Thus, in addition to coming to grips with the specific subject matter involved, this program fosters a deep community/fellowship among the participants.

Particularly appealing for FRCC church is that the focus of the study guides parallels the mission purposes of our church. This is not surprising since Warren's book *Purpose Driven Church* was a major resource in developing FRCC's current mission and vision. Focusing efforts in these areas should engender the fostering (1) participants progressing in their Walk with Christ toward becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, (2) the achievement of the mission purposes of our church, and (3) fostering multiple short term small groups leading to relational small groups.

[1208] This Section draws from *John Wimberly, "Aligning a Congregation," Congregationalist, p.3, September, 2014.*

musicians, secretarial and maintenance help. People, programs and staff are all in the same boat. If all row in the same direction at the same speed, i.e., they are aligned, the boat is likely to do well. If not, there is cause for substantial concern.

Foundational to alignment is a congregation understanding the purpose or mission of its church. Too often missing is the lack of clarity.

> It is impossible to create alignment in a congregation if there are multiple understandings of the congregation's purpose. Without clarity of purpose, the subtext is always "*Align with what*?"[1209] (Emphasis supplied.)

Keys to clarity include create clarity of purpose (mission), over communicate clarity, and reinforce clarity. A church needs purposes and a vision as to where it is going, goals to get there, and specific strategies to realize these goals.

A strategic planning process affords a means to generate clarity of purpose when it defines strategic plans in the context of the church's purposes. Plans developed predicated on purposes offers an internal discipline lacking in many congregations. Discussion should start not by asking the value of a program or activity, but rather by asking whether the program contributes to achieving a primary purpose, i.e., mission, of the church. In an aligned congregation all that is done relates to and foster achievement of its mission.

What deters a congregation from being in alignment? Among the circumstances doing so are the following.

- *Failing to reward right behavior* – People not acknowledged and/or not rewarded, whether they are staff or volunteers, may conclude that nobody cares so why do it or why spend the time and effort to do it well. "Behavior that contributes to the purpose needs to be rewarded and recognized. Behavior that distracts from the primary purpose needs to be changed, not tolerated."[1210]

- *Ineffective information flow* – Despite current efforts through announcements from the pulpit, newsletters, etc., quite often most people don't get it. A church needs to constantly work on communicating purpose and strategy to achieve it. Communication specialists reiterate the need to repeat the church's primary purpose until people are tired of hearing it and then repeat it again. Eventually they may actually hear and get it.

- *Strategy execution a low priority* – Don't develop and institute a strategic plan unless there is serious commitment to implement. Furthermore, keep the congregation informed as to how it is going.

- *Lack of enthusiasm beyond the core* – Strategic planning needs to include a plan which will create a buy-in from the entire congregation as the process moves forward. If a plan

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[1209] *Id.* at 36.
[1210] *Id.* at 37.

is presented as a *fait accompli*, it becomes difficult to build congregational support for its on-going implementation.

In short,

> Without clarity of purpose, there will be no alignment. Without alignment, it is very difficult to grow a congregation or engage in a consistently faithful ministry.
>
> Aligned with God, aligned with a well-defined purpose, congregations can and will grow.[1211]

II. EXCELLENCE IN IMPLEMEMTING AND GROWING A DISICPLE-MAKING CHURCH: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The goal of excellence in all that we do as a church is a core value of FRCC.

> As a local church we are God's franchise in the local community. Excellence honors God as well as attracting and inspiring people. Therefore, in all that we do as a church, we are committed to the standard of excellence by every person exercising their God-given spiritual gifts to the best of his or her ability. If in presenting ourselves as a reflection of God's love and character, we do so in a mediocre manner, we fail to honor God who offers us love, salvation and eternal life. He deserves the best we can offer.[1212]

In responding to God's call, we should strive to do no less.

To grow in its effectiveness as a disciple-making church, a church needs to embrace the goal of on-going quality improvement. This not simply to do what we are doing more efficiently. Efficiency for efficiency sake is poor stewardship. But rather, the goal of quality improvement is to be efficient in a manner which enhances our effectiveness in advancing our mission.[1213] In all that we do in reaching out to people and encouraging, equipping and supporting them in their growing toward a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions, we should do so in a manner of pursuing excellence.

Failure to strive for excellence in seeking to advance our mission would dishonor God. This does not say that we will always achieve excellence. We are imperfect human beings. But

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[1211] *Id.*

[1212] Fox River Congregational Church, Statement of Core Values of Our Church" (adopted June 22, 2003).

[1213] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 169-70 (1999).

strive we must. The goal of doing so is woven into the fabric of the vision for our church as expressed in FRCC's current adopted Vision Statement,

> We envision a Christian fellowship striving to meet a high standard of excellence in all that we do by every member using his or her God-given gifts to the best of his or her ability so as to honor God who deserves the best that we can offer.[1214]

A. EXCELLENCE AS A PROCESS

Creating and maintaining an effective disciple making church is not a short term event, but rather an extended process of winning and discipling people. Development of the process for excellence depends upon the church leaders. Until it becomes a natural process in all that the church does, the leaders will have to intentionally train, monitor and cultivate the process of quality orientation. Being able to respond positively to five questions reflects excellence as a process which in turn leads to a quality outcome.[1215]

(1) How does our church facilitate safe sharing of ideas? Are our team leaders doing this? Ask them. Another way to ascertain this is survey team members by a neutral third party. Facilitate safe idea sharing by inviting comments from all people in the ministry not just the church and team leaders and team members. Solicit feedback either anonymously or use a third party to ask sensitive questions (e. g., are Sunday school leaders doing a good job?)

(2) Do we discuss how we are doing the process itself? We need to periodically consider how we are communicating and facilitating idea sharing. Healthy communication lessens the likelihood of conflict.

(3) Do we inspect what we expect? Plans tend to go awry in the absence of follow-up. However, it might be urged that being a watchdog over or policing people is a tough and resented role, especially when dealing with volunteers. However,

> accountability is different than watch dogging. *Accountability is mutual and, hopefully, prearranged and negotiated so that everyone agrees on the way to implement the idea or change.*[1216] (Emphasis supplied.)

When there is a discrepancy in what a person was to do, leadership skills are very important to affirm what is good and remind what needs to be done.

Since various persons respond differently to feedback and accountability, it is important to respond appropriately to each person. Even though inspection and follow through needs to occur, a particular leader may either do it himself or

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[1214] Fox River Congregational Church, Vision for the Future of Our Church (adopted June 22, 2003).
[1215] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 83-87 (1999).
[1216] *Id.* at 84.

assure that it is done by one with relevant people skills to do it. It all comes back to people skill training, leader selection, and putting into place feedback systems.

(4) Do we explicitly discuss the quality factor in both planning sessions and in postmortems? Postmortems are essential. Do it by putting it on the agenda, use surveys, e-mail each other, conference calls or hold a meeting strictly for postmortem discussion. Employ the feedback into future events and programs. To motivate people, it is essential to listen and implement their good ideas. The focus is on how do we get better.

(5) How should we confront people when quality improvement is not what was expected while celebrating both small and large advances in quality? It is essential to find a balance between confronting a weakness while affirming strengths. Church and team leaders need to learn the principle of affirmation and critique. When quality improvement becomes a part of church culture, after the fact reviews are expected. We are not talking about allocating personal blame or criticism. But rather, place everything in the context of how can we do better next time?

Furthermore, a quality improvement mindset constantly asks what are we doing that we do not need to do and what aren't we doing that needs to be done? Are we engaging in the right activities, programs and events to fulfill our mission purposes? If yes, are we doing them well and how can they be improved? If programs are not directed towards fulfilling our mission purposes or if we are unable to do them well, drop them.[1217]

An easy mistake to fall into is a "strategy rut," i.e. embracing a certain strategy at the outset and then failing stay tuned into the Holy Spirit now anointing different strategies. A basic truth strategy is that it is not permanent. Avoid be becoming too comfortable with a strategy that is in place. And, don't elevate certain strategies to the "doctrinal" level.

> Doctrines, values and mission are eternal, but not methods or strategies. These must be continually and ruthlessly evaluated in light of our rapidly changing and increasingly settled post-Christian culture.[1218]

Excellence as a process calls for a program analysis team. The team, preferably relatively small, should reflect a balance of persons who are analytical and creative. The key players include the senior minister, perhaps other staff, lay leadership and perhaps other qualified volunteers in the church's ministry. Failure to include these types of participants runs the risk of blind spots[1219]

[1217] *Id.* at 197.

[1218] James Emery White, "3 New Outreach Realities that Many Churches Still Don't Get," OutreachMagazine.com, September 7, 2017.

[1219] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 206 (1999).

B. ASSURING QUALITY IN THE PHYSICAL AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS

Later discussion (Section VII.I. below) focuses on the importance of creating irresistible environments for both attracting newcomers as well as growing current members in their Walk with Christ. Such won't be repeated here other than to note that it considers an appealing physical and welcoming environment, availability of information, cultural adaptation, and helpful content. The emphasis needs to be on on-going efforts to maintain that which is excellent and improve the quality of that which is not.

C. ASSURING QUALITY IN CONTENT OF DISCIPLE-MAKING EXPERIENCES

The discussion here centers on pursuing quality in the content of what we do, i.e., the programs and ministries we conduct.

Toler and Nelson, in their book *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence*, offer an approach to analyze what a church is doing and how well it is doing it. Start with each individual ministry and break it down into a list of programs events and other activities. The analysis of each consists of four main elements: (1) staffing, (2) resources, (3) goals and (4) processes. When programs fail to achieve the level of excellence sought, the problem usually falls within one or more of these four categories. [1220]

1. Staffing

Consideration of staffing involves such questions as what is the talent and motivation of the persons carrying out the ministry? Are they well equipped to do so or is more training needed?

a. Best People in the Right Positions[1221]

For a church to most effectively carry out its mission, it needs to place the best people in the right positions. Using the worship service as an example, are the most talented people running the sound board, singing the solos, leading the worship, preaching the sermons? Some churches are expanding their teaching team to include talented lay persons who can effectively support the pastor in the teaching function.

Problems may arise when a person, either staff or volunteer, proves not to be up to the task (e.g.., a soloist, liturgist, etc.). How does one deal with this situation? Start by creating a culture of quality awareness and improvement throughout the church. When people are unable to provide the caliber of ministry required, train, stretch or and fined a place elsewhere where their gifts can best be used. The fundamental goal is providing effective disciple-making experiences for the congregation as a whole rather than the sensitivities of the individual. Of course, the situation should be dealt with great sensitivity, encouragement and appreciation for the willingness and effort. If there is no one better, the question becomes whether the church is

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[1220] *Id.* at 194.

[1221] This Subsection draws from Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 195-98 (1999).

better off with what you have or none at all. The "warm body" approach to filling ministry positions is counterproductive and non-biblical. Scripture teaches about varying gifts for the purpose of building up the body. Find a place that matches his or her talent level. The church should not be subjected to mediocrity.

> Quality would suggest that if you cannot do it, with a semblance of excellence, you ought not do it....[1222]

Once a quality improvement culture becomes embedded in the operations of the church, people will be much more willing to change when necessary to improve a ministry.

b. Training

It is important to provide initial orientation and training. Mentoring and apprenticeship periods are helpful. A quality improvement culture recognizes training processes as normal rather than insulting. In addition, there should be provision for continuing education including seminars and workshops for lay as well as staff personnel.[1223]

c. Find Places in Which People Can Excel

This activity reflects two functions of a church. First, create quality ministries by finding, developing and using quality people using their own gifts to meet the needs of the ministry. Second, open up new areas of ministry where more people can use their gifts. The goal of the church is not only to provide ministry events and services, but also to develop people, all people, in the church. Matching church needs with people is one role, creating fresh ventures to attract, develop and utilize more people is another. *Don't leave large segments of the congregation inactive and/or undeveloped.* [1224]

2. Resources

Adequate resources are critical in effectuating a quality ministry. Consideration of resources looks at equipment and facilities which are the tools for ministry. Even a good auto mechanic will perform poorly if he lacks adequate tools. A singer cannot sound good with a poor sound system, a worship service suffers from poor lighting, etc. Program content needs source materials. Although many items needed may not be in the budget, compile an inventory of haves and have nots. Prioritize needs in the context of the mission of the church and its vision on carrying out that mission. Don't nickel and dime creative types and ministry leaders. If this occurs, they are likely to disappear from engaging in key roles.[1225]

[1222] *Id.* at 196.
[1223] *Id.* at 200.
[1224] *Id.* at 200-01.
[1225] *Id.* at 201-02.

3. Goals[1226]

The third basic ingredient of effectuating a quality disciple-making church, is clearly identifying goals to enable knowing whether the ministry is hitting the target. Are we making progress in our ministry? To be effective, goals must be established even though people tend not to be keen on accountability.

A transformational process for many churches as they embark on the road to excellence is answering the question: why are we in business? Nothing is more important than the Great Commandments and the Great Commission upon which both the current and recommended Mission Statements of FRCC are founded. If a church doesn't know where it is going, it won't know how to get there or whether it has arrived. The mission and vision of the church must be understood and communicated so that it is known and accepted church-wide.

The process of doing so sets the stage for reviewing current ministries. If they don't significantly advance achieving a mission purpose either eliminate them or reduce their priority. Don't waste time on things that don't make a difference. Align budget priorities with ministry goals. When planning a budget and calendar, determine whether the items under considering reflect the church's mission purposes, core values and vision. If mission purposes are not being achieved, we are merely playing at being church -- pretending to be something we are not. Stewardship of time, talent and money are demanding issues in God's kingdom. Sacrifice those ministries that are unproductive and change personnel, equipment and style when called for.

4. Process Analysis

A quality mindset, in a church process analysis of what is going on in the delivery of program content, seeks to foster advancement of the church's mission. Process analysis considers whether people are working together as a team and whether the leader is proving to be competent, loving and strong. The analysis looks at the manner in which activities, events and projects are prepared and done. Leadership is the crucial question.[1227]

In short, to enhance our effectiveness as a disciple-making church, the pursuit of quality in the programs, events and activities we offer requires analyzing what we do and how we are doing. Analysis of each consists of looking at four main elements: (1) staffing, (2) resources, (3) goals and (4) processes. When programs fail to achieve the level of excellence sought, the problem usually falls within one or more of these four categories. Excellence as a process is discussed in Section A. above. When a church undertakes a process analysis, it takes a quality look at all of its existing programs, events and activities and compares them to the church's mission. Then, when it follows up with needed changes, the natural result is enhanced effectiveness in its disciple-making efforts.

[1226] This Section draws from Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 202-03(1999).
[1227] *Id.* at 196-97.

D. ASSURING QUALITY IN THE SPIRITUAL AREA

Quality improvement is not just doing things well. Focusing on efficiency and not effectiveness leads to improving things that do not matter. Despite how well a church performs its tasks in enhancing its physical and welcoming environment and conducting its various program, events and other activities, if it fails to make a dent on people's lives for Kingdom purposes, it is wasting its time and efforts. When a church invests scarce money and talent into a ministry that fails to build God's kingdom, it risks frustrating a demanding investor.[1228]

If our church fails to discern where we fall short in advancing the mission of the church, we are unlikely to do much to improve our effectiveness in assuring the spiritual growth of both newcomers and current members of our church. Consequently, it is essential to measure how well the church doing in bringing people to Christ and moving people along in growing as followers of Christ. In short, based upon our mission purposes (connecting with God, connecting with other Christians in our fellowship, connecting with both Christians and non-Christians through serving, and connecting with people outside the faith), we need develop means to measure growth toward reflecting these purposes. How to do so is considered in Section V.E. below.

The quest for quality improvement can be viewed in four contexts: (i) excellence as a process, (ii) an appealing physical and welcoming environment of the church, (iii) quality of the content in the disciple-making experiences, and (iii) quality in the spiritual area.

E. CHURCH: ANALOG AND/OR DIGITAL[1229]

Serious concerns and cautions have arisen as churches' evangelism outreach efforts move more and more into the digital age. Recent years have witnessed the digital world taking over our society. Increasingly, many churches have followed. Are online churches, video venues, brighter lights, virtual gatherings (worship and otherwise), etc. to be the future of church efforts to attract, retain and grow those currently outside, on the fringes, and in the faith? What is the digital age's impact on discipleship, community and the Bible? As the culture at large begins to recognize some of the limits of a digital world, churches need to do so in the context of their mission.

Pastor Jay Y. Kim, has extensively experienced the digital church. In his book *Analog Church*, he grapples with the ramifications of a digital church with respect *to worship, the experience of Christian community, the manner we engage scripture, and the sacrament*. The question is posed whether in our efforts to stay relevant in this digital age, churches have begun to give away those things which people most desperately need, i.e., transcendence? May the best way to reach new generations be a more timeless path? Perhaps, in its heart, the church has really been analog all along.

[1228] *Id.* at 210-11.

[1229] This section is drawn from Jay Y. Kim, *Analog Church*: *Why We Need Real People, Places and Things in the Digital Age* (2020) (both from the book directly and from description and comments at ivpress.com).

As loving parents thoughtfully consider the usage and impact of technology on their children, church leaders had best do the same on behalf of those whom Jesus entrusts us with. Churches today confront a bewildering array of options and opinions on how 'to do church' in our contemporary digital age. It's an age-old dilemma: Too often people jump on the latest trends and whatever seems most attractive with little thoughtful discernment. *Analog Church* issues a wake-up call to ask tough, much-needed questions. The question is whether the rush toward embracing whatever new technology is available helps or hurts people's understanding of relating to God, worship, church, and themselves. In a digitally saturated world, where new generations are bombarded with and immersed in the digital, perhaps we need to press into analog all the more. When do our efforts to adapt to a new cultural setting result in compromising what Jesus offers the world?

Kim's book critiques this booming digital movement and urges detaching more from digital technology and returning to patient communion with God and one another. He invites reorienting values to reflect the spiritually enriching practices of past generations. He does not suggest ignoring the digital world in reaching out to people, but rather adjust in a way connecting with the digital age without being controlled by it. Continue to foster, not move away from, what the church is uniquely poised to provide. i.e., transformation, community, and shared moments of wonder and awe. He calls us back to centering and implementing focus on the transcendent presence of God and the warmth of communal life in his Kingdom.

The younger generations, having grown up in an over digitalized world, are beginning to sense on an intrinsic level that they are missing something. They are seeking experiences which they can see, hear, feel and touch. They are longing for what the church can offer, Thus, the church has a missional opportunity to provide these transcendent spaces which are few and far between in this digital age.

Churches need to address how to keep people and foster genuine fellowship in a virtual/digital world? *Analog Church* is an essential resource for those churches seeking to employ digital technologies without succumbing to disastrous distortions coming from ill-considered adaptations. Move away from digital emphasis on information and return to the biblical emphasis on transformation, and from mere communication to communion gathering together as God's people. This is a subject deserving full attention of those churches seeking to foster personal fellowship/communion in their disciple-making efforts.

III. LEADERSHIP

It is virtually axiomatic that foundational to an effective disciple-making church is effective leadership. This broad, deep and vital subject for all forms of organizations, ranging from large to small, has given rise to a plethora of books, research, training programs, college courses, etc. These, plus professional consultants, academia as well is experienced leaders throughout a church's congregation, provide a host of resources to which a church can turn to enhance the effectiveness of its leadership. Particularly important for churches is the Global Leadership Summit, annually sponsored and put on by Willow Creek Association, annually for

the past 25 years.[1230] Participation in and resources flowing out of these annual gatherings are outstanding and worthy of close attention on an on-going basis in efforts to enhance a church's leadership effectiveness. Given this vast array of resources, it is beyond the scope of this resource book to delve into the subject of leadership here in any great depth. However, while limited in scope, a few observations may prove be helpful.

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership can be viewed from two perspectives. First, a leader is responsible for leading a person or group of persons to advance the achievement of the organization's mission. Second, a leadership may also involve the responsibility of developing new and/or growing current leaders. These two roles are on-going, often at the same time.

Ultimately, the test of church leadership is the transformation of peoples' lives. Real and sustained change begins when persons begin to sense a change as to who they are, a sense of identity. Help them realize that they can be better. What we believe is what we become. Leaders help people overcome their mindset of current group identity thereby leading to transformation.[1231]

Leadership embraces several characteristics which might be classified into one of two categories. First, effective leadership depends upon the personal attributes of the leader. As a leader, one serves as a model for those he leads. Positive personal characteristics are a *sine qua non* of effective leadership. Second, effective leadership also depends on how one goes about exercising his or her leadership role. Of course, personal qualities impact the second.

Effective leadership can involve numerous elements. Several are noted below, not necessarily in order of their importance.

1. Spiritual Direction and Calling

The basis of effective leadership in a church is a leader's personal relationship with God. The healthy leader focuses on prayer, meditation on the Word of God and his relationship with the Holy Spirit. Good leaders recognize the fundamental importance of their own spiritual walk in nurturing and inspiring the spiritual life of others.[1232]

Furthermore, in order to lead a church, at the core of one's being, he or she must believe that God has brought him or her to this position. Lacking such conviction, a person cannot exercise a meaningful leadership role.[1233] Similarly, a sense of calling also undergirds effectiveness of those in a lower-level positions of leadership.

[1230] The 2017 Global Leadership Summit was viewed in 126 countries by 240,000 people.

[1231] Sam Adevemi, "Leading from the Inside Out," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1232] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 264 (1993).

[1233] Brad Powell. "What an Effective Leader Looks Like, " OutreachMagazine.com, December 1, 2011.

2. Passion and Perseverance: GRIT

People like to be good at what they do and usually they want to become better. To so requires GRIT, i.e., passion and perseverance (hard work and finish the job). Neither ability nor intellect alone leads to great accomplishments. Ability combined with a sustained passion for hard work and zeal exceeds the importance of intellect. People differ in natural talent and skills learned. Talent plus skill is a good start. But to really achieve, talent and skill need to be combined with two critical attributes to success and well-being. They are *passion and perseverance*.[1234] Note, scripture calls for perseverance.[1235]

How does one build GRIT? World class experts and athletes *deliberately practice passion and perseverance*. They do those by recycling through the following stages.

- *Set a goal* – Cultivate a purpose. Develop interests which provide the seed for passion. Doing what you love to do is the most important part of passion. From this, set a meaningful goal (the greater the passion the better). This might simply involve refining an existing goal and be better at it than before. The more meaningful the goal (e.g., making the world a better place, benefitting other people, etc.), the greater the passion.

- *Focus* – Concentrate 100% on achieving the goal. Exert full effort in doing what you love to do. Don't quit just because you are having a bad day.

- *Feedback* – Gain input from persons trusted for their skill and honesty as to how you are doing.

- *Reflection* – Reflect on self-evaluation and that learned from others. Don't be defensive about their observations. Then refine and set goal(s) which returns you to stage one and restarts the cycle. Be willing to change one's mindset. People grow as they encounter and seek to meet new challenges.

As a leader, cultivate a culture of passion and perseverance. Talent, intelligence and luck help. But, more importantly, it is through GRIT that leaders can build themselves and others.[1236]

[1234] Angela Duckworth, "GRIT: *The Power of Passion and Perseverance,"* (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1235] "Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:4). "And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."(Hebrews 12:1-2).

[1236] Angela Duckworth, "GRIT: *The Power of Passion and Perseverance,"* (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

3. Authenticity

The leadership dynamic of aligning with the person to be led derives from attracting that person by being who you are rather than portraying yourself as something else. Be real and be authentic.[1237] People don't follow someone they don't respect. Leadership requires character. Be rightly motivated, a person of integrity and authenticity.[1238]

4. Humility, Vulnerability and Self-Reflection

A crucial value of leadership is humility. Be modest and respectful of others. A leader can learn from others when he enters into a mutual relationship with them. Respect others and expect that they will respect you.[1239]

Success is built upon recognizing one's own vulnerabilities and being transparent about them. Being vulnerable and transparent with others leads to a relationship built on trust. This encourages others to share their concerns, problems and aspiration problems with you. Get people to tell something about themselves and then build from there.[1240] One who is trusted can successfully lead.

It is not hard for a person in a position of authority and perhaps success to get carried away and lose his or her sense of humility. A leader should frequently reflect upon and evaluate oneself to maintain, or regain if necessary, one's humility. Acknowledge one's vulnerabilities and transparency when interacting with others as a leader

Don't simply be tolerant of others. Seek to understand each other. Be part of a loving church. Leaders should challenge their people to always be civil. Leadership needs to instill a culture of civility and caring. It has been suggested that a church should have a civility code (see discussion in Section 12. below).

5. Competence and Confidence

Effective leadership requires the right gifts for the responsibilities to be undertaken coupled with a willingness to further develop those gifts to more effectively lead. Furthermore, a leader needs to believe that he or she is the right person at the right time doing the right thing. People are unlikely to follow an insecure and hesitant leader into an unknown and risky new thing.[1241]

[1237] Sam Adevemi, "Leading from the Inside Out," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).
[1238] Brad Powell, "What an Effective Leader Looks Like," OutreachMagazine.com, December 1, 2011.
[1239] Bill Hybels, "Rules of Respect and Identifying Young Leaders," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).
[1240] Marcus Lemonis, *"Reinventing Performance Management,"* (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).
[1241] Brad Powell. "What an Effective Leader Looks Like, " OutreachMagazine.com, December 1, 2011.

Some say that there is a thin line between confidence and arrogance, not so. There is a vast difference. A leader can be confident and humble at the same time. Christian humility fuels confidence. One who has humbly received the grace of God can be confident since his or her sins are forgiven. A leader confident in the mission of a team inspires whereas cocky and self-absorbed leaders repulse. Confident leaders humbly admit that they can learn from others whereas arrogant leaders believe they have all the answers and miss out on what others can valuably offer. Confident leaders understand their leadership is not ultimately for themselves, but rather it is to serve others. Arrogant leaders use their roles to be served and to further their own reputations and agendas. Confident leaders welcome input from others since it helps them grow in advancing the mission of the church. Confident leaders make choices that center on the advancement of the mission, arrogant leaders' decisions are clouded by obsession with their own stature. Confident leaders seek to help others grow recognizing that this is a test of their own leadership. Arrogant leaders feel threatened by other and may hamper their development. Confident leaders think of others first; arrogant leaders think of themselves first. Confident leaders think first of the mission of the church and of others. Arrogant leaders, in order to advance themselves in stature, position, authority, etc., derogate others.[1242] In short, confidence and humility are essential characteristics of an effective mission-oriented leadership.

6. Communicate the Mission

Leaders, potential leaders and the congregation as a whole must know and understand the mission/vision of the church. People become what they consistently see and hear overtime, especially when the vision is one that grabs their hearts. As a leader, generate, communicate and sustain the common purpose and vision over and over. And, importantly, describe the vision in ways that people see themselves in it and identify with it. Help them see their future being part of fostering the accomplishment of that vision.[1243]

7. Active Listener

An effective leader is one who actively listens. Most people tend to feel that they have

> to "weigh in" before they will "buy in," and most of us feel respected when we've been heard. Leaders who are easy to follow know how to ask good questions that get the best answers. They are genuinely interested in you and know how to make eye contact during conversations. They tend to linger with their team in unhurried conversations and seldom make people feel rushed or pushed aside.[1244]

[1242] Eric Geiger, "10 Differences Between Confidence and Spiritual Arrogance," OutreachMagazine.com, August 17, 2017.

[1243] Sam Adeymi, "Learning from the Inside Out," Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1244] Brady Boyd, "5 Characteristics of a Leader Who Is Easy to Follow," OutreachMagazine.com, September 6, 2017.

Listen to, hear and spend time with those whom one wants to lead.

8. Invest in People: Interact with Those Being Led

Trying to lead primarily by performance reviews and accountability has increasingly come into disfavor. Annual performance evaluations have not been very effective in increasing a congregation volunteers, lay leaders or staff members' performance. Instead, leaders should engage in ongoing attention to performance. The keys to improved performance by members of a staff, a team, a small group, etc. are guiding, coaching, and tutoring. Provide oversight and generally do whatever is needed to assist a person to perform successfully. Improve performance on the go. Lead rather than simply periodically critique.[1245]

A leader is responsible to both the organization and the individuals in that organization. A leader is a steward of the people he or she is leading. He or she molds people (whether family, friends, business associates, etc.). He or she is responsible to make other people successful. To do so, one needs to know their story, tolerate their differences, and learn what they see their purpose to be. Support the person working toward the goals of the organization and the person's personal goals so long his or her goals are not inconsistent with those of the organization. Help build on their dreams as well as advancing the church's mission. Take a chance on the person.[1246]

Leaders should clearly communicate the organization's purposes so that everyone he is responsible for knows them. Then, be transparent about what is expected of individuals relating expectations to the organization's mission and what is going on. Interact with the workers. Provide access to information. Trust them and build their trust. Find out what the individual's goal is. Treat people with respect. Ask their opinions as to how the organization and or the leader can help the person in working toward both the organization's mission and the individual's goal. Be fair and sensitive in evaluating performance and results. Praise and celebrate accomplishments. Praise in public, correct in private, never embarrass. Trust and respect lead to better results. Connect and reconnect with people on an on-going basis.[1247]

In short, leadership requires interacting with people in multiple ways by investing one's time, talent, and passion in the people he or she seeks to lead.

9. Give Work Meaning

Leaders need to give meaning to work. Motivate people, but not just so they can make money or compete to win. Such work focus brings little lasting joy. The daily routine becomes just a job. Get through the day and go home. However, most people really connect with work that has a deeper meaning, something that has a meaningful impact on human lives. Leaders

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[1245] John Wimberly, "It's Time to Talk About Performance," June 4, 2014, Congregational Consulting Group, (congregationalconsulting.org).

[1246] Marcus Lemonis, *"Reinventing Performance Management,"* (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1247] Laszlo Bock, "Insights from Inside Google: Transform How You Live and Lead (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

should connect with their people and figure out why they are doing what they are doing. What motivates them? Talk with them often on a one-on-one basis. Give them time to come in and tell their story. Then connect them with the work they are doing in a way that is meaningful to them. When work becomes more meaningful, the worker becomes more passionate about what he or she is doing. This results in a fuller life as well as better advancing the purpose of the organization.[1248]

The two most powerful tools in leadership are using people where their interests and strengths lie and make sure the person knows what is expected of him or her in context of the organizations overall mission and the specific role of the person being led. In doing so, learn the person's story. Find out what are his or her interests, passions and dreams are. Discover what the person loves about doing their work. Discern his or her gifts. Connect and clearly communicate how these various factors fit with the role the person is expected to perform. The leader's role is to integrate the organization's mission, the person's personal hopes, dreams and purposes, and his or her gifts with the work to be done and/or the role to be played. Doing so requires frequent (e.g., weekly) personal 1 on 1 interactions with those persons for whom the leader is responsible. If a leader unable to invest in his people on a frequent basis, there are too many people under his control and responsibility.[1249]

10. Creativity

Encourage people to be creative. Leadership involves keeping one's eyes and mind wide-open. Listen to others whether or not they are church goers. Avoid a closed mind. A leader with a closed mind will close the people around him. Listen and learn from the ideas of others. Be receptive to change. [1250]

Reverend Lonnie Richardson has offered "Ten Aspects of Positive Leadership at Fox River Congregational Church" to foster creativity and the pursuit of new ideas.

- Never give up on a good idea just because you think it's impossible.
- Never reject an idea because it may be personally ego fulfilling.
- Never oppose a plan or an 'idea because it will produce new problems.
- Never reject an idea because it is not perfect.
- Never make your decisions on your ability but on God's ability.
- Never wait to start until you have solved all the anticipated problems.
- Never use a problem as an excuse to quit.
- Never back away from an idea because its price seems too high.

[1248] *Id.*

[1249] Marcus Buckingham, "Reinventing Performance Management," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1250] Andy Stanley, "Uniquely Better," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson). The new product almost always arises out of the next generation, rarely from the previous generation. Pay attention to the middle-schoolers, high school students, college persons and young adults. Learn from their cultures. They aren't governed by our assumptions. Create a culture in the church that will do so. *Id.*

- Never reject an idea because it may not harmonize with your present or past position or policy.
- Never refuse to support a good idea because it might build somebody else up instead of you.

Create a safe, secure environment where there is freedom and comfort to bring up ideas for change. Don't consider idea givers as troublemakers. This will close the creative process down. Leaders need to feel secure enough to let others raise ideas without taking such ideas as personal criticism. People willing to offer ideas should feel accepted and affirmed. Regularly brainstorm. Some ideas will be accepted, others passed over. Yet all ideas and idea givers should be welcome and non-threatened. Facilitate discussion between the leaders and the volunteers to generate ideas as how to do better. The leader is not the source of all answers, but rather a facilitator to let the ideas flow without intimidation. When people express ideas which are implemented, they take part ownership in the ministry and work towards its success.[1251]

However, there can be problems with chronic complainers. Teach, through sermons or otherwise, the difference between constructive and destructive sharing. Make this a discipleship principle.[1252] Furthermore, when dealing with complainers, respond in a positive manner, ask specifically how they would make things better. When constant quality improvement is the norm, done on a regular basis, chronic complainers tend to dissipate. Listen to and thank them for their thoughts. When you create regular opportunities to reap ideas from others, the more positive people tend to step up.[1253]

11. Pause and Reflect[1254]

We are in the age of overload. The tyrant of the urgent (often lots of little distracting unnecessary or low priority stuff) has removed the opportunity to pause, think, reflect, vision and create. Time for pause is when ideas emerge. Here is when creativity and self-evaluation occur.

Juliet Funt created the concept of WhiteSpace which is a strategic pause between activities. The pause need not be long although at least one company sets a daily 30 minute period of silence for all employees to pause and reflect. WhiteSpace is not meditation which is focusing on one particular item. But rather, there are no rules and guide lines as to what thoughts should come to mind and be reflected on. Think about whatever pops up so long as relevant. For example, don't spend a lot of time on recounting last night's baseball game.

Four characteristics, when taken to extremes, lure people into a pace and pressure which lowers creativity, productivity and successful results.

[1251] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 60-61, 69-70 (1999).
[1252] *Id.* at 61.
[1253] *Id.* at 72.
[1254] This Section draws on Juliet Funt, "The Strategic Pause," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

- Drive – becomes overdrive results in scheduling and doing
- Excellence – becomes striving for perfection
- Information – becomes gathering too much resulting in overload
- Activity – too much activity results in frenzy and stress

Of course, each of these characteristics (drive, excellence, information and activity) are positive values, but when they are overdone and deprive of person from experiencing WhiteSpace, they are also faults.

WhiteSpace needs to be interjected into the equation. To create WhiteSpace, ask oneself and respond to the following questions and then act upon the responses.

- Is there anything I can let go of?
- When is good enough, good enough?
- What do I truly need to know?
- What deserves my attention?

Strip away the unnecessary. Leaders need to take time to reflect.[1255]

Bill Hybels challenges leaders to spend 15 minutes every day reading and reflecting on one's own life. Pray and surrender to God. Ask who am I becoming? Am I getting better? Avoid the temptation to squeeze out of reflecting in order to do other things.[1256]

12. Civility

Today, leaders are confronted with leading in a culture of divisiveness and disrespect. Such is not tolerable in a church environment. Everyone has been created in God's image. Each person has intrinsic value. Everyone needs to respect all others and is entitled to respect him or herself. Respecting others starts with the leader himself. The leader is also responsible for creating and maintaining a culture of civility throughout the congregation and enforce those under him or her to respect others. Challenge people to seek to understand each other and be part of a loving church.[1257]

Bill Hybels suggests that churches develop a civility code setting forth rules for leaders to enforce covering such areas as the following. Provide examples on how to differ with others without demeaning them. While permitting and encouraging, spirited conversations, such must be done in a manner to avoid drawing blood. Don't interrupt others. Avoid incendiary remarks. Be a courteous. Don't stereotype., Apologize when wrong. Consider other opinions carefully

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[1255] The concept of WhiteSpace (timeout for pause and reflection) considered above might be introduced as a part of leadership training. WhiteSpace offers leaders the opportunity to experience and apply the principles of WhiteSpace in their church teams. Each team member participates in a three 20 minute session mini-course, do interactive activities with the team and take few moments to discuss the applicability of the content. Finally, meet on the fourth week to brainstorm possible changes to make within the organization.

[1256] Bill Hybels, "Rules of Respect and Identifying Young Leaders," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1257] *Id.*.

and let conversation evolve. Show up when promised. Do what you said you would do. Leaders should set rules of civility, serve as examples, and enforce respect of others. Greet and acknowledge others even if is just eye contact and a nod of the head, say please and thank you, treat all equally, always be sensitive and honest with others and be courteous in all circumstances.[1258]

13. Fun

Leaders who enjoy and reflect fun are persons others like to be around. Leaders who laugh and welcome laughter tend to run more successful meetings, build camaraderie and reduce relational stress that occurs in organizations and situations involving more than two people. Most people welcome humor which serves as good medicine in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships.[1259]

14. Courage [1260]

A leader is called upon to make tough decisions. However,

> [i]t is one thing to make a tough decision, it is something else to stay with that decision when the pressure builds. It is important to live with a tough decision long enough to make an impact. But there is a difference between being fearless and being reckless. Being fearless is about courageously living out of one's values and one's faith that God is at work. Being reckless sometimes happens when we do or say outrageous things only to get the attention of the organization or to create disorientation instead of making a tough decision because it is the right thing to do.[1261]

One can learn all sorts of things about and train to be a leader. But, all of these can be washed away by one thing – FEAR. At the Last Supper, one of the last things Jesus taught his disciples was do not be afraid. Fear can deter people from doing what they have learned despite their talent and good intentions. Christian leadership flows out of love and dreams. Fear shifts focus to oneself and thereby destroys dreams. Fear undermines love and replaces it with preoccupation with self.

[1258] *Id.*

[1259] Brady Boyd, "5 Characteristics of a Leader Who Is Easy to Follow," OutreachMagazine.com, September 6, 2017.

[1259] Bill Hybels, "Rules of Respect and Identifying Young Leaders," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1260] This Section draws primarily on Gary Haugen, "Leaders, Do Not Be Afraid," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1261] Bruce Ough and Susan Nienaber, "What It Takes to Revitalize the Mainline," June 29, 2015, Congregational Consulting Group, congregationalconsulting.org.

Fear can emerge from several sources. Perhaps the most extreme is threat of physical violence. But more often and subtle is the fear of being a failure, or to look like a failure and a loser. With this fear one may let go of his or her dreams. Thus, the question is raised for leaders is how can a leader's dreams survive. To do so, consider three approaches in combination with one another.

- *Reflect on one's own fears* – What am I really anxious about. As suggested earlier, set aside time for stillness and reflection every day. Sit in silence, reflect and perhaps pray, about one's own situation. Especially, if attentive to God, there is an enhanced sense of self awareness, sense of hope and peace. A period of reflection should become a routine, and it is especially important for leaders.

- *Switch from Defense to Offense* – Focus on what might go right rather than on what might go wrong. This can refocus on great dreams rather than hunker down in a defensive bunker. Joy comes from putting the ball in their goal, not in simply defending our goal. God wants people to join him in playing offense.

- *Cultivate and surround oneself with a culture of dreams.* It is difficult to forge ahead alone. Jesus forged a community of courage. Don't be afraid. Love each other as I have loved you. Being involved with a loving supporting group builds courage to prevail over dream killing fears. Leaders need to feel primarily responsible for implementing the strategy of fostering a loving community working together, and trusting God and one another. Christ himself is the real soldier with us for a courageous dreaming community leading without fear.

- *Play to the right audience.*

> Effectively moving people against the prevailing currents of their lives and culture demands courage. To do this, you must be able to love people without needing them.... If you need people too much, you will never be able to courageously lead them for fear of losing them. *The right kind of courage always results from playing to the right audience—the audience of One.*[1262] (Emphasis supplied.)

In short, leadership consists of several elements considered above which can be grouped into one or both of two categories. First, as a leader, one serves as a model for those he leads. Positive personal characteristics are a *sine qua non* of leadership. Effective leadership depends upon the personal character traits of the leader modeled and practiced. Second, effective leadership also depends on how one goes about exercising his or her leadership role, especially interconnecting with and investing in his or her people and giving them work in a manner meaningful to them.

[1262] Brad Powell, "What an Effective Leader Looks Like," OutreachMagazine.com, December 1, 2011.

15. Jesus Model: Servant Leadership

And finally and importantly, let's not overlook Jesus' big statement about leadership. He not only explains to his disciples how he led them over the three-year period of his ministry, he also makes clear how he expects them to lead once he is gone, the church is established, and they are in the position of authority.

> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.
> (Mark 10:42-44)

Jesus' teaching leadership counters much of how those in leadership positions today exercise their authority, e.g., "Just do as I say because I am the boss."

> But Jesus turned this dynamic on its head. If you want to have authority like Jesus had, you have to be a servant. You have to put the needs of those over whom you have authority ahead of your own. That's how Jesus led.[1263]

To be an effective disciple-making church leader, learn to serve the people you lead rather than essentially telling them what to do. This is the standard to which Jesus calls his followers. "Great leaders—leaders such as Jesus—leverage their authority for the benefit of the people under their authority. They look around and ask those they lead, "What can I do to help?"[1264]

B. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

1. Need

An effective leader is one who learns and continues to grow in his or her leadership characteristics and responsibilities. People should continually be reinventing themselves. Evolve to the next level.[1265] Thus, to assure an on-going and expanding supply of leaders in various capacities and responsibilities, it is important for a church to institute a leadership development program for both those currently occupying leadership positions and those coming on board as leaders in a variety of situations. In particular, the next generation of leaders requires intentional leadership training and experiences with successful leaders. Development efforts should include instructing and encouraging leadership characteristics such as those considered above.[1266]

[1263] Andy Stanley, *Follow* 88 (Participant's Guide) (2014).Leadership

[1264] *Id.*

[1265] Sam Adeymi, ""Learning from the Inside Out," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1266] Andy Stanley, in his book *Next Generation Leader:* ***Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future***

In those persons evidencing leadership potential, plant leadership seeds especially in the lives of the young. Invite them into leadership, provide them with what they need, communicate your belief in them and express that they will have a bright feature. That is, believe in someone and give them opportunity. Give attention to young leaders and encourage them often.[1267]

For those having some ministry responsibility in the church, training can be critical for effectiveness. The question for the church is "*How can the church train the maximum number of people*."[1268] Simply vesting responsibility in someone and leaving it to them figure out what they are to do often results in failure. Training is required. Pastors oversee those who do the work of the ministry. In small churches, at least initially, the pastor does most of the training. As the church becomes bigger, someone else is assigned as a recruiter and/or/ trainer to work with potential leaders as well as those already engaged in some leadership capacity. These ministry leaders then raise up others to train yet others. Leaders should have assistants who, in the process, become trained to be leaders.[1269]

2. Prepare for Emerging Leadership Needs

Failure to find and begin to nurture potential leaders before a leadership need occurs undermines a church's efforts. For example, assume a relational small group wants to get started, but no one (at least no one with adequate leadership abilities) steps forward. That group is unlikely to either start or progress in a manner likely to fulfill its purpose. The same can be said about any situation which calls for a qualified leader.

Simply thumbing through the church directory looking for someone who might fill the bill does not promise to meet the need of finding the right person(s) at the right time. Instead, a church should institute a process for identifying potential leaders before they are needed.

Personality traits to look for when searching for potential volunteer leaders include concern/love for others, not a complainer, teachable and open to suggestions, willingness to follow, reliability, interested, good character, potential, confidence and good people skills.[1270]

The key is to be people focused rather than need focused. This requires intentional and on-going leader development effort (by the senior pastor and/or some other church leader) if the church wants to enhance its effectiveness as a disciple-making church.[1271]

(2006) shares material from his leadership training sessions developed to mentor promising candidates in five areas – clarity, character, courage, competency and coaching. This offers a guide for any new leader as well as for the mentor of a future leader.

[1267] Bill Hybels, "Rules of Respect and Identifying Young Leaders," (Global Leadership Summit on Everyone Has Influence sponsored, by Willow Creek Association), August 10-11, 2017 (from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson).

[1268] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 176 (1993).

[1269] *Id.*

[1270] Ron Edmondson, "10 Valuable Characteristics to Look for in Volunteer Leaders," September 28, 2020, OutreachMagazine.com.

[1271] A. Trevor Sutton, "Don't Wait Until You Need a Leader to Find One," September 6, 2016 (faithandleadership.com).

A system for doing so might look like this. First, pray to God to identify leaders and potential leaders in the congregation. In addition to one's own list, ask other leaders in the congregation to suggest names of potential leaders. After compiling the list, send each person a letter introducing them to the church's leadership development process and note that his or her name had surfaced as a potential leader and ask that he or she pray about possibly becoming a part of a future leader pathway. The pathway has three components; reading a book,[1272] praying about possibly being a leader, and attending an occasional gathering of the future leaders' group. The timeline of the process is short (perhaps a few months) and a weekly time commitment is limited. The note should make clear that there is no obligation to take on a leadership role when the process is completed. After those who choose to participate, afford time to read the book, gather, discuss the book and get to know each other.[1273] Subsequently, send each a note expressing that you have been praying for them. Then follow-up by individually meeting with each person to discuss the book, get to know them better, and talk about leadership in a more personal way. For those reflecting a continuing interest, encourage them to participate in a short term leadership development program or participate in some activity in which he or she can observe leadership being modeled. From a process such as this, leaders begin to emerge and become available when the need arises.[1274]

This suggested approach, or some variant may work well for our church or perhaps another system might be better in our context. But whatever approach might be adopted, be sure that it is implemented.

> Waiting until you need a leader is the worst time to find one. Develop future leaders by praying for them, praying with them and discovering the gifts God has given them. Develop your leaders first. And then find a place for them to serve.[1275]

> Next to the favor of God, everything rises and falls on leadership. Do the leaders in your church demonstrate a strong spiritual depth and a servant's heart? What is your plan to find and develop new and better leaders? You will not realize your potential as a church without a serious dedication to this process.[1276]

[1272] The book recommended is *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* by Henri Nouwen. Although not a leadership book, it helps developing spiritually mature Christians through centering on Christ rather than on the chaos of daily life. However, this suggestion is not intended to deter others from selecting material that better suits their needs.

[1273] Various books should be explored for possible use. *E.g.*, as noted above, Andy Stan Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: 5 Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (2006). This book has been described as leadership training for church young people eager to serve God. It serves to mentor promising candidates in the areas of clarity, character, courage, competency and coaching. christianbook.com.

[1274] A. Trevor Sutton, "Don't Wait Until You Need a Leader to Find One," September 6, 2016 (faithandleadership.com). In seeking people to serve in various roles, including leadership positions, churches commonly extend a public invitation for volunteers. A cautionary note, while it is important to find a place for everyone willing to serve, just because they are willing does not necessarily qualify them to perform that role. Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 39 (1999).

[1275] A. Trevor Sutton, "Don't Wait Until You Need a Leader to Find One," September 6, 2016 (faithandleadership.com).

[1276] Dan Reiland, "8 Questions to Evaluate the Health of Your Church," OutreachMagazine.com, August 21, 2017.

C. EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR MINISTRY SUCCESS

For a church ministry to reach its maximum potential in accomplishing that which God calls the church to do, it is essential to develop strong leaders. Church leaders developed today will determine the ministry's future. As noted earlier, there are numerous sources on leadership for both business in general and church ministry in particular. And, it is beyond the scope of this resource book to extensively treat the broad subject of training for church leadership. However, instructive is the work of Pastor Dan Rieland who has spent a considerable portion of his career in leadership and church development. The discussion in this section draws heavily upon an article encompassing an excerpt from one of his books. However, as FRCC further considers training for leadership, other sources should be explored as well as Rieland's entire book which sets forth a process for developing leaders that are established spiritually and trained practically.

Jesus modeled the principle of equipping in the process of training his disciples. Even though he had taught his disciples about faith, prayer, casting out demons, and fasting, occasions arose when they were still unable to do so. When they were unable to put into practice what he had taught them, he spent time to teach them again. Jesus shows that equipping someone not only involves teaching how to engage in ministry, but also showing them what to do. It is this kind of leadership commitment which is needed to equip people for ministry. Furthermore, rarely does a person learn how to effectively minister effectively the first time he or she is taught. Although at some point, one can become adequately prepared to perform certain function or functions, the learning process never ends.

Leaders of church teams and other ministries need both teaching and hands-on training that will enable them to be effective leaders. There are several strategies to assist leaders in strengthening their abilities to equip those whom they are leading or well lead.

1. Create the Right Environment

Developing an equipping strategy by one's lonesome is not enough. A congregation needs a culture shift. A training program is highly unlikely to succeed in the absence of an awareness of and a buy-in by both church leadership and the congregation as a whole as to the value of equipping people in general and leadership in particular. Both leaders and the congregation need to "buy-in" and commit to seeing the process through for the long haul. Having the best equipping strategy, without an environment that supports it, is unlikely to work.

Thus, before commencing an equipping program, cast a vision on the value of training both leadership and members of the congregation for their respective roles in ministry. Pastors should consider preaching sermons on the importance of becoming a leadership equipping church. Leaders can address the issue in group sessions. Since equipping is connected to the larger value of serving, it should not be relegated to single sermon or staff meeting.

> Equipping is not just about teaching someone how to perform a certain ministry function. It addresses the much larger kingdom

> idea of serving and to grow in maturity and experience fullness in Christ.[1277]

This needs to be communicated and championed on an on-going basis.

When individual Christian church members, as well as church leaders in various capacities, recognize and acknowledge serving as a natural, healthy, and essential part of Christian life, rather than simply a task and duty, becoming equipped comes to be viewed in a more positive perspective. It is part of one growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feeling and actions. Equipping works best in an environment where the people do not see their serving as simply helping the pastor or others getting their get his work done. But rather, when people understand that equipping helps them fulfill their call to serve others and build up the body of Christ, becoming trained for leadership or some ministry(s) engenders a positive "let's do it" perspective. People want to be successful in what they do, want to make a difference, want their contribution to matter. This requires competency and continually working to improve. So, create an environment which often and effectively communicates understanding that training is an important part of responding to God's call to serve. Whatever method or methods a church uses, equipping must become a core value in training both leaders and other church members.

2. Equipping Is Not Developing

Enhanced training of leaders and others for ministry arises from understanding that equipping people differs from developing them. Although both are vitally important, these are two distinct functions.

Equipping prepares a person to accomplish a ministry function or task. The equipping process establishes the standard for competency and trains persons to get the job done in the context of focusing on the church's mission. The equipping process is designed to help those being led to more effectively fulfill the church's mission.

Distinct is the development process which invests in a people's lives. It focuses not only on cultivating leadership and/or other skills, it also adds value to an individual's personal life as well as to his or her role in the church., i.e., it contributes to a person's spiritual growth. When a leader desires to develop people, he or she invests time teaching principles wanting them to succeed in life and to experience transformation. Here the purpose is not simply to better serve the church. Equipping for serving in some capacity may better contribute to transforming those people being equipped. In short, **e**quipping centers on changing the ministry, developing a person changes the person. However, equipping and developing tend to blend and blur together. Equipping does build people and developing does prepare people for ministry. The real distinction is equipping prepares people to *do* ministry, and developing builds up the people who are *in* ministry. Both elements need to be incorporated in church training efforts of both leaders and others.

[1277] *Id.*

3. Qualities of Effective Training

Some training seminars, workshops, lectures and/or other programs can be very helpful, others may be a waste of time. Often the difference derives from the communicator quality of the person leading the training. When conducting or sponsoring training, care must be exercised in the selection of the instructor(s). Avoid those who lack a good command of the material they're presenting or are boring and poor communicators.

Furthermore, even leaders who are gifted teachers won't be effective at equipping people if their training process lacks quality characteristics such as the following..

- *Relevance* – **t**raining must stay current and relevant. Standards and best practices are constantly changing.

- *Variety* – keep training interesting by periodically altering the delivery method. Occasionally invite a guest trainer, a community or business leader, or pastor to speak or lead a session or two. Or, occasionally use a DVD series of high quality which meets the church's training needs.

- *Practicality* – training demands that it be useful. Although offering Mission and vision background, in addition to some philosophical background on the need for the area of ministry being trained for, ultimately training must be practical. Although it is a plus for those being trained to grow spiritually, avoid the pressure to convert training sessions into Bible studies. Concentrate on the specific skills needed to be effective in a particular area of ministry. One of the most important practical elements of training is for the leader to offer hands-on training as part of the equipping process.

- *Inspiration* – **p**racticality doesn't mean boring! The training should stir and challenge. Vision helps motivate people. Stories of changed lives tend to offer even greater inspiration. Share stories about the impact resulting from people who have been trained. This will remind the trainees of their potential impact role.

- *Fun* – keeping training fun and light significantly contributes to encouraging trainees. Lightening the load of busy people and causing them to laugh or smile fosters continued participation.

- *Focus* – it is challenging to gather people to training sessions. While it is tempting to add other items to the agenda when you have everyone in one room (e.g., announcements, group prayer for a mission group, etc.), it is counterproductive. Doing so draws the training session off point, prolongs the session, and detracts from the overall program. Stay focused, train the group, then let them go home. Avoid deterring them from coming back. Focus makes more likely they will return for the next training session.

4. Plan for Success

Successful training requires adequate preparation before starting the training process. Consider several basic items which underlay a successful training program. If left out the training process most likely will suffer.

- *Connect the right person with the right ministry* – Often determining whether a person fits a particular ministry becomes evident during the invitation process. However, a non-fit sometimes doesn't surface until after a person has joined a ministry team (the group being trained). The pressure to meet an immediate ministry need can easily cause leaders to invite wrong person into a ministry or leadership role. Although it's true that people with the spiritual gifts for serving can do well in several different ministries, it is also true that people are best suited to one or two ministry areas. Spiritual gifts tests, conversing about a person's passions and interests, and inviting him or her to participate in a ministry on a short-term experimental basis offer ways to assist people discover their right or wrong spots on a ministry team.

- *Determine the desired results for each ministry* – Effective equipping starts with a clear understanding of the specific goals for that ministry.

- *Identify the skills and core competencies needed to achieve desired results* – Knowing the needed skills to achieve the ministry specific goals is a most critical factor impacting the effective direction of the training. program. Plan and implement training to equip people in the core competencies needed.

- *Consider the cultural and philosophical biases of the church* – Be aware of the church's unique cultural dynamics. Acknowledge the reality and carry that awareness into the design of the training processes. For instance, denominational churches have specific governing structures that shape how teams and committees are empowered (e.g., the Congregational Way). Carry the church's governing philosophy into the way the training process is organized and conducted.

- *Be prepared to invest in the necessary training materials and tools* – Although people can be quite creative with modest resources and exercise great stewardship with resources, nevertheless a certain level of investment is necessary to provide good tools and training for various church roles. Find room in the church budget for training expenses and equipment needed to advance the mission purposes of the church and the specific goals to achieve them.

5. Equipping Is an Ongoing Process

Effective equipping requires an on-going process of training. Offering a few classes and then assuming a team and/or leaders are set for life fails to recognize that both ministries and cultures change. Successful ministry needs to constantly grow and become more

effective. Never think we have arrived. Equipping is not an event, it is a lifestyle. The practice of the following tips can assist equipping to become an integral part of a growing disciple-making church. Among these are the following.

- *Communicate often with teams about desired results* – The two prime purposes of equipping ministry teams are (1) afford team members an opportunity to grow spiritually by serving others and (ii) enabling them to actually and clearly see actual ministry results. Avoid allowing a ministry team and/or leaders to continue to function in a manner producing ineffective results. Doing so not only adversely impacts the church but also the team members. Regularly discuss the progress being and/or not being made. Ask simple, direct questions such as, what is working, not working, and how can we improve. Then incorporate what is learned into the training process.

- *Offer generous amounts of praise and affirmation* –

> God wants individual team members to be built up, encouraged, and loved to a place where consistent serving becomes a lifestyle. This builds the body of Christ and advances God's kingdom. The simple act of saying thank you and telling your team they are doing a good job can literally change eternity. Think about it. As you build them up, they build the ministry up, the ministry changes lives, and eternity is impacted![1278]

- *Provide ongoing training* – The frequency and the nature of on-going training varies depending upon the ministry. A couple of one- or two-hour huddles twice a year after initial training may suffice. A group leader might do well with three or four "Lunch and Learn" sessions. Whatever the number of sessions, choose current and relevant topics presented in an inspiring, engaging, practical, and interactive manner. Also, let the teams have fun in a manner for them to get to know one another better.

- *Check for fruit and joy* – Periodically ask team members individually, in an informal setting, what fruit (results) and joys they are experiencing on this ministry team. For ministry to be successful, both should occur.

- *Results without joy is drudgery* – No one can or should endure drudgery for long. Joy without results may be fun for a while, but ultimately it will be frustrating that the team's efforts are not paying off.[1279]

- Periodically ask those whom you are leading about their individual personal experiences and sense of fruits sprouting. And, offers insights which build them up and improve their ministry.

[1278] *Id.*

[1279] Excerpt from Dan Reiland, *Amplified Leadership: 5 Practices to Establish Influence, Build People and Impact Others for a Lifetime* (2012), appearing in OutreachMagazine.com, August 8, 2012.

In order to amplify leadership, build a great team or teams. Invite people into meaningful ministry with sincerity and conviction. When a team is in place, train them for effective serving.

D. DEVELOPING QUALITY TEAMS: TEAM LEADERS AND TEAM MEMBERS

1. Quality Teams[1280]

Structuring a church for effective disciple-making revolves around various teams responsible for different (albeit related) ministries. When a church leader dictates what is to be done and others carry out the dictates, quality and quantity of effort are unlikely to emerge. Quality improvement tends not to happen unless a church works together in teams.

Teams possess a greater degree of motivation than does an individual or committee assigned a task and told to do it in this way. In contrast, there is a sense of ownership when there is a team approach as distinguished from a committee in which the chair person is the main planner. The more people involved in the process, the more and the higher caliber of the ideas occur. True ownership comes when the team as a whole generates ideas and seeks to implement them rather than when a couple of people generate the ideas and ask the others to carry them out with little or no discussion.

Furthermore, times are changing. Those in the more recent generations tend to be more experiential. They want to participate, make a difference, and see their ideas acted upon. Teams tend to invest more time in building relationships, sharing their joys and burdens and praying together. This not only fosters a basic purpose of the church (fellowship), it enhances productivity.

From the onset of a team and periodically throughout its on-going activities, a pastor or team leader should emphasize fostering a ministry partnership. At team gatherings, share the vision for the team-ministry concept. Some topics which might be discussed include effective ministry teams are biblically based, perform in the power of the Holy Spirit, plan according to God's will, pray together, and agree to move forward through consensus. Include team building activities in the team gatherings accompanied by the rationale for doing so.

Again, working through the team concept is crucial to quality improvement. The team approach enhances communication effectiveness, creates broader ownership, enhances meeting efficiency, is more rewarding to participants, better models Christian community, and contributes to growing team members in their own individual Walks with Christ.

2. Team Members and Team Leaders

a. Composition of Team

[1280] This Section draws primarily on Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* p.98 - 107(1999).

Developing quality teams depends upon both those who are on the teams and who is the team leader. The most effective teams are those consisting of people according to their strengths. Different people offer different areas of potential. Various factors interplay in determining who best fits a particular function. These include intelligence, attitude in working with others, time availability, energy, motivation, and spiritual maturity in the context of the role he or she is to play. These factors are relevant to both team leaders and members. [1281]

b. Team Leaders

Team leaders, as do leaders of small groups, occupy highly crucial positions. It is a leader who catalyzes the team's (small group's) efforts. Such persons need to balance the *ability to get things done* and the *ability to build relationships*. Too much task orientation may get a particular task done, but no one enjoys the process and the turnover is high. This does not work well in a volunteer faith community. On the other hand, too much emphasis on relation building results in a wonderful time but little gets done with respect to the team's responsibilities.[1282]

Teams which fail to get moving tend to be one's (a) whose leaders are *not really leaders* or (b) whose leaders *have not caught the vision* of what needs to be done. If a team leader proves not to be a leader, it is necessary to replace him or her. Of course, it is tough to replace a volunteer. But, to institute and implement a quality-improvement mindset in the church, the importance of advancing the church's mission must be elevated above simply accepting poor leadership. Leadership selection and development are the crux of establishing and conducting quality improvement ministry teams.[1283]

In a congregational church such as here at Fox River, there is no mechanism to fire a team leader or member. However, sensitive discussion by church leadership might suffice. Furthermore, under the Fox River Constitution and By-Laws, both team leaders and members are elected annually. Thus, avenues for leadership change are available.

In summary, quality improvements in a ministry demands healthy teams. Healthy teams require that both their members and their leaders be in the right roles in the right proportions. Thus, the first objective is involving the right people in the right roles. This requires investigating what it takes to accomplish a particular ministry effectively and then find those individuals possessing those traits or resources. Furthermore, a church owes its members the process of matching abilities (gifts) to functions.[1284] At Fox River, this involves encouraging those with the relevant attributes to volunteer their time and talent by making themselves available for election, by self-nomination, for a team(s) position. Furthermore, the earlier discussion of the church preparing for emerging leadership needs should significantly contribute to getting the right person in the right place.

[1281] *Id.* Toler and Nelson discuss these factors in terms of being quotients. For example, if the person is to serve as a role model, his or her spiritual quotient should probably be high

[1282] *Id.* at 113.

[1283] *Id.* at 114, 118.

[1284] *Id.* at 115-16. For discussion of discerning and matching a person's gifts to ministry, see Section V.A. below.

E. SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP

As emphasized repeatedly throughout this document, as well as in numerous sources elsewhere, participation in relational small groups, is absolutely fundamental for a church to be an effective disciple-making church. This is at the heart of disciple-making, the growing of people toward a Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions. Thus, it is critical for a church to encourage and move people into some type of Christ oriented small group.

As groups form and expand, small group leaders will be needed. They need to be trained for small group leadership. Section VI.B. below elaborates on building transformational fellowship around relational small groups and the leading such groups. That discussion, coupled with the discussion in this section on leadership, offers a basis for the development of small group leadership training here at FRCC.

F. VOLUNTEER CULTURE[1285]

Those who become affiliated with a church tend to have strong feelings about it. People want to volunteer and be a part of what they love and are passionate about. Although they may not be ready today nor know exactly what to do or how at this point in time, it is in them to support what they feel strongly about and believe in. An effective disciple-making church and its leadership need to help them do that. Pastors, staff and leaders are to equip the people to do the work of ministry that God called them to do. A local church cannot function without loyal and dedicated volunteers who contribute to the advancement of the mission of the church. Thus, it is crucial to build a strong volunteer friendly culture in the church. (Doing so is discussed in Section IV.B.6.*f.* below.)

IV. ENGENDERING MOVEMENT TO, WITHIN AND THROUGH THE STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

To become a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ, one seeks to grow toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions. This requires spiritual growth leading toward life transformation. Spiritual growth emerges from intentional learning and practicing various spiritual disciplines focused on (1) connecting with God by pursuing an intimate relationship with him, (2) connecting with other believers by sharing life with them, (3) connecting both believers and non-believers through serving their needs and (4) connecting with people outside the faith through evangelism. It is the growth in these relationships which are the marks of growing toward a more Christ-like life.

A. MOVEMENT THROUGH THE STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

Progressing to, within and through each stage of the disciple-making process involves walking a procedural path offering experiences for spiritual formation. As envisioned for our

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[1285] This section draws primarily on Dan Reiland, "5 Foundational Principles for a Strong Volunteer Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, October 21, 2018.

church, the procedural path (i.e., the stages of disciple-making) consists of conversion, regular participation in worship, learning the basics of the faith, becoming a member of and assimilated into our church, participation in short term small groups, participation in relational small groups, and growing in a Christian life style encompassing not only continued pursuit of intimacy with God through the personal and relational practice of spiritual disciplines, but also being involved in fellowship with fellow Christians, serving others and reaching out to people outside the faith.

For some, perhaps many, traversing this path may not necessarily be entirely sequential. However, in one way or another, traversing this path is essential. As a disciple-making church, it is our role to encourage, equip and support people, wherever they are in their journey, to traverse this path which encompasses the stages of the disciple-making process leading to growing more Christ-like in thoughts, feelings and actions.

Earlier discussion focused on mission, the process as depicted by the various stages of discipleship, the content for each stage offering disciple-making experiences and the implementation of both short term and relational small groups as prime vehicles for spiritual growth. The questions which need to be addressed are threefold.

(i) How do we as a church encourage *movement* of people along the procedural path so as to experience spiritual growth in the various stages of the disciple-making? That is, how do we engender movement?

(ii) How do we garner an on-going *commitment* of the individual to pursue this path?

(iii) How do both the individual and the church *evaluate* on-going progress of persons on the path of growing toward the image of Christ?

1. Intentionality of Movement

As previously considered, to be an effective disciple-making church, movement through the various stages of disciple-making is crucial. Movement consists of taking steps in the disciple-making process which lead people to move to deeper understanding, commitment and doing. To reiterate some earlier observations, all too often churches focus insufficient attention on how to move people to greater levels of commitment to spiritual growth. Commonly, not infrequently, members of a congregation experience little, if any, transformation. At least in significant part, spiritual stagnation of believers stems from the lack of an intentional church process to move them along in their Walk with Christ.

Yet, it is when we place ourselves in God's presence that God transforms us. A disciple-making church's role is to move people to places where God is most likely to transform them. This is achieved by implementing and effectuating a disciple-making process which moves people through greater levels of commitment and action in their pursuit of the four critical relationships of connecting with God, with other believers, with others through serving and with people outside the faith. People need to *move beyond their personal comfort zone*. Without movement, programs, sermons, events and other activities are simply ends unto themselves.

As noted earlier, George Barna's research revealed that only 1 out of 5 believers stated that their churches had put into place a systematic means to evaluate the spiritual maturity and commitment to spiritual maturity of their congregation. However, in the same survey, 9 out of 10 said they would seriously consider their church's recommendation to pursue a spiritual path if one were clear and made available to them.

The ministry process must be about moving people along the path leading to a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions. An effective disciple-making church needs to strive moving their people beyond their zones of comfort along this path.

To respond to the challenge of moving people through the process, both the church and the individual need to be intentional about movement through the stages of discipleship. Grow people through a process that has a purpose (a mission). It is the intentional development of a clear spiritual path and the means to traverse such path which demands our church's primary and on-going attention.[1286]

2. Underlying Conditions for Successful Movement

We need to continually remind ourselves of two basic fundamentals of engendering movement of people to, within and through the various stages of the disciple-making process. First, the experiences we offer need to be attractive to people both in terms of their focus and their scheduling. Second, the experiences offered need to be implemented in a high-quality manner. Not meeting these conditions will result in either failing to attract people in the first place and/or deterring continued walking the path. Bad experiences don't lead to participation in future experiences. That is, excellence in terms of both the content and the implementation of the experience is essential.

3. Communicate the Process[1287]

Instituting a procedural path to enable people to progress in the disciple-making process does little good if this path is simply communicated by another statement posted on the bulletin board. Instead, the message must not only be communicated, it must become an integral part of the fabric of the church. "[I]f something is important to the church, it really cannot be over-communicated."[1288] This requires frequent periodic discussion rather than discussion solely at the time of the launch. Church leaders must own the disciple-making process. Surface it and resurface it.

- View everything through the lens of disciple-making using a graphical presentation illustrating Our Walk with Christ. Refer to process when decisions are made, programs are evaluated and budgets are discussed. Bring conversations back to the blueprint.

[1286] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship Making Disciples a Few at a Time* 52-53 (2003).

[1287] This Section draws primarily on Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* 124-32 (2006).

[1288] Thomas S. Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit?* 12 (2016).

- Surface the process in meetings. Discuss it. Sometimes put it on the agenda.

- Test leaders on it (e.g. hand out the visual illustration with blanks to be filled in.) Do it again at a later time.

- Brainstorm new ways to communicate the process.

Invest time in communicating the process to the people of the church. Intentionally and repeatedly evaluate and confirm that members possess a clear understanding of the process. Not only do people progress through the process when they are clear about it, they also bring other people to it. So, it is essential to increase the level of understanding in the church

- by repeatedly articulating the process to the church as a whole (e.g., weave it into regular messages and communications),

- sharing the process interpersonally when interacting with others at dinner tables, meetings, conversations, etc., and

- most importantly, live the process personally. Doing personally what is being asked of others to do is paramount. Leaders, both clergy and lay, need to participate in the disciple-making process along with everyone else.

B. Encouraging Movement in the Various Stages of the Disciple-Making Process

Movement to, within or through the stages of disciple-making needs to be encouraged at every stage of disciple-making. Akin to a relay race in which a baton is handed off from one person to another, movement is how someone is handed off from one stage of commitment to the next stage. For example, determine ways for the church to best move people from going through the becoming a church member stage to the assimilation stage. There must be intentional effort to move a person to the next stage of disciple-making. And, of course, at each stage the experiences offered need to be perceived as attractive, interesting, exciting and worthwhile so as to induce people to move to, within and, in some cases, beyond a particular stage of disciple-making. As a church, we need to evaluate the content offered to assure that selected does offer meaningful spiritual formation experiences which are attractive to potential participants. This applies to all stages of disciple-making. Some (albeit not suggested to be exclusive) efforts to engender movement through the various stages are considered below in the context of each stage of disciple-making.

1. Conversion

One initiates becoming a follower of Christ by accepting him as Lord and Savior. Our moving people to the acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior depends upon our evangelism efforts that lead to inviting people to our various church activities, worship services, programs and small groups. This is particularly effective when church members come to realize and

commit to inviting people outside the faith with whom they have some type of personal relationship. It is a role of the church to foster such commitment. Evangelism efforts are efforts to move people to the first stage of disciple-making, i.e., conversion.

2. Worship

Success in moving people to regular participation in worship services depends upon the attractiveness, meaningfulness, and scheduling of the services. We need to consider offering various a styles or blends of styles, of worship services which are not only pleasing to God, but which also attract people. To attract, they need to be meaningful which, in turn, suggests fostering participation in worship services as one of the fundamental spiritual practices. At least, in part, this could be achieved by communicating the purposes and the hows of meaningful worship as a transformational experience. Such communication could be presented in one or combination of ways such as a sermon or sermon series, a worship retreat and/or a short term small group programs. The combination of highly attractive, meaningful and conveniently scheduled worship services, coupled with communications about such services through a variety of mediums and venues,[1289] promises to encourage guests to return after a first try, to move current members to become more active and regular participants in worship services, and to invite others to our worship services.

In turn, meaningful worship services provide a platform to move people to the next stages of discipleship such as exploring church membership and assimilation into the life of the church. Invitations from the pulpit, follow-up contacts by the pastor and/or other church leaders, and individual member invitations should occur to engender moving the newcomer to his or her next stage in the disciple-making process.

3. Basics of Faith

For those who are newcomers to the faith, movement along the spiritual path requires understanding the basics of the faith beyond the rudimentary understandings underlying the conversion decision to accept Christ. As noted earlier, gaining this greater understanding of the basics of faith may occur in the context of any one of several stages of disciple-making. This may happen as early as the conversion stage, result from teachings during worship services or occur later such as participation in a small group. However, whatever the context, proceeding to, within and beyond the basics of faith disciple-making stage is a foundational element for one to grow in his or her spiritual formation.

Thus, it is incumbent on the church to offer programs on the basics of faith and well publicize the time, place and importance for new believers (as well as others seeking a refresher opportunity). Furthermore, pastors, church leaders and other individual members of the congregation should not only be alert to the availability of such offerings, but also be made aware of their responsibility to extend an invitation to newcomers with whom they have developed even a casual personal relationship. This responsibility needs to be communicated to all members. A planned approach to move people to and through the basics of faith stage of disciple-making is

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[1289] Another possibility to encourage movement to worship services might be to add to the Exploring Church Membership Class a segment focusing on the purposes of worship.

another element for engendering movement to, within and through the various stages of disciple-making. Upon conclusion of the basics of faith stage, whatever its format, the leaders of these program offerings should encourage participants to participate in either a short term or a relational long term small group and arrange for personal invitations from one or more of such groups.

