

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LEADERSHIP PARADIGM AND MISSIONAL FAITHFULNESS:
AN EXAMINATION OF ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
PAUL D. MACPHERSON

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
APRIL 15, 2022

THIS DOCUMENT IS SUBMITTED WITH PERMISSION
TO NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION TO INTERESTED PERSONS


Doctor of Ministry Dissertation Approval

Student Name: Paul MacPherson

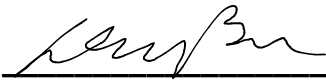
Dissertation Title: Leadership Paradigm and Missional Faithfulness: An Examination of Adaptive Leadership Within the Ecclesiastical Context

Date of Defense: February 28, 2022

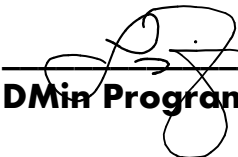
We, the undersigned, determined that this dissertation has met the academic requirements and standards of Nazarene Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry program.



Faculty Advisor, Alexia Salvatierra



Second Reader, David Bowser



DMin Program Director, Levi Jones

ABSTRACT

Paul D. MacPherson

LEADERSHIP PARADIGM AND MISSIONAL FAITHFULNESS: AN EXAMINATION OF ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

The ecclesiastical world has operated primarily from a technical leadership paradigm. The technical paradigm is hierarchical and relies heavily on previously implemented modes of operation and problem-solving. Society's rapidly growing attitudes of suspicion and disinterest toward the church, and the church's seeming indifference or inability to respond to these attitudes of suspicion and disinterest is forcing the church to re-think its approach to ministerial leadership. Thus, it is imperative that the church embrace a paradigm of leadership that will allow the local congregation to transition from an understanding of mission focused on the institutional/organizational preservation to an understanding of mission that is congruent with the missional and relational nature of the triune God. This paradigm of leadership, called adaptive leadership, calls the church to develop missionally faithful resilient leaders who operate within an adaptive context. Through the examination of various case studies, the reader will find examples from which their own adaptive leadership capacity can be developed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Preface	
1	
Chapter 1: The Leadership Crisis in the North American Church	
Introduction	1
Spiritual and Theological Crisis	2
The Need for a Missionally Faithful Leadership Paradigm	5
Cultural Exegesis: Contextual Intelligence	8
What Has History Taught Us?	10
Conclusion	14
Chapter 2: Sources Contributing to the Conversation	
Introduction	15
The Mission of God	15
The Missional Church	19
The Technical Leadership Paradigm	23
The Adaptive Leadership Paradigm	30
Conclusion	37
Chapter 3: Congregational Engagement in the Missio Dei	
Introduction	38
God's Mission or the Church's Mission	40
Mission in the Old Testament	43
Mission in the New Testament	47
Mission Participation: Private or Corporate?	51
The Corporate Apostolic Calling of the Church	53
What Does Missional Faithfulness Look Like in the Local Context?	56
Community Influence and Partnership	58
Chapter 4: Foundational Qualities and Essential Characteristics of Missionally Faithful Adaptive Ecclesiastical Leaders	
Introduction	62
Foundational Qualities: Relationally Focused	62
Foundational Qualities: Resiliently Engaged	66
Essential Characteristics: Catalytic	70
Essential Characteristics: Attentive	72
Essential Characteristics: Responsive	75

Essential Characteristics: Experimental	77
Conclusion	81
Chapter 5: Adaptive Leadership Characteristics: Case Studies	
Introduction	82
Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of John Wesley	82
Catalytic	84
Attentive	88
Responsive	90
Experimental	92
Conclusion	95
Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of Dr. Phineas F. Bresee	96
Catalytic	99
Attentive	102
Responsive	108
Experimental	112
Conclusion	118
Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of Dr. Nina Gunter	119
Catalytic	123
Attentive	126
Responsive	130
Experimental	134
Conclusion	137
Conclusion	138
Bibliography	140

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are, honestly, too many people to properly acknowledge or thank for their support in helping this dissertation come to fruition. However, I especially want to thank the following individuals:

To my beautiful wife: Theresa, your constant encouragement, love, and prayer for me has been, and continues to be a source of strength. Thank you for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. You truly are God's gift to me, and I love you more than words can say!

To my three amazing children: Seth, Zeke, and Naomi. Thank you all for loving me and for being so patient with me. I love you each more than the world. And to Nora Joy Leilagi, my beautiful grandchild, your smile and laugh always bring joy and peace to your Poppie!

To my dad, Dr. Neil MacPherson: thank you for being such an incredible example of what a pastor, and more significantly what a dad should be. I pray that one day I will have been as faithful to my calling as you continue to be to yours. I love you, Dad!

Dr. David W. Bowser: thank you for your insight and guidance, and especially for being such an amazing example of a Christlike adaptive leader.

Dr. Alexia Salvatierra: thank you for pushing me and for believing in the value of this project.

Norm Huffman, Brian Remsch, and Kelly Spitler: thank you all for being such amazing friends and colleagues throughout this journey. There are more times than each of you will ever know that I wanted to quit, but your faithfulness in the journey kept me going.

To the incredible congregation with whom I am privileged to partner in ministry: thank you for the way that you passionately engage in God's mission in the place that He has strategically placed us. You truly are a beautiful expression of God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

PREFACE

The church universal, when existing as God intended, is a beautiful expression of the relational nature and Kingdom of the triune God. However, the contemporary homogenous expression of the church has largely become the norm in North American Christianity. Recognizing diversity within the ecclesiastical world presents challenges in a work such as this in that various contextual and ethnic frameworks impact the way in which subjects such as leadership are viewed and understood. The focus of this work is primarily on the Anglo North American church, though much of the material would be applicable to the North American church at large. Therefore, in those places in which the North American church is referenced, let it be understood that the context is that of the Anglo North American church.

CHAPTER 1

THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH

Introduction

The contemporary North American church finds itself in a unique and challenging position. In a recent article published in *Pew Research Center*, the research team noted that, “The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip.”¹ The frightening reality is that the landscape is trending in the wrong direction. According to the article, the number of American adults who consider themselves Christian is currently at 65%, down from 77% just ten years ago. During that same time period, those who would consider themselves

¹ Gregory A. Smith et al., “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at a Rapid Pace,” *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

atheist, agnostic or among what sociologists have labeled “the Nones” has risen from 17% in 2009 to 26% only one decade later.²

The numerical decline of the North American church is only one of many areas in which the church is experiencing crises. Darrell Guder writes,

“The crises are certainly many and complex: diminishing numbers, clergy burnout, the loss of youth, the end of denominational loyalty, biblical illiteracy, divisions in the ranks, the electronic church and its various corruptions, the irrelevance of traditional forms of worship, the loss of genuine spirituality, and widespread confusion about both the purpose and the message of the church of Jesus Christ...(the crisis) has to do with who we are and what we are for. The real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological.”³

Spiritual and Theological Crisis

These spiritual and theological issues arise from two pervasive realities. First, the North American church now exists in an age that Charles Taylor calls “Secular 3.”⁴ In this, Taylor says that we have moved from living “within a theistic construal, to one in which...unbelief has become for many the major default option.”⁵ As a result, one of the primary characteristics of the Secular 3 age is that there has been a complete loss or “denial of transcendence.”⁶ In other words, in a culture in which unbelief is the norm, the sense of reverence and awe for God is at best ignored, or at worst, denied.

Andrew Root clarifies this further when he writes,

² Smith, *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*.

³ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998), 2-3.

⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, First Harvard University Press paperback edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 14.

⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 14.

⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 61.