4. Personal Spiritual Disciplines: Nurturing Faith

To reiterate earlier discussion, spiritual disciplines are the content of disciple-making experiences. One learns and practices spiritual disciplines in the pursuit of connecting with God, connecting with other believers by sharing life together, connecting with others by serving their needs, and connecting with those outside the faith by sharing the gospel and bringing them into the life of the church. To grow in one's Walk with Christ a person needs to progressively engage in various spiritual disciplines (considered in some detail in PART THREE above). The disciple-making stage of practicing a personal spiritual discipline(s) (including, e.g., prayer, spending time with God's Word and worship) to connect with God in a loving intimate is not a one time or one place exercise. It is an-on-going stage of discipleship which interrelates with other stages such as participation in small groups, growing in serving others and growing in sharing Christ.

Although there are numerous spiritual disciplines, for persons in their earlier stages of spiritual growth, the church should place special emphasis on the spiritual disciplines of prayer, spending time with God's Word and worship. These are foundational disciplines to be practiced throughout one's lifetime.

A theme, which surfaces when people relate their faith stories, revolves around the development of a private devotional life. Personal spiritual disciplines introduce a sense of intimacy with and accountability to God in a person's growing faith. Private personal disciplines attune us to God. There is a direct relationship between a person's private personal devotional life and the growth in his or her faith. Private disciplines are faith catalysts which strengthen ones' faith.[1290] Thus, it is incumbent on a disciple-making church to explore ways "to coax, bribe, bait, and equip everybody from kindergarten up to engage in some kind of private devotional exercise."[1291]

Spiritual experiences for learning and practicing these disciplines should be offered on an on-going basis. Short term small groups provide a good format for introduction to these disciplines. Relational small groups not only can offer an introduction, they are also excellent for on-going practice of such disciplines. Sermons can encourage and supplement these other efforts.

In addition to offering experiences to foster all church members engagement in worship, prayer and spending time with God's Word, the church needs to develop and implement a strategy to move all members of the church to learn, understand and practice these disciplines as well as additional disciplines such as those considered in PART THREE above.

[1290] Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* 117 (2012).
[1291] *Id.* at 121.

5. Church Membership in a Covenant Community: Getting to Know Our Church

After a person accepts Christ and begins participating in worship services, begins to increase one's basics of faith and the practice of spiritual disciplines (e.g., likely worship and prayer), the next stage of disciple-making is becoming a part of Christ's family. As a condition of membership, one needs to learn, understand and commit to the mission purpose of the church both from the perspective of what the church collectively seeks to do and, most importantly, the responsibility of and expectation for the individual to grow more Christ-like in his or her thoughts, feelings and actions. Stagnating as a nominal Christian does not suffice. Thus, a critical role of the church, as a disciple-making church, is to create expectations that all will grow in their Walk with Christ. Low expectations lead to low results. Clear communication of mission, and the stages of discipleship is essential. This involves not only learning about our church mission, but also about our covenant, core beliefs and values, vision, organizational structure and, in the context of FRCC, doing church in the Congregational Way. This learning process is offered primarily through participation in the Exploring Church Membership Class. However, so as not to be intimidating, it should be made clear that participating in the class is an exploration, not a commitment.

And, of course, knowing, understanding and continuing to commit to FRCC's mission applies to all church members as well as those newly coming onto the scene.

In order to move people to participate in this getting to know our church class, being a warm and welcoming church is vital. In addition, invitations to participate in the Exploring class should be extended not only through general announcements at various times and places (e.g., from the pulpit, on a bulletin board, on the church website, in the newsletter and worship bulletins, etc.), but also though personal invitations. These can come from the pastor, other persons involved in offering the course and any other member of the congregation. Such invitations should be made to any person whom we think might have interest. Although FRCC has been and continues to be a very friendly church, we members of the church should be continually reminded to be alert to newcomers and to incorporate them into friendly conversations. We should also be mindful of Exploring Church Membership Classes and invite newcomers to participate.

6. *Assimilation*

After newcomers are initially drawn to our church, the question becomes whether they will return and stay. It is crucial to move people into the life of the church. Thus, the question to be asked is what will move people into the life of the church.

As previously noted, people are attracted to a church primarily for one or both of two reasons; friendships and meaningful ministry involvement. Assimilation efforts embrace both (i) persons before they become members (perhaps even before they have crossed the bridge and accepted Christ, i.e., conversion), thereby enhancing the likelihood that they will opt to become members, and (ii) persons after becoming members thereby enhancing the likelihood of their on-going active participation in the church's mission. Failure to assimilate enhances the likelihood

that people will drift away. To be an effective disciple-making church, intentional moving people into the life of the church is an essential. In turn, assimilation fosters growing toward a more Christ-like life. We need to encourage and assist in helping people getting connected.

Effective assimilation involves (a) a friendly welcome, (b) discerning people's interests, (c) fostering friendships, (d) informing about opportunities, and (e) invitations to participate. The church needs to periodically remind its members their roles and responsibility for assimilating others.

a. Friendly Welcome

Walking into a unfamiliar church filled with strangers can intimate a newcomer. To break down this initial wall, the church should foster warm welcome by members of the congregation. Each member of the congregation should understand his or her responsibility to look for opportunities to meet with newcomers before and after worship services and other church events. Do so, not just once but again when a newcomer returns. Strike up conversations. It is important to offer friendship building activities at all other church events as well. Greeters and ushers need to be welcoming and informative.

Although members of our Congregation are generally quite good at welcoming new members with whom they come in contact, nevertheless on occasion someone new or relatively new sits alone during our worship services. We should be sensitive to the presence of newcomers and guest. This includes sitting with them during worship service, especially if they are off by themselves. Each member needs to be responsible to keep his or her eyes open, be sensitive to situations such as these, and make all feel welcome.

b. Discerning Interests

A newcomer is more likely to assimilate into the life of the church if what he is interested in matches one or more offerings of the church. To enhance the likelihood of achieving such a match, we need to ascertain what are the person's interest(s). Various alternative means of doing so should be developed and implemented. These might include the following.

- Newcomer cards on the backs of the chairs in the sanctuary and/or in other readily visible and accessible locations are used for newcomer expressions of interest and follow-up contact information. Church members should be encouraged to discern newcomers' interests when possible in a non-threatening and friendly manner. A mechanism should be established for such information to be reported to an appropriate church person or body for use in appropriate situations in follow-up communications.

- An interest questionnaire for newcomers (whether or not members of the church) should be utilized do ascertain their interest either in current or potential church activities. What are they looking for in the church? The forms would be distributed at the last session of the Exploring Church Membership Class. Our senior pastor

would then contact the individuals to discuss their responses on the form. Some team would review the completed forms and possibly in the future take on the role of contacting the newcomers to discuss their responses and how their interests match up with current church activities.

c. Fostering Friendships

The welcoming environment offers initial opportunities for the beginning of friendly personal relationships. Ultimately the assimilation process should lead to participation in small groups. However, jumping into some group activity, no matter how appealing, may initially be a too great of obstacle for some newcomers who are not sure what the experience is all about or are leery of participating in a group of persons with whom they are not familiar. A more casual introduction to getting to know people is to develop an on-going system of member hosted small informal get-togethers including both members and invited newcomers. Such gatherings can take a variety of forms, e.g., small dinners, lunches, coffee groups, picnics, golf outing, a serving/volunteering opportunity, etc. The locations can be varied although places other than the church offer a more casual/homey atmosphere. In each situation, the emphasis is on friendly getting to know one another. After attending one or more of these gatherings, a newcomer would be more likely to respond to the idea of participating in some type of small group, especially if the invitation came from a person attending one of the previous hosted gatherings.

d. Information about Opportunities

In order to become assimilated, a person needs to become aware of the opportunities for participation. Information can be provided in a variety of contexts. A schedule of events in the church bulletin or a church newsletter is a starting point. It is important for members of the church be aware of what is going on as well as the ministry teams whose meetings are open to all interested parties. Members are then in a position to inform newcomers of such opportunities should the occasion arise to do so. Similarly, the hosts of the small casual welcoming gatherings noted above should be aware of and pass on such information.

Both the Pastor and church members should inform newcomers about and invite them to the next session of the introductory welcoming Exploring Church Membership Class. During such class, newcomers should be informed about and invited to participate in a small group.

e. Invitations

Newcomers need someone to walk with them. Although some churches provide a new believer with a mentor or discipleship leader, another highly viable approach is to match new believers with either a new believer group or an already existing open relational small group. Since it is hard to develop relationships in a large group, small groups are critical. A small group is the best place to build friendships and assimilate newcomers into the life of the church. "[P]eople stick to a church when they get involved in a small group."[1292]

[1292] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* 153 (2006).

When names and interests are discerned, they can be passed on to appropriate host or group leaders who follow up with a personal invitation to a newcomer to participate in a hosted get together or to a small group gathering. Personal invitations tend to be most effective if they come from someone whom the newcomer knows. Whatever the manner, encourage and assist every newcomer and especially new members to participate in a small group. Where people are hurting, refer them to an appropriate serving ministry such as a grief support group.

f. Building a Volunteer Disciple Making Culture[1293]

Commonly, the term volunteer connotes a person who performs some task(s) working without compensation or legal obligation, hopefully garnering some form of satisfaction. In the context of a disciple-making Christian church, a volunteer also exercises his or her will to undertake to perform some task or role. But here, the volunteer's effort in some way constitutes obedience to God. In short, building a voluntary culture should be done in a manner contributing to the disciple-making process.

As noted earlier, people are attracted to and remain with a church primarily for one or both of two reasons – friendships and meaningful ministry involvement. "People want to volunteer and be a part of what they love and are passionate about."[1294] A local church cannot effectively function without loyal and dedicated volunteers who carry on the leadership and mission of the church. To be an effective disciple-making church, building a volunteer disciple-making culture is a critical a element for successful assimilation of people into the life of the church. Thus, the church needs to focus on creating a strong volunteer disciple-making culture.

Dan Reiland,[1295] offers a framework for building a culture in which both staff and volunteers thrive. This consists of five foundational principles for a strong volunteer culture.

- *Inspiring Mission and Vision* – A vibrant volunteer culture starts with a clear mission, namely the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), which is the foundation of the recommended Mission Statement for FRCC. The vision for person to volunteer in carrying out the mission must be inspiring. Volunteers want to be part of something bigger than themselves. The church's vision should be bold enough to inspire and challenge, but not so "out there" that it is not believable, big enough to require faith and compelling enough to cause people to move to action. An inspiring vision encourages volunteers change their lives for the good.

- *Culture of Friendly Relationships Are Strong* – Volunteers want to connect in a community in which they are cared for, loved and appreciated. Volunteers want to trust and enjoy those with whom they work. Very few things exceed the importance of healthy and productive relationships. The importance of connection, appreciation and encouragement cannot be overestimated. The church should structure its tasks

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[1293] This Section draws primarily on Dan Reiland, "5 Foundational Principles for a Strong Volunteer Culture," October 21, 2018, OutreachMagazine.com.

[1294] *Id.*

[1295] He is a pastor and a vice-president of Leadership and Church Development and has been described as best known as a leader with a pastor's heart and a coach's instincts.

and ministries so as to foster the development of relationships in the context of fostering the advancement of its mission and vision.

- *Practical Training* – Volunteers want a sense of personal competence to feel good about what they do. An effective training program includes three elements: *equipping*, *developing* and *coaching*. Equipping focuses on the specific skills needed to accomplish a particular ministry, e.g., workshop(s), online video training, personal instruction, etc. Development involves investing in a person's overall personal growth with respect to leadership or spiritual life. Coaching which usually focuses more on leaders may also be applied to others.

- *Clear Expectations* – Volunteers both want and need to know what is expected of them, again in the context of advancing the mission and vision of the church as well as the volunteers' personal growth. Furthermore, high standards inspire. Be appreciative and flexible without lowering standards. This is not to suggest "command and control." But, provide a simple, brief and clear job description for each ministry. It might be as simple as an overall objective and 5-7 bullets that take up no more than a half page. The written descriptions of responsibility need to reflect the cultural values and ministry philosophy of the church.

- *Helpful Organizational Systems* – Volunteers want structure to avoid chaos and want good teamwork. A simple straightforward organizational framework frees the red tape and helps things run smoothly so the volunteers can do their ministry with relative ease. Volunteers should not have to serve structures and systems, but rather the structures and systems should serve ministries and volunteers. Furthermore, good communication is essential for the organization to function well.

In short, build a vibrant volunteer disciple-making culture based upon sound principles. Doing so not only assimilates people into the life of the church and contributes to persons' spiritual growth, it also enables successful functions and ministries of the church.

> [In] trying to find ways to engage people and keep them engaged, it's critical to build up the volunteer teams and leaders of those teams.... Serving together creates a deep, rich community environment worth pursuing. It gives people the option to "own" part of the mission of the church and put their gifts and talents to use. This is how God designed the body of Christ to engage the mission ... together.[1296]

7. Short Term Small Groups

Small groups, short term small groups as well as relational small groups constitute a fundamental stage of disciple-making. For both short term and relational small groups to play their essential roles in disciple-making, there needs to be a mechanism or process to connect

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[1296] Tony Morgan, "3 Glaring Church Growth Trends," January 9, 2020, OutreachMagazine.com.

people with a group. We need to help move people get to where they need to go. This requires steps moving people to and through a small group path ultimately to a relational small group.[1297]

To successfully engender such movement, taking such step needs to be easy, obvious and strategic. If the step is not *easy,* people tend to be either unwilling or unlikely to successfully to take it. If the step is not *obvious,* i.e., if people don't see how it will take them where they want to go, they may not even try. If the step is not *strategic*, the step will not lead people to where they need to go, i.e., the desired destination – a relational small group.[1298]

On the path to spiritual growth, a natural step after participation in meaningful worship is participation in some short term small group. (Of course, becoming a church member and/or regular participation in worship may either precede or follow the short term small group stage.) Participation in a short term group is an easy step in that it does not require long term commitment yet offers introductory programming of interest and relevance. It is an obvious step in that the programs offered are relevant to development of Christian life. And, it is strategic in that this step naturally leads to stimulating interest and comfort in moving to the essential destination of ultimately participating in a relational small group.

To foster movement to participation in short term small groups, such groups can be promoted during worship services. Because of their short duration, a short term small group program might be integrated with a sermon series. To test drive a small group experience, people are encouraged to either join an existing or start a new small group for a short duration. Then, after the short term small group nears its conclusion, offer the opportunity to continue their group as a relational small group or to try a different, either existing or new, short term or relational small group.

Saddleback Church pioneered the short step approach. To assist people in moving from worship to relational small groups, the church offers short term small groups which are promoted in conjunction with the worship services. It uses a forty-day spiritual growth campaign during which all of the teachings in the church are aligned around the same theme. For six weeks, the small groups utilize the curriculum that relates to the messages presented in the worship services. All persons are exhorted to join one of the small groups offering this six week program. People are more receptive to trying a small group when their commitment is limited to six weeks. Not only are they exposed to the small group environment, which may lead to a longer relational small group commitment, the content of the program moves them further along in their spiritual transformation process.

Promotion of short term small groups must come from the top down. The senior pastor provides more credibility than anyone else. In the context of the worship service, the senior pastor should often communicate a hard-hitting message that just participating in the worship service is not enough for those seeking to follow Christ.[1299] Being a follower of Christ is not just attending worship services, some social gatherings and a few committee meetings. The pulpit provides an influential forum to communicate the importance of participating in small groups in

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[1297] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 115-16 (2004).
[1298] *Id.* at 124.
[1299] Missy Lovick, "5 Tips for Small Group Life," Outreach Magazine (March/April 2008).

general with short term small group experiences an introductory initial step. Invite people to join with other members on a disciple-making journey together. Furthermore, convey the expectation that they will do so.

The same message can be communicated as part of the Exploring Church Membership Class which informs not only as to the availability, the role and importance of the short term small group programs, but also the expectation that church members will participate in this small group stage of the disciple-making process. Personal efforts (most effectively by those involved in the conduct of the new members program) should be made to match new members up with a soon to be held short term small group, or, if thought appropriate, with an about to be newly organized relational group. The new members class might even test drive the short term group experience by constituting such a group themselves.

Another mechanism for matching new members with a group would be a new members' dinner at which not only team leaders are present, but also group leaders. Whatever the approach, a disciple-making church needs to develop a strategy to deal with moving both new believers and current church members into the small group ministry of the church.

In addition, the other normal means of communication (e.g., newsletter, website, display tables, bulletin boards, etc.) should be employed to communicate the role of and procedure for participating in some short term small group program.

A key method of establishing small groups is to invite people to participate. Tell them when and where there will be meeting and who the leader/facilitator will be. Preaching a sermon on the topic which is the subject of the small group study can also be an effective way to inspire people to sign-up. In any event, an easy periodic procedure to sign up for a short term small group needs to be implemented. This might simply be periodic *connection reception* after (between) worship services. These receptions offer small group sign up opportunities. An information desk or booth could be set up for each of the short term group program to be held in the near future. The simple fact of people gathering around a booth of interest also serves to begin a connecting process. Signups by telephone, e-mails and the internet also offer appropriate means. And, of course, personal invitations by the pastor, group leaders and others can be quite effective.

A barrier to joining a small group is the fear of committing to something about which one knows very little. To alleviate this concern, don't ask people to commit to a long term group with people they don't know. Instead, people join a starter short term small group typically four to eight weeks. If the group gels, it may then evolve in to a longer term relational small group. If it doesn't, no hard feelings, no questions asked. In short, offer people the opportunity to try small groups by means of a trial run before they are ready to buy into a relational small group.[1300]

8. Relational Small Groups

Moving people into a small relational small group is a prime and essential strategic goal in the disciple-making process. Create an environment conductive to the

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[1300] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 134-35 (2004).

development and widespread participation in meaningful relational small group relationships. Look for ways to get people connected and remain connected. Create and move people into authentic community. Doing so is a major catalyst for strengthening faith and growing people to a more Christ-like life. As noted above, the entire ministry model for Andy Stanley's highly successful North Point Ministries[1301] is designed to move people into small groups. This applies to kids and youth as well as adults. For FRCC to be an effective disciple-making church, we need to develop and implement means to move people into relational small groups.

There are several alternative and/or complementary approaches to the intentional movement of people to participation in relational small groups including (a) short term small groups as a bridge, (b) the "living room" experience, (c) group link opportunities, and (d) other.

a. Short Term Small Group as a Bridge

Short term small groups can provide a linkage or a bridge between simply participating in worship services and the essential next step to a longer term relational small group experience. However, to be effective as a bridge, the short term group experience needs to have been a good one both in terms of the topics presented and the beginning of relationships established and/or deepened. Furthermore, built into the programming of every short term small group should be encouragement for the participant's to take the next step and move on to participating in a relational small group. Both a basic and positive understanding of what relational small groups are about and the procedure to participate should be conveyed.

In addition to offering program/topic oriented short term small groups, a "starter" short term small group offers an alternative approach. Such starter group could gather a few times simply for discussion and an opportunity to get to know other people on a level above coffee chit chat, perhaps immediately after a worship service. This might be described as something akin to six weekly group dates.

Becoming a member of a relational small group might occur in any one of several contexts. For example, members of the short term small group might decide to evolve into an on-going relational small group. Or, one or more participants in the short term small group may decide to form a new group (grassroots approach). Or, people may sign up for one of the relational small groups in the process of being formed. (See discussion of signups through Group Link in Section *c*. below.)

In any event, serving as a bridge to relational small groups by encouraging and assisting people towards becoming members of relational small groups must be intentional and a part of the DNA of every short term small group. This could be facilitated by incorporating an introductory relational component in the short term small group experience; e.g., an element of prayer, scripture, and praying for one another.

[1301] North Point Ministries, Inc., was founded in 1995 with the vision of creating churches that unchurched people love to attend. Since its inception, NPM has grown from one church to six in metro Atlanta and has developed a global network of more than thirty strategic partner churches. Each week, more than 30,000 people attend services at NPM churches.

b. The "Living Room" Experience[1302]

In efforts to connect people with small groups, North Point Community Church in Atlanta experimented with what is referred the as the *living room*. Like a house, the living room is designed for people to become better acquainted. It enables people to casually connect. It is comfortable. It is where guest begin to feel like friends. A living room is a medium sized environment designed to change people's minds about connecting. By the end of the evening, the hope is that guests will have made connections with other people in their season of life, in their area of town or in an area of common interest (e.g., singles, married, parents, Bible study, apologetics, etc.). This might be achieved in the context of a discussion group, simple conversation around a table, etc. The 'living room" approach focuses on helping people to connect and make new friends. From this, it is hoped that movement toward relational small groups will emerge.

However, at North Point, the original living room step, monthly gatherings in homes according to season of life and geographic area, proved less effective than hoped in connecting people relationally and moving them into relational small groups. This ineffectiveness was due to varying schedules and inconsistent attendance. If a person missed a couple of get-togethers, it would be a couple of months before connecting with the people again.[1303] Thus, instead of relying on the area concept, as a remedy, *group link* was introduced. However, this is not to say that we, at FRCC, should not consider how "the living room" approach might be adapted to our circumstances.

c. Group Link

For North Point Community Church, *group link* is a two-hour event, held four times annually, where people can connect with others in their geographic area and/or stage of life. These events are heavily promoted by the church including worship time announcements, bulletin inserts, videos, etc. plus at least one sermon annually on community.

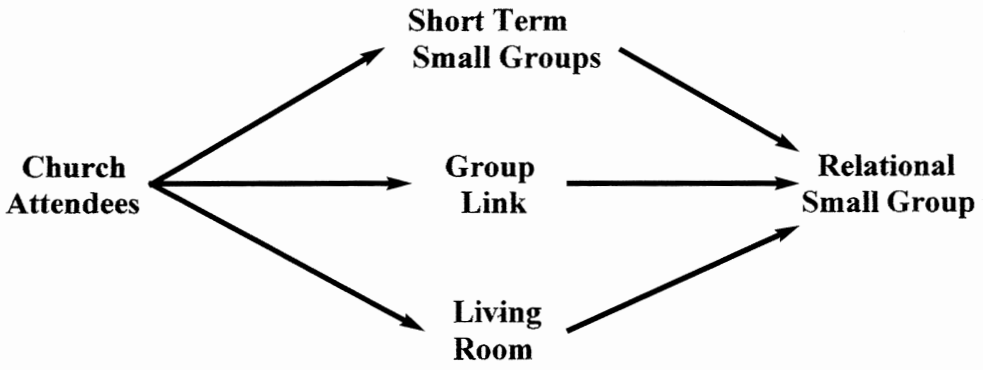
Group Link encompasses an inviting ambience, hors d'oeuvres, designated tables perhaps according to geographical area, age, specific topical interest, etc. Conversation, video to clarify what to expect in relational small groups, and personal testimonies are key parts of the Group Link event. It is made clear that small groups are not a social club. They are groups which meet regularly (preferably weekly) in comfortable setting such as a home for fellowship, Bible study and prayer. The event also includes people sharing their testimony about how God worked through their group to change their lives. Group leaders are introduced. Signup opportunities are provided. Once number of signups are achieved, they gather with the leader and a starting time is arranged.

Further time is allotted for more food and an opportunity for new group members to better get know one another.[1304]

[1302] This section draws primarily on Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 118-21 (2004).
[1303] *Id.* at 125.
[1304] *Id.* at 125-27.

Here at FRCC, while adopting the group link concept, it has been modified in some respects. Being a smaller church, group link gatherings have not been limited according to geography or season in life. This, however, is not intended to say that small relational groups which emerge from group link might not or should not reflect such characteristics. Furthermore, rather than holding group link gatherings four time per year, our approach has been to do so not quite annually, something that probably should be changed. Group link can be held either on our church campus or in people's homes. Whenever appropriate, child care should be provided. The nature of relational small groups should be introduced. The focus of relational small groups being organized should be described. And, in the event that those small groups available for signup are not appealing to all, the opportunity for forming grass roots relational small groups not previously contemplated should be offered and made clear.

In short, there are at least three alternative approaches, as depicted in this chart, to moving people through the discipling process to becoming involved in relational small groups.



The key is to develop a connection process so as to realize the relational small group potential. The purpose is to connect the unconnected. The above process is *easy* (simply sign up or attend). It is obvious in that a living room environment, group link and/or and short term small groups are prime steps leading to connecting people to a relational small group. This connection process is strategic in that it takes people where we want them to go. Each of these environments offer a progressive step enabling people to connect in a place which God can use to change lives.

We might also consider whether group link concept should also be used for sign-ups for short term small groups as well as for relational small groups.

Here at FRCC we have utilized a modified Group Link approach four times on essentially an annual basis. However, since the goal is for every member of the congregation to participate in a relational small group, we have enjoyed only very limited degree of success. A major problem, which needs to be addressed, has been attracting people to attend a Group Link. Session. Different approaches working in tandem with one another should be considered.

To reiterate earlier comments, focusing on mission must remain center stage. The purpose of the church and the responsibilities of its members need to be repeated and repeated again (by preaching, by banners, by inclusion in church bulletins, newsletters, etc.). In sermons, announcements, church events, short term and relational small groups, team gatherings and other church activities, continually reiterate and emphasize that FRCC being a disciple-making church and what this requires. In turn, this should lead to an increasing a greater and more positive response to the Group Link event ultimately leading to participation in relational small groups.

d. Other Approaches

The same methods used in encouraging participation in short term small groups can also be utilized to encourage participation in relational small groups – i.e., messages from the pulpit; visioning in Exploring Church Membership Class; new member dinners; personal invitations by the pastor, group leaders and others; employment of other forms of church communications; readily available information desks and signup opportunities; etc.

In addition, establish a small group registration booth where leaders of the groups meet prospects and answer questions. Encourage prospects converging around the table to talk with each other about not only the program but also about themselves. Beginning and/or enhancing of relationships lends further attraction to the experience. Fears are alleviated. Relationships, even more than information, serve as a bridge. Capitalize on the power of relationships.[1305]

Some questions to be asked in developing and implementing a relational small group model of doing church include the following.

> Does your ministry model connect people quickly and keep them connected? Does your model have easy, obvious steps into community? Is it easy for non-believers to find their places? Are you classing people to death? What can you do programmatically to create more relational connection opportunities in your ministry model?[1306]

In short, there are numerous ways of promoting movement to relational small groups some of which are considered above. This is not to suggest that they exhaust the possibilities. Creativity is always welcome.

However, regardless of what approach(s) is used, when encouraging people to participate in relational small groups, do so in a positive way. When we hear the call to follow Christ, we find it easy to say yes. But, when we hear such words as training, discipline, schedule and accountability, enthusiasm wanes. Thus, the question becomes how to best to communicate compelling reasons for participation in small groups. Bad salesmen talk about the costs with lack of emphasis on the value. They also lower the price. Don't be a bad salesman. Start by raising the value of what's being offered so that people are more willing to pay the price. Extol the value

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[1305] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* 52 (2006).
[1306] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 137 (2012).

of following Jesus. Don't lower the price by minimizing what people are called to do. This cheapens what cost God everything.[1307]

9. Life Style Spiritual Disciplines of Serving and Evangelism

The procedural path through the disciple-making process involves moving through the stages of disciple-making from conversion to worship, basics of faith, personal spiritual disciplines, church membership, assimilation and short term and relational small groups. But, spiritual growth does not end with relational small groups. There is more. In addition, we are called upon not only to grow in our own personal spiritual disciplines in pursuing intimacy with God and Christian fellowship with one another through sharing life together, we are also called to serve others and to reach out to persons outside the faith. Embracing serving and evangelism are additional foundational elements in our Christian life style which further sets the stage for deepening our personal connection with God and leads to places where God transforms us to a more Christ-like life.

As a disciple-making church, how do we encourage people's movement toward embracing these additional elements of a Christian lifestyle? There are two basic approaches.

First, we need to periodically and repeatedly communicate

- the fundamental purpose for all Christians (i.e., growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions),
- the pursuit of the four relationships that places us where God is most likely to spiritually transform us (i.e., connecting with God, fellowship with other believers, serving the needs of others and reaching out to people outside the faith) and
- the procedural path we are to travel in order to grow spiritually and be transformed (i.e., the stages of discipleship).

To encourage people's movement, these messages should be communicated in various venues such as worship services, the Exploring Church Membership Class, short term and relational small, team gatherings, and other modes of communication with our church members.

Second, experiencing spiritual growth in the context of relational small groups can be a profound experience. Nurturing the values of and equipping persons for the personal spiritual disciplines of serving and evangelism in the context of relational small groups promises significant growth experiences in peoples' Walk with Christ. Thus, major elements in our church's efforts to move people in progressing to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ include

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[1307] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 240 (2006).

- ensuring that the nurturing the pursuit of intimacy with God through the on-going practice of the spiritual disciplines of serving and evangelism become an integral element in the functioning of relational small groups,

- urging all relational small groups to participate in a short term program for equipping people to better serve and/or engage in evangelism,

- encouraging group members to actively incorporate loving serving and evangelism as an integral part of their Christian lifestyle,

- challenging relational small groups to undertake a serving project and/or evangelism efforts, and

- ensuring that members of the group provide encouragement, support and loving accountability with respect to each group member's serving and/or evangelism efforts.

C. SIMPLE PROCESS: PROGRAM SCHEDULING TO ENHANCE MOVEMENT[1308]

The ability to move people toward growing a more Christ-like life is enhanced by embracing a simple process, i.e., "a straight forward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth."[1309] The expressed mission, process and programs should function in partnership. Establish weekly programs on a sequential basis After a person progresses through the conversion and membership process, ask them to do three things: (1) regularly come to worship to fall more in love with God and his Word; (2) participate in a small group (perhaps initially a short term small group) to connect with other believers in community and (3) engage in some serving and/or evangelism ministry to impact others.

Commonly larger churches offer lots of programming and activity, e.g., eight major programs weekly for adults plus numerous programs for youth and children. The programs may be very good. Participants seem to enjoy them. Program leaders are passionate about what they are doing. However, there is no process; no beginning and ending point. The programs were isolated events rather than tools to reach an end. Programs offered in this context should be dispensed with.

In contrast, the simple process offers disciple-making experiences experienced weekly through the programs offered. The weekly programs are tools to achieve the mission. The first step connects with God in a loving relationship. The weekend worship services better enable people to do so through inspiring worship and dynamic biblical teaching. The second step in the process is a weekly midweek gathering connecting with others in lovingly sharing life together. Furthermore, it is in such groups that faith and one's relationship with God are nurtured through

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[1308] This Section is primarily drawn from Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* 43-44 (2006),

[1309] *Id.* at 40.

prayer, spending time with God's Word and learning and practicing these and other spiritual disciplines. The third step in the process is to serve the world by connecting with others through serving their needs and/or reaching out to share Christ and bring them into the church community. People in small groups are challenged to serve on a ministry team. People enjoy camaraderie when serving in a team environment. Some ministry teams focus on the church and its members. Others focus on the outside community.

In short, a simple process schedules three main programs each week, one for each phase of the process (i.e., worship, small group participation and serving and/or reaching out to others.) The goal is to move people sequentially from program to program leading to transformation. In this manner, the mission purpose of the church and the scheduling of weekly programs should function in partnership. People are moved each week along the path toward growing to Christ-likeness. A clear process and three weekly programs afford a means which is more likely to motivate people on the path to becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ.

Effective churches are creative in developing new ideas in response the needs. Typically, a church will develop and implement new special programs or events to do so. While possibly using similar curriculum, the simple process concept opts to respond through its current ministry process, i.e., either creating new or utilizing existing small groups. This not only addresses a specific need, it also enhances personal relationship development. Furthermore, this approach not only avoids bombarding church members with new options, it avoids internal ministry competitions.[1310]

D. SUMMARY

Effective disciple-making requires movement of people to places where God is most likely to transform them. Without movement, programs are simply an end to themselves. People need to be moved beyond their perpetual comfort zone. To respond to the challenge of moving people through the process, intentional and sustained efforts by the church for movement are needed. Thus, to be an effective disciple-making church, it is incumbent upon the church to encourage, equip and support people in moving along the procedural path encompassing the various stages of the disciple-making which, in turn, leads to growth in the four marks of discipleship (connecting with God, other believers, serving, and reaching people outside the faith).

At the outset, we must recognize that success in moving people is conditioned upon offering spiritual growth experiences that are attractive to people both in terms of their focus and their schedules as well as being implemented in a high-quality manner.

Furthermore, programmatic and small group efforts do little good if the discipleship process is not well communicated as an integral part of the fabric of the church. This requires frequent discussions in a variety of ways and in a variety of venues. That is, communicate in personal interactions, in Exploring Church Membership Classes, during worship services, in short term small groups, in relational small groups, in team and committee meetings, etc. Invest

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[1310] *Id.* at 49-50.

time in communicating the process to the people of the church, inviting and encouraging them to participate.

Moving people through the stages of disciple-making offers rich spiritual rewards to both people individually and to the church as a whole as we respond to that which God calls upon us to do – i.e., make disciples.

V. FOSTERING DISCIPLE-MAKING SUCCESS

PART FIVE covers the content and church delivery of experiences at the various stages of disciple-making fostering people's progress in their Walk with Christ. In addition to engendering movement to, within and through the stages of disciple-making (considered in Section IV. immediately above), there are several additional means to foster successful disciple-making which are apply across the range of the stages of disciple-making. These include (a) discerning and matching a person's gifts to ministry, (b) implementing personality style evangelism, (c) fostering people's personal commitment to the disciple-making process, (d) implementing means of individual persons' self-assessment and development of spiritual assessment plans, and (e) assessing the church's discipleship-making efforts.

A. Discerning and Matching Gifts

Both PARTs THREE and FIVE above devote considerable attention to the spiritual discipline to serve others. A crucial element in responding to God's call for serving is discerning the various God given gifts which people have. Then, best match persons and their gifts to those church ministries aimed at advancing God's mission purposes for our church; i.e., encouraging, supporting and equipping people to grow in their thoughts, feelings and actions leading to a more Christ-like life through connecting with God, with other believers by sharing life together, with both believers and nonbelievers by serving them, and with those outside the faith by witnessing the good news, leading them to Christ, and bringing them into the life of the church.

1. Importance of Discerning One's Spiritual Gifts

When God established the church as the body of Christ, each Christian is a part of that body. Spiritual gifts are what enable the body parts (each individual Christian) to best function in response to God's will.

> In his letter to the church of Ephesus, Paul tells us that we are "God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus" and that we have been created to "do good works, which 'God prepared advance for us to do" (Ephesians. 2:8-10).

God has gifted each of us in some way to fulfill some purpose whether large or small. Each of us possess different gifts. In addition to understanding the spiritual discipline of serving, we need to discern those gifts which we each possess and how they can be best used in response to God's

call to serve the needs of our members, those outside our church, and the functioning of the church itself.

Thus, the question "what are my spiritual gifts?" is vitally important. Unless one knows the answer, he or she will not likely be highly effective in serving God. When a person struggles to do something for which God did not create him to do, the results are likely to be frustration, burnout, or giving up on the church altogether. In contrast, discovering one's spiritual gifts, clarifies God's call for his or her life. Spiritual gifts are like a personal job description from God. As one discovers his or her spiritual gifts and commences using them effectively, he or fulfills God's will for him or her. God has no hands, feet, lips, eyes and ears in this world to advance the work of his kingdom except through those persons he created and gifted. Therefore, God is glorified through the loving serving by his spiritually gifted people using his God given gifts. Thus, the crucial question is what are the God-given gifts that we each possess and how they can be best be used in response to God's call to ministry?

Furthermore, from an individual's perspective, at some point in life most persons are likely ask is this all there is? What is my purpose in life? Discovering one's purpose is essentially becoming oneself and becoming the person God created one to be. Look inside for one's burning passions, gifts and inclinations which make one unique. Finding one's God given purpose is finding one's authentic self.[1311]

Every follower of Christ has been created to be the unique masterpiece God created him or her to be. It is the responsibility of the church to equip people to discover their personal calling and deploy them to the best places to fulfill that calling.[1312] From both the perspective of a church whose mission includes both serving others and disciple-making its members and from the perspective of an individual seeking to grow into a more Christ-like life, achieving the most meaningful serving depends upon discerning where he or she can best and joyfully serve either directly or through others. [W]e want to think in terms of ministering in the power of the gifts that God gives his people…."[1313] What are the God-given gifts we each possess and how they can be best used in response to God's call to ministry? Such gifts and where best applied need to be discerned. As a disciple-making church, we need to ask "How does… [our] congregation help people to affirm their gifts and discover the ministry to which God is calling them."[1314]

2. Offer Means to Equip for Discerning and Using Spiritual Gifts

It is the responsibility of an intentional disciple-making church to help people to discern their gifts and the ministry to which God is calling them. There are a variety of means, either individually or in combination with others, for doing so.

[1311] Andy Langford and Mark Ralls, *Beginnings: an Introduction to Christian Faith* 17-18 (2003) (a participant's guide).
[1312] Todd Wilson and Robert Wegner, "See Volunteers as God's Masterpieces," OutreachMagazine.com, December 11, 2018.
[1313] Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God* 42 (2014).
[1314] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 98 (2001).

a. Short Term Small Groups

Short term small group programs can be utilized to assist people in discerning their gifts. Various short term small group programs and other materials are available for to help people discovering their spiritual gifts, personal style and God given passions to serve. These programs help persons assess and utilize one's spiritual gifts, i.e., discover, develop, and deploy the spiritual gifts which God has given them. These are likely to be attractive to not only those who have progressed in their discipleship process from worship to relational small groups, but also to those who already have leanings toward serving in their Walk with Christ.

Willow Creek Community Church has found that the utilization of small groups is particularly effective in its efforts to enhance individual spiritual gift discernment and matching people to situations calling for the use of such gifts. This is particularly true in a small group context in which the group leader knows the individuals and is equipped to guide them toward situations matching gifts to ministry needs. Doing so might even lead to new ministries.[1315]

b. Relational Small Groups

Often God given gifts are so much a part of us that we tend not to be aware of them. If not discovered, we shortchange God, ourselves and others as we continue to operate without understanding of who we are and the qualities that make us unique. Consequently, our gifts are commonly best discerned in community with others, especially in relational small groups. It is in the community where we are known, where we trust others to listen, and where we can better discern our gifts and the call to which God wants us to apply such gifts.

Thus, an important approach to discerning one's gifts is to (i) incorporate gift discernment as one of the purposes of a relational small groups and (ii) utilize the relational small group to foster the understanding that serving others comes up, perhaps most often, in the numerous situations we encounter every day. Simply be nice and helpful to people. This requires no specific skill. It simply requires a loving attitude on our part reflecting God's love and a willingness to take some small action expressing that love attitude which can be well nurtured in the context of a small relational group.

c. Other Approaches

In addition to offering short and/or relational small group experiences focusing on discerning one's personality and gifts, other approaches to discerning one's gifts, either separately or in combination with the above, include (i) consultation with one's pastor, (ii) participating in a spiritual retreat which encompasses teaching about spiritual gifts, completion of a survey of a person's gifts and then a small group discussion in which others provide discernment as to a person's gifts, (iii) participating in a variety of available programs for gift discernment, (iv) attending various church meetings (virtually all of which are open here at Fox River Congregational Church) which can afford people an opportunity to see where they might fit into church activities and/or (v) importantly, participation in a small group. And, of course,

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[1315] *An Inside Look at Willow Creek Community Church* 137 (2000) (Paul Braoudakis, Editor).

focused prayer, spending time with God's Word, worship, and participation in small groups can lead to participating in God's love for all the world through serving others.

d. Exploring Alternative Programs

To aid in discerning gifts, offering skill development and matching a person's gifts with ministry needs, a church needs to offer some type of program(s) to enhance the likelihood and better enable church members to discern and match their gifts. as they are motivated to progress in some type of meaningful serving ministry. Alternatives programs for doing so need to be explored. Some possibilities include the following.

- "Your Divine Design" (Walk Thru the Bible Seminars) by Chip Ingram, in an 8-part DVD series, explores passages from Romans, Ephesians, and 1 Corinthians to understand the role of spiritual gifts. In the process, you'll be invited to pinpoint your own primary spiritual gift and then learn a Biblical process to develop, and deploy your gift for greater ministry and significant impact.

- One approach to discovering one's spiritual gifts involves three elements. (1) *Pay Attention*. What energizes the person and seems to come naturally? For example, in response to a particular problem, a person with the gift of inter-cessionary prayer will say "Let's pray." People possessing the gift of leadership start by looking for a solution to the problem. Those with the gift of shepherding will immediately focus on caring for the person. (2) *Try*. After gaining a sense of one's gifts, try them, e.g., in some voluntary ministry in the church, or simply in situations which occur in everyday life. (3) *Develop*. Each person should seek to develop his or her gifts.

- Churchgrowth.org offers Team Ministry Facilitator's Resource Kit for teaching spiritual gifts to implement a spiritual gifts team ministry in a church. The kit helps members identify and understand their individual spiritual gifts and equips for ministry in their daily lives. People are happier and more productive when exercising his or her own gifts rather than begrudgingly serving in some position out of guilt or pressure from church leaders or colleagues.

- *Finding Your Spiritual Gifts: Expanded Questionnaire; The Easy to Use Self-Guided Questionnaire* (2017) by C. Peter Wagner. Sixteen pages offers church members, group leaders, teachers and pastors a questionnaire as a guide for discovering and using one's spiritual gifts..[1316]

[1316] Booklet description from christianbook.com.

- The Wisconsin Congregational Association sponsored A Lay Ministry training program which included a determination of one's gifts. This program centered on a Wall Street Journal's #1 best seller entitled *Strengths Finder 2.0* (2007) by Tom Rath. Based upon Gallup's 40-year study of human strengths, this book, coupled with a personal on-line survey, focuses on learning and applying one's strengths.

  The problem is not that we don't have enough strengths, but rather the problem is that we don't use the strengths that we have. Determine one's strengths and then use them. Elements in identifying one's talents include spontaneous reactions, yearnings, rapid learning, satisfactions and taking the Strength Finder on-line 2.0 test. The book covers an introduction to finding one's strengths and applying those strengths in the context of 34 themes of talent and ideas for action. Following are the talent theme categories.

Achiever	Deliberative	Intellection
Activator	Developer	Learner
Adaptability	Discipline	Maximizer
Analytical	Empathy	Positivity
Arranger	Focus	Relator
Belief	Futuristic	Responsibility
Command	Harmony	Restorative
Communication	Ideation	Self Assurance
Competition	Includer	Significance
Connectedness	Individualization	Strategic
Consistency	Input	Woo (Winning Others Over)
Context		

  The on-line test identifies a person's top five areas. Once identified, the book offer suggestions for action to make use of one's strengths. Although the Strength Finder approach is not solely focused on those involved in churches, it is said to apply to a person's work, relationships and/or ministry. This approach offers an alternative approach, possibly in combination with others, for discerning one's gifts and helping to match those gifts to current or new ministries here at FRCC.

Whatever approach, program, and/or surveys of one's characteristics a person follows in discerning his or her gifts, what next? Reverend Stu Merkel offers a path to success;

- Study your prominent gifts further
- Give something a fair try.
- Let God's spirit work in you.
- Be patient, clarifying your gifts may take some time . . . days, weeks, years

- Clarifying your Spiritual Gifts comes from the Body of Christ
- Celebrate because God has gifted you! [1317]

Furthermore, Reverend Merkel concludes his observations of spiritual gifts with the following passages from by Paul.

> Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit….
> (1 Corinthians 14:1)
>
> [T]ry to excel in those [gifts] that build up the church.
> (1 Corinthians 14:2)

To discern one's spiritual gifts is to come to know God's will and purpose for one's life. This, in turn, better enables one to glorify God and edify others.[1318]

To reiterate, the importance for the members of our church to discover and utilize their God given gifts cannot be overemphasized. One's growth toward a more Christ-like life is seriously deterred by one's failure to do so. Consequently, if we as a church are serious about being an effective disciple-making church, it is our responsibility to develop and implement a way or combination of ways, on a churchwide basis, for our members to discern and apply their God given gifts.

God gifts each of us

> for the common good and [such gifts] are to be exercised in love to build up the Body of Christ... Today, as in the New Testament times, *a spiritually vital church recognizes the essential role that spiritual gifts play in the life and ministry of the church and organizes itself so that those gifts can be exercised.*[1319] (Emphasis supplied.)

This is essential in fostering disciple-making success.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF PERSONALITY STYLE EVANGELISM[1320]

Fostering disciple-making success also embodies implementing personality style evangelism. While people acting individually can utilize their own personality style to influence unbelievers, a greater impact is possible when members of a congregation work together as a whole with each person discovering and employing his or her own evangelism personality styles. Thus, any church desiring to enhance the overall effectiveness of its evangelism efforts should

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[1317] "My Spiritual Gifts; What Gift or Talent Has God Given Me?, Wisconsin Congregational Leadership and Lay Ministry Training Program, February 22, 2011 (led by Stu Merkel).
[1318] *Id.*
[1319] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 72(1993).
[1320] This Section draws primarily on Jeffrey A. Johnson, *Got Style? Personality –Based Evangelism,* 147-51 (2009).

consider instituting personality style evangelism on a church-wide basis. An overall process for church-wide personality style evangelism includes the following several elements.

- *Prayer* – Prayer augments all else. The pastor(s) and lay leadership, when spending time together, should intentionally and continually seek the Lord for discernment concerning what the congregation should be doing in reaching out to the skeptics and unbelievers in the community. Each church member, both individually and when a part of a group, pray for personal prospects by name and need on a regular basis.

- *Individuals Personality Evangelism Style Assessment* – A church should offer a means for individual members of the congregation to assess his or her evangelism personality style(s). The various evangelism personality styles (confrontational, intellectual, testimonial, interpersonal, invitational and serving styles) are discussed in PART FIVE, Section IX.C.5. above. When a person knows his or her style and comes to understand that evangelism is most effective when a he or she engages in a manner natural to him or her, the stage is set for overcoming fears, fostering motivation and providing training members for effective personal relationship evangelism.

  As considered in Section V.A. above. all church members need to discover their individual God given gifts to better discern God's call to a specific ministry for them. Consideration should be given to whether a personality style and gift evaluation surveys should be conducted in conjunction with or separately from one another.

- *Assessment of the Church's Personality Style and Gifts* -- In addition to assessing members' gifts and personality styles from the perspective of each individual, such information should be compiled on a church-wide basis to determine the primary set of both gifts and personality styles of the congregation as a whole By ascertaining the church's primary strengths based upon the God given gifts of its members and discerning the primary evangelism personality styles running throughout the congregation, a church is better positioned to focus its time, energy and resources on motivating and training its people for effective evangelism.

- *Personality Styles Specific Training* – After determining the personality style composition of both individuals and the congregation as a whole, offer evangelism training relevant to persons' specific personality style or styles. In doing so, however, also incorporate the basic elements of evangelism which apply commonly across the range of different evangelism styles.

- *Vision Casting* – "Every time there is an opportunity to vision cast about a the mission of the church, evangelism should be at the top of the list,"[1321] This vision should be spread by whatever means of communication is available such as from

[1321] Bill Hybels: "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Your Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2014.

> the pulpit, in training sessions, small group gatherings, programs, bulletins, newsletters, websites, social media, internet, etc. Members should be urged to participate in personality evangelism evaluation and incorporate the results in their outreach efforts.

Effective evangelism is a church-wide team effort. All members of the church need to be involved. An important component of effective evangelism is determining what is the personality evangelism style(s) of each individual member. What style is most natural for him or her? Assess and train the person in his or her style.

> Unleash your church to reach out to the community in a variety of ways, and encourage and support them, as God uses them all to lead many into the church and ultimately into a relationship with Christ.[1322]

C. FOSTER PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Although we are saved by grace, not by what we do, Jesus calls upon us to follow him now, not wait until we are nearing death. God wants us now to mature spiritually by developing the characteristics of Jesus. Spiritual maturity does not occur automatically. Being a follower of Christ (a disciple), involves embarking on and continuing a process of growing in the image of Christ. An effective disciple-making church fosters a strong desire in its members, and perhaps others, to come to know and experience God. The goal is for each person to understand, embrace and commit to following Christ by becoming more like him in thoughts, feelings and actions. This is achieved through the understanding, learning and practicing the spiritual disciplines taught and reflected in Christ's life. A prime responsibility of a disciple-making church is to communicate understanding, create expectations and foster motivation of persons to commit to growing as a disciple.

1. Commitment: A Choice Must Be Made

The question is how does one grow as a follower of Christ. As considered earlier, one does so by in engaging in the on-going practice of spiritual disciplines. This is more than simply asking and trying to do "what Jesus would do" as particular situations come up. Like an athlete, we need to constantly try to be prepared and able to do what Jesus would do. Learn and practice the spiritual disciplines as a way of life that enabled Christ to receive God's constant and effective support while doing his will. We need to avoid simply making an occasional stab at doing so or simply trying to respond at a particular point in time to the question "what would Jesus do."

> *If we are to be serious about spiritual transformation, we must not merely "try harder," we must "train wisely."* Growth in our relationship with God results from training in the spiritual disciplines. … Spiritual disciplines are the practices we live by

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[1322] Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 156 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).

> that enable us to do what we cannot do by will power alone. These practices help us grow in the ability to love God and people – true indicators of spiritual well-being.[1323]

If one becomes a believer (a convert) but his or her habits remain the same, he or she will experience little of the life Christ offers. Failure to submit to and practice spiritual disciplines bars entry into a powerful new life. One does not excel without training and we are not exempted from this rule when we enter the kingdom of grace.[1324] This requires commitment.

Discipleship, the process of becoming more like Christ, starts with a decision, a commitment.

> Becoming like Christ is the result of the commitments we make. We become whatever we are committed to! ....Without a commitment to grow, any growth that occurs will be circumstantial, rather than intentional. Spiritual growth is too important to be left to circumstances.[1325]

We become that to which we commit.

Reverend Mike Matheny, in a guest sermon at FRCC, observed that joining a church, believing in God, and accepting the teachings of Christ are part of being a follower of Christ. However, he went to emphasize there is more. One growing as a follower is a committed learner, student and follower of his teacher. Thus, to be a disciple of Christ is not only to believe in him but also to follow wherever he might lead. A disciple follows Christ's example and seeks to learn and live a Christ-like life.

> *We either are or are not a follower of Jesus. It requires commitment and effort. Each person has to make a choice one way or another. There is no in between.*[1326] – (Emphasis supplied.)

The choice may be informed and intentional or it may be uninformed and/or passive. *Whatever the manner, a choice is made* which results in either commitment to or lack thereof to growing toward a more Christ-like life.

2. Responsibility of the Church

Researcher George Barna emphasizes the importance of commitment and the church's role in fostering it. He selected five churches which he evaluated as being highly effective in making disciples. He then summarized the best aspects of these churches resulting in a "best of" model. An essential element of an effective disciple-making church is that

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[1323] John Ortberg, *The Life You Always Wanted* 22-23 (2004) (Participant's Guide).
[1324] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives,* 114, 21 (1988).
[1325] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 333 1995).
[1326] Mike Matheny, "Discipleship: Come Follow Me," January 27, 2002 (sermon)

"[c]hurch membership is granted only when a person covenants to participate in a focused, demanding discipleship process."[1327]

Unfortunately, too many are afraid to commit, they just drift. Others make half-hearted commitments and succumb often to competing values leading to frustration and mediocrity. Nevertheless, both the church as a whole and its members individually, must understand, that "*every choice has eternal consequences, so...[a person] had better choose wisely.*"[1328] (Emphasis supplied.)

In the successful church model, leaders both teach and ask for commitment. As a church, we can do several things to encourage and help people to commit to and move along the path embracing the various stages of the disciple-making process. Ultimately, however, a person's progress depends upon his or her personal commitment to follow Christ.

Consequently, to be an effective disciple-making church, we need to be to be quite proactive in fostering persons' commitment to learn, understand and practice the spiritual disciplines which place them where God is most likely to exercise his transforming power toward a Christ-like life. In doing so, as a church, we need to be prepared to accept that a few people, who are overly sensitive to what they perceive as undue pressure, might leave the church. As Lonnie Richardson and others have noted, there are always highly sensitive people who leave a church for little reason. It is important that we don't defer to such over sensitivity at the expense of not doing those things which encourage other people to commit to that which contributes to their spiritual growth and transformation. Don't appease the lowest denominator at the cost of not successfully moving others along in their spiritual growth.[1329] As a church, we must be very proactive in motivating people to commit to moving along a path leading to transformation toward a more Christ-like life.

3. Means to Foster Commitment

Quite commonly most people with families, jobs and/or other activities have limited discretionary time. This is the time for which a church competes. People make time for what they consider to be most important to them. To be an effective disciple-making church, we cannot buy into the busyness excuse. Instead, it is essential to embark upon an intentional and concerted effort to convince individuals and people as a whole, that taking steps to explore, begin and progress on their journey with Christ is fundamentally important for them with lots of fun and fellowship along the way.

Thus, the question becomes how do we effectively encourage and better help people to commit to the disciple-making process leading to their spiritual growth? There are various approaches to foster commitment either separately or in combination with one another; two of which are explored in the next two subsections.

[1327] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 307 (2006).
[1328] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 180 (2002).
[1329] Fox River Congregational Church, Minutes of the Task Force on Disciple-Making, December 10, 2008, p.5.

a. Cost-Benefit Ratio of Following Christ Versus Non-Discipleship

As considered earlier in PART II, Section III.D. we all are confronted with the temptation to refrain from a serious commitment to following and growing in Christ because of the perceived costs of active discipleship such as time, effort, other desires and priorities. Others make half-hearted commitments, but then often succumb to competing values or temptations. For some, this is due to a lack understanding as to what discipleship calls for. For others, an understanding of the nature of the commitment to discipleship gives rise to concern as to the time demands or costs discipleship. Their time is consumed by work, career, family, recreation and other self-interests and desires. Their lives are too are too busy to be distracted by spending time and energy on the practice of spiritual disciplines. For many engaging in spiritual disciplines connotes work and drudgery. Thus, the costs of discipleship are perceived as being quite high, hence the lack of motivation to commit.

Yes, growing as a disciple requires a response to God's call for obedience. It calls for serious commitment and effort. This involves learning, practicing and engaging in various spiritual disciplines aimed at connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with both believers and unbelievers through serving and connecting with those outside the faith. Such effort is motivated by a clear direction and the ultimate rewarding goal of growing toward living a Christ-like life and entering into a personal relationship with God. Furthermore, when considering costs of engaging in committed discipleship, too often people fail to recognize the overriding benefits of discipleship which include growing in a loving and intimate personal relationship with God who is the perfect friend, growing in loving relationships with others, acceptance of oneself and a sense of well-being[1330] The goal of spiritual disciplines is Christ-likeness. When this is understood, the effort becomes a joy than drudgery.[1331]

Not only are the benefits of growing toward Christ likeness profound, the failure to commit to discipleship engenders far greater costs than perceived costs of loss of some time to pursue other desires and priorities. The failure to follow Christ costs us

- the loss of a life penetrated throughout by love and joy, an abiding peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- the loss of a faith that views life in the light of God's governance for our own good,
- the loss of security in God's promises,
- the loss of hope in discouraging circumstances,
- the loss of ability to do make the right choices, and
- the loss of the opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with our God – the perfect friend.[1332]

[1330] Steve A. Peay, "Introduction to The Spiritual Life," 1998 (First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Lenten Series) (drawn from notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson). .

[1331] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* 17 (1991).

[1332] Dallas Willard and Bill Hybels, "The Great Omission (Defining Moments, Willow Creek Program, 2008).

In discerning the cost-benefit ratio of following Christ versus the costs of non-discipleship, the case for following Christ is overwhelming. Christ promises us the abundant life[1333] and that his yoke is easy and the burden is light.[1334]

Instill the mission of our church and the stages of discipleship into the DNA of our members not only to guide the church as to what it should be doing, but also to motivate individual's commitment to follow Christ. Thus, it is incumbent on the church to offer clarity about and foster commitment to growing as disciple of Christ by

- casting and continually recasting fundamental understanding of discipleship and inspire members of our church (and others) to sincerely following Christ
- communicating the cost-benefit ratio of following Christ versus non-discipleship
- creating high expectations for members of our church (and others) to grow in their discipleship, and
- repeatedly calling for commitment to becoming and growing as disciples of Christ.

b. Saddleback Approach to Commitment[1335]

Rick Warren's approach at Saddleback Church to fostering commitment to spiritual growth consists of five elements.

(i) *Ask People for Commitment.* If a church doesn't ask its people for commitment, it won't get it. If you don't ask for commitment, other organizations will. People commit to things all the time. The question is to whom or to what? A prime reason there are so many weak Christians is that they are only partially committed to many causes rather than being wholly committed to the most important cause of all. Encourage and teach people to make wise commitments.

(ii) *Ask Confidently for a Big Commitment.* People are attracted to a challenging vision, especially when it provides meaning to their lives. Weak appeals do little. Remember people respond to a passionate vision. The vision here is life transformation through progressive steps toward becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ.

[1333] "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." – (John 10:10)

[1334] "[M]y yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30) "The secret of the easy yoke is simple, actually. It is the intelligent, informed, unyielding resolve to live as Jesus lived in all aspects of his life...." Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* 10 (1991).

[1335] This Section draws primarily on Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 344-47(1995).

(iii) *Be Specific in Asking for Commitments.* Inform people as to exactly what is expected of them. Ask them to commit to Christ, then to baptism, membership, disciplines for spiritual maturity, serving ministry and reaching out to others. Develop covenants at each stage of the process which spell out what each commitment involves. For example, at the conclusion of Saddleback's class on spiritual habits, everyone is asked to sign covenant cards. Each year commitments are renewed and new cards are issued. Annual recommitment helps those who became discouraged or quit to make a fresh beginning.

(iv) *Explain Benefits of Commitment.* People commit to whatever is important to them whether it be work, family, recreation, sleeping in on Sunday morning, movies, concerts, travel, etc. Commonly, the focus of their commitments is what they perceive to be of benefit to themselves and their families. Thus, it is essential to make clear the benefits and importance of spiritual growth.

Repeatedly God sets forth the benefits in scripture. Many of the commands in scripture have wonderful promises attached to them.

> "[E]xplain the personal benefits, the family benefits, the benefits to the body of Christ and society in general, and the *eternal* benefits of committing to spiritual growth."[1336]

Address people's innate desire to learn, grow and improve by communicating the disciple-making process in terms of value and benefits to them For example, "Here is what this class, program, activity or experience will do for you" and "here are the benefits resulting from your commitments." At each stage of spiritual growth, state the values and the benefits to the participants.

(v) *Build on Commitment Rather than Toward Commitment.* Start with whatever commitment a person has no matter how weak. Growing towards a more Christ-like life requires a commitment to at least take a step forward along this path. Challenge people to make this step a commitment and then help them grow into it. It may work better to divide a big commitment into smaller steps and gradually lead people along.

As a Congregational church, here at FRCC becoming a member of the church requires owning the church covenant. Both our current covenant and that one being recommended involve the individual covenanting with God and each other to pursue the path toward a more Christ-like life. This is a big, foundational commitment. However, it should be understood that one cannot do everything first. Following through on the commitment is a step-by-step process on-going for the rest of one's life. Warren's suggestion that smaller step by step commitments, which build upon one another, should perhaps be incorporated into our covenanting process. The recommended revised church covenant, focusing on growth and the stages of disciple-making, embraces this approach.

To raise the level of commitment of people to growing in their spiritual maturity, Saddleback uses the above five means; i.e., (i) ask people for commitment, (ii) ask for a big

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[1336] *Id.* at 346.

commitment, (iii) be specific in asking for commitments (perhaps using a covenant), (iv) explain benefits of commitment and (v) build on commitment rather than toward commitment at the outset. This approach, integrated with the communication of the understanding of God's call and the comparative benefits and cost of discipleship and non- discipleship offer powerful means to motivate commitment. Additional approaches to motivating commitment might also be explored.

4. Concluding Observation on Fostering Commitment

Common sense, experience in other successful churches such as Saddleback, and our own life experiences inform us that commitment is essential to success in any worthwhile endeavor. This is especially true in the context of a church motivating people to commit to embarking on the path of growing in Christ's image through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Thus, a prime responsibility of the church is to communicate understanding, create expectations and motivate persons' commitment to progressing in their Walk with Christ. Communicating the stark comparative differences in the costs and benefits of discipleship versus the costs and benefits of and non- discipleship provide powerful motivation for people to positively respond and commit to God's call to follow Christ. To be effective, the church's call for commitment needs to be aggressive rather than passive.

D. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. Need

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls upon us as well, as the Corinthians, to examine and test ourselves to see if we really are in the faith. Although we get physical checkups, Paul urges that we give ourselves spiritual checkups and look for a growing awareness of Christ's presence and power in our lives. "Only then will we know if we are truly Christian or merely imposters. If we're not taking active steps to grow closer to God, we are drawing further away from him."[1337]

Presumably, most of us are not very conscious of the specific nature of our shortcomings in trying to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ. Although we generally accept that we fall short, at best, only a few translate this recognition into self-assessment as to how we might do better. In short, we don't think about it very much. So, we do little if anything about it, especially in light of all the other things we either need or want to do. If this is a correct surmise, then perhaps a key to motivating ourselves and our members to commit to more intentional discipleship is developing a system of self-assessment.

In addition to fostering commitment to spiritual growth, a self-assessment mechanism helps *guide* a person in discerning a development plan to better enable him or her to progress in growing toward a more Christ-like life. Furthermore, one is more likely to commit if they have some idea as to the specifics to which they are committing.

[1337] Study note for 2 Corinthians 13:5 in *Life Application Study Bible* (NIV 1991).

Both Willow Creek and Saddleback churches have discerned the importance of self-assessment. By an extensive survey of current church members and 500 of those who left the church, Willow Creek discovered that it was insufficiently meeting the needs of segments of its members in developing their personal relationships with God. Thus, Willow has moved from an activity based approach to a spiritual journey approach in growing its members toward spiritual maturity. Willow initiated a program to enable its individual members to assess where they are on their spiritual journey. The goal is for every member of the church to have their own personal spiritual growth plan and to be able to answer the question, at any time, where he or she is currently and what is the next step in his or her spiritual growth development. In turn, the church will then be able to better help persons in customizing individual "personal spiritual growth plans" for them to pursue.[1338] Furthermore, as noted below, a self-assessment form is utilized in the small group program *Doing Life Together* series based upon Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* book.

If successful churches, such as Willow Creek and Saddleback, have discovered the need for self-assessment mechanisms and/or development of customized plans for individuals to assess where they are and guide them on their spiritual journey, this strongly suggests that FRCC should do like-wise.

2. Alternative Approaches to Self-Assessment

A system of personal self-assessment requires some sort of measures by which to evaluate the current status and the growth of both individuals and the church with respect to progress, or lack thereof, with respect to discipleship-making. The following discussion offers some illustrative approaches to self-assessment. One or more of these, or others yet to be discovered, either separately or in some combination thereof offer methods for self-assessment as to where one is on his or her spiritual growth path.

a. FRCC Marks of Being a Disciple Approach to Self-Assessment

Our mission is to *grow toward living a Christ-like life in our thoughts, feelings and action.* This spiritual growth involves pursuing certain relationships called for by Christ. A person pursuing these relationships reflects the marks of growing as a disciple of Christ. In turn, they provide a framework for self-assessment. With respect to each of these relationships, we can list the prime attributes which are characteristic of such relationship. This affords some specificity for self-assessment.

The following discussion serves as an illustrative effort of allocating attributes to each relationship.

(i) *Connecting with* God – The mark of a maturing follower of Christ seeking to connect with God is the continual pursuit of an intimate relationship with God. This is achieved through *learning and practice of spiritual disciplines*, especially

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[1338] Gene Appel, "Can Willow Change,?" Willow Creek Association Acts 2 Conference (2006).

the foundational disciplines of prayer, spending time with God's Word and worship.

Questions to ask with respect to spiritual disciplines in general might include have I undertaken a serious effort to understand what spiritual disciplines are about and what they are? What practices work best for me? Questions with respect to spending time with God's Word, might include, do I regularly spend time with God's Word? Have I learned how to effectively study the Bible and apply its teachings to my life? Questions to be asked in self-evaluation of the meaningfulness of one's worship experience include have I acquired the knowledge of the purposes of worship? Do I regularly attend worship services? Am I an active engaged participant, rather than simply an observer, in worship services? Does the worship service get my concentrated attention? Do I participate in the worship ministry? Questions relating to prayer might include have I learned and practiced prayer in various ways? Other questions, do I know what type of spirituality works best for me? Am I constantly seeking to discern God's will and then act upon it?

(ii) *Connecting with Other Believers* – People seeking to become more Christ-like in their thoughts, feelings and actions regularly and meaningfully connect with other believers by sharing life with them in Christian fellowship. We need each other for mutual encouragement, caring and accountability. This happens when believers spend time together, encourage one another, support each other each other, serve one another and practice mutual accountability in the learning and practicing spiritual disciplines. The spiritual discipline of connecting with other believers requires active and regular participation in relational small groups. One who fully and meaningfully pursues intimate relationships with other believers in Christian community reflects various attributes including trustworthiness, honesty, humility, courtesy, grace, sympathy, reliability, love, openness, caring, accepting of others, affirming and, being supportive as well as being a listener, a learner, one who accepts correction and is accountable.

Questions to be asked to self-evaluate oneself with respect to pursuing intimacy with other believers might include to what extent do I reflect the above characteristics? Do I regularly and often participate in Christian fellowship involving building shared relationships of love, trust, friendships, vulnerability and support with one another through relational small groups and/or individual one on one relationships? Am I intentional in encouraging, participating in and enhancing such relationships?

(iii) *Connecting with Other through Serving* – Since God calls upon each of us to serve others, a mark of a maturing believer is serving the physical, emotional, spiritual and/or relational needs of others in a loving and caring way. The attributes of one who serves include the generous offering of time, talent and treasure for the care, protection, and nurture of other people. Serving requires doing, not just talking. Furthermore, serving others should not be approached in

a casual, unthinking, cavalier manner. To achieve the most meaningful serving, one needs to reflect a willingness to do what is necessary to discern his or her God given gifts and discern where God wants them to be applied. Then, through study and practice, equip oneself to best utilize those gifts in God's service. Equipping includes knowing the basic practices of faith (worship, Bible study, prayer, etc.) as well as additional knowledge and skills specific to one'serving call.

When evaluating oneself, questions to be asked include have I truly come to know the importance of serving in the disciple-making process and my role in it? Am I offering my time, talent and/or treasure to serve the needs of others in a loving caring way? Have I undertaken the steps necessary to discover my gifts and where God wants me to apply them? Have I undertaken those steps necessary to equip myself for serving? Am I participating in the serving ministry of the church? Am I consciously seeking opportunities, whether large or small, to serve the needs of others during the daily routine of my life?

(iv) *Connecting with People Outside the Faith* – Since God so loves people, to be a friend of God we must care about whom God cares so much about. "Friends of God tell their friends about God."[1339] God calls on us to reach out to others, share the gospel and one's own story and contribute to bringing them into a community of believers. To grow in our relationship with God we need to learn and practice the spiritual discipline of evangelism as an integral part of our Christian life.

In self-evaluating our evangelism efforts, what types of questions do we need to ask about ourselves? These might include the following. Have I come to know the importance of evangelism in my becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ? Do I really care about people, their salvation and eternal destiny? Am I intentional in my efforts to enter into personal relationships in a way that may ultimately bring people to Christ? Do I share the Gospel and my story with others? Do I invite people to join me in Christ related experiences such as church gatherings, short term and relational small groups, *Alpha*, worship services, etc.? Do I do so in a non-threatening manner? Do I reflect Christ in my words and deeds? Have I undertaken efforts to equip myself through knowledge and practice to be more effective in evangelism efforts? Do I participate in church outreach and evangelism experiences (e.g., the *Alpha* course either as a participant, inviting others and/or or assisting in its conduct)?

There are various means of spiritual disciplines for pursuing the relationships of connecting with God, believers, others whether believers or not by serving them, and those outside the faith. To grow in one's Walk with Christ an individual needs to progressively engage in various spiritual disciplines. Doing so evidences spiritual growth thereby evidencing "marks of discipleship." When one understands what these marks of discipleship are and how they might be practiced, he or she is more likely to commit, embark and continue in response to God's call

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[1339] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 97 (2002).

to follow Christ. Thus, to be an effective disciple-making church, we need to establish and communicate marks of discipleship by which a person can evaluate how they are doing.

Appendix E contains a Spiritual Growth Self-Assessment Survey form, subject to a few recommended additions, which was used once during an FRCC worship service. This form incorporates questions such as those mentioned above. There has been little follow-up and the process has not been repeated. However, this format affords a substantial possible starting in renewing the effort for an effective evaluation process to for individuals to better determine where they are in their own Walk with Christ and for the church to evaluate the effectiveness its efforts to foster its mission.

In evaluating or rating oneself, it is important to note that there is no pass or fail grade. Every individual is at a different stage in his or her Walk with Christ. The purposes of the assessment are to provide a sense where one is in his or her Walk and discern what areas should next be worked on. Periodic evaluations offer measures of progress and/or retreats and serve as a guide on what to do next.

b. Willow Creek Approach to Self-Assessment

As noted above, Willow Creek initiated a self-assessment program to enable its members to evaluate where they are on their spiritual journey. In turn, this should lead to customized individual spiritual growth plans. On the assumption that Willow's materials would be germane to our consideration of a self-assessment program, hopefully, at some point they either are or will become publicly available.

c. Purpose Driven Life Approach to Self-Assessment

Saddleback Church has developed a small group program entitled "Doing Life Together" based upon Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* book. The six major study topics are God's purposes, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism and worship. Incorporated in this course is a self-assessment form entitled "Purpose Driven Life Health Assessment." This form raises a series of questions for each of the major topics with provision for the individual to rate oneself on a scale of 1 to 5 ranging from just beginning, to getting going, to well developed. The major topics are connecting with Gods family, growing to be like Christ, developing your shape to serve others, sharing your life mission every day, and surrendering your life for God's pleasure. A copy of this self-assessment appears in Appendix F. Drawing upon its content, structure and/or methodology should be explored when crafting a potentially revised FRCC self-assessment form for our members.

d. Deepening, Equipping and Ministering Approach to Self-Assessment[1340]

Jeffrey Jones offers a disciple assessment tool for individuals and a disciple assessment also for congregations. He structured this approach to disciple-making

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[1340] This Section draws primarily on Jeffrey D. Jones, *Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-forming Congregations* 171-174 (2006).

around the concepts of *deepening* (growing in relationships with God and with the disciple-forming community), *equipping* (growing giftedness), and *ministering* (growing in serving).

Jones utilizes a Discipleship Assessment Tool for Individuals. A copy is attached as Appendix G. At the outset of the survey, the stage is set for thoughtful responses and planting seeds for future growth.

> REFLECT BACK ON THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS AND answer each of these questions. After you have completed them, note the areas of significant involvement as well as those in which you have done little recently. Then, make plans to enhance the weaker areas of your own growth as a disciple.[1341]

Here, the person is instructed to reflect back on the last several weeks and answer a series of questions relating to each of these concepts (deepening, equipping and ministering). The questions require an explanatory answer rather than providing answers employing a rating according to some scale. The questions are grouped according to three categories: (i) How has deepening been a part of my life these past few weeks? For example, a question under that category is "In what ways have I grown in my relationship with Christ?" (ii) How has equipping been a part of my life these past weeks?" And, (iii) "How has ministering been a part of my life these past weeks?

Upon completion, one is to note the areas in which he or she has been significantly involved as well as those areas in which the person has done little recently. Then. personally determine a plan or plans to enhance the weaker areas in one's growth as a disciple.[1342]

Hereto, drawing upon this self-assessment form for its content, structure and/or methodology may be helpful when crafting a self-assessment form for our members.

e. Calhoun Spiritual Growth Planner Approach to Self-Assessment[1343]

In her book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us,* Adele Ahlberg Calhoun offers a "Spiritual Growth Planner" for a person's use in exploring his or her spiritual orientation. Marks on the planner reveal one's inertia, one's desire and one's growth. By taking periodic inventories, a person may see the invisible process of growth bearing fruit. The planer is said to be an invitation to recognize where God is at work and is calling. The planner is intended to put a person in touch with his or her longing for God that translates into intentional motivation for the spiritual journey.

The planner asks which of seven expressions of desire for God resonates most deeply; worship the trinity, open yourself to God, relinquish the false self and idols of your heart, share your life, hear God's Word, incarnate the love of Christ, and pray your life. Select the strongest desire and then proceed through an assessment in that area by responding to specific questions

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[1341] *Id* at 171.
[1342] *Id.* at 171.
[1343] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 256-63 (2005).

and rating yourself on particular attributes relevant to that area. This "Spiritual Growth Planner" can be found in Appendix 1 of Calhoun's book.[1344] The Calhoun approach offers us another self-assessment spiritual growth planning method worthy of consideration.

f. Christian Life Profile Assessment

How can you think, act and be like Jesus? Pastor Randy Frazee believes there are 30 key beliefs, practices, and virtues which help a Christian to think, act and be like Jesus. His *Christian Life Profile Assessment Workbook* is designed to help a person assess where he or she is in relation to these beliefs, practices, and virtues. Responding to questions posed helps answering the questions "how am I doing?" and "where do I need to grow?" Once areas are identified where one wants to grow, the workbook offers suggestions and plans to help one realize that growth.

The Christi Life Profile journey is best experienced in a small group community that seeks to encourage, pray for, and hold each other accountable for progress. The goal is to redo the profile a year later to monitor progress. In addition, there is a compressive disciple tool kit which enables churches to assess the Christian beliefs, practices, and virtues of each of their members which better enables churches to help everyone grow. There are four sessions each containing a video, lecture, leader-led discussion, and group discussion.

g. Foss's Six Marks of Discipleship Assessment for Individuals[1345]

Michael Foss sets forth six marks of discipleship.

- Daily prayer
- Weekly worship
- Bible reading
- Serving
- Spiritual friendships and mutual accountability in the context of caring relationships
- Giving

To foster individuals practicing these six marks of discipleship, Foss's church gives a credit size plastic card for the wallet, carrying in pockets or sticking on the refrigerator which lists the six marks. The front side of the card leads off with "Marks of Discipleship" followed by the church's name, address, time of services, etc. The reverse side leads off saying

To the glory of God, I believe I am called...
"to the measure of the full stature of Christ " – Eph. 4:12

I will strive to...

[1344] *Id.* at 257-263.
[1345] This section is drawn from Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church 88*-106 (2000).

followed by listing the basic or foundational practices (marks of discipleship) of those who want to live active lives of faith as disciples of Christ.[1346]

These six marks of discipleship, to which the church calls for commitment, do not constitute an exhaustive list of the spiritual disciplines which a Christian might practice. However, they are considered foundational practices that become the bedrock upon which lives of faithful discipleship are built.[1347]

h. Flourish Discipleship 360 Assessment[1348]

Flourish is an organization whose mission is to assist churches and leaders to flourish and to strengthen disciples of Christ through assessment, trainings courses, and support services. Here the focus is on assessment.

Within the first year or two when a person first comes to knows Christ, there may be tremendous spiritual growth. Often this is followed by a plateau. One significant factor for this occurring is that people lack understanding of and intentionality about how to pursue their own discipleship. Effective assessments allow individuals, leadership and entire churches to explore areas of discipleship strengths and determine where growth is needed.

Flourish's Discipleship 360° Assessment 2.0 seeks to address this need so as to better enable a person(s) to explore the health of his or her discipleship in areas of strength and in areas where growth is needed. The assessment consists of seventy items in which disciples are asked whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The result is a tool that measures the relative health of a disciple in eight core qualities and twenty associated characteristics of discipleship. The results allow the participant to develop a strategy for growth in the areas most needed for greater spiritual maturity.

The above Subsections *a* - *h.* raise various approaches to personal self-assessment with respect to of where one is at in growing as a follower of Christ. Drawing upon one or more of these, either separately or integrated with the FRCC marks of discipleship approach discussed in Subsection *a.* above, is worth further consideration.

Each of these is embraced by the marks of discipleship used in the FRCC personal assessment survey noted above.

3. Self-Assessment Mechanism Process

In the context of the recommended Mission Statement for Fox River Congregational Church, the church should reflect the marks of discipleship which evidences a Christian life seeking to become a fully devoted follower of Christ.

[1346] *Id.* at 88-89.
[1347] *Id.* at 89.
[1348] This section is drawn from flourishmovement.org.

The next step is to develop and implement a self-assessment mechanism which offers an approach to not only encourage commitment to spiritual growth, but also to provide an assist in charting a course for future progress in such growth. The above review of the various alternative approaches and forms for self-assessment serves as a basis for development of a self-evaluation form for use in our church. Such self-assessment form would then be provided to each member of the congregation in some type of anonymous self-evaluation process. Each person would be asked to evaluate himself or herself with respect to each of the marks and how they have or have not grown over a period of time with respect to each. The responses should also indicate where the person needs to concentrate his or her growth in the following months or year ahead, how he or she plans on doing so, and what type of church programs he or she would like to see either continued or implemented to assist doing so. Such a self-assessment survey would not only encourage people to act in progressing in their Walk with Christ, responses (if compiled) would help measure the progress our church as a disciple-making church.

Doing this survey periodically (e.g., quarterly, semiannually or annually) would provide a means of self-accountability which, in turn, would further encourage people to undertake steps to advance their spiritual growth in their Walk with Christ. In addition, if copies of such self-assessments, on perhaps an anonymous basis, are made available to the church, such would not only help measure the effectiveness of our church in attempting to carry out our disciple-making efforts, it would also aid its ability to offer programs, activities and experiences targeted at specific areas in which our members indicate a need.

To maximize the number of member survey responses and to increase the likelihood that individuals will act on their self-assessments to further their Walk with Christ, major effort as to the importance of this activity, for both our members individually and our church as a whole, should be trumpeted on repeated basis. This could be done by sermons, newsletters and urgings through other sources.

Whereas a pastor talking about spirituality all of the time from the pulpit is not likely to be highly effective, a pastor talking to people individually is more likely to have greater impact. Periodic private visits with members of the congregation raising questions as to where they sense they are at in their spiritual journey and what kind of progress they are making could markedly encourage people to engage in self-assessment and commitment. Ask individual members questions as to the state of their soul; are you at peace with your neighbor; do you know at least some of the creed (at least that God loves you); do you pray regularly, etc.? There are not many churches where the pastor asks and listens to individual members about where they are on their spiritual journey.[1349] The impact of doing so could be huge.

Once a person, through filling out such a self-assessment survey or otherwise, discerns that "Yes, there are some specific areas which I should to work on," he or she is more likely to commit to progressing on the path to growing in spiritual maturity. It might be a small step or steps, but this either initiates or continues a process for spiritual growth. The likelihood of committing is even greater if some specific relevant program, experience or activity is offered by our church and the personal benefits of the program for the individual are clearly explained.

[1349] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 72 (2001).

Few churches establish a means or system to measure what is happening in the life of its members. Rarely will believers tie into a trustworthy and competent partner who will hold them accountable to specific and measurable goals. The implementation of a self-assessment mechanism is a foundational element in fostering commitment to and growing in one one's spiritual maturity. However, to be effective on an on-going basis, the growth process needs to be conducted in a relational setting which involves an element of accountability, e.g., relational small groups.

In short, the development and implementation of a self-assessment and a personal growth program should engender not only commitment to spiritual growth; it also provides a tool to better measure and provide a guide for a person to advance in his or her spiritual formation.

E. ASSESSMENT OF CHURCH'S DISCIPLE-MAKING EFFORTS

1. Need for Assessment

To the extent that we, as a church, fail to imbue members of the congregation with an understanding of, commitment to and personal involvement in the various aspects of discipleship (not only in a church context, but in day-to-day Christian living), we are failing to achieve the mission purposes of our church (i.e., growing toward a more Christ-like life by connecting with God, other believers, others through serving, and people outside the faith). Furthermore, if we don't have people in the pews having a greater understanding about what being a fully devoted follower of Christ is all about and being excited about growing in Christ, we are not only failing in our mission, more specifically, we are unlikely to be successful in reaching out to people outside our church. Growth comes from members in the pews being inspired, excited and eager to invite others to join in.

To be an effective disciple-making church, a church needs not only to *offer disciple-making experiences*, it also needs to *foster people's commitment to progress in their Walk with Christ*. Ultimately the question posed for our church is whether we are fulfilling the mission Jesus gave us? Since Jesus calls us to make disciples, we should know whether we are doing a good job at it.[1350] Scripture calls for assessment. "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds…." (Proverbs 27:23) And, as our senior Pastor emphasizes, "Growing churches buy into the concept that what is measured improves. Growing churches make bold plans and then measure their results to see if they are on target."[1351]

Thus, we need to ask, are people coming to Christ, are they being discipled, are they taking their next step. in growing toward a more Christ-like person? In short, are we making disciples?[1352] Where are we being successful and where are we falling short?

Answering these questions calls for the development and implementation of a means to assess to the effectiveness of the church's efforts. A systematic means to do has yet to be

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[1350] Ed Stetzer, "Do Small Churches Need Self-Assessment?", OutreachMagazine.com., November 23, 2014.
[1351] Lonnie Richardson, "Let the Church Grow," August 25, 2019 (sermon).
[1352] Chris Bell, "Creating a Welcoming Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, September 26, 2013.

implemented at FRCC. To become a more effective disciple-making church, it is necessary to determine what is and is not working well as the basis for what should be added, enhanced, and/ or discarded. Assessing the church needs to be a regular on-going process in order to discern what continues to work, what needs improvement, what no longer is effective, and what are the changing circumstances which need to be addressed. However, in doing so, it is important that it be understood, by both the evaluators and those being evaluated, that the purpose is not to criticize or judge. But rather, "[e]valuation is a way to learn and grow through the ministry experience."[1353]

What does a church look like if its members are growing in their Walk with Christ? Active faith translates into attitudes and behaviors. This is far more than simply agreeing with a set of beliefs set forth in a creedal formula. The question is what would a church look like if its members were disciples (i.e., growing towards a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions). It would reflect a positive attempt to translate belief into behavior. Faith is active. The discipleship model expects the transformation of lives in a community of faith.[1354] This, in turn, raises the question, what are indicators that lives are being transformed. That is, what are the marks in a person's life which evidence that spiritual transformation is occurring

However, remember the earlier discussion that it is God who causes transformation. The role of the individual is to engage in those practices which place him or her in a situation where God is more likely to cause transformation to occur. It is a person's sincere and genuine engagement in those practices, i.e., the various spiritual disciplines considered above in PART THREE above, which constitute the content of disciple-making experiences. It is engagement in these practices which reflect one's growth as a disciple. These are marks of discipleship by which not only can an individual evaluate him or herself, but also by which a church can assess itself. The degree to which members reflect and are growing these marks also evidences the degree to which the church is a disciple-making church.

2. Initial Church Evaluation Efforts at FRCC

The discussion in this section of the initial church evaluation efforts here at FRCC draws almost entirely upon the Year End Report of the Accountability Team which was adopted at the June 6, 2004 Annual Meeting.

In addition to monitoring and facilitating coordination of planning, policies, programs and activities, among its responsibilities the Accountability Team is responsible for developing, implementing, assisting, overseeing and/or conducting evaluation mechanisms with respect to all that the Church does with special focus on the activities of the mission purpose teams.[1355] The basic questions to be considered are (a) How are we doing? Are we doing the right things? If yes, are we doing them well? Can we do them better? (b) Are there things we aren't doing that we should be doing? (c) Are there things that we are doing, that we should not be doing? These

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[1353] Maria Mallory White, "Evaluation as Collaboration," Alban Weekly, November 16, 2015.
[1354] Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* 82 (2000).
[1355] By-Laws of Fox River Community Congregational Church (as Amended September 11, 2011), Article IV., Section B.1.f. (1).

evaluations are to be based upon whether that being evaluated significantly contributes to the achievement of one or more of the mission purposes of our Church.

In undertaking this effort, it was understood that the Accountability Team would work in close conjunction with each of the other teams. The Accountability Team lacks authority and responsibility to control the actions of the other Teams. Instead, it is to partner with the other teams in a close, cooperative and supportive manner to advance the effectiveness of the ministry of our Church. Good interaction is facilitated by the fact that all team leaders are also members of the Accountability Team.

a. Evaluate Based on Purpose

Defining purposes and incorporating them into a mission statement, establishing our environment as to how we "do church" (Congregational Way), discerning our core values, setting forth our vision, putting into place an overall conceptual strategic framework predicated on our purposes and organizing our church structure around such purposes all together set the stage to be a purpose-driven-disciple-making church. Equally important, we must rigorously apply our mission purposes to everything we do as a church. This includes evaluating what we do based upon our mission purposes. That is, *we need to evaluate on purpose.*

The success or effectiveness of a church is measured by the extent to which it meets or fails to achieve its mission. To be successful, we must constantly evaluate what we do to answer the question "how are we doing?" In performing evaluations, the basic questions to be asked are we accomplishing our mission, what are we doing that is an obstacle to accomplishing our mission, and what aren't we doing that needs to be done to accomplish our mission.

Furthermore, evaluation prioritizes ministry accomplishment. What is evaluated tends to be what gets done. Evaluation affirms and encourages that which serves the mission and leads to corrections of that which does not.

In short, without an on-going evaluation process to review the results achieved or not achieved, needed corrections are unlikely to happen, incentive opportunities are lost and targets sought are unlikely to be reached. It is essential to build evaluation mechanisms around our mission purposes in a manner integrated into our various programs and activities on an on-going basis so as to enhance our effectiveness as a disciple-making church.

However, this is easier said than done. In the context of church operations, we are exploring relatively unknown waters. Few churches have put into place an effective on-going evaluation system. It is probably even rarer in churches of a congregational nature as distinguished from those with a more hierarchical mode of authoritative church governance. Nevertheless, it had been the belief and the hope of the Accountability Team that we had embarked upon a significant and sound beginning.

b. *"Getting Everyone on the Same Page:" Develop Common Understanding of Team Responsibilities*

At the outset, the Accountability Team concluded that was essential to develop a common understanding as to who is supposed to be doing what. That is, get everyone on the same page. Every team member of every team *needs to be familiar* with the elements of our mission, vision and core values and where their team fits into the process. Then the Accountability Team implemented the following approach to foster a common understanding.

A common presentation, entitled "Achieving Our Vision," was presented to the individual teams covering the overall strategic framework to achieve our Vision, where each team fitted in our overall ministry, and the specific responsibilities of each team. The Summary of the Responsibilities for each team were not something new, but rather were directly based upon the elements of our church Vision as previously and unanimously adopted by the Congregation. The Summary for each respective team was made available to every team member as part of the presentation to that team. The Accountability Team was available to make the presentation to individual teams. The various teams reported back positive reactions as to the worth of this effort in enhancing common understanding and in providing guidance for their team activities.

On several occasions, Lonnie Richardson and others have emphasized that an essential element in a successful church is constantly keeping the Mission and the Vision of the church in the forefront of everyone's thinking. This requires periodically recasting the Mission and Vision to members of the congregation as a whole. Thus, the Accountability Team unanimously concurred that the presentation, "Achieving our Vision" (periodically updated as appropriate), should be presented annually to each of our respective teams at the beginning of our operational year. Despite occasional communication of these materials, generally speaking the process feel into disuse. Furthermore, over the period of several years, the "Achieving Our Vision," has not been subject to periodic review for possible updating, something which should be done.

c. *Team Status Reports: Essential Feedback Mechanism in the Conduct of the Monitoring and Evaluation Functions*

In order to perform the monitoring and evaluation functions, it is necessary to develop and implement a periodic feedback mechanism(s) from each team to provide an informational base upon which evaluations can be made. After some experimentation, the Accountability Team concluded that two types of Status Reports are needed.

- *Update Status Reports* should provide brief summaries as to what the individual Team is doing and information as to what the Accountability Team needs know in order to perform its coordination function. Furthermore, such reports afford an opportunity to seek the Accountability Team's help when needed. Such reports should be made at each Accountability Team meeting. These reports establish an on-going environment for exchanging ideas and lending support to one another.

- *Full Evaluation Status Reports* should be designed to provide information to facilitate the process of evaluating how we are doing in seeking to accomplish our mission purposes. This includes such information as (i) a synopsis of that team's brainstorming activity including identifying needs which need to be addressed and working strategies designed to meet those needs, (ii) a progress reports as to that team's activities already underway, and (iii) input, on an on-going basis, from that team's members as to their thoughts on how the Accountability Team can support and facilitate their efforts.

  Importantly, the Full Evaluation Status Reports should respond to a series of theme questions which directly relate mission purposes and vision. Such questions include the following. (i) How are we doing? Are we doing the right things? If yes, are we doing them well. Can we do them better? Thus, the Full Evaluation Status Report should include a summary of activities already underway as well as an evaluation of those activities completed. (ii) Are there things we aren't doing that we should be doing? In this context the Report should include a synopsis of the team's brainstorming activity including identifying needs which to be addressed and working strategies designed to meet those needs. (iii) Are there things that we are doing, that we should not be doing because they do not significantly contribute to a mission purpose? (iv) Are we moving at an appropriate pace? Responding to questions such as these should generate answers that better enable evaluations as to whether that being evaluated significantly contributes to the achievement of one or more of the mission purposes of our Church.[1356]

Full Evaluation Status Reports were not expected at every meeting of the Accountability Team, but rather on a more periodic basis (e. g., quarterly). Although Update status reports continue to occur on a relatively informal basis, the process and preparation and provision of Full Evaluation Status Reports have not taken hold.

d. Feedback Mechanisms

In addition to the Update and Full Status Reports, a variety of additional feedback tools are available. In its initial evaluation efforts, the Accountability Team considered several, including the following. Occasionally, some have been used. Further consideration of these items seems warranted for possible future implementation.

- *Post-Modern Reviews After Every Event, Programs, Activities* – (e. g., worship services, small group programs, Exploring Church Membership Class, serving activities, outreach events, etc.). Such reviews should be conducted and/or involve the relevant team, participants in the conduct of the event, the pastor and other professional staff members. volunteer lay assistants, and other persons providing a representative cross section of the congregation.

[1356] These questions are embraced in a guideline, adopted by the Accountability Team, entitled "Feedback of Information to the Accountability Team."

- *Use an evaluation feedback sheet* at the end of a class, workshop or other events. Among other things, always ask what were the objectives, did we meet our objective(s), how can we do better?

- *Exit Interviews of Persons Who Have Dropped Our Church or Out of an On-Going Activity*

- *Secret Shopper* – (one who reflects the target group). This seems particularly relevant for worship services and other events designed to attract new people

- *Suggestion Boxes*

- *First Impression Cards for New Attendees and Repeat Newcomer Survey*

- *Evaluation Comment Cards for Members*

- *Periodic Personal Survey of Members/and Regular Attendees* re their evaluation of various aspects of our Church's ministry and how the church could better support them in their own personal Walk with Christ

- *Evaluation Focus Groups*

- *Track Attendance Trends* at all worship services, events, programs, small groups, classes, etc. Determine both absolute numbers and percentage of the target group. This will reflect whether the church is trending up or down. However, although widely used in past years, the value relying on attendance figures has significantly decreased.[1357]

- *Track Financial Trends*

Furthermore, the frequency of feedback methods is critical. Obtain feedback on a regular basis so as to track trends rather than risking reliance on odd ball results from a non-representative day. To the extent possible utilize numerical ratings.

e. Standards for Evaluation

In order to evaluate how we are doing as a disciple-making church, standards are needed upon which to base the evaluation. In its initial efforts many years ago, the foundational standards flowed directly from the Vision: Building for the Future of Our Church which was adopted by our Congregation. These were incorporated in the Summary of Responsibilities for each team. The Summaries focused on those portions of the mission, core values and vision statements most relevant to the work of the respective teams as well as on the By-Laws which set forth with more specificity the responsibilities of each of team. These

[1357] Nathan Kirkpatrick, "Are Churches Counting What Counts" Alban Weekly, February 190, 2020.

summaries, in essence, set forth the general standards (responsibilities) for each team and provide some basis for evaluation as to how the teams are doing. team. However, if the Mission Statement recommended in this resource book is adopted, the church organizational structure will be somewhat changed (discussed in Section VIII. below) and the vision and core value statements need to be reviewed and possibly updated. Similarly, the Summaries of Responsibilities for each team will also need to be reconsidered.

In summary, before the Accountability Team and each of the other teams, with respect to their own spheres of responsibility, are to perform the evaluation function, several elements need to be determined, developed and implemented.

- *Develop Standards for Evaluation* -- With our mission purposes, core values and vision as the foundational standards, we need to develop *quantitative and qualitative standards* which provide a practical means to ascertain how well we are doing and what yet needs to be done in order to advance our mission purposes. This includes the development of strategic plans for each team which need to be evaluated in terms of our church's mission purposes, vision and core values, their specific objectives and what has and has not been accomplished.

- *Determine the information needed to evaluate* performance based upon the standards referred to. above. That is, we need to obtain information that enables us to discern what is going well, where are there problems, what we aren't doing that we should be doing, etc.

- *Develop Feedback Mechanisms* -- We need to implement feedback mechanisms which generates the information needed to evaluate. Such feedback mechanisms might include, for example, various types of response cards, secret church shoppers, post mortem sessions after events, surveys, team status reports, etc.

To date, an on-going formalized evaluation system has yet to be developed and implemented. This should be done through cooperative efforts among the Accountability or its successor (as considered in in Section VIII.C.9.) and other teams in a manner to promote on-going quality mindset of excellence throughout the congregation.

3. Marks of Discipleship Defined in Context of Recommended FRCC Mission Statement

As expressed earlier, in business terms, our Church is in the disciple-development business. The product is transformed lives, i.e., - an expanding body of people growing toward more Christ-like life lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions. The role of our church in general and our teams in particular is to motivate and better enable individuals to progress through the stages of discipleship in their Walk with Christ by moving them to deeper levels of spiritual maturity and levels of commitment. This requires a series of processes designed to move people through various stages of development. Each team is an integral part of this series of processes to encourage and better enable people to progress toward becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, the ultimate result of achieving our mission purposes.

As a church we want to be able to measure our effectiveness in motivating and assisting people's progress in their Walk with Christ. The questions are how do we measure our effectiveness and what information feedback systems are needed to do so?

A system of self-assessment requires some sort of measures by which to assess. This requires some specificity as to what it means to be a follower of Christ. This is provided by the recommended Mission Statement for FRCC which sets forth four foundational marks of discipleship

(i) connecting with God in a loving and intimate relationship as modeled by Christ (e.g., prayer, spending time with God's word, worship, and other spiritual disciplines),

(ii) connecting with other Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together,

(iii) connecting both believers and non-believers through lovingly serving their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and

(iv) connecting with people outside the faith through lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ, leading them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life.

To assess the effectiveness of FRCC, we need to develop a means to measure to what extent church members are in fact progressing in their efforts to make these connections, i.e., to what extent do they reflect theses marks of discipleship. Successful evaluation begins with articulated goals formulated in the context of the mission purposes of the church and then development of the means to assess he results. "Without articulated goals, there is nothing to evaluate."[1358] As that well known philosopher Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up some place else." Two approaches, which complement one another, offer a means to evaluate whether we are progressing in advancing the mission of our church.

First, *track persons' progress through the stages of discipleship* as well as movement within particular stages. The path starts with experiences in coming to Christ leading to conversion and then proceeds (not necessarily in sequential order) to worship, basics of faith, personal spiritual disciplines, becoming a member of the church, assimilation, participation in relational small groups, growing in serving both believers and nonbelievers and reaching out to those outside the faith by sharing the gospel with them. To some extent, assessment of a church's effectiveness can be achieved by numerical tracking of persons as they move to and within the various stages. Such numbers don't provide in depth knowledge as to whether, for example, participation in a small group in fact leads to a growing faith and significant progress in a person's Walk. Nevertheless, a growing number of persons moving into, within and through

[1358] Jeffrey Kaster, "Why I Love Program Evaluation," Alban Weekly, February 10, 2020.

stages of disciple-making evidences that the church is fostering those conditions which lead people toward a more Christ-like life.

Second, in addition to numerical tracking, tapping into individuals' *personal self-assessments* can the most revealing. Although subjective, self-assessments, such as those considered earlier in Section D. above, inform as to where people think they are at, where they need to go and, when done on a periodic basis, whether there has been progress, stagnation or retrogression. This not only informs the church as to how it is doing, it points to areas where improvements need to be made.

Of course, the basic problem with this approach is getting church members on a widespread basis to periodically conduct a self-examination and then make their results available to the church on either a known or anonymous basis. However, a combination of (i) diligent on-going effort to communicate the importance of this effort to effectuate the work of the body of Christ of which they are a part and whom they seek to follow and (ii) development of a system of confidentiality and anonymity will enable the assessment process to go forward.

Rick Warren has said "Giving people a track to run on and then evaluate their spiritual growth has proven indispensable."[1359] The combination of tracking our members' progress through and within the stages of discipleship and gathering persons' self-assessments of where they are evidencing the marks of discipleship would better enable FRCC in its disciple-making efforts.

In applying the two approaches, it is not suggested that the earlier comments reflecting the initial efforts of the Accountability Team are no longer relevant. To the contrary they as well as the recommendations here should be considered for integration with each other to maximize the effectiveness of assessing our church's effectiveness as a disciple-making church.

4. Other Approaches to Church Self-Assessment

There are other churches and sources which, in some manner, embrace the marks of discipleship as a basis for self-assessment as to how their church is doing. Although these sources tend to express and/or list the marks in different ways, at least for the most part, the list of marks expressed by one are essentially consistent with the others. Certainly, it would be worth considering other frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of our church either in addition to, in lieu of, or integrated with the marks of discipleship used in the context of the recommended FRCC Mission Statement. But, whatever is done, it must center on effectuating the Mission of our church.

A few other approaches appear to be worth mentioning for consideration. And, presumably there are others.

[1359] James Long, "The Outreach Interview: Rick Warren," Outreach Magazine, p.12 at 104, January/February 2013.

a. Transformational Church Initiative

One alternative approach, offered by LifeWay,[1360] is the *Transformational Church* initiative. LifeWay developed its transformational church concept by surveying thousands of churches considered to be leading examples of spiritual transformation from numerous denominations This provided a biblical framework for the Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT). TCAT provides a scorecard type of measuring the tangibles such as leadership training, worship attendance and number of people participating in some type of Bible study. But, it does more. TCAT assists churches in garnering an honest look at how their members perceive they are doing in the context of spiritual transformation.[1361]

Integral in this effort is *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (2000) by Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer.[1362] It is recommended that prior to launching into the assessment tool, church leaders prepare by reading their book and use the accompanying DVD as basis of discussions among church staff, small group leaders, etc.[1363] Next conduct the TCAT in the church. Some churches opt to work with a trained TCAT consultant who can facilitate the discovery process. However, it is essential that the insights garnered and decisions made emerge from within the body of the church, not from an external source. Although results are not likely to be flawless, sound research can reveal strengths and weakness which a local church may not otherwise perceive.[1364]

The Transformational Church concept, coupled with TCAT, was designed to offer churches tools to maintain their focus on biblical principles and guidelines being a disciple-making/transformational church while also providing guidance on engaging the church's culture and growing the church. This approach offers an intriguing possibility as FRCC considers how best to develop and implement an on-going effort of self-assessing our church as a disciple-making/transformational church as to what needs to be continued, improved, added, or deleted from current and/or future efforts.

b. Natural Church Development

Another alternative for church assessment is the "Natural Church Development" developed by a German researcher and writer Charles Schwarz who studied 1,000 churches in 32 countries. Data was compiled and processed involving 4.2 million responses to questions designed to ascertain what factors are needed for a church to thrive and to determine to what degree a church reflects these characteristics.[1365] Although every church is unique, the

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[1360] LifeWay, whose CEO is Thom Rainer, is a very large non-profit provider of religious and Christian resources. It consults with churches and offers biblical solutions through various ministries, resources, enrichment and training events, age-group products, leadership development, evangelism, discipleship, music, worship, marriage, and parenting. It conducts research studies and directs industry development and strategic projects.

[1361] tcat.lifeway.com/what-is-it/tda.

[1362] In a separate forum, Thom Rainer also offers, "10 Questions to Diagnose the Evangelistic Health of Your Church," OutreachMagazine.com, July 17, 2014.

[1363] tcat.lifeway.com/what-is-it/tda.

[1364] *Id.*

[1365] David J. Claassen, "The 'Natural Way' to Grow Your Church," Congregationalist, p.6, July/August/September 2003). Charles Schwarz founded and directed the Institute of Natural Church Development. Smart Resources is the

type presentation might be made to all interested persons followed by attendees splitting into their separate groups. Otherwise, there can be a separate presentation to each small group.

Short term small groups may be formed or sponsored in any one of several ways. There is no rigid format or protocol for doing so. For example, an individual or group of individuals may want to form and/or participate in a short term small group because of interest in particular topic and/or to test drive a small group experience before committing to a longer term relational small group.

A more structured approach is for a small group program to be sponsored by one of the church teams to spark interest in a variety of topics at various stages of disciple-making process starting with conversion experiences and continuing on in the context of worship, basics of faith, personal spiritual disciplines, exploring church membership and assimilation, growing in serving others and growing in sharing Christ. In each situation, focus should be on some aspect of moving people along in their spiritual formation coupled with serving as a bridge to relational small groups.

All members of the congregation, through the various means of public communication and by personal invitation or encouragement, should be encouraged to participate in some type of short term small group and/or a relational small group. The motivation might be to test drive a small group experience or to form a small group around a topic of particular interest to him or her. All teams need to explore and include either a small short term or longer relational small group component into their team activities, programs and events. Teams themselves should function as a small group rather than simply being a committee performing some tasks.

Other than the situation where a few people want to "test drive" entering into a relational experience with one another, short term small groups would, subject to maximum size limits, typically be open to anyone interested in participating. Such groups would be announced publicly and sign up opportunities would be offered. Short term small groups are low commitment in terms of duration. They typically last from four to eight weeks. They introduce people to the small group experience as well as to the specific subject being presented. A major purpose of such groups is to support people moving into, within and/or through a stage of discipleship and across the bridge to relational small groups, and/or to equip people for serving or evangelism.

2. Standards

Despite the flexibility associated with short term small groups, three standards should be adhered to. First, the group effort should be done with excellence. Poor group experience is likely to dissuade persons from moving on to other group experiences whether short term or relational. Second, prior to the conclusion of the short term small group experience, in some manner, people should be encouraged and supported to move on to a relational small group either because of interest in the subject matter or in continuing and deepening one's small group experience. A not uncommon result of a short term small group experience is the desire of the participants (or at least some of them) to continue and to evolve their group into a relational small group. Third, the content of short term group programming should embrace some fundamental aspect of fostering spiritual growth such as (i) a general introduction to spiritual

degree. This is the area that will be most likely to inhibit a church from moving forward. A church should identify its minimum factor and address strengthening in that area. The process for discovering a church's minimum factor is to conduct the Natural Church Development Survey. Thirty members of the church and the pastor fill out the questionnaire forms which are sent to NCD where they are analyzed by computer. With the returned results, an implementation guide is utilized to assist the church to strategize ways to build an awareness and an appropriate response to the church's minimum factor. The church also sees a statistical snapshot as to its strengths. These strong areas are used to strengthen the minimum factor.[1367]

c. Renovo Spiritual Life Inventory for Churches

This spiritual inventory offers a means to benchmark and track the spiritual growth in a congregation. It goes beyond measures such as attendance and financial giving to determine whether the church is making a real difference in growing people toward a more Christ-like life. This inventory utilizes an anonymous congregational online survey said to be easy to understand, simple to administer and repeatable over time to monitor change. A large data base derived, from over 2000 churches, enables a church to compare its results to that of other churches. The inventory is designed to enable church leaders track over time whether their congregation is moving toward Christ and discern whether ministry allocations of resources are in fact elevating the spiritual health of its members.[1368]

d. Toler – Nelson Approach

Churches are in the faith business. They help people grow spiritually. Quality organizations seek information which gives them objective feedback as to how they are doing as measured against the mission of the church. Stan Toler and Alan Nelson offer a detailed approach for evaluating how a church can undertake an evaluation of how it is doing.

Feedback should be obtained on a regular basis. This enables tracking trends rather than relying on an odd ball result from a quirky, non-representative day. Furthermore, when possible, incorporate numerical rating responses feedback mechanisms to provide a more accurate sense of what important.

(1) Feedback Instruments

Getting quality feedback is critical for assessing how our church is doing. Various feedback instruments should be considered. The following are some possibilities.

- *Growth in Attendance Trends*[1369] – Flat or declining numbers of persons attending worship services or other aspects of ministry are red flags suggesting closer look. Specific questions to ask include:

[1367] *Id.* Information and survey can be obtained from SmartChurch Resources.

[1368] Website at renovo.services/churches/.

[1369] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 147-48 156(1999).

- Are we growing?
- How do our monthly attendance figures compare to last year? The last five years?
- What are the trends?
- How are the various individual services, programs and ministries doing in attendance?
- Are we tracking small groups and Sunday school classes to determine the percentage of our regular attendees participating in a small group environment?

- *Growth in Financial Trends*[1370] – Although a church should not see itself in the money raising business, it does need to raise enough to be able to serve people. Financial figures afford a clue as to how a church is doing. When people give more money, this may indicate that they are excited about what is happening in the church, a good sign. Questions to ask might include:

  - How do the finances compare to previous results?
  - How many new regular givers have emerged?
  - What is the average gift amount?

  In analyzing attendance and financial numbers, discern whether there is particular event or campaign which has skewed the results. Although these statistics may not explain why there are certain trends, other feedback mechanisms may be able to do so.

- *First Time Attendees and Guests*[1371] – First impressions are crucial. If they are negative, newcomers are unlikely to return, hence little growth. A church needs to discern and correct the causes of adverse first impressions. So, seek feedback. Provide first time visitors a simple newcomers' survey. Keep the survey brief, requiring only a minute or two to complete with a few open-end questions at the end to elicit a longer response. Try to ascertain if the person fits the target profile. Use the newcomer survey to ascertain how people find out about the church, the one thing they really like about the church (if any), and one idea as to how we can make the church experience better. Provide a readily available place to deposit the survey and/or provide a self-addressed envelope. Compile the responses and look for trends.

- *Periodically Survey Regular Customers*[1372] – In addition to surveying visitors, conduct a periodic survey, perhaps on a quarterly basis, of regular attendees and members of the congregation. This might be done through the worship service bulletin (an insert), possibly done as part of the worship service. Each survey should highlight those areas of ministry which the church wants to assess. Announce the

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[1370] *Id.* at 141-42,
[1371] *Id.* at 142-43, 148-49.
[1372] *Id.* at 143, 149.

survey prior to the worship service. The shorter the survey, the more likely an immediate after the service or by e-mail responses. Responses can be anonymous.

- *End of Activity Feedback Sheets*[1373] – A quality improvement process requires obtaining feedback on programs, events and curriculum, as well as on leaders of the same. At the end of the activity, provide an evaluation sheet to participants requesting, on an anonymous basis, their views on such items as physical facilities, location, content, leader, and other parts of the experience. The questionnaire should address some specific issues followed by some open-end questions.

- *Focus Groups*[1374] — Gathering people (current and/or potential church members) in small groups to discuss ministry issues. Face to face conversations permits greater depth and exploration. Focus groups can offer invaluable insights as to what people are thinking and feeling and they can be useful in brainstorming new projects as well as critiquing a current ministry(s).

  Focus groups, in effect, occur all the time. People gather during the coffee hour after the worship service, in restaurants, and/or in small groups expressing their joys, frustrations, opinions and ideas about various aspects of the church. By intentionally gathering a group, feedback can be recorded and channeled constructively. The purpose of focus groups is not to persuade, but rather to gain feedback so as to better be able to address problems and improve the quality of the ministry. Carefully select the focus group leader who needs good listening skills and the ability to ask penetrating questions.

- *Suggestion Boxes*[1375] – Provide a suggestion box where anonymous comments can be made. Encourage approval when something is done well, share ideas for improvement and point out problems.

- *Exit Interviews*[1376] – Whenever someone leaves the church, especially if they have been active in the church, after about a month make contact. This is especially important if the person is part of the church's target group. Ask why they left. Whether done by phone or in writing, this should be done in a non-threatening manner with an attitude that we really want to do better in serving people. Ask how our ministry did not fulfill their needs. Some may even return because they sense that someone cared.

(2) Reaction to Feedback Mechanisms

There always is a concern about various feedback mechanisms which can be critical of persons and/or what they are doing. This is a particularly sensitive issue in an organization which functions through a cadre of volunteers. How can you put people under

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[1373] *Id.* at 150-51.
[1374] *Id.* at 143-44, 151-52.
[1375] *Id.* at 152.
[1376] *Id.* at 152-54.

a magnifying glass by encouraging critiques when peersons are donating their time, effort and dollars. The key is communicating an understanding as to why feedback is being done. When the goal is people growth, including growth of those subject to feedback, and continued improvement in the quality of the ministry to which we are all dedicated, feedback serves as an important mechanism to achieve such goals. With a quality improvement mindset in which gathering feedback is part of the normal process, feedback efforts will become a natural and accepted part of the manner in which the ministry is conducted. God deserves our best. Most people will rise to the task.[1377]

In summary, the goal is ministry excellence. Evaluation of what we do as a church, as measured by the church's mission statement, is essential for successfully growing a disciple-making church. Various approaches have been considered above. As a church, it is incumbent to determine what approach or combination of approaches, (including perhaps some methods not touched upon here), to better discern on-going basis what we should create anew, where to improve upon what we are doing, and/or what we should cease doing. Meaningful evaluation is critical in growing as an effective disciple-making church.

VI. CREATING AND STRUCTURING SMALL GROUPS FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

PART FOUR sets forth the stages of disciple-making through which we envision a person will travel in growing as a follower of Christ. PART FIVE considered the content of disciple-making experiences at the various stages. These discussions highlighted the fundamental roles which small groups, both short term and relational small groups, must play in our church's efforts if we are to be an effective disciple-making church.

While the ultimate focus are relational small groups, as previous discussion throughout this resource book demonstrates, short term small groups also play a vital disciple-making role in in a variety of ways and contexts. This section focuses on the factors which need to be considered in creating and structuring small groups for effective-disciple-making.

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF SHORT TERM SMALL GROUPS

1. Forming Short Term Small Groups

Short term small groups serve to teach the basics as well as more advanced levels of faith, spark interest in spiritual growth through introduction to spiritual disciplines, train and equip members for various ministerial roles (e.g., leading a small group), offer an introductory small group relationship experience as a bridge to participation in a relational small group, learning spiritual disciplines, etc. With short term group programs being introductory in nature, the number of sessions is limited. If the number of persons attracted to the program offered exceeds the size of a manageable proportions (e.g., in excess of 8 to 10 people), more than one group should be formed. In this situation, depending upon the nature of the program, a classroom

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[1377] *Id.* at 145, 155-56.

type presentation might be made to all interested persons followed by attendees splitting into their separate groups. Otherwise, there can be a separate presentation to each small group.

Short term small groups may be formed or sponsored in any one of several ways. There is no rigid format or protocol for doing so. For example, an individual or group of individuals may want to form and/or participate in a short term small group because of interest in particular topic and/or to test drive a small group experience before committing to a longer term relational small group.

A more structured approach is for a small group program to be sponsored by one of the church teams to spark interest in a variety of topics at various stages of disciple-making process starting with conversion experiences and continuing on in the context of worship, basics of faith, personal spiritual disciplines, exploring church membership and assimilation, growing in serving others and growing in sharing Christ. In each situation, focus should be on some aspect of moving people along in their spiritual formation coupled with serving as a bridge to relational small groups.

All members of the congregation, through the various means of public communication and by personal invitation or encouragement, should be encouraged to participate in some type of short term small group and/or a relational small group. The motivation might be to test drive a small group experience or to form a small group around a topic of particular interest to him or her. All teams need to explore and include either a small short term or longer relational small group component into their team activities, programs and events. Teams themselves should function as a small group rather than simply being a committee performing some tasks.

Other than the situation where a few people want to "test drive" entering into a relational experience with one another, short term small groups would, subject to maximum size limits, typically be open to anyone interested in participating. Such groups would be announced publicly and sign up opportunities would be offered. Short term small groups are low commitment in terms of duration. They typically last from four to eight weeks. They introduce people to the small group experience as well as to the specific subject being presented. A major purpose of such groups is to support people moving into, within and/or through a stage of discipleship and across the bridge to relational small groups, and/or to equip people for serving or evangelism.

2. Standards

Despite the flexibility associated with short term small groups, three standards should be adhered to. First, the group effort should be done with excellence. Poor group experience is likely to dissuade persons from moving on to other group experiences whether short term or relational. Second, prior to the conclusion of the short term small group experience, in some manner, people should be encouraged and supported to move on to a relational small group either because of interest in the subject matter or in continuing and deepening one's small group experience. A not uncommon result of a short term small group experience is the desire of the participants (or at least some of them) to continue and to evolve their group into a relational small group. Third, the content of short term group programming should embrace some fundamental aspect of fostering spiritual growth such as (i) a general introduction to spiritual

disciplines, (ii) modeling Bible study, (iii) introduction to alternative forms of prayer, (iv) overview of basic Christianity, (v) equipping for serving, evangelism and/or leading and/or participating in relational small groups, or (vi) understanding the Congregational Way.

3. Leaders

A key element to successful short term small groups is the leader of the group. Without engaging in lengthy leadership training, which would deter many potential volunteer group leaders, there are a couple of approaches to preparing volunteers to lead a short term small group. First, there is "quick start" method. Typically, this approach begins with a retreat or seminar during which potential volunteer leaders receive an overview of the materials they will be using and some basics on leading a group. The availability of such training would enable persons interested in leading a group to learn how and test whether they want to do so before committing to lead a group. Then, they go out and lead a group. Such persons might be from a sponsoring ministry team. Or, a volunteer leader may simply be an individual who wants to start a group or a person who has been requested by his or her on-going relational small group to learn how to lead that group in a short term subject of interest to the group.[1378]

The "inspire and hand out the materials" to a volunteer leader method offers an alternative approach. Although perhaps less effective than if a person were to attend a retreat or seminar, it possesses the merit of being more workable and requiring less start up time. Observe and invite those who express interest and who appear to have the capability to lead. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to ask. Develop responses to overcome standard objections. General public announcements can be used to solicit interested people. Provide handout material and programs that virtually lead themselves. Group leaders of existing groups or teams should discern who in their group might be good future group leaders.

Fortunately, today there are a lot of resources that virtually teach themselves, especially those programs with video components and leader guides. The pastor, the person leading the small group ministry, or a person on the sponsoring team simply gathers the person or persons interested in leading a small group, lays out the small group plan, and hands out the materials to be used to those who want to go forward in either starting his or her own group or leading a group arranged for by church sign up efforts.[1379]

In short, in creating, structuring and attracting people to lead short term small groups, we need to be creative, open and flexible. There is no one exclusive way to finding, attracting and preparing small group leaders.

B. BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL FELLOWSHIP AROUND RELATIONAL SMALL GROUPS

Since God is love, his very nature is relational. Not only does God command that we live a life of loving one another, when he creates man in his own image, we are inherently relational and purposed to loving one another. However, love cannot be learned in isolation. Love involves

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[1378] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 239 (2006).
[1379] *Id.* at 239-40.

relationships. Life is meant to be shared. The spiritual discipline of connecting with others in Christian fellowship is crucial to spiritual formation and central to the Christian experience.

To reiterate earlier discussion, participation in relational small groups is foundational for spiritual growth. Christians are called to belong, not just to believe. Sharing life with other believers, in an environment of mutual acceptance, caring, sense of belonging, accountability, integrity, trust and love is central to the Christian experience. Following Christ requires that we walk alongside others to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow in the image of Christ. Most nurturing of a spiritual life and ministry occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught. Following Christ needs to be lived. Relational small groups serve as a prime, perhaps indispensable, vehicle for doing so.

Failure of persons to connect with a meaningful relationship building small group tends to result either in slow or even stagnation in their spiritual growth. It takes an authentic relationship building community to form a disciple. Let's make no mistake. Participation in relational small groups is crucially important if we are to spiritually grow toward a more Christ-like life. Failure of a church to foster a relational small group environment significantly lessons the effectiveness of its disciple-making efforts.

At FRCC, the absence of church-wide participation in meaningful small relational group relationships reveals a major gap in our disciple-making efforts. An earlier comment bears repeating here. Since we are called by God to grow toward a more Christ-like life through the learning and practice of spiritual disciplines and since relational small groups are not only the prime but also the virtually indispensable means of effectively doing so, as a disciple-making church, we need to concentrate priority efforts on offering spiritual formation experiences through relational small groups. A fundamental goal of our church should not simply be a church with just a few relational small groups. But rather, a fundamental strategy is for our church to *become a church of relational small groups* with all church members participating in a relational small group of some sort.

Whatever the particular area of concentration, relational small groups offer much needed opportunities to create environments and offer experiences enabling people to connect and share life with others. In turn, such Christian fellowship communities better enable their participants to experience spiritual growth, i.e., the continual pursuit of the four vital relationships of connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with others through serving their needs and connecting with those outside the faith. The ultimate purpose of relational small groups is to move people toward a deeper relationship with God through growing more Christ-like in thoughts, feeling and actions.

1. Crucial Role

a. Providential Relationships[1380]

[1380] Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* 131-37 (2012).

Often, in relating their faith stories, people tell about the individuals whom God has placed in their path, e.g., perhaps a family member, neighbor or even a person they barely knew. Commonly, there may be more than a one-time occurrence where other persons intersect with one's faith journey. These intersections have been referred to as providential relationships which occur when we hear from God through someone and when we see God in someone. In these situations, faith grows.

Can a church create a providential relationship? The answer is no. However, a church can create an environment conducive to the development of these types of relationships. Create a model which is relationship-centric. Explore how to get people connected and keep them connected. Be aggressive to transition the unchurched and the unbelievers, as well as believers into authentic community. This is achieved by moving people into closed small groups for a period of time. The model applies to kids and youths as well as adults. Focus on conversation and relationship building rather than class presentations. Relationships are built and providential situations are likely to occur.

b. Authentic Community

"Life is meant to be shared."[1381] The Bible terms this shared experience as *fellowship*. In the Christian sense "fellowship" means more than just socializing, fun and food. It is more than showing up for worship service. Real fellowship is *experiencing life together*. It involves "loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting and all of the 'one another' commands found in the New Testament."[1382]A transformational community emerges when participants "embrace a shared commitment as to the attitudes and practices that open us up to Christ."[1383] The absence of a community which recognizes and embraces seeing "other people as necessary instruments of God's grace… limits the work of transformation in our lives."[1384]

In real fellowship, people experience authenticity. It is not superficial, surface level chit chat. Instead, real fellowship embraces genuine heart to heart and sometimes gut-wrenching sharing. It arises when people are honest about who they are and what is occurring in their lives. It occurs when people share their hurts, reveal their feelings, confess their failures, express their doubts, admit their fears, acknowledge their weaknesses, and request prayers. We experience real fellowship when we become open about our lives. Real fellowship occurs as we pursue and build intimate relationships with fellow believers. This requires both courage and humility. It requires overcoming our fear of exposure, rejection and being hurt. However, it is the only way to grow spiritually and become emotionally healthy.[1385]

It is in relational small groups where participants have the opportunity to experience authentic community, i.e., real fellowship embracing accountability, belonging, caring and

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[1381] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 138 (2002.
[1382] *Id.* at 138.
[1383] IVP Book Club Digest, Feb. 16, 2015, p.2 describing Ruth Haley Barton's book, *Life Together in Christ.*
[1384] *Id.*
[1385] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 140 (2002).

spiritual growth through intimacy with God, community with believers, serving others and connecting with the unchurched. It creates an environment for providential relationships.

Questions for consideration in creating a relational small group environment for giving rise to providential relationships and authentic life sharing community include:

- does our ministry model connect people quickly and keep them connected?
- does our model offer clear steps into community?
- does our model avoid classing people at the expense of creating community?
- what can be done programmatically to create more relational connections in our ministry model?[1386]

It is the responsibility of a disciple-making church to create environments giving rise to the creation of providential relationships through the creation of authentic communities, i.e., well-structured and conducted relational small groups.

2. The Disciple-Making Environment: Conditions for Transformation in Relational Small Groups

Humans have demonstrated the ability to survive and even thrive in the most inhospitable environment – e.g., Dietrich Bonhoeffer's experience in Nazi prison camps. People can grow spiritually despite negative families and/or churches. However, our exploration here centers not on how Christians grow despite their environment, but rather on discerning and offering the best environment for such growth.[1387]

Experience demonstrates that simply meeting in a relational small group format does not automatically result in spiritual growth. Certain spiritual disciplines must occur in the small group context to facilitate transformation in us. The factors in relational small groups which converge to create such transformation can be summarized by saying

> [w]hen we (1) open our hearts in transparent trust in each other, (2) around the truth of God's Word (3) in the spirit of mutual accountability, we are in the Holy Spirit's hothouse of transformation.[1388]

Stanley and Willits define authentic community around the ABC's of group life – accountability, belonging and caring.[1389] John Ortberg focuses on confession, application, accountability, guidance and encouragement.[1390] Bill Hull sets forth the environmental conditions in terms of

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[1386] Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* 137 (2012).
[1387] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 154 (2006).
[1388] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* 154 (2003).
[1389] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 106 (2004).
[1390] John Ortberg, "No More Mr. Nice Group: Five Practices that Take Small Groups Beyond Polite Sharing to the Disciplines that Change Lives," (christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/areas/biblestudies/articles/070704.html).

trust, grace, humility, submission and affirmation.[1391] Rick Warren elements for cultivating community include honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality and frequency.[1392]

Clearly, these various expressions of the environmental conditions for effective disciple-making are either related to or overlap one another. The following discussion elaborates upon several practices each as a part of an integrated expression of the environmental conditions setting the stage for transformation toward a more Christ-like life in the members of our church. These relational small group practices express the marks of disciple-making community. Some of these are also applicable to short term small groups and relevant to other aspects of church ministry. However, here the focus is on relational small groups.

Often small groups are criticized on the basis that nothing spiritual happens in our meetings. This may result from the absence of one or two of the basic elements of spiritual experiences in the context of small groups. The two elements of spiritual experience are *content* and *process*. Content refers to the explicit topic or issue discussed. A group's content is spiritual when dealing with religious or spiritual topics. Process encompasses the manner in which group members interact with one another and with God. The process is spiritual when members act in ways that are genuine, generous and gracious. It is spiritual when participants experience their interchanges as an opportunity for faith formation, for deepening their spiritual lives. The leader of the group is responsible for not only content but also for process. Simply placing something spiritual on the agenda will not ensure faith formation. Attention also needs to focus to the spiritual character of the group process. [1393]

Content for relational small groups is discussed in PART FIVE, Section VII.B.4 above. The manner in which group members interact is considered in the subsections immediately below.

Several ingredients are necessary for a healthy environment to encourage people out of their shells into active and meaningful disciple-making relationships. When present, these conditions or characteristics of relational small groups create a disciple-making environment leading to spiritual formation. They need to be increasingly reflected by group members as the group evolves into deeper relationships and life sharing. To these characteristics we now turn.

a. Understanding of and Commitment to Agreed upon Purposes

"Community satisfies two basic human needs; the need for relationship and the need for participation in purpose greater than ourselves."[1394] Meaningful relationships start with agreed upon goals. If everyone in a group pursues different objectives, little will be gained. Thus, foundational for a meaningful relational small group is an agreed upon group covenant. The group covenant making encompasses mutual agreements not only setting forth the mission purposes of the group, but also establishes shared norms as to the manner in which

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[1391] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 155 (2006).
[1392] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 145-51 (2002).
[1393] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 87-89 (2001).
[1394] *Id.* at 73 (2001).

group members interact with one another. Furthermore, although objectives of different groups might vary somewhat, for a group to be a disciple-making group, two goals are foundational.

The first goal is to *grow toward maturity in Christ.* That is, the first basic goal of disciple-making relational small groups is for each person to grow in his or her Walk with Christ. We seek transformation into becoming increasingly like Christ in our thoughts, feelings and actions. This is fundamental to participation in meaningful relational small groups.

The second goal is *equip to teach others*. Growing in one's own discipleship involves helping others in finding Christ and then journeying with them toward Christ-likeness. This requires becoming equipped to do so. Being a follower of Christ includes the understanding that a disciple internalizes the value of multiplying and growing the number of Christ followers and that each disciple is to contribute to this reproduction process.[1395]

In short, the basic goals for relational small disciple-making group members are to grow toward becoming more like Christ and to encourage and support others in their journey toward doing the same.

Through a covenant committed to by each member of a relational small group, the context is created in which participants in the group experience the gift of community. Covenants not only establish a higher quality of relationships, they also unite us in a shared purpose to which God calls us. A relational small group covenant not only defines the larger purposes to which members commit (which need to be consistent with the mission purposes of the church), it also establishes the norms defining how members relate to one another and to God. Groups are most likely to experience God's gift of community when the members negotiate explicit covenants articulating their norms and vision which connect the group to one another and to God.[1396]

For discussion of recommended relational small group covenant for FRCC, see Section 3.*a*. below.

b. Relational Trust and Transparency

(1) Need for Trusting Relationships

We live in a culture in which people are often, if not constantly, on the move. People change jobs, move to different communities and turn over their relationships at an astonishing rate. As a result, our society primarily reflects acquaintances, colleagues and allies, rather than real and close friends. We may be able to work together to get things done. We may be gifted in small talk, shop talk and weather talk. However, we tend to trust no one with the last 10 percent of ourselves. In a crisis there are few, if any, with whom we trust with our lives.[1397]

[1395] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* 131 (2003).
[1396] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 74-75 (2001).
[1397] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 133 (2005).

In contexts of relating to others, the basic question a person asks is whether "I can trust me with you?" This question reflects a yearning for acceptance and for a safe place to be the real me. We want to be honest about our dreams, disappointments, hurts, failings and successes. In such an environment, we come out of our shell. However, too often in Christian environments, the answer to this question has been "no." So, people remain in their shells. However, this need not and should not be the case.

In real fellowship, people experience mutuality. Mutuality is giving, receiving and depending upon one another. Mutuality is at the core of fellowship. Mutuality is the building of reciprocal relationships, sharing responsibilities and aiding one another. We are all more consistent in our faith when others are there to walk with us and encourage us. The Bible calls for mutual accountability, encouragement, serving and honoring.[1398] However many, if not most people, lack such supporting and loving relationships.

Relational small groups can fill this void. They afford an opportunity to enter into an authentic, confidential and healing relationship with a committed group of fellow journeyers in Christ in which people encourage, support and help one another as each person seeks to live out God's will in his or her life. Relational small groups are intended to take participants to deep levels of the soul of each other. They offer a vehicle for continuity and development of relationships. Such groups attend to peoples' stories as well as the hard questions concerning lifestyles, priorities, goals and spiritual well-being.

As trust builds, members learn how to listen deeply to one another in the presence of Christ. They promise to encourage, help, support, challenge and pray for one another. Intentional spiritual nurture, care and listening are primary reasons for gathering. Therefore, a major portion of group time is devoted to authentic sharing life together.[1399]

Most importantly, the foundation of growing disciples is to foster an ever increasing openness and transparency. Why is transparency an essential for transformation? To the extent we are willing to reveal to others areas of our life that need God's transforming touch, we invite the Holy Spirit to make us new. Willingness to enter into an intimate relationship expresses our true yearnings to invite God to transform our lives.[1400] It moves us to a more intimate relationship with God.

One might argue that he or she already has a transparent relationship with God. God already knows all about us. There is nothing we can withhold from him. It isn't anyone else's business what I am struggling about so long as God is not being deceived. But herein lies the problem, i.e., deception. We have an infinite capacity for self-deception and self-justification. While we tend to be hard on others, we tend to be soft on ourselves.

> .... [T]hose who try to go it alone or who refuse to listen to others set themselves up for futile wandering at best and disaster at worst. Spiritual arrogance, rooted in self-centeredness and overly self-

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[1398] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 140-41 (2002).
[1399] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 133 (2005).
[1400] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* 154 (2003).

> confident reliance on one's own thinking and experience, can easily lead to making significant personal mistakes and to hurting others.[1401]

As long as struggles in our Christian growth are known only to God and not recognized by ourselves, we will not defeat the sins besetting us.[1402]

Self-disclosure (transparency) increases in direct proportion to the trust we sense with our partners in the discipling relationship. To the extent we find a safe place to be who we are, we are then free to discover our unique creation waiting to be unleashed. Thus, to create an environment of transparency in which we come to know ourselves, we need to be in a discipling relationship with others which is founded on trust.[1403] This is a message that needs to be clearly and forcefully communicated to those aspiring to grow as followers of Christ.

(2) Building Trust: Character Traits Engendering Effective Relationships

Trust is based on whether a person is honest and reliable. Although he or she may not always agree with you, you can trust him or her to listen without judging or condemning you. Being in relationship with a trustworthy person enables you to be under that person's influence. When you trust a person to the point that you permit him or her to speak into your life, when you permit yourself to be vulnerable with that person, transformation can begin to take place. Relationships of trust afford the foundation for transformational discipleship.[1404]

Cultivating a small group community in which members will trust and rely upon one another in intimate life sharing relationships requires that the members of the group reflect certain elements of character.

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Honesty*. It is essential in our lives that there is someone who loves us enough to tell us the truth, even when doing so is painful. We share our true feelings with each other. Otherwise, we are likely to continue in our destructive ways. Not uncommonly we know what needs to be said, but are afraid to say it. Real fellowship can be undermined, if not destroyed, if this fear factor prevails and a person's life can fall apart because of such failure. An honest answer is the mark of friendship. Care enough for someone to confront them when they are going astray.

  Don't reduce real fellowship to superficiality because of fear of conflict. Frankness is more valued than flattery. Until we care enough to confront and resolve underlying problems, we will never grow close. Honesty, openness, and being non-judgmental are characteristics which enable spiritual formation to happen. However, this is not a license to say anything we want, wherever we

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[1401] Timothy C. Geoffrion, "Giving Up on Finding Christian Community," Alban Weekly, November 10, 2008.
[1402] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 155 (2003).
[1403] *Id.*
[1404] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 156 (2006).

want and whenever we want to say it. Honesty is not rudeness. There is a right time and a right way to do things.[1405]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Humility.* – Arrogance. self-importance, smugness and stubborn pride destroy fellowship. Pride builds barriers between people. Humility builds bridges. Humility can be developed by admitting our weaknesses, by being patient with the weaknesses of others, by being open to correction, and by focusing the spotlight on others.[1406]

  Humility is essential for transformation. Without it, there is no submission. Without submission, trusting relationships don't occur and people don't let themselves be vulnerable. No vulnerability means no one can influence us. Without influence, we don't change. Humility is an environmental condition for transformation to occur.[1407]

  Through the group process, we are on the journey together. No one person can offer a complete model for another. A sign of maturity is the ability and willingness to learn from the least likely source.[1408]

  Note, however, that humility does not involve thinking less of oneself, but rather it involves thinking of oneself less. Humility is thinking more of others. Focus on serving rather than centering on oneself.[1409]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Courtesy and Respect,* – Courtesy may be defined as respecting differences, being considerate of the feelings of others and being patient with people who irritate us. Typically, there is at least one difficult person in every group. This affords us an opportunity for growth and tests our fellowship. Despite a member's faults, he or she is one of us.[1410]

  A helpful key to courtesy is understanding where people are coming from. This creates more understanding. Also, do not down play another person's doubts. Even though you don't fear something, this doesn't make another person's fear invalid. Real fellowship occurs when people feel safe to share their doubts and fears without being judged.[1411]

[1405] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 146-47 (2002),
[1406] *Id.* at 148.
[1407] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 158 (2006).
[1408] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 131 (2003).
[1409] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 148 (2002).
[1410] *Id. at* 149.

> Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with – even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently. Rick Warren, "5 Keys for Making the Most of Small Groups," OutreachMagazine.com., February 26, 2019.

[1411] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 149 (2002).

- Cultivating Fellowship Takes *Grace.* – Grace means treating others better than they deserve. Fellowship is a relationship of grace where mercy wins over justice. Mistakes are rubbed out rather than rubbed in. We all stumble, fall and need help to recover. Offer mercy to each other and be willing to receive it from them. Forgiveness is an essential element of fellowship. God forgives us, we should forgive others. In real fellowship, energy is applied to resolution rather than retaliation.[1412]

  Grace goes further. It not only means forgiving one another, it requires looking past faults and offering praise and support. An environment of grace engenders acceptance and a willingness to look for and see the good in other people. Faults and problems can be handled better in an environment of grace. When people feel accepted, supported and affirmed, they are more open to change than in situations in which they are defensive. People who love and support can influence others as well as making themselves available for transformation,[1413]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Sympathy.* –In real fellowship people experience sympathy. Sympathy is not simply offering advice and cosmetic aid. But rather, sympathy involves entering into and sharing the pain of others. It communicates an understanding of what the other person is going through and expresses that what they feel is not wrong or off the wall. Sympathy serves two fundamental human needs: the need to be understood and to have one's feelings validated. When a person understands and affirms the feelings of another, fellowship is built.[1414]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Confidentiality.* – Only in a safe environment of warm acceptance and trusted confidentiality will people become open and share their hurts, needs and mistakes. What is shared in the group must stay in the group. The group needs to deal with it, not gossip about it.[1415] It is important for members of the group to discuss and commit their mutual understanding of confidentiality in the group's context. A basic rule of thumb is one must not repeat someone else's story without that person's permission.[1416]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Reliability.* – The discipling relationship is established for the purpose of growing together toward Christ. There is a covenantal character to the relationship. Participants commit to agreed upon elements that shape the relationship. Being reliable includes getting together on a regular time schedule – preferably weekly.[1417] Building a genuine fellowship

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[1412] *Id.* at 142-43.
[1413] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 157 (2006).
[1414] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 141 (2002).
[1415] *Id.* at 150.
[1416] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 102 (2001).
[1417] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 130 (2003).

requires frequent and regular gatherings of the group. Relationships take time and commitment. Fellowship cannot be built on convenience (getting together when we feel like it). Make gathering frequently as a matter of priority. Fellowship is built on the conviction that I need this for my spiritual health. Fellowship requires an investment of time and being a reliable participant.[1418]

- Cultivating fellowship takes *Love, Caring and a Sense of Belonging* – It is essential that all that is done in discipling relationships is done in love for those with whom we journey. Trust in disciple-making is founded on love. They are inseparable. Love creates the environment in which Christ can be formed within us.[1419] In a loving authentic community, people naturally care for those with whom they are connected.

Walking with each other in difficult times is an essential characteristic of a relational small group. Entering a covenantal relationship lasting a year or more affords opportunity to address peoples' highs and lows. Paul captures an essence of relationships. "If one part [of the body of Christ] suffers, every part suffers with it: if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (1Corinthians12:26) This is particularly true with respect to small groups of believers. Trust is gained through the faithfulness of partners who sustain each other when times are tough. Being carried by the faith of others is typically the manner in which we learn to trust God. Let my faith carry you for a while and someday yours will carry me. This is a characteristic of a discipling group as members build transparent trust in one another.[1420]

In short, to build trust which encourages people to open themselves to others and to God in deep and mutual transparent relationships (which is essential for substantial transformation), members of the groups need to reflect several character traits including (1) honesty, (2) humility, (3) courtesy, (4) grace, (5) sympathy, (6) confidentiality, (7) reliability and (8) love, caring and sense of belonging. Practicing these qualities encourage and better enable members of the group to move deeper and deeper into the waters of transformation toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions..

c. Listening

The spiritual practice of listening arises from two perspectives. Members of a relational small group are responsible to help other members be aware of God's hand on their lives. From this perspective, the listeners are those seeking to enhance the development of mutual trusting and supportive relationships and enhanced discernment for others. The second perspective is a listener who is seeking from others comfort, support and aid in discerning choices with which he or she is confronted.

[1418] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 150-51 (2002).
[1419] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 131 (2003).
[1420] *Id.* at 157-58.

(1) Be a Listener

We all have a myriad of conflicting choices confronting us which need to be sorted out by hearing God's voice. However, God's voice can be drowned out by the din of the world and/or the confusion resulting the multitude of options with which we are confronted. There is no end of issues requiring calling for guidance from our God: e.g., direction in employment, ethical dilemmas, marital problems, errant teens, unsaved family members, friends or colleagues, desires, discerning God's call, etc. We need places where we can sort out these conundrums with people who care for us, listen to us and stay with us long enough to help us through difficult choices.[1421] A small relational small group, which has developed mutual trustworthy relationships, offers an excellent environment for listening to one another.

Well-tried spiritual discipline practices form and transform people. Listening is a basic practice for Christian communities of faith. How we listen reveals how we value ourselves and others. Without listening, Christian community is not possible. Listening and being listened to are the basic and primary means of feeling being understood and accepted. Being listened to is the way we discover ourselves as acceptable and valuable. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry…." (James 1:19)

Listening involves suspending our own agenda and forgetting about what we want to say. Listening is attentive receptivity to another person. When we listen, we suspend judgment (don't disagree or formulate and give advice), we don't focus on what interests us or what we desire. We control our emotional reactions. When we listen, we create an environment in which the other person feels welcomed and cared for.

(2) Guidelines for Listening

There are both barriers to and guidelines for the practice of listening. For one discussion of these see Hawkins book on cultivating Christian community.[1422]

By listening, we create a welcoming space where others feel acknowledged and accepted. The practice of listening involves centering on others rather than ourselves. It is an important element of spiritual growth.

d. Accepting

Authentic community embraces and reflects the sense of being accepted, a sense of belonging. Accept one another. "You are my brother." As a person senses acceptance, he or she become more comfortable from which an increasing tendency to be open emerges. The sense of belonging is more important than before since we live in a culture which increasingly prioritizes belonging over believing. People need to know that they will be missed when they don't show up. The sense of belonging is built by sharing life experiences.[1423]

[1421] *Id.* at 160.
[1422] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 38-42 (2001).
[1423] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 106 (2004).

e. Affirming

Those sharing in the disciple making journey need to affirm each other as to their uniqueness and value to the God. "Way to go. I am proud of you." We starve for honest and meaningful affirmation in a world that is better at criticizing or rebuking us. In the small group relationship, there is the opportunity to observe the formation of the unique creations God has made each of us to be and to affirm that which God is birthing.[1424]

When we express appreciation for other persons' strengths and contributions, they are more likely to come out of their shells. Affirm one another. Also create the expectation of the other doing better or well.[1425]

If no one else affirms them, they are likely to try to affirm themselves to feed their own ego and try to get notice and recognition. But, when a person is affirmed and respected, he or she will be more relaxed and will contribute without coming from a sense of an unmet need to build up his or her own ego or self-esteem.[1426] When we are affirmed by others, we gain knowledge about our gifts and character. "Being acknowledged is the foundation for all future growth."[1427]

We need to know that others are committed to and love us. We need the embrace, encouragement and support of others. This does not happen when we are alone, nor does it occur in large gatherings. It does happen in smaller communities. Small groups supply love, encouragement and embrace which people need as they continue their journey toward transformation.[1428] The spiritual discipline of listening and being listened to offers basic ways of accepting and affirming one another which, in turn, leads along the path spiritual growth.

f. Confession

It is at the deep end of the pool of transparent trust where mutual confession of sin and addiction occurs. To reach the deep end, we must first move through the shallower waters of encouragement, support through life's difficulties, and prayerful listening. Only after these stages are we likely to confess our sins. Few believers experience safe context in which they reveal to another that which lurks in the recesses of their hearts. However, until we can articulate to another those things which have a hold on us, we will continue to live suppressed by them. As James admonished, "[t]herefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16)[1429] Un-confessed sin is a burden. The spiritual

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[1424] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 156-57 (2003).

[1425] Stu Weber, "Keynote Opening Comments," No Regrets 2011 Conference of Christian Men (Elmbrook Church, Wisconsin).

[1426] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 159-60 (2006).

[1427] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 84 (2001).

[1428] John Ortberg, "No More Mr. Nice Group: Five Practices that Take Small Groups Beyond Polite Sharing to the Disciplines that Change Lives," (christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/areas/biblestudies/articles/070704.html).

[1429] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 160 (2003).

discipline of confession and absolution removes the burden. Furthermore, confession contributes to avoiding future sin.[1430]

Each of us wears a mask and hides our true-self, at least to some extent. Confession removes our masks. Thus, confession is one of the most formative practices in a small group. Disclosure of brokenness, temptations and sin contribute to healing, forgiveness and spiritual growth. Without valuing truth and confession, transformation is less likely. By removing our masks through the spiritual discipline of confession, we acknowledge the reality of who we truly are thereby opening ourselves to God's transforming power.[1431]

Bringing the shame of our sense of guilt into the open with believers we trust is liberating. Once something is admitted in front of others, it begins to lose its power to control us. Furthermore, when one boldly confesses, this offers invitation for the others in the group to go deeper and withhold nothing that gets in their way of obedience to Christ. And, when we confess, we receive through our partners in the discipling relationship words of comfort coming from God himself.[1432]

The lack of mutual confession is a major failure which hinders the process of life transformation.[1433]

When a member(s) of the group openly talks about his or her faults, stresses, pressures and troubles in life, the small group grows. Most people lack the opportunity to do sor elsewhere. People spend a lot of time pretending their lives are fine. However, for them to grow, to be transformed, persons need to be open and honest about their pain.[1434]

In short, a condition for accelerated growth in Christian life is learning to swim in the deep waters of trust stemming from relational transparency. Trust stems from relational transparency which is a fundamental condition of life transformation. Such transparency is engendered by participating in a relational small group environment reflecting a combination of (a) character traits which engender effective relationships, (b) affirming others, (c) walking with others in difficult times, (d) reflective listening, and (e) confession. Learning this swim can be scary. Once one learns to trust the water to hold him or her up, the experience becomes relaxing and refreshing. [1435]

g. Accountability

A crucial condition for an environment conducive to accelerated spiritual growth is mutual accountability. Accountability involves inviting others into our lives to

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[1430] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* 188 (1988).

[1431] John Ortberg, "No More Mr. Nice Group: Five Practices that Take Small Groups Beyond Polite Sharing to the Disciplines that Change Lives," (christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/areas/biblestudies/articles/070704.html).

[1432] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 161 (2003).

[1433] *Id.* at 162.

[1434] Rick Warren, "5 Keys for Making the Most of Small Groups," OutreachMagazine.com., February 26, 2019.

[1435] *Id.* at 162.

challenge our priorities and relationships with God, with other believers, with those we serve and with those outside the faith.[1436]

At the outset, engaging in meaningful accountability is difficult. To do so requires an environment of mutual trust among members of the group. Creation of a mutually trusting environment requires group participants to develop, embrace and exhibit the characteristic traits which engender a trust relationship considered above. Trust relationships evolve and build over time. Thus, it should not be expected that persons will commit to mutual accountability at the beginning of the group. However, group members should commit to serious effort to work with the others in the group to build such trusting relationships.