“Secular 3 is the loss of the reach of transcendence itself. To live in a Secular 3 world is to inherit a sense that it’s much easier *not* to believe in a God who reaches out to us. Secular 3 is an absence of belief – the nearly unthought conception – that God no longer reaches out to us. It assumes that our human acts, like prayer, confession, and worship, are feeble and therefore have no reach. Such things are a complete waste of time, or perhaps good only for ourselves...Secular 3 is the contesting of all beliefs. Across the West it closes down reach from having any spiritual or transcendent end outside itself.” ⁷

While not the primary focus of this work, it is important to note this Secular 3 reality unfortunately has had and continues to have a devastating impact upon the North American church, including its understanding of mission and what it means to lead in a way that is faithful to that mission.

Consequently, the church, in many cases within this culture that is starving for the inbreaking, transcendent presence of God that the church is called to embody, has been reduced to nothing more than a social institution offering a service of behavior modification. Andrew Root states,

“In a secular age, when the good life is deferred to the dream-state of the future, the church loses any sense of scope (which Root defines in Hartmut Rosa’s words, as a ‘form of life that turns the world into a living, breathing, speaking, responsive, enchanted world’ alive with divine action and congregations that feel alive with the love of the living God). The congregation narrows and becomes a service organization of resources...It no longer seeks in our present for the living God to speak, to give us the crucified Christ as the seeming opposite, but nevertheless fullness, of the good. This is the deep alienation that the Protestant congregation confronts.” ⁸

As a result of this reality, the primary task of ecclesiastical leadership has devolved to simply assessing and managing already existing programs rather than leading the congregation in missional engagement in which individuals and communities once again discover the redemptive and restorative presence of the transcendent God. This is the spiritual and theological crisis into

⁷ Andrew Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time Against the Speed of Modern Life*, Ministry in a Secular Age, volume three (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 145-146.

⁸ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 166-168.

which the North American church is called to minister, a challenge in which, “whether in faith formation, pastoral identity or (within the life of the) congregation, (there has been a complete) loss of divine action.”⁹ It is in this spiritual and theological crisis that, “we yearn to find once again...the sacred in the present, and therefore to be truly alive.”¹⁰

In order to re-engage the transcendence, or the “sacred in the present,” Root suggests that the church become an organism of “resonance.”¹¹ This resonance is the intersection of emotion and affection where an individual or congregation is brought into a redemptive and restorative encounter with the transcendent God in which that individual or congregation not only receives, but also gives. It is at this intersection that the organism that is the church is drawn “into affection with the otherness of God’s self in and through a concrete encounter with our neighbor...(This) is a concrete experience of living out the narrative of the cross and resurrection in our own bodies (or the body of Christ that is the church).”¹² Until this resonance is once again embodied within the ranks of ecclesiastical leadership for the purpose of regaining the transcendent nature of the church, the theological and spiritual crisis will continue.

In addition to the loss of transcendence, the other contributing factor to this spiritual and theological crisis is the loss of the North American church’s sense of identity and mission. From the moment that the church was breathed into existence on the day of Pentecost, it was intended to be the “living, breathing, speaking, responsive” expression of the presence and life of Christ in the world in which God was strategically placing the church. The church’s primary mission was and is to proclaim the same message that Jesus proclaimed, namely, the coming of the Kingdom

⁹ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 193.

¹⁰ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 169.

¹¹ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 191.

¹² Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 208.

reign of God. The church, from its inception was intended to be the incarnational presence of Christ and expression of the Kingdom in which He rules. The church's calling and mission was first and foremost to engage the world in which it had been placed with the message of the Kingdom and the reign of God.

Unfortunately, the church has "tended to envision itself in a variety of ways unconnected to what must be fundamental for it – its relation to the reign of God."¹³ Too often, in recent decades, the North American church, because of its loss of transcendence and its loss of any sense of divine activity has largely envisioned itself institutionally (reflecting a more human/nationalistic/self-transcendent kingdom and reign) rather than incarnationally (reflecting the transcendent Kingdom and reign of God; a Kingdom reflecting the selfless life of Christ). For the church to be scripturally and missionally faithful, it must return to an incarnational existence in which it reflects the person and message of Jesus Christ in all that it is and does, including its leadership paradigm.

The Need for a Missionally Faithful Leadership Paradigm

While there are numerous causes for the crisis in which the North American church now finds itself, the issue of leadership paradigm within the ecclesiastical world plays a pivotal role. Often while programs and ministries have changed in their attempt to adapt to the rapidly changing culture, the leadership paradigm from which the church has operated has remained the same, and in many cases has stagnated and been rendered virtually ineffective.

"The typical North American response to our situation is to analyze the problem and find a solution. These solutions tend to be methodological. Arrange all the components of the church landscape differently, and many assume that the problem can be solved...the

¹³ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 92.

answer to the crisis of the North American church will not be found at the level of method and problem solving.”¹⁴

The resultant leadership crisis facing the church today has been brought about by its desire to celebrate programmatic innovation over leadership that helps to recover resonance and transcendence. Andrew Root proposes,

“What (the church) needs is not innovation (because of all the mis-goods it delivers) but resonance. Innovation is just an energy drink that can get us up and running. Its allure is that it really can get us moving into action. But it’s formulated with too many chemicals and preservatives – with too many goods of accelerated modernity (with too many programmatic approaches) – which eventually promise a crash.”¹⁵

The crisis, and potential crash facing the North American church can only begin to be addressed and answered as the church lives into its resonant calling to rediscover the wonder of transcendence and return to faithfulness in carrying out its Scriptural identity and mission.

To be faithful to its mission, and to become the organism of resonance that it was created to be, the church must re-discover an understanding of mission that is congruent with the missional and relational nature of the triune God. Engagement in mission that is congruent with the missional and relational nature of the triune God requires the church to be constantly proclaiming the message of the transcendent Kingdom and reign of God within the particular context and culture in which the church finds itself. Literally, the church is to be transformed from the people who pray, “Your Kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven,”¹⁶ into the incarnational expression of that Kingdom.

“As a people sent to pray ‘Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,’ the (local) church is to be an imperfect but perfecting social incarnation of God’s inbreaking reign of love and reconciliation, joy and freedom, peace and justice...

¹⁴ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 2-3.

¹⁵ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 200.

¹⁶ Matthew 6:10 (*New International Version*).

(The local church is) an intentional and disciplined community witnessing to the power and the presence of God's reign."¹⁷

This demands that the church embrace a paradigm of leadership that is not only missionally faithful, but also a reflection of the transcendent God whose image and Kingdom the church was created to express and in whose mission the church is commissioned to engage. For the North American church to withstand the crisis in which it finds itself, it is vitally important that the church develop missionally faithful leaders who operate within an adaptive context so that the church may faithfully engage in the mission of God.

With that in mind, this study will focus primarily on two leadership paradigms, technical and adaptive leadership, and their impact on the church's ability to faithfully reflect the Imago Dei as it engages in the Missio Dei. It is the ultimate goal of this dissertation to propose that the church must embrace an adaptive paradigm of leadership to engage in God's mission most faithfully. To that end, this work will examine areas crucial to understanding and embracing an adaptive paradigm of leadership that allows the church to faithfully engage in the mission of God. The remainder of this chapter will examine two important topics: cultural exegesis (Contextual Intelligence) and a brief historical examination of ecclesiastical leadership paradigms.

Chapter 2 will serve as an examination of current literature in topics pertinent to missionally faithful leadership. These topics will include an examination of Missio Dei, the Missional Church, the Technical Leadership Paradigm, and the Adaptive Leadership Paradigm. The theological underpinnings of missional faithfulness will be the focus of chapter 3, as the question, "*What does it mean for the local congregation to engage in the mission of God?*" will be addressed. This discussion will include a brief definition of mission, and an examination of

¹⁷ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 158-159.

the following topics: Initiator of Mission; Mission as revealed in the Old Testament and New Testament; Mission Participation; the Corporate Apostolic Calling of the Church; Missional Faithfulness Within the Local Context; and Community Influence and Partnership.