A potential danger inherent in the small group setting is "vague "sharing" stemming from weak or totally absent accountability. We are unlikely to deepen our relationship with God in a casual way.

> People do not drift into full devotion to Christ. People do not drift into becoming loving, joy-filled, patient, winsome, changers. It requires intention and effort.[1437]

We need to commit in a serious and intentional manner.

> What are my commitments about prayer, about scripture, about my use of money, about evangelism, about servanthood, about truth? Keeping these commitments requires a community of accountability to serve as a scale revealing how we're achieving our goals or missing them.[1438]

Don't go it alone. Scripture calls for us to "confess…our sins to each other and pray for each other so that… [we] may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) We need encouragement and accountability. Training in the spiritual disciplines involves constant repetition which requires discipline. Since self-discipline is rare, we need others to hold us accountable. This means submitting our self to at least one other person. Few, if any, make spiritual breakthroughs without the support of and accountability to at least one other person.[1439]

God calls upon Christians to help other Christians in their pursuit of spiritual growth. Providing a relational small group environment offering the opportunity for spiritual accountability is a key aspect of growing disciples. The Bible tells us the importance of encouraging one another through mutual accountability.

[1436] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 106 (2004).
[1437] John Ortberg, "No More Mr. Nice Group: Five Practices that Take Small Groups Beyond Polite Sharing to the Disciplines that Change Lives," (christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/areas/biblestudies/articles/070704.html).
[1438] *Id.*
[1439] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 199 (2006).

> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another….
> (Hebrews 10:24-25)

A small group needs to encourage and support serious discussion about sensitive issues challenging an individual. The group needs to develop an openness and trust that gives people the freedom to share without fear of embarrassment or betrayal.[1440] Every person in the church needs someone to spur them to reach their goals whether the goals are spiritual, health, career or family. Most people lack trusting, encouraging, accountable relationships. But, they need them. A need that relational small groups can meet.[1441]

When a person makes a commitment in a small group setting, the mechanism is in place for accountability. The relationship between those on a discipleship journey together is covenantal. The covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more persons which clearly expresses the expectations and commitments in the relationship. Implicitly, the partners give to each other the authority to hold them to that to which they have mutually agreed. This gives rise to accountability which has been said to be "a willing decision to abide by certain standards and a voluntary submission of oneself to review by others in which one's performance is evaluated in light of these standards."[1442] One approach suggested to implement a practice of accountability in a small group is for a member of the group to request that he or she be held accountable. In such case, other group members are permitted, at the next meeting, to ask whether progress has been made toward the person's stated goal.

A true friend has both the right and responsibility to tell his friend that he is wrong or treading a dangerous path. Accept a friend's well-founded advice knowing that he wants what is best for me and wants me to grow.[1443]

Participating members' commit to an agreed upon covenant. The covenant serves several purposes. [1444] It

- provides a standard to which members of the small group can hold each other accountable,
- increases intensity by setting high the bar of discipleship (a common failing of churches is that they fail to ask people to do what Jesus calls for them to do), and
- invites our partners to hold us accountable (when one specifically commits, he or she is more likely to act.).

[1440] Ajith Fernando, "What Biblical Discipling Is Not," OutteachMagazine.com, February 28, 2019.
[1441] Rick Warren, "5 Keys for Making the Most of Small Groups," OutrachMagazine.com, February 26, 2019.
[1442] Greg Ogden, Transforming *Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 168 (2003).
[1443] Stu Weber, "Keynote Opening Comments," No Regrets 2011 Conference of Christian Men (Elmbrook Church, Wisconsin).
[1444] *Id.* at 169.

h. Discerning God's Will

(1) Group Discernment

The goal of Christian experience is to discern God's will to enable us to make wise choices in harmony with his will. Discernment concerns the discovery of God's specific will for the everchanging circumstances of our lives. Discernment involves monitoring moods, thoughts, emotions and affections for what they reveal about movements either toward or away from God and his intentions. In doing so, one needs to be cognizant of two limitations on discerning God's will. First, we can only discern what God intends us to do (not what someone else is to do). Second, we can't discern what may happen in the future. God intends us to choose in a specific situation at this particular moment in time.[1445]

Discernment can occur in at least three settings. The first setting is personal in which the individual discerns God's will for him or her. (ii) The second setting involves a group which helps clarify or confirm one's personal discernment. (iii) The third setting is a formal group seeking God's will together for the group's common life.

Although God does guide people individually, he also speaks through others. As quoted earlier,

> [God] guides groups of people and can instruct the individual though the group experience.... [Jesus assured] that when a people genuinely gathered in his name his will could be discerned. The... [Holy] Spirit would utilize the checks and balances of the different believers to ensure that when their hearts were in unity they were in rhythm with the heartbeat of the Father. [1446]

By inviting a group of Christians to assist us in clarifying clarify God's intentions, rather than requesting advice, we are asking the group to create a climate in which we can better discern God's word to us. Posing questions offer different angles of vision, and raise the person's thinking capacity. Rather than a formless interchange, use a structured process for group discernment to help an individual.[1447] For a more detailed discussion of a structured process for group discernment, see Hawkins book *Cultivating Christian Community.*[1448] Discernment should not be confused with decision making by consensus. The primary goal of communal discernment is to seek God and, in finding God, discover his will. No one has all the truth; everyone is part of the truth. We can best discover the whole of God's truth by entering into prayerful, open listening and dialogue with God and one another.[1449]

[1445] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 56-57 (2001).
[1446] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* 176-77 (rev. ed. 1988).
[1447] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 63 (2001).
[1448] *Id.*at 63-71 (2001).
[1449] *Id.*at 65-66.

Since discerning God's call is fundamental to every person's growing as a follower of Christ and given the unique ability of a relational small group to vitally contribute to this effort, it is essential that relational small groups assume the responsibility of doing so. Every relational small group should reflect and vigorously pursue creating transformational disciple-making experiences better enabling its members to discern God's specific call for them both individually and as a group.

(2) Discerning the Truth of and Applying God's Word

Transparency in our relationships with others and the building of trust in those relationships are foundational to the transforming process of disciple-making. Also foundational are discerning and applying the truth of God's Word in our daily lives.

Paul well summarizes the nature and value of the Word of God.

> All scripture is God breathed [inspired] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

It is in scripture that we hear fully God's Word. It is only here that we find the complete story of God's self-revelations. It provides the truth about God, ourselves, and matters of faith and practice. Paul sets forth the four things for which scripture is useful: (a) teaching, (b) reproof or rebuking, (c) correction, and (d) training in righteousness.[1450]

- *Teaching* – The purpose of scripture has been well summarized.

> In the word of God, the Spirit of God has revealed the true nature of the world we live in, the true nature of man and of God, the ultimate consummation of history, the pattern of relationships and responses to God and to life which corresponds with *the way things really are*.[1451]

It is essential that one seeking to grow more Christ-like be offered and takes the opportunity to cover the essential teachings of Christian life in a systematic method so as to cultivate this reality. Today, we assume that people have a reservoir of biblical knowledge. More likely, most potential disciples possess only bits and pieces of Christian teaching interspersed with world views from contemporary secular culture. Thus, spending time in the Word should be a central feature of a relational small group's activity.

- *Reproof* – Scripture offers us a perspective through which we can view reality. In turn, this enables us to discern changes we need to make in our lives. The term reproof means showing a person his or her sin and summoning such person to repentance.

[1450] *Id.* at 162-67

[1451] Larry Richards as quoted in *id.* at 163.

Scripture serves as a mirror evidencing our true-selves vis-a-vis that which we are called to be. When we look in the mirror of the Word, we see two images. The first is the way we currently are. The second reflects the manner which God intends us to be. Seeing the contrast leads to conviction which, in turn, leads to repentance and the desire for transformation.

- *Correction* – Reproof is not intended to leave us wallowing in guilt and self-condemnation. Instead, it leads to repentance which is followed by the cleansing mercy of God. This is followed by correction which means to be restored or reestablished. Whereas reproof is the rebuke of the Spirit which exposes, correction is to be put back on to the right path.

- *Training in Righteousness: Spiritual Disciplines* – The ultimate objective of scripture is to guide and to provide the inner strength leading to a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feeling and actions, i.e., growing in the image of Christ. Scripture provides the training manual for righteous living. Becoming like Christ involves learning and practicing the spiritual disciplines that place oneself in the presence of God's transforming influence.

  As noted earlier, there is a difference between trying to live a Christian life and training to do so. Trying is attempting to do something without preparation. Too many supposed followers of Christ try without preparation. However, just like trying to run a marathon, not much success is achieved in the absence of training over a period of time. The need for preparation is as essential to vibrant spiritual life as it is the case in any physical or intellectual activity. Learning to think and feel like Christ is at least as demanding as preparing for a marathon.

  Training requires discipline. Any discipleship process necessitates a disciplined practice of study, mediation and memorization of scripture. The Word as the seed of life must be deeply planted if it is to bear fruit. The Word not only informs, it performs. Jesus equates the Word with the seed of new life. We need to plant the seed deep so that our life will bear fruit.[1452] It is important for a small group to follow a logical path to incrementally build the big picture of the Christian life through study and application of the Word.

  The format of a relational small group is well situated for study and application of the Word. Programs and leaders offer content and leadership in teaching the content. Self-disclosure arising from trusting relationships and group comment comparing what scripture calls us to do and what we actually do satisfies the element of reproof. The mutual accountability of the group guides toward correction and discipline for practicing the spiritual disciplines(s) placing oneself in the presence of God's transforming influence.

[1452] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 166-67 (2003).

i. Summary of the Environment for Transformation in the Context of Relational Small Groups

Several qualities characterize discipling relationships in the context of disciple-making relational small groups which foster personal transformation toward a more Christ-like life.

- Participants understand and concur with the disciple-making purposes of the group.
- The group understands the need for and works toward creating an environment of relational transparency and mutual trust through developing and applying the character traits engendering effective mutual relationships. These characteristics include honesty, trust, humility, courtesy, grace, affirmation, sympathy, confidentiality, reliability, love, caring and providing a sense of belonging.
- Members of the group practice the spiritual discipline of listening to others with respect to both hearing concerns expressed by others and hearing comments by others in response to their own concerns.
- Members of the group reflect the sense of being accepted, a sense of belonging.
- Group members respect and affirm others as to their uniqueness and value to the God.
- The group's trusting mutual relationships grow toward individual members valuing and practicing confession of brokenness, temptations and sin thereby opening themselves to God's transforming power.
- Group members commit to and strive toward creating an environment of mutual accountability in which individual members voluntarily abide by certain standards and a voluntary submission of oneself to review by others in which one's performance is evaluated in light of these standards. Group members challenge one another as to their efforts in the practice of spiritual disciplines appropriate for that person.
- The group vigorously pursues creating transformational disciple-making climate which better enables its members to discern God's specific call for them both individually and as a group.

3. Forming Relational Small Groups

a. Relational Small Group Covenant

To reiterate earlier comments, community serves two basic human needs; the need for relationships with others and the need for involvement in purposes greater than

oneself. This is best achieved through covenant making. Covenants not only establish a higher quality of relationships; they also unite us in a shared purpose to which God calls us. Through the making and committing to a covenant, small groups articulate their common purposes, vision and norms which connect the group to one another and to God.[1453]

(1) Establish Common Understanding as to Purposes

At the outset of the formation of a relational small group, it is essential to develop a common understanding and concurrence of group members as to the purpose(s) of the group. It is difficult to reach goals, if the goals are not known. In the absence of a common purpose, people will come into the group with different expectations. One might expect intensive Bible study while another looks forward to fun and games. Conflicts will arise as people go off in different directions. Little positive is likely to result. Thus, there needs to be a unifying mechanism.

To enhance common understanding, to bind the group together and to engender commitment and mutual accountability, each relational small group should have a *covenant* expressing the group's purposes, expectations and procedures. Agreeing to such covenant should be is a condition for participating in the group.[1454] The experiences of successful relational small group programs in other churches demonstrate that group members committing to a written covenant underlies a successful relational small group. However, it needs to be understood that even though a person commits to the covenant, if the person later concludes that he or she either cannot or does not want to live up to the covenant, thereby leaving the group, the group should be non-judgmental and wish the departing person well in his or her Walk with Christ.

Here at FRCC two foundational purposes for relational small groups have been established by the Discipleship Team. The first foundational goal is *spiritual growth through getting connected.* This goal is directed at providing a group relationship building environment in which we journey together experiencing spiritual growth toward becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ. That is, we seek life transformation toward becoming increasingly like Christ in our thoughts, feelings and actions by (a) connecting with God, (b) connecting with other believers through sharing lives with one another, (c) connecting with believers and non-believers through serving them, and (d) connecting with those outside the faith through sharing Christ and bringing persons into our Christian community.[1455] This goal reflects FRCC's current Disciple Mission Statement and more explicitly and clearly by the above recommended new Mission Statement for our church.

The second foundational goal of relational small groups is *reproducing disciples*. Christ trained his disciples to go out to form new disciples. Similarly, as we grow spiritually, we are to go out and help others in their spiritual growth. Thus, as we form and structure a relational small

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[1453] Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* 73-74 (2001).

[1454] For an examples of a small group covenant, *see* Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 182 (2004); Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 89 (2002); Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 170 (2003).

[1455] Jon S. Hanson, "Getting Connected: Importance and Nature of Relational Small Groups," presentation on behalf of the Fox River Congregational Church Discipleship Team at FRCC Group Link Conference, February 24, 2013.

group, there should be the expectation that the group will not continue forever. But rather, after a period of time, perhaps time 12 to 24 months, the group will evolve and birth new disciple-making relational small groups. This will not only multiply the opportunities for others to spiritually grow through a relational small group experience, but also will help prevent group stagnation.[1456]

Although there can be a wide variety of relational small groups, each reflecting the common interests of that group, the foundational purposes of relational small groups are (i) *mutual spiritual nurture leading to growth and transformation toward a more Christ-like life* and (ii) *contributing to others in doing the same*. Specific group interests and purposes must be consistent with these primary mission purposes which should be included in the group covenant. Virtually any such group is appropriate so long as it includes seeking to achieve these primary purposes.

Furthermore, the group covenant of all relational small groups should include one or more foundational purposes and/or/topics focusing on spiritual growth so as to support achieving the primary purpose. The spiritual formation purposes/topics from which such selection should be made include

- gaining an overview of spiritual disciplines in general,
- learning and practicing spiritual disciplines of worship, prayer and/or Bible study in particular
- serving others and
- reaching out to the unchurched.[1457]

Of course, it is recognized that few, if any, groups can effectively focus on all of these foundational topics, at least not at the same time. However, a group should incorporate at least one in its activities. Furthermore, over time a group may move from one topical area to another and/or return to a previous area.

In determining a group's purposes, a caution should be noted. Experience has been that groups implode if their mission is too small.[1458] Think big. We have a big God. Let's not underestimate him and what he can do for us and with us if we let him.

(2) Establish Common Understandings as to Expectations re Core Values Contributing to Spiritual Growth

Not only should the covenant set forth the purposes of the relational small group, the covenant should also express expectations as to spiritually oriented core values that contribute to spiritual growth. These include (a) striving for intimacy, (b) insisting on serving and evangelism and (c) committing to reproduce.[1459]

[1456] *Id.*
[1457] Fox River Congregational Church, Minutes of the Disciple-Making Task Force, November 19, 2008,
[1458] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 231 (2006).
[1459] *Id.* at 235-36.

(a) Striving for Intimacy

Within a few weeks of commencing, the group should substantially move from being structure based to being founded on love and support. Connect with one another face to face and experience "the love of God through the love of God's people."[1460] Establish relationships and bond with one another. Intimacy creates a safe environment which permits a lowering of defenses and permits the real me to emerge. Only then can we open ourselves not only to each other, but also to God. This becomes a basis for life transformation.

As extensively considered in Section VI.B.2. above, there are several characteristics in a relational small group which are essential for an environment of creating spiritually forming communities which lead to life transformation. Not only must group members understand and commit to the agreed upon purposes, they must understand how to strive to build relational transparency and trust. Character traits which engender effective trusting relationships include honesty, humility, courtesy, grace, sympathy, confidentiality, reliability, love, caring and giving a sense that one belongs. As trust and intimacy deepen, the members as a group come more and more to being able to discern God's truth and apply his Word to their lives.

Encouraging people to open themselves up to one another, in turn, opens us up to God thereby inviting God to transform us toward a more Christ-like life. Connecting in genuine Christian fellowship in a small group fosters spiritual growth which is central to the Christian experience.[1461]

Furthermore, out of trust and intimacy with others comes an openness and willingness to be accountable to others which is critical for a person's spiritual formation. Becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ requires commitment, training and action which require discipline. Since on-going self-discipline is rare, we need others to hold us accountable. Voluntary accountability involves inviting others into our lives to challenge our priorities, our failures to practice spiritual disciplines, and our relationships. Sustained spiritual growth occurs when we are personally challenged and encouraged by others. Few people make spiritual breakthroughs without the support of and voluntary accountability to others, hence a fundamental role of relational small groups.[1462]

(b) Growing in Serving Others and Sharing Christ (Evangelism)

Each small group needs a mission outside itself. Christ was a man for others, so should his disciples. Failure to serve others and reach out to and share the gospel with others sets the stage for inward self-centered focus. Without serving and evangelism, Bible study becomes academic, prayer becomes stale and fellowship becomes shallow. Serving

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[1460] Elmbrook Church, "Group Life Ministry" (brochure).
[1461] Jon S. Hanson, "Getting Connected: Importance and Nature of Relational Small Groups," presentation on behalf of the Fox River Congregational Church Discipleship Team at the Group Link Conference, February 24, 2013.
[1462] *Id.*

and evangelism are catalysts not only for spiritual development, they are also responses to God's call for mission.[1463] Progress in both areas is essential in disciple-making.

Members of a relational small group can motivate, equip and support fellow members in progressing to and within the growing to serve and growing in sharing Christ stages of disciple-making. Through small group Bible study and discussion, members can become well-grounded in God's call to serve and reach out to others. Follow this up with the learning the "how to" as well as the "what." Then, the group, which reflects the characteristics an authentic relational small group considered above, is well positioned to motivate, support and hold each other accountable for engagement in serving and/or evangelism. This might take the form of individual efforts, involvement in one of the church's serving or evangelism ministries, or active involvement in a joint group serving and/or evangelism project. The latter is more likely to bring the group even closer together. Whichever route is followed, members of the group have not only advanced the mission of the church, they have also placed themselves in situations where God is more likely to cause life transformations thereby advancing one on his or her path toward a more Christ-like life. Thus, serving and evangelism should be included in the relational small group's covenant.

(c) Committing to Reproduce: A Disciple Finds and Teaches Other Disciples

Disciple-making commonly fails because we don't expect it to reproduce disciples. Today's churches typically have approached disciple-making as optional. Instead, we just meet with ourselves, interact about ourselves and address issues about ourselves. We function in a closed system. In contrast, once we are taught, equipped and growing in being disciples, we should also find and help inteaching others to become and grow as disciples. Christ trained his disciples and they went out. When we are trained, we should go out and make disciples rather than remaining forever in our own small group. We are helping others in becoming disciples within our own relational small group. But we are called to do more.[1464] "Groups must expand and multiply so that eventually every believer can be connected to others."[1465] Multiplying groups opens the door for more people to participate in relational small group life which, in turn, contributes to their growth in spiritual formation.[1466]

Relational small groups should not exist solely for themselves. They also should desire that other unconnected people experience group life. Thus, relational small groups must have a viable strategy for growth and reproduction so that everyone who gathers as a part of the local church is included in some kind of relational connection.

William Barclay said "Every Christian must see themselves as the link to the next generation."[1467] Create small, reproducible, long term groups as a means to transmit the gospel from one generation to the next. Make it a priority to reproduce Fully Devoted Followers of

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[1463] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 235-36 (2006).
[1464] *Id.* at 71-72.
[1465] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 23 (2002).
[1466] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 158 (2004).
[1467] As quoted by Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 197 (2003).

Christ by walking with them toward maturity in Christ. There is no greater eternal investment or legacy to leave behind.[1468]

Christ trained his disciples to go out to form new disciples. Similarly, as we grow spiritually, we are to go out and help others in their spiritual growth. Thus, as we form and structure a relational small group, there is the expectation that the group will not continue forever. But rather, after a period of time (perhaps 12 to 24 months), the group will split up and birth new disciple-making relational small group. This will not only multiply the opportunities for others to spiritually grow through a relational small group experience, but also will help prevent group stagnation.[1469] Thus, as we form and structure relational small groups, there should be an expectation that the group will reproduce into new disciple-making relational small groups. This is part of the vision. As a follower of Christ, one not only seeks one's own spiritual growth but also to help others to grow spiritually. Healthy small groups embrace the call for developing reproducing disciples. To engender this result, the group should establish not only a start date but also a potential end or expansion end date after which members form new groups. The time span determined should reflect the group's purposes.[1470] In short, one foundational goal of a relational small group needs to be reproducing disciples. This needs to be included in the group covenant.

(3) Establish Procedural Expectations Supporting the Functioning of the Relational Small Group

Members of relational small groups should covenant with one another not only with respect to their common understanding of the purposes and expectations for the group, they also need to address the manner of conduct according to which the group is to function. That is, the covenant should include the common understanding of the ground rules to which all are to abide. These include the expectations of and commitment to regular attendance, being on time, the place and frequency of meetings, and the manner in which members will interact with one another (including mutual trust, honesty, confidentiality, openness, accountability, respectful discussion, etc.). Committing to procedural ground rules shows respect for other members of the group and contributes to developing good habits.

Relational small groups are established for the purpose of growing together toward Christ-likeness. Practicing the spiritual discipline of fellowship requires participation in frequent and regular gatherings of the group. Building and maintaining relationships take time and commitment. This involves gathering together on a regular and frequent basis. It cannot be overemphasized that the mere fact that people come together in a small group format does not automatically build meaningful spiritual growth relationships. Not only must group members learn and practice the spiritual discipline of regular and frequent participation in relational small groups, such groups need to be structured to maximize the likelihood of spiritual growth. Fellowship cannot be built on convenience (i.e., getting together only when we feel like it or when we have nothing better to do). Commitment to regular participation in group gatherings is

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[1468] *Id.* at 197.

[1469] Jon S. Hanson, "Getting Connected: Importance and Nature of Relational Small Groups," presentation on behalf of the Fox River Congregational Church Discipleship Team at the Group Link Conference, February 24, 2013.

[1470] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 236 (2006).

a priority. Fellowship is built on the conviction that not only do I need this for my own spiritual growth, but also the spiritual growth of others in the group depends in some part upon me.[1471]

Clearly, it is essential to stress the principle of confidentiality at the outset and any other time deemed appropriate. Discussion of what members perceive as confidential will reinforce the importance and parameters of what is intended. A basic rule of thumb is that one does not repeat another person's story without that person's permission.

Another principle enhancing the sense safety in the group is the general acceptance that a person need not speak if he or she does not want to.[1472]

And, more generally, the covenant should express the commitment to remain faithfully engaged with others on their journey. The deliberate and intentional nature of relational small groups requires shared commitment.[1473]

In establishing the ground rules, the group members should be asked what else they consider important in a group experience so as to create a safe environment for them. That is, let the group participate in generating a list of expectations.

(4) Recommended Model Covenant for Relational Small Groups

The Discipleship Team has previously put into place a Covenant for Relational Small groups here at Fox River. However, to date, the few relational small groups which have been formed have tended not to incorporate a covenantal base for their small group efforts. In order to render our relational small groups efforts more effective in growing disciples, it is recommended here that the church place more emphasis and efforts in establishing a covenantal base for such groups using the following recommended covenant. The recommended covenant is essentially that adopted 2009 by the Discipleship Team.

RELATIONAL SMALL GROUP COVENANT

Foundational Purposes

(1) *Getting Connected*

> Provide a group relationship building environment in which we journey together experiencing authentic community and spiritual growth toward a more Christ-like life in our thoughts, feelings and actions through connecting with (a) God, (b) other believers through sharing lives with one another, (c) believers and

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[1471] Jon S. Hanson, "Getting Connected: Importance and Nature of Relational Small Groups," presentation on behalf of the Fox River Congregational Church Discipleship Team at the Group Link Conference, February 24, 2013.

[1472] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 102 (2001).

[1473] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 133 (2005).

non-believers through serving them, and (d) people outside the faith through evangelism.

(2) *Reproducing Disciples*

Become reproducing disciples by evolving over a 12 to 24 month period into new disciple-making relational small groups and/or expanding our current group so as to multiply the opportunities for others to grow spiritually through a relational small group experience.

Core Values Fostering Spiritual Growth in Our Relational Small Group

(1) We will seek to *learn and practice spiritual disciplines* in response to God's invitation to a personal relationship with Him by opening ourselves to transformation toward a more Christ-like life through the *learning and practicing the spiritual disciplines* of, although not exclusively, (a) spending time with God's Word for discerning and applying His truth in our daily lives, (b) communicating with God through prayer, and (c) including an element of worship in our group (as well is in our corporate and private worship) life.[1474]

(2) We will strive to grow an authentic Christian community of *sharing life together* in which *relationship*s are built upon love, caring, encouragement, support, belonging, trust, and openness.

(3) We will seek to foster an environment of *voluntary accountability* which involves voluntarily inviting others into our lives, to challenge our priorities, to address our failures and to practice spiritual disciplines, and to praise our successes.

(4) We will seek to grow in *serving* the needs of others and *evangelize* through witnessing and bringing people outside the faith into congregational life as catalysts for spiritual growth and as responses to God's call for mission.

(5) We commit to *regular participation* in group gatherings as a priority recognizing that fellowship is needed not only for my spiritual growth but also the spiritual growth of other group members depends in part upon me.

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[1474] It is through the practice of spiritual disciplines that we respond to God's invitation to a personal relationship with him through placing ourselves in a situation where he is more likely to transform us.

(6) We seek to enjoy our gatherings and have fun.[1475]

(7) We commit to *other core values*, if any agreed to by all members of the group (either inserted here or attached to this commitment).

Ground Rules

(1) *Meeting Schedule*

- The group will meet for a period of approximately 12 to 24 months, commencing on _____ (subject to possible shortening or extension) as determined by the group.
- The group will meet on _____ [Insert day of the week] at _____ [Insert the time] unless otherwise agreed upon.[1476]
- The group will gather at _____ [insert location] unless otherwise agreed upon.

(2) *Group Conduct*

- Subject to exceptional circumstances (e.g., emergencies, travel, holidays), group members will participate on a regular basis.
- Each group member is entitled and encouraged to express his or her opinions while remaining on topic. However, a decision not to speak is respected.
- Each group member will contribute to a climate of honesty, trust and mutual caring and support.
- Matters of a personal nature raised in the group shall remain confidential.
- If at any point in time, a member of this group can no longer continue to pursue the commitments made in this covenant, he or she will be excused from further participation with love, encouragement and prayer in his or her pursuit of spiritual growth in another way and/or format.

[1475] Fun creates bonding, enthusiasm, ease in working together, tolerance, and acceptance of other peoples' ideas, accountability and support. Include some fun activities.

[1476] At a minimum, a group should meet no less than twice per month. If this is agreed upon, insert the 1st and 3rd or 2nd and 4th the day of the week.

(3) *Group Structure*

- The group size will not exceed eight.
- After the group has gathered ____ times (insert number, e.g. 1-3), the group will be closed unless all members, by secret vote, agree to the addition of a new member(s)

I agree, together with other members of this group, to honor this agreement.

[Group Members Sign]

Such a covenant serves as a foundation for an effective disciple-making relational small group experience.

b. Structuring Relational Small Groups

Some relational small groups may highly structured with a designated leader. Other groups are more laid back and share leadership rotating around the group. Whichever *modus operandi*, it is important to have a structure that supports the purposes and expectations. Several aspects of structure need to be considered: (1) structuring the gatherings, (2) open or closed group, (3) size of group, and (4) gender of group.

(1) Structuring the Gatherings

Sound structure for a relational small group rests not only upon fostering the foundational purposes of the group, the core values for spiritual growth and the procedural expectations of the group. There also needs to be some mechanism(s) to guide the group when it gathers. This might take the form of some type of curriculum or utilization of guide books and questions to lead discussion. It might consist of an agenda which includes sharing of personal life experiences, prayer, attention to scripture, etc. The nature of the structure can vary widely. Different structures might be used at different times. The group can rely on the leader or reach common agreement as to the structure for the gatherings which can evolve or change over time. But whatever structural mechanism is chosen, it is essential that when the group gathers, the ensuing time together does not result in aimless wanderings with little relationship to the purposes of the group and a lack of progress toward members' spiritual growth.

(2) Open or Closed Groups?

Healthy churches typically have both open and closed groups. Open groups offer an on-going curriculum or series of programs which enables a non-member of the group to enter into the study at any point of time. These groups can emphasize evangelism with a goal of being an entry point for guests. Closed groups limit entry once the group is underway. They emphasize discipleship with the goal being to strengthen believers spiritual

walk.[1477] Should relational small groups here at FRCC be open (i.e., anyone can join at any time) or closed (i.e., new members are not accepted after the mission is established and the members are securely in place)? Each type of structure is better suited to address certain purposes.

(a) Closed Groups

The effectiveness of a relational small group depends upon how well it delivers on its promise – i.e., providing a small group environment in which participants experience predictability, authentic community and spiritual growth. Small groups function most effectively when there is a "closed door" policy. That is, once the group is underway, new members are not permitted unless the entire group signs off on the addition of a new member.[1478]

Closed groups offer the attributes of (i) predictability, (ii) authentic community, and (iii) spiritual formation.

- *Predictability*[1479] – A changing group membership undermines the effectiveness of a group gathering. Essential to the relational small group concept is predictability. Here, being predictable means *who* the participants can expect to attend the group gathering. Relationships take time to form. Whatever interferes with the building of relational momentum tends to defeat the purpose. Every shared story, common experience, shared dream or fear builds relationships. Introducing new people disrupts this experience. In a closed group, there is no revolving door.

  Also being predictable refers to *what* the participants can expect from the group. Everyone's expectations should be on the same page right from the start. There should be clarity about the purpose of the group. A group is not likely to be successful if one expects Bible study, another expects a support group and a third expects simply a social or fellowship gathering.

  There should also be clarity as to the group's values, e.g., standards for relating to one another, guidelines on how, when and where to meet, etc. Groups with changing memberships are often forced to modify one more elements of predictability, or spend time in considering doing so, and often are compelled to backtrack. Frequent changes may tear asunder the relational foundation of the group.

- *Authentic Community*[1480] – Closed groups work best for spiritual formation for several reasons. They offer an authentic community which can be defined as a group engendering sense of belonging, care, trust and accountability. Authentic community embraces belonging - i.e., the sense of being accepted, connection

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[1477] Chuck Lawless, "Keeping Small Groups Evangelistic," OutreachMagazine.com, January 7, 2015.
[1478] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 102-03 (2004).
[1479] *Id.* at 104-05.
[1480] *Id.* at 106-07.

and comfort with a group of people. An authentic community creates an environment for the development of mutual trust which is essential to foster the kind of self-revelation and openness which spiritual formation requires. When the group membership experiences periodic changes, such trust is harder to maintain. As a result, effective relational small groups evolve over time. Development of mutual trust is deterred, if not defeated, if a group is open to non-committed persons who simply drop in to tryout the group. Furthermore, an open group does not afford the necessary structure and environment conducive to accountability. If people drift in and out, it is difficult to establish the types of relationships necessary for mutual accountability.

> Groups that constantly change seldom experience authentic community. They are weakened in their ability to deliver accountability, belonging and care because they are never able to build the relational capital to get to that depth of relationship.[1481]

- *Spiritual Formation*[1482] – Due to their predictability and authentic community, relational small groups enable people to better experience spiritual growth. Well-functioning closed relational small groups offer an environment conducive for practicing the spiritual disciplines leading to connecting with God, other believers through sharing live together, others through serving their needs and reaching out to the unchurched. Coming together in deepening relationships results in encouraging, challenging, supporting and holding one another accountable. Furthermore, when a group is closed, the church can better monitor its progress and help those who are struggling in their devotional life. Thus, participation in a closed relational small group is a prime means and opportunity for transformation into a more Christ-like life, the essence of being a follower of Christ.

(b) Concern over Closed Relational Small Groups Excluding Newcomers

The emphasis on relational small groups being closed does raise a natural and important concern. Closed groups, when considered alone, does not project a welcoming and inviting community. Such perception would tend to deter newcomers from becoming a part of a church which is certainly contrary to a foundational purpose of our church. However, it should be recognized that when churches offer only or emphasize open groups, the potential for spiritual growth through relational small groups is likely to be substantially lessened if not deterred.

> The long-range goal of Christians gathering in small groups should be discipleship rather than evangelism. In fact, evangelism will result from proper discipleship. The lack of passion for the Great Commission comes from a lack of character – a lack of spiritual

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[1481] *Id.* at 107.
[1482] *Id.* at 107-08.

> depth – rather than a lack of strategic vehicles for reaching others.[1483]

Furthermore, here at FRCC there are several "open door" circumstances and opportunities for quickly bringing additional people into the fellowship of the church without the necessity of undermining the in-depth relation building experiences foundational to spiritual growth offered in the context of closed groups. These alternatives include the following:

- The on-going welcoming of people by our members as a whole. This has been an ongoing experience in our church which we need to continue to emphasize and encourage. It will not change because we have closed relational small groups.

- Our pastor and the lay leaders engage in welcoming experiences for newcomers and lead them into fellowship opportunities.

- The church offers a variety of fellowship events to which all are invited.

- All are invited to participate with various teams and committees.

- There will be an on-going series of short term small group opportunities introducing relationship building experiences which, in addition may lead participants to form new relational small groups.

- New relational small groups will be formed on an on-going basis in which people will have an opportunity to experience.

- An element of the recommended relational small group covenant is involvement of its members in outreach efforts. Such may occur in a multitude of ways, e.g., personal relational evangelism bringing newcomers into a variety of church programs including open short term small groups, group outreach projects and other assimilation efforts.

Thus, there are numerous opportunities and circumstances reflecting openness in our church.

Relational small groups can and should play a significant role in reaching out to the skeptics and unbelievers, but they can do so without being open groups. As a church, structures and implements relational small groups emphasis should be on closed relational groups.

(c) Season for Closed Groups

A legitimate concern about closed groups is the potential that they become stagnant and inwardly focused over a period of time. Furthermore, they may become cliques resulting in divisiveness in the church. Thus, relational small groups need to be challenged to multiply after the end of their covenant period, e.g., 18 to 24 months. By splitting

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[1483] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 233 (2006).

into new groups with new members, fresh experiences and vitality are interjected. So, a part of a group's expectation from the outset should be that, regardless of how great the group experience has been, at some point the group will need to end and regenerate into new groups and/or expand the current group with a person(s) acceptable to existing members. This not only benefits current participants; it also offers opportunities for additional people to enter into an existing relational small group experience.[1484]

(3) Size of Relational Small Groups

Another question relating to group structure is whether there should be size parameters. On the other hand, if there are too few people, when a few do not show up, there is not enough to offer a viable group experience. On the other hand, when a group becomes too large, the number of personal interactions experienced by each member decreases. Too many people tend to inhibit individuals in freely sharing.

Furthermore, when a group gets too large, its leader cannot provide an appropriate level of care necessary for life transformation of each individual member of the group. As a general rule, the member to leader ratio should not exceed 10 to 1. When groups exceed this size, it is time to consider birthing a new group.[1485]

As a general proposition, the more limited size groups tend to be more effective. Some suggest limiting groups to triads, i.e., 3 or perhaps 4 people at the most. This size group tends to more readily reflect the environmental characteristics so important to transformation including intimacy, truth and accountability. Groups of 6 to 10 are said to tend to emphasize intimacy, but discerning God's truth and accountability are more likely to become secondary. The triad (or a very small group) discipling process is said to balance all three attributes.[1486] However, depending upon the make up the membership of a small group, larger small groups (i.e., greater than 3 persons and no larger than 10), can also exhibit the environmental characteristics so important to transformation. Furthermore, when a church fosters 6 to 10 people relational small groups, the door is open for a greater number of people to participate in the relational small group experience. The experience of other churches having successfully implemented the small group process suggests that groups of up to 10 people tend to be quite viable.

(4) Relational Small Groups and Gender[1487]

The question has been asked whether genders should be kept separate or mixed in small relational groups. It has been suggested that, at least in the intimacy of the very small triad group arrangement, it is best to limit the group to the same gender. People tend to find it more difficult to be transparent about their personal feelings and circumstances in a mixed gender group. This tends to limit the development of the intimacy sought as an essential element in the disciple-making process. However, if the opposite situation occurs and intimacy is achieved in a mixed gender group, there is the possibility of inappropriate bonding as between

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[1484] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* 108-09 (2004).
[1485] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 24 (2002).
[1486] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 171 (2003).
[1487] This Section draws primarily on upon Greg Ogden, id. at 199.

persons of different sexes. There have been situations in which an intense spiritual environment has resulted in spiritual passion which has led to inappropriate relationships.

On the other hand, it can be argued that true relational maturity is not achieved until the different sexes have the ability to understand one another. Perceiving things in different ways contributes to the mutual growth of all. Furthermore, couples might decline to participate in a relational group unless they do so with their partner.

4. Supporting the Organization of a Relational Small Group

a. Church Leaders' Participation in Small Group Ministry

Before embarking upon a relational small group ministry, it must be something the church leader/pastor really wants to do. Among the elements that George Barna discovered among effective disciple-making churches is that "[t]he senior pastor is an irrepressible advocate of discipleship."[1488] The urge needs to come from the Holy Spirit. Although various aspects of a small group ministry can be delegated to others, the church leader must personally own, communicate and continue to communicate the vision of wanting people to walk more meaningfully with God.[1489]

> People will hear the passion in the leader's voice, see the determined look in the leader's eyes, and measure the effort in the leader's actions. The leader must make the small-group effort personal and that means participation. The most powerful aspect of leading is modeling. Anything less and small groups won't become integral to the life of the congregation, because the leader doesn't embody the values.[1490]

However, the responsibility for effectuating and participating in relational small groups rests not only on the senior pastor and others on the professional staff of a church. Other church leaders must also be active and enthusiastic participants. All leaders of our church (lay, assistant lay and team leaders, team members, as well as our pastor(s), should be especially urged to commit to participating. This should be done on an on-going basis since at Fox River Congregational Church those in leadership roles change over time with significant frequency.[1491]

b. An Overseeing Body

There should be somebody or team that oversees the viability of relational small group efforts in our church. What role, if any, should this body play in the organizational/structural aspects of the formation of relational small groups?

[1488] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ 307* (2006).
[1489] *Id.* at 237-38.
[1490] *Id.* at 238.
[1491] Fox River Congregational Church, Minutes of the Task Force on Disciple-Making, November 19, 2008, pp.7-8.

At this point in time, here at FRCC, there are not many people who are experienced in either participating in or leading relational small groups. For such groups to be effective in spiritual formation, some guidance or educational efforts are needed. A knowledgeable representative of the team responsible for overseeing relational small groups should participate in the initial organizational aspects of a relational small group as well as provide personal and/or written resources to the person spearheading organizing the group. For example, a format, guide, a check list of items to consider, a sample of a small group covenant should be prepared. Perhaps some discussion as to what such groups are all about and how they operate might be in order. However, it cannot be over emphasized that such help is to be provided as a guide, not as a dictate. The ultimate decision as to how a group is to be organized is for the group itself to make. However, the design and conduct of the group must serve advancement in the accomplishing of the mission of the church, i.e., growing people toward a more Christ-like life through pursuing one or more of the four connecting relationships.

Quality leadership is the most essential element for healthy groups and multiplying relational small groups. Ultimately, all group leaders should be responsible to recruit and train apprentices until they are able to assume leadership in another newly formed group or takes over an existing group. "The key to a successful cell [relational small] group] ministry is training, training, and more training."[1492]

The primary relational small group breakdown is the failure to oversee and help guide small group leaders. Because of other demands on pastoral staff, experienced small group lay leaders are essential. As the number of small groups multiply, a successful, experienced leader can be designated to offer guidance to a group of small group leaders (perhaps as many as five). They don't lead the small groups, but rather attend several group sessions in order provide training and counsel to the leaders who, in turn, guide their apprentices.[1493] The appropriate small group team church ministry support team provides oversight for the development, training and conduct of the small groups.

5. Getting Started: Leading Relational Small Groups

As emphasized and concluded throughout this document, a high impact effective disciple-making church needs to be organized as a relational small group church. The burden of ministry is spread by mobilizing lay people and training them to lead groups. The basic building block is a small group of approximately 6 -10 people led by a trained leader. Whether there is a designated leader or various people share in leading a group on a rotating basis, good leadership is a necessary condition for both starting and then experiencing successful small groups. It has been said that the most strategic persons in the church are the small group leaders.[1494]This is true with respect to short term as well as relational small groups although the training and skill level needed is greater for the latter.

[1492] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 183 (1993).
[1493] *Id.* at 184-85.
[1494] Paul Braoudakis (Editor), *An Inside Look at Willow Creek Community Church* 117 (2000).

a. Selection of Leaders

The church body responsible for fostering an effective disciple-making relational small group effort incurs the primary responsibility for finding and selecting potential leaders and encouraging them to give it a try. Whether potential leaders arise from a , triad, larger small group, apprentice experience or some other method, care needs to be exercised in their selection. A potential selectee for leadership should meet certain criteria which offer the expectation of successful relational small group experiences. Selection of invitees should be preceded by considerable thought and prayer. One should be convinced that the Lord is drawing him or her to those to whom the invitations are extended.[1495] Among the desired small group leadership attributes are the following.

- *Character/Loyalty to Christ* – Regardless of a person's talent, if one lacks character he or she will likely engender negative results. Character determines impact. Christ modeled such character qualities as humility, servanthood, obedience, sacrifice and love.[1496] We seek people for leadership roles whose behavior and lifestyle are aligned to Jesus' desires for us of "openness to self –examination and a hunger to place our lives at his disposal."[1497]

- *Suitability and Teachability* – There is little worse than a godly *non*-leader who is asked to lead. Select people to lead who have the aptitude to lead. They don't need to be able to lead large movements by inspiration. But, they do need to be able to lay out a plan, run a simple program and be willing and able to be trained.[1498]

  Teachability is an essential trait. Jesus chose his disciples not on the basis of what they were at the time of the call, but rather on what they would become. Remember, the disciples he selected were not distinguished according the world's standards. This should caution us to avoid the temptation of selecting people based on cultural norms. Simply because one has achieved professional or academic success, leadership positions, etc., or because he or she has an outgoing personality, occupied positions of influence and/or possesses wealth does not necessarily mean that he or she is loyal and/or teachable in the context of a disciple-making arrangement. Don't overlook people simply because they lack society's emblems of success.[1499] However, reachability is an important triat.

- *Reliability* – A leader needs to be reliable. To be reliable, one must be available – i.e., he or she must have both the time and the willingness to undertake the obligations of leadership. Ask, "Do you have the time?"[1500] Furthermore, look for stable members in our community, that is, people who are likely to stay around for the long term. This

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[1495] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 177 (2003).
[1496] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 242 (2006).
[1497] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 180 (2003).
[1498] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 242-43 (2006).
[1499] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 180 (2003).
[1500] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 243 (2006).

> is essential if we are to reproduce small groups over time.[1501] And finally, be wary of inviting people who ask to be a member of the triad or very small group. Do they want to be in a disciple-making relationship leading to growing into a Christ-like life? Or, do they have some hidden agenda?[1502]

In short, the first step in creating a reproducible discipleship group is finding the right people. Be careful when selecting whom to invite as potential leaders. Look for the qualities of character, loyalty, suitability, teachability and reliability.

b. Training Leaders for Relational Small Groups

(1) Nature of Training

Selecting potential leaders and attracting them to relational small groups is only half the battle. It is equally important to focus on the experience that they have when they participate.[1503] "Effective leaders are not born; they are made."[1504] Leadership skills are transferable; they are teachable and learnable habits. Developing new leaders is a current leader's top priority. Connect young leaders with one another. Nurture their capacity for leadership. Share the vision and mission that is calling for their leadership. Identify potential leaders and then train them by providing them with the skills and resources needed to be effective. Then, get out of their way. Provide practical on the job training as Jesus did with his 12 disciples. "The most strategic person[s] in the life-change process of the church is [are] the small group leader[s]."[1505] Thus, small group leadership development is crucial. Teach, model and mentor.[1506]

Small group leadership experience opportunities can be provided on three levels: helper, apprentice and leader. Helpers are given specific tasks with additional responsibilities when persons perform well at the helper level. Such persons then advance to the apprentice level. They too are given more responsibilities when earned. Apprentices who are active in ministry and committed to the mission, vision and strategic goals of the church are the best leadership candidates. Initially look for the qualities of faithfulness to God and likability to others.[1507]

A relational small group organizational structure is foundational for a high impact disciple-making church. In order to multiply small groups, it is crucial to reproduce trained small group leaders and provide ongoing training and overview support. A high impact church multiplies its small groups, small group leaders and those providing overview and guidance as it grows in advancing its mission. The process of developing leaders at whatever level has been referred to as the "training loop" or "disciple loop."

[1501] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 190 (2003).
[1502] *Id.* at 191-92.
[1503] Missy Lovick, "5 Tips for Small Group Life," Outreach Magazine (March/April 2008).
[1504] Michael J. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* 151(2000).
[1505] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 23 (2002).
[1506] Michael J. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* 151-55 (2000).
[1507] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 182-83 (1993).

The sequence is:

- You do it, they watch!
- They do it, you watch!
- They do it, you support!
- They get others to do it![1508]

The goal is for the church to act and think like a single team rather than several little teams. Avoid becoming departmentalized with each team doing its own thing without concern for the bigger picture. Even in small churches there must be some periodic gathering place where people can share ideas and critique each others' ministries. Gathering church leaders periodically helps to build relationships, eases the sharing process, and unifies efforts. Avoid tunnel vision.[1509]

The point cannot be overemphasized that small group leaders are shepherds who are responsible to help people spiritual grow.[1510] Thus, it is essential for a disciple-making church to support its small group leaders through encouragement, training and on-going coaching. The best resources of the church should be employed to ensure that the small group leaders have everything necessary to be effective.[1511]

To support a variety of relational small groups, experiences for training group leaders are needed. Such experiences should include (1) the exposure or re-exposure to the mission and process of disciple-making in our church, (2) group dynamics, (3) familiarity with subject matter and/or resources which will be the focus of the group, (4) the nature and responsibilities of members of small groups, (5) the process for organizing a small group, and (6) methods of Bible study, prayer and spiritual disciplines in general. Relational small group leaders should be taught and periodically reminded of the value of sharing life together, growing together, serving together and reaching out together.[1512] Too often churches limit the teaching of small group leaders to how to run a good meeting. However, importantly, leaders need to learn how to lead their people relationally closer to God. Be sure group leader training includes opportunity to experience all the elements that make the relational small group work.[1513]

(2) Resources for Training Relational Small Group Leaders

Various resources for training small group leaders should be explored. Some possibilities include the following.

- Bill Donahue, who has served as Executive Director of the Willow Creek Association and launched a church-wide small group ministry, has authored and co-authored a series of books and programs for building a small group

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[1508] *Id.* at 189

[1509] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 61-62 (1999).

[1510] Missy Lovick, "5 Tips for Small Group Life," Outreach Magazine (March/April 2008).

[1511] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 23 (2002).

[1512] Missy Lovick, "5 Tips for Small Group Life," Outreach Magazine (March/April 2008).

[1513] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 238 (2006).

ministry and training small group leaders. These aid small group leaders to learn the basics of leading a successful small group. Small groups, like nothing else, have the power to transform lives. They offer the most effective route to discipleship growth. Whether a person is leading for the first time or has been doing so over a period of years, Donahue's works are designed to assist leaders to more effectively facilitate group discussion and encourage and support group members leading toward authentic life transformation. His ready-reference format highlights the requirements and responsibilities of a small group leader, offers insight into the group formation process and answers practical questions on meeting preparation and encouraging group participation. His series of works[1514] should be explored in structuring, implementing and overseeing the development of a small group ministry here at FRCC.

- The Upper Room offers several tips for leaders of small groups.
    - Always begin and end with a scripture reading and prayer. Allow members opportunities to voice their prayer concerns or joys.
    - Remind members that the group is a forum for respectful, open discussion and mutual learning. Vital groups invite people to reflect on sensitive or even controversial issues. A spirit of humility and a genuine desire to learn from others enriches the experiences of the group members.
    - Invite contributions from all, but respect members who choose to remain silent. Encourage members to share ideas and experiences briefly so that one member doesn't dominate the sessions.
    - Keep discussions moving within the focus of the planned topic, but always be sensitive to what's being shared by members. Gently guide the discussion back on track after acknowledging members' statements.
    - Ask members to evaluate the sessions regularly. Make adjustments to strengthen fellowship within the group. Use simple questions such as: What went well? What did you learn? What could be improved?[1515]
- David Earley's book on effectively leading small groups focuses on the habits of (i) leading a healthy multiplying group, (ii) praying for group members daily, (iii) inviting new people to visit the group weekly, (iv) contacting group members regularly, ((v) preparing for the group meeting, (6) mentoring an

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[1514] E.g., *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups: Groups that Grow*, (2012); Coaching *Life-Changing Small Group Leaders* (with Greg Bowman); the *Equipping Life-Changing Small Groups* DVD, *et al.* e.g., amazon.com, christianbook.com, etc.

[1515] upperroom.org/ministry-areas/small groups.

apprentice leader, (vii) planning group fellowship activities, and (viii) being committed to personal growth.[1516]

- A compilation of the Discipleship Journal's 101 best ideas for small groups includes a substantial section aimed at small group leaders on best ways to plant, water and grow healthy small groups as well as on ideas for immediate use in small groups in such areas as Bible study, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, serving and missions.[1517]

In his book, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched*, Linus J. Morris urges that the training of small group leaders and apprentices develop skills related to personal evangelism as well as leadership. These skills include the following.[1518]

- *How to become a skilled listener* – The cell leader needs to listen to what is both said and not said. Read body-language. Affirm emotions without being driven by them. The cell leader strives to maintain coherency in the discussion by using natural breaks to restate and summarize the discussion topics.

- *How to give appropriate feedback* – The group leader waits for voicing his or her own comments. He refrains from answering his own questions. When the discussion lags, he should rephrase the question under discussion. Don't be intimidated by silence. Respect and accept all comments.

- *How to keep a balance of discussion between members* – A sensitive leader encourages new or quiet members to participate. Discourages over-talkative members from dominating the discussion. Keep the group on the topic by discouraging irrelevant and other non-essential discussion.

- *How to handle controversy without squelching it* – During debatable subjects, the leader needs to be careful as to how much influence he should attempt to exert. Too much leader input squelches participation and good group discussion. However, too little input may result in confusion and running off course.

Furthermore, small group leaders need to possess or develop various attributes engendering his or her likeability in the view of group participants. Desiring to be liked is not a terrible thing. Caring what others think (while not being dominated by it) shapes one's responses, and helps becoming a more loving and generous person. If group members genuinely don't like the leader, who is a representation of Christ for them, then such leader probably acts as a barrier to them enjoying Jesus thereby impeding their spiritual growth.[1519] Among the attributes to be cultivated are

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[1516] Dave Earley, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders: Transforming Your Ministry Outside the Meeting.* (2001).

[1517] *Discipleship Journal's 101 Best Small-Group Ideas* (1996) (compiled by Deena Davis).

[1518] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 186-87 (1993).

[1519] Ben Reed, "12 Pointers for Small Group Leaders," OutreachMagazine.com, July 6, 2015.

- Listen intently
- Share one's own story
- Be authentic – be real, open and honest with one's own struggles and victories
- Be consistent in showing at the group gathering, week after week after week regardless whether your feel like it; consistency builds trust.
- Go beyond the normal and expected – (e.g., invite group member for coffee or a meal, communicate with one who you expect will have a difficult day, call on birthday, offer to watch kids, etc.)
- Give grace when it's not deserved
- Remember birthdays, anniversaries and kids' names
- Provide needed resources
- Be yourself – (if you're funny, be funny, If you're contemplative, be contemplative, if life of a party, be the life of the party, if an intellectual, be an intellectual, etc. Be the you who God created you to be.[1520]

In addition to finding or preparing of written materials covering these subjects, it would be well to obtain or create a training DVD to do the same. Such DVD could be later shown to the members of the group as part of the group's organizational process.

Since meaningful relational small groups are crucial in the growth spiritual growth of members of our church toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feeling and actions, it is crucial that there be effective group leaders. Consequently, the church cannot be casual about finding, selecting and training leaders. In structuring our church and implementing strategies to advance our mission and vision, the development of small group leaders must be a major component.

c. Sources of Relational Small Group Leaders: Getting Started

To be an effective disciple-making church, we need to rely upon members of our congregation to serve as relational small group leaders. Presumably, there are some people who are just not cut out to be leaders. Others, for whatever reason, have no interest and just do not want to undertake this disciple-making role. There are probably several others who are potentially good leaders, and perhaps even interested in doing so, but are reluctant dragons because of a lack of confidence. For these persons, an invitation, coupled with availability of a digestible amount of training materials and programmatic support, may result in their becoming volunteer leaders. Motivational urgings (one on one or in a more general format) from a pastor and/or others contribute to generating volunteers.

There are a variety of other contexts or approaches which offer potential sources from which volunteer leaders may emerge and serve as the basis for getting relational small groups started.

Whatever the, criteria, selection process and, training of relational small group leaders at some point relational small groups need to be organized and begin functioning. The relational

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[1520] *Id.*

small group leaders are the foundation. Where and how are they to be found and the groups started? Various approaches have been suggested for doing so.

(1) Starting Prototype Relational Small Groups

To start a relational small group ministry, one approach is to open a beachhead done through a prototype small group consisting of a very limited number of potential small group leaders.[1521] Although a prototype group can start in several ways, "[p]erhaps the most successful ones are created informally as pastors risk sharing their struggles and propose to others that they enter in a disciplined process of growth together [with him]."[1522] However, the initiator might very be another leader who is well versed in relational small group concepts and/or experience. The leader (pastor or otherwise) forms a prototype relational small group as a model for future relational small groups and their leaders. If the prototype group consists of three persons, it has been referred to as a triad (considered in Section (2) below). After an appropriate period of time, when all are immersed in the relational small group experience and capable of leading a group, the original prototype group/triad splits up with each participant going out to form new relational small groups based upon the prototype unit model.

Thus, one source of leaders emerges from the formation of a prototype relational small group composed of persons who are potentially small group leaders. In forming the group, it is essential to select the right future potential leaders. (See Section a. above). Look for people who have the time, interest and gifts to lead.

Prototype groups are not formed by open announcements and signups. Instead, after the leader carefully and prayerfully considers whom he or she wants to invite to participate, a personal invitation is extended. Stress that the invitation is not a random one, but rather it emerges from serious thought and prayer. Emphasize that the Jesus model was to have a few journey with him and that he continues today to make disciples though intentional relationships. The foundational role of deepening personal relationships with others in spiritual formation, as well as the nature of and requirements for successful relational small groups, should be fully explored and understood. Gather these potential leaders in a comfortable setting, e.g., a home, and explain what is planned and why they were selected. Present the vision of the foundational importance of the disciple-making process and the crucial role that relational small groups play in that process.

It is essential that the prospect has the opportunity to clearly understand the extent of the commitment involved participating in this relationship. There are expectations of time including preparation, travel and meeting time. If the group is to be in leading the development of an effective relational small group ministry, members of the prototype group are likely to experience transformation themselves at some point in time. Importantly, this group is not simply undergoing training. Itself is a relational small group in the fullest sense of the word. The group should reflect the same relational characteristics discussed earlier which characterize an effective relational small group. The purpose of the prototype is not only leadership training, but also

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[1521] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ 229* (2006).

[1522] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 109 (2001).

spiritual formation of those participating in the group. Thus, the prospective member of the protype should be aware and accepting of significant change in some area(s) of his or her life.

Don't seek or accept an immediate response. The person should not only consider readiness to commit to the process and the potential results therefrom, but also to the time commitment in context of his or her other life responsibilities and activities.

If the invitee accepts, inform him or her that there will be (or already is) a third party joining the group. If a third (possibly fourth and/or fifth) person has not yet been settled upon or there is none in mind, enlist the invitee's aid in discerning who it should be. Repeat the process until the group has been filled.

After leadership has been modeled in the initial session or sessions, the leadership role is transferred from one person to another at following sessions. This role should be rotated. Among other things, this builds confidence in people to lead new groups in the future which in turn will repeat the process expanding the number of people experiencing transformation emerging from the relational small group experience.

At some point in time, the prototype group ends and its members will go out and start new groups of the same nature or fill leadership roles in other larger relational small groups needing a leader. Overtime, this prototype group approach promises to exponentially multiply the number of relational small groups. This will substantially contribute to the growing of disciples throughout the church.

(2) Starting a Triad Relational Small Group

A variation on the prototype group, as a model for disciple-making, is the triad. Here, the size of the group is very limited. The pastor invites only two, or at most, three other persons into a covenantal relationship structured around a Bible based curriculum. The group meets weekly for approximately 1½ hours. Invest in a relationship with two other people for approximately a year. (A discipling relationship varies in length depending upon the relational dynamics and the growth process unique to each relationship.) Each person will then repeat the process with two other people. The repeated efforts do not get boring because the dynamics of each relationship are different. (Although a group of four people also works, experience suggests that three people work more effectively.) This process is repeated leading to an ever-expanding number of reproducing small relational groups experiencing spiritual formation.[1523]

A single triad sets the foundation for a multiplication of self-initiating, reproducing followers of Christ. After the 1st year, each member of the initial triad starts a new group resulting in 9 disciples at the end of the 2nd year. Those, in turn, form new groups resulting in 27 disciples at the end of the 3rd year.[1524] Over time, the growth of disciples increases to great numbers assuming, for the most part, that only a few of the participants drop out of the process.

[1523] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples of a Few at a Time* 176-77 (2003).
[1524] *Id.* at 185.

In short, to grow a multigenerational discipling network, (1) start with one triad, (2) have a long term vision, and (3) select people carefully and wisely.[1525]

The prototype or triad relational small groups (the beachhead approach to creating a relational small group ministry) are quite small. They embrace relatively intense efforts for discipling one another. Furthermore, they are led by a well-trained leader with one primary ultimate aim being the on-going reproduction of such discipling groups with qualified persons to lead them. This approach should perhaps become an integral part of our disciple-making efforts here at Fox River. However, sole focus on this approach tends to ignore a large number people who either are not invited to participate in one of these limited groups or don't want to. Thus, the second prong to relational small group development involves starting larger relational small groups.

(3) Starting Larger Relational Small Groups: Training Groups to Be Groups

The prototype group and triad approaches commence with the selection and training of a very limited number of future leaders who are together for an extended period ranging from several months to a year or more. These now trained leaders go out and invite a few more people and repeat the general experience. This establishes a beachhead for expanded growth in disciple-making. Over time, this process promises to lead toward many progressing through the discipleship process. But during this extended period of time, there are many others who are left out of the relational small group experience because of the lack of leaders. This is particularly true in a growing church. Waiting several years to address the relational spiritual needs of these people, especially where their numbers grow fasters than the number of those who are incorporated into relational small groups, has been described as "spiritual infanticide."[1526]

This is the situation confronting us at Fox River. We have approximately 160 church members with the number growing. However, up to this point, we have had only limited success in relational small group formation and virtually no leadership training, strategy and programming. If we are to be a disciple-making church for more than just the few, we need to take a two prong approach simultaneously. Gather up relational small groups, with perhaps as many as 8 to 10 people each (albeit smaller per group would be better) for both fellowship and spiritual growth. It is both easier and quicker to grow small group leaders who only need to create the beginnings of a nurturing environment. At the same time initiate and grow the beachhead reproducing leader approach which will serve as the source of leaders for more extensive spiritual growth experiences to more and more people over a period of time.[1527] Furthermore, many of the people nurtured in the larger small groups will prove to be good candidates for leading new small groups in the future.

Sources of leaders for these larger relational small groups can be varied. Some leaders might simply emerge at the grass roots level. That is, a person may simply decide that he or she

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[1525] *Id.* at 194.
[1526] *Id.* at 191.
[1527] *Id.* at 191

wants to form a small group, goes out and does it. Or, a group of people decide among themselves that they want to start a group and either choose their own leader or request that that the church provide one. People might respond by signing up for a publicly announced relational small group opening because of interest in the focus of that group being formed. At some point, the small prototype groups or triads should kick an increasing source of small group leader. Potential leaders might be recruited/invited by the pastor or other church leadership. Solicit general interest. Observe people and, when promising, ask them to lead a small group.

An additional beginning step in creating a relational small group might be to build the start of relationships with potential members through a social event or meal together. A current member of a group can witness what the group experience has meant to him or her. The leader presents the vision and parameters of the small group. Interested persons are invited participate with the group on an introductory basis. When the focus of the proposed group is on outreach, be sure to involve people having unchurched friends.[1528]

Another potential source of leaders are relational small groups who rotate the leadership role among all members of the group. Sharing the leadership responsibility renders some people more likely to be attracted to further leadership possibilities. This expands the number of people upon whom we might draw to serve as small group leaders.

Once groups are established, and on-going, leaders of such groups should discern who might be a potential future leader. Over time, a major source of leaders might be those persons who have served as apprentice leaders.

d. Apprentices: Source of Future Relational Small Group Leaders

Since the vitality and effectiveness of a church depends upon the quality of its small group leaders, it is the responsibility of a disciple-making church to identify and develop new leaders. This is best achieved by one leader training the next. Discerning persons with leadership potential most often is achieved by current small group leaders as they observe those with whom they are working. Incorporate them into the life of the group as potentially evolving apprentice leaders. Furthermore, pastors, other church leaders and others also often spot those with potential.[1529] A development system should be established which brings eager people to the surface. Here are potential future leaders. Have an evaluation system and place people where they belong and prepare them to serve in ways best suited to their interests, character and competence.[1530]

Whether it is a small group leader or someone else asking a person to become an apprentice leader, typical objections often need to be overcome. For example, "I don't have the time." However, people make time for those things they deem important. Share the importance of leadership in the body of Christ. "Cast a vision for the life change that can occur as they rise to the occasion and accept the challenge of… [helping to lead] a group…." Or, the objection

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[1528] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 164 (1993).

[1529] For a list of characteristics suggesting a potential leader, see Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 68 (2002).

[1530] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 262 (2006).

might be "I don't have the gift of leadership." This may be overcome by reminding people that leadership stems primarily from character. As to knowledge and skills, such can be achieved by appropriate training. Or, the objection might be "I am not the leadership type," Here the response might be to examine what is meant by leadership. Leadership in a relational small group is not a take charge type person seeking to exercise control. Nor does a leader need to possess superior knowledge. But rather, a leader is one who facilitates life change through caring for, shepherding, discipling and loving others.[1531]

Developing leaders through an apprenticeship program must be an integral part of small group life. When groups grow to their maximum size, they are to reproduce themselves. Leadership training should be available at all levels so that when it comes time to launch a new group, leadership is available.[1532] Apprentices provide a major source for filling leadership roles in the near future. We must conscientiously be on the look out for potential leaders, be willing to invite, and be able to lay out the benefits and respond to objections. However, be aware that a coerced positive response is not likely to result in a durable commitment

e. Orienting Potential Participants to the Relational Small Group Experience

Regardless of the manner of formation, the potential members of the group need to be gathered and the nature of relational small groups needs to be explored, understood and accepted as the structure upon which to proceed. Understanding of and committing to the environmental conditions for spiritual growth and transformation are foundational to the success of any relational small group. At the outset, members of the group should be informed of and commit to the nature of relational small groups including the environmental conditions necessary for personal transformation as well as the purposes, expectations and manner of functioning. If available and appropriate, each group should view a video presentation for its organizational meeting which reviews the purposes and priorities of a relational group, suggests what one can do to get the most out of the group experience, and indicates what the group participants can expect. Clear expectations at the outset constitute an important key for a group to be successful.

A DVD program, including a participant's guide, aimed at training groups to be group[1533] coupled with the earlier discussion re the recommended Fox River Congregational Church Covenant for Relational Small Group,[1534] offers a substantial basis for relational small groups to be effective. This program is described as a curriculum which guides both the small group leader and all the members of group together into a new closeness and effectiveness. It is designed to create healthy dynamics and an atmosphere fostering personal growth. It is aimed at equipping both group leaders and members with values and skills for creating and sustaining life changing small groups. It covers such topics as five habits of life changing small groups (i.e. care for one another, safe environment for being one self and accepting others unconditionally, authenticity,

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[1531] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 69 (2002).

[1532] Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Community* 167 (2001).

[1533] Henry Cloud, Bill Donahue and John Townsend, *ReGroup: Training for Groups To Be Groups* (2007).

[1534] See Subsection B.3.*a*,(4) above.

spurring one another in spiritual growth, and helping and receiving help in one's needs).[1535] This program, perhaps coupled with relevant material covered in section(s) above, promises to offer a good basis for the conduct of effective groups.

A structure for the small group needs to be established. To do so, develop a covenant that establishes the goals and objectives of the group. An agreed upon covenant clarifies what the group members are committing to do, the time and level of commitment they are making, a measure by which to gauge their progress, and the permission given to the leader and others to hold them mutually accountable. People need to take tangible action which expresses to others in their community that "I'm really committed to this."[1536] (For a more detailed discussion of a relational small group covenant, including one recommended for our church, see Section VI.B.3.a,(4) above.)

The essentialness of mutual accountability and support in relational small groups needs to be stressed as well as emphasizing that, within the context of loving relationships, this is not a harsh condition. An element of being a disciple is to support each other in realizing God's dream for all of us. This means engaging in activities that require discipline. Community discipline helps build personal discipline.[1537]

At the orientation meeting, permit potential members of the group to raise questions and concerns before the group commences. Based upon these reactions, changes can be made to customize the group structure to the interests and needs of the group. It may require more than one organizational meeting before agreed upon purposes, expectations and commitments are finally determined. Then give the prospective participants a few days to decide whether they want to commit and be accountable to the covenant.

The person who will, at least initially, lead the group needs to be well prepared before the group's orientation and organizational meeting. For relational groups to be effective-disciple-making experiences, the church needs to assure that there will be periodic training sessions for new leaders as well as more advanced training for on-going leaders.

f. Teams, Committees and Other On-Going Groups

To date, few of our team or committee meetings stray very far from focusing on the business at hand. However, such focus is too limited. In addition to a business agenda, our teams should gather in a manner to engender the development of deepening relationships (fellowship). In helping them do so, questions to be asked with respect to each team might include the following.

> Do committees conduct their business like any other organization, or are they forums where community is formed? Does prayer serve as bookends for meetings, polite words at the beginning and end?

[1535] Henry Cloud, Bill Donahue and John Townsend, *ReGroup: Training for Groups To Be Groups* 25 (2007) Participant's Guide).
[1536] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* 246-47 (2006).
[1537] *Id.* at 246.

> Does the committee listen for God's will? Do leaders take steps to make room for the Spirit's presence in the meeting? Are individuals invited to notice the Spirit's presence in the meeting? Do they check in with their own stories? Can the group members discern a corporate spirit at work? Are leaders expected to grow spiritually during their term, or is it assumed that they will be burned out by the end of their duty? Does anyone evaluate whether there is too much busyness?[1538]

Questions such as these should be posed to our various teams and committees. If the responses are too often negative, consideration needs to be given as to how to train our various team (and their committee) leaders, as well team members, to learn how to listen to God as they conduct the church's (God's) business.

Since our church teams and committees typically do not meet on a weekly or frequent basis and since they are gathered for the conduct of church business, such bodies are not ideal vehicles for the development as fully on-going relational small groups. Nevertheless, team and committee meetings offer potential venues for the introduction of relationship building and opportunities for helping people progress in their spiritual formation. Here we have already formed groups who meet, at least somewhat, on a regular albeit not on a frequent basis. The members have volunteered to serve in a ministry of the church. They are leaders in the church. Thus, there is potentially fertile ground to be sown.

In the past, it has been suggested that team gatherings are one place to begin instituting relational small group concepts. The Task Force on Disciple-Making concurred that the relational concept should be incorporated in team meetings on an introductory basis. Doing so affords, albeit only an introductory basis, an opportunity to deepen relationships with other team members, more than would otherwise occur. This should engender greater appreciation of the importance of relation building in disciple-making.[1539] Team members are among the leaders in the church. Moving them towards some understanding and experiencing the relational small group concept would be a significant step forward.

In addition, it has been suggested that, as part of our efforts, we should work through our strengths, i.e., already on-going groups, which have gathered around a common interest. For example, those participating in our choir have gathered around a common interest, i.e., music in a religious context. Perhaps their activity could be extended into a relational small group activity such as exploring the role of music in spiritual growth. Similarly, those responsible for worship could engage in a small group experience centering on the purposes of worship. The same approach might also be applied our other teams.[1540]

There is more to teams than just conducting business.

[1538] John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* 99 (2001).
[1539] Fox River Congregational Church, Minutes of the Task Force on Disciple-Making, November 19, 2008, p.13.
[1540] Fox River Congregational Church, Minutes of Task Force on Disciple-Making, December 10, 2008, p.2.

> In a discipleship congregation, ministry teams are seen microcosms of the larger congregational culture. Teams – no matter what their specific ministry goals and objectives might be – are garden plots for spiritual growth and the experience of a caring, committed community. Teams are made of people with a shared passion, a common commitment, and clear ends in mind. As such, they are marvelous opportunities for spiritual growth through Bible study, prayer, and conversation. Every team meeting must begin with scripture and prayer. Ideally all team meetings will provide an opportunity for all team members to "check in" with one another.[1541]

In short, not only should a team gather to conduct its business, it should also nurture spiritual growth of its members through prayer, Bible reading/study and sharing life together through conversation.

The church needs to foster team and committee movement toward becoming more like a relational small group in their nature. One approach would be to institute training at the outset of the operational year of the church either at one of the initial meetings of each team or at a retreat for all teams and committees. This opportunity for spiritual formation, as well as discerning how God wants his work to be done, should not be ignored.

An additional or alternative approach would be to have each team add to its agenda for every meeting, either at the beginning or ending of a team meeting, the opportunity for deepening relationships. Perhaps our pastor could attend the initial team meetings to get the process underway and on-going until the team leader (or other team member) becomes comfortable as the facilitator of this activity.

g. Small Groups: Foundational Principles for Next Generation Ministry[1542]

Gen Z individuals have been defined as persons born during the period 1997 and 2012. Research project finds GEN Z characterized as recession marked (born in the midst of the early 2000's recession) Wi-Fi enabled (teens spending 9 hours per day on line), multiracial, gender fluid, and post Christians (although 78% believe in God, only 41% regularly attended church services. The millennial generation experience many knocks and dismissive generalities from church pastors, volunteer and thought leaders, and other older adults. It is now being urged to avoid doing the same with the younger generation, understand what makes them unique and their attributes. "If you seek to understand someone and assume to believe the best about them it's amazing how much influence you can gain with them."[1543] Jesus applied this approach with tax collectors, zealots and prostitutes. Presumably, today's church can do the same

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[1541] Michael W. Foss, *PowerSurge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* 146 (2000).
[1542] This section is drawn from Shane Sanchez, "3 Foundational Principles for Next-Gen Ministry," OutreachMagazine.com, October 20, 2020.
[1543] *Id.*

with kids and teenagers. Three foundational principles are suggested to start an approach to influence Gen Z.

First, *develop strategy outlasting personality*. Build a ministry that lasts beyond a leader's personality. While a personality of a particular leader offering charisma, coolness, likeability of a particular leader, etc. plays an important role influencing others, such disappears when the person leading moves onto something else. Thus, it is important to strategize how deal with these situations when such a leader leaves the scene.