Chapter 4 will then focus on “*Foundational Qualities and Essential Characteristics of Missionally Faithful Adaptive Ecclesiastical Leaders.*” The foundational pillars to be discussed will be the leaders’ ability to be Reflections of the Imago Dei, Restless Learners, Relationally Focused, and Resiliently Engaged. Building upon those foundational qualities will be a look at the following essential characteristics of the adaptive leader: Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental. Finally, in chapter 5 three separate case studies from within the Wesleyan theological perspective will be presented. These leaders exhibit the qualities and characteristics of adaptive leadership. These case studies are not intended to be a technical and programmatic solution to the leadership crisis of the North American church. Rather, it is the intent to present the case studies of John Wesley, Phineas Bresee and Nina Gunter as examples of those who have been able to lead adaptively in ways that were contextually and missionally faithful. These examples serve to challenge the reader to develop her/his own adaptive leadership within their particular and unique context.

Cultural Exegesis: Contextual Intelligence

To develop adaptive leadership abilities within that particular and unique context demands that the leader understand the context in which they exist. Throughout history, the people of God have been called upon to find ways to faithfully engage in the mission of God while still maintaining cultural relevance. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than as the Israelite army was being established under David’s leadership. In 1 Chronicles 12:32, we read of

the tribe of Issachar, who “understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” As the local church is continually called to faithfully engage in the mission of God within the culture in which it has been strategically placed, it is imperative that leaders “understand their times and know what to do.” This Issacharian ability is what Michael Adam Beck and Leonard Sweet call, “CQ: contextual intelligence.”¹⁸

This term, originally popularized by the Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg in 1985 is defined as “the ability to accurately diagnose a context and make the correct decisions regarding what to do.”¹⁹ Beck further describes CQ as he writes, “Matthew Kutz, an award-winning author, professor, Fulbright scholar, and leading researcher in the area of contextual intelligence, first described CQ as ‘accurately reading between the lines’ (the threads that intertwine to form a context) and ‘making correct decisions regarding what to do’.”²⁰

This, according to Beck, is “Issachar’s secret.”²¹ It is also the pressing need of leadership in an ecclesiological crisis as described above that has only been exacerbated by the reality of the recent COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. As the world, and the church, live into what Leonard Sweet called the “pandemic or pandemonium context,”²² it is critical that the church discover and develop leaders who have discovered “Issachar’s secret, a distinct kind of intelligence (that allowed leaders) in a time of great transition and change (to) accurately diagnose the context (‘read the signs’) and effectively apply their knowledge (‘know what to do’).”²³

¹⁸ Michael Adam Beck, *Contextual Intelligence: Unlocking the Secret to Mission on the Front Lines* (S.I.: Higherlife Development SE, 2021), 6.

¹⁹ Beck, *Contextual Intelligence*, 15.

²⁰ Beck, *Contextual Intelligence*, 16.

²¹ Beck, *Contextual Intelligence*, 16.

²² Michael Adam Beck and Leonard Sweet, “Reading the Signs of the Times,” accessed October 28, 2020, <https://freshexpressionsus.us>.

²³ Beck, *Contextual Intelligence*, 16.

As part of that “knowing what to do,” the leader is called upon to honestly question the leadership paradigm out of which she/he may be operating as it relates to the missional faithfulness of the local congregation. From that honest and authentic examination, then, the leader’s responsibility is to adapt a leadership paradigm that will most effectively equip and empower the local church to faithfully engage in the mission of God. A faithful missional leader’s knowledge of “what to do” is founded upon her/his ability to learn and understand the greater cultural context in which they exist and minister (“understand their times”). In this case, that greater cultural context and time is the contemporary North American world and church.

What has history taught us?

To understand cultural context properly and thoroughly, it is of utmost importance to understand historical context. While the focus of this dissertation is on the necessity of an adaptive paradigm of leadership within the North American church, a brief look at leadership paradigm within the historical church can provide some insight into why the church finds itself in the leadership crisis that it does, as well as providing insight into why an adaptive leadership paradigm is essential for the church to faithfully engage in God’s mission.

Craig VanGelder and Dwight J. Zscheile write,

“Many legacy forms of church organization are hierarchical, shaped by cultural contexts in which hierarchies predominated households and society. The biblical world was a hierarchical one, even though Christianity disrupted and undercut many forms of hierarchy in favor of more inclusive, egalitarian, gifts-based leadership. As the church took root in Roman society, it embraced the hierarchical patterns of Roman life, becoming more patriarchal and establishing an ordered ministry (bishop, presbyter, deacon) that reflected the Roman imperial career ladders. In European Christendom, hierarchies endured, and the church took its place at the center of society and even conferred legitimacy on political rulers.”²⁴

²⁴ Craig Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 303.

It is this reality that Phyllis Tickle addresses in her book, *The Great Emergence*. Tickle contends that about every five hundred years, the church goes through a period of reinvention. Typically, this period of reinvention is preceded by an atmosphere of discontent and a decline in the church's influence on the world in which it exists,²⁵ not completely unlike the crisis in which the North American church finds itself today. Tickle writes,

“The Right Reverend Mark Dyer, an Anglican bishop known for his wit as well as his wisdom, famously observes from time to time that the only way to understand what is currently happening to us as twenty-first century Christians in North America is first to understand that about every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale. And, he goes on to say, we are living in and through one of those five-hundred-year sales.”²⁶

This cycle can be traced back to the beginning days of the Christian church. Throughout the two-thousand years of the church's existence, certain realities have remained constant within the context of these periods of reinvention. Bishop Dyer notes that “about every five hundred years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at that time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur.”²⁷ Tickle continues,

“When that mighty upheaval happens, history shows us, there are always at least three consistent results or corollary events. First, a new, more vital form of Christianity does indeed emerge. Second, the organized expression of Christianity which up until then had been the dominant one is reconstituted into a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self...The third result is of equal, if not greater, significance, though. That is every time the incrustations of an overly established Christianity have been broken open, the faith has spread – and been spread dramatically into new geographic and demographic

²⁵ Phyllis Tickle, *Great Emergence, The: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781441241726>, Loc. 20ff.

²⁶ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, Loc. 22.

²⁷ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, Loc. 23.

areas, thereby increasing exponentially the range and depth of Christianity's reach as a result of its time of unease and distress.”²⁸

One of the characteristics throughout these periods of reinvention that has not been as intentionally addressed has been the overarching leadership paradigm present within the church in general, and therefore, within the local congregation. From the time of Emperor Constantine's reign, when Christianity became the official religion of the empire, the church adopted a paradigm of leadership that was very power-centric, as seen within the dynamic of papal authority. This power-centric model of leadership, known as technical leadership, arose as church leaders were endowed, not only with spiritual authority but also with political power. Centuries later, as the Protestant Reformation took place, even amid the radical theological and doctrinal changes, the leadership paradigm and model within the Protestant movement mirrored, to an extent, that which was present in Roman Catholicism. This paradigm was one in which the clergy were endowed with authority and power and quite often led the church with little to no regard of the laity. Even this early, a foundational crisis such as the one mentioned above began to be seen as the Roman kingdom (self-transcendent) mindset was more evident in the prevailing leadership paradigm within the church, than was the transcendent Kingdom and reign of God mindset.

There have been brief glimpses of transformation throughout these periods of reinvention. One such glimpse took place during the time of The Great Reformation. The presence of multiple popes began to address a key question of missionally faithful leadership. That question was “the one question that is *always* present in re-formation: Where now is the authority?”²⁹ Martin Luther answered that question with two simple words, *sola scriptura*. In

²⁸ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, Loc. 23.

²⁹ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, Loc. 116.

addition, Luther and the reformers' embraced the concept of the priesthood of all believers. The benefit, from a leadership paradigm standpoint, of the marriage of these two foundational beliefs of the Protestant Reformation was that this "required absolute and universal literacy if it were going to work. The Protestant imperative toward every believer's being able to read Holy Writ for him or herself excited the drive toward literacy..."³⁰ One of the side benefits of this literacy was the inclusion of other believers within the leadership circles of the church. Not only were the Scriptures eventually placed in the hands of the laity, so were elements of leadership, an adaptive model that reflected a much more transcendent Kingdom and reign of God mindset.

Despite these brief glimpses of change in the leadership paradigm, the underlying paradigm from which the church operates has often reflected a human, self-centered and self-transcendent kingdom mindset more than a Kingdom and reign of God mindset. In fact, Sherwood Lingenfelter makes this assertion, "The tragedy is that religious leaders...are not essentially better or different from political leaders. Driven by the same insecurities, hungers, and fears, they, too, rely on their power, listen to their close and powerful friends for counsel, and ignore the words of Scripture and the prophets who challenge them."³¹

Today, the North American church finds itself in this period of transition and reinvention; and, as it faces this period of exponential cultural change and crisis, it is imperative that the church honestly examine its leadership models and paradigms. If the church is going to truly be faithful to its scriptural calling and mission, it must learn to recognize the cultural shifts that are taking place (understand the times) and find ways to adapt (know what to do), not only its

³⁰ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, Loc. 118.

³¹ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross: Forging Ministry from the Crucible of Crisis* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018) Kindle edition, Loc. 1066.

programming, but more importantly its leadership paradigm accordingly. If that transformation is going to effectively occur, it will be within the context of the local congregation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the leadership crisis in the church has been described. While there are many contributing factors, that crisis has largely resulted from the overall loss of transcendence and loss of a Scriptural understanding of mission. Due to this crisis, the church must embrace the more relational and organic adaptive paradigm of leadership to engage in God's mission most faithfully. Now that the need for embracing an adaptive paradigm of leadership has been established, this study will focus on the current literature that addresses pertinent topics and issues within the realm of missional faithfulness and leadership paradigm.

CHAPTER 2

SOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONVERSATION

Introduction

To effectively address the importance of leadership paradigm and its impact on the church's missional faithfulness, it is imperative to examine the sources that have contributed to this critical conversation up to this point. This chapter will examine some of those sources, focusing primarily on the following contributing subjects: The Mission of God, The Missional Church, The Technical Leadership Paradigm and The Adaptive Leadership Paradigm.

The Mission of God

For decades, local churches have engaged in the crucial work of designing and crafting statements that articulate what they believe to be their God-given mission. This is good and necessary work; however, this process can produce an unintended, unwanted, and critical problem for the local church. One problem is the belief that it is the church's responsibility to not only author an articulate and catchy mission statement, but to actually become the author of mission itself. Scripture makes it clear that this responsibility does not lie in the hands of the local congregation, nor is it the responsibility of the greater church. While it is necessary for a local congregation to articulate a contextually relevant reason for being, it is not necessary for the church at any level to assume the responsibility of authoring mission. That responsibility lies in the hands of God alone.

Thomas Oord, in referring to Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, writes, "What would it mean to believe Jesus' loving pursuit of the lost – which seems to include you, me, everyone and everything – tells us something essential about who God is? This question may seem boring. But upon closer examination...it is revolutionary! In fact, the missional theology emerging from

believing God lovingly pursues creation radically alters the status quo. The God who seeks and saves is a God on a mission!”³²

Ryan Pugh clarifies this thinking even further as he writes,

“The justice of God...seeks actively to restore the world to the way God created it to be...we need to understand, (therefore), that God’s mission is the restoration of all creation to its beautiful, intended wholeness. While God’s good creation is broken and wounded, God continues to work through God’s people, toward the end of all creation being made new.”³³

In the words of Christopher J. H. Wright,

“The Bible does not begin at Genesis 3 (or end at Revelation 20). You might think so when you listen to some presentations of the Bible’s message and mission. That is to say, the Bible is not just about the solution to our same problem and how to survive the day of judgment. It begins with creation and ends with new creation...God’s mission is the final destruction of all that is evil from this whole creation. Our mission therefore has to be as comprehensive in scope as the gospel the whole Bible gives us.”³⁴

This understanding of mission, based on the whole of Scripture, is a liberating reality in the life of the church as the church leader begins to recognize that creation of mission is not their responsibility. Instead, the church is invited to engage in an eternal mission created and being ultimately carried out by God through His people. Pugh goes on to write,

“Perhaps the most significant lesson to grasp about this mission is that it is just that: God’s mission. We are not called to bring our mission into our local context. We are called to enter into partnership with God in what God is already doing in the lives of people in our communities. As Brad Brisco indicates, ‘We often wrongly assume that the primary activity of God is in the church, rather than recognizing that God’s primary activity is in the world, and the church is God’s instrument sent into the world to participate in His redemptive mission.’ God’s mission is ours, and all throughout Scripture, God’s people are sent into the world in order to join God in this mission.”³⁵

³² Jay Richard Akkerman and Mark Maddix, *Missional Discipleship: Partners in God’s Redemptive Mission*. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2014), <http://qut.ebiblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=3379704>, Loc. 110.

³³ Akkerman, *Missional Discipleship*, Loc. 62.

³⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 40-41.

³⁵ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 63.

In the words of Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”³⁶

As will be stated again later, in chapter 3 of this work, Craig VanGelder and Dwight J. Zscheile make this very succinct, yet powerful statement: “God’s mission has a church.”³⁷ That mission since the fall of humanity, has been the redemption and restoration of all of creation, and in particular, humanity to its original created state.

“The Bible’s story is that the God who created the universe, only to see it ravaged by evil and sin, has committed Himself to the total redemption and restoration of the whole creation, has accomplished it in advance through the cross and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and will bring it to glorious completion in a new creation when Christ returns.”³⁸

The mission of God, as it pertains to humanity, is to redeem humans to their created state and purpose. As a result, humanity is then restored to the relationship of intimacy in which the Trinitarian relational image of God can be expressed. As this relates to the mission of God in which the church is called to engage, VanGelder and Zscheile contend that, “To say that God is triune is to assert a provocative thing: ultimate reality consists of communion, the shared, interdependent life of a community of persons united in love.”³⁹

Christopher Wright reminds us that the purity of this created state and relational intimacy is demonstrated throughout the Old Testament as blessing. The subject of God’s blessing made manifest through the Abrahamic covenant will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 64.

³⁷ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 36.

³⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 48.

³⁹ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 268.

Recognizing this, the mission of God is to invite humanity to be restored to that state of blessing. As individuals are restored, they are invited within the context of God's collective people to engage in His eternal mission of becoming a vessel through which that blessing is made manifest to the created world around them. The authors of *Participating in God's Mission* write, "The call of Abraham and Sarah sets a pattern for God's mission through the Bible: that is, God works through the particular for the sake of the universal, choosing a few for the sake of the many."⁴⁰

The church, as the collective of those who have been restored to this blessed, created state, is then invited to engage in God's mission as vessel through which God's blessing of redemption and restoration will be made known throughout the world and throughout generations. Wright reminds us,

"If we inherit Abraham's blessing, we inherit his mission also. What then is the mission of God's people? It is to be the community who live by the ethical standards of the ways of God, so that God can fulfill his promise to Abraham and bring about the blessing of the nations...what constitutes the mission of God's people (is) to be those who, having received the blessing of Abraham, continue the task of reaching those who have not yet been touched by it."⁴¹

It is for this purpose of blessing, restoring, and redeeming humanity that "God's mission has a (missional) church."⁴²

The Missional Church

⁴⁰ Van Gelder, *Participating in God's Mission*, 270.

⁴¹ Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 83-88.

⁴² Van Gelder, *Participating in God's Mission*, 36.

J. R. Woodward and Dan White painfully point out, “We are in a predicament,”⁴³ going on to assert, in the words of David Bosch, that “the church is always in a state of crisis and... its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it.”⁴⁴ This predicament, or crisis, in which the Western world/USAmerican church finds itself can be attributed largely to a loss of Scriptural and missional identity stemming from an abandonment of engagement in God’s eternal mission.