Second, *build system based upon leaders worth following: leadership for next-gen ministry.* Particular care needs to be taken in selecting group leaders for those in Generation Z which includes kids from middle school through students in high school. Build a small group volunteer leadership system which focuses on finding, training and supporting the kinds of small group leaders we want kids and students to trust and model their lives after. Such groups are important, especially for this age group. Note that 81% of the GEN Z say that community is part of their "ideal church." Thus, participation in an effective small group is not only important for this age group, it can attract and keep them. The critical question is whether current and future adult group leaders are the kind of adults we want our students to become. Yes, volunteers are needed to be found and willing. They need to be the right persons rather than simply mediocre volunteers. This sounds harsh, but the next generation deserves adults worth following.

- *Set a high Bar* – To build a system which attracts adult leaders that are worth following, set a high bar. Adult volunteers will usually respect what ministry leaders expect and inspect. Don't anticipate extraordinary results when low or ordinary expectations for volunteers are the standard. Quality volunteers rise to the level of expectations set for them. Furthermore, to better ensure quality, consistent and mission-oriented leadership, shift from a year-by-year commitment to a 4-year commitment for high school leaders. The departure of a leader from a group often undermines effectiveness or even continuance of that group and may even lose students from a significant Christian faith.

- *Develop Adult Leaders Spiritually* – A critical function for next-gen ministries is creating volunteer systems which help adult leaders grow spiritually. Many churches recruit millennial adults. Millennials tend to reflect a high degree of being biblically skeptical. Consequently, a church should not expect Millennials generally to be biblically founded spiritual mentors for Gen Z. This suggests taking the spiritual development of volunteer leaders just as seriously as that of the kids and students. Create environments where volunteers can build their theological foundation. Not only would this enhance the kids and students progressing in their Walk with Christ, it would also do so for the volunteer leaders themselves.

Third, *involve the parents*. Barna's research demonstrates that 68% of youth pastors say that their primary struggle are parents who do not prioritize their teen's spiritual growth. However, doing nothing about this may miss one of the great opportunities for building a strategy that reaches Gen Z. A fascinating insight from Barna's research is that 4 out of 5 Christian teens

say they can share honest questions, struggles and doubts with their parents. Thus, it would be foolish to discount parental influence in the spiritual formation of their child or teenager. To be strategic about reaching Gen Z, be strategic about including the parents on the journey. Choose to believe that parents care about the faith of their kids. Develop a strategy to resource, support and encourage parents to become actively involved.

In short,

> [w]e have an opportunity to help Gen Z build a faith of their own, but… to do so… [w]e need incredible adult small group leaders that kids and students can trust. When we set a high bar and choose to believe that fostering the spiritual growth of our leaders is our responsibility, we'll start heading in the right direction.[1544]

And, then, involve the parents in developing the faith of their kids.

6. Differing Natures of Relational Small Groups

All relational small groups are not the same. The spiritual discipline of community through small groups can be practiced in different ways with variations in their focus. Groups take on their own particular attributes based on the participants and their interests.[1545] However, despite their varying natures, a church without small groups built as an integral part of its structure is unlikely to produce optimal life transformation for people looking for spiritual growth, serving and evangelism opportunities.[1546]

Groups can widely vary as to the purposes for their gathering. The focus of different groups may fall in one or more of several categories including the following.[1547]

Some groups gather primarily for fun activities such as potluck meals, picnics, a swim party, day outings at a tourist attraction or ballgame, etc. Such outings offer some opportunity for Christians to enjoy and get to know one another. The fun focus can serve as an appealing entry point for new people. However, fun groups offer limited value in moving people in growing toward Christlikeness. While such activities provide opportunities for fellowship, these gatherings are essentially secular, coffee type chit chat fellowship with little emphasis on spiritual development.

[1544] *Id.*

[1545] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 149-150 (2005).

[1546] Bill Donahue, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* 23 (2002).

[1547] *See, e.g.,* David Claassen, "Great Small Groups; A Primer for Small group Ministry in the Church," The Congregationalist, Fall 2005; Ed Stetzer, "Strategy Matters in Fast Growing Churches," October 28, 2014.OutreachMagazine.com; Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 155 (1993).

A second broad category of small groups are those that are task oriented. They focus on performing a specific task, perhaps in the serving in a church ministry (e.g., the choir, Sunday school teachers) or some charitable function, or perhaps in some outreach efforts.

A third broad category of relational small groups is a learning group. These may focus on study of the Bible, learning and practicing alternative forms of prayers, learning and practicing other forms of spiritual disciplines, understanding and applying the way of Christian living. Biblical illiteracy is rampant through churches. Scheduled and regular prayer time with other Christians, outside worship services, occurs rarely. Thus, the learning small group encourages, supports and better enables growth to a more Christ like life through the learning and practice of various spiritual disciplines.

Another type of group are affinity groups. These are groups who have gathered because of their common interests which may or may not be necessarily church oriented, e.g., motorcycle riding, fishing, quilting, caring for others, social and fun.

A relational small group might be based on similar stages in life (singles, married, youth, children, elderly), men and women groups.

There are also accountability groups which focus upon supporting one another in establishing and maintaining good habits in practicing spiritual disciplines.

Another basis for relational small group formation is geography. Here, persons gather with others who live in the same area or neighborhoods. This approach may be particularly appealing to those persons belonging to a church which encompasses a large area. This better facilitates becoming involved in community serving opportunities as well more easily reaching out to non-believers in their neighborhood and inviting them to participate in the group.

One example of extensive use of small groups is Elmbrook Church (Brookfield Wisconsin). Life Groups are considered to be the heartbeat of Elmbrook Church believing that they offer the single best way to find community. Members of the group connect either weekly or bi-weekly for Bible discussion, prayer together, and encouragement of one another. There are groups for men, women, couples, and individuals; for the young in age and the young at heart. They gather in various places in the community, e.g., on the church campuses or in homes. Some groups require preparation and a long-term commitment. Other groups invite a person just show up and engage. Some groups are ongoing which may be joined at any time.[1548]

Differing small groups are necessary to attract and meet the individual needs and interests of different believers as well as the diverse needs of the church as a whole. People can grow toward a Christ-like life, care for each other, and make other contributions in various types of groups. Real fellowship is experienced in different ways at different times. For example, fellowship occurs when sharing and studying God's Word together. It is also experienced when serving and/or when outreaching together. Perhaps the deepest sense of fellowship emerges at times of suffering when we enter into each other's pain and grief and carry each other's

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[1548] elmbrook.org/ministries/life-groups.

burdens.[1549] Relational small groups are a means of connecting people and offering them a place for self-disclosure and meaningful interaction. Within this context each group decides their purpose, duration, number, etc. Small groups come in a variety of shapes, sizes and forms.

However, although the common interest(s) which brings together a relational small group can vary from group to group, the foundational purpose of spiritual growth needs to be included in the experience of every group. In general, Bible study, prayer, sharing life together and mission through serving and/or outreaching need to be a part of the experience of every relational small group in order for significant spiritual growth to occur..

Relational small groups aimed at effectively fostering persons growing as followers of Christ are covenantal in nature such as those based upon the recommended relational small group covenant considered in Section 3.a.(4) above. Although covenantal in nature (being based upon the two foundational goals and six core values), various relational small groups need not be the same. Differing small groups are necessary to meet the needs and interests of the different members of our congregation. The learning and practice of spiritual disciplines through relational small groups can be practiced in many ways with each group taking on those attributes reflecting its particular common interests and needs. It is ultimately up to the members to shape their own group. However, when doing so, such needs to be done within the context of the group covenant reflecting the foundational purposes and core values.[1550]

7. Essential Goals of Relational Small Groups

Relational Small Groups serve one or a some combination of several goals including edification, leadership development, evangelism and multiplication, and pastoral care.

- *Edification* – A foundational and primary goal of relational small groups is edification, i.e., growing members toward a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions. Structure the group for members to nurture and care for each other and helping one another in growing to maturity in Christ. Although edification is rooted in the Bible, the primary purpose of the group is not Bible study. Emphasis on Bible study tends to intellectualize scripture and internalize faith rather placing the emphasis on the application of the Bible to personal growth. The goal of the small group "is not Bible information, but life transformation."[1551]

- *Evangelism* – A second essential function of a relational small group is evangelism. Although edification is foundational to everything else, edification, groups must avoid becoming ingrown and focusing solely on themselves. Small groups need to be involved in personal relationship evangelism in some manner on an on-going basis. For example, each member of the group might be asked to set a measurable outreach

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[1549] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* 141 (2002).
[1550] Jon S. Hanson, "Getting Connected: Importance and Nature of Relational Small Groups," presentation on behalf of the Fox River Congregational Church Discipleship Team Group Link Conference, , February 24, 2013.
[1551] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 156 (1993).

goal and be held accountable for achieving it (e.g., establish a relationship and successfully invite an unbeliever to some church activity within a specified time).[1552]

- *Pastoral Care* – As a church grows larger, the responsibilities for pastoral care, which commonly fall upon the pastor and /or his staff, become overwhelming. A decentralized pastoral care structure is needed to assure that all persons' needs are met. The role of the pastoral pastor and his pastoral staff should shift from providing pastoral care to equipping lay church members to provide the bulk of pastoral care. Caring small groups draw believers together with love and commitment for Christ and for one another. Frequently coming together in a small caring group develops a sense of acceptance and support not often found elsewhere. Furthermore, small groups can undertake offering care to persons outside their group. Involvement of small groups contributes to decentralizing the caring function and enables the church pastor to focus on those things for which he is best positioned to do.[1553] At the same time, group members themselves grow toward a more Christ-like life.

- *Leadership Development* – As a church grows, the increasing number of relational small group will increase the demand for more group leaders. An important element in filling this demand is for current relational small groups to have both a leader and an apprentice. Once trained the apprentice can serve either his current group with its leader moving on or the apprentice can assume leadership of a new group. Leaders need spiritual maturity, relational strength, leadership skills, and evidence a visible life of faith. The multiplication of well led groups expands the ability of the church to reach out to and bring more people into and grow in the family of Christ.[1554]

- *Multiplication* – To be an effective disciple-making church, a church needs to continually seek not only to increase the number of persons embraced within current small groups, but also seek to multiply the number of small groups. Current groups generate new leaders enable the formation of additional groups.[1555]

  Generally, a relationally small group starts with three to eight or ten people. Dynamics change when a group reaches this size. As groups become larger, they become more leader centered and experience a decline in heart-to-heart fellowships, trust, transparency, intimacy and participation. Thus, it is imperative to grow/multiply the number of relational small groups rather than increasing the current size of existing groups.

Within the parameters of the above key elements, flexibility reigns. Leaders and groups are at liberty to experiment in adapting small group principles in performing various functions and growing their members in the image of Christ. Discern what actually works rather than how

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[1552] *Id.* at 157.
[1553] *Id.* at 154-55.
[1554] *Id.* at 156-57.
[1555] *Id.* at 157.

it should work.[1556] However, it is the responsibility of the church to foster and assure that the fundamentals of relational small groups are understood and incorporated in all the groups.

VII. BUILDING A CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIAN CHURCH[1557]

PART FIVE, Section IX. considers evangelism in the context of the Growing into the Evangelism Stage of disciple-making. There the focus centered upon the role and development of individual believers in personal relationship evangelism and the church's responsibility in creating evangelism disciple-making experiences. The following discussion here, shifts focus from the individual's perspective to the church's perspective of building a contagious Christian church. Of course, this includes the church activities considered earlier, but there are additional approaches and supporting evangelistic functions to be considered.

A. SYNERGY: INTEGRATION OF PERSONAL AND CHURCH OUTREACH EFFORTS

The early Christians not only preached the gospel, they strove to persuade people of its life-changing message. They delivered the message with conviction and the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel message led people to believe in Christ, to repent and to be saved from sin and eternal death. Similarly, today a "spiritually vital church is one that mobilizes it members to witness and creates many opportunities for them to present the gospel."[1558]

> There is little ambiguity or doubt that evangelism is central to what we're supposed to be about.... [The Great Commission was given by Christ] for all churches of all time, so it *includes every one of us who is a part of those congregations.*" [1559] – (Emphasis supplied.)

Thus, each person's individual personal relational evangelism plays a crucial role in bringing people to Christ. To be an effective disciple-making church, it is essential for a church to motivate, equip and support ordinary believers to communicate their faith naturally and do so effectively. People come to Christ one life at a time – usually through the influence of one or two authentic Christians who have built genuine relationships with them. All believers can and should have that kind of impact on the people round them.[1560]

However, more is needed than enthusiastic and equipped individuals to effectively reach out to others. There also needs to be evangelistically active churches synergistically functioning along with them. There are limits to the degree of success which individuals can achieve when

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[1556] Joel Comiskey, *Cell Church Solutions: Transforming the Church in North America* 63 (2005).

[1557] The terminology "contagious Christian church comes from Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Christian Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (2001as well as other resources from Willow Creek Community Church.

[1558] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 73 (1993).

[1559] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 20 (2001).

[1560] *Id.* at 21.

carrying out unsupported Lone Ranger evangelism. Those being reached tend to fall through the cracks when evangelistic efforts aren't well integrated with and followed up by the rest of the local church.[1561]

Rather than engaging in various efforts in isolation, effective disciple-making churches integrate personal evangelism of individuals with church creative outreach events, Bible teaching, relevant worship, etc. When individual personal relationships develop with persons outside the faith, there needs to be a place to bring them to experience a relevant church service event or other activity. When a person asks spiritual questions, classes, teachers, or small groups need to be available to help them. When a commitment to Christ is finally made, the church can offer a course of action whereby such person can find community, spiritual growth and accountability in a small group. Developing a synergistic approach for individual and church efforts affords a powerful evangelistic approach. This is essential for effective outreach efforts.[1562]

B. CHURCHES THAT REACH LOST PEOPLE[1563]

Churches which have been successful in bringing people to Christ reflect four fundamental characteristics; truth, experience, serving and prayer.

- *Truth* – All proclamations, assertions and efforts must be grounded in absolute truth. Truth is on our side. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life…." (John 14:16) Efforts to attract persons to Christ and his church by shading or circumventing gospel truth are doomed to fail. Whether the mode of communication is debate, dialogue, stories, or testimonies, they must be founded on truth.

- *Experience God* – While speaking the truth about God, it is essential, to remember that God is more than facts. In a commercial context, Harley Davidson does more than simply offer a high-quality motorcycle and service. It also sells the experience of a Harley. It is crucial for a church to help people experience God. God is love, mercy, compassion and joy. People possess an inherent hunger to experience him. Thus, when reaching out to people not only tell them about God but also afford opportunities to experience God (e. g., worship services, small groups, outreach events, etc.). Invite people to welcoming and friendly activities, rather than to intimidating, situations, where they can at least get a glimpse God,

- *Serving* – Serving others is the third essential component in reaching out to and sharing Christ with people. Serve their practical needs before attempting to share Christ's love. Reflect Christ's love in practical terms. Once their interest has been engendered, they become open to a more explicit sharing of Christ's love. Thus,

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[1561] *Id.* at 21-23.

[1562] *Id.* at 23.

[1563] This Section draws primarily on Lee Strobel, "Churches that Reach Lost People" (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

think in terms of how the church may discern and help meet problems of persons in the community. Show people in need that the church cares. Develop a sense in the community that the Jesus place is a place where they want to go. Serve in a manner which is attractive so that people will want to discover what motivates the server's love and caring.

- *Cognizance of Dependence on God: Prayer* – In attempting to reach out to others (evangelism), remain cognizant of our dependence on God. Such dependence is reflected by prayer. Pray in three ways. First, pray persistently for the lost. For example, engender the practice by all church members to pray daily for one minute for a specific lost person. Second, pray for opportunities to approach a lost person. Third, prayers are needed to ask God to embolden us to reach out to others, to communicate the emptiness of a life without Christ and salvation through the cross, to help us to open their heart to accept Christ, and to open the door to spiritual conversations.

  Reviving and strengthening evangelism results only "to the extent that we locate ourselves in God's plans and God's reality through a discipline of prayer. Take time to pray. Pray for nonbelievers. Intercede for the next generation of Christians."[1564]

When implementing a synergistic approach to its evangelism (and other efforts), these crucial elements of truth, offering opportunities to experience God, serving and cognizance of dependence on God through prayer need to remain in the forefront of the church's efforts.

C. EVANGELISTIC VALUES

Seven contagious (evangelistic) values serve as the foundation of outreach efforts. These values, which are rooted in scripture, provide the essential principles which need to be owned, modeled and instilled in the culture of the church in order to build a contagious Christian church.

- *Value #1 – People Matter to God.* Effective evangelistic efforts are founded on both leaders and church members deeply believing that people matter to God. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son…." (John 3:16) Jesus clearly manifests that we need to see every person as one who is created in the image of God and is loved by God. The church needs to cultivate this core value in the hearts of its members.[1565]

- *Value #2 – People Are Spiritually Lost.* Contrary to the belief of many that "I am OK, you're OK," the Bible manifests a very different picture. No one is righteous. Thankfully, Jesus declared that his mission is "to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) This offers a simple statement of truth about those yet to find Jesus and his grace. People don't become right with God simply because they do good or loving

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[1564] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism* 101 (1919).

[1565] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 35-37 (2001).

things and/or engage in sincere religious activities. No matter how good people are, failing to know Christ leads to a Christ-less eternity. The Bible makes clear that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Thus, everyone needs to know, accept and follow Christ.[1566]

- *Value #3 – People Need Christ*. Modern thinking militates against biblical teaching. Christians should not impose their beliefs on others. Some believe there are different paths to God, or perhaps there is no God at all. Everyone has their own truth. To the contrary, however, Christ taught "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) And, "Salvation is found in no one else…." (Acts 4:12). While this message is unpopular or politically incorrect for many, biblically it is inescapable.[1567] People are spiritually hungry. Christ is the answer to this hunger and salvation. The gospel needs to be proclaimed with clarity.[1568]

- *Value #4 – People Need Answers*. People need more than simply hearing the gospel preached. To assist people in moving toward Christ, their questions need to be addressed. Demonstrate that the Christian faith is built upon a foundation of truth which can be trusted. Thus, it is important to not only *declare* the gospel to the doubters and unbelievers, it must be *defined* it and *defended.* Deal with intellectual roadblocks. Failure to answer questions offers excuse for disbelief. As Peter admonished, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)[1569]

- *Value #5 – People Need Community*. God designed and created people to share life together and with him in community. People need community. A church collectively and members individually are responsible for building a church where authentic community flourishes for not only current members, but also for those who not yet convinced – a place where persons can "test drive" the Christian faith before moving ahead to becoming part of it. Thus, a church needs to expose outsiders to genuine biblical fellowship. When a church does so, Christ is with us and the person we are trying to reach. Provide opportunities to experience a taste of genuine community. Doing so, enhances the likelihood that a person will be motivated to participate in becoming members of God's family.[1570]

- *Value #6 – People Need Cultural Relevance*. Cultural barriers, exist which deter secular persons from hearing and understanding the gospel message. These include such things as language used, manner of dress, musical tastes, personal motivators, cultural norms, beliefs and spiritual interests, styles of learning, both religious and/or

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[1566] *Id.* at 37-38.
[1567] *Id.* at 39.
[1568] Lonnie Richardson, "Contagious Christianity: Taking the Plunge," July 8, 2001 (sermon).
[1569] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 42-45 (2001).
[1570] *Id.* at 46-47.

secular traditions, etc.[1571] Paul recognized the need to overcome cultural barriers in communicating the gospel message.

> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Of course, Paul only made such accommodations when doing so did not to compromise his spiritual integrity. While it is necessary to take appropriate risks in reaching out to others, this must not be done in a manner or situation which detracts from the gospel message.

Do not alter or compromise the message it in any way. But rather, the value of cultural reference only impacts such things language, buildings, clothes, choice of music, cultural points of reference, habits, teaching styles and traditions. Express biblical truths in *language* and terminology that the listener will more likely understand and in the context of his or her culture, e.g., use "forgiver and leader" rather than "Savior and Lord." *Dress* in ways that minimize cultural barriers (e.g., causal rather than coats and ties). Utilize *music*, which complements the message and appeals to the listeners. Convey not only the costs of following Christ, but also bring out the tremendous benefits of doing so in a manner to draw upon peoples' *personal motivations*. Communicate in the context of *familiar local culture points* of reference. Adjust to the *habits* of the listeners (e.g., time and day of the event such as worship services). Tailor the occasion (worship or other gatherings) to the level of *spiritual and relational openness* of those being reached out to. Employ those modes of communication attuned to the *learning style(s)* of the recipient (reading, listening, visual, hearing). Teach using the tools of drama, video, multimedia to raise spiritual interest and preset biblical truths. Draw upon both *religious and secular traditions* (e.g., various stories, holidays) to present spiritual truths. In short, crack the cultural code for each generation and, in a manner relevant to them, communicate the full gospel message.[1572]

- *Value #7 – People Need Time*. While some unbelievers come to Christ rather quickly, after having been exposed to the gospel message, most skeptics and unbelievers need

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[1571] *Id.* at 49.
[1572] *Id.* at 50-58.

> more time and perhaps some space to recognize that the rational side of Christianity makes sense as they consider and balance the costs and benefits of actually following Christ. Pressing persons to take steps for which they are not ready very likely will backfire. Although they should be encouraged and sometimes challenged, avoid pushing them prematurely. Find the right balance between persistence and patience. Permit people to proceed at their own and God's pace. Plant the seed and rely on God to make it grow. (1 Corinthians 3:6)[1573] We each can do our part by sharing the good news and then trust the Lord to do the rest.[1574]

In short, seven evangelistic values have been discerned which provide the foundation for building an effective contagious Christian church;

- People Matter to God
- People Are Spiritually Lost
- People Need Christ
- People Need Answers
- People Need Community
- People Need Cultural Relevance
- People Need Time.

Having ascertained these evangelistic values, the question becomes how to put them into effect so as to reach the doubters and atheists. What is the evangelic process?

D. EVANGELISTIC PROCESS

Evangelism is one of the core missions embraced by FRCC's current and the recommended Mission Statements. The discernment of the evangelism values affords a foundation to support working toward accomplishing this mission in the context of the culture within which the church functions. In doing so, it is important to recognize that evangelism is not simply an event. It is a process. To be effective in carrying out the evangelism mission, it is important to establish a step-by-step strategy to put its mission and values into action.

There is a proven six stage process, implemented by Willow Creek Community Church, which can lead to a highly effective contagious evangelism effort in other churches. The six stages are

- own and model evangelism values,
- instill evangelism values,
- empower an evangelism point person,
- liberate and equip every believer,
- develop a diverse evangelism team, and
- innovate high impact events.

[1573] *Id.* at 59.
[1574] Upper Room (Daily Devotional), p.44, May-June, 2019.

Critical for the church is to get both its leaders and its members to affirm and carry out their roles. To this six stage evangelism process we now turn

1. Stage 1: Owning and Modeling Evangelistic Values – Life Style of Personal Evangelism[1575]

The shape of an organization is a reflection of those who lead it. As taught by Sam Walton in a commercial context, the values which permeate the culture of an organization are the values flowing out of the people who run it. Thus, the first stage of creating a contagious Christian church centers on church leaders embedding an evangelistic culture in the church by personally owning and modeling evangelistic values themselves.

> "When the pastor and the leadership of the church are fired up about living a lifestyle of evangelism, they are sending a clear message to the congregation that it is a priority."[1576]

The values which permeate the culture of an organization are those that flow out of the people who lead it.[1577] To build contagious churches, leaders "must own and model evangelistic values."[1578] The key idea in Stage 1 is that "Leaders must model contagious lives."[1579] As said in 1 Timothy 4:12, "… *set an example for the believers* in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (Emphasis supplied.)

> [U]ntil leaders are modeling evangelism that other people can imitate – and can convince their people that it's meaningful and doable – the people will continue to cheer and applaud from the sidelines.[1580]

Thom Rainer highlights that in recent years there has been

> a precipitous decline in the amount of time church leaders spend doing evangelism, or doing activities that have an outward focus…. If the pastors and church leaders are not serious about reaching people with the gospel… [d]on't expect the members to do so either.[1581]

[1575] For an extensive discussion of Stage 1. *See* either *id.* at 87-110 or Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).

[1576] Bill Hybels, "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Your Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2014.

[1577] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 89 (2001).

[1578] *Id.* In "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Our Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2015. Bill Hybels sets forth 14 practices for church leaders to raise and maintain one's evangelistic enthusiasm.

[1579] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 111 (2001).

[1580] Rick Richardson, "Confronting the Challenges of Leading Evangelism," OutreachMagazine.com, May 12, 2020.

[1581] Thom Rainer, "The 5-Hour Challenge That Will Make Your Church Focus Outward," OutreachMagazine.com, February 21, 2019.

Rainer issues a challenge to pastors, staff and church leaders. Commit a specified amount of time per week to evangelism and outwardly focused ministries. Mark time on the calendar. Then "don't let busyness and excuses that keep you from fulfilling your challenge."[1582]

2. Stage 2: Instilling Evangelistic Values in the People Around Us

a. Deepen Convictions: Evangelize Those Called to Evangelize

In recent years there has been a dramatic change in Christians' views on sharing their faith. Those engaged in evangelism have been and are confronted with mounting challenges including,

- *Stay in Your Lane* – Over 80% of Americans say that they believe one should not criticize the life choices of others. Consequently, spiritual conversations, such as telling someone that he or she is in desperate, existential need of a Savior confront stiff and increasing social pressure not to offend.[1583]

- *Extremism* – Attitudes toward Christianity are moving beyond perceiving Christianity as being merely irrelevant to being viewed as extreme. Three out of five adults (and 83% of non-Christians) believe efforts to convert another person to Christianity is religious extremism.[1584]

- Other challenges include secular rising, belief in the self, bad religion, skepticism of sincerity, outsourcing evangelism, conversational barriers, and not-so-great commission.[1585]

Thus, not surprisingly, the percentage of Christians has substantially increased who say "I would avoid discussions about my faith if my non-Christian friend would reject me. Increasingly, numerous Christians have come to believe that it is the responsibility of the church to do the work of sharing the faith with others. That is, outsource the responsibility for spiritual conversations to others.[1586]

Effective evangelism has little future if Jesus followers are unwilling to share their faith. Regardless of those external factors influencing non-Christian attitudes toward Christianity, "p*racticing Christians must believe their faith is worth sharing.*"[1587]

Unfortunately, the Barna researchers have found that the situation is not as favorable as we would like.

[1582] *Id.*
[1583] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism* 88 (2019).
[1584] *Id.* at 88. Other challenges include secular rising, belief in the self, bad religion, skepticism of sincerity, outsourcing evangelism, conversational barriers, and not-so-great commission. *See id.* at 88-89.
[1585] *See id.* at 88-89.
[1586] *Id.* at 89.
[1587] *Id.* at 46.

> [W]hile more than nine out of 10 practicing Christians agree that part of their faith means being a witness for Jesus (96%), and eight out of 10 strongly agree that "the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus" (79%), one-quarter *also* believes it is "wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith" (27%). Among Millennials, the percentage is nearly half (47%).[1588]

Furthermore, the data demonstrates that among millennials there is great ambivalence being called to share their faith with others. Some Millennials are unsure about evangelism or think it as morally wrong. Younger Christians are aware of the cultural resistance to spiritual conversations sharing the gospel which highlight people's differences. Young Christians' hesitance to share the faith is quite understandable in today's culture which casts a negative light on proselytization. Three out of five Christian Millennials believe people today are likely to take offense when one tries to share his or her faith with them. Thus, it is no surprise that Christians, especially younger Christians, are becoming even less willing to share the gospel.[1589]

It is difficult to cultivate a deep and resilient faith conviction which embraces the call to evangelize in a cultural environment which says do not either implicitly or explicitly criticize another's life.

Furthermore, a major challenge confronting churches seeking to more effectively reach out to people to bring them to Christ and participating in a Christian fellowship community is what has been referred to as the *Not- So-Great Commission*. A most surprising finding in recent years is that of 51% of Christian churchgoers report that they have never heard of the concept of the Great Commission. This reflects an incredible unawareness of the fundamental calling for every Christian to make disciples.[1590]

Nevertheless, the fundamental truth never changes. People need Christ. Evangelism needs to be ingrained not only in our church leaders but also in the church body as a whole. The Barna study highlights

> the Christian community's profound need to bolster our confidence that they [members of the community] matter… in our materialistic, accelerated, frenetic, experience and emotion-driven society.... *Among the convictions that require our recommitment is this: Evangelizing others is good and worthy of our time, energy and investment*.
>
> …[This includes passing on and deepening a] resilient faith to Christian young people (this is also a form of evangelism),

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[1588] *Id.* at 46.
[1589] *Id.* at 48.
[1590] *Id.* at 89.

> planning especially for the pivot point of the high school and college-age years. The dropout problem is real, and it has a chilling effect on the overall evangelistic environment…. [E]very day that faith for the next generation must be among the Church's top priorities.[1591]

Critical is the fact that Millennials are less committed than older Christians to the belief that the best that could happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus. This is key. For those who believe the best thing that can happen to someone is to know and follow Jesus, they can be motivated to share the faith. If this belief is lost, then they won't. And. it appears that a growing number of Christians are not sure exactly how good the good news is. Christians must be reminded and understand that the good news is genuinely *good news* for everybody to experience and everybody to share. Thus, *there is a growing need to "evangelize" Christians as to the importance [and morality] of evangelism.* Once the younger Christians are committed to deepening and sustaining their resilient faith, they then need to be persuaded that for them, as well as other Christians, evangelism is an essential element of following Christ.[1592]

> Spiritual hunger is not static— and Christians can help it grow. The data indicates that spiritual hunger varies among non-Christians in part *depending on the Christians they know*. When non-Christians have experienced vibrancy, personal care, intelligence, reasonableness and a gentle, non-judgmental approach from Christians, their spiritual curiosity overall and their interest in Christianity specifically are elevated. This implies that spiritual hunger has a social element. *We all play a part in encouraging or depressing the spiritual hunger of our neighbors.*[1593] (Emphasis supplied.)

To be an effective disciple-making church, church needs to evangelize those called by Christ in his Great Commission to be evangelists, i.e., the young, middle-agers and those more advanced in years. To better enable persons to follow God's call, an effective disciple-making church needs to (1) *deepen the members of its community faith convictions* and (2) *instill evangelism values church-wide.*

b. Elements of Instilling Evangelistic Values[1594]

Perhaps the most overlooked requirement in building a contagious Christian church is the spiritual maturity of current church members. Not uncommonly, churches traditionally focus on the wants and desires of those already within the church. Effective church wide evangelism outreach requires church members to learn and accept limiting their own

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[1591] David Klingman, "What's Next for Evangelism" Barna, *Reviving Evangelism* 94 (2019).
[1592] *Id.* at 84-85.
[1593] *Id.* at 82.
[1594] Mark Mittleberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 116-128.

preferences with respect to worship styles, other ministries and church practices. This necessitates a church to instill evangelism values on a church-wide basis.

When leaders consistently and aggressively communicate values, over time the culture of the church will change. This starts by owning and modeling evangelistic values (Stage 1). Then leaders need to move to Stage 2, i.e., instilling these values in the people around them. The question becomes how to motivate people who aren't excited about becoming involved in personal evangelism. Instilling evangelistic values embraces several elements including the following.

- *Pray* – Pray for embedding the values of evangelism. First, leaders do so for themselves. Next, equip those being led to pray for the lost. Call upon each person to make of list of, e.g., three persons whom they hope will come to Christ and then pray for them daily. Also, include outreach related prayers in team meetings, classes and services throughout the church.

- *Vision Casting* – Pastors and core lay leaders clearly and repeatedly cast God's vision for the congregation. Here, vision means the discerned God's purpose for the particular church and the God's Kingdom contribution work the church is to do in the local community. Spread the vision by all means of communication available: the pulpit, disciple-making training, newsletters, bulletins, websites, small groups, and social media. Budgets and various ministries must reflect this God given focus. Things that do not, set them aside.[1595]

- *Lead It* – Church leaders need to clearly and repeatedly emphasize that evangelism is central to what the various ministries are to be about. For people to become personally involved, convince them that the mission is biblical, Christ honoring, essential and urgent. The lives and future of many people depend upon it. As Reverend Bill Hybels emphasizes, not only is walking the walk key, talking the talk is also key. Pastors need to teach about evangelism on an on-going and regular basis.[1596] "[I]t's going to take a constant lifting of people's vision in order to overcome the gravitational pull toward self-centeredness."[1597] Furthermore, importantly, emphasize those who actively become involved in reaching out to others for Christ, grow in their own personal Walk with Christ.

- *Tell the Truth about It* – An essential part of leadership is honesty and complete communication about the problem(s) which need to be overcome. Break the bad news as to how far short we are in achieving our mission. Create a sense of urgency.

- *Teach It* – Whether it is the pastor, Sunday school teacher, small group leader or someone else who speaks in a ministry situation, raise the evangelism temperature in the church via straightforward teaching of the biblical values calling for evangelism.

[1595] Jeffrey A. Johnson, *Got Style? Personality Based Evangelism* 148 (2009).
[1596] Bill Hybels, "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Our Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2014.
[1597] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Courageous Church, Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 119 (2001).

Teach regularly from key passages. Go over the seven values of considered above. Show that evangelism can and should flow out of each individual's God given personality rather than one size fits all. When trying to instill the value of evangelism, it is important for clear, passionate biblical teaching which comes from the highest level in the church as well as from other leaders.

- *Illustrate It* – Although it is necessary to go through a cycle of topics and scripture passages to provide a balanced teaching diet to the church, nevertheless the value of evangelism needs to be constantly lifted up. This can be done through evangelism illustrations though focusing on a different primary topic. Repeatedly illustrate the value of evangelism.

- *Study and Discuss It* – Offer church members the opportunity to study and discuss evangelism in small group settings. Such small group efforts are more effective when done in concert with the teaching and vision casting from the pulpit.

- *Disciple It* – Life change best occurs in the context of a small group where participants disciple one another.

- *Inspire It* – Pastors, leaders and other members of influence should participate in events outside their normal circle which can provide increased inspiration for evangelism, e.g., visit effective outreach churches in the local area, attend outreach conferences, discuss evangelism materials with leaders in the church, etc. A moderate investment in training and travel can reap great rewards.[1598]

- *Personalize It* – Motivate people by presenting the call for evangelism on a personal level. Help members see how evangelism efforts can attract persons they care about, e.g., son, daughter, grandchild, friend, etc. "[W]hen a loved one's life and eternity are at stake, levels of personal interest and motivation climb sharply."[1599]

- *Fund It* – Evangelism is a major priority for a disciple-making church. Planning meetings and retreats, attending evangelism conferences and workshops, training, outreach events, etc. require money. Money needs to be allocated to where the church convictions are. Thus, evangelism should be a major part of the church's budget.

- *Schedule It* – In addition to investing money in outreach efforts, church leaders need to invest one's own time. Make time. Schedule rooms and time slots for outreach-oriented efforts. Also, don't wait until one is fully prepared. If one does so, it may never happen. Take up the challenge and go for it.

- *Measure It* – In order to be managed, it needs to be measured. Count conversions, attendance at outreach events, baptisms, persons in exploring Christianity groups,

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[1598] *Id.* at 124.
[1599] *Id.*

people in training courses, and members participating in and with the evangelism team.

- *Reinforce It* – To inspire and create those persons active in outreach efforts, make heroes out of ordinary Christians having a contagious influence. Reinforce and celebrate the good things that are happening. Leaders should express gratitude through personal thanks, notes, comments from the pulpit, etc. "It is vital that we affirm them. Do so in front of the entire congregation, Underscore the importance of what they're doing."[1600]

- Celebrate It – "Nothing fires up an individual Christian or a church more than seeing the tangible results of evangelism in the form of new believers. We need to find appropriate ways of telling stories about how they came to Christ….[1601] And importantly, celebrate when persons cross the line of faith. The Bible expresses that every time someone does so, there is rejoicing in heaven. (Luke 15:10) Willow Creek Community Church takes this to heart. When people come to Christ, the congregation gathers along the lakeshore on the church's campus bringing picnics and blankets to sit on when people are baptized. Then there is a lot of shouting, cheering and celebrating.[1602]

c. Process to Instill Evangelism Values

(1) Start Small

When undertaking to instill evangelism values start small. Rather than starting with the church as a whole, begin with small groups especially one involving the leadership. Talk and reemphasize that since *God cares for the lost, so should we.* Pray for the lost during the services and at small group meetings. Get the church into the same mindset. Possibly use, e.g., the booklet *Three Habits of Highly Contagious Christians,* in small group discussion.[1603]

Perhaps the initial small discussion group, here at Fox River, should consist of professional staff, our lay and team leaders (the Accountability Team).. Then each team leader can lead his or her team in the small group discussion. Defer going to the body of the church until the evangelistic values have been instilled in the leadership group.

(2) Vision Casting Periodically to Congregation as a Whole

Every time there is an opportunity to vision cast about the mission of the church, evangelism should prominent. When we offer support groups to those who are hurting, we want people to get healing and meet the great healer, i.e., Jesus Christ. When we

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[1600] *Id.* at 127.
[1601] *Id.* at 127-28.
[1602] Bill Hybels, "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Our Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2014.
[1603] Rickey Bolden, "Instill Evangelism Values in the People Around Us," How to Build a Contagious Church" Willow Creek Association Conference, October 15-16, 2004.

provide relief (food, clothing, etc.) in times of crisis, we want to introduce people to Christ because he is the one who meets all our needs. At the heart of effective outreach, there is a burning desire to see people come to faith. Don't pass up an opportunity to vision cast to every ministry about the impact they're having and/or can have in reaching people for Christ.[1604]

Once the church leadership has embraced the values of evangelism, then it is time to go to the Congregation as a whole. The minister should preach evangelism values every week for a period of time. At some point during worship services, each member of the congregation should drop the name of a specific lost person, for whom they will pray, into a prayer box. This will increase personal commitment to do so. In addition to sermons, leaders can teach through a variety of techniques such as small discussion group, Bible studies, etc. Here the teaching should not emphasize theology, but rather on doing, how to do evangelism.[1605]

3. Stage 3: Empower an Evangelism Point Person

a. Designating an Evangelism Point Person

Many pastors possess great desire and intentions to grow the number of persons coming to Christ. But, when they try to do it all, they are overwhelmed. A pastor cannot alone build a contagious church. Nevertheless, for any business to survive it needs to serve both present customers well and bring in new customers. Churches seeking effectively evangelize need to designate someone, as an Evangelism Point Person to oversee the efforts reaching out to new customers. Vital growing churches have someone other than pastor in charge of evangelism efforts. This is not only true with respect to large churches, it may be even be truer for small churches where evangelistic work tends to be done by one person, i.e., the pastor. Failure to have a person to oversee the church's evangelism efforts most likely will lead to overwhelming the pastor to the detriment of the church as a whole. A ministry of such importance as evangelism needs someone put in charge. To be an effective disciple-making church in the area of evangelism, clearly authorize and empower an Evangelism Point Person, perhaps be best achieved by incorporation in the By-Laws. Such person will partner with the Senior Pastor in championing evangelism. And, he or she would also automatically become member of the Evangelism Team in developing and implementing a strategic evangelism plan.[1606]

The person selected should be someone who has *proven to be a leader* (someone who knows how to get things done) and who possesses *evangelistic passion*. He or she should also reflect several specific elements of character, competency and chemistry (i.e., how he or she relates to others).[1607]

At the outset, the Evangelism Point Person might be a volunteer, but at some point, this position might call for a paid professional. If and when going the professional route, look for

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[1604] Bill Hybels, "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Your Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2015.

[1605] Rickey Bolden, "Instill Evangelism Values in the People Around Us," How to Build a Contagious Church" Willow Creek Association Conference, October 15-16, 2004.

[1606] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*132-36 (2001).

[1607] *Id.* at 138-139. For a list of specific characteristics for each category, see id. at 139,

someone not only within one's own church, other churches and related organizations, but also look in the business/professional community[1608] For alternative places to find a such person, see the citation below.[1609]

b. Responsibilities of the Evangelism Point Person

(1) Supplementary Roles

The Evangelism Point Person's responsibilities occur throughout all six stages of the evangelistic process. He or she plays supplementary roles in Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the evangelistic process. In Stage 1, in addition to the pastor and other leaders, he or she owns evangelism values and lives and models an evangelistic life. In Stage 2, he or she should assume a partnering role with the pastor in raising and instilling evangelistic values in people around him or her. In Stage 3, the Evangelism Point Person needs to find and equip additional leaders from among the congregation to assist him or her. Most of these persons should remain in their other ministries or teams throughout the church, while, at the same time, aligning themselves with the Evangelism Point Leader. By doing so, they are positioned to uplift and implement outreach values and activities within their differing teams or ministries.[1610]

(2) Primary Responsibilities

Although the Evangelism Point Person partners with the pastor and other church leaders in the first three stages of the evangelism process, in conjunction with the Evangelism Team, Stages 4, 5 and 6 are primarily his or her responsibility. These include the following.

- Training 100% of the Church – In Stage 4 of the evangelistic process, the first and a most important responsibility is to implement training (whether in seminars, classes, small groups, church-wide campaigns, or combination thereof) to assist every believer in the church in developing the skills and confidence to communicate and share their faith to others.[1611] Furthermore, offer age-appropriate training for kids and youth. When they learn the importance of personal evangelism at an early age, they may traverse that path into and throughout their adult years.[1612]

- Mobilizing the Church's Evangelism Specialists (the 10%) – Typically 10% of a congregation have a passion and gift for evangelism. An advantage of offering ongoing training is that it provides the Evangelism Point Person, and those involved in the training, numerous opportunities to identify and recruit those with gifts or passion for evangelism. Such people are vital for effective outreach efforts. Invite them to occasional

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[1608] Mark Mittelberg, "You Are Not Alone: Empowering Leadership for a Contagious Church," (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004)..
[1609] *Id.* at 139-42.
[1610] Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 77-78 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).
[1611] This Section draws primarily on id. at 78.
[1612] Bill Hybels, "5 Ways to Embed Evangelism into Our Culture," OutreachMagazine.com, May 1, 2014.

gatherings designed to charge their evangelistic batteries and alert them to upcoming outreach opportunities and training events. Here, and in Stage 5 of the evangelistic process, is when the Evangelism Point Person gathers and mobilizes this group of enthusiasts and outreach momentum can really build.[1613]

- Unleashing an Array of Outreach Ministries and Events – Once the point person has mobilized a cross ministry group of highly motivated evangelists, in Stage 6 of the evangelistic process, the needed human resources are available to launch a wide range of outreach ministries and events. These people can help create and determine what efforts should be tried to reach lost people and then make it happen.[1614]

In addition, in conjunction with the Evangelism Team, the Evangelism Point Person needs to be an advocate for the lost; fighting for a budget at budget meetings, fighting for space to conduct evangelism activities, etc. Whereas other ministries in a church voice their and congregation members concerns, there is no one to represent non-Christians who are not around to be heard. They need an advocate.

c. Making the Evangelism Point Person Position Work

In order to make the Evangelism Point Person position work, (i) empower him or her, (ii) provide adequate evangelism resources, (iii) render the point person leader accountable, and (iv) encourage him or her.[1615] The latter two are self-explanatory. Here the focus is on empowering the Evangelism Point Person.

Commonly in churches, there exists considerable resistance by individual members of the congregation to becoming actively involved in evangelism efforts, as well as to the church allocating considerable time and resources away from serving current members of the church. Thus, it is essential that the pastor empower the person who is centrally involved in the evangelism cause. The role of the point person needs to be authorized and clarified. The congregation needs understand that the pastor and other church leadership including the Evangelism Team have vested trust and authority in this person.

This needs to be done both initially and reinforced periodically in vision presentations clarifying the evangelistic mission of the church. Furthermore, the empowerment should be done in a very public laudatory manner before the congregation. The congregation needs to know where the overseeing responsibility resides and have confidence in such person. Put the mantle of leadership on him or her in a manner which instills confidence (e.g., at a worship service or congregational meeting).

In addition, empowerment also emerges through interaction with other church leaders. Evangelism cuts across all the ministries of the church. If the point person becomes viewed as just another ministry leader, one of many ministries of the church, effective outreach efforts are

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[1613] Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 79 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).

[1614] *Id.* at 79.

[1615] *See id.* at 79-85.

unlikely to emerge. Thus, he or she needs be involved with other ministries so that outreach efforts are embraced by all the church ministries. However, the leader must focus on evangelism and not be burdened with responsibilities more appropriate for other ministries.

4. Stage 4: Liberating and Equipping Every Believer

In most churches, a relatively low number of members actually participate in reaching out to the unbelievers or doubters. To be an effective disciple-making church, this reluctance must be overcome. People are unlikely to engage in an activity about which they know little and do not feel prepared to undertake. A church needs to focus on liberating and equipping every believer (i.e., 100%) in the church for evangelism. To do so involves addressing the following:

- dealing with their misconceptions about evangelism,
- equipping them to engage in personal evangelism and
- implementing the concepts of evangelism based upon practice, feedback and repetition.

Each of these elements is considered in the context of the earlier discussion of personal relationship evangelism. Each person needs to be liberated from the negative attitudes which deter him or her from participating in reaching out others and to be equipped to effectively engage in personal relationship evangelism.[1616]

5. Stage 5: Mobilize the Church's Evangelism Specialists: Develop a Diversified Evangelism Group

a. Role of a Diversified Evangelism Group

In the process of creating a 100% church membership involvement in the evangelism process, don't ignore those possessing a special gift to be evangelists. In a typical church perhaps 10% possess (possibly latently) a passion for evangelism. However, they are dispersed around the church engaged in different roles. With respect to evangelism they are isolated. Discover who these people and bring them together in a manner to provide support for each other. In turn, they can serve as evangelism champions for the other 90%. *Build this 10% into a diversified evangelism group.*[1617]

However, in doing so, do not gather them all together as one continuous on-going team. If this occurs, they probably won't return to their former ministries. So, avoid having them hangout together all the time. Instead of creating an evangelism department gather these people on a relatively infrequent basis, perhaps 4 to 6 times annually for encouragement and support.

[1616] *See* discussion in PART FIVE, Section IX.C.3 & 6. above.

[1617] Mark Mittelberg. "Rallying a Team for the Frontline Action: Developing a Diverse Evangelism Team," (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

Encourage them to continue to participate in their former ministries or teams. Gather the evangelism-oriented people together, fire them up and send them back to their personal lives and other ministries. The purpose is not simply to build a small group of contagious Christians. The purpose is to develop and maintain a contagious evangelism ministry throughout the entire church, especially through the other church teams. These people are to champion evangelism throughout the church as well as individually continuing to personally engage in direct outreach efforts with persons who have not yet come to Christ.[1618]

b. Shape of the Diversified Evangelism Group Ministry[1619]

The Diversified Evangelism Group Ministry might be described as "a centralized, cross-departmental, multi-styled, easy-access, regular but not-too-frequent gathering of evangelism enthusiasts from all over the church… to MOBILIZE the Church's Evangelism Specialists – the 10%."[1620]

This ministry offers a place where persons can gather for inspiration and ideas, but not a place where people set up permanent residence. It constitutes a gathering of those possessing a particular bent towards and passion for evangelism. This team is led by the Evangelism Point Person. It is both *centralized* and *cross departmental* because evangelism is a value and activity which transcends any one ministry, team or group. The purpose is to become a contagious church, not just a contagious department. The Diversified Evangelism Team is *multi-styled* because it embraces a wide range of evangelism approaches. There should be *easy access* in terms of time and place so as to remove obstacles for participation. Furthermore, avoid projecting this team as an elite group of specialists. If a person has a passion to try, he or she is welcome. The gatherings should be *frequent enough,* e.g., four to six times a year) to build relationships, but not too frequent necessitating people to choose between other church involvements.

c. Nature of Infrequent Gatherings of Diversified Evangelism Group[1621]

Gatherings of this group afford opportunities for the enhancement of evangelism efforts through various types of experiences. Of course, given the time frame (e.g., a 2.5 hour breakfast and hanging out together), a gathering can only embrace some of these elements. However, the elements can vary somewhat from gathering to gathering depending upon what is most important at that particular time.

The components of the gathering, in some combination, should include the following.

[1618] *Id.*.

[1619] This Section draws primarily on Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 108 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).

[1620] *Id.*

[1621] This Section draws on *id.* at 109-17 and Mark Mittelberg. "Rallying a Team for the Frontline Action: Developing a Diverse Evangelism Team," (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

- opportunity for various of relational connections through sharing a meal together
- encouraging and teaching one another one another by telling their evangelism stories relating successes and failures
- bit of training, teaching and skills reinforcement by evangelism leaders from both within and outside the church
- bit of practice, role playing
- inspiration
- encouragement
- opportunity for questions
- tap into peoples' ideas
- inside scoop on upcoming outreach opportunities,
- highlighting available resources,
- group prayer
- healthy accountability (perhaps through smaller groups),
- expression of appreciation for their devotion and efforts
- celebration not only for the fruits of evangelism efforts, but also for the evangelizers themselves
- pray together
- laugh with one another

It is important for the Evangelism Point Person, the Senior Pastor and the Evangelism Team leader and to participate in these gatherings. Evangelism is a major ministry of the church deserving of their time.

d. Finding the Evangelistic Core[1622]

The next step in mobilizing the Diversified Evangelism Team is discovering and gathering those persons who evince some interest, passion, and/or gifts for evangelism. The purpose is to bring them together in a group affording them an opportunity to discover whether they may have such interest, passion and/or gifts. If yes, challenge them to go the next step.

Where does a church find those to make up this evangelistic core? Not many persons are likely to simply stand up and identify themselves. For those who don't, various approaches can be employed to find and encourage them. These include the following.

- The pastor, the Evangelism Point Person, other church leaders, and small group team leaders should be constantly alert in discerning persons evincing some interest, passion and/or gifts for evangelism.

- In training campaigns, classes, seminars, etc., and Becoming a Contagious Christian type courses, prospects tend to emerge.

[1622] *See* Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 117-23 (2007).

- Potential candidates might be discovered in various group gatherings, especially small groups focusing on evangelism or perhaps in spiritual gifts discovery small groups.

- Seize opportunities, which may in the context of a worship service, or a series of services, focusing on evangelism. Suggest a short after service opportunity to learn more about how a person might explore getting involved. Then challenge those who attend to try basic training, attend the next Diversified Evangelism Group gathering, participate in a small group studying, and/or participating in some evangelism activity.

- Partner with church ministries in identifying persons.

- Provide periodic compelling announcements to spur interest in the team.

- Send invitations to the entire congregation to check out participating in the team.

- Challenge members of the Diversified Evangelism Team to invite others to give it a try.

In each of these situations, look for people reflecting some interest or passion and/or evangelistic gifts. When such a person is discerned, pull them aside and invite them to a next step opportunity of trying out the Diversified Evangelism Group to explore where they are and where they might go in response to their interest in and gift for evangelism.

In short, the Diversified Evangelism Group consists of those persons reflecting a passion for evangelism and possessing an evangelistic gift. Through the leadership of the Evangelism Point Person, with positive support of the Senior Pastor, the Evangelism Team and other church leaders, they gather periodically for mutual encouragement, support and training for the purpose of returning to their other ministries in the church to enhance those ministries contributions to the outreach efforts of the church as well as continuing and enhancing their own personal evangelism efforts and progressing in their Walk with Christ.

Unlike the more formally organized teams of our church, members of the Diversified Evangelism Group are neither appointed (except for the Evangelism Point Person) nor elected. All are welcome. They come of their own volition and are under no compulsion to continue if it doesn't work out for them. However, through championing evangelism efforts throughout the various ministries of the church, this group of persons can vitally and substantially contribute to fostering the evangelism mission of the church.

6. Stage 6: Innovating High Impact Outreach Events

In building a contagious Christian church, a church (i) should consider mobilizing the 5% to 10% of the congregation to be champions for evangelism through a Diversified Evangelism Group (Stage 5 of the evangelistic process), (ii) should encourage, enlist, train and

support 100% of the members of the congregation in participating in personal relationship outreach efforts, and (iii), develop and implement high impact outreach events and ministries to further the evangelism process (Stage 6). Members individually reach out to people to build relationships. Then, invite/bring such persons to church events.[1623] As said in Colossians 4:5, " make the most of every opportunity."

There are a wide variety of church events and activities which can contribute to the evangelism process. These can be grouped according to three general categories: (a) worship services, (b) non-worship events and (c) small groups. The wide range of church outreach activities and events and elements in the development and implementation of these categories of outreach efforts are considered in Section F. below.

E. CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

The concept of building contagious Christian church, discussed above, rests upon six stages:

Stage 1: Owning and Modeling Evangelistic Values –
Life Style of Personal Evangelism

Stage 2: Instilling Evangelistic Values in the People Around Us

Stage 3: Empowering an Evangelism Leader

Stage 4: Liberating and Equipping Every Believer

Stage 5: Mobilizing the Church's Evangelism Specialists:
Develop a Diversified Evangelism Team

Stage 6: Innovating High Impact Outreach and Ministry Events

For these stages to successfully implement outreach efforts, several conditions are necessary including the following.

- *Fully Committed Leadership:* – Pastors and other church leaders need to be fully committed to the church's evangelistic mission (Stages 1-3). Evangelistic values must be owned and then instilled in others.

- *Participation of Entire Church:* – The church needs to encourage, support and equip all members' participation in outreach efforts. Unremitting effort toward accomplishing this is crucial not only in reaching unbelievers, but also in growing the members' own discipleship growth. The powerful outreach of the early church involved broad participation of the entire group of ordinary Christians. "Every

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[1623] Lee Strobel, "Innovating High-Impact Outreach Ministries and Events." (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

Christian is a part of the church to which Jesus gave his Great Commission, and we each have a vital role to play."[1624]

- *Alignment of the Church Ministries*: – On-going effort to align all of the church's ministries with the church's evangelistic mission is crucial. It is likely that in the process of strengthening the evangelistic values and culture in the church, pockets of resistance or even disinterest will emerge. While many of these ministries and functions fulfill other important church purposes, which is good, it is important that those functions also be maximized for the church's outreach mission. In all situations, apply the principle articulated in Colossians 4:5 – "Be wise in the way you live around those who are not Christians. Make good use of your time." All ministries of the church should include an evangelistic perspective in all that they do. Make use of every opportunity, whether worship services, outreach events, small groups, serving situations, etc. as a means to reach out to the lost. Don't let fear and traditional church strongholds deter outreach efforts.[1625] We *must* align the entire church to accomplish its mission of reaching lost people for Christ. We need to be wise about what to address and when to do so. Nevertheless, we must be courageous to move ahead as the Spirit leads[1626]

- *Strategic Coordination of All Outreach Activities*: – Be cognizant that that every class, worship service, event, small group gatherings, classes, etc. afford opportunities to point people to strategic next steps. Plan and schedule activities so one flows out into another. For example, hold an outreach event a couple of weeks after completion of a contagious Christian course or hold an exploring Christianity small group gathering immediately following a sermon or sermon series on evangelism. Every class, serving, event, etc. offers a natural opportunity to point people toward the next step.[1627]

- *Other Conditions*: – There are other conditions essential in building a successful contagious Christian church. The task is neither natural or easy. *Sustained effort* is required. Hold a high view of the Bible and emphasize the message of salvation and the need to trust Christ. And commit to prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit. Do not relegate these to merely one step in the evangelism process. Weave prayer into every stage.[1628]

The recommended mission for Fox River embraces and calls for our response (both individually and collectively as a church) to Christ's command to reach out to non-believers in efforts to lead them to acceptance of Christ, participation in Christ's family (the local church) and progressing in their walk toward growing more Christ-like in their thoughts, feelings and

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[1624] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 377 (2001).

[1625] *Id.* at 379-80.

[1626] *Id.* at 379-80.

[1627] *Id.* at 380-81.

[1628] *Id.* at 382-84.

actions. There are various ways a church can approach outreach efforts. The building of a contagious church, as considered above, affords a basis for structuring our church for major outreach efforts here at Fox River subject to additions, alterations and/or deletions which may be integrated into this basic framework as considered in other parts of this book. Regardless of how our church resolves the specifics of our evangelism efforts, through the influence of prayer and the speaking of the Holy Spirit, we need to become people "inspiring fellow church members with our lives, and teaching them, so that they in turn they will go and tell the message of God's love and truth to others."[1629]

While of prime importance, evangelism is not the sole calling of our church. As Andy Stanley so tersely puts it, to be an effective disciple-making church, the church must both *go deep and go wide*. Go wide through outreach efforts to bring in the lost, i.e., the unbelievers. But, once people come to Christ (current as well as new members), go deep in helping them grow in their faith leading to more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and action. One should not be sacrificed for the other. *Christ calls us to go both wide and go deep.*

F. OUTREACH EVENTS

1. Key Elements in Developing Outreach Events

There are several questions and principles to consider in getting on to the right track in developing and implementing an outreach event.

a. Who Are We Trying to Reach?

First, know the target whom the church is trying to reach. This determines the type and level of event to be created and implemented. Furthermore, knowing the target group enables focusing on the particular needs and interests of this set of unbelievers. Knowing the specific goal establishes to whom invitations should primarily be extended and to whom promotional efforts should be directed. Defining the focus of evangelism efforts is considered more fully in Section G. below.

b. What Are We Trying to Achieve?[1630]

Outreach events fall at different points on the continuum between lightly and heavily evangelistic. The primer level of event seeks to start people on a spiritual quest. These are low intensity events offering less in teaching and spiritual challenge and more in relationship building and areas of common interest (e.g., sporting or other types of events). Or, they might be aimed at simply at bringing people into the church to demonstrate that church members are quite normal people. The goal is to attract visitors, especially those outside the

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[1629] Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 180 (2007).

[1630] This Section draws primarily on Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 222-23 (2001); Lee Strobel, "Innovating High-Impact Outreach Ministries and Events." (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

faith, to the church campus, relate them to an in area of common interest (e.g., financial planning, music, fun, sporting event, etc.) and expose them to Christians in a non-threatening manner.

Mid-intensity level events gently challenge participants to investigate what they have heard and assure them that the church welcomes one and all (regardless of race, ethnicity and religious or non-religious background). These middle range level events are designed to assist persons in progressing on their spiritual journey toward reaching a decision for Christ.

High intensity outreach events focus on clarifying the gospel message, eliminate any confusion as to its meaning, and strip away the excuses which often hold people back. Challenge people to trust Christ. The purpose is helping people to cross the line of faith and commit their lives to Christ. Often these events afford an opportunity to pray and accept Christ right then and there.

Be clear in defining the broad purpose of the outreach event, the target to be reached, and the type of outreach event is to be held. Then articulate the specific goals and design the event accordingly.

In all cases, however, structure church outreach events with emphasis on building relationships. Members of the congregation are expected to participate with a friendship building attitude. The programs should be non-threatening. Newcomers are not singled out, pressured or embarrassed. Fun events might include picnics, ice-cream socials, square dances, sporting events, concerts with different types of music, chili cook-offs, etc. Both food and music are key elements for successful friendship building events.[1631]

c. How Does Event Fit into a Larger Evangelistic Process?[1632]

Don't develop and implement outreach events in isolation from one another.

> View them as important threads in the overall fabric of the church. …[Consider] some basic questions: How does this effort fit into the church's overarching mission and goals? How could we adjust the timing or positioning of the event to help it create more ministry synergy? What will precede it that we could build on? What will follow our event that it could feed into.[1633]

Effective application of outreach events requires designing and implementing a series of events which lead people farther along on the path to accepting Christ. For example, the first event might simply involve inviting a substantial number of people to a get acquainted, setting

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[1631] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 194-96 (1993).

[1632] This Section draws primarily on Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 229-30 (2001): Lee Strobel, "Innovating High-Impact Outreach Ministries and Events." (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

[1633] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 229 (2001).

the stage for beginning relationships. A subsequent event could focus on showing that the church body is a fun, meaningful, positive, caring and/or non-intimidating group of people. The next event might be designed to encourage seekers to participate in a short term small group discussions.

The crucial point is to create outreach events not in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of a process to move people further along in their journey. "*Always give seekers a next step.*"[1634] Such outreach events, when done with excellence, can provide a powerful supplement to the evangelism process. However, unless church members are confident that the events will be done well, they are unlikely to invite and encourage others to attend.

d. Integrate Outreach Events with Other Opportunities.[1635]

In addition to outreach events being designed to fit together with other outreach events, as part of the process of moving people progressively to next step, outreach events also need to be integrated with other ministry activities of the church. Every outreach event should be designed to move people Show them clearly a next step or steps. For example, encourage them to attend next week's worship service, other program or participation in some serving opportunity. Make clear that questions are welcomed and that services are designed to be relevant to them. In short, offer series of relevant and interesting events to those outside the faith and communicate what will occur.[1636]

e. Promotion[1637]

Holding an event does little good if people don't show up. Promote outreach events powerfully and accurately. Put substantial time and effort into getting the word out.

There are numerous modes of promotion including mailings, websites, radio and TV spots, social media, billboards, signs, flyers, and letters to people moving into the area. They all can have an impact. Create a buzz in the target community about the event.

Primarily promote through various types of invitations, especially those personally made, rather than relying mainly on advertisement. Promote through relationship building including information as to what, where (easy directions) and when. One method, often overlooked, is providing a high quality and well-worded printed piece for members to use as a tool to invite their friends. This tool has more impact than the impersonal kind since it comes with an endorsement and encouragement of a trusted friend. It can be particularly effective with an offer of a ride and/or a brunch or tasty pizza before or after the event.

[1634] *Id.* at 230.

[1635] Mark , *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 229-31 (2001) Willow Creek Resources);

[1636] Lee Strobel, "Innovating High-Impact Outreach Ministries and Events." (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

[1637] This Section draws primarily on Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 146-48 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*).

Importantly, be accurate as well as creative in all promotional efforts. If it promoted as a sporting or music event, such better be the primary focus. That is, promote with integrity. No bait and switch! That is, don't attract people by offering them one thing and then provide something else. Doing so is a real turn off and will likely to negate future efforts to reach such persons.

f. Other Elements in Effective Outreach Events[1638]

There are several other elements which contribute of successful outreach events including the following.

- *Communicate* the purpose of the event and the target not only to those involved in putting it together and implementing it, but also to the church family as a whole.

- *Design* the event to fulfill the purpose.

- "[B]e *culturally relevant* while remaining doctrinally pure."[1639] The outreach event should be well designed for the people the event is trying to reach and for the intensity level of evangelism intended.

- Plan, prepare and execute with excellence. Although avoid the paralysis of perfectionism, remember we live in a culture where people are accustomed to things being well done. Deliver at a level which makes people want to come back and bring their friends.

- *Evaluate* the results of the event in terms of the actual number of people affected. If it was a high intensity event, how many people came to Christ. That is, evaluate based upon actual impact on those trying to be reached. Then, consider how the event might be improved for future use or perhaps be discarded. Surveys, response cards, etc. are means to get a sense as to how we are doing. However, remember that we can't convert non-believers. Only the Holy Spirit can do so. All we can do is contribute to the process. Keep at and pray for God's help. (For further discussion of evaluation of outreach events, sees Section 3 below.)

  An effective disciple-making church needs to develop and implement an evaluation process. And, of course, once an event or series of outreach events have occurred and been evaluated, the church needs to apply what has been learned in the conduct of future events.

[1638] This Section draws primarily on Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church: Increasing Your Church's Evangelism Temperature* 140-44, 149-50 (2007) (revised edition of *Building a Contagious Church*)

[1639] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 228 (2001).

2. Wide Range of Outreach Events

There are a wide variety of church events and activities which can contribute to the evangelism process. As noted earlier, these can be grouped according to three general categories: (a) worship services, (b) small groups and (3) other non-worship events.

a. Worship Services

By the end of the 1990's a trend had emerged and still continues somewhat among several churches today. Separate worship services were designed specifically to attract and relate to persons outside the faith. Rather than just offering worship focused on the already believers, offer services especially relevant to those who have not yet crossed the bridge to faith. Such services, commonly referred to as seeker services, are provided in a manner enabling the unbelievers and skeptics to feel comfortable and safe rather than out of place and threatened. The Christian message is shared only in a very basic way. Music was selected to support the message in a manner pleasing and attractive to seekers. It is important for such services to be perceived by church members as being attractive to and comfortable for their unchurched friends as a condition of their willingness to invite their them to attend. Services which attract people outside the faith to return are essential to an effective evangelism process.[1640]

However, as an alternative to holding separate worship services constructed especially for people outside the faith, a church might continue to hold regular services which also take into account sensitivity to such persons' needs. Such an approach, entitled worship evangelism, is considered in some detail in the PART FIVE, Section II.E. above. In addition to other factors mentioned there, a worship service evangelism approach recommends itself for Fox River Congregational Church which is a relatively small church perhaps lacking the resources to offer two separate significantly different worship services. Furthermore, such services may very well be more effective in building a contagious Christian church.

It is also important to recognize the dramatic shift which has occurred in the American workplace. More people and more people work on weekends including Sunday mornings. According to a 2016 the Bureau of Labor Statistics time study, 34% of the workforce works on the weekend. With the U. S. workforce being approximately 160 million over 54 million work on the weekend, many on Sunday. If someone works either Saturday or Sunday, they are unlikely to attend Sunday services. The problem becomes greater with respect to Sunday only services. Holiday weekends, increasing growth of entrepreneur activities, and family travel to accommodate kids' sports and other activities all deter participation in Sunday services. This is a huge demographic that churches are missing, i.e., those likely to disregard attending worship services because of the work or other routines overlapping weekends. Most churches haven't adjusted their worship service routine to accommodate this reality. While not advocating abandoning Sunday worship, serious consideration needs to be given to offering a non-Sunday

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[1640] Lee Strobel, "Innovating High-Impact Outreach Ministries and Events." (Willow Creek Association Conference on How to Build a Contagious Church, October. 15-16, 2004).

alternative worship service(s). Seeking to be an effective disciple-making church, this is an area which FRCC should seriously consider.[1641]

b. Short Term Small Groups Aimed at Attracting Skeptics and Unbelievers

Short term small groups, designed specifically to attract skeptics and unbelievers, have played a powerful role in leading people to Christ. This is achieved by creating informal small groups, gathered in comfortable non-threatening environments, discussing their questions about and objections to the faith. The opportunity for discussion (rather than being preached at) arouses interest and attracts participation, especially when invited by a friend. Furthermore, it offers opportunity to develop relationships which enhances the appeal to keep coming back. This short term small group evangelism approach, along with description of three highly successful short term small group evangelism programs available to any church (e.g., seeker/exploring Christianity small groups, the Q-Place variant and the Alpha programs), are is discussed in PART FIVE, Section IX.E above. This form of short term small group is an approach to be actively fostered and implemented on an on-going basis by a church seeking to enhance its evangelism efforts.

And, as discussed earlier, there are other small groups based on the interpersonal style of evangelism which contribute to the evangelism efforts. Build a church around small groups that foster community, authentic relationships, mutual accountability and intentional evangelism. Both short term and relational small groups play a fundamental role in this evangelism effort.

c. Other Non-Worship Outreach Events

In addition to worship services and short term small group programs noted above, there is a wide variety of other non-worship events and activities which can provide safe and attractive gatherings for seekers, skeptics and unbelievers. These helps fuel the invitational approach to evangelism. Some possibilities are considered immediately below.

(1) Matthew Parties

"Matthew Parties" refer to social events named for the parable of the great banquet.

> So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good.... (Matthew 22:9-10)

Matthew parties are aimed at facilitating inviting people to gather together in an environment conducive to initiating and deepening relationships between Christians and non-Christians. They enable people getting to know one another. Such "parties" might include, formal banquets block

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[1641] Thom Rainer, "The Largest Group of People Many Churches Are Missing," OutreachMagazine.com, October 17, 2019,

parties, sports-oriented events, private dinners, dessert or coffee times with neighbors next door, etc. They might be by invitation only by ticket with the ticket for admission being the bringing of a friend. Such gatherings fall in the low range of evangelistic intensity scale. The sponsor might be a small group of believers or the church as a whole. The intent is to draw people who don't know Christ into a social setting where they rub shoulders with believers, especially those possessing an interpersonal style of evangelism.[1642]

(2) Children Ministry as an Outreach to Children

Willow Creek Community Church has utilized a highly successful children's ministry, called Promisedland for Kids, which teaches God's word in relevant and creative ways coupled with developing friendships in a loving discipling way. Use drama, video, puppets, activities to apply Bible lessons in their daily lives. Since kids love interacting with one another and learning about Jesus in fun ways, an outreach opportunity is created for them for them to invite their friends and schoolmates. [1643]

One has church successfully offered a weekly dinner and Bible study for children. The meals are full, not just hot dogs and chips. This is not based upon fun and games to entertain the kids, but rather focuses on dynamic Bible lessons. The kids are drawn to the love involved in the meal, the meal preparation and interacting with other kids. Emphasis is on passion for Jesus and loving the kids.[1644]

This type of activity offers the potential for a double benefit. First, it brings other children on to the path of growing in Christ. Second, many adults who are not involved in attending church may have a nagging sense that perhaps they should try a church, especially for the sake of their kids who "could use a little religion." This, in turn, may lead to parents to find what the church is all about. This suggests that a disciple-making church should make an affirmative effort for the children in their church to invite their friends from outside the church to join them in fun and learning.[1645]

(3) Other Examples of Outreach Events

The list of possible outreach events and activities to draw people into some form of interaction with the church and its members can go on and on. A few more will be touched upon here which may prove useful in our church's thinking.

- Hosting one or multiple night financial management seminars or small groups open to the community has proven to be effective bringing people in. Relevant topics like getting out of debt, planning for retirement, saving for college and thriving as a single-income family are all subjects, when well-promoted, have

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[1642] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 293-94 (2001).

[1643] *Id.* at 311-12.

[1644] Christy Heitger-Ewing, "Little Church, Big Reach," OutreachMagazine.com, November 26, 2017.

[1645]. Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (2001).

been effective in drawing a crowd. When a church demonstrates to its surrounding community that it cares about the issues that are important to them, a platform for connection begins to build.[1646]

- Host a community Playdate by making the church available where moms with young children can come to get together and interact with other adults while their children play together. Such playtime can be scheduled on a monthly basis complete with themes, activity stations and snacks for the kids. As part of the process, provide the parents with information about the church and introduce them to church staff, leaders and other volunteers.[1647]

- A "big-day" approach to outreach events still works, but the choice of the big days has changed. Traditionally, Easter and Mother's Day have been selected for outreach emphasis based on the rationale that Easter is the one day when everybody still goes to church, and Mother's Day is when Mom (often the only churchgoer in the family) could get her clan to attend. The "big-day" approach can still be effective.

  However, the problem today for many churches is their failure to update their cultural calendar. The biggest days no longer tend to be Easter or Mother's Day. Easter lacks the cultural impetus to attend which once existed. Further, Easter occurs around spring break of many, if not most, public schools and colleges. This results in one of the biggest vacation weekends of the year. Some church's attendance is actually starting to dip on Easter. Similarly, with families highly spread out geographically, the draw on Mother's Day has also lessened.

  But there is a new set of "big days, which offer good opportunities for outreach, in particular, services surrounding Christmas Eve and the first weekend following the start of school year (either in August or September). Some churches are even experiencing more people on Christmas Eve than on Easter as well as major spikes in attendance for the weekend closest to the start of the new school year.[1648]

- Other examples of outreach possibilities include neighborhood parties, bringing a friend to a music concert, Easter egg hunts, barbeque and carnival outings, sporting or other events on church grounds, free car washes coupled with handing out information on the church and offering tours of the church campus, Christmas pageants, and holding a confessional booth both on and off the church campus at which the church member confesses to the other person rather than vice-versa (which has proven to intrigue the non-church goers). The possibilities for outreach events are only limited by the lack of church member or staff creativity.