What, then, is an authentically missional church? That question will be answered in much greater detail in chapter 3, however, for purposes of this brief examination, perhaps Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, in their call for the church to return to a proper understanding of and engagement in God’s mission put it best.

“This type of new (missional church) is about a returning. Returning to something ancient, something tried, something true and trustworthy. Something that has rerouted the legacies of families, nations, kings, and peasants. Something that has caused hundreds of thousands to give up security, reputation, and their lives. What we are returning to has always been and must still be revolutionary. What we need to dig up, recover, and find again is the life of the Kingdom and Jesus’ community... the church. As we do, we will find that it’s not American... it’s ‘other world’; it’s not evangelicalism, it’s much more holistic and integrated into real life. It’s not anti-church; it’s pro-church. It’s about the type of church that Jesus would go to, the type He died to give flight to. It’s not about success, size of buildings, budgets, or ‘salvations.’ It is about being faithful to live Christ’s alternative ways in the world again.”⁴⁵

Simply put, the missional church is the church that is willing to return to its God-given purpose and identity as the living participatory expression of the inbreaking Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven.”⁴⁶

⁴³ J. R. Woodward, Dan White, and Alan Hirsch, *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016), 26.

⁴⁴ Woodward, White and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 26.

⁴⁵ Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community: The Posture and Practices of Ancient Church Now*, 1st ed (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 10.

⁴⁶ Matthew 6:10 (*New Living Translation*).

According to Darrell Guder, the missional church is,

“Located always in particular places (and) inevitably sits between the gospel and a specific cultural context. Therefore, the church’s leadership seeks to express the gospel in ways that speak to the realities of their sociocultural setting. Missional leaders must understand their context and interpret that context to the church so that a faithful and relevant witness emerges. As God’s wise stewards, they will love that part of creation in which they have been placed, but also aid God’s sent people in calling their part of creation into the relational fullness that God originally embedded throughout creation and that the gospel seeks to restore.”⁴⁷

The missional church can be described in various ways and has a plethora of distinguishing characteristics. However, underlying them all is an identity, founded in the person of Christ, in which the missional church is apostolic and incarnational.

“The missional (apostolic) part was Jesus leaving His Father’s side in the heavens and coming to us in the form of a human. The incarnational part was how He took on flesh and lived with us. Said another way, *missional* sentness (apostolic) is focused on leaving and everything related to going, but *incarnational* represents how we go and what we do as we go.”⁴⁸

The church that engages in God’s mission as defined in the previous section, is apostolic in that it is sent out into its unique context to embody the blessing of God’s redemption and restoration.

Alan Hirsch tells us,

“In Jewish spirituality, many consider the most important task in life is to find what is broken in the world and to repair or heal it. This is the meaning of the phrase *tikkun olam*—to repair the world/universe. The faithful Jew assists God in the restoration and healing of the world through the *mitzvah*, the various acts of goodness and kindness that are done in accordance with the *Torah*, with God’s instruction. Faithful disciples therefore bear a responsibility not only for their own moral, spiritual, and material welfare, but also for the welfare of society at large, for the establishment of godly qualities throughout the world—they are healers of a broken world and restorers of a lost glory.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 189.

⁴⁸ Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 38.

⁴⁹ Alan Hirsch et al., *Reformation: Seeing God, People, and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames*, (100 Movements Publishing), 2019, Loc. 3304.

As the organism through which God brings redemption and restoration, the church must recapture its apostolic nature, a nature in which it becomes an active participant in carrying out God's mission. "If the church is truly apostolic, it must see itself as participating in God's victory over evil."⁵⁰

This apostolic nature demands that the missional church "recover a way of being the church of God in the way of Christ and in the power of the Spirit and allowing God to bring fruit in whatever way He sees fit. Our focus is being faithful and joining (being sent out on) God's mission, trusting him for fruitfulness."⁵¹ This recovery will force the church to embrace new ways of thinking, new ways of viewing the world, and ultimately a completely new and different understanding of the church. In an ecclesiastical culture in which the primary metrics used to measure a local congregation's faithfulness are attendance, finances, properties and programs, this recovery of an apostolic missional identity will be difficult, but incredibly necessary. The missional church must return to an understanding that, "the church is not a building, a weekly gathering or program, but the people God has called out of the world and sent back into the world to renew and redeem the world."⁵²

For the church to truly recover its missional identity, it must embrace its apostolic commissioning to be a participatory expression of the inbreaking Kingdom of God. "As a people sent to pray 'Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,' the church is to be an imperfect perfecting social incarnation of God's inbreaking reign of love and reconciliation, joy and freedom, peace and justice."⁵³ If the church is to authentically live into its

⁵⁰ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 113.

⁵¹ Woodward, White and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 33.

⁵² Woodward, White and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 144.

⁵³ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 158.

missional identity, it must embrace the fact that it is being sent out into its unique settings as both an expression of the eternal Kingdom of God, and an embodiment of the presence of Christ Himself. As Halter and Smay put it, “Missional has an inseparable twin. It’s called incarnational.”⁵⁴

Alan Hirsch reminds us that while we say that “Jesus is the (sole) incarnation of God, we all must in a real sense become the incarnations of Jesus.”⁵⁵ The church, sent out to engage in God’s mission, is literally to become the very presence of Christ within the context and culture in which it has been strategically placed by God. As we are reminded in John’s Gospel, Jesus, the One in whom we find our missional identity, “became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”⁵⁶ As the Body of Christ, the missional church is called to do the same.

“Living incarnation is moving from going to a space (church building) once or twice a week to inhabiting a place...Followers of Christ are called to live out an alternative story in the local neighborhood. There’s a counter story we are to play out under the nose of those who exploit and subject. This counter story looks for ways to invigorate those dimensions with the presence of Jesus”⁵⁷

It simply is not enough for the church to proclaim the message of the blessing of God’s restoration and redemption. Rather, the missionally faithful church, as it is sent out, becomes the embodiment of the message that it proclaims. Alan Hirsch, quoting Linda Fuller, writes, “the essence of Christianity (is) incarnation; a spoken word without it being acted upon (is) absolutely meaningless...We are (called to) a new demonstration of *the way* of Jesus. It is not just speaking

⁵⁴

Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 38.

⁵⁵

Hirsch et al., *Reformation*, Loc. 3103.

⁵⁶

John 1:14 (*The Message*).

⁵⁷

Woodward, White, and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 197, 214.

prophetically; it involves living prophetically, living heroically. Not just studying theology but *being* theology.”⁵⁸

The engagement in the mission of God challenges the church to set aside the inwardly focused understanding of mission and embrace one in which the church is sent out to live among and love the community and neighborhood into which it has been strategically sent. As the church recovers this missional understanding and mindset, founded in the person of Jesus Christ, it is commanded to “follow in this (incarnational) way of love, finding ways to romance its culture, (and) to lovingly engage with the hearts of people who have no real idea how wide and deep an experience of God can be.”⁵⁹ To this end, the church must find ways to develop leaders who are willing to engage in God’s mission within an adaptive context.

The Technical Leadership Paradigm

Technical leadership is the paradigm in which much of the secular and religious world has operated for years. This framework is largely a top-down, hierarchical paradigm of leadership in which decision-making is relegated to the individual or individuals at the top with little or no regard for those who are responsible for carrying out those decisions. Often, this paradigm lends itself to an operational understanding that the leader(s) at the top of the hierarchy are the “experts” or the only ones qualified and equipped to assess and make decisions for the organization. The experts are ones that have learned the proven methods and solutions and know how and when to incorporate those proven methods in the given culture and challenge in which they find themselves.

⁵⁸ Hirsch et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 3072-3082.

⁵⁹ Hirsch et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 3728.

While there may be times in which this leadership paradigm is, or has been effective, this power-centric paradigm of leadership creates a divide within the organization. Patty Mulder writes, “It’s often thought that leaders are dominant with an organization and want to use their strong personalities to impose their will. This hierarchical top-down leadership style hasn’t worked for a long time. It hinders the flow of information in companies, undermining cooperation and unity between teams and departments.”⁶⁰ In this mode of operation, the organization, whether it be a corporation, a denomination, or a local congregation, is almost solely dependent upon the upper level of leadership being able to recognize and implement what seem to be obvious solutions.⁶¹ Mulder continues, “In most cases, (leadership and decision-making) is done in a hierarchical way with the top layer of management being responsible for finding the right solutions.”⁶²

The leader, in this framework, leads out of the power instilled by the organizational hierarchy and/or title and position which he/she holds. This leadership model functions out of what sociologists have described as, “ascribed authority...the kind that comes from a title or an inheritance.”⁶³ The leader in the technical framework typically leads from more of a dictatorial position, in which his/her word and decision is final and is often pronounced and carried out with little to no input from others. This is a paradigm of leadership founded upon the belief that the top rung of the hierarchical ladder is where the expert(s) reside and from which all solutions and innovations must come.

⁶⁰ Patty Mulder, “Adaptive Leadership,” *Toolshero.Com*, August 27, 2019, <https://www.toolshero.com/leadership/adaptive-leadership/>.

⁶¹ Mulder, “Adaptive Leadership.”

⁶² Mulder, “Adaptive Leadership.”

⁶³ Andy Crouch, *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk & True Flourishing*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016), 37.

Within the church, this can become a dangerous and divisive way of leading; a way that is ultimately, not reflective of Christ. Sherwood Lingenfelter writes, “There is nothing about a position, title, or role that makes one a leader.”⁶⁴ He further states, “the challenge of leadership is much more complex than position, structure, policy, and implementation. It is fundamentally about how and why leaders lead, and how they exercise the authority and power inherent in their position.”⁶⁵ The danger, particularly within the context of the local church, is that this authority and power, exercised within a technical paradigm, can unfortunately end up taking the leader and, therefore, the congregation off course in such a way that they are no longer faithful to the mission of God. Lingenfelter continues,

“Self-will is the Achilles’ heel of authority, disconnecting us from Christ, and setting us on a pathway of coercion and control to get what we believe is best for ourselves and those who follow us. In...leadership crises, men and women of God, called to lead God’s people, took the authority that God’s people gave them and, for ‘good purpose,’ used its power for something they valued more than the people they served.”⁶⁶

As destructive and costly as this may be, the more dangerous challenge that a technical paradigm presents is the question that this paradigm poses. The technical paradigm is primarily focused on asking these two questions, “What *has*...?” and “What do we need to *do*?” A technical leader is primarily looking for proven methods to attack and conquer all challenges faced within the organization, resulting in a very programmatic (plug-and-play) reactionary paradigm of leadership. Mulder writes, “Every organization is confronted with persistent, recurring problems. They often fall back on obvious solutions.”⁶⁷ Technical leadership relies

⁶⁴ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 806.

⁶⁵ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 914.

⁶⁶ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 961.

⁶⁷ Mulder, “Adaptive Leadership.”

upon past solutions and programs to solve new and contemporary, often unseen, and never-before-experienced problems and crises.

Leadership is often relegated to one's ability to identify the current challenge and implement an already existing program to address, and ultimately resolve, that challenge. Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, premier voices in the study of leadership paradigms, point out,

“While technical problems may be very complex and critically important (like replacing a faulty heart valve during cardiac surgery), they have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things.”⁶⁸

Heifetz and Linsky go on to describe this challenge: “What makes a problem technical is not that it is trivial; but simply that its solution already lies within the organization's repertoire.”⁶⁹ In an article in the special Summer 2020 edition of *The Harvard Business Review*, Heifetz and Linsky further expanded their contribution: “(Technical leaders) default to what they know how to do in order to reduce frustration and quell their own and others' fears. Their primary mode will be drawing on familiar expertise to help their organizations.”⁷⁰

In the rapidly changing world and climate in which the church finds itself today, the temptation within this technical paradigm to simply “hunker down,”⁷¹ will cause many leaders to rely on past methodologies and solutions crafted to address problems and questions no longer faced by the organization. The danger, particularly for the church, lies in the reality that this

⁶⁸ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press, 2009), Loc. 3973.

⁶⁹

Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), Loc. 289-290.

⁷⁰ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis,” *Harvard Business Review*, Special Issue (Summer 2020), 12.

⁷¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis,” 12.

dependence on past and proven methods can stifle, and potentially choke the very life out of the organization as it is unable to move into a new, life-giving reality.

Robert Schnase references Gordon McKenzie's book entitled *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*. Schnase states that the hairball is McKenzie's description of what we understand to be a technical paradigm. He writes,

“The *hairball* is (the) term for the procedures and policies that accumulate in an organization. Rules, standards, guidelines, and accepted models become established and set in stone. The ‘hairs’ of the hairball begin as practices that initially solve a problem. Because the idea works in one place, it becomes prescribed in all places. Rules accumulate far beyond their usefulness. Every new policy adds another hair to the hairball. The hairball grows enormous, until it has its own heavy mass and gravity that pulls everything into the tangled web of established policies and procedures. The hairball makes change nearly impossible, stifles innovation, slows adaptive response, and chokes the spirit.”⁷²

Further reflection on this metaphor and Schnase's statement illustrates that not only does this “hairball” present the danger of choking the spirit of the organization, it presents the greater danger of choking the work of the Spirit that empowers not the organization, but the organism that is created and commissioned to be the Body of Christ. Consequently, if the Spirit, whose life-giving breath was breathed into the first humans at creation and into the church at Pentecost, is choked out, the church will eventually die of suffocation. Obviously, an alternative and life-giving paradigm of leadership must be developed and embraced if the church is to thrive in these challenging, yet exciting days.

Leading technically can be necessary and effective at times. It can provide quick and decisive action and authoritative implementation of strategies to challenging situations faced by the organization. However, the challenges of operating solely within a technical framework are great, and often dangerous to the organization's ability to be missionally faithful. One of the

⁷² Robert C. Schnase, *Seven Levers: Missional Strategies for Conferences* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 15-16.

inherent dangers in this mode of leadership operation is that it is primarily focused on short-term goals and rewards.⁷³ Sherwood Lingenfelter agrees with Heifetz and Linsky that, “it is the habit of most leaders to seek quick and ready solutions for problems.”⁷⁴ He goes on to state that “we all have a truncated view of leadership. Relying on authority alone, and technical solutions to resolve issues that require learning, and adaptive change.”⁷⁵ In the context of the church, this often translates into implementation of the latest and greatest programs and systems that are seen as quick fixes to increase attendance and giving. One of the greatest problems with this is, as will be addressed in later chapters, the lack of cultural and community exegesis. Often, while these programs and systems may have been effective in a particular cultural, geographical, and congregational setting, it is not easily translated or replicated in other settings. Technical leadership, too often, skips the hard and necessary work of understanding a particular culture, and instead settles for a short-term programmatic solution.

Another challenge and inherent danger within a technical paradigm of leadership is that without intentional efforts to build in systems of accountability, this can lend itself to an iron-fisted, dictatorial style of leadership. Without others involved in the process of decision-making and leadership training within the organization, the leader can easily succumb to the mindset that the success and failure of the organization rises and falls solely on his/her shoulders. This can lead to the organization becoming an extension of the leader himself/herself. This danger can have disastrous effects within the realm of church leadership. Churches which embrace technical leadership structures can easily become celebrity-focused, and dependent upon the personality

⁷³ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 276.

⁷⁴ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 396.