[1646] Scott Marshall, "New Year, New Leaf: 4 Ways to Connect with Seekers as the Year Begins," OutreachMagazine.com, December 6, 2012.

[1647] "Idea Starter: Host a Communitywide Playdate," OutreachMagazine.com, July 23, 2014.

[1648] James Emery White "3 New Outreach Realities that Many Churches Still Don't Get," OutreachMagazine.com, September 7, 2017.

3. Evaluation of Outreach Events

After an event has occurred, it is important to evaluate the results to determine whether it is worth repeating. If so, how might it be improved? If not, move on to other efforts. The following series of questions might serve as a basis for evaluation.

- What was the objective of the event?
- Was the objective of the event achieved? If not, why not?
- If it is a low intensity event, how many people came? If it was a middle level event, how people signed up for offerings such as the exploring Christianity small groups, the Q-Place Variant, the Alpha program, etc.
- What positive things can be done to improve the next event like this?
- What should not be repeated at the next event like this?
- Did the event advance the stated mission of the church?
- Was the event effectively communicated to the congregation and the outside community?
- Was the event worth the financial cost and human effort?

Evaluation need not be scary. To ease anxiety and foster openness, recast evaluation as a learning experience. It is not to threaten or judge those involved in the event. View the evaluation as a collaborative effort to focus on learning from the experience to enhance ministry to even better serve those who we aim to serve. Be open and invite to the evaluation process those persons who either have an interest in the ministry and/or who can offer perspectives which could contribute to the exploration and a review of the findings. Furthermore, evaluation should be on-going. Evaluation should be a collaborative effort and woven into the culture of the church. Foster a culture which values learning, curiosity, improvement, growth and accountability.[1649]

G. INTENTIONALITY AS TO OUR TARGETS

1. Who Are We Trying to Reach?[1650]

In fostering the achievement of our mission purpose of reaching out to and bringing people to Christ and into the local church community, it is important not to approach this fundamental task with a casual attitude. When asked "who is your church trying to reach?" a common response is likely to be "everyone." However, no church can do it all. For an individual church to be effective in evangelism it needs to determine who it is primarily trying to reach.[1651]

[1649] Maria Mallory White, "Evaluation as Collaboration," Alban Weekly, November 16, 2015.

[1650] Except where otherwise noted, this Section draws primarily of the contents of (i) Jon S. Hanson, "Where Congregationalism in Growing the Family of Christ?" September 5, 2007 (prepared on behalf of the Congregational Church Development Division of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (requested and reviewed by CCDD members but not intended to suggest that all members necessarily concurred with all that was said); (ii) Fox River Congregational Church Outreach Events Task Force Report,, "Strategic Framework for Outreach Events," pp.2-4, May 19, 2007, and (iii) notes prepared by Jon S. Hanson which summarize and integrate three presentations at National Outreach Conference, November 8-11, 2006,

[1651] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church, The Church that Makes a Difference* 155-57 91995).

As a general principle we should welcome virtually anyone who comes. However, outreach efforts should not be aimed at raiding other churches for their members. Our mission is not to specifically grow our church, but rather, it is to grow Christ's family. Simply reshuffling people from one church to another not only fails to do so, it utilizes and wastes resources which have been entrusted to us by God as his stewards. If we focus on our self-centered growth purposes rather than on God's purposes, it is unlikely that God will bless our efforts with much success.

Despite this limiting parameter, however, we are confronted with a broad universe of opportunity for outreach: (1) unbelievers, (2) doubters, (3) non-church goers sometimes referred to as the unchurched or lapsed Christians (i.e., those who may have been involved in church at some point but no longer participate in a church community on a regular basis), and (4) church goers who are looking for a new church affiliation either because of a change in personal circumstance (e.g., a relocation) or dissatisfaction with their current church affiliations.[1652]

This universe of people embraces a wide range of attitudes, mindsets and personal circumstances. A church needs to determine to whom and how it can most effectively outreach. Successful outreach efforts are those directly targeted toward the persons we are primarily trying to reach. In defining a target group, ask what does the target group understand about God and the gospel? People are not spiritually the same. We need to meet them where they are. When we have a clear idea who we are targeting, we can more effectively select and implement those outreach efforts most likely to attract these people.

This, in turn, requires an understanding of the contemporary cultural environment within which we function with the 21st Century is well underway.

a. Today's Evangelism Environment: Distinct but Overlapping Cultural Eras

The cultural context has changed over the years, the centuries, and continues to do so today. Most importantly, it is now commonly perceived that there are three distinct, but not mutually exclusive, eras as to different views as to how one perceives and communicates truth: (a) the Pre-Modern Era, (b) the Modern Era and (c) the Post-Modern Era.

(1) Pre-Modernism

In Pre-Modernism (sometimes referred to Christendom), discerning the truth is somewhat mysterious. Truth is revealed by God primarily through scripture. This view came to dominate with the expansion of the Christian church. Since its

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[1652] Welcoming church-goers seeking a new church affiliation does not constitute efforts to raid other churches. These are people who, on their own initiative, are looking elsewhere. Either they will find what they are seeking or they will cease their church participation. In either case, if our church can fulfill their needs, even though not growing Christ's family, we are contributing against a decline of active participants in his family. However, this should not be the focus of our outreach time and resources. The natural focus of our outreach efforts is on unbelievers, doubters and the unchurched.

founding in the early 1600s, until relatively recently, the United States has lived under the paradigm of Christendom. For a long time, our culture accepted a whole series of Christian assumptions. The U.S. has been a Christian country. Its people knew about Christ. Pre-Modernism reflected the mindset of processing the perception of truth through the filter of a concept of God. Well into the 1900s, people generally expressed belief in God and, at least occasionally, went to church. There was a sympathetic and influential relationship between the Christian community and this nation's government. Christianity was accepted as the norm.

(2) Modernism

The seeds of Modernism were sown in the early 1500s with the early scientists such as Copernicus who asserted that the earth revolves around the sun. Since the Catholic Church had long maintained that everything revolves around the earth, seeds of doubt were planted. If the church erred here, where else might it be wrong? Darwin further cast doubt upon the teachings of the church. In the view of many, science and reason came to rule. In the 1800s, the German philosopher Nietzsche (sometimes referred to as the prophet of modernism) asserted that God is dead. There is no absolute objective truth. Instead, the foundations of truth are rationalism and empiricism, things discerned in the material world. The Bible is suspect. There is little acceptance of the supernatural.

By the 1900s the modernism era emerged as a major cultural mindset. More recent generations, such as the baby boomers, tended to fall away from both the church and the Christian view. Instead, the trend has been toward a more Modernism perspective in which science and reason rules. Truth is no longer perceived as absolute. God receded from the center of perceptions.

(3) Post-Modernism

The 1970s ushered in dramatic times. The Supreme Court, in the *Roe v. Wade* decision upholding the right to abortion, rendered an earthquake event. In the same period, the divorce rate took off. Women's rights became the rage. Families fell apart. Single mothers, working to make ends meet, no longer felt they had time to go to church. Fathers often failed in their parental responsibilities. This confluence of events resulted in numerous children not being raised in a church. Adult participation in church related activities dramatically declined. Substantial segments of the population became disconnected with the church. The concepts of family, marriage and our cultural moral compass changed. Community has broken down. Generation X grew up as a *non*-Christian generation. Thus, the church no longer was seen as a resource for answers and support.

Paralleling these developments, questions were raised as to where has science, reason and so-called progress gotten us. We have had two world wars, the Korean, Viet Nam and Middle East wars. Totalitarianism abounds. The world is replete with problems and misery. The Age of Reason has not provided meaning or positive answers.

Lacking having been schooled in the basics of Christianity (or other faith traditions) by their baby boomer parents and being skeptical of modernism, much of the younger generations

feels something is missing. Material gains and successes, achieved in what has often been seen as the rat race, have raised doubts as to the assumptions of Modernism. The Post-Moderns are seeking to connect with something, but don't know what. Consequently, they have emerged with a Post-Modernism seeking and curious mindset. Although not anti-Modernism, the Post-Moderns are willing to critique the assumptions of Modernism. The more recent generations of the of the Post-Modern era is referred to as the Millennial Generation or Generation Y. Although there is some disagreement as to who fall within this classification, as a general rule those born between 1980 and the early 2000s fall within the Post-Modern category. Now, there has emerged Generation Z (those born after 2000 (sometimes referred to Boomlets) consisting of toddlers, those reaching their teen years and those growing into early adulthood.

b. Defining Our Target(s)

The recommended mission for FRCC includes encouraging, equipping and supporting members of our church in growing toward a more Christ-like life by connecting with those outside the faith lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ, leading them toward accepting Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life. This embraces atheists, doubters and those who have fallen away from the church for whatever reasons. This offers a rather broad potential target range. Thus, the question becomes how to further define who we are primarily trying to reach so as to implement more tailored outreach efforts leading toward positive impactful results. There are at least four basic factors influencing the definition of whom we should focus upon in our outreach efforts; (1) nature of persons who are most susceptible to being successfully reached, (2) relative impact of successfully reaching alternative groups, (3) nature of our church in relation to the target group, and (4) demographics in our geographical area.

(1) Nature of Persons Most Susceptible to Successful Outreach

In defining our target(s), we are confronted with a population which exhibits three different mindsets: Pre-Modernism, Modernism and Post-Modernism (including Millennials and Generation Z). In order to maximize our impact, within the fundamental framework of our mission purposes, we need to explore where we can be most effective in reaching out and bringing people to God's family and nurturing them as they undertake or continue progress in their Walk with Christ.

Although we have entered moved into the Post-Modern Era, it is important to recognize that all transitions from one era to another take place over a period of time and that transitions are not complete with respect to all segments of the population. Thus, while we continually live in a transition period, there are significant segments of the population which embrace the central perceptions and beliefs of one (or perhaps even a combination) of the three eras. This should be kept in mind as we as a church consider various approaches to outreach.

(a) Pre-Modern Mindset

As noted above, the Pre-Modernism mindset embraces the perception of truth primarily through the filter of the concept of God, especially as that truth is

revealed through the Bible. Pre-Moderns generally express belief in God, at least on occasion go to church, and tend to accept the concept (if not the practice) of God's truth being the normative standard for living. For Christians God's Word is revealed through the Bible, for Jews it is through the Old Testament, and for Muslims it is through the Koran. Here, we are considering those Pre-Moderns with at least a somewhat Christian orientation.

With respect to the segment of the population with at least some Christian orientation, presumably a substantial segment of these people are currently members of a church or have leanings towards a particular church. Since, as noted above, our church is not called reshuffle Christian oriented persons from one church to another, this removes a significant percentage of the number of persons possessing a Christian Pre-Modern mindset from being a prime target for our outreach efforts.

This is not to say that there are not some opportunities. There are people, although they have fallen away from regular church involvement, who possess some religious/church background and continue to harbor some sense of God and notions of Christian beliefs. Even though they are religious opt outs, they might possess a strong Christian memory. These people might be susceptible to the Billy Graham's approach which was to urge his listeners to come home to what they knew to be true – i.e., the Christian message. He sought to tap into an existing Christian conscience. In particular, this approach might be effective for young non-churchgoing parents who went to church as children. They may now sense that when their children reach Sunday school age, perhaps they should return to church.

Another small, but not to be ignored group, of Pre-Modern Christians are those seeking affiliation with a new church either because of change of circumstances or dissatisfaction with their current church.

While the opportunities for outreach to those with at least a somewhat Christian oriented Pre-Modern mindset are declining as we move further and further into the Post-Modern Era, some opportunities do exist and should not be ignored. Here, however, the emphasis is less on reaching out to unbelievers and doubters and leading them to an acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior, but rather the focus is more on nurturing people who have at least some start in their Walk with Christ.

(b) Modern Mindset

By the latter half of the 20th Century modernism emerged as a major cultural mindset. In particular, the baby boomer generation has drifted or run away from the Christian perspective in general and the church in particular. Absolute truth is rejected. Science and perceived reason rule. Success, money and materialism are glorified. One-self and self-indulgence assume the center of one's life. God has receded from the center of perceptions if not disappearing altogether from view.

Those possessing the Modern Mindset promise to be the most difficult to reach. They strongly reject either the existence or importance of God. Other factors, primarily science, reason and personal desires, control the world in which they live. They perceive themselves as the

worthy center of their attention and indulgence. Since Christianity poses a perceived threat to doing what they want to do, they are little motivated to respond to the Christian message. The Modern Mindset possesses little curiosity about the Christian perspective. While no group is immune to change, the Moderns appear to be the group least susceptible to outreach efforts.

(c) Post-Modern Mindset

The Post-Modern Era is substantially reflected by younger generations, often referred to as Millennials (perhaps ranging in age from the late teens, early 20s to the early 40s) and even the younger Generation Z. However, while the characteristics which exemplify Post-Moderns are most often observed in the younger generations, these characteristics can also be found among the baby boomers and even older persons. One era tends to influence those of another era. Thus, our focus here is on the Post-Modern mindset rather than simply the younger generation.

The Post-Modern mindset is characterized by several elements including the following.

- *Ignorance of Christian Beliefs* – The younger generation, as well as some others, has not generally been exposed to the basics of Christianity or other religious beliefs. Their parents, having fallen away from the church, did not raise their children in a Christian context. Even though they may accept the notion of God, they have little sense of who God is or that he even matters.

- *Relativism* – Being persons lacking a grounding in any of the three faith traditions (Christianity, Judaism or Islam), the Post-Modern mindset perceives truth as being relative rather than absolute. Truth is processed differently in different cultures and eras. Who is to say that one person's perception of truth is better than that of someone else? They live in an environment which confronts them with a lot of confusing messages.

- *Pluralism* – Lacking a sense of absolute truth derived from a religious foundation, the culture of Post-Modernism preaches tolerance with a capital T. All is relative. As a result, there is little critical thinking. Everything is O: K. For those who assume there is a God, Post-Moderns believe that all ways lead to God. Gods of all religious are the same or equal. There are many diverse paths to God. Maintaining that Jesus is the only way is like spiritual racism. At least until the very recent years, religious pluralism is politically correct. However, more recently there are increasing efforts to ban public expression of religious beliefs. Such is becoming politically incorrect.

- *Meaningful Life and Spiritual Curiosity* – Post-Moderns tend to believe that there should be more to life than getting up every day, going to work, coming home, doing chores, eating out once in a while, etc. and repeat the same pattern day after day. Isn't there more meaning to life than simply chasing after money and material things? They want to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose. Some young adults turn to religion as a backlash against a culture obsessed with

sex and money or against parents who gave them little or no direction. Materialism has become much less of a factor compared to the viewpoint of their parents' generation.

> Young non-Christians talk about spiritual matters a lot more than older adults and are twice as likely to express personal interest in Christianity. Millennials report many more faith conversations and evangelistic encounters than older non-Christians. This is partly due to greater religious diversity among their family and friends—but that's not the whole story. For at least some young adults, there appears to be greater curiosity about spirituality and, specifically, deeper interest in Christianity.[1653]

Thus, those possessing a Post-Modern mindset embrace a different approach than those holding the Modernism view. They are looking for the real thing, for real meaning, for truth. They tend to be sold on the supernatural (remember they don't accept that science and reason have all the answers), but they don't know who or what to believe. Might just possibly the church be the real thing? Consequently, Post-Moderns are spiritually hungry. They are more spiritually curious than their predecessors. They. possess *a greater interest in how all things spiritual relate to their lives and the world around them.* While rejecting dogma, they are reaching out for personal and convenient ways to find answers. Spiritual matters are thought to be important. Questions about faith are more likely to be on their agenda.

- *Making a Difference* – Simply achieving career success and making a lot of money has not proven sufficiently satisfying for the Post-Moderns. While not forsaking money, this group is more attuned to the problems around the world. A high percentage seeks meaning by serving as volunteers for what they perceive are worthy projects. While not forsaking the making of money, they also want to make a difference. A representative expression captures a common sense of a Millennial. "While our age group likes money and things too, we measure ourselves more by how we make a difference in the world."[1654] They are socially conscious. Feeling that they are special and privileged, they exhibit a responsibility to give back. "Millennials will not stay long at work or causes that have little greater meaning or purpose. [Thus it is important that a church's] mission and vision [be] clear, compelling and inexhaustible. … If your church doesn't have a burning sense of purpose and vision, … [it will] look lame … to the average 22 year-old."[1655]

[1653] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism* 68 (2019)..

[1654]. Jeff Trubey and Ben Casey, "Meet the Millennials: Who They Are and Why Your Church Should Care," OutreachMagazine, p.108 at 110, January/February 2007.

[1655] Carey Nieuwhof, "12 Cultural Treads Yu Can't Afford to Ignore," OutreachMagazine.com, August 3, 2015.

> I find a deep hunger, especially among members of the younger generation, for something worth committing one's life to. …[T]he two great hungers of our time are the hunger for spirituality and the hunger for social justice – and the connection between the two has great power to motivate people to action.[1656]

Post-Moderns seek challenge, both intellectually and spiritually. Too many churches create church worship services, programs and/or other activities that are merely observed. These church programs, which require little sacrifice or effort, give rise to little or no commitment. And, they fail to provide a sense of meaning on a personal level.[1657] Furthermore,

> [d]efining faith by the things you won't do doesn't create a compelling style of life. And young people are hungry for an agenda worthy of their commitment, their energy and their gifts.[1658]

A 2014 study found that for 6 in 10 Millennials, a "sense of purpose" is a significant factor in choosing whether or not to work for a particular employer. What is the why and the how underlying the job to which they are to give themselves. Regardless of facilities, staff, programs and opportunities, lack of clarity and excitement in vision turns off cause-hungry young people. The same applies in a church context. Millennials want to make a difference. They want to know the cause behind the vision, why is it that we do what we do? They want to be involved. To attract Millennials, vision, cause opportunity for active involvement need to be a part of the church's DNA.[1659] Offer them a loving God who is worth sacrificing for.[1660]

- *Non-Favor of Traditional Church* – In trying to find meaning in their lives, some Post-Moderns return to the religion of their parents. More often, however, the Post-Moderns generally don't like attending traditional worship services. They shy away from religious labels and increasingly identify with no specific religion. An increasing number are those who are termed "Nones," i.e., people who don't identify with any religion. Or those who do call themselves Christian, they call themselves non-denominational. Furthermore, in the process of trying to discover themselves, religion is more likely to strike a responsive chord if it does so on a personal level e.g., college minister clubs, smaller and less formal worship which is individualized, etc. Although looking for answers, younger adults tend not to look toward churches for answers to their questions.

[1656] Jim Wallis, *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religions Right America* 26 (2008).
[1657] Jeff Trubey and Ben Casey, "Meet the Millennials: Who They Are and Why Your Church Should Care," Outreach Magazine, p.108 at 114, January/February 2007.
[1658] Jim Wallis, *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religions Right America* 26 (2008).
[1659] William Vanderbloemen, "The Secret to Reaching Millennials," OutreachMagazine.com, May 4, 2016.
[1660] Alban Weekly, "Proclaiming Passion: The Theological Challenge of Youth Ministry," August 10, 2006.

- *Dislike and Distrust of Authority* – Post-Moderns don't trust persons in authority and dislike pronouncements. Authority is not readily accepted. Don't tell people what to do or what to believe. They don't like being told to believe in this or that dogma. They want to find their own path. The use of guilt to motivate people to change and come to faith is not well received. The sense of guilt is not pervasive in the younger generations. Trust of authority has to be earned. This takes time.

- *Dialogue* – Rather than trusting and accepting authority, Post-Moderns want to dialogue and process information themselves. They want to reach their own conclusions. They want to talk, not just listen. They want to be listened to, heard and respected. A church needs to offer meaningful venues for both in-house and online dialogue.

- *Meaningful Relationships* – Despite their attraction to technological gadgets, with the breakdown of family and community, the impersonal nature of an increasingly automated and technological society and the impermanence of today's personal relationships, for many people there is a great sense of loneliness. Despite the internet, texting and social media, there remains a deep underlying sense of wanting deeper personal relations with other people. They long for human relationships. They seek community, a sense of belonging. They seek others who listen, care and are there for them.

> [Y]oung adults want churches to be relational – a place for intergenerational conversation and fellowship. They want to be valued for their own specific gifts and welcomed into the life of the church – not treated as a separate group….
>
> Contrary to popular perception, these tech-savvy people yearn for a loving, authentic and inclusive experience – not a high –tech presentation with lots of flash. The worst thing a church can do … is attempt to look "cool."[1661]

Too often, Post-Moderns either fail to find community in a church or simply do not think of a church as a place where one can find and foster relationships. When they do try a church worship service, program or activity, they often don't get the sense that people care about them or whether are not they are even there. They want a sense of being welcomed and accepted.[1662] "[U]ltimately, millennials are looking for a church that supports their faith formation and offers them fellowship."[1663]

[1661] Karen Gwynn Massey, "Dreaming, Talking, Acting" (What Millennials Want), Congregationalist, p.14, September 2017.

[1662] Jeff Trubey and Ben Casey, "Meet the Millennials: Who They Are and Why Your Church Should Care," OutreachMagazine.com, January/February, p.108, 2007.

[1663] Karen Gwynn Massey, "Dreaming, Talking, Acting" (What Millennials Want), Congregationalist, p.14, September 2017.

Despite the obstacles of *ignorance of Christian beliefs* (something which can be taught if there is a curiosity to learn), a sense of *relativism* (stemming from a lack of a foundation of Christian beliefs) and *pluralism*, those with a Post-Modern mindset seek a more *meaningful life*, *express belief in some God* (however limited the understanding), exhibit a greater acceptance of and *curiosity about spiritual matters, seek* to *make a difference*, relish *challenge* and *commitment*, and long for meaningful connectedness or *fellowship* with others. Furthermore, many younger adults are more likely than those in older generations to be in a "searching season" of life seeking identity and better answer to question. Hence, they are more open to change or transformation. These attributes, offer a tremendous opportunity for successful outreach if we create a safe, comfortable and non-threatening place and manner to engage them.

(2) Relative Impact of Successfully Reaching Alternative Groups

(a) Those Not Yet Having Accepted Christ: Impact on an Individual

Despite one's good works, good intentions and participation in church and other religious activities, it is beyond our ability to meet God's perfect standards so as to be able to cross the chasm which separates us from God. However, God so loved the world that he gave us his only son to die on the cross to atone for our sins. By his grace, God offers us the gift of salvation. However, for a gift to take effect, the recipient must receive it. All that we need to accept the gift is to believe in Christ and accept him as Lord and Savior, God assures us of eternal life in personal relationship with him. This is the good news. However, to be effective, the gift must be accepted. Those who do not accept will not have eternal life with God. Although we don't know precisely what the alternative will be, we can be quite confident it is not good.

This essence of the gospels is highly relevant in the determining toward whom we should focus primary attention in our outreach efforts. Those who have accepted Christ in the past are assured of salvation and eternal life even if they have since fallen away from the church. Although other adverse consequences are likely, God does not withdraw his promise of eternal life with him or her. Thus, the consequences of not reaching these people pose substantially less adverse import than failing to reach those who have not yet accepted Christ. The impact of reaching the lost is much greater. This strongly suggests that we as a church, should focus our primary attention where the impact is the greatest, i.e., the unbelievers and doubters.

(b) The Powerhouse Generation

Research suggests that Millennials will be one the most impactful age groups ever to emerge in America. This generation is working within the fabric of society rather rebelling against it, a sharp contrast to the 1960s counter culture. The college graduates of this generation are said to be on the track to become a "powerhouse generation" full of technology planers, community shapers, institution builders and world leaders. Set apart by its mastery of technology, this generation will be characterized by more of a world citizen mentality. It will be a generation at ease in harnessing technology and the building of a diverse

community – both locally and globally.[1664] Furthermore, the beliefs and value systems which these people embrace presumably will substantially carry through to their children and those who view them as leaders. This reemphasizes the importance of reaching out to and bringing in today's younger generation. If we can reach these future leaders of technology, community shapers, institution builders and world leaders, we will greatly magnify the opportunity for spreading Christianity and adding to the family of Christ.

Furthermore, today the Millennials and those that follow account for nearly 50% of the population in the United States. They are the key to the now and future vitality of the church. Any church concerned about its on-going impact in advancing the Kingdom of God must focus efforts on reaching out to the Millennials.[1665]

The time is now. Reach Millennials when they are still in the early stages in developing their faith direction. Among other places, look to college and high school campuses.

> [B]ecause this highly influenced and influential generation sounds a bullhorn of tolerance and is more interested in spirituality than its predecessors, the college years are often an optimal time for introducing unchurched millennials to a new community that shows them the love of Christ in ways that resonate with them: relationships, community service, global awareness.[1666]

If churches fail do so, they have "lost opportunity to mobilize for the Kingdom a generation wired to reach the world… [This] could be the most devastating event ever experienced by the modern church."[1667]

(3) Nature of Our Church in Relation to the Target Group

For reasons considered in Subsection *a.* above, as a general proposition, the nature of a substantial group persons most susceptible to successful outreach are those possessing a Post-Modern mindset. Furthermore, as noted in Subsection *b.* above, success with this group promises to have the greatest impact in growing and nurturing Christ's family. However, these conclusions are of little import if a church does not possess the characteristics (either actual or near future potential) which are attractive to persons holding a Post-Modern mindset. So, a critical question for us to consider is nature of our church in relation to this target group.

Many of the attributes of the Post-Modern mindset render these people susceptible to outreach by churches in general which have an evangelism orientation. Moreover, Congregational churches in particular, and especially our church which has adopted a well

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[1664] Jeff Trubey and Ben Christy, "Meet the Millennials: Who They Are and Why Your Church Should Care," Outreach Magazine, p.108, 110, January/February. 2007.
[1665] Karen Gwynn Massey, "Dreaming, Talking, Acting" (What Millennials Want), Congregationalist, p.14, September 2017.
[1666] Jeff Trubey and Ben Christy, "Meet the Millennials: Who They Are and Why Your Church Should Care," Outreach Magazine, pp. 108, 114, January/February 2007.
[1667] *Id.*

defined set of Congregational Principles, are particularly well suited to reach out to the Post-Moderns. The Christian faith has answers for what they are seeking so long as they are approached in a manner acceptable to them.

(a) Meaning and Spiritual Curiosity

The Christian faith offers the basis for a meaningful life which is one of the prime quests of the Post-Moderns. When this is coupled with significant spiritual curiosity, often with acceptance that there is at least some type of God, the door is wide open for outreach.

(b) Relevancy

Post-Moderns tend to possess a strong interest in how all things spiritual relate to their lives and the world around them. Here is one of the strengths of our church. Sermons and discipleship-oriented programs and activities are, and presumably will continue to be, strongly oriented to bringing understanding as to how God's Word is relevant in our everyday lives. This is a message to which Post-Moderns are likely to respond.

(c) Freedom of Exploration and Thought

Post-Moderns reject dogma. They dislike authority of other people telling them what to think and what to do. Instead, they like to gather information, dialogue with others, raise questions and doubts, process information and reach their own conclusions.

Professor of Religion Timothy Beal addresses the question "Can Religion Still Speak to Younger Americans?"[1668] The fastest growing population on the religious landscape are those, referred to as "Nones" who do not identify with any religion. They are either indifferent to or even antagonistic to religion. According to a 2018 American Family Survey released by the PEW Research Center, the two most significant reasons driving them away are (i) questioning a lot of religious teachings and (ii) disagreeing with positions churches take on political/social issues, especially those relating to sexuality and science. The implication is that a person being religious should not question religious teachings and must share positions which a religious organization takes on political/social issues. However, experience with students has shown that when many "Nones" are given access to religion not as a set of teachings and positions but as a space for active engagement with enduring questions, they lean in." People are energized by a diversity of interpretations and viewpoints. "What we need is sustained conversation in a context that allows and even welcomes different experiences and points of view."[1669] Exploring the faith in the context of a Congregational church such as ours is a natural for this type of mindset.

We are organized around a Covenant rather than around a required adherence to set dogma, faith statements or creed. Instead, we embrace liberty of private conscience in interpreting the gospel and developing our own faith convictions as led by the Holy Spirit,

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[1668] Wall Street Journal, November 16, 2019.
[1669] *Id.*

scripture, prayer and reason. Sincerity of conviction requires full opportunity for intellectual freedom and personal experience. We are not told that we have to think this or that. We raise questions, we dialogue and we reach our own conclusions. (Of course, freedom of the Congregational Way is freedom from the authority of other persons so that we can be more completely obedient to the authority of God.) Our freedom of private conscience obligates each of us to carefully and honestly think through and reach our own conclusions (giving appropriate regard to the opinions of others) as to the meaning of God's Word and his will for us. For God to be truly meaningful to us, we must discover our faith first hand.

Since Post-Moderns reject being told that they have to think this or that, since they like to apply their intellect in reaching their beliefs and values, since they like to raise questions and doubts, and since they like to dialogue and challenge, they should feel very comfortable with the methodology which is part of the very fabric of our Congregational Way. There is wide latitude to explore the faith in an open and non-threatening environment without being subject to pronouncement or judgments.

(d) Absence of Hierarchy

The perception of the institutional traditional church is anathema to Post-Moderns. They don't understand its forms and rituals. Most importantly, they reject hierarchical institutions which attempt to exert authority over what they believe and do.

Here again, our Congregational church should be particularly appealing. Other than being under the headship of Christ, we lack layers of authority. Our church is autonomous. It is not subject to outside denominational or other types of clerical or lay authority. The congregation is self-governing. It serves as the active and real (as distinguished from a perfunctory) governing body of our church. It is the arbiter of policy. Although a minister has special duties, he or she is one of the members of the church, not set over the members. The minister offers expertise, guidance and support which an individual may accept, reject or modify. This minimal structure should appeal to the Post-Moderns.

(e) Making a Difference

Post-Moderns want to make a difference. They want to be challenged. They don't want to sit back and simply observe what others are doing. This is evidenced by the fact that a significant number of Post-Moderns serve as volunteers for what they perceive are worthy projects. Serving is an important value.

FRCC's adopted expression of the "Essential Principles of Congregationalism" speaks to this value as well in stating that all of us, where live, work as well as in church are called to the ministry of servanthood.[1670] As a matter of practice, as we grow our congregation, we seek involved people who are difference makers. Serving is a cardinal principle of the Christian faith

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[1670] "All Christians are called to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God." Fox River Congregational Church. "The Congregational Way: Essential Principles of Congregationalism," adopted June 22, 2003.

in general as well as of our church in particular; a principle akin that that of the Pos- Modern mindset.

(f) Challenge and Commitment

Post-Moderns seek challenge (both intellectually and spiritually) and commitment. They don't want to be simply observers or be involved in things which require little or no sacrifice. They want to be involved in a meaningful way. They want a sense of meaning.

At the foundation of Christian faith in general and in our Congregational church in particular are challenges and commitments. Christ challenges his followers and asks for commitment. In addition, our church is organized around commitment. We are gathered and organized by Covenant in which we personally commit to a series of things including our church's mission purposes. These mission purposes are meaningful, challenging, and require sacrifice. The appeal to the Post-Modern mindset seems quite evident.

(g) Fellowship

Because of the breakdown of family and community, the impersonal nature of an increasingly automated and technological society and the impermanence of today's personal relationships, many persons of the Post-Modern Era lack the connectedness or fellowship of a caring, loving and supportive group or community of people. They want to connect with others. They long for personal human relationships and a sense of belonging.

Not only is a deep, loving, supportive and caring fellowship a call of Christ, it is embodied in our mission statement and covenant. And, such fellowship is practiced by our congregation. This should prove to be a great attraction to the Post-Moderns seeking to connect with others.

In short, the nature of the Christian faith, the elements of Congregationalism in general and the Principles of Congregationalism as adopted by and practiced by our church in particular embrace many of the predispositions of those possessing a Post-Modern mindset. Thus, the nature of our church should greatly enhance our ability for successful outreach to this segment of our population.

c. Other Factors in Defining Our Target(s)

(1) Subcultures

In order to fulfill the call of the Great Commission, bodies of believers are needed who can relate the gospel in culturally relevant ways.[1671] Here culture refers to the life style and mindsets (as to values, interests, hurts and fears) of persons living within an area readily accessible by the church.[1672] Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples of

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[1671] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 137 (1993).
[1672] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 165 (1995).

all people. All people include multiple subcultures (especially in urban areas). In order to reach people, the church needs to design strategies to reach diverse subcultures. A subculture is a group consisting of persons bound together by a similar world view. Their common values, codes, behaviors, perceived needs and life styles generate a unique group identity. In reaching out to people, to be effective, a church needs to penetrate a group and express God's truth in ways which makes sense to that particular subculture which it is trying to reach.[1673] Consequently, as our church reaches out for Christ, primarily to those possessing a Post-Modern mindset, we need to shape our efforts in a manner relevant to and receivable by a group's particular characteristics. Of course, such must not be done in a manner compromising the message of the gospel.

Awareness of certain demographic factors present strategic opportunities for sharing the gospel-. These demographic groups include (a) uprooted members of society, (b) religious non Christians, (c) ethnic minorities, (d) people with low income, and (c) young adults.

(a) Uprooted Members of Society

A mobile society uproots people who become disconnected from a framework of family, friends, work and faith. They tend to be engulfed by the demands for economic survival and often leave behind cultural and religious patterns. The bad news is that many leave behind their faith. The good news is that many displaced persons are receptive to a fresh presentation of Christianity.[1674]

(b) *Religious Non-Christians*

Persons possessing the greatest sense of being on a spiritual quest are those who are currently practicing religious non-Christians, e.g., primarily Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists as well as those raised in these those faiths but are not currently religious. The Barna study found that two-thirds of respondents connected to a religion other than Christianity indicated some level of spiritual hunger. Their percentage is less than that for practicing Christians, but significantly higher than that for lapsed Christians and religiously unaffiliated non-Christians (atheists, agnostics and nones).[1675]

> This signal of openness is an opportunity. Getting to know neighbors or co-workers who come from non-Christian religious backgrounds introduces Christians to people different from them but who share a higher-than-average interest in spirituality…. Millennials are more likely to already have such friendships, compared with older Christians—so Gen_X, Boomer and Elder believers may need to step out of their everyday zone of comfort to establish new relationships.[1676]

[1673] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 137 (1993).
[1674] *Id.* at 136.
[1675] Barna, *Reviving Evangelism* 70 (2019).
[1676] *Id.* at 70.

(c) *Ethnic Minorities*

Data indicates that generally ethnic minorities reflect more spiritual hunger than that which occurs among white adults. This suggests considering how greater ethnic diversity might increase the spiritual temperature in a given Christian community and how to connect with people in such groups.[1677]

(d) *People with Low Income*

Adults reporting an annual household income less than $50K appear to be more aware of their spiritual hunger than do higher earners. This is true regardless of ethnicity. They more readily acknowledge and accept that they have "unanswered spiritual questions" and that "something feels missing from my life" The Christian message of hope has always uniquely impacted the poor. The high level of spiritual openness among lower-income Americans offers a real invitation and opportunity for Christians to reach out to, connect with and share the gospel message with those having a lower income. [1678]

> Amid cultural prejudice against and frequent marginalization of the poor and disadvantaged, Christianity stresses the inestimable value and shared humanity of all persons, and beckons them all to a kingdom where the last will be first—a kingdom that poor people often seem to yearn for more deeply than their richer neighbors.[1679]

(2) Geography

Selecting a target group based upon the susceptibility of the group to outreach, the relative potential impact of successful outreach as between groups and the nature of our church in relation to the target group or groups being considered does little good if the group or groups under consideration are not physically present in the geographical area in which outreach efforts will to be conducted.

Reasonable driving distance is very subjective which can vary according to the nature of the drive. Rural persons tend to be more willing to drive further distances than urban drivers. People are likely to drive further if they can travel on expressways vis-à-vis miles of city stop lights. As a rule of thumb, 12 stoplights or a 15 to 20 minute each way may reach the limit of toleration of many.[1680] City and suburban dwellers tend not to view their residential neighborhood as their primary focus of social identity. They are accustomed to travel by car or public transportation. Mobility is a way of life thus reducing necessity of selecting a small neighborhood church.[1681] So, don't necessarily define a group strictly according the nature of the immediate neighborhood. Most urbanites and/or or suburbanites think less in terms of miles to be traveled, but rather are more influenced by the time it takes to travel. when choosing a church, Thus, in deciding upon a geographical scope of a target group, consider the mileage radius in

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[1677] *Id.* at 72.
[1678] *Id.* at 72.
[1679] *Id.* at 72.
[1680] *Id.* at 161.
[1681] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 140 (1993).

terms of time which involves the nature of the roads and the number of stoplights for a person to travel to the local church.

(3) *Demographics in Defining Our Target Group*

Demographic data covering our geographical area may provide some clues as to the sufficiency of a presence of those persons we want to reach. Determine the type of people in the selected geographical area. Avoid overdoing data collection. The most relevant demographic facts are age, marital status, income (median and average), education level, and predominant types of occupations. These factors help in discerning how to minister to people and how to communicate the good news. For example, young adults have different hopes and fears than retirees. Emphasizing the assurance of heaven as the result of salvation plays better to older groups whereas emphasis of fellowship with Christ and church members is more likely to be well received by young adults. For the message to be effective, the nature of the audience needs to be well understood.

There are numerous resources to obtain information on the population in a church's target area.[1682] Such is helpful in defining the target group(s) according to ethnic group, age, marital and family status, income levels, education and occupation.

A summary of demographic 2004 data[1683] for our geographical area shows the following. The Pewaukee area is predominantly affluent and younger in age. It exhibits a relative high level of education with a substantial number of married couples with children. 45% of the households are classified as affluent families, 24% as middle American families and 21% as young and an upcoming. Survey questions as to faith indicate that 31% of the respondents are strongly involved in their faith, 31% are somewhat involved in their faith and 38% are not involved in their faith. Slightly more have decreased their involvement in the last 10 years as compared to those who have increased their involvement. 81% of the respondents believed that there is a God although only 57% view God is being active in the world. However, when responding to questions related to spiritual and personal issues, church does not loom large. 32% noted dealing with stress, 17% noted finding companionship, 15% noted finding life direction, 12% noted finding a good church, and 9% noted finding spiritual teaching. Presumably for this type of information to be worthwhile, it would need to be updated.

However, the demographic survey, being general in nature, does not provide great light on the presence or absence of the characteristics of the Post-Modern mindset in our geographic area. It is also limited to an area encompassed by a three-mile radius from our church whereas our mass marketing reach and our members' personal evangelism outreach extend to where our members live, work and play which is considerably beyond the three-mile radius. Nevertheless, However, the demographic data does reveal in our most immediate vicinity a relatively well educated and younger population with a greater leaning towards acceptance rather than rejection of the existence of God. Thus, there is little, if anything, in these several year findings to deter

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[1682] *E.g.*, U. S. Census library, county or city planning departments, newspaper offices, local Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, local contractors and/or realtors, and utility companies. Large church denominations also maintain data bases which perhaps can be accessed.

[1683] Prepared by Bob Dieringer, member of Fox River Congregational Church.

the selection of the Post-Modern mindset as our primary target group. Nevertheless, it might prove to be worthwhile to update the above noted information.

The Barna report provides a significant amount of updated highly useful and important data which is considered earlier. However, research for the Barna study utilized nationalized data which does not focus on the local area in which Fox River Church functions. Thus, there is no suggestion here that the Barna should replace localized demographic information.

Most importantly,

> [t]he best way to find-out the culture mindset and lifestyle of people is to talk to them personally. ...Take your own survey. Ask them what they feel are their greatest needs. Listen for their hurts, interests, and fears. No book or demographic report can replace actually talking with people in your in your own community. ...There is no substitute [for one-one interaction].[1684]

d. Summary

Today, it is crucial to recognize that there is no dominating Christian world view. Each of the sweeps of history poses opportunities and challenges as to the view of truth. God raises and works through good and faithful people in each era. However, in doing so, we need to be mindful of the different mindsets of the substantial majority of non-Christians today reflecting a modernism or Post-Modernism perspective (younger people especially reflecting the latter). As we undertake our evangelism efforts, we need to go where the people are and adapt our approaches to ways which make sense to them. A review of such factors as (1) susceptibility to outreach, (2), the relative impact of successfully reaching different potential target groups, and (3) and the nature of our church in relation to the characteristics of the different groups lead to the conclusion that the primary focus of our church's outreach efforts should be those persons possessing a Post-Modern mindset discussed above.. The review of geography and demographic data suggests a sufficient presence of this group in our geographic area. Although the attributes of this mindset are most commonly reflected among the younger generation, such attributes can also be found in older age groups as well. So, our primary focus should be on those persons possessing a Post-Modern mindset, not necessarily on specific age groups per se.

As people increasingly seek a more meaningful life, exhibit a greater acceptance of and curiosity about spiritual matters and long for connectedness (fellowship) with others, if we create a safe and comfortable place and manner to engage them, there is a tremendous opportunity for successful outreach.

2. Targeting Strategy

a. Aim Your Style at Your Target

After defining the primary target group, next is developing a ministry strategy which is consistent with the target group's cultural or sub-cultural patterns.

[1684] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 166 (1995).

> The styles of worship, music, preaching, leadership and programs need to be culturally contextualized to fit the [primary] targeted unchurched.... To reach the diverse subgroups... the patterns, forms, style and structure of the church must be culturally relevant.[1685]

Without sacrificing biblical principles, adapt to the culture which the church is trying to reach. Don't let cultural differences constitute a barrier (e.g., style of dress) to getting out the message.[1686]

Urban and suburban residents tend to be more keen and more open to the development of relationships than they are to being a part of some social or religious institution. The old time door to door visitations are unlikely to be effective. Instead, a church needs a contextual approach to outreach which encourages the development of relationships and ultimately friendships. Offer people opportunities to become involved in activities before asking them to make a profession of faith. Don't require theological conformity before a newcomer can become assimilated into church activities. As one convert commented, "you evangelized us not by evangelizing us. You included us."[1687]

b. Key on Networks

Once a subgroup is targeted, it is important to recognize that every subgroup (or subculture) consists multiple networks such as geographical, business, social and/or personal networks. An effective church develops a strategy to reach each of these networks with the gospel. Thus, an effective outreach strategy is for the church to encourage and train its Christian members to establish a presence and become involved in these personal networks through various social organizations which bring people together. Typically, people are involved in a personal network in the range of 20 to 30 people with whom they relate and trust – e.g., family, neighbors, friends, worker colleagues, and those persons exclusive to a life style enclave. The church should develop a strategy which motivates and supports believers in efforts to develop positive relationships with those who are outside the faith in their own personal network of family and friends. Believers should not isolate themselves from the unchurched who are around them.[1688] But rather, they should embark on the proximity principle espoused in the "Just Walk Across the Room" evangelism.[1689]

c. Felt Need Ministries

Jesus attracted crowds by responding to people's needs. People crowded around him because he addressed their physical, emotional, spiritual and relational problems. He did not judge some needs as being more legitimate than others nor did he make people feel guilty because of their needs. Each person was treated with dignity and respect.

[1685] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 141 (1993).
[1686] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 195-96 (1995).
[1687] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 142 (1993).
[1688] *Id.* at 142-43.
[1689] Discussed in PART FIVE, Section IX.C.4.c.

"Jesus often met a felt need to establish a beachhead for evangelism..."[1690] Here is a model of a fundamental strategy for reaching the subcultures of the primary target as well as occasionally other groups (e.g., the pre-moderns and/or the moderns in addition to the Post-Moderns). That is, develop a church "felt need" ministry through church groups offering sustenance to those in the outside community who reflect specific needs or interests. This is one form of serving evangelism which is considered in PART FIVE, Section IX.D.4. above.

> The more a church can identify and minister to felt needs, the more effective its outreach will be. Understanding felt needs contextualizes ministry and connects the believers with the interests and life stages of unbelievers. While felt need groups begin with a focus on a common interest, they ultimately move to deeper spiritual needs as well.[1691]

In summary, a church's targeting strategy involves (a) aiming your style at your target, (b) key on networks, and (c) offer felt need ministries.

H. ATTRACTING NEWCOMERS

1. What Is Unlikely to Attract First Time Visitors[1692]

In order to attract first time visitors, it is essential to understand the shifting cultural landscape of those outside your church and what really matters to the unchurched. There are churches which still focus on communicating what they offer. For example, a flyer in the mailbox might promise relevant and practical messages, contemporary music, great coffee and so on. This is predicated on the belief that if you offer something, the unchurched will come. But, for the most part they don't.

It is tempting to believe that encouraging casual dress, offering Starbucks coffee, playing rock music, and then delivering a message in a popular style, the church will be enormously appealing. However, this approach hasn't worked in over a decade. Even if a church offering such characteristic is successful in drawing in the unchurched, the question is whether that is what really brings them in? Let's accept that a successful contemporary church does promise and provide contemporary music, casual dress, and good coffee. But people already have these things. They do not need to go to church to experience them. If they want Starbucks, they go to Starbucks. If they like contemporary music, they have easy access with their iPod. When they do come to church, they may appreciate those things when they attend. But, it is very unlikely that this is what draws them in the first place.

Looking at an analogous situation. In a newspaper there are usually dozens of ads offering new cars. One is very unlikely to read these ads unless he or she is in the market for a

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[1690] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 219 (1995).

[1691] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 145 (1993).

[1692] This Section draws primarily on James Emery White, "Why You're Not Reaching the Unchurched," OutreachMagazine.com, August 12, 2015.

car. If one is not in the market for a car, it doesn't matter whatever the offers are. Such person doesn't pay attention to these offers because he or she is not in the market for a car.

The same is true with respect to a church. The unchurched don't see church as a need in their lives, even though they might be interested in spiritual things. They no longer tie such interest to a need to find a particular faith, much less a particular church. They are not in the market for a church so offering them some niceties, by itself, is not likely to draw them in.

2. An Inviting Church

The number one and preponderant reason that growing churches are attracting the unchurched to attend a church a worship service or other church event or activity is an invitation by a family member or a friend. Churches grow because their members and attendees talk about it to their unchurched friends. This occurs naturally and comfortably in their conversations like the mention of a good movie, a favorite restaurant, or a treasured vacation spot. This occurs because the church has created a culture of invitation in its members.[1693]

Data confirms that now is a very opportune time to connect the unchurched to a church by simply extending an invitation to come to a church activity whether it be a worship service or some other event or activity.[1694]

Once they've been invited and attend, the things the church offers which appeals to them will enhance the likelihood of their return. In addition to prayer, being an *inviting church* is the crucial first element successively outreaching to people.

Being an inviting church involves more than an initial invitation. We want people to return. The effective disciple-making church reflects relational intentionality. Many churches struggle to retain their attendees because of failure to connect them in relationships. Proximity with other people does not automatically lead to community. The 30 second meet and greet either before or after a worship service, or other event, does little to connect visitors with the church. Instead, small groups opportunities offering themes of interest to visitors need to be available coupled with intentionality of church members to connect them with such a group. A small group environment provides opportunity to bring a visitor into authentic community and a connection with church.[1695]

3. Serving

When reading the Gospels, it is hard to overlook the fact that Jesus attracted large crowds. He played to their consumer instincts. Rather than the content of his messages, which were commonly not understood, people flocked to Jesus because he *fed* them, *healed* them, *comforted* them, and *promised* them things which they could not get elsewhere.[1696] Caringly and

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[1693] *Id.*

[1694] Thom Rainer, "5 Insights About the Unchurched That Might Surprise You," OutreachMagazine.com, August 28, 2017.

[1695] Ed Stetzer, "Breaking the Attendance Barrier, OutreachMagazine.com, July/August 2016.

[1696] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 16-17 (2012).

lovingly serving people's physical, emotional and/or spiritual needs opens the door to communicating a sense that there is something positive about the Christian faith. When a church's members do so on a widespread basis, the potential for bringing people to embarking upon a faith journey may prove to exceed the imagination. (For discussion of serving, see PART FIVE, Section VIII.)

4. Marketing

Churches have an immensely important message to give, but it is of little avail if no one is there to listen. Many churches rely on mass marketing in various forms, e.g., press releases, paid adds, mass mailings, etc., which on their own, lack great effect. Rick Warren has said

> Some of the tools have changed. For instance, advertising has been on a death curve for about 30 years. It's getting less and less effective. The reason? We're in an over advertised society. We're bombarded with thousands and thousands of messages. I started the church on direct mail. If I were starting today, I would not use direct mail. I'd be using social media. …Telephone, radio, television—each innovation has brought new opportunities. And now the Internet. ...We have more tools for outreach at our disposal than ever before.[1697]

Although there has been a continuing assumption that typically a person's first experience with a church is the Sunday morning service, this is no longer true. Today, a high proportion of people who attend a church for the first time have already visited the church on line. This is true whether the church has an on-line experience, a killer website, a social media presence, or even a website from 2008. People now commonly check out a church, perhaps a week or even months prior to entering a church for the first time.[1698]

Well done websites offer great promise with respect to those who know about it and are interested enough to access it. A church's website maybe the first point of contact with a church for many people. Make it as attractive as possible. Facebook offers another possibility as do exciting newsletters with lots of pictures. One Milwaukee church has found it to be effective to place prominent internet adds on onmilwaukee.com which many young adults (including college students) use for their weekend entertainment information.

Find ways to use various on-line medias to spread the word about the church and welcoming them into our faith community. With many people spending substantial time on these devices and using social media, chances are that some will take notice of well-done posts and

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[1697] James Long, "The Outreach Interview: Rick Warren," Outreach Magazine, p.100 at 104, January/February 2013.

[1698] Carry Nieuwhof, "Why Charismatic Churches Are Growing (and Attraction Churches are Past Peak)," November 18, 2018, outreachmagazine.com.

tweets. "We need to do what we can to leverage the power of this incredible tool God has given us to build bridges and reach people."[1699]

To the extent marketing is utilized, avoid that which has proven to become increasingly ineffective. Commonly church mass marketing focus on contemporary music, coffee and casual dress. Or sometimes the pastor's face is prominently displayed. on the page.

> Really? That's what will get an unchurched person to attend? They already have contemporary music, coffee and the ability to dress casually. Such things reflect an '80s mentality, back when boomers were actively looking for a church. That world no longer exists.[1700]

Whatever marketing is done, it is important to develop the church's most effective story about who we are, what our ministry is about and how that vision can impact peoples' lives.[1701]

However, the critical lesson is that, while marketing and media efforts can play a significant role, they cannot replace personal relationships as the prime means for both bringing people in and encouraging/supporting them in commencing on and continuing a spiritual walk.[1702]

To the extent marketing might aid our church's outreach efforts is beyond the realm of this document to offer a comprehensive and detailed marketing suggestions. But, it is worth noting a unique perspective by Reverend. Les Wicker, First Congregational Church of Naples. He urges that in marketing one's church, whatever its form, market it first to one's own members. They are the first group which receives the message. Marketing can energize one's own people and get them excited about the church. This, in turn, is likely to be conveyed to those outside the church in personal relationship invitational situations.[1703]

I. CREATING IRRESISTIBLE ENVIRONMENTS

On any given day persons may walk onto a church campus. His or her first impression may determine whether ultimately he or she becomes a lifelong member of the congregation or never again steps foot in the building. The environment influences what comes to people's minds when they think about a church, especially if they are first time attendees. Environments matter. To attract those from outside the church and enhance the likeliness of their return, *create irresistible environments*.[1704]

[1699] Ed Stetzer, "Leverage Tech to Advance the Kingdom," OutreachMagazine.com, February 28, 2018. For discussion of using Facebook videos, see Phil Cooke, "4 Steps to Use Facebook Videos to Boost Attendance," OutreachMagazine.com, January 9, 2020.

[1700] James Emery White, "3 New Outreach Realities that Many Churches Still Don't Get," OutreachMagazine.com, September 7, 2017.

[1701] Phil Cooke, "How to Get Your Message Heard," OutreachMagazine.com, January 31, 2013.

[1702] Ed Stetzer, "Want More Visitors? It has to get Personal," OutreachMagazine.com, July 15, 2017.

[1703] Les Wicker, "Marketing Your Church," Congregationalist, p30, September 2017.

[1704] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 156 -57 (2012).

1. Evaluate Environments

For a church to be attractive to the unchurched, as well as to current members, create and sustain attractive environments so that even people who have yet to buy into the church's theology will want to return. To do so, determine what is meant by irresistible environment for each specific ministry and all other areas of the church (e.g., parking lots, ministry areas for children, high school students, small groups, worship services, weekend gatherings, etc.). Establish and implement a standard of excellence for ministry environments. A church seeking to go wide as well as deep better develop and implement standards for its various ministry environments because *people who come do evaluate*.[1705]

2. Ingredients for Irresistible Environments

Several essential ingredients underlying the creation of great environments for attracting and retaining the unchurched include (a) an appealing setting, (b) availability of information, (c) a welcoming prior to the commencement of the worship service, (d) cultural adaptation, (e) engaging presentations, (f) helpful content, (g) relational integrity, and (h) secret church shopper

a. An Appealing Setting

An appealing setting depends on several factors.

- *Brighten up the environment*. Every ministry environment has a physical setting. The physical areas reflect the image of the church and how it ministers to people.[1706] Make it attractive and comfortable for the target audience, a place where a person likes to be. There is only on chance for creating a positive first impression. *Clean and tidy* communicates that the church expects and welcomes guests.[1707] Furthermore, don't underestimate the olfactory senses which are the most impactful of all five senses for long-term memories. Every church environment has the potential for both positive (coffee, citrus) and/or negative (mold, bleach) smells. In evaluating the potential guest experiences, apply the smell test especially in entrances, restrooms and child care facilities.[1708]

  Furthermore, facilities and environment impact people's impressions and mindset before even entering into the worship service or other church activities. Mediocrity does not appeal. Some places are depressing while others lift the spirits. Unchurched persons should enter an environment which is bright and cheerful. Project the image that this church is a warm, friendly, joyful and relevant place. The *physical appearance* of the church's ministry environments needs to be monitored and evaluated on an on-going basis.

[1705] *Id.* at 157-63.

[1706] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 180 (1999).

[1707] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 168 (2012)..

[1708] Greg Atkinson, "8 Unintentional Barriers to New Visitors, "OutreachMagazine.com, January 18, 2012.

Environments tend to deteriorate and become dated. Many churches waste money by spending it on poor quality items rather than investing in excellence. The question is not what is this going to cost, but rather what is it going to cost us if we don't improve.[1709]

Responsibility needs to be vested in some person or persons to see the church's environment as guests see it. Look at the church's facilities – inside and out – as to the mood that it creates. See what needs to be done before guests see it.[1710]

- *Welcoming greeters and ushers* are vitally important in creating a positive initial impression of the church. Four types of greeters can contribute to this effort; *parking lot attendants* to direct traffic. *Outside greeters* who casually greet people as they approach the building, *hosts* stationed at information tables who escort rather than simply direct newcomers as to where they need to go, and *ushers* who greet people as they enter the worship service area, pass out programs and assist in special situations. Greeters should be persons who project personal warmth, smile easily and are friendly.[1711]

  In addition, greeters and ushers are particularly well suited and strategically located to identify guests and point them out to other church members. Hence, the Evangelism Team has recommended that the responsibilities of greeters and ushers (who currently fall within the sphere of the Worship Team's responsibilities) be expanded to include the following:[1712]

  - When guests enter the building, provide information as to where everything is located (e.g., sanctuary, restrooms, fellowship room and Sunday school rooms), and information areas.

  - Invite guests to join us for coffee and refreshments following the service.

  - Immediately after the worship service, be the first people to exit the sanctuary and position themselves between the sanctuary and the exit before guest leave the building. Invite the exiting guests to join in the coffee hour, walk them to the (whether the Sanctuary or Fellowship Room and introduce them to other members of the church.

  - Whether before or after the service attempt to get guests names and, contact information.

[1709] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 183 (1999).
[1710] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 172 (2012) and Warren at 264-69 (Church).
[1711] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 257-58 (1995).
[1712] Fox River Congregational Church, Evangelism Team, "Welcoming Guests at Our Worship Services: Responsibilities of Ushers and Greeters, February 12, 2008.

- A successful church has created a team of volunteers to follow up with first time guests. When a volunteer, rather than a professional staff person, takes time to follow up with a guest, there is a completely different feel. A volunteer perceives this as an outreach ministry, not simply as a task to be done. Either a personal call or a handwritten note (not an e-mail) introduces the caller/writer, ask if they have any questions about the church and how the church might pray for them. If interests or needs are revealed, an opportunity is opened for possible serving, perhaps through a felt needs group or care visitation.[1713]

- Introduce church members to the guests and/or point out guests to church members suggesting they visit with the guests and welcome guests to come back.

- Provide whatever information obtained to the pastor and/or whomever is the appropriate person for follow up.

It should be noted that the above recommendations of the Evangelism Team have not incorporated in the December 2018 Usher and Greeter Instructions.

Although currently at Fox River, the ushers, greeters, etc. function under the scope of the Worship Team, it might be more effective to form specific guest welcoming group to assume responsibilities for and create ideas about these interrelated functions. However, the Worship Team should continue to determine usher instructions with respect to their role during the actual conduct of the worship service.

- *To be a guest friendly church, Church members in general* should be sensitive to, understand and accept the responsibility to seek out and welcome newcomers and guests both before and after worship services. Too commonly, however, church members say "our church is friendly" when in the fact the church seems quite cold to visitors. Instead of outward friendliness to visitors, members tend to gather into tight, impenetrable groups with their friends.[1714]

> The Bible is replete with admonitions of hospitality and servanthood. …[C]hurch members…] should understand that the servant-like spirit should also be manifest when we gather to worship. Guests are often uncomfortable, if not intimidated, when they visit a church. We are to be gracious and sacrificial servants to them.[1715]

[1713] James P. Long, "Empowering Volunteers: Gateway Growth," OutreachMagazine.com, March 31, 2014.
[1714] Dan Hotchkiss, "Five Lies We Like to Tell About Our Church Growth" Alban Weekly, April, 9, 2018.
[1715] Tom Rainer, "The 10 Commandments of Guest Friendly Churches," OutreachMagazine.com, August 30, 2015.

Thus, when newcomers come to our worship services or other events, it is essential that our members recognize their presence and welcome and converse with them.

This includes creating and maintaining a welcoming environment *by all members of the congregation*, a message that needs to be periodically communicated and reemphasized. We should never assume that members of our congregation, on a widespread basis, actively engage in friendly interactions with visitors to our church. Church members need to know that showing Christ's love begins by taking a genuine, hospitable interest in people God brings to us.[1716]

To respond to the need for more guest-friendly church members, the following "Ten Commandments" set forth characteristics which should be reflected in church members so as to be a guest friendly member,[1717]

- Pray for persons in the worship service whom one does not recognize.
- Smile which contributes to the sense of welcome.
- Sit with guests during worship services if they are off by themselves.
- Move to the middle seats in a row so as to leave sufficient seats on the aisles so guests do not have to climb past them.
- Leave back row seats open so guests do not have or move down to the front where they are likely to feel uncomfortable.
- Offer one's seat to a guest when space is lacking.
- Do not save seats. Placing coats, Bibles, etc. on seats in effect puts up an unwelcoming "Do Not Trespass" sign.
- Ushers help seat the guests.
- Offer assistance to guests if they appear to not to know where to go.
- Greet someone he or she does not know both before and after the service. Do not tarry too long in one's own group so as to miss an opportunity to welcome, speak and begin to connect with guests.

[1716] Ronnie Martin, "3 Ways to Create a Welcoming Environment for Visitors," OutreachMagazine.com, December 23, 2018.

[1717] Tom Rainer, "The 10 Commandments of Guest Friendly Churches," OutreachMagazine.com, August 30, 2015.

- The utilization of mystery guests to come and evaluate a church's facilities, discussed Section *h.* below, also applies here. A person unknown to the members of the congregation should be invited to participate in one or more worship services and assess whether the church was guest friendly during his or her visit. Resulting feedback may suggest what the church should do to enhance the guest friendliness of the congregation in general as well as that of ushers and greeters in particular.

- *Accessibility of the senior pastor* offers a subtle and powerful statement. Whether the pastor locates himself at an information counter, participates in a meet and greet, walks around the campus shaking hands, announces and remains at the altar after the service, etc., being present and readily accessible are key to generating positive guest impressions. Especially with respect to a large church, visibility counters the rock star or unavailable stigma that many guests have come to expect in a church.[1718]

- *Place directional signs* in readily seen locations identifying entrances, nursery, bathrooms, worship area, etc. Even small churches can be intimidating to first-time guests. Be sure there is adequate signage throughout the facilities. Although members know where to go, guests do not.[1719]

- Both being *organized* and, as importantly, *appearing organized* communicates that the church is serious about what it does.[1720]

- Of course, facilities must not only be *safe*, especially in readily locatable and accessible children areas, they must appear to be safe. "Unsafe is unappealing." An environment that appears safe communicates valuing kids of both church members and visitors.[1721]

- *Design, decor* and *attention to detail* should reflect understanding the target audience and conveying that the church content is relevant to them.[1722]

- Quality improvement also applies to the *personal appearance* of the pastor, staff, volunteers who greet, ushers, those who serve in the nursery and Sunday School, etc. This does not necessarily mean formal rather than casual dress and appearance. One can be casual without looking tacky, disheveled or unclean. Dress like those people to whom we are ministering. Think about

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[1718] Greg Atkinson, "8 Unintentional Barriers to New Visitors, "OutreachMagazine.com, January 18, 2012.
[1719] Thom Rainer, "5 Things the Unchurched See When They Come to Your church, "OutreachMagazine.com, September 6, 2012.
[1720] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 169 (2012).
[1721] Id. at 1*69-70* (2012).
[1722] *Id.* at 170.

> how we appear to those we want to attract. Look nice and appear professional whatever the style.[1723]

A few final comments on creating an appealing setting. Anthropologists say that our physical surroundings – housing, buildings, decorations, attire, etc. – reflect how we think about ourselves. Our self-image relates to how we value and think of others. Seeking excellence in the physical presentation of the church is a very important element of ministry. Yes, we know that there are physically shoddy buildings housing churches that are full and spectacular building churches which are relatively empty. A quality environment alone does not build a vital church, but does contribute to attracting people to give it a try and enhances the experience of those already there. Remember that Solomon's Temple, blessed by God, was the best in its day. *Excellence glorifies God.*[1724]

b. Provide Readily Available Information about Our Church

Interest in attending our church for the first time may arise from a variety of sources, e. g., an invitation by a friend, seeing the sign at the front of our church property, hearing about us via a grapevine, etc. Whatever the reason, for someone's interest in our church to continue, they will want to learn more about us. Too often in churches, people tend to visit and quickly leave in the absence of any sense of connection with members and the lack of information which might further garner their interest. Thus, when newcomers cross our threshold, in addition to whatever personal touch our members offer, encourage their continued interest. Provide readily available information setting forth various aspects about our church, our mission, our ministry, elements of our vision, our Congregational Way, our teams, and our people (both members and pastor), etc. Making information available as to who we are and what are we about can play an important role in whether a person returns. Showcase the church. This calls for developing and making readily available informational tools to assist people "find a place" before they became discouraged and depart.[1725] General information needs to be provided about the church, its ministries and small groups. Also, make available to church members attractive informational brochures which they can use in the process leading up to an invitation to attend some activity at our church.

Newcomers visiting a church want to know what this particular community of faith believes and practices. Thus, a church interested in attracting and retaining new people needs to be upfront and clear about both. An effective mission statement is essential for a disciple-making church. It provides the basis for a checklist against which the quality of life together and the individual personal growth as disciples can be held accountable. A published mission statement offers a first view people have into the soul of the community of faith and lets people know what to expect. And, it serves as a basis for strategic planning and implementation. The mission statement and the key words which summarize it create a deep sense of shared purpose and

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[1723] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 185 (1999).

[1724] *Id.*

[1725] Paul Braoudakis (Editor), *An Inside Look at Willow Creek Community Church* 135 (2000). See discussion below on Willow Creek Community Church's approach to providing readily accessible information.

direction.[1726] Such should be clearly visible and available for the taking. This also applies to other materials, such as pamphlets, about the church. Wall graphics can also serve in informing visitors. Of course, all such materials should be done with excellence.

To fulfill this informational role, a variety of questions should be considered. What topics should be covered? If we were newcomers attending a church for the first or second time or participating in a session(s) getting to know the church, what information would we want? Who are our targets with respect to specific information to be presented? What is the purpose of each informational piece? What format(s) should be used, e. g., brochures, booklets, etc.? What other questions do we need to ask?

General information or publications embrace all that a church prints – brochures, Sunday worship folders, monthly newsletter, letterhead and business cards, etc. They say a lot about the quality of the church. Even those materials which are primarily for in-house use get around and are seen. Communicate excellence. Understand the importance of presenting ourselves well on the printed page. If it can't be done well, don't do it at all. Every piece of information reflects who we are. Don't reflect mediocrity.[1727]

Willow Creek Community Church has offered a rather detailed approach to providing readily accessible information. This model, discussed immediately below, is worth consideration in attempting to develop and approach suitable for here at FRCC.[1728]

In a readily accessible and highly visible location there should be a welcoming center/information table manned by friendly people both before and after worship services and other major church events. Eliminate clutter, keep things simple, provide only up to date information and contact information. Provide only the most important things a person needs to know about the church. The primary goal is to make the initial connection with guests and guide them to their next step.

Volunteers and/or staff respond to information needs of visitors and outside callers in several ways.

- A *call center* responds to telephone calls from people seeking a variety of information concerning the life of the church.

- A *guided tour* of the facilities, including a description of the various ministries of the church, are provided. This aids in connecting with people based on their needs.

- An *information and welcome center* provides basic information and ministry literature to attendees informing them not only about the church, but also offering

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[1726] Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* (2000), see Chapter 6, pp.111 *et seq.*

[1727] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 183-85 (1999).

[1728] Paul Braoudakis (Editor), *An Inside Look at Willow Creek Community Church* 135-36 (2000).

"first step" tools towards connecting with the ministry services and small group opportunities which meet their specific needs.

- One way to help create a good first impression is providing a welcome packet to each new visitor reflecting what the church believes and offers. Include in the packet a brochure or pamphlet providing a welcome letter from the pastor expressing appreciation for the visitor coming, the mission of the church,[1729] current ministries and programs, schedule of events, perhaps a note about sermon series, perhaps a small gift, and contact information for the pastor, staff and team leaders.

- A *welcome center* in which volunteers come alongside people in a safe and comfortable environment to encourage them toward developing a relationship with the church and assist them in becoming acquainted with the ministries and services of the church.

- *Small groups* designed to help *newcomers* become familiar with the church and assist them in becoming connected to the church.

- A *Phone Team* responds to visitors and attendees who submit questions and requests on a tear off portion of the worship service bulletin.

There will be new attendees who whose relational needs which go beyond informational needs. In these situations, it is important to connect them to the appropriate persons or groups relevant to helping with their needs. Connections to the church community can be facilitated though an assimilation team and/or other appropriate knowledgeable volunteers (perhaps located in the information and welcome center) who can direct them in one of three ways.

- Assist unconnected people find a place relevant to their interests and gifts where volunteers serve in a church ministries.

- Help unconnected people identify and connect with small groups looking for new members or perhaps create a new small group.

- Refer hurting people (e.g., those in need of grief support) to a care team or group.

In short, through readily availability of information and of means of connecting with the church community, the probability of return visits and church involvement can be significantly enhanced.

[1729] If the recommended Mission Statement for FRCC is adopted, the pamphlet "Getting Connected: Becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ (Disciple-Making Mission Statement at Fox River Congregational Church" (2009) should be updated.

c. Welcoming Prior to Commencement of Worship Service

Rick Warren offers several suggestions relevant to both visitors and church members. Prior to the commencement of the worship service, as people enter the building and the sanctuary, the playing of appropriate *music*, whether by tape or live, creates a positive, relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. Offer a *public welcome* that relaxes newcomers. Refer to newcomers and return visitors as *"guests."* The term visitor implies they are not here to stay. The term guest implies someone who is welcome and who we want to make comfortable.[1730]

Furthermore, Warren recommends *avoiding silence before the service.* Walking into a silent large room with numerous people can be unnerving to someone who does not know what is going on. There is a place for silence in the service but not before a service starts. (This is not to suggest doing away with the practice at Fox River of asking attendees to greet one another, especially guests, after the first hymn.) The atmosphere before the service should be alive, happy and contagious. Play upbeat background music to encourage normal and happy conversation. Begin and end each service asking attendees to greet one another and invite all to refreshments after the service.[1731]

However, this suggestion should be weighed against earlier comments (PART THREE, Section I.C.5.c.) above considering the spiritual discipline of worship including warming up for worship by settling in the sanctuary for a bit of quiet time in thought and reflection on why we are gathered in preparation to fully worship. From this perspective, the church should create conditions in the sanctuary conducive to preparing for the worship.

Avoid the hang-up that many unchurched persons have about churches, i.e., they only want me here to collect money. Provide a disclaimer about the offering. For example, before the service commences comment that "Those of you who are visiting today are our guests. As our guests you are not expected to contribute to our offering. Our hope is that you benefit from this worship service not that you make a financial gift." In short, from the outset, seek to make the unchurched guests feel comfortable and welcome,[1732] rather than wanted for his or her money.

d. Cultural Adaptation

A major obstacle to the spread and acceptance of the gospel is not theology, but rather it is the prevailing culture.

> A major issue facing the Western church is making the gospel message intelligible and attractive to people unfamiliar with the church. People receive the Good News of Christ when it is presented in a culturally appropriate manner.... To carry out the Great Commission, the church needs to keep the gospel *biblical in*

[1730] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message* 258-59, 260-61 (1995).
[1731] *Id.* at 263.
[1732] *Id.* at 262-63.

> *content* [and] *culturally significant in form.*[1733] (Emphasis supplied.)

Christ attracted people not only because of his teachings and unique character, but also because he fit into the local culture. He grew up in a normal way as part of a family, working in a normal job, attending local functions and worshipping in a synagogue. In his ministry, he spoke the local dialect, taught through familiar stories about fishing, farming and other everyday occurrences. He asked questions which brought listeners into dialogue with him. And, his parables were relevant to people's lives. The early church also was culturally attractive. Although the primary appeal was spiritual vitality, people also were attracted because of the church's adaptation of its structure and message to the local culture.[1734]

Don't make new guests wonder what is being talked about. People visiting may be from a different culture or background. They may not immediately understand church vocabulary. Use language guests can understand. Define terminology when words used which might not be understood. This is particularly true with respect to "church" things such as baptisms or taking communion. If the message or other aspects of a worship service or other church events are confusing, persons are less likely to come back.[1735]

> The task of contextualization is paramount to the mission of the church because we are called to understand and speak to those around us in a meaningful way.[1736]

Similarly, Paul adapted the manner of expressing his message to Jewish and Gentile audiences. When addressing Jews, he drew upon the Old Testament. When addressing the Athenians, instead of employing Jewish concepts and terminology, Paul started with premises of Greek philosophers. In his first letter to the Corinthians, he set forth his adaptive approach for different audiences.

> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-24)

[1733] Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 100 1993).
[1734] *Id.* at 101.
[1735] Ron Edmondson, "4 Do's and Don'ts for Engaging New Guests," OutreachMagazine.com, August 26, 2015.
[1736] Ed Stetzer, "3 Things Churches Love that Kill Outreach," OutreachMagazine.com, August 27, 2015.