⁷⁵ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 410.

and ego of the leader himself/herself. Instead, for the church to be faithful to its scriptural calling and mission, it is to reflect Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

Perhaps the greatest danger of a technical framework of leadership as it relates to the Body of Christ is the potentially negative impact it can have on those serving under the one in leadership. This impact is what Andy Crouch calls, “exploitation.”⁷⁶ In writing about this painful reality, Crouch refers to the example of the North Korean dictator, Kim Jong Un. Crouch writes, “he has ruthlessly eliminated anyone who might pose a threat to his power. Causing even the most minor disturbance to the leader’s authority...is a death warrant...”⁷⁷

This exploitation, within the ecclesiastical world, is not limited to the laity. In a rapidly changing world, the desire for the quick fix, which is a foundational reality within the technical leadership paradigm, has infiltrated the church perhaps more than any other institution. Edwin H. Friedman writes,

Over the last ten to fifteen years, I have witnessed a tremendous increase in the collective reactivity of religious congregations to their ministers, irrespective of gender or belief. As America’s emotional regression has deepened, the clergy of every denomination have been increasingly thrust into a panicky national game of musical chairs, as each minister leaves one disappointed congregation only to be eagerly snatched up by another in the false hope that this new one will be better than the last. The former minister, in the meantime, has now found a new opportunity to be a displacement focus for a congregation that had become disaffected with its previous minister, who is presently about to take the place of the first, the anxiety still unabated and the focused issues still unresolved.⁷⁸

The pastor himself/herself becomes a victim of the organizational exploitation in their search for the quick fix.

⁷⁶ Crouch, *Strong and Weak*, 92-109.
⁷⁷

Crouch, *Strong and Weak*, 93.

⁷⁸ Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, 10th anniversary revised edition. (New York: Church Publishing, 2017), 88.

In contrast, a leadership paradigm modeled after the person of Christ, and founded upon a Kingdom and mission of God mindset, leads from a position of humility and servanthood. If the church is to truly be the incarnational presence of Christ and a missional expression of the Kingdom and reign of God on earth, then a leadership paradigm based on titles and positions is antithetical to the church's message. The incarnational message is one of selfless service, not positional power. To this alternative paradigm, we now turn our attention.

The Adaptive Leadership Paradigm

Adaptive leadership, in contrast to the technical paradigm is a much more organic paradigm of leadership. Rather than operating within a hierarchical and programmatic mindset, adaptive leadership is group- or team-oriented. There is no superhero in the adaptive paradigm of leadership. The primary task of the adaptive leader is to empower and include those who are a part of the organization and allow them to use their strengths, gifts, and abilities in making the decisions and addressing the challenges facing the organization. Mulder suggests, "An adaptive challenge allows problems to be identified more accurately and involves the entire organization in the search for possible solutions."⁷⁹ She continues, "They cultivate a diversity of viewpoints in order to generate a large number of options. They lead with empathy, reward their employees' performance with autonomy and independence and find winning solutions for all stakeholders."⁸⁰

Heifetz and Linsky address the way in which this ability to work within a team concept can help to not only address present problems, but also make necessary changes within the organization. "Adaptive leadership is an iterative activity, an ongoing engagement between (the

⁷⁹ Mulder, "Adaptive Leadership."

⁸⁰ Mulder, "Adaptive Leadership."

leader) and groups of people...so much of adaptive leadership work is iterative: you try something, see how it goes, learn from what happened, and then try something else.”⁸¹ This process, they contend, allows the organization to address challenges and find working solutions that allow the organization to move forward in a way that is faithfully congruent with their mission. “Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive...Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive.”⁸²

Technical leadership is primarily focused on the questions, “What *has*?” and “What do we need to *do*?” In contrast, Adaptive Leadership is primarily focused on the questions, “What *if*...?” and “*Who* do we need to *become*?” As the leader and the individuals within the organization continue to work together to “tackle tough challenges and thrive,”⁸³ creativity and experimentation are encouraged. This atmosphere allows the organization to continually be forward focused as together they seek to move into the possibilities of the future. Mulder writes, “Employees are encouraged to go beyond their traditional way of thinking and find creative solutions by thinking in possibilities rather than in limitations.”⁸⁴ While the adaptive leadership paradigm does seek to make decisions and solve problems for the ultimate good of the organization, the primary goal is to change the culture of the organization to respond to the greater societal culture more effectively in a way that will allow the organization to not just survive, but thrive, and ultimately, to be faithful to its mission.

Adaptive leadership is focused on the process of learning from the past, engaging the present cultural context, and adapting strategies and methodologies to guide the organization

⁸¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3810-3838.

⁸²

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3889, 3895.

⁸³

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3810.

⁸⁴ Mulder, “Adaptive Leadership.”

effectively and faithfully into the hope of the future. This is hard and often dangerous work.

Heifetz and Linsky write,

To lead is to live dangerously because when leadership counts, when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear – their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking – with nothing more to offer than a possibility...People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss...You place yourself on the line when you tell people what they need to hear rather than what they want to hear. Although you may see with clarity and passion a promising future of progress and gain, people will see with equal passion the losses you are asking them to sustain...The hope of leadership lies in the capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb, prodding them to take up the message rather than ignore it or kill the messenger...Leadership becomes dangerous, then, when it must confront people with loss.⁸⁵

Adaptive leadership is dangerous, in that it brings resistance and change in behavior, in both the leader and those being led as it challenges the organization to wrestle with the critical questions mentioned above: “What *if*?” and “*Who* do we need to *become*?” Again, Heifetz and Linsky speak to this reality.

“While technical problems may be very complex and critically important..., they have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization’s current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things. Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding certain entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating the new capacity to thrive anew.”⁸⁶

While dangerous, though, this paradigm of leadership can be extremely rewarding and beneficial to the leader, to those being led, and to the overall missional faithfulness of the organization. An argument could be made that this paradigm is what makes it possible for the leader to lead out of their truly authentic selves, and, therefore, to lead more faithfully.

⁸⁵ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 79-200.

⁸⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3973.

Edwin H. Friedman makes the argument that what counts in leadership in this rapidly changing world and culture, “is the leader’s presence and being, not technique and know-how.”⁸⁷ He continues, “A leader’s major effect on his or her followers has to do with the way his or her presence (emotional being/self) affects the emotional processes in the relationship system. Consequently, a leader’s major job is to understand his or her (authentic and emotional) self.”⁸⁸ It is this self-understanding that allows the adaptive leader to address challenges and systemic issues present within the organization most faithfully. As previously noted, Heifetz and Linsky contend that what people resist is loss; and due to this reality, the leader must lead in such a way that those experiencing the loss are able to do so at a rate that they can absorb.⁸⁹

This can be a challenging and frightening transition for the leader, as well as the followers. The quest for a quick-fix solution, coupled with the demand for a technical remedy largely negates the leader’s emotional presence as they seek to faithfully lead an organization. Friedman contends that this emotional presence is crucial if the leader and the organization are to continue to exist and thrive. He writes, “In every major area of American civilization today, leaders and mentors are adapting to this demand for quick fixes, technical solutions for problems that actually have to do with emotional processes.”⁹⁰ A leader’s inability or unwillingness to recognize and address the emotional processes within an organization can have a devastating impact on that organization’s missional faithfulness. Friedman continues,

“Whether we are considering the self-defense of a nation, the preservation of a family’s integrity, or the cohesiveness of an organization, the key to survival is the ability of the ‘host’ to recognize and limit the invasiveness of its viral or malignant components. If lack of self-regulation (or inability to understand and lead from the authentic and emotional

⁸⁷ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *A Failure of Nerve*, 18.

⁸⁸ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *A Failure of Nerve*, 206.

⁸⁹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 79-200.