The ministries of Jesus, the early church and the teachings and writings of Paul evidence and highlight the importance of adapting and contextualizing the proclamation of the gospel message to the culture of the audience being addressed.

e. Engaging Presentations

The fifth ingredient of an irresistible environment is offering engaging presentations whether they be sermons, lectures, leading discussions in small group, etc. *Engaging presentations are those which attract and hold people's attention.* It is presumed that the presentations are true in the scriptural sense. However, here the focus centers on an essential ingredient of an irresistible environment, i.e., is the presentation e*ngaging.*

> Jesus was not content to simply say what was true. Being right was not enough. Being biblical was not enough. Being exegetically correct was not enough. That was not his purpose in coming. He came to seek and save that which was lost. And, he communicated to that end. …To seek and save the lost, you must first capture their attention. That is exactly what he did.[1737]

That is, as Jesus modeled, to seek and save the lost, you must first capture their attention. To present the scripture in an un-engaging manner communicates that the Bible is boring and irrelevant and the church is boring and irrelevant. So, commit to offering engaging presentations in all the ministry environments of the church.

To engage is to secure and hold one's attention. An engaging presentation offers information in an interesting manner. It makes text come alive through illustrations and fresh applications. Furthermore, the manner of presentation determines a listener's attention span. It is primarily the manner of the presentation, not the content, which determines interest. Furthermore, an engaging presentation may utilize of variety of techniques in addition to or in lieu of talk, e.g., visuals, interviews, note-taking, outlines, etc.[1738]

Reverend Ron Edmondson offers four specific do's for engaging new guests.[1739]

- Put new guests at ease right from the outset and make them feel welcomed. In the early minutes, try get them to laugh, shed a tear, or reflect. Something personal helps them to know and begin to trust the speaker. The more one can connect quickly with newcomers, the greater the likelihood of keeping their attention.

- Make guests feel love by avoiding criticizing them or making them feel bad about themselves or that are alone. When the message is hard-hitting, include oneself in the struggle.

[1737] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 173-74 (2012).
[1738] *Id.* at 175-76.
[1739] Ron Edmondson, "4 Do's and Don'ts for Engaging New Guests," OutreachMagazine.com, August 26, 2015.

- People only listen to people they trust. Trust is earned by authenticity. Be honest with people. Communicate that oneself is not perfect. Be transparent and hold oneself out in the context of the message.

- Leave the audience with a way to act on the message. People need both a challenge and what is or are the next step(s) in responding to the challenge. So, close with some practical ways to implement the truth or a personal challenge. Pose a question to help them process the message.

To be effective a church needs implement a process which enables utilizing those (i) gifted as engaging presenters to present, (ii) skilled content creators to create content, and (iii) relationally savvy group leaders to facilitate group discussions and fellowship interactions. Utilize people to do what they do best. Select presenters, provide them with great content and turn them loose. Free group leaders from presenting and let them facilitate. Don't allocate a task that is gift dependent to those who lack the requisite gift.[1740]

f. Helpful Content

The final component of an irresistible ministry environment is helpful content (based upon that which is scripturally true). That is, will the audience find it useful? Will it change the way people think? Does it offer a fresh perspective? Will the audience know what to do with what they have heard, i.e., is it actionable? To be helpful, the content must do one or a combination of two or three things:

- help people thinking biblically,
- help people behave biblically, and
- help people contextualize biblical teaching.[1741]

(1) Thinking Right[1742]

Thinking and believing right is seeing the world through God's eyes. Helping people to think right (biblically) leads to growing belief and faith which, in turn, leads to behaving more in accordance with God's will. Such can be life changing. Using simple statements having the potential to lodge in the minds and hearts of the listeners can be life transforming in growing towards a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions. Presenters, and communicators and curriculum/sermon creators should write and communicate a simple and clearly crafted bottom line. Truth is only helpful if people understand it.

Thinking right and believing right are catalysts for transformation. However, application makes all the difference. It is useless to know something if one doesn't know what to do with it. So, not only teach, but challenge people to do something. Thus, a key goal for presenters is an affirmative answer to the question will the listeners know what to do with that which is being taught. Challenge the audience to do something.

[1740] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 176-78 (2012).
[1741] Id. at 182.
[1742] This Section draws upon Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* 182-85 (2012).

(2) Intentional Contextualizing[1743]

For content to be helpful, it must be contextualized for the audience. It needs to address a felt need, otherwise it is irrelevant to that person. Furthermore, to be helpful, content normally is presented in a way that is age and stage of life specific. Be intentional in selecting content for the particular audience being addressed. Address the specific issues of people in the community. For those seeking more in-depth theological training, offer separate opportunities. Don't neglect equipping and inspiring persons to become followers of Jesus rather simply becoming Bible scholars. Lead people to Christ and then into a growing relationship with Christ. To be an effective disciple-making church, it must be both deep and wide.

In evaluating content, one might consider these questions.

- Is the content helpful?
- Does the content offer a potentially new and helpful perspective?
- Does the content provide applications or next steps?
- Is the content age and stage of life specific?[1744]

g. Relational Integrity

Authenticity and transparency in creating and sustaining relationships are foundational for genuine community. For genuine community to be achieved, the atmosphere of love needs to be present in the life of the church as a family of God. If first time visitors and especially returnees fail to sense this in a congregation, they are unlikely to be drawn into the fellowship of the church. Pastors, key leaders and, perhaps even more importantly, relational small groups need to emphasize relational issues such as caring, integrity, communication, building trust, and learning how to forgive. Bottom line is the need to for people to come together on a regular basis in a manner practicing authentic, transparent, relationship-building which in turn is reflected in encounters with newcomers and returnees.[1745]

h. Secret Church Shopper

As a supplement to internal church people doing evaluations, periodically evaluate church's environment through an outsider's eyes. Those who are at the church everyday or, at least quite often, get used to things the way they are and fail to notice something(s) which may not be just right. Thus, find a person or persons who have never been to our church, sometimes an unchurched person. Such persons should be someone whom people of the church do not know resulting in them being unaware that an evaluation is being done. That is, utilize secret church shoppers.

[1743] This section draws primarily on *id.* at 185-92.
[1744] *Id.* at 191.
[1745] Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church; 10 Traits of a Vital Ministry* 19 (1999).

Ask the secret church shopper to assess the church entire environment including physical facilities (signage, parking lot, the building's exterior and interior), availability of information, welcoming, cultural adaption, engaging presentation, helpful content, atmosphere of friendliness, caring and love, etc.

> Our minds often overlook information that is familiar. … First impressions are huge for people stepping into a church for the first time. If they don't come back, they will rarely tell you why. …We should be aware of what newcomers are seeing and feeling. … We'll need to initially answer three questions – who [will do it], what [will he or she do] and how [will it be done]. The who means finding a shopper who fits the profile of the type of person we're trying to reach. …[T]he goal is a descriptive report of what the shopper saw, did and experienced. …Criticism is our most important resource for growth and improvement…. The secret shopper idea would work best if done periodically, so we could look for trends.[1746]

Questions for the unknown visitor to respond to might include the following:

- was it obvious where the children's ministry was located and that it was clean, safe and well-staffed?
- did you observe anything that would lead you to believe that the church values diversity?
- describe and what was your opinion of the worship service?
- over-all was the church friendly and welcoming?
- how was the seating both as to location and comfort-wise?
- was signage adequate, obvious and clear?
- were restrooms accessible and clean?
- were church members positive and upbeat?
- was information about the church readily available?
- did you feel unwelcome pressure?
- what was your overall impression of the church?
- would you return to the church and, if not, why not? and
- are there other observations you care to make? etc.[1747]

The secret church shopper(s) should be someone one who has never been to our church, perhaps even an unchurched person. Provide him or her a guide as to what to evaluate and asked what to. Take copious notes and be blunt in his or her observations and comments. A church seeking to create an irresistible environment should face the reality of what guests observe and

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[1746] Sam Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving god and His People with Excellence,* 126-130 (1999). For an example of a secret shopper survey covering the categories facilities, hospitality, nursery, children, youth. worship service, restrooms, visual image package, follow up and miscellaneous, *see id.* at 227-230.

[1747] Mystery Visitor, "The Pastor Stood on a Diving Board – Lessons from a Mystery Visitor," OutreachMagazine.com, October 29, 2017.

feel when they come to the church. Shortcomings need to be discerned and rectified to avoid deterring potential newcomers and possible returnees. [1748] And finally, avoid utilizing a secret church shopper only on a one-time basis. Use a multiple number of secret church shoppers and do so on a frequent basis.

i. Summary

In summary, to attract newcomers initially and encourage visitors to return, create and maintain, on an on-going basis, an irresistible environment. Such an environment involves several elements. The filters to gauge the irresistibility of a church's environment are several including the following.

- an appealing setting
- provide readily available information about our church
- welcoming prior to the commencement of the worship service
- cultural adaptation
- engaging presentations
- helpful content
- relational integrity
- secret church shopper

Each ministry in a church should be periodically evaluated through these filters. Utilization of secret shoppers, in addition to other forms of internal evaluation, further enhances the ability to create and maintain an irresistible church environment.

J. PLANTING A CHURCH

Another approach to bringing people to Christ and nurturing them in their on-going walk with him is planting a church. Here at Fox River, being a church plant several years ago, we are familiar with the concept and practice of church planting. A church plant can be accomplished in several ways by a church individually or in conjunction with other churches. Many church plants have been highly successful.

There are some who advocate that all churches, whatever their size, should become involved in planting new churches. Christ was clear about his mission. He came to "seek and save the lost." He didn't remain on earth enabling everyone come to him on a physical one-on – one basis. The plan was more than that. He sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his followers so that his light would sign in multiple places throughout the world. Christ commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples…" (Matthew 28:19) Eleven disciples commenced spreading the gospel across the globe. This was their mission. Spread and multiply. It is urged that the fastest way to bring as many people as possible to a saving disciple-making faith is not solely attempting

[1748] Thom Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit* 46-47 (2016).

to add members to one's own church. The answer is argued to be not addition, but rather it is multiplication through the planting of churches.[1749]

However, exploring the planting of churches approach to evangelism is beyond the scope of this document. Nevertheless, this possibility may be something that FRCC may want to consider at some future time.

K. STRATEGY FOR REACHING SECULAR PEOPLE

The recommended Mission for Fox River Congregational Church, with respect to outreach, expresses that it is the mission of FRCC

> *to encourage, equip and support people in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions by...*
>
> > *connecting with people outside the faith through lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ and the power of God's love for all people, leading them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life.*

However, unless the evangelistic values, and good intentions are translated into a step-by-step strategy geared specifically to people outside the faith. evangelism efforts are unlikely to achieve significant impact. Willow Creek Community church has developed and implemented an effective strategy reaching secular people consisting of three basic steps.[1750]

1. Step 1: Build Relationships

> .... [T]o follow the example of Jesus and lots of others in the pages of the Bible... challenge believers in this church to build relationships with nonchurched people. On a regular basis, we've got to leave the huddle of close Christian fellowship, take some risks and get to know some nonchurched people. We've got to build relational bridges....[1751]

The church needs to instill and develop in believers a consciousness which engenders the habit of asking God to lead them to an unbeliever or skeptic with whom one can establish a relationship as well as asking God for aid in doing so. Thus, Step 1 in the church's evangelistic strategy is for all church members to commit, as part of the whole congregation, to building relational inroads with people who need to be reached as Jesus did. When the relationship is, or becomes,

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[1749] Jake Mills, "Why Every Church Should Multiply," Outreachmagazine.com, 2019-02-17.

[1750] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 68 et *seq.* (2001).

[1751] *Id.* at 68.

one of friendship, the ability of the believer is enhanced for discerning what spiritual questions that person has and to provide him or her with relevant, biblical answers.[1752]

2. Step 2: Share a Verbal Witness

It is important to take advantage of opportunities to share our faith regardless of the fear of awkwardness in doing so.

> Believe that God is both willing and able to give you what you need in order that you might joyfully spread the word about his Son… however seemingly awkward it may feel at first.[1753]

After building a trusting relationship, the next step in reaching out to the nonbelievers is offering verbal witness. It is incumbent on the believer, when an appropriate opportunity arises, to offer a brief, clear and compelling explanation who Christ is and what he has done for us. Scripture calls upon us to do so.

> … always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Each believer needs to be willing to assume risks and initiate spiritual conversations, to clearly articulate the message of salvation and the coming Kingdom of God in ways which non-Christians can understand. Consequently, it's imperative that the church develop and implement means to prepare all of its members to build relationships, witness the impact of Christ in their lives, and articulate the truths of the gospel.[1754]

3. Step 3: Invite Friends to Outreach Events

Scripture says

> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? – (Romans 10:14)

In order for skeptics and unbelievers to hear, someone needs to either preach, teach or lead them to a basic understanding of the Christian faith and to experience the joy of relationships in following Christ. Someone has to do it, but an individual church member does not have to lead a person to Christ all by him or herself. Thus, Step 3 of the strategy to reach those outside the

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[1752] *Id.* at 69-71.

[1753] Gloria Furman, "How to Start Conversation about Jesus," Outreachmagazine.com, November 20, 2018.

[1754] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* 72-75 (2001).

faith is for the church to offer both attractive and interesting worship and non-worship outreach events and activities, as well as short term and relational small group opportunities, to which members invite them to attend in an attractive irresistible church environment. Effective evangelism is a church-wide team evangelism effort. Combining individual efforts with well executed worship and non-worship events, the message of the Word can be communicated and loving relationships can grow initiating a person's embarkation and/or continuation on a path leading to accepting and growing in Christ. This combination leads to powerful results.[1755]

Of course, in the process must not compromise biblical truth or standards. Avoid the temptation to tone down expressing biblical truths. Communicate the gospel without compromise. Avoid substituting uplifting stories and positive platitudes for the for the humbling, eternity altering truth of the gospel. Be faithful and courageous in preaching and teaching the gospel message.[1756]

It doesn't require a modern message to reach modern people. The gospel message is unchanging applying to all people. Yes, it may require addressing a modern culture in a manner to which the culture will listen. However, the message must not be diluted. There is no success when losing the message in the process.[1757] And, Paul condemns those who modify or soften the gospel when preaching or teaching. "[S]o now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!" (Galatians 1:9)

It is the responsibility of a disciple-making church to structure itself and will itself to carry out the three stage strategy of (i) relationship building, (ii) sharing Christ and (iii) invitation. Become a contagious Christian church by motivating, training, equipping and supporting all of its members to actively engage in personal relationship evangelism and by providing attractive opportunities to which they can invite people to whom they are reaching out. A strategy that integrates an individual's personal relationship evangelism outreach efforts with well executed worship and non-worship outreach events has proven to be quite effective.

As Christ said,

> The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Luke 10:2)

Let's do it.

[1755] *Id.* at 76-77.
[1756] *Id.* at 340-41.
[1757] *Id.* at 345.

VIII. CHURCH ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The effectiveness of a church as a disciple-making church, in significant part, depends upon its organizational framework being based upon and implemented for the accomplishment of its disciple-making mission. The current organizational structure of FRCC reflects the intent of doing so. However, the passage of time and the discussion considered in this resource book raises to some suggested modifications. But, most importantly, the adoption of the Recommended Mission Statement and a greater awareness of the Stages of the Disciple-Making Process incumbent on a person growing toward a more Christ-like life call for reconsideration of some aspects our organizational structure.

A. FRCC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Current Organizational Structure

The current organizational structure here at FRCC is set forth in the church By-Laws. Our adopted basic principles of governance are fundamental for the organizational structure of the church.

> Under the Headship of Christ and consistent with the Church Mission and Covenant, determination of Church policies is reserved exclusively to the Congregation. In reviewing Church policies, programs and activities, the Congregation, as well as those persons or bodies developing such policies, programs and activities, shall conduct its evaluation with the primary standard being whether they significantly contribute to the achievement of Church Mission and/or Covenant.[1758]

That is, the current organizational structure at FRCC is based upon Christ as the head of the church. Under Christ, the Congregation is the policy making body. Serving under the Congregation currently are seven teams. Those commonly referred to as the mission purpose teams include the Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Service and Evangelism Teams. The two support teams are the Accountability and Administrative Teams. Team responsibilities are set forth in the By-Laws. In the context being a Congregational church, although the senior pastor, as well as other staff under him, does not occupy a command and control role authority, our senior pastor is highly respected and is quite influential as the leader of the church.

2. Recommended Organizational Structure

The following discussion offers a modified team structure and allocation of team responsibilities. The proposed set of teams is as follows:

[1758] Fox River Congregational Church By-Laws, Article IV.A.1.a. (2011).

- Worship
- Fellowship
- Evangelism
- Assimilation – (new)
- Adult Christian Education – (formerly Discipleship)
- Sunday School and Youth Christian Education – (formerly Discipleship)
- Serving
- Relational Small Groups – (new)
- Ministry Support – (formerly Accountability)
- Administration

The recommended changes involve amending the church By-Laws with respect to creating new and deleting old teams, name changes, and team responsibilities. However, the By-Laws remain the same with respect to team membership with the exception of the Ministry Support Team (formerly the Accountability Team) whose membership will consist of all team leaders and up to a maximum of 4 at-large members. The recommended team responsibilities, considered below, reflect both currently FRCC adopted By-Laws, church vision and core value statements, current team descriptions, outlines of current strategies applicable to each mission purpose team, as well as other recommendations considered throughout this resource book.

3. Major Changes in Team Structure

Several significant changes in team organizational structure will be noted here before getting into the specifics of team responsibilities.

Newly created is an Assimilation Team. Our church lacks systematic and coordinated efforts to assimilate prospective, new and even on-going members into the life of the church. When we fail to do so, the disciple-making effectiveness of our church is dramatically reduced. The new Assimilation Team is to play a major role in remedying this defect.

Second, no longer will there be a Discipleship which currently is responsible for matters relating to the mission purpose of discipleship (growing faith and spiritual maturity) which includes the Christian education for adults, youth and children and organizing small groups. As a result, as is common in other churches, the educational component of discipleship is often equated to what discipleship is all about. This narrow and erroneous perception of discipleship tends to result in under-emphasizing attention and concern about the responsibility for disciple-making throughout the rest of a church. However, as considered in some depth at the outset of this research book, disciple-making is at the core of our entire church's ministry.

The recommended Mission Statement reestablishes that FRCC seeks to encourage, equip and support people in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions (i.e., discipleship) by connecting with God, other Christian believers, believers and non-believers through serving, and those outside the faith through evangelism. worship, fellowship, serving and evangelism all constitute integral elements in the disciple-making process. Thus, it is important to emphasize that disciple-making is not merely one of several the ministries of the church which falls solely under the province of the Discipleship Team. But rather, disciple-

making is at the core of what God calls upon each of us to do both individually and as a church collectively. Disciple-making is the function of the entire church which means it is the responsibility of all church leadership, all teams and all members of our church. Creating and growing disciples is the role of the entire church, not simply that of one team. Thus, it is recommended that there no longer be a Discipleship Team. Its responsibilities will be reallocated to a new and/or other existing teams.

Third, the new Adult Christian Education Team emerges from the former Discipleship Team. Its focus will be on adult Christian education and supporting other teams in related areas.

Fourth, a new Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team is created to assume responsibilities in this area from the former Discipleship Team.

Fifth, the new Relational Small Group Team is created to foster, create, train and lead relational small groups. Currently this responsibility has been assumed by the Discipleship Team. Although some progress has been made, the Discipleship Team has been consumed by other activates. As explored earlier, participation in relational small groups is a critical element in a successful disciple-making church. The recommended mission calls for fostering the movement of every member of the congregation into an effective disciple-making relational group. Thus, a new Relational Small Group Team devoted to fostering, creating, training and leading relational small groups is needed as a fundamental component in our church organizational structure.

Sixth, the Accountability Team, having an unsuitable name for the Team's current and future functions, is renamed Ministry Support Team covering a wide gamut of responsibilities.

Fellowship, Serving and Administrative Teams continue as before in the organizational structure.

B. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES: GENERAL

Section C. below considers specific responsibilities for each team, Here, focus is on general responsibilities of all teams.

1. Enculturation of the Mission

Foundational of an effective disciple-making church is its mission. This requires deeply embedding our Mission in the culture of our church. As an important element in doing so, it is the responsibility of pastors, staff, all teams and ministries to be actively involved in the enculturation process. Thus, a general responsibility for every team in their team meetings, programs and other activities is to incorporate, in a meaningful manner, reaffirmation of the recommended Covenant which includes the recommended Mission.

2. Disciple-Making Process

All teams, especially team leaders, need to be cognizant of and understand their responsibility for advancing the Mission of our church and advancing people through the stages of discipleship. All teams are, or should be, actively involved in disciple-making. This has been well recognized by FRCC when it adopted a general standard applicable to all mission purpose teams.

> In business terms, *we are in the disciple-development business. The product is transformed lives - an expanding body of Christ-like people. The role of our Mission Teams is to motivate and better enable individuals to progress in their Walk with Christ by moving to deeper levels of spiritual maturity and levels of commitment.* This requires a series of processes designed to move people through various stages of development. Each mission purpose Team is an integral part of this series of processes to encourage and better enable people to progress toward becoming *Fully Devoted Followers of Christ* -- the ultimate result of achieving our… mission purposes.[1759]

While each team has an area of primary focus, in all they do, they are also responsible for considering how and what they can do to advance other elements of our mission either separately or in conjunction with other teams.

In any organization, consisting of teams or other similar bodies, there is a tendency for each unit to focus virtually all of its attention and efforts on its particular area of prime responsibility. The unit tends to function within its relatively exclusive area. In a church context, all too commonly, there is little tendency to be continually alert to supplementing the efforts of others in moving persons through and within the various stages of discipleship.

In a church context, various questions might be asked. For example, here at FRCC, how often does the Worship Team focus on assuring that greeters and ushers perform their function in a manner to foster outreach to visitors through fellowship? How often does performing various types of serving embrace significant and on-going efforts aimed at leading the unchurched, among those being served, in the direction of Christ? Does the Evangelism Team efforts result in not only leading people toward Christ, but also toward their assimilation into the body of the church? Has the former Discipleship Team conduct of short term small group programs served as a frequent bridge to relational small groups? The purpose of noting questions such as these is not intended to be critical of past or current practices, but rather to suggest that teams in performing their primary functions teams should not do so with an exclusive mindset.

Instead, in planning and performing team activities, the church mission and the entire disciple-making process should be kept in view. The recommended Mission for FRCC consists of helping people connect with God, connect with other Christians in fellowship, connect with

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[1759] Fox River Congregational Church, "Foundational Standards & Outline of Comprehensive Strategy Applicable to Each Mission Purpose Team," adopted, June 6, 2004.

both Christians and others through serving, and connect with the those outside the faith. In this effort, the disciple- making process (Stages of Disciple-Making) consists of conversion, worship, basics of the faith, personal spiritual disciplines (nurturing the faith), getting to know the church (church membership), assimilation, participation in short term and ultimately relational small groups, growing in serving, and growing int sharing Christ (evangelism). The general standard for all teams quoted above calls for non-exclusivity in team thinking whether proceeding individually as a team or in conjunction with another team whose primary focus is in that area.

In short, it is the responsibility of all teams to be alert to when and, where it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in moving people through the stages of disciple-making.

3. Fostering Fellowship

Although there is a Fellowship Team, fostering fellowship is a natural and essential responsibility of all teams as well as each member of the church. The concept of encouraging and enabling fellowship as a church-wide phenomenon is well expressed in the FRCC Vision Statement.

> *Gathered Covenant Fellowship* -- We envision a Christian fellowship gathered around and bound in love to Christ and one another by a covenant freely entered into; a Christian fellowship of believers personally committed to follow Christ by creating an environment of friendships, belonging and personal relationships where members learn, share, nurture, laugh, love, celebrate joys, grow and pray with one another; a Christian fellowship where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated, and the confused can find love, trust, acceptance, support, hope, forgiveness, guidance, encouragement and healing; and a Christian fellowship where the self can grow and where communion with God can be richer.[1760]

The opportunity for fostering fellowship arises in all that the various teams do both in the context of the activity being pursued and among team members themselves.

In short, it is the responsibility of all teams to be alert to and supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship and assimilation in moving people through the stages of discipleship.

4. Foster Team Member Spiritual Growth

Team meetings should be more than simply the conduct of business. In addition, they offer opportunity for team members to gather in a manner fostering their own personal spiritual growth. Among other possibilities, this not only involves building fellowship, but moments for prayer and spending a bit of pertinent time with Scripture. Thus, a general responsibility for all teams is to foster team member personal spiritual growth through fellowship, prayer and scripture.

[1760] Fox River Congregational Church, "Vision for the Future of Our Church," adopted June 22, 2003.

C. INDIVIDUAL TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The following Subsections 1. through 10. consider and recommend the specific responsibilities for each team under the recommended new team structure.

1. Worship Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Worship Team

The recommended mission for FRCC includes, among other elements, encouraging, equipping and supporting people

> in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions by connecting with
>
> > God in a loving and intimate relationship through worship, prayer, scripture, and other spiritual disciplines….

Reflecting this element of recommended mission is the currently adopted worship core value at FRCC.

> Worship is at the heart of a Christian church. Christ's first and greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. As a prime means of expressing praise, love and gratitude to God, inspiring and uplifting worship is fundamental to our faith.[1761]

And, in our Vision Statement, we

> envision a Christian fellowship in which all members gather together as a worshipping community to express our love, reverence, praise and gratitude to God in joyful, inspiring, energetic, prayerful and creative worship. Such worship includes the revelation of God's Word, especially as that Word is revealed in the Bible, through creative and learned preaching, so that we might discern and be obedient to God's will.[1762]

The worship core value and vision reflect church direction in carrying out this element of mission purpose.

Worship services are to be

[1761] Fox River Congregational Church, Statement of Core Values of Our Church" (adopted June 22, 2003).
[1762] Fox River Congregational Church, "Vision for the Future of Our Church," adopted June 22, 2003.

> imbued with the expectancy of inviting and experiencing the presence of Christ in our midst; the expectancy of the revelation of God's Word and will for us; the expectancy of the Holy Spirit entering into our lives to guide, sustain and empower us; the expectancy of a loving and caring personal relationship with God; and the expectancy of the great things and joy which God has prepared for those that love him.[1763]

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context for worship, a context for defining the role of the Worship Team is provided.

b. Responsibilities of the Worship Team

The prime responsibility for the conduct of worship rests with the Senior Pastor. In general, the role of the Worship Team is to assist in the worship function. Specific Worship Team responsibilities include the following:

- provide support, consultation and recommendations to Senior Pastor (and/or his or her designated person) resulting in the implementation of an effective worship program by
  - offering vital worship leading people to experience God's presence' and transformation in their spiritual growth path
  - attracting and engaging believers, unbelievers and unchurched
  - offering genuinely participatory rather than spectator oriented worship
  - offering meaningful opportunities for confession and prayer
- provide inspiring music expressing love, praise, reverence and gratitude to God
- assist in the sacraments and liturgy
- oversee special worship events
- arrange for and train ushers and greeters with emphasis on creating a welcoming and fostering fellowship environment among both existing members and visitors

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[1763] Fox River Congregational Church "Foundational Standards & Outline of Comprehensive Strategy Applicable to Each Mission Purpose Team," adopted, June 6, 2004 . Although creating a genuine sense of expectancy of God in our lives is a responsibility for all of our Teams, creating a genuine sense of expectancy of Christ's presence in our midst in worship is a particular function of the Worship Team.

- arrange for and/or offer teaching experiences on the purposes and the hows of worship (though preaching and small group programs which also foster fellowship)

- as common with all teams

    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

    - foster personal spiritual growth of Worship Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

2. Fellowship Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Fellowship Team

The recommended Mission for FRCC calls for the church

> to encourage, equip and support people in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions by connecting with… Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together…

The currently adopted fellowship core value at FRCC reflects this element of the recommended mission.

> God calls us to belong as well as to believe. We are not meant to live alone or in relative isolation from one another. Instead, we belong to Christ's family. We are a community of believers voluntarily "gathered together around Christ" in fellowship with Christ and with one another through our common love of Christ. Such fellowship calls for frequent and meaningful personal relationships with one another creating an environment for richer communion with God, growth of self, and mutual support and service to one another. Loving, trusting, sharing, forgiving and respectful relationships should permeate every aspect of church life making our church a secure and loving home, family and community for all.[1764]

[1764] Fox River Congregational Church, Statement of Core Values of Our Church" (adopted June 22, 2003).

Similarly, as noted above, the FRCC vision statement envisions a Christian fellowship environment of friendships, personal relationships, sense of belonging and nurturing one another. This is reflected in the recommended mission.

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context for fellowship, they also provide context for defining the role of the Fellowship Team.

b. Responsibilities of the Fellowship Team

Although all teams are responsible for fostering fellowship in the context of their responsibilities, the Fellowship Team focus centers on fellowship. Specific Team responsibilities include the following:

- create, promote and implement activities and programs creating environments fostering sense of belonging and friendships through the development of warm, knowing and caring personal relationships founded on respect, understanding, forgiveness, trust and love

- offer church-wide social fellowship offering opportunities for people to get to know one another. Means to do so include

    - host refreshments after worship services and refreshment/meals at church events in conjunction with other teams sponsoring such events

    - foster home fellowship social gatherings

- as common with all teams

    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

    - foster personal spiritual growth of Fellowship Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

3. Evangelism Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Evangelism Team

The recommended mission for FRCC includes, among other elements, encouraging, equipping and supporting people

> in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions by connecting with …
>
> > people outside the faith though lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ and the power of God's love for all people, leading them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life.

The unchurched specifically embrace both persons outside the faith who are atheist or doubters and those persons who have fallen away from the church for whatever reason.

The currently adopted evangelism core value reflects this element of recommended mission for FRCC. This value expresses that

> [a]ll people including the unchurched people (i.e., non believers and believers without meaningful affiliation with a church) have value and matter to God. Therefore, they matter to us….
>
> God desires for us to reach as many people as possible with the life-changing message of Jesus the Christ. Thus, we are committed to pursuing a wide range of methods and policies (including one on one personal evangelism, life style role model evangelism and serving physical, mental and spiritual needs), which do not compromise our integrity or commitment to biblical truth, to reach out and witness the Gospel to the unchurched so as to win them to being followers of Christ (followed by discipling them toward Christian maturity). A fundamental reason for our church to exist is to lead others to accepting Christ as Lord and Savior (i.e., conversion).
>
> We are committed to creating and maintaining a friendly, welcoming and non-threatening environment in which those not yet committed feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith.[1765]

And, in our Vision Statement, we

> envision a Christian fellowship in which all members seek to win others to Christ by reaching out to all by entering into personal relationships, by sharing the Gospel and by bearing witness by word and deed to the power and love of God so that others may know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and by maintaining a welcoming and non-threatening environment in which those not yet committed to Christ can feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith. … Recognizing that God desires that we reach as

[1765] *Id.*

> many people as possible with the life-transformation message of Jesus Christ, we envision using a wide range of traditional and creative methods and policies.[1766]

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context for evangelism, the role of the Evangelism Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of the Evangelism Team

The Evangelism Team role is to plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts leading people outside the faith in getting to know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and to active participation in our Christian fellowship community. Specific Evangelism Team responsibilities include the following:

- both directly and in conjunction with the Senior Pastor (and/or his designated person) repeatedly communicate, permeate and instill into the church culture Christ's call for evangelism, evangelism values, and ~~an~~ evangelism lifestyle in all members of the church

- encourage, train, equip, support, and foster commitment of all church members in developing knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in personal relationship and serving evangelism including fostering members' understanding of their natural personal traits and style for evangelism and using their God given gift(s) and personality characteristic in reaching out to others

- plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts and activities leading people outside the faith to know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior and to actively participate in our Christian fellowship community, including the following

  - offer meaningful experiences to people outside the faith through building personal relationships. small group gatherings, teaching basics of faith and responding to questions, objections and doubts leading toward acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior

  - either directly and/or in conjunction with the senior pastor (and/or persons he or she designates), foster clearly understood alternative ways and opportunities to accept Christ as Lord and Savior

  - foster evangelism through the formation of evangelism oriented short term and/or relational small groups either directly and/or in support of the Relational Small Group, Team and/or other teams

  - when appropriate, consult with and recommend to the Pastor and/or Worship Team as to the nature and effectiveness of worship services in attracting and engaging those outside the faith (worship evangelism)

[1766]" Fox River Congregational Church, "Vision for the Future of Our Church," adopted June 22, 2003.

- gathering and developing evangelistic leaders to serve on other teams to uplift and implement evangelism values and activities in those teams

- foster the maintenance of an attractive, welcoming and non-threatening environment in which those not yet committed to Christ feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith.

- as common with all teams

  - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

  - foster personal spiritual growth of Evangelism Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

  - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

4. Assimilation Team

   a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Assimilation Team

   As expressed earlier,

   > The role of… [the church] is to motivate and better enable individuals to progress in their Walk with Christ by moving to deeper levels of spiritual maturity and levels of commitment. This requires a series of processes designed to move people through various stages of development.[1767]

Without movement, programs, events or other activities are simply ends unto themselves. To be an effective disciple-making church, the ministry process must be intentional about moving people through the stages of discipleship, that is, assimilate people into the various stages as an on-going process.

As newcomers are drawn to the church, through evangelism efforts or otherwise, the church should endeavor to quickly assimilate them into the life of the church which reduces the likelihood that they will drop out. As noted earlier, the key question is "what will help

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[1767] Fox River Congregational Church, Foundational Standards and Outline of Comprehensive Strategy Applicable to Each Mission Purpose Team: General Standard Applicable to All Mission Purpose Teams, adopted by Congregation, June 6, 2004.

newcomers become a part of this church." The answer is the more friends a newcomer makes, the greater the likelihood that he or she will become involved. People try out a church for a variety of reasons. They stay primarily for one of two reasons – friendships and meaningful ministry involvement. The assimilation stages of disciple-making embrace assimilating efforts both (i) before persons become members, thereby enhancing the likelihood that they will opt to do so, and (ii) after becoming members thereby enhancing the likelihood of on-going active participation in both the church's mission and in personal spiritual growth.

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context, the role of the Assimilation Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of the Assimilation Team

Assimilation is an on-going process throughout a person's Walk with Christ as he or she progresses to, within and through the stages of disciple-making (spiritual growth). As considered earlier, within in the context of their own specific responsibilities, fostering assimilation, in the various stages of disciple-making, is a general responsibility of all teams. However, to date FRCC has lacked a concentrated focus on assimilation, hence the need for an Assimilation Team.

The Assimilation Team role is to plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts leading both members and prospective members to assimilate into and progress through the various stages of discipleship. Specific Assimilation Team responsibilities include the following:

- develop and make available a current information data base on team, small group and other church offerings and opportunities for participation
- foster and facilitate participation in assimilation opportunities including discerning prospective participants, encouraging their exploration, and assisting in making connections
- offer relationship building assimilation opportunities either directly and/or on conjunction with other teams including matching new and/or already believers with an existing group of believers or create a new group
- foster becoming a church member
- recognize and celebrate new members
- as common with all teams
    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

- foster personal spiritual growth of Assimilation Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

5. Adult Christian Education Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Adult Christian Education Team

In his Great Commission Christ commanded that we, both as the church and as individual disciples,

> go and make disciples of all nations… and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. – (Matthew 28:19-20))

FRCC's current mission statement reflects this command calling us to teach "what Jesus taught so that we may grow toward living a Christ-like life …." Furthermore, our current covenant calls upon each of our members to "GROW in the knowledge and expression of our faith."

As expressed in FRCC's core values,

> After someone has made a decision for Christ, he or she must be discipled which is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This involves teaching and mentoring people in the foundations of the Christian faith, encouraging them, and praying for them so that they may follow Christ more effectively. This process begins when a person accepts Christ as his or her Lord and Savior and continues throughout the rest of his or her life. Thus, a fundamental role for our Church is discipling believers' growth toward life transforming Christian maturity and cultivating a Christ-like and loving atmosphere within our Church community.
>
> Discipling calls for Bible based continuing Christian education at all age levels.[1768]

FRCC Vision includes envisioning

> a Christian fellowship mentoring people in the foundation of the Christian faith by teaching them what Jesus taught; encouraging them; and praying with them so that they may grow toward living a Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This

[1768] Fox River Congregational Church, Statement of Core Values of Our Church" (adopted June 22, 2003).

> discipling process of growing in one's faith begins when a person accepts Christ and continues throughout the rest of his or her life.[1769]

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context, the role of the Adult Christian Education Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of the Adult Christian Education Team

The Adult Christian Education Team is responsible for matters relating to the Mission Purpose of encouraging, equipping and supporting people in their on-going Walk with Christ by offering experiences to better enable them to connect with God in a loving and intimate relationship through prayer, scripture and other spiritual disciplines. Christian education is an on-going process throughout a person's life. Specific Adult Christian Education Team responsibilities include the following:

- offer Christian adult (including youth) educational experiences to foster understanding of and commitment to
  - Fox River Congregational Church Mission and growing toward being more Christ-like through progressing through the stages of stages of discipleship
  - basic, refresher and advanced knowledge of the Bible and other spiritual growth subjects
  - God's call for transformed living and the elements of Christian living
  - the nature and practice of spiritual disciplines
- in consultation with the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person),
  - offer Exploring Church Membership Class opportunities for non-members to learn and understand the church's mission, covenant, stages of discipleship, core values, vision, the Congregational Way, benefits of being a member, how the church is organized, how to get involved in small groups and/or ministry, and membership requirements. Offer similar learning opportunities to current members.
  - for confirmed church youth, offer preparatory church membership program experiences including Exploring Church Membership Class, age suitable basic Christian education, and other spiritual growth programs and activities

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[1769] Fox River Congregational Church, Vision for the Future of Our Church (adopted June 22, 2003).

- _ as common with all teams,

    - be alert to where and when it can be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

    - foster personal spiritual growth of Adult Christian Education Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

6. Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team

The Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team responsibilities include the following:

- offer age appropriate biblically based Christian education programs and experiences for children and youth of the church up to and including eighth grade and confirmation

- recruit and schedule teachers

- as common with all teams

    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

    - foster personal spiritual growth of Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

7. Serving Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Serving Team

In his second Greatest Commandment, Christ calls upon us to love our neighbor. (Matthew 22:40) Christ calls us to reflect his radical love for all people. Our Mission includes encouraging, equipping and supporting members of our church in connecting with both believers and non-believers through serving their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The

church is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...." (Ephesians 4:12)

FRCC Core Value Statement reflects Christ's call.

> By serving the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of others in the name of Jesus, we respond to God's call to love our neighbor as ourselves. Since caring for people honors God, our Church is here to minister to (serve) people in Christ's name….
>
> Every follower of Christ has been created unique with valuable gifts which are meant to be discovered, developed and used in furtherance of God's will.[1770]

And, our Vision Statement lends further emphasis when

> envision[ing] a Christian fellowship expressing its love for others by serving, in the name of Christ, their spiritual, emotional and physical needs through encouraging and equipping every member for significant ministry in the family, church, community and the world. Such fellowship assists members in discovering, developing and using their unique gifts to minister to the needs of others through a broad range of caring ministry and mission opportunities.[1771]

Our Senior Pastor Lonnie Richardson poignantly points out that serving is not beyond those of us who are ordinary persons. Look at the serving of Mary, the mother of Christ, who, was a very ordinary persons.

> We are all members of the body of Christ. God has no other hands and minds in the world but ours. …God is still calling ordinary people to do his work and assuring us that he will be with us as we do.[1772]

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context, the role of the serving Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of the Serving Team

The role of the Serving Team is to encourage, equip and support members of the church engaging in a variety of serving ministries to both those within and outside the church. Specific Serving Team responsibilities include the following:

[1770] Fox River Congregational Church, Statement of Core Values of Our Church" (adopted June 22, 2003).
[1771] Fox River Congregational Church, Vision for the Future of Our Church (adopted June 22, 2003.
[1772] Lonnie Richardson, "To Be Like Mary," December. 20, 2015 (sermon).

- teach and foster understanding
  - the biblical, mission and spiritual discipline bases for serving
  - serving evangelism
- foster a churchwide serving culture encouraging and equipping all church members to participate in a serving church ministry and/or serving in individual personal life circumstances
  - foster and assist persons discerning and developing their personal gifts for serving and help matching persons' gifts with serving needs and opportunities both inside and outside the church
  - foster and assist persons serving physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others whether or not they are believers or in our church community
  - in consultation with and support for Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person), provide pastoral care for both those inside and outside church including visiting shut-ins in nursing homes, hospital, private homes, etc.
  - foster identifying and serving felt need groups both within and outside the church community
- as common with all teams
  - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
  - foster personal spiritual growth of Serving Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
  - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

8. Relational Small Group Team

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Relational Small Group Team

Since God is love, his very nature is relational. Christ has made it crystal clear that not only is the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart, mind and soul, but also the second greatest commandment is to "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-39) He commands us to live a life of love. Love cannot be learned nor lived in isolation from others. Life is meant to be shared.

In Genesis 2:18 "[t]he LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" Here divine knowledge and mandate is clearly expressed. People are to connect with and enter into loving, caring personal relationships with others. We are further spurred to do so in Hebrews 10:24-25 which says

> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another....

As Proverbs 15:22 sagely expresses, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

We need others to help us navigate our way in our process of spiritual transformation. "Regular and prayerful companionship becomes a life-changing vehicle of God's grace"[1773] for both those persons receiving and those offering on-going loving and caring support. Most nurturing of a spiritual life occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught. Following Christ needs to be lived. The relational element in Jesus' model must be at the heart of becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ.

From this discussion and conclusions reached earlier. (1) On-going relational small groups constitute a virtually indispensable element for those seeking transformation toward a more Christ-like life and a growing relationship with God. (2) Small groups need to be an integral part of the church structure, not merely an appendage or an after-thought add on. And, (3) every church member and attendee should effectively be encouraged to become involved in a relational small group.

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context, the role of the Relational Small Group Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of Relational Small Group Team

The Relational Small Group Team role is to foster participation in a relational small group by all members of the congregation leading to spiritual growth toward a more Christ-like life. Specific Relational Small Group Team responsibilities include the following:

- foster creation and, implementation of relational small groups which lead people toward spiritual growth (a more Christ-like life) through learning, understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines (including worship, prayer, spending time with God's Word), and basics of Christian living including fellowship, serving and evangelism

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[1773] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* 123 (2005).

- equip relational small group participants for effective relational small group experiences
    - foster understanding the attributes underlying effective relational small groups including honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, caring, reliability, support in difficult times, reflective listening, affirming one another, mutual trust, mutual accountability and confession
    - develop and implement means to help relational small group members to discern their gifts and match them to ministry
    - find, train and develop relational small group leaders either directly and/or in conjunction with other church leadership training programs
- foster church-wide the multiplication of and participation in relational small groups either directly and/or supporting other teams doing so
- foster relational small groups undertaking serving and/or evangelism efforts, projects or activities
- as common all with teams
    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
    - foster personal spiritual growth of Serving Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

a. Underlying the Responsibilities of the Ministry Support Team

As emphasized throughout this resource book, our church is in the disciple-making business, i.e., the whole church all the time. Teams need to function in conjunction with one another rather than each doing their own thing with little interaction with other teams and ministries. The absence of on-going awareness and mutual support inhibits advancing the carrying out our God called for mission of making disciples. Consequently, it is essential that it be the responsibility of every team to be alert to where and when it can be supportive of other teams and ministries in moving people through the stages of discipleship. This poses the question how can the ability of individual teams be enhanced to better fulfill this responsibility?

The goal is for the church to act and think like a single team rather than several little teams. Avoid becoming departmentalized with each team doing its own thing without concern for the bigger picture. Even in small churches, there must be some periodic gathering place where people can share ideas and critique each other's ministries. Gathering church leaders periodically helps to build relationships, eases the sharing process, and unifies efforts. Avoid tunnel vision. Build an overall church team mindset to avoid individual team and ministry barriers.[1774]

The Ministry Support Team (the reconstituted Accountability Team), among other things, plays a major role in this area. It functions as a forum to enhance the interchange of information as to what each individual team is doing, plans to do, needs help in doing, and what ideas it offers for other teams to consider doing. This is achieved through regular meetings of the Team whose membership consists of all team leaders as well as elected at large members. In addition, it is expected that the Senior Pastor (or person(s) designated by him or her) will participate ex officio.

Furthermore, in any organization there are a variety of functions which can best be performed by one unit rather calling on several units to individually do so on their own behalf. The Ministry Support Team serves in this role in providing to the various teams and ministries of the church various support functions.

With these underlying foundational elements providing the context, the role of the Ministry Support Team can be better defined.

b. Responsibilities of Ministry Support Team

The Ministry Support Team is to provide team and ministry support services better enabling them to advance the Mission of the church. Specific Ministry Support Team responsibilities include the following:

- foster teams functioning together in advancing the mission of the church including facilitating coordination of church policies, planning, programs and activities

- directly and/or in conjunction with the senior pastor (or his or her designated person) and/or other teams, foster understanding of and commitment by all members of the church to following Christ by progressing the through the stages of discipleship

- foster excellence in all that the church does; assuring quality in the physical and welcoming environment of the church, quality in the content of disciple-making experiences offered by the church, and quality of spiritual results in growing, disciples.

[1774] Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence* 61-62, 68 (1999).

- develop, implement and foster periodic individual spiritual growth self-assessment of all members of the church and foster development of individual personalized spiritual growth plans

- in consultation with the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person), implement annual financial stewardship campaign

- institute a church-wide program for all church members to discover their gifts, talents and interests, guide them in matching their characteristics into existing or new ministries and/or team roles, encourage their commitment to serve, and foster appropriate teams to train and assist them in their growth[1775]

- either directly and/or in conjunction with other teams and/or the senior pastor (or his or her designated person), institute periodic assessment of the church's disciple-making efforts evaluating whether they significantly contribute to the achievement of mission purposes of the church and, when appropriate, recommend to teams and/or the Congregation areas for continuation, improvement or removal

- directly and/or in conjunction with Senior Pastor (and/or his or her designated person), foster leadership recruitment and development process. and prepare for emerging leadership needs

- foster people volunteering for teams and other church ministries

- make available and distribute church public information

- <u>as common with all teams</u>

    - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

    - foster personal spiritual growth of Ministry Support Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

    - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

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[1775] However, in doing so, the Ministry Support Team will neither directly nor indirectly endorse a person for a Team or Officer position.

0. Administrative Team

The Administrative Team possesses overall authority over the administrative aspects of the church's operations including annual budget, personal oversight, communications both within and outside the church, membership, financial affairs, records and reporting, investments, audits, borrowing, financial planning, gifts to the church, maintenance of physical assets, purchase, sale, and/or mortgage of real property, fund raising for specific church projects (other than annual financial stewardship campaign), and emergency actions. Since no changes are recommended here in this resource book with respect to the current responsibilities of the Administrative Team and since its responsibilities are set forth in lengthy detail in the FRCC By-Laws, these responsibilities will not be reiterated here, but are set forth in Appendix H.

However, there are three new specific team responsibilities which apply to all teams. Thus, the Administrative Team responsibilities also include the following:

- as common with all teams

  - be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

  - foster personal spiritual growth of Administrative Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

  - incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

IX. MINISTRY SYSTEMS

A local church (and its members) is part of the body of Christ. The church consists of a number of systems. A system is a combination of parts which function and operate together. A disciple-making church seeks to align its vital systems in a manner designed to effectively advance the mission of the church. In the context of our church, moving people in growing toward a more Christ-like life, we need all of our systems to be designed and implemented in a manner to effectively work together in moving people through the stages of disciple-making from bringing people in, leading them to believing in and accepting Christ (conversion), worship, basics of faith, nurture of faith through spiritual disciplines, getting to know the church and becoming members of our church family, assimilation, participation in small groups (ultimately relational small groups), growing in serving others, and growing in reaching out to and sharing Christ with those outside the faith (atheists, skeptics and others who are outside any church family including lapsed Christians).

An effective church consists of several essential systems working together.[1776]

- *Intercessory System* – The most important system is intercessory prayer. Through prayer Christians discern God's will. Effective churches emphasize intercessory prayer in several ways including regularly scheduled prayer times and private prayer for every leader and church member.

- *Outreach System* – Effective outreach calls for a leadership team imbued with a passion for the lost. Several actions can be used to create a passion for evangelism and bringing people in.

  (i) Leaders need to own and model evangelistic values and instill these values in people around them throughout the congregation. Preach and talk about the need and God's call for outreach. Leaders need to impart an outreach mentality to small groups and individual members of the congregation as a whole.

  (ii) Train members of the church for outreach. Small group leaders are to be trained to assist members reach out to new people and add newcomers into their groups.

  (iii) Create friendship building activities which facilitate relationships. Especially, focus on small group ministries.

  (iv) Personal relationship evangelism and small groups serve as the foundation for bringing people to Christ, assimilation into the church, and growing people in their Walk with Christ.

- *Nurture System* – Relational small groups are the primary source for nurture. Preaching, teaching, worship, baptism and communion serve as other avenues for nurture. Instruction in basic beliefs and principles of Christianity and engaging in spiritual disciplines are an integral part of the assimilation and growth process.

- *Worship System* – Worship services which experience and celebrate the presence of God are central to one's transformation toward a more Christ-life in one's thoughts, feelings and actions. It is critical for the worship system to embrace quality and attractive elements. These include an inspiring message, engaging music, a future challenge, and an awe-inspiring understanding and awareness of God's presence. However, as important as worship services are in standing alone, they must also well complement other ministries of the church.

- *Leadership System* – Underlying the effectiveness of a disciple-making church, under the headship of Christ, is church leadership including pastors and professional staff,

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[1776] The following discussion draws primarily on is primarily drawn from Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach to Reaching the Unchurched* 275-82 (1993).

lay and team leaders, and leaders of small groups. Vision is the glue that unifies the church. Each member of the leadership team must know his or her role and how it relates to the overall mission of the church. Good leaders reproduce themselves through apprentice training.

- *Management System* – Akin to the leadership system is the management system. Good management starts with a vision which stems from the purpose that God has for the church. To translate vision into action, clear objectives – both short and long range goals – are established along with measurable standards and timeframe schedules. An effective management system maximizes the use of time and people which requires delegation, clarification of roles, encouragement of team leaders, and conflict resolution and reconciliation.

- *Communication System* – Effective communication is necessary to prevent confusion and inefficiency. A good communication system becomes increasingly important as a church grows. Small churches can readily communicate through verbally face to face conversations. Decisions are made and easily reported to members. In larger churches, media support is needed involving internet, social media, bulletins, announcements, flyers, newsletters, letters, brochures, banners, etc.

- *Administrative and Finance System* – When the pastor(s) and those responsible growing disciples get sidetracked by administrative matters, their effectiveness decreases. An effective administrative system is crucial. This includes adequate staff, accounting procedures, financial and property management, and capital equipment planning. As a church grows, the need grows for people capable of handling these specialized tasks also grows. A church administrative system often determines the disciple-making effectiveness of the church.

An effective disciple-making church has many inter-related ministries. A "systems approach" is needed for overall coordination. Develop the needed systems as the church grows and trust God to give rise to the men and women to fill the ever-expanding ministry roles.[1777]

[1777] *Id.* at 282.

SUMMARY

Christ invites us to follow him. To become and grow as his disciples is not a simple jaunt through the woods. However, one does not have to do it alone. A local church is here to help us if it understands and commits to the responsibility of doing so. Fox River Congregational Church has sought to do so since its inception and has advanced in major ways. However, it has been many years since a comprehensive review has occurred. It is the purpose of this resource book to provide an extensive resource for our church to consider how we can grow as a more effective disciple-making church. Background information, recommendations and suggestions are offered here for consideration. It is the hope and prayer that this resource will meaningfully contribute in our church's efforts to grow more as an effective disciple-making church. The comments below highlight some of the main areas considered.

- Disciple-Making: Core Mission of the Church
- Essential Elements of a Disciple-Making Church
- Clarity of Mission
- Content of Disciple-Making Experiences: Spiritual Disciplines
- Process of Disciple-Making Experiences: Stages of Disciple-Making
- Stages of Disciple-Making: Program Content
- Church Implementation of Vision for Disciple-Making

I. DISCIPLE-MAKING: CORE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Christ's command in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) serves as marching orders for the church. We are to go out proclaiming the good news, lead people to Christ, and invite and lead people into the embrace of fellowship within our Christian family. And, this command goes even further. It calls upon us to make disciples. We are called upon not only to be disciples ourselves but also to "make disciples." The Great Commission charges us to lead the lost to Christ, bring them into the body of Christ and then equip and support them to become more Christ-like. The responsibility for carrying out this function, both becoming disciples ourselves and helping others do the same, falls upon all believers, not just upon church leaders. Churches make a fundamental mistake when they categorize discipleship as simply one of the ministries of the church. But rather, *making disciples should be viewed as the CORE of our church's ministry and integral in all that we do.*

Christ's command to make disciples involves two types of growth – width and depth. We are to reach people beyond the body of believers. Grow the number of believers. That is width. And, we are to make true disciples of them, as well as of ourselves, teaching them to obey all that he has commanded. That is depth. To be an effective disciple-making church, a church must vigorously pursue both width and depth.

Regardless of whatever else it does, the only question that really matters is whether a church encourages and offers real opportunities for people to experience the transforming love of Christ in ways that touch their greatest needs and highest hopes and do so in ways which lead them to be people that God wants and created them to be? *The key to leading people to becoming what God created them to be lies in the recovery of churches' identity as disciple forming community.* Disciple-making is at the core of effective church ministry.

II. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH

The crucial question is how can we most effectively structure what we do as a church to make disciples? Spiritual growth is the process of believers becoming transformed into the image of Christ. All that a church does *must mesh together to engender life transformation.* To be effective, we need to foster and create disciple-making experiences in three key areas:

- defining and communicating understanding of our disciple-making *mission* with clarity
- knowing and effectively offering the *content* of disciple-making experiences
- understanding the nature of the *process*, i.e., where people need to go (the *stages of disciple-making*) to experience the content of disciple-making

III. CLARITY OF MISSION

The foundation of creating effective disciple-making experiences is a crystal-clear mission as to what we are about. Clarity requires answering two fundamental questions. First, what does God want us to become? Second, what do we need to do to grow toward a Christ-like life? As expressed in the *recommended* Mission Statement for Fox River Congregational Church, God wants us to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, by growing toward a Christ-like life in our thoughts, feelings and actions. This involves connecting in four crucial relationships:

- connect intimately with God,
- connect with other believers through sharing life together,
- connect with both believers and non-believers through serving their needs, and
- connect with people outside the faith.

It is in the pursuit of these relationships that we open ourselves up to God and place ourselves in situations where God is most likely to transform us into the image of Christ thereby becoming people that God intends us to be. This is a clear mission as to what disciple-making is about.

IV. CONTENT OF DISCIPLE-MAKING EXPERIENCES

Growing as a follower of Christ requires spiritual growth toward living a more Christ-like life through *understanding, learning and incorporating various spiritual disciplines into one's everyday living*. To be an effective disciple-making church, a church needs to encourage, equip and support people through the learning and practicing of spiritual disciplines. This requires addressing what should be the *content* of such experiences and what is the best *process* through which the content is learned, understood and practiced. The content of disciple-making experiences can be grouped according to "getting connected" in four crucial relationships.

- *Connect with God* – While not exhaustive, the content of the disciple-making experiences fostering the pursuit of intimacy with God include the spiritual disciplines of prayer, spending time with God's Word, worship, silence and solitude, meditation, discernment of and obedience to God's will, and using different forms of spirituality (i.e., the different ways we connect with God to hear God's voice).

- *Connect with Other Believers* – Initially, this involves fellowship in the community of the church as a whole. However, more importantly is connecting with other believers in small groups. God does not intend that we live alone or in isolation from others or only in casual relationships. We have been created for relationships. Thus, it is essential that a disciple-making church foster the spiritual discipline of participation in well- structured relational small groups through which life can be intimately shared in the context of mutual love, encouragement, care, support and accountability.

- *Connect with Others Through Serving* – To foster people's efforts to connect with ministry through serving others, both those inside or outside a local church's family. A disciple-making church needs to instill the understanding that the spiritual discipline of serving others reflects loving help, caring, and sharing the love of God in the world. Serving consists of offering resources, such as time, talent, expertise, influence and treasure, for the care, protection and nurture of other people. One's spiritual gifts and God's call need to be discerned and his or her knowledge and skills need to be developed. Acts of serving offer hands in effectuating the second greatest commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:38)

- *Connect with the People Outside the Faith* – In his ultimate sacrifice on the cross, Christ demonstrated a loving obsession for all people. He calls upon each of us to share this love and introduce people to God. Christ's ministry modeled evangelism. In the Great Commission he commanded us to "go" out to others. Doing so is important to God, to the persons reached and not reached, to us in our spiritual growth and to local churches. Thus, connecting with the those outside the faith (through reaching out to, sharing Christ with and bringing people in) is a fundamental aspect of being a follower of Christ; i.e., growing toward a more Christ-like life.

Growing as a follower of Christ is more than simply accepting a set of beliefs. It is also how we conduct our lives. The essence of a disciple is to be a follower of Christ by seeking to grow more Christ-like in one's thoughts, feelings and actions. Thus, *the responsibility of the individual Christian is to follow Christ by embarking upon and continuing those practices modeled by Christ (commonly referred to as spiritual disciplines)*, which offer experiences in which we are more likely to connect with God and be subject to God's transforming power. The four general categories of spiritual disciplines, which mark a person growing and transforming into a disciple of Christ, are the habits focusing on connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with others through serving, and connecting with the people outside the faith. These categories encompass the substantive content areas for disciple-making experiences.

For a person to embark upon and grow as a disciple, one needs to understand God's call upon him or her, be able to express it and be committed in his or her efforts in striving to meet the call in his or her daily living. Doing so is founded first on the clarity of the call which is expressed in the recommended Mission Statement for FRCC. Next is awareness of the spiritual disciplines offering the opportunities of connecting with God. And finally, there needs to be personal commitment to on-going engagement in those spiritual disciplines which best work for each individual. Practicing spiritual disciplines are to be done for the purpose of spiritual growth, rather than merely engaging in a church ritual or to impress others. Principles applicable to meaningful practice of spiritual disciplines include purpose, commitment, assumption of personal responsibility, understanding why, learning how, training and perseverance.

V. PROCESS OF DISCIPLE-MAKING EXPERIENCES: STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

The first of the three principal elements undergirding an effective disciple-making church is defining the mission with clarity and members of the church embracing the disciple-making mission of the church. The second principal element undergirding an effective disciple-making church is communicating understanding of following Christ and fostering participation in the content of disciple-making experiences, i.e., spiritual disciplines, which lead to the accomplishment of the Mission. The third principal element undergirding an effective disciple-making church is understanding the nature of the process, i.e., where people need to go. This consists of the stages of disciple-making which progressively move people along the path toward a more Christ-like life.

As a disciple-making church, our responsibility is not only to communicate understanding of and the hows of spiritual disciplines, but also support our members (and others) to progress in their spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines. This requires designing and implementing a process or path encompassing the various stages of disciple-making. The content of disciple-making experiences consists of meaningful practice of various spiritual disciplines reflecting the pursuit of connecting in the four connecting relationships. Guiding where people need to go involves establishing a spiritual growth path, i.e., stages of disciple-making, which promise to effectively deliver the content of disciple-making experiences. To continually grow toward a more Christ-like life, one needs to pursue the four

critical connecting relationships by progressing (not necessarily in a sequential order) to, within and through the stages of discipleship.

The recommended process or stages of disciple-making consist of the following.:

- *Conversion Process* – One initiates becoming a follower of Christ by accepting him as Lord and Savior. The process leading up to and including conversion is the initial step in connecting with God. The conversion stage of disciple-making consists of the thoughts, feelings, experiences and/or relationships leading to the decision for and commitment to Christ.

- *Vital Transforming Worship* – A maturing follower of Christ continually pursues an intimate relationship with God. Foundational in doing so is the spiritual discipline of participation in vital transforming worship. Christ promised to be with us when we gather in his name. Through reverence, awe, submission, praise and thanksgiving, worship services offer a time and place where we respond to and encounter our living God leading to a personal and intimate relationship with him. Failure to move from one's initial experience with Christ to regular and deeply personal involvement in worship presents a serious roadblock in one connecting in an intimate relationship with God.

- *Basics of Faith* – For those who are newcomers to the faith, movement along the spiritual path requires understanding the basics of the faith beyond the rudimentary understandings underlying the conversion decision to accept Christ. Gaining greater understanding of the basics of faith may occur in the context of any one of several stages of disciple-making. This may happen as early as the conversion stage, result from teachings during worship services (from sermons or otherwise) or occur later, for example, during becoming a member of the church or at some point in the context of participating in a small group. However, whatever the context, proceeding to, within and beyond the basics of faith disciple-making stage is a foundational element for one to grow in his or her spiritual formation. This stage of disciple-making can also serve as a valuable refresher experience for on-going members of the church.

- *Spiritual Disciplines Nurturing Faith* – Spiritual disciplines are the content of disciple-making experiences. Engaging in personal spiritual disciplines (including worship, prayer, spending time with God's Word) introduces a sense of intimacy and accountability in our faith walk which places us in situations where God is more likely to cause transformation toward a more Christ-like life. One learns and practices spiritual disciplines in the pursuit of connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with others by serving their needs and connecting with those outside the faith. To grow in one's Walk with Christ a person needs to progressively engage in various spiritual disciplines. The disciple-making stage of practicing a personal spiritual discipline(s) is not a one time or one place exercise. It is an-on-going stage of discipleship which interrelates with the other stages such as participation in small groups, growing in serving and growing in sharing Christ with

persons outside the faith. Spiritual growth is a process that takes time. Practicing and growing in spiritual disciplines continues through one's lifelong Walk with Christ.

- *Getting To Know the Church and Church Membership* – Scripture paints the church as an essential organism in which Jesus dwells. The church is the body of Christ in which he continues his incarnation by dwelling in his people. The church is nothing less than Christ's replacement on earth. The church is not an optional afterthought for those who accept Christ as Lord. Instead, a person's involvement in a local church is central in God's plan. A believer's role involves doing his or her assigned part in building Christ's church through the spiritual gifts he or she has been given. Thus, a major disciple-making stage, as one progresses as a follower of Christ, is becoming a part of Christ's family through membership in and assimilation into a local church.

  As a condition of membership, one needs to learn, understand and commit to the mission purpose of the church both from the perspective of what the church collectively seeks to do and, most importantly, the responsibility of and expectation for the individual to grow more Christ-like in his or her thoughts, feelings and actions. This involves getting to know and committing to what church membership is about including its mission, covenant, expectations, organizational structure and, in the context of Fox River Congregational Church, doing church in the Congregational Way.

- *Assimilation into the Life of the Church* – The disciple-making growth process is just beginning when one becomes a member of a church. Membership is more than simply belonging. Rather, membership connotes deep connectedness with and a responsibility towards others. Assimilation moves uninvolved persons to where he or she becomes an indispensable part of the church family in advancing Jesus' mission. And, importantly, assimilation into the life of the church enhances the likelihood of one progressing on his or her disciple-making path toward a more Christ-like life. Assimilation is a crucial and an on-going stage of disciple-making.

  The key to assimilation is persons experiencing opportunities giving rise to new friendships and meaningful ministry involvement. In turn, these foster growth in their growing a more Christ-like life. Furthermore, although assimilation is normally thought of in the context of those persons growing toward becoming a member of a church and/or persons who have newly become members, the concept of assimilation also applies to already on-going members who have yet to become active participants in the life of the church.

- *Small Groups*

  - *Relational Small Groups* – God created us to be in relationships with others. Christians are called to belong, not just to believe. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught. but rather needs to be lived. The most effective place for life transformation occurs within the context of intentional

relationships. The best place for intentional relationships is participation in a relational small group.

Too often, relationships in a typical church are neither deep, close nor frequent. Casual relationships do little to contribute to life transformation. Thus, developing meaningful relationships in relational small groups (in which where every person senses love, caring, belonging, trust, encouragement, support and accountability) is crucial to spiritual formation and central to the Christian experience. Most nurturing of a spiritual life occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. The relational element in Jesus' model is at the heart of becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ. It is central to the Christian experience. Failure to connect in a relational small group leads to stagnation of spiritual growth. Participation in relational small groups constitutes a virtually indispensable element for those seeking transformation toward a more Christ-like life and a growing relationship with God.

- *Short Term Small Groups* – Limited duration short term small group programs (e.g., 4 to 8 weeks in duration) have become a popular trend in churches today Although much good can come from such groups, when standing alone, their prime failing is the lack of developing on-going deepening relationships with other believers after these short term small group sessions conclude. Nevertheless, short term small groups can serve one or more of three important functions:

    - spark spiritual growth by addressing various topics such as basics of faith, Bible studies, exploring theological questions for faith formation, etc.

    - introduce people to small group experiences thereby providing a bridge to relational small groups which are essential for deeper and broader spiritual growth experiences

    - train people in various aspects of disciple-making such as small group leadership, serving others, and/or evangelism.

It cannot be overemphasized that progressing to and becoming active in small groups, both short term and ultimately relational small groups, constitutes major advancement in growing through the stages of disciples-making resulting in growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions. Small relational groups nurture not only continuing pursuit of intimacy with God (both within the context of a small group and also in personal private devotions), but also they nurture moving on to Christ's mission of serving others and reaching out to and bringing people to Christ.

- *Growing into Serving Others &*
  Growing into Sharing Christ

The disciple-making stages of the conversion process, vital transforming worship, learning the basics of faith, practicing personal spiritual disciplines nurturing faith, getting to know the church and church membership, assimilation into the life of the church, and committed involvement in a relational small (and possibly some short term small) group all nurture us in growing toward a more Christ-like life. These stages of disciple-making primarily and vitally contribute to our growing intimacy with God and connecting with other believers in loving, caring and supportive relationships through the practice of the various spiritual disciplines.

But there is more. Christ calls us to mission. We are to serve others and to reach out to those outside the faith. Growing in serving the needs of others and reaching out to and sharing Christ with others not only respond to God's call for mission but also, in doing so, further enables us to connect with God in an intimate relationship and connect in relationships with others (both those being served and those being reached as well as those with whom we work with in doing so). Growing into serving others and sharing Christ with others (evangelism) constitute the last two stages of disciple-making. However, one's progress through the various stages does not necessarily occur sequentially.

VI. STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING: PROGRAM CONTENT

Following the procedural path consisting of the various stages of disciple-making leads a person to disciple-making experiences essential to growing toward a more Christ-like life. It is the role of a disciple-making church to offer such experiences in meaningful ways to foster the practice of various spiritual disciplines leading to enhancing connections with God, with other believers, with others through serving their needs, and with people outside the faith. Thus, the question for the church becomes what should be the content of disciple-making experiences and how should they be delivered. PART FIVE suggests some content possibilities for consideration with respect to each stage of disciple-making. This is done in some detail which will not be reiterated here. These suggestions are offered to indicate the type of subject matter appropriate for the various stages of disciple-making and to provide a starting point for exploring and reviewing possible programs, events, activities and materials for use.

VII. CHURCH IMPLEMENTATION OF VISION FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

To implement a vision for effective disciple-making, several key elements need to be addressed and implemented by a church seeking to be an effective disciple church. These include the following. including the following.

1. *Foundation for Implementation of an Effective Disciple-Making Church*

There are five foundational structural components which undergird an effective disciple-making church: (i) mission, (ii) process (stages of disciple-making), (iii) model, (iv) programming, and (v) alignment

- Our *Mission* is predicated on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The recommended Mission for Fox River Congregational calls for us to be to be a disciple-making church by encouraging, equipping and supporting persons in growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions by connecting in four relationships, i.e., with God, with fellow Christians, with persons through serving their needs, and with the people outside the faith. The Mission must be the nonnegotiable imperative for a disciple-making church All that the church does must be based upon and reflect its mission. To be an effective disciple-making church, we must to be passionate about our mission and structure our church in a manner to accomplish it

- The *Process* by which by which one grows as a follower of Christ, i.e., the S*tages of Disciple-m\Making*, needs to be clear, fostered and implemented to move people toward developing and enhancing connecting in the four critical relationships.

- A church *Model* is the framework a church creates to advance its mission. The model serves as the organizational principle under which programming operates. The small group model, designed to funnel all people into small groups, has proven to be highly successful. Not only are relationships and Christian fellowship best developed in small groups, other aspects of spiritual formation in growing toward a more Christ-like life are also fostered.

- *Programming* content (whether in worship services, program studies, events or other activities and whether on-going or new) should be considered with the questions does this and, if so, is this the best way to foster advancing the mission our church. Furthermore, the model of programs should foster and facilitate utilization of the small group model which plays a fundamental role leading people to grow in following Christ. This is the critical concept to keep front and center in developing a strategy for continuation of, change in, or adding to what we are doing as Christ's church.

- Without A*lignment* among the various components of a congregation (pastors, church leaders, church staff, volunteers, and all other members of the church), a church is out of sync with different components pulling in different directions. When all are pulling in the same direction, the likelihood of effective results is greatly enhanced. Foundational to alignment is a congregation understanding the mission of its church. It is impossible to create alignment in a congregation if there are multiple understandings of the congregation's purpose. Clarity of mission is essential. Start by asking whether the program contributes to achieving

the primary purpose, i.e., mission. In an aligned congregation all that is done relates to and foster achievement of its mission. Without clarity of mission there will be no alignment. Without alignment, it is very difficult to grow a congregation and engage in a consistently faithful and effective disciple-making ministry.

2. *Excellence in Implementing and Growing a Disciple-Making Church: Quality Improvement*

As a local church we are God's franchise in the community. Excellence honors God. Therefore, in all that we do as a church, we need to be committed to the standard of excellence by every person exercising their God-given spiritual gifts to the best of his or her ability. If in presenting ourselves as a reflection of God's love and character we do so in a mediocre manner, we fail to honor God who deserves the best we can offer. Thus, as we seek to grow in effectiveness as a disciple-making church, we need to embrace the goal of on-going quality improvement. This is not simply becoming more efficient in what we do, but rather be efficient in a manner which enhances our effectiveness in advancing our mission. That is, in all that we do in encouraging, equipping and supporting people in their growth toward a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions, we should do so in a manner of pursuing excellence. This does not say that we will always achieve excellence. We are imperfect human beings. But, strive we must.

Growing disciples is on-going process requiring on-going rather than periodic efforts. Hence a church needs to develop an on-going process for excellence in such areas as assuring quality in the physical and welcoming environments of our church, assuring quality in the content of disciple-making experiences, and assuring quality results in our spiritual growth efforts. When a church undertakes an excellence process analysis and follows up with needed changes, the natural result is increased effectiveness in its disciple-making efforts.

3. *Implementing Leadership in a Disciple-Making Church*

Quality leadership is foundational for an effective disciple-making church. In order to create and sustain quality leadership, a church needs to consider and institute several elements including the following.

- Possession of *positive personal leadership characteristics* is the *sine qua non* of effective leadership. Effective leadership depends upon how he or she goes about exercising one's leadership role, especially connecting with and investing in his or her people and giving them work in a manner meaningful to them. Be aware of these needed characteristics when looking for and using persons in leadership capacities.

- *Leadership development,* for those having some ministry responsibility, can be critical for effectiveness. Simply vesting responsibility in someone and leaving them figure out what they are to do is an invitation to failure. To assure an on-going and expanding supply of leaders in various capacities and responsibilities,

it is important for a church to institute a leadership development program for both those currently occupying leadership positions and those coming on board as leaders in a variety of situations. Furthermore, waiting until the church needs a leader is the worst time trying to find one. Instead, institute a process for identifying potential leaders before they are needed. The key is to be people focused rather than need focused. This requires intentional and on-going leader development effort.

- *Equip leaders for ministry success.* Plan and prepare for success by inviting the right person to the right ministry, determine the desired results for each ministry, identify the skills and core competencies need to achieve the desired results, and invest in the necessary training materials and tools. Equipping is an ongoing process. Ministry and culture change. Equipping is not an event. It is a life style. Equipping needs to be an integral part in the life of a disciple-making church.

- *Develop team leaders and team members.* Structure a church around teams. The team approach enhances communication, creates broader ownership, is more rewarding to participants, better models the Christian community, and contributes to growing team members in their own individual Walks with Christ. This not only fosters a basic purpose of the church (fellowship), it enhances productivity and quality. This is particularly true in the context of more recent generations who want to participate, make a difference, and see their ideas acted upon. Leadership selection and development are the crux of establishing and conducting quality improvement ministry teams. An importantly, since effective relational small groups are the heart of growing of people toward a Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions, as groups form and expand in number, increasingly small group leaders will need to be found and trained.

4. *Implementing Effective Stages of Disciple-Making Path*

Growing as a disciple is the process of becoming transformed into the image of Christ. To grow spiritually one needs to move through Stages of Disciple-Making which offer experiences of spiritual disciplines that better place oneself in situations where God is more likely to transform him or her. Needed is a pathway leading people step-by-step from the point of initial contact with the church to spiritual maturity through growing toward a more Christ-like life. Thus, it is incumbent for a disciple-making church to not only to clearly express its disciple-making mission purpose and the characteristics or marks of discipleship by which the mission is to be achieved, but also it is the responsibility of the church to set forth Stages of Disciple-Making to, within and through which one progresses to grow toward a more Christ-like life by connecting with God, other believers, others through serving, and the persons outside the faith. A church which recognizes disciple-making as its core mission, is confronted with the responsibility of implementing a process (i.e., Stages of Disciple-making) to encourage and support people in their efforts to grow in their Walk with Christ. It is the development of a clear spiritual path and the means to traverse such path to engender movement which demand our church's on-going focused attention. Conditions underlying successful implementation of a

process which effectively moves people through the Stages of Disciple-Making include the following.

- *Clear Path.* The Stages of Disciple-Making must be clear and understood. The recommended Stages of Disciple-Making, as set forth in this Summary Section V., establishes a process in which various programs, ministries and other are intentional tools to move people along in their Walk with Christ rather than simply being isolated or non-integrated experiences. When specific programs, events, ministries and other experiences are draped on this pathway structure, a simple clear path of disciple-making process is provided for a person to follow.

- *Intentionality of Movement.* Grow people through a process that has a purpose (a mission). To respond to the challenge of moving people through the Stages of Disciple-Making, both the church and the individual need to be intentional about movement. They must commit and remain committed throughout the Walk with Christ.

- *Encouragement of Movement at Each Stage.* Movement to, within or through the Stages of Disciple-Making needs to be encouraged at each and every stage. The church needs to determine and foster various ways to encourage movement to, within and through each stage There must be a system of intentional effort to move people along in their Walk with Christ. At each stage the spiritual growth experiences offered need to be perceived as attractive both with respect to being interesting, exciting and worthwhile, as well as offering convenient scheduling with respect to persons' availability, so as to induce people to move to, within and, in some cases, beyond a particular stage. As a church, we need to evaluate the content offered to assure that selected offers meaningful spiritual formation experiences attractive to potential participants. Furthermore, programmatic and small group efforts do little good if the discipleship process is not repeatedly well communicated as an integral part of the fabric of the church.

  Both the church and individuals need to recognize that disciple-making is one step at a time and that people progress at different paces. Furthermore, one's path may not be sequential. Different people may enter the process at different points and proceed in different ways. However, the goal is ultimately to move to and experience each of the Stages of Disciple-Making as we pursue intimacy with God, intimacy in a community of believers, serving others and connecting with the people outside the faith. The church is responsible for effectively fostering peoples' movement through the Stages of Discipleship.

5. *Fostering Disciple-Making Success*

In addition to engendering movement to, within and through the Stages of Disciple-Making, there are several additional means to foster successful disciple-making applicable across the range of the Stages of Disciple-Making.

- *Implementation of Means to Discern and Match Persons' Gifts to Ministry* – In addition to understanding the spiritual discipline of serving, we need to discern those God given gifts which we each possess and how they can be best used in response to God's call for us to serve the needs of our members, those outside our church, and the functioning of the church itself. When a person struggles to do something for which God did not create him to do, the results are likely to be frustration, burn out, or giving up on the church altogether. In contrast, discovering and using one's God given gifts clarifies God's call for one's life, glorifies God, and brings joy and growth in one's Walk with Christ. From both the perspective of a church whose mission includes both serving others and disciple-making its members and from the perspective of individuals seeking to grow into a more Christ-like life, the crucial question becomes what are the God given gifts that we each possess and how can they be best be used in response to God's call to ministry? The importance for the members of our church to discover and utilize their God given gifts cannot be overemphasized. One's growth toward a more Christ-like is seriously deterred by one's failure to do so.

  Consequently, if we as a church are serious about being an effective disciple-making church. it is our responsibility to develop and implement a way or combination of ways, on a church wide basis, for our members to discern and apply their God given gifts. These include short term and/or relational small groups using gift discovery programs and materials as well as discerning the gifts of others in one's group. Other gift discerning approaches are available as well including periodic church-wide gift surveys. A spiritually vital church recognizes the essential role that God given gifts plays in the life and ministry of the church and organizes itself so that those gifts can be discerned and exercised. This is an essential in ingredient in fostering disciple-making success.

- *Implementation of Personality Style Evangelism* – While persons acting individually can utilize their own personality style to influence unbelievers, a greater impact is much more likely to result when members of a congregation work together as a whole with each person discovering and employing his or her own evangelism personality styles. Thus, a church desiring to enhance the overall effectiveness of its evangelism efforts should consider instituting personality style evangelism on a church-wide basis. An overall process for church-wide personality style team evangelism embraces several elements including (i) both individual and collective church *prayer* on what to do and for the opportunity to encounter prospects, (ii) *individual personality evangelism style assessment* for all members of congregation better enabling reaching out to others in a style natural to him or her, (iii) *assessment of church's personality style and gifts to* better focus energy, resources and training for effective evangelism, (iv) incorporating the basic elements of evangelism commonly applicable across the range of different evangelism styles, and (v) vis*ion casting* the church's evangelism mission

- *Foster Personal Commitment* – Being a follower of Christ (a disciple) involves embarking on and continuing a process of growing in the image of Christ. This is achieved through the understanding, learning and practicing spiritual disciplines by moving though the Stages of Disciple-Making. The process is neither easy nor does it lack challenges. But, if one's habits remain the same, he or she will experience little of the "abundant" life Christ offers. Growing toward a more Christ-like life is a choice. It is the result of the commitments we make and spiritual practices we do. A critical responsibility of a disciple-making church is to communicate understanding, create expectations and motivate persons' commitment to progress in their Walk with Christ. Communicating the stark comparative differences in the costs and benefits of following Christ versus the costs and benefits of non- discipleship provide powerful motivation for people to positively respond and commit to God's call to follow Christ. A church needs to confidently ask people for commitment. Whatever the specific approach, to be effective the church's call for commitment needs to be a clear, aggressive and positive.

- *Implement Self-Assessment and Spiritual Development Plans* – In his letter to the Corinthians Paul calls upon us, as well as the Corinthians, to examine and test ourselves to see if we really are in the faith. He urges that we give ourselves spiritual checkups and look for a growing awareness of Christ's presence and power in our lives. Presumably, most of us are not very conscious of the specific nature of our shortcomings in trying to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ. Although we generally accept that we fall short, at best, only a few translate this recognition into self-assessment as to how to do better. Typically, we view ourselves as being pretty good persons. A key to motivating ourselves and our church members to commit to more intentional discipleship is developing a system of self-assessment which not only fosters commitment to spiritual growth, but also helps guide a person in discerning a development plan to better enable him or her to progress in growing toward a more Christ-like life. Furthermore, one is more likely to commit if they have some idea as to the specifics to which he or she is committing.

  Several highly successful churches have discovered the need for self-assessment mechanisms and/or development of customized spiritual development plans for individuals to personally assess where they are and guide themselves on their spiritual journey. This gives rise to the goal that every member of the church (as well as others involved in the albeit not members) have his or her their own personal spiritual growth plan and be able to answer at any time the question where he or she is currently and what is the next step in his or her spiritual growth development. In turn, the church will then be able to better help persons in customizing individual "personal spiritual growth plans" for them to pursue. Alternative approaches to a self-assessment are available (some considered earlier in PART SIX, Section V.D. above) including an approach used by our church based upon a self-assessment survey conducted several years ago. Whatever the alternative approach is selected, an on-going self-assessment plan

and the development of individual personal spiritual growth plans are of prime importance for greater church effectiveness in disciple-making efforts.

- *Assessment of the Church's Disciple-Making Efforts* – Scripture calls for assessment: "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds…." (Proverbs 27:23). This calls for the development and implementation of a means to assess the effectiveness of our church's disciple-making efforts. To progress as an effective disciple-making church, we must regularly ask whether we are advancing the mission to which Jesus calls us, i.e., make disciples by leading people to accept Christ as Lord and Savior and grow them to be more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings and actions. What does a church look like when people are growing in their Walk with Christ? The discipleship model anticipates transformation of lives. This, in turn, raises the question, what are the marks in a person's life which evidence that spiritual transformation is occurring and the church is advancing its mission. The recommended Mission Statement for FRCC sets forth the foundational marks of discipleship; (i) connecting with God in a loving and intimate, relationship, (ii) connecting with other Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together, (iii) connecting with people through loving serving, and (iv) connecting with the people outside the faith by witnessing the good news, bringing them to Christ and into Christian fellowship in the church.

  To assess the effectiveness of FRCC as a disciple-making church, we need to develop a means to assess, on an on-going basis, to what extent people are in fact progressing in their efforts to make these connections, i.e., to what extent do they reflect theses marks of discipleship. Two approaches, which complement one another, offer means of doing so. (1) Keep *track of persons' progress within and through the* Stages of Disciple-Making. Although such numbers don't provide in depth knowledge as to persons growing in faith, nevertheless they evidence whether the church is fostering peoples' participation in experiences which may lead toward a more Christ-like life. (2) Drawing upon individuals' *personal spiritual self-assessments*, such as that considered earlier, can be most revealing. Subjective, self-assessments inform as to where people think they are, where they need to go and, when done on a periodic basis, whether there has been progress, stagnation or retrogression. This not only informs the church as to how it is doing, it points to areas where improvements need to be made.

  Developing an effective assessment of our church's disciple-making efforts, such assessment needs to be implemented on a regular on-going basis consisting of the following elements. With our mission purposes, core values and vision as the foundational standards, we need to develop quantitative and qualitative standards providing practical means to answer are we advancing our mission, what are we doing that is an obstacle to advancing our mission, and what aren't we doing that needs to be done to advance our mission. Determine the information needed to evaluate church performance. Then, develop feedback mechanisms to generate the information needed to evaluate.

6. *Implementing the Creation and Structuring Small Groups for Disciple-Making*

Earlier discussion highlights the fundamental roles which both short term and relational small groups small groups must play if we are to be an effective disciple-making church. Here the focus is on factors which need to be considered in creating, structuring and implementing small groups for effective-disciple-making. Every church member and attendee should be aggressively encouraged to become involved in either or short term and/or relational small group.

- *Form and Implement Short Term Small Groups*

  There is no rigid format or protocol for forming short term small groups, encouraging interest for participation, the manner of conduct, nor as to who may sponsor the group (e.g., a team, an individual or group of individuals). However, despite the high degree of flexibility, three standards should be adhered to; (i) group conduct should be done with excellence (avoid poor group experience which is likely to dissuade persons from moving on to other group experiences), (ii) prior to the conclusion of the group experience participants should be encouraged and supported in progressing to a relational small group, and (iii) the content of short term group programming should embrace some fundamental aspect of fostering spiritual growth to, within and/or through the Stages of Disciple-Making. The key element in the success of a short term small group is the leader. Therefore, the church should afford some means of attracting and training potential leaders.

- *Building Transformational Fellowship around Relational Small Groups*

  - *Crucial Role of Relational Small Groups*. Since God is love, his very nature is relational. When he creates persons in his own image, we are inherently relational and purposed to love one another. However, love cannot be learned in isolation, but rather love involves relationships. In the Christian sense "fellowship" means more than just socializing, fun and food. Real fellowship is experiencing life together. Life is meant to be shared. The spiritual discipline of connecting with others in Christian fellowship characterized by mutual acceptance, caring, sense of belonging, accountability, integrity, trust and love is fundamental to the Christian experience. Following Christ requires that we walk alongside others to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward the image of Christ. Most nurturing of a spiritual life and ministry occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught. Following Christ needs to be lived. Relational small groups serve as a prime, perhaps indispensable, vehicle for doing so. At FRCC, the absence of church-wide participation in meaningful small relational group experiences reveals a major gap in our disciple-making efforts. Failure of a church to foster a relational small

group environment significantly undermines the effectiveness of its disciple-making efforts.

As a disciple-making church, we need to concentrate priority efforts on offering spiritual formation experiences through relational small groups. A fundamental goal of our church should not simply be a church with just a few relational small groups. But rather, a fundamental strategy for our church needs to become *a church of relational small groups* with all church members participating in a relational small group of some sort.

- *Encourage Churchwide Participation in Relational Small Groups.* It is essential that relational small groups should not be considered simply as an appendage or an alternative to other operational aspects of the church. But rather, relational small groups need to be an integral and central part of the church strategy and structure. They constitute a foundational and indispensable stage of effective disciple-making. Participation in an effective relational small group is the ultimate goal of assimilation efforts. Thus, all members of the congregation, through the various means of public communication and personal invitations, should be encouraged to participate in some small group. The motivation might be to test drive a small group experience or to form a small group around a topic of particular interest to him or her. All teams need to explore and wrap either a small short term or longer relational small group component into their team activities, programs and events. Teams themselves should function as a small group rather than simply being a committee performing some task.

- *Conditions for Transformation through Relational Small Groups.* Experience demonstrates that simply meeting in a relational small group format does not automatically result in spiritual growth. Several ingredients are necessary for a healthy environment to encourage people out of their shells into active and meaningful disciple-making relationships. When present, these characteristics of relational small groups create a disciple-making environment leading toward spiritual formation. They need to be increasingly reflected by group members as the group evolves into deeper relationships in sharing life together.

Such qualities, considered in earlier discussion, include working toward creating an environment of relational transparency and mutual trust through developing characteristics such as honesty, listening, respecting and affirming others as to their uniqueness and value to the God, humility, confidentiality, reliability, caring and love. Grow trusting mutual relationships fostering confessions thereby opening oneself to God's transforming power. Strive toward creating an environment of mutual accountability in which group members challenge one another as

to their efforts in the practice of spiritual disciplines effective for that person. In short, a relational small group should reflect and vigorously pursues the creation of transformational disciple-making climate which better enables its members to discern and pursue God's specific call for them both individually and as a group.

- *Forming and Structuring Covenant Based Relational Small Groups: Relational Small Group Covenant*. Community serves two basic human needs; the need for relationships with others and the need for involvement in purposes greater than oneself. Relational small groups are covenantal in nature. A relational small group covenant not only fosters an environment for higher quality relationships, but also unites group members in a shared purpose for which God calls us. Through the making and committing to a covenant, relational small groups articulate their common purposes, vision and the norms which connect the group to one another and to God.

It is the responsibility of an effective disciple-making church to create a model covenant for relational small groups which establishes understanding of and commitment to (i) the foundational purposes of mutual spiritual nurture leading to growth and transformation toward a more Christ-like life and contributing to others in doing the same, (ii) the expectations as to core values contributing to spiritual growth (e.g., striving for intimacy with other members of the group, growing in serving others, sharing Christ with people outside the faith, and going out and reproduce disciples by finding and teaching others), and (iii) procedural expectations as to the manner of group conduct supporting meaningful functioning of the group in building and maintaining relationships (e.g., participation in frequent and regular gatherings, manner of interacting with one another such as mutual trust, honesty, confidentiality, openness, accountability, respectful discussion, etc.). In order to both foster and place greater emphasis and effort in effectuating *meaningful* relational small groups, our church needs to establish a covenantal base for such groups. In doing so, it is recommended here that the church adopt and institute as a model, the relational small group covenant. (See discussed in PART SIX Section VI.B.3.a.(4).

Although effective disciple-making is covenantal in nature, relational small groups need not be the same, i.e.. identical in structure and mode of operation. Groups take on their own particular attributes and focus based on the nature of the participants and the interests which draw them together. Differing small groups are necessary to meet the needs and interests of the different members of our congregation. The learning and practice of spiritual disciplines through relational small groups can be practiced in many ways with each group taking on those attributes

reflecting its particular common interests and needs. It is ultimately up to the members to shape their own group.

However, the foundational purpose of spiritual growth needs to be included in the experience of every group. In general, in addition to sharing life together, spending some time with the Word and prayer, serving and/or outreach need to be a part of the experience of every relational small group in order for significant spiritual growth to occur. In building, fostering and implementing a church-wide relational small group effort, the church should accept the varying natures of groups, but do so in the context of covenantal groups embracing the elements of growing toward more Christ-like lives.

7, *Building a Contagious Christian Church*

Earlier discussion in this resource book on evangelism centered upon the role and development of individual believers engaging in personal relationship evangelism and the church's responsibility in creating evangelism disciple-making experiences to encourage, equip and support such efforts. Here, focus shifts from the individual's perspective to the church's perspective in building a contagious Christian church. In addition to church evangelistic efforts considered elsewhere, additional facets of church efforts need to be considered.

- *Synergy: Integration of Personal Relationship Evangelism and Church Outreach Effort* – The Great Commission leaves little ambiguity that evangelism is central to what our church is to be about. This includes every member of our congregation. Each individual's personal relational evangelism efforts play an important role in bringing people to Christ. To be an effective disciple-making church, it is the responsibility of the church to motivate, equip and support ordinary believers to communicate their faith naturally and effectively.

  However, there are limits to the degree of success which individuals can achieve when carrying out unsupported Lone Ranger evangelism. When individual personal relationships develop with persons outside the faith, at some point there needs to be a place and situation to bring them for a relevant, interesting, attractive experience (e.g., an engaging worship service, an exploring small group to discuss questions, participation in a friendly small group, etc.). Developing a synergistic approach for individual and church efforts affords a powerful evangelistic approach and is essential for effective outreach efforts.

- *Characteristics of Churches that Reach People* – Churches which have been successful in bringing people to Christ reflect five fundamental characteristics; (i) all proclamations, assertions and efforts must be grounded in absolute *truth*, (ii) afford opportunities helping people to *experience God* or at least get a glimpse of God, (iii) *serving others needs* reflecting God's love in practical terms, (iv) *share the good news by word* at an appropriate time, and (v) remain cognizant of

dependence on God through prayer by all church members (praying persistently for the lost, for opportunities to approach people outside the faith, and for boldness to open the door for spiritual conversations). When implementing a synergistic approach to its evangelism (and other efforts), these crucial elements of truth, offering opportunities to experience God, serving, sharing the good news, and cognizance of dependence on God through prayer need to remain in the forefront of our church's efforts.

- *Evangelistic) Values* Evangelistic values serve as the foundation of outreach efforts. These values, which are rooted in scripture, provide the essential principles which need to be owned, modeled and instilled in the culture of the church in order to build a contagious Christian church. They include

  people matter to God
  people are spiritually lost
  people need Christ
  people need answers
  people need community
  people need cultural relevance
  people need time.

  Having discerned these evangelistic values, the question becomes how to put them into effect so as to reach the doubters, atheists and others. What is the evangelic process?

- *Evangelistic Process* – Evangelism is a core mission embraced by FRCC's current and recommended Mission Statements. To be an effective disciple-making church, we need to develop and implement a strategy to build a contagious Christian church. The discernment of the evangelism values affords a foundation for doing so.

  Based upon these values, Willow Creek Community Church has predicated its evangelism efforts on a six stage evangelistic process consisting of the following: (i) church leaders own and model evangelism values, (ii) instill evangelism values into the culture of the church to excite people to become involved in personal relationship evangelism,(iii) empower an evangelism point person to lead implementation of a strategic evangelism plan, (iv)liberate people from fears of doing evangelism and equip every believer for personal relationship evangelism, (v) mobilize evangelism specialists in a diverse evangelism group ministry, and (vi) innovate high impact outreach events. Willow Creek evangelistic process provides a highly successful model for building a contagious church. Here at Fox River this and other approaches should be explored for additions, alterations and/or deletions which may be integrated into or in lieu of this basic framework.

Several conditions underlay successful implementation of an evangelistic process including fully committed church leadership, broad congregation support, alignment with the evangelism mission and other church ministries, and strategic coordination of all outreach activities with one building upon another.

- *Width and Depth* – Although evangelism is a foundational element in our mission, it not the sole calling of our church. To be an effective disciple-making church we must not only go wide through outreach efforts to bring in the lost, but also once people come to Christ (current as well as new members), we must go deep in helping them grow in their faith leading to more Christ- like lives in their thoughts, feelings and action. One should not be sacrificed for the other. We are called to go both wide and deep.

- *Attracting the Unchurched*

  - *An Inviting/Connecting Church.* The preponderant reason that growing churches attract the unchurched to attend a church worship service, program, other event or activity is an invitation by a family member, a friend or one who is the process of establishing a relationship. This occurs on a widespread basis when a church has created a culture of invitation in its members. Furthermore, failure to engage newcomer guests in relationships lessens the likelihood of a return. The 30 second meet and greet either before or after a worship service, or other event, does little to connect visitors with the church. More is required.

    In contrast, small group opportunities offering themes of interest to visitors need to be available coupled with intentionality of church members to connect newcomers with such a group. A small group environment provides opportunity to bring a visitor into authentic community and a connection with church. Informal small groups, gathered in comfortable non-threatening environments, affording opportunity for discussion and questions, arouse interest and attract participation, especially when invited by a friend. Furthermore, such groups provide opportunity to connect and develop in relationships which enhances the appeal to keep coming back. It is essential that our church be an inviting/connecting church.

  - *Serving* – Caringly and lovingly serving peoples physical, emotional and/or spiritual needs opens the door to communicating at least a sense that there is something positive about the Christian faith. When church members do so on a widespread basis, the potential for bringing people in and ultimately leading them to embarking on a faith journey may prove to exceedingly successful.

  - *Marketing – Churches* have an immensely important message to offer, but it is of little avail if no one is there to listen. Whatever mass marketing is

done, it is important to develop the church's most effective story about who we are, what our ministry is about and how that vision can impact peoples' lives. Find ways to use various on-line and other medias to spread the word about the church and welcoming them into our faith community. To the extent marketing is utilized, avoid that which has proven to become increasingly ineffective.

Furthermore, whatever form our mass marketing takes, first market our own members. Get them excited about the church. This, in turn, is likely to be conveyed to those outside the church in personal relationship invitational situations. However, the critical lesson is that, although marketing and media efforts may help somewhat, they cannot replace personal relationships and invitations as the prime means for both bringing people in and encouraging and supporting them in commencing a continuing a spiritual journey.

- *Outreach Events.*

The sixth stage of the evangelistic process is to innovate and implement high impact outreach events There are several questions and principles to consider to get on the right track in developing and implementing an outreach event including (i) who are we trying to reach, (ii) what are we trying to achieve, (iii) how does the event fit into a larger evangelistic process (always give a prospect the next step), (iv) integration of outreach events with other opportunities, and (v) promotion.

There are a wide variety of church events and activities which can contribute to the evangelism process. These can be grouped under three general categories (worship services, short term small groups designed specifically to attract skeptics and unbelievers, and other non-worship events).

- *Intentionality as to Our Targets*

In fostering the achievement of our mission purpose of reaching out to and bringing people to Christ and into the local church community, it is important not to approach this fundamental task with a casual attitude. The universe of unchurched people embraces a wide range of attitudes, mindsets and personal circumstances. When we have a clear idea as to whom we are targeting, we can more effectively select and implement those outreach efforts most likely to attract these people. We need to be intentional about primary our targets.

In doing so, we need to be mindful of the different mindsets of the substantial majority of non or lapsed Christians today reflecting a Modernism or Post-Modernism perspective (younger people especially reflecting the latter). We need to go where the people are and adapt our approaches to ways which make sense to them. A review of such factors as (i) susceptibility to outreach, (ii), the

relative impact of successfully reaching different potential target groups, and (iii) and the nature of our church in relation to the characteristics the different groups lead to the conclusion that the primary focus of our church's outreach efforts should be those persons possessing a Post-Modern mindset (including Millennials and younger). Post-Modern people, who increasingly seek a more meaningful life, exhibit a greater acceptance of and curiosity about spiritual matters and long for connectedness (fellowship) with others. If we create a safe and comfortable place and manner to engage them, there is a tremendous opportunity for successful outreach. Geography and demographic data suggest a sufficient presence of this group in our geographic area. Although the attributes of this mindset are most commonly reflected among the younger generation, such attributes can also be found in older age groups as well. So, our primary focus should be on those persons possessing the Post-Modern mindset, not necessarily on specific age groups per se.

- *Creating Irresistible Environments*

On any given day persons may walk onto our church campus. His or her first impression may ultimately determine whether he or she becomes a lifelong member of the congregation or never steps foot in the building again. Environments matter. To attract those from outside the church and enhance the likeliness of their return, create irresistible environments. To do so, define what is meant by irresistible environment for each specific ministry and all other areas of the church (e.g., parking lots, ministry areas for children, small groups, worship services, etc.). Establish and implement standards of excellence for all ministry environments. Newcomers who come, do evaluate. Several essential ingredients, considered in earlier in the resource book underlay the creation of great environments for attracting and retaining the unchurched. Each ministry in the church should be periodically evaluated and necessary corrections and improvements made. Utilization of secret shoppers, in addition to other forms of internal evaluation, further enhances the ability to create and maintain an irresistible church environment.

- *Strategy for Reaching Secular People*

Unless the evangelistic values and good intentions are translated into a step-by step strategy, significant advancement in our church's efforts to build a contagious Christian church advancing our evangelism mission is unlikely to occur. The foundation of an effective strategy consist of three basic steps.

- *Step 1: Build Relationships.* The church needs to instill and engender in believers the habit of asking God to lead them to an unbeliever or skeptic with whom one can establish a relationship as well as asking God for aid in doing so. Thus, Step 1 in the church's evangelistic strategy is for all church members to commit to building relationships with people who

need to be reached. When the relationship is, or becomes, one of friendship, discern and utilize the opportunity for spiritual conversations.

- *Step 2: Share a Verbal Witness.* After building a trusting relationship, offer verbal witness. Each believer needs to be willing to assume risks and initiate spiritual conversations. It is imperative that the church develop and implement means to prepare all of its members to build relationships, witness the impact of Christ in their lives, and articulate the truths of the gospel (i.e., personal relationship evangelism).

- *Step 3: Invite Friends to Outreach Events.* For unbelievers to come to Christ, someone needs to lead them to a basic understanding of the Christian faith and to experiencing the joy of relationships in following Christ. However, an individual church member does not have to lead a person to Christ all by him or herself. Step 3 of the strategy to reach unbelievers is for the church to offer both attractive and interesting worship and non-worship outreach events, as well as short term and relational small group opportunities, to which members invite unbelievers to attend in an attractive irresistible church environment. Effective evangelism is a church-wide team evangelism effort. By combining individual efforts with well executed worship and non-worship events, the message of the Word can be communicated and loving relationships can grow initiating a person's embarkation on a path leading to accepting and to growing in Christ.

It is the responsibility of a disciple-making church to structure and will itself to carry out this e three-stage strategy of (i) relationship building, (ii) sharing Christ and (iii) invitation. We should strive to become a contagious Christian church by motivating, training, equipping and supporting all of our members to actively engage in personal relationship evangelism and by providing attractive opportunities to which they can invite people whom they are reaching out to. A strategy that integrates an individual's personal relationship evangelism outreach efforts with well executed worship and non-worship outreach events and offers an irresistible environment has proven to be quite effective in building a contagious Christian church.

8. *Team Organizational Structure*

The effectiveness of a church as a disciple-making church, in significant part, depends upon its organizational framework being based upon and implemented for the accomplishment of its mission. The passage of time since the last organizational review here at FRCC and the discussion considered here in this the resource book gives rise to recommended modifications. But, most importantly, the adoption of the recommended mission statement and a greater awareness of the steps in the disciple-making progress for persons seeking to grow

toward a more Christ-like life call for reconsideration of several aspects our current organizational structure.

- *Recommended Organizational Structure*

As established in the By-Laws of our church, the current organizational structure is founded upon Christ as the head of the church. Under Christ, the congregation is the policy making body. Serving under the Congregation are currently seven teams whose responsibilities are set forth in the By-Laws. In the context being a Congregational church, although the senior pastor as well as other staff under him, do not occupy command and control role authority, our senior pastor is highly respected and influential as the leader of the church.

The recommended organizational changes involve amending the church By-Laws with respect to creating new and deleting old teams, team name changes, and team responsibilities. Several significant recommended changes in team organizational structure are noted here.

- To remedy our current lack of a systematic and coordinated efforts to assimilate prospective new and even on-going members into the life of the church, a *newly created Assimilation Team* is recommended to play a major role in remedying this defect.

- Creating and growing disciples is the role of the entire church, not simply that of one team. Worship, fellowship, serving and evangelism are all integral elements of discipleship. Thus, it is recommended that there *no longer be a Discipleship Team* whose current responsibilities will be reallocated to a new and/or other existing teams.

- The new *Adult Christian Education Team* emerges from the former Discipleship Team. Utilizing a variety of means, including short term small groups, its primary focus will be on adult Christian education, training short term small group leaders, and supporting other teams in related areas.

- The new *Sunday School and Youth Education Team* is created to assume responsibilities in this area formerly exercised by the Discipleship Team. This includes youth up to and through confirmation.

- The new *Relational Small Group Team* is created to assume the responsibility, previously under the scope of the former Discipleship Team, to foster relational small groups as a fundamental component in advancing our disciple-making mission which calls movement of every member of the congregation into an effective disciple-making relational group. A new team focusing on creating, training and leading relational

small groups needs to be a fundamental component in our church organizational structure.

- Create the *Ministry Support Team* which is a rename for the current Accountability Team whose current name is unsuitable for the Team's current and future functions covering a wide gamut of responsibilities.

In short, the recommended team structure consists of the ten teams:

(i) Worship
(ii) Fellowship
(iii) Evangelism
(iv) Assimilation
(v) Adult Education
(vi) Sunday School and Youth Education
(vii) Serving
(viii) Relational Small Group
(ix) Ministry Support
(x) Administrative

- *Team Responsibilities in General*

  - *Disciple-Making Process.* In any organization consisting of teams or other similar bodies, there is a tendency for each unit to focus virtually all of its attention and efforts on its particular area of prime responsibility. In a church context, all too commonly, there is little tendency to be continually alert to supplementing the efforts of others teams in moving persons to, within and through the various Stages of Disciple-Making leading toward a more Christ-like life. Consequently, it must be communicated and emphasized that all teams, especially team leaders, need to be cognizant of and understand their responsibility for advancing the overall Mission of our church, not just focusing on their specific area of responsibility. All teams need to be alert as to when and, where it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in moving people through the Stages of Disciple-Making. This general responsibility needs to be specifically included in the By-Laws for each team.

  - *Fostering Fellowship.* Although there is a Fellowship Team, fostering fellowship is a natural and essential responsibility of all teams as well as each member of the church. The concept of encouraging and enabling fellowship as a church-wide phenomenon is well expressed in the FRCC Vision Statement which envisions a Christian fellowship gathered around and bound in love to Christ and one another. In all that a team does, it should create and incorporate an environment of friendships, belonging, and caring personal relationships. The opportunity for fostering fellowship arises in all that the various teams do both in the context of the

activity being pursued and among team members themselves. In short, it is the responsibility of all teams to be alert to and supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship and assimilation in moving people through the Stages of Disciple-Making.

- *Foster Team Member Spiritual Growth.* Team meetings should be more than simply the conduct of business. These meetings offer opportunity for team members to gather in a manner fostering their own personal spiritual growth. Among other possibilities, this not only involves building fellowship with one another, but also moments for prayer and spending a bit of time with scripture. Thus, a general responsibility for all teams is to foster team member personal spiritual growth through fellowship, prayer and scripture and perhaps in other ways as well as conducting team business.

□ *Individual Team Responsibilities*

The detailed recommended responsibilities specific for each team are set forth above in PART SIX, Section VIII C. above. These reflect the recommended Mission Statement, current FRCC By-Laws, our current adopted church vision and core value statements, current team descriptions, outlines of current strategies applicable to each mission purpose team, and suggestions and recommendations offered in this resource book.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

Successfully encouraging, equipping and supporting the spiritual growth of our church, especially on a widespread basis, is unlikely to result from a haphazard and/or sporadic approach to disciple-making. However, a strategically sound approach to offering disciple-making experiences can have a profound impact on the lives of people. With disciple-making the core mission of FRCC, we need to address how our church can best achieve this mission. How best can we turn religious, as well as irreligious, people into becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ? The suggestions and recommendations presented and discussed in this resource book offer real opportunities for people to experience the transforming love of Christ in ways that touch their greatest needs and highest hopes and do so in ways which lead them to be people that God wants and created them to be.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

THE CONGREGATIONAL WAY:
ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM

(as adopted by Fox River Congregational Church, June 22, 2003)

Preamble

Every church must determine in some manner the way it goes about "doing church." Each church is a bit different and each Congregational church may hold somewhat different views as to what constitutes the Congregational Way. As a Congregational church and as a congregation which has reflected upon the Congregational Way, our way of "doing church" is reflected in the following Statement of the Essential Principles of Congregationalism. These principles are commonly understood, shared, accepted and adopted by our Congregation as a whole. They provide a common and shared expression as to our understanding of the Congregational Way by which we seek to carry out our mission and reach our vision - that is, the way we "do church."

1. Christian Faith

   A Congregational church consists of those individuals called to God to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and to enter into a personal relationship with Him.

2. Voluntary Fellowship in a "Gathered Church"

   A Congregational church is a "gathered church" arising from a group of people voluntarily drawn together in fellowship through their common love of Christ by the power of the Spirit. The "gathered church" engages in frequent and meaningful personal relationships with one another for richer communion with God, growth of self and service to others.

3. Covenantal People

   By entering into ("owning") a common agreement (the "covenant") between God and ourselves, Congregationalists enter into a personal commitment to God and to each other to live a life with Christ according to God's will as that will is revealed through Christ. Through the covenant relationship men and women are bound together not by law but voluntarily in love for God and for one another.

4. Equality Among Believers

A fundamental principle of Congregationalism is that all believers in Jesus Christ are equal in the sight of God.

5. Freedom in Faith

(a) Congregationalism does not require adherence to a specific creed. Every Congregationalist possesses full liberty of private conscience in interpreting the gospel and developing his or her own faith convictions as led by the Holy Spirit, scripture, prayer and reason. Sincerity of conviction requires full opportunity for intellectual freedom and personal experience.

(b) Freedom in faith is not freedom to do whatever one wants. Our freedom is for God's sake, not our own. Freedom of the Congregational Way is freedom from the authority of other persons so that we can be more completely obedient to the authority of Christ. Such freedom places more responsibility on us not less. Not only are we as individuals not compelled to accept the opinions of others, we are not free to uncritically do so. Our freedom of private conscience obligates each of us to carefully and honestly think through and reach our own conclusions (giving appropriate regard to the opinions of others) as to the meaning of God's Word and His will for us. For God to be truly meaningful to us, we must discover our faith first hand.

6. Freedom in Matters of Conduct

As in matters of faith, Congregationalists also accept the freedom of private conscience in the conduct of daily life. A Congregational church does not seek to impose human inventions, traditions, institutions or authorities on an individual's personal walk with Christ. One's educated conscience, informed by the Holy Spirit, scripture, prayer and reason, is his or her guide to conduct.

7. People of the Word

At the heart of Congregationalism is a life of worship as a People of the Word. Congregationalists are people eagerly seeking to find, understand and do the Word of God, especially as that Word is revealed in the Bible. God's Word is our authority, discipline and mandate. Consequently, preaching of the Word and prayerful study of the Bible are central to our faith.

8. Governance of the Church

a. *Headship of Christ*

The supreme authority for Christians is God's will as His will is revealed through Jesus Christ. Christ and only Christ is the head of each local church.

b. *Autonomy of Local Church - Free Polity*

As we understand the Congregational Way, each local Congregational church is autonomous, i. e., self governing, entirely free from external political control and ecclesiastical authority, pronouncements and creeds. Governance of the church stems not from an administrative hierarchy involving a Pope, apostolic succession, presbyters or synods. Our governance comes directly from Christ, therefore our church is free before God to order its own life as it feels directed by the Holy Spirit.

c. *Church Meeting: Role of the Congregation*

The Church Meeting is the whole people of God in a given local church meeting together and governing themselves under the guidance of Christ. Through the Church Meeting the congregation serves as the active and real (as distinguished from a perfunctory) governing body of each local Congregational church.

9. Ministry of a Congregational Church

a. *General Ministry of All Christian Believers.*

The Congregational Way accepts and fosters the principle that we are all ministers where we live and work as well as in church. Our Christian ministry is our understanding and expression of the mind and mission of Christ that demonstrates a common life of gratitude, devotion, witness, service, celebration and discipleship. All Christians are called to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God.

b. *Ordained Ministry*

In addition to the general ministry of all Christian believers, the ordained ministry is a call by God to the pastoral ministries of

(1) the Word of God through careful study, faithful interpretation and proclaiming the Word;

(2) responsible administration of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist; and

(3) building up and guiding members of the congregation in their performance of the general ministry.

In the tradition of the Congregational Way, an ordained minister is called by the particular local church he or she is to serve.

c. Unity of Ministry

There is one ministry in Christ, but there are diverse gifts and evidence of God's grace throughout the Body of Christ. General and ordained ministries are complimentary rather than subservient to one another.

10. One Holy Catholic (Universal) Apostolic Church

Despite differences in matters of faith and the form of governance, all Christian churches are still a part of the one catholic (universal) apostolic church.

11. Freedom in Fellowship with Other Churches

Congregationalists believe that it is God's will for them and their churches to love, pray for and support churches of Christ everywhere. A Congregational church is free to form any kind of Christian fellowship with other churches as led by the Holy Spirit. However, such an association with others must be free of any outside authority over the local church.

APPENDIX C

FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH: VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CHURCH

To be a biblically functioning community of believers so that Christ's redemptive purposes can be accomplished in the world, we here set forth the vision for the future of our Church.

Expectancy –We envision a Christian fellowship seeking and inviting Christ's presence; expecting to see and experience Christ in our midst; expecting revelation of God's Word and discerning His will for us; expecting the continuous entering of the Holy Spirit into our lives to guide, sustain, and empower us; expecting life transformation; expecting a loving and caring personal relationship with God; expecting great things to happen; and expecting wonders and joy that God has prepared for those that love Him.

All of Life – We envision a Christian fellowship consisting of members living out *all* of life, with joy and enthusiasm, as a response to God's love and grace. No dichotomy occurs between our spiritual and church life on the one hand and secular life on the other. Our faith, hope and love extend to all of life which is sacred and devoted to God.

Bible Centered – We envision a Bible centered fellowship in which the Bible, as God's inspired Word, serves as our authoritative and trustworthy rule of faith and conduct in all that we do. Scripture is relevant to the needs of all people for all times including the specific problems of contemporary living.

Worship – We envision a Christian fellowship in which all members gather together as a worshipping community to express our love, reverence, praise and gratitude to God in joyful, inspiring, energetic, prayerful and creative worship. Such worship includes the revelation of God's Word, especially as that Word is revealed in the Bible through creative and learned preaching, so that we might discern and be obedient to God's will.

Service – We envision a Christian fellowship expressing its love for others by serving, in the name of Christ, their spiritual, emotional and physical needs through encouraging and equipping every member for significant ministry in the family, church, community and the world. Such fellowship assists members in discovering, developing and using their unique gifts to minister to the needs of others through a broad range of caring ministry and mission opportunities.

Making Disciples – We envision a Christian fellowship helping to transform people's lives by making disciples of Christ through the process of bringing people to knowing and accepting Christ as Lord and Savior (evangelism); helping them mature into a Christ-like life (discipling); involving people in our fellowship; and equipping, motivating and sending them out to do Christ's work (service).

Evangelism – We envision a Christian fellowship in which all members seek to win others to Christ by reaching out to all by entering into personal relationships, by sharing the Gospel and by bearing witness by word and deed to the power and love of God so that others may know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and by maintaining a welcoming and non-threatening environment in which those not yet committed to Christ can feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith. We envision expanding the community of Christ through growth in our own fellowship, growth through new church plantings, or through other efforts. Recognizing that God desires that we reach as many people as possible with the life-transformation message of Jesus Christ, we envision using a wide range of traditional and creative methods and policies to generate growth consistent with maintaining our integrity and commitment to biblical truth.

Discipling – We envision a Christian fellowship mentoring people in the foundation of the Christian faith by teaching them what Jesus taught; encouraging them; and praying with them so that they may grow toward living a Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This discipling process of growing in one's faith begins when a person accepts Christ and continues throughout the rest of his or her life.

Gathered Covenant Fellowship – We envision a Christian fellowship gathered around and bound in love to Christ and one another by a covenant freely entered into; a Christian fellowship of believers personally committed to follow Christ by creating an environment of friendships, belonging and personal relationships where members learn, share, nurture, laugh, love, celebrate joys, grow and pray with one another; a Christian fellowship where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated, and the confused can find love, trust, acceptance, support, hope, forgiveness, guidance, encouragement and healing; and a Christian fellowship where the self can grow and where communion with God can be richer.

Service – (see above)

Equality – We envision a Christian fellowship in which all are embraced as being equal in the sight of God and all, under the headship, guidance and direction of Christ, are entitled to equal opportunity to be heard, to influence and to determine church policies and practices.

Freedom in Faith – We envision a Christian fellowship in which all follow Christ by seeking to grow in faith and personal commitment according to the dictates of individual private conscience. Convictions of faith require full opportunity for intellectual freedom and personal experience as led by rational thought guided by the Holy Spirit. We envision a fellowship which embraces freedom of inquiry, willingness to express convictions and hear convictions of others, and freedom to respectfully disagree. However, our freedom in faith is not freedom to do whatever one wants, but rather freedom from the authority of other persons and institutions so that we can be free to be more completely obedient to the authority of Christ.

Freedom in Governance and Fellowship – We envision a Christian fellowship which, subject to God's will as revealed through Christ, is entirely self-governing and free from all external ecclesiastical and political control; but which, as led by the Holy Spirit, also freely enters into loving, praying and supportive fellowship with other churches.

Priesthood of Believers – We envision a Christian fellowship in which all members enjoy the benefits and accept the responsibilities for the work of the church in becoming vital, fully-empowered partners in general ministry ("priesthood of believers") where they live and work as well as in the church.

Presence in Society – We envision a Christian fellowship reaching into society with compassion and justice, not by manipulating political power to impose Christian standards on a secular and pluralistic society, but rather by serving as a conscience to the world by demonstrating the love and righteousness of God in word and deed. We envision a Christian fellowship encouraging its members, as individuals guided by their Christian values, to be active citizens in the local, regional, national and international community of which we are all a part.

Creativity and Cultural Relevance – We envision a Christian fellowship functioning in all that we do in an innovative, adaptable, creative and culturally-relevant manner which does not compromise scripture, our mission, the Congregational Way, our core values or otherwise the basics of our faith.

Excellence – We envision a Christian fellowship striving to meet a high standard of excellence in all that we do by every member using his or her God-given gifts to the best of his or her ability so as to honor God who deserves the best that we can offer.

"City on the Hill" – We envision a Christian fellowship, as modern-day heirs to the heritage of our Pilgrim/Puritan forebears, serving as a latter day "City on the Hill" model as to "doing church" in the Congregational Way to the glory of God.

Stewardship – We envision a Christian fellowship honoring God by joyfully returning to Him a portion of His gifts - material, talent, time and energy - generously, proportionally and regularly.

Family Affirming – We envision a Christian fellowship which lovingly affirms, strengthens and spiritually nurtures the family.

Ministry Campus – We envision a beautiful, spacious, and inspiring ministry campus grounds and facilities conducive to ministering to the total person (spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially); to providing ministerial services and to offering a variety of opportunities helping people connect with our Lord and with one another.

APPENDIX D

FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH: STATEMENT OF CORE VALUES OF OUR CHURCH

(adopted June 22, 2003)

Before setting forth the Statement of Core Values of Our Church, it is essential that we have a common understanding of (1) what core values are, (2) why they are important and (3) what they are not.

1. What Are Core Values? - Definition

As used in this Statement, core values are the primary beliefs held collectively by our Church which respond to the question *Why we do what we do?* They are the beliefs which motivate people to act. Here is where we stand, here is where we draw the line. In the context of our church, core values may be defined as *"the constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive the ministry."*

2. Importance of Core Values

The basic structure in building for the future of our Church consists of six foundational elements: - (1) mission (i. e., what God calls our Church to do), (2) how we "do church" (the essential principles of Congregationalism, (3) core values, (4) vision (i. e., the visual image of what our ministry will look like in the future, (5) strategic planning, and (6) organization around the purposes of the Church. The core values held by members of the Congregation are closely intertwined with the other foundational elements of the church. They impact the formulation of our mission, how we "do church," our vision for the church and even our strategy and our organizational structure to accomplish our mission and vision.

It is essential that a church's core values are reflected in and/or are consistent with these other foundational elements. To the extent there are serious inconsistencies between the core values which drive our members and the other foundational elements, the potential for serious problems and ineffective ministry is quite real. However, when core values, mission, "doing church," vision, strategy and organizational structure are aligned, the likelihood of a dynamic and effective church greatly increase. Since our collective core values as a church will impact all that we do in the future as a church, thereby impacting each of us as members of the Church, we need a common understanding as to what our core values are.

3. What Core Values Are Not - Not a Creedal Statement

Being a statement of what both motivates and what is collectively important to the members of this Church, naturally the Statement of Core Values sets forth a variety of deeply held convictions. However, while accepting and adopting this Statement of Core Values, such Statement *is not a statement of faith or a creed binding on individual members of our*

Congregation. But rather, our Statement of Core Values provides a guide as to the general thrust of our Church collectively. Individuals are free to accept and/or reject in part or whole various aspects of the Core Value Statement. Subscribing to some or all of the Statement is not a condition of membership. Instead, freedom of conscience is one of the essential elements of our Congregational Way as well as being one of core values.

Core Values of Our Church

Drawn from a survey of the Congregation and adopted by the Congregation, the following statement sets forth our common understanding of the core values of this Church.

1. Trinity

There is one God who exists eternally in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each fully God yet each distinct from the other. God the Father created heaven and earth and all things in it. He continues to sustain his creation and is operating throughout history to fulfill His redemptive purpose which is to call all people to fellowship with him. Jesus the Son was born, lived, died by crucifixion, was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven to join the Father as our arisen Lord and Savior. God the Holy Spirit sustains, guides and empowers us in growing into a life of Christ-like character.

2. Salvation

While originally created to have fellowship with God, humans have defied God and chosen to go their own independent way thereby alienating themselves from God. Jesus satisfied divine justice thereby enabling reconciliation with God by voluntarily dying on the cross for forgiveness of our sins.

Salvation (reconciliation with God) cannot be earned through human effort, but rather salvation comes from our response to God's offer of grace through faith (belief and trust) in Christ. Good works reflect an appropriate response to, not a condition of, God's love and grace.

With God's resurrection of Christ, Christ conquered death making good on His promise that all who believe in Him will live. God offers eternal life, as well as salvation, to those who have faith in Christ.

3. Our Relationship with God

Christ is our Lord and Savior through whom God reveals himself to us.

God created all people, in his image, whom he loves deeply. In his love for us, God gives us free will. We honor God through worship, obedience and service.

God seeks and invites all of us to live in loving fellowship with Him and with each other. God is a personal God with whom we can enter into a caring, loving, and personal relationship.

Faith develops through spiritual disciplines such as worship, prayer, sacraments, service, studying and applying scripture, and fellowship.

4. Worship

Worship is at the heart of a Christian church. Christ's first and greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. As a prime means of expressing praise, love and gratitude to God, inspiring and uplifting worship is fundamental to our faith.

Preaching

Since our life of worship depends upon the frequent revelation of God's Word, we seek to find, understand and do the Word of God, especially as that Word is revealed in the Bible and through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Thus, preaching and hearing the Word of God is central to our faith. Whatever its style, preaching is more than simply lecturing or informing (education). Preaching is to make the case for God, declare the Good News, and win the verdict. It is to challenge and inspire us to make God's agenda our agenda.

Sacraments

The sacraments of baptism and communion constitute fundamental elements in our worship of God.

Music

Music, in various forms, serves as an integral element in the worship of God, expression of our faith, fellowship and outreach.

Confession and Forgiveness

An important element of worship is the confession and forgiveness of sin.

5. Prayer

Through prayer we personally communicate and strengthen our personal relationship with God who hears and answers. Prayer serves as a catalyst for spiritual development.

Learning how to pray and frequent opportunities for private and corporate prayer are important elements of church. Conception, planning, and execution of all aspects of our Church's ministry and activities need to be characterized by reliance on prayer.

6. Bible

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is fundamental in our understanding of the character of God. It is the authoritative and trustworthy rule of faith and practice for Christians. Scripture rather than church tradition is final authority. Scripture is relevant to the needs of all people both for all times and the specific problems of contemporary living.

Preaching and teaching God's Word with integrity and authority enables seekers to find Christ and believers to mature in Him.

Our church should be a Bible centered ministry in all that we do. The Bible is especially important in preaching, Christian education, conduct of the ministries of our Church, and personal conduct.

7. Life as an Integrated Whole

It matters how one lives his or her life. The gospel is not something simply to be read and understood, but to be lived. Faith is the fundamental and practical element of living. It extends to all of life. Every act and task in life, not simply one's act of worship, is the response of a steward of God. For the person of Christian faith, there is no distinction between religious and secular life. All of life is God's.

8. Fellowship in a "Gathered" Church Bound Together by Covenant

God calls us to belong as well as to believe. We are not meant to live alone or in relative isolation from one another. Instead, we belong to Christ's family. We are a community of believers voluntarily "gathered together around Christ" in fellowship with Christ and with one another through our common love of Christ. Such fellowship calls for frequent and meaningful personal relationships with one another creating an environment for richer communion with God, growth of self, and mutual support and service to one another. Loving, trusting, sharing, forgiving and respectful relationships should permeate every aspect of church life making our church a secure and loving home, family and community for all.

By entering into ("owning") a common agreement (the "covenant") between God and ourselves, we personally commit to God and to each other to live a life with Christ according to God's will as that will is revealed through Christ.

Our local church is a congregation of believers who gather together for worship, prayer, instruction, encouragement, mutual accountability as to life within our Church community, and fellowship with one another. Through the church, we invest time, energy and resources to fulfill the mission of our Church.

9. Discipleship: - Growth in Christ-Like Life

After someone has made a decision for Christ, he or she must be discipled which is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This involves teaching and mentoring people in the foundations of the Christian faith, encouraging them, and praying for them so that they may follow Christ more effectively. This process begins when a person accepts Christ as his or her Lord and Savior and continues throughout the rest of his or her life. Thus, a fundamental role for our Church is discipling believers growth toward life transforming Christian maturity and cultivating a Christ-like and loving atmosphere within our Church community.

Discipling calls for Bible based continuing Christian education at all age levels.

10. Service/Ministry

By serving the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of others in the name of Jesus, we respond to God's call to love our neighbor as ourselves. Since caring for people honors God, our Church is here to minister to (serve) people in Christ's name including participation in missions.

Every follower of Christ has been created unique with valuable gifts which are meant to be discovered, developed and used in furtherance of God's will. Each of us has a mission in the world no one else can perform. We are committed to encouraging, equipping and assisting each and every member in discovering, developing and using their gifts in ministry to meet the needs of others.

In light of God's love for us, we encourage people to serve Christ through love and gratitude rather than through guilt, shame and condemnation.

11. Reaching Out -Sharing the Good News (Evangelism)

All people including the unchurched people (i. e., non-believers and believers without meaningful affiliation with a church) have value and matter to God. Therefore, they matter to us.

While aware of the advantages of a small, intimate congregation, we recognize that growth is the natural consequence resulting from our reaching out

to those exploring Christianity as well as from our other ministries. Trusting God to lead us to appropriate growth and size, we set no maximum nor minimum limits on the growth and size of our Church.

God desires for us to reach as many people as possible with the life-changing message of Jesus the Christ. Thus, we are committed to pursuing a wide range of methods and policies (including one on one personal evangelism, life style role model evangelism and serving physical, mental and spiritual needs), which do not compromise our integrity or commitment to biblical truth. to reach out and witness the Gospel to the unchurched so as to win them to being followers of Christ (followed by discipling them toward Christian maturity). A fundamental reason for our church to exist is to lead others to accepting Christ as Lord and Savior (i. e., conversion).

We are committed to creating and maintaining a friendly, welcoming and non threatening environment in which those not yet committed feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith.

12. Congregational Way

We are committed to the Congregational Way both in general and as to each of the Essential Elements of Congregationalism as adopted by our Congregation.

Our Pilgrim/Puritan forebears sought to be a "City on the Hill" model as how to do church. As modern day heirs to this heritage, we are committed to serving as a role model and challenge for other churches as to "doing church" in the Congregational Way to the glory of God.

13. Culturally Relevant: Creativity and Innovation

In today's rapidly changing world, the forms and methods of our worship and ministry must be continually evaluated and, if necessary, altered to fit current needs and new conditions. While proven techniques should not be discarded at a whim, creativity, innovation, and adaptability are to be encouraged to assure that we are culturally relevant in today's world. Effectiveness in ministry rather than church tradition is paramount. We seek to communicate the Good News of Christ to contemporary society in ways that can best be understood. However, seeking to be culturally relevant shall only be done in a manner which does not compromise scripture, the basics of our faith, our message and/or our integrity.

14. Excellence

As a local church we are God's franchise in the local community. Excellence honors God as well as attracting and inspiring people. Therefore, in all that we do as a church, we are committed to the standard of excellence by

every person exercising their God-given spiritual gifts to the best of his or her ability. If in presenting ourselves as a reflection of God's love and character, we do so in a mediocre manner, we fail to honor God who offers us love, salvation and eternal life. He deserves the best we can offer.

15. Family Affirming

God calls upon us for the spiritual nurture of the family not only as an expression of our love for others, but also as one of God's means to spread and perpetuate the Christian faith. We are committed to providing an environment which strengthens marriages and families.

16. Tithing

All that we have is a gift from God. Tithing (the giving of 10% of one's income to the church), as well as giving of one's time and talents, is an appropriate response to God's grace which allows us to trust God for meeting our needs.

17. Social. Economic Justice, Moral, Environment and/or Civil Rights Issues

Our Church encourages members, as individuals guided by their Christian values, to be active and responsible citizens in the local, regional, national and/or international community of which we are all a part.

APPENDIX E

FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH: SPIRITUAL GROWTH SELF ASSESSMENT SURVEY

A. Need for Spiritual Growth Self Assessment

Most of us are not very conscious of the specific nature of our shortcomings in trying to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ by growing toward a more Christ-like life in our thoughts feelings and actions. Although we all recognize that we fall short in general, too few of us translate this recognition into self-assessment as to how we might do better. Since we don't think about our spiritual growth, we tend to do little about it. A key to more intentional spiritual growth is to undertake a spiritual growth self-evaluation. This, in turn, will serve as a guide for developing a personal customized spiritual growth plan which, through digestible steps over time, progresses to a more fulfilling personal relationship with God.

B. Methodology

A system of self-evaluation requires some sort of measures by which to assess. In its adopted Disciple-Making Mission Statement, FRCC provides the basis for such measures in the four crucial relationships (sometimes referred to as the Marks of Discipleship) – *i.e., connecting (i) with God, (ii) with other believers, (iii) with believers and non-believers through serving, and (iv) with the unchurched through evangelism.* By thoughtfully and truthfully responding to some specific questions about one's own journey in each of these four relationships, a person can discern (1) a pretty good sense of where he or she is in his or her spiritual growth toward a more Christ-like life and (2) those spiritual areas in which he or she might next seek to grow.

The following Spiritual Growth Self-Assessment survey asks several questions with respect to each of these four relationships. (Note – the category of connecting with God is divided into two categories: worship and other spiritual disciplines.) Based upon the scale provided, simply circle the number reflecting your response to each question. Total the circled numbers for each section and transfer each total to the Self Rating Sheet on the next page under the column for that relationship on the row whose numbers in the parentheses includes your total numbers. The italicized heading in that row indicates approximately where you are in your spiritual journey with respect to that particular relationship.

Based upon the results, select one or two categories upon which you would like to focus your next spiritual growth efforts whether individually or through some program offering of the church. Periodically repeat the self-evaluation survey (e.g., every 3 months) and compare to previous results. This provides a sense of growth or lack thereof and where to go next.

C. Church Assistance in an Individual's Spiritual Growth

The final page asks (1) for your suggestions as to what type of church offerings would assist you in your spiritual growth journey and (2) whether you would like a personal and private visit with Pastor Lonnie with respect to your spiritual growth. Please return this page to the church (or Pastor Lonnie directly) either anonymously or signed.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH SELF-ASSESSMENT

Scale: 0 = Not at All
1 = Fair
2 = Making Progress
3 = Getting Good
4 = Well Developed

CONNECTING WITH GOD: PURSUING A LOVING AND AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

Worship Services

Can I express a clear understanding of the purposes of worship?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I understand and practice preparation for worship?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I regularly attend worship services?	0 1 2 3 4
Does the worship service engage my concentrated attention?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I sense the prescence of God during the worship service	0 1 2 3 4
Do I experience, a more Christ like life stemming from worship services?	0 1 2 3 4
TOTAL	

Other Spiritual Disciplines

Have I undertaken a serious effort to understand what different spiritual disciplines are about?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I know and practice regularly one or more spiritual discipline(s) and know which ones work best for me?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I believe the Bible is credible?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I regularly spend time with God's Word?	0 1 2 3 4
Have I learned how to effectively study the Bible and apply its teachings to my life?	0 1 2 3 4

Do I understand the nature, elements and types of prayer? 0 1 2 3 4

Do I practice prayer regularly? 0 1 2 3 4

Do I sense a deepening in my friendship with God? 0 1 2 3 4

TOTAL

CONNECTING WITH OTHER BELIEVERS: LOVING AND SHARING LIFE TOGETHER

Do I *regularly* connect with other believers through sharing life together in a relational small group(s)? 0 1 2 3 4

If yes, does such group foster spiritual growth toward a more Christ-like Christ life through building mutual relationships of encouragement, trust, openness, caring, support and accountability? 0 1 2 3 4

*(**Note** – score either the above or below question, not both)*

If no, am I intentional about finding a such relational small group and/or encouraging others to participate with me in such a relational small group? 0 1 2 3 4

Am I willing to share my real needs for prayer and support from others? 0 1 2 3 4

Am I willing to participate in voluntary mutual accountability through confessing my faults and being challenged to improve? 0 1 2 3 4

Am I growing in my ability to share and show my love toward others? 0 1 2 3 4

TOTAL

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: LOVINGLY SERVING THEM

Am I regularly praying to God to show me opportunities 0 1 2 3 4

Have I truly come to know the importance of service in the disciple-making process and my role in it? 0 1 2 3 4

Am I offering my time, talent and treasure to serve the needs of others in a loving caring way? 0 1 2 3 4

Have I undertaken the steps necessary to discover my gifts and where God wants me to apply them?	0 1 2 3 4
Have I undertaken those steps necessary to equip/develop myself for service?	0 1 2 3 4
Am I participating regularly in the serving ministry of the church?	0 1 2 3 4
Am I consciously seeking opportunities to serve the needs of others during the daily routine of my life?	0 1 2 3 4

TOTAL

CONNECTING WITH THE UNCHURCHED: LOVINGLY REACHING OUT, SHARING THE GOSPEL AND INVITING THEM INTO CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Have I come to know the importance of evangelism in becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I really and lovingly care about other peoples' salvation and eternal destiny?	0 1 2 3 4
Have I undertaken efforts to equip myself through knowledge and practice to be more effective in evangelism efforts?	0 1 2 3 4
Am I intentional in my efforts to enter into and invest time in personal relationships in a way that may ultimately bring people to Christ?	0 1 2 3 4
Am I regularly praying for God to provide me with natural opportunities to share is love with the unchurched?	0 1 2 3 4
When opportunities arise, do I share the Gospel and/or my story with others?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I regularly invite unchurched people to join me in Christ related experiences such as church gatherings, short term small groups, *Alpha*, worship services, etc.?	0 1 2 3 4
Do I participate in church outreach experiences (e.g., the *Alpha* course either as a participant or assisting in its conduct)?	0 1 2 3 4

_____

TOTAL

SPIRITUAL GROWTH SELF ASSESSMENT: *RATING SHEET*

CONNECTING WITH GOD:

WORSHIP	SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	OTHER BELIEVERS	OTHERS: SERVICE	UNCHURCHED
		WELL DEVELOPED		
(15-16)	(22-24)	(15-16)	(25-28)	(29-32)
		GETTING GOOD		
(11-14)	(16-21)	(11-14)	(18-24)	(21-28)
		MAKING PROGRESS		
(7-10)	(10-15)	(7-10)	(11-17)	(13-20)
		FAIR		
(3-6)	(4-9)	(3-6)	(5-10)	(5-12)
		NOT AT ALL		
(0-2)	(0-3)	(0-2)	(0-4)	(0-4)

CHURCH ASSISTANCE IN AN INDIVIUDUAL'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

(1) HOW MAY THE CHURCH BETTER ENCOURAGE, EQUIP AND/OR SUPPORT YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH, PROGRAMS, EVENTS, OTHER TYPES OF EXPERIENCES, TOPICS COVERED AND/OR OTHERWISE?

(2) WOULD YOU LIKE A PRIVATE AND PERSONAL VISIT WITH PASTOR LONNIE CONCERNING YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH JOURNEY TOWARD A MORE CHRIST-LIKE LIFE?

(3) IN WHAT AREA(S) AND HOW WILL I TRY TO ADVANCE MY WALK WITH CHRIST?

NAME (OPTIONAL): _____ DATE: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER (OPTIONAL): _____

APPENDIX F

PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE SELF ASSESSMENT FORM[1778]

Scale: **1 = Just Beginning**
3 = Getting Going
5 = Well Developed

CONNECTING WITH GOD'S FAMILY

I am deepening my understanding of and friendship with God in community with others	1 2 3 4 5
I am growing in my ability both to share and to show my love to others	1 2 3 4 5
I am willing to share my real needs for prayer and support from others	1 2 3 4 5
I am resolving conflict constructively and am willing to forgive others	1 2 3 4 5

CONNECTING Total

GROWING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

I have a growing relationship with God through regular time in the Bible and in prayer (spiritual habits)	1 2 3 4 5
I am experiencing more of the characteristics of Jesus Christ (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control, etc.) in my life	1 2 3 4 5
I am avoiding addictive behaviors (food, television, busyness, and the like) to meet my needs	1 2 3 4 5
I am spending time with a Christian friend (spiritual partner) who celebrates and challenges my spiritual growth	1 2 3 4 5

GROWING Total

[1778] Drawn from the small group entitled "Doing Life Together" based upon Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* book.

DEVELOPING YOUR SHAPE TO SERVE OTHERS

I have discovered and am further developing my unique God-given shape for ministry	1 2 3 4 5
I am regularly praying for God to show me opportunities to serve him and others	1 2 3 4 5
I am serving in a regular (once a month or more) ministry in the church or community	1 2 3 4 5
I am a team player in my small group by sharing some group role or responsibility	1 2 3 4 5

DEVELOPING Total__

SHARING YOUR LIFE MISSION EVERY DAY

I am cultivating relationships **with non-Christians** and praying for God to give me natural opportunities to share his love	1 2 3 4 5
I am investing my time in another person or group who needs to know Christ personally	1 2 3 4 5
I am regularly inviting unchurched or unconnected friends to my church or small group	1 2 3 4 5
I am praying and learning about where God can use me and our group cross-culturally **for missions**	1 2 3 4 5

SHARING Total __

SURRENDERING YOUR LIFE FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

I am experiencing more **of the presence and power of God in my** everyday life	1 2 3 4 5
I am faithfully attending my small group and **weekend services** to worship God	1 2 3 4 5
I am seeking to please **God by** surrendering every area of my **life** (health, decisions, finances, relationships, future, etc.) to him	1 2 3 4 5

I am accepting the things I cannot change and becoming increasingly grateful for the life I've been **given** 1 2 3 4 5

SURRENDERING Total__

At the beginning of the assessment period, total your scores for each purpose, and place them on the chart below. Reassess your progress at the end of thirty days. Be sure to select your spiritual partner and the one area in which you'd like to make progress over the next thirty days.

Connecting	**Growing**	**Developing**	**Sharing**	**Surrendering**
Beg. End.	**Beg. End.**	**Beg. End.**	**Beg. End.**	**Beg. End.**

Well Developed

20

Very Good

16

Getting Good

12

Fair

8

Just Beginning

4

Beginning Assessment Total ____ **Ending Assessment Total ____**

APPENDIX G

DISCIPLE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR INDIVIDUALS[1779]

REFLECT BACK ON THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS AND ANSWER each of these questions. After you have completed them, note the areas of significant involvement as well as those in which you have done little recently. Then, make plans to enhance the weaker areas of your own growth as a disciple.

How has deepening been a part of my life these past weeks?

- In what ways have I grown in my relationship with Christ?
- In what ways have I become more aware of myself as a person—my strengths, my weaknesses, my struggles, my fears, my hopes, the temptations I face, the risks I avoid, the challenges I undertake?
- In what ways have I developed a stronger community in which to share my own faith journey and encourage the journeys of others?
- What can I do to enhance my own deepening?

How has equipping been a part of my life these past weeks?

- Have I discovered new gifts or used old ones in new ways?
- How is my call being lived out? Is it still vital? Am I sensing a new call?
- What have I learned that is important to my living as a disciple?
- What skills have I acquired or improved that increase my ability to live as a disciple?
- What can I do to enhance my own equipping?

How has ministering been a part of my life these past weeks?

- In what ways is the leadership role I play my ministry?
- In what other ways am I living out my discipleship – at home, in the church, at work and in the community?
- How has my involvement in ministering strengthened my life as a disciple?
- What can I do to enhance my own ministering?

[1779]Jeffrey D. Jones, *Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple Forming Congregations* 171-172 (2006).

APPENDIX H

FOX RIVER CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH: BY-LAWS RE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

ARTICLE IV – GOVERNANCE

B. Teams

1. Responsibilities of Teams

g. *Administrative Team*

The responsibilities of the Administrative Team are set forth below.

(1) Budget - In consultation with the other Teams, formulate and present a recommended proposed annual church budget, based upon the mission purposes of this Church, for approval by the Congregation at the first Regular Meeting in the calendar year. To enable this activity, at a date determined by the Administrative Team, each Team shall submit to the Administrative Team its proposed itemized budget, based upon the mission purposes of this Church, of proposed expenditures and revenues, if any, for the next one or two (2) years as the Administrative Team so determines.

(2) Oversight of Personnel - Exercise general oversight responsibilities as to personnel, whether volunteer or paid, including recommendations as to compensation (including benefits) and performance evaluation in accordance with standards adopted by the Congregation. The Administrative Team shall make recommendations to the Congregation on all matters of administrative personnel procedure, policy and compensation (including benefits). It shall maintain supportive relationships with the ministers and other staff members and, with the advice of the Accountability Team, assist them to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling. At the discretion of the Congregation, the Administrative Team oversight of personnel matters is subject to review, ratification and/or change by the Congregation.

(3) Communications - Formulate and present recommended programs of communications both internally within and externally outside of the Church for consideration and approval by the Congregation, and implement and administer that which is

approved. Communication programs recommended by other Teams within their respective spheres of responsibility shall be communicated to the Administrative Team for purpose of overall coordination of church communications.

(4) Membership - Discharge the administrative responsibilities pertaining to membership in this Church as set forth in Article I. above.

(5) Financial – In accordance with either policies or specific actions approved by the Congregation, the Administrative Team shall exercise powers and duties with respect to Church financial assets. In doing so, it is authorized to engage in the following activities.

(a) Financial Affairs - The Administrative Team shall manage and safeguard the funds of the Church, designate depositories and authorize routines for approval of the Treasurer. It shall establish policies and procedures for the purchase of all goods and services. It shall be responsible for cash management of all Church funds and for approving all expenditures by the Church.

(b) Financial Records and Reporting – The Administrative Team shall maintain monthly financial schedules in accordance with accepted accounting policies showing funds received, expenditures made, activity relevant to budget, cash on hand and investments, and any other information relevant to managing the financial affairs of the Church in a prudent and fiscally responsible manner. The Administrative Team shall at least quarterly report to the Congregation the financial affairs of the Church including the relationship of such financial results to the budget.

(c) Investments - In accordance with standards adopted by the Congregation, the Administrative Team shall administer the investment activities of the Church including investing reserve funds and, where applicable, funds of separate foundations or trusts for specific purposes established in accordance with paragraph (g) below. The funds and property of the Church, unless specifically otherwise provided by deed, gift, bequest, device, grant or contribution, may be invested in real estate, both improved and unimproved, intangible or intangible personal property and/or in securities of one or more types as may be authorized by the Administrative Team in accordance with policies or specific actions approved by the Congregation. Church investments shall be published to the Congregation at least quarterly.

(d) Audit - In accordance with Article IV.C.2.c. below, provide advice to the Congregation as to membership of the Audit Committee, review the findings and recommendations of the Audit Committee and provide to the Congregation the Team's own findings and recommendations as to the audit report.

(e) Borrowing - When required in the interest of the Church, the Administrative Team may recommend to the Congregation that the Church borrow funds, the purpose of the borrowing, the amount of funds to be borrowed and the manner of such borrowing. The Team has no authority to borrow funds for any purpose without specific approval by the Congregation. If the recommendation is approved by the Congregation, the Team shall authorize the proper officers of the Church to make, execute and deliver in the name and on behalf of the Church such notes, bonds and other evidence of indebtedness as the Congregation authorizes and the Team shall have power to mortgage or pledge the property of the Church, or any part thereof, as security for such indebtedness as the Congregation authorizes.

(f) Financial Plan - The Administrative Team shall formulate and present a recommended long range financial plan for approval by the Congregation and implement that which is approved.

(g) Gifts - The Administrative Team shall review memorials and special gifts, including planned giving, and shall administer and invest all funds received therefrom as well as naming trustees when appropriate. Before becoming the property of the Church, each gift, bequest, device, grant or contribution must be accepted by the Team. It shall discuss, consider, and determine with donors whereby Church projects are proposed, the availability of projects, and the appropriateness of the use of these gifts for the Church. It may also establish and administer a memorial fund. All activity conducted pursuant to this section shall be done in consultation with other Teams whose areas of responsibilities would be directly affected by such gifts and in accordance with policies or specific actions approved by the Congregation.

(6) Physical Property Assets - In accordance with either policies or specified actions approved by the Congregation, the Administrative Team shall exercise powers and duties with respect to Church physical property assets. In doing so, it is authorized to engage in the following activities.

(a) Facilities Management - The Administrative Team shall be responsible for management of rental facilities and maintaining and managing the physical property and facilities of the Church. All such property shall be kept, used and disposed of for the benefit of the Church.

(b) Real Property - When appropriate the Administrative Team shall recommend to the Congregation for approval the purchase, sale, or mortgage of real property. The Team shall have no power to buy, sell, or mortgage real estate without specific authority being granted by the Congregation.

(7) Emergency Action - The Administrative Team is authorized take emergency action with respect to urgent matters which need to be dealt with before a Meeting of the Congregation can be held.