⁹⁰ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *A Failure of Nerve*, 95.

self) is the essential characteristic of organisms that are destructive, it is the presence of self-regulatory capacity that is critical to the health, survival, and evolution of an organism or an organization. That is precisely the function of a leader within any institution: to provide that regulation through his or her (patient) non-anxious, self-defined presence.”⁹¹

Adaptive leadership flows out of the leader’s authentic and emotional self and invites input and engagement of those being led while engaging as a patient, non-anxious presence, allowing those experiencing loss the ability to absorb that loss in an emotionally healthy way, and at a “rate that they can absorb.”⁹² This leadership skill liberates the organization as they carry out their mission effectively and faithfully. Nowhere is this more necessary today than in the North American church.

Andy Crouch argues that leadership within any organization, but particularly within the context of the church, flows out of not positional power (technical leadership) but out of, what he calls “true authority.”⁹³ He defines true authority as “the capacity for meaningful action,”⁹⁴ going on to state that when Jesus came,

“He came with unparalleled authority – more capacity for meaningful action than any other person who has lived. His actions all took their place within the story of Israel, the greatest of all shared histories and they decisively changed the path of history and created a new and different shared future. And yet He, too, was born naked and dependent and therefore vulnerable as any human being; and though the Western artistic tradition has placed loincloths over the uncomfortable truth of the crucifixion, He died naked as well. He died exposed to the possibility of loss, not just of human life but of His very identity as the divine Son with whom the Father was well pleased. He was laid in the dust of death, the final and full expression of loss. And in all of this, He was not just Very Man but Very God.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *A Failure of Nerve*, 160.

⁹² Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 79-200.

⁹³ Crouch, *Strong and Weak*, 35.

⁹⁴ Crouch, *Strong and Weak*, 35.

⁹⁵ Crouch, *Strong and Weak*, 45-46.

The church's existence and mission, more so than any other institution or organization, is based on its capacity for meaningful action, as it is called to go into this rapidly changing world with the transformative and eternal truth of the gospel message. The church and its leaders are compelled by Scripture and the example of Christ, to risk vulnerability and to lead out of their authentic and emotional selves, as did Christ.

The implications of embracing this leadership paradigm within the context of the local church are striking and, in comparison to the suffocation of the hairball, life giving. Lingenfelter puts it powerfully as he writes,

"I will define 'Adaptive Leadership' as leadership that exercises one's authority in such a vulnerable way that the leader is able to inspire and mobilize God's people in situations of crisis to move beyond their personal values and habitual practices toward a greater vision and engagement for the mission of God in that changing context...To give the work to the people is the ultimate risk, an act of vulnerability, that many leaders are unwilling to take...to flourish as persons in leadership we must embrace both the authority given to us in Christ to serve, and the vulnerability of trusting His people and His Spirit to accomplish whatever God intends." ⁹⁶

What God intends is to continually breathe His life-giving Spirit into His people to carry out His redemptive and restorative mission.

John Chandler writes of the need for faithful adaptive leadership when he writes, "Technical leadership adjustments don't address massive adaptive challenges." ⁹⁷ The 21st Century North American church is desperately in need of good leaders who can navigate these massive cultural and adaptive changes in such a way that will allow the church to truly be missionally faithful. Eric Law defines a good leader as "someone who enables the group to do what it needs to accomplish." ⁹⁸ Tod Bolsinger adds to this when he writes, "For Christians the

⁹⁶ Lingenfelter, *Leadership in the Way of the Cross*, Loc. 1456, 1495, 1625.

⁹⁷ Chandler, John P., *Uptick: A Blueprint for Finding and Forming the Next Generation of Pioneering Kingdom Leaders*, (100 Movements Publishing, 2019), 40.

⁹⁸ Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multi-Cultural Community*, (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), Loc. 31.

motivating factor for leadership is mission. Christian leadership is fundamentally about gathering people together to become a community to grow in order to accomplish something that needs to be done in the name of Christ.”⁹⁹ This ability, though not impossible, is much more difficult in a tradition-oriented, top-down model and paradigm of leadership. The adaptive leadership paradigm offers an atmosphere that is much more conducive to creating the ability to “enable the group to do what it needs to accomplish,”¹⁰⁰ in “the name of Christ.”¹⁰¹ This adaptive leader is what the 21st Century North American church needs to faithfully engage in the Missio Dei within the continually changing world in which we find ourselves.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on four subjects critical to addressing the cotemporary North American church’s need for developing missionally faithful leaders within an adaptive context. Understanding the technical and adaptive leadership paradigms, as well as the Scriptural foundation of the Mission of God and the Missional Church provide the framework for the remainder of this dissertation. Building upon this underlying foundation, the theological framework will now be explored in the next chapter.

⁹⁹

Bolsinger, Tod, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change*, Kindle Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), Loc. 237.

¹⁰⁰

Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Loc. 31.

¹⁰¹

Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 237.

CHAPTER 3

CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE MISSIO DEI

Introduction

“Mission” has been the subject of ample research and writing over the past several years. Businesses and corporations have spent thousands of dollars to employ experts to help them determine their unique mission. Following their lead, churches have done the same thing: spending hundreds, if not thousands of dollars in research; involving experts from both the ecclesiastical and secular world. These efforts have been made and dollars spent for one purpose, to determine the impact and importance of a proper understanding of mission. The conclusions

have been overwhelming, while not at all surprising: a proper understanding of mission is crucial to a corporation's and/or church's "success."

Unfortunately, modern Western Christianity is facing a problem in its understanding of mission. In a recent round table on race relations, Drew Hart made the statement that the "American church today suffers from a belief in and worship of a domesticated Jesus. In other words, the church has placed its faith in and is worshipping a Jesus created in our own image, rather than one in whose image we have been created."¹⁰² Alan Hirsch affirms this reality when he writes, "The problem is that contemporary Christianity is the product of the long-term, religious domestication process that has been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years."¹⁰³ Part of that Western-world domestication has been the consumeristic, self-preserving mindset that has crept into the church's understanding of mission. Often, the local church's mission is focused on what that particular church *does* to accomplish a missional understanding that has the promotion and preservation of the institution in the forefront of its understanding. Consequently, as Woodward and White put it,

"We are in a predicament. While the church in some places in the world is thriving, the church as a whole in the west (especially the Euro-tribal denominations) is increasingly viewed as irrelevant to the pursuit of spirituality and life-transformation. We are swimming in resources, ministry real estate, and fast-growing churches, but little seems to resonate within the wider culture."¹⁰⁴

This is due to a lack of clarity regarding the true essence of the meaning of mission within the ecclesial context.

Hirsch, quoting the renowned missiologist, Lesslie Newbigin, writes, "Mission is not something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who is Himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its

¹⁰² Drew G. I. Hart, Roundtable on Race Relations, November 18, 2020.

¹⁰³ Hirsch et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 1383.

¹⁰⁴ Woodward, White, and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 26.

missionary journey.”¹⁰⁵ Darrell Guder echoes that sentiment in these words, “We have come to see that mission is not primarily an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation.”¹⁰⁶ He goes on to write, “Mission is not just a program of the church. It defines the church as God’s sent people. Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus, our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church.”¹⁰⁷

With that in mind, perhaps the church needs to stop asking questions such as, “How important is mission to our success?” and “What is *our* mission?” to asking, “Whose mission is this?” (which will be addressed later in this chapter). Ultimately, that question then helps us to ask and begin to answer the question that may be the most fundamentally important question that the church and church leaders can ask: “What does it mean to be faithful to the mission of the church?” To be faithful to its mission, the church must move from an understanding of mission that is focused on the institution/organization to an understanding of mission that is congruent with the missional nature of the triune God.

In an attempt to address the issue of missional faithfulness, this chapter will focus on three primary supporting and foundational questions. The first question will focus on the Initiator of mission, asking the question, “*God’s Mission or the Church’s Mission?*” To address that question, there will be an examination of mission as seen throughout the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. Secondly, we will explore the nature of mission, in the question, “*Private or Corporate Mission?*” in which the apostolic nature of the church’s engagement in mission is addressed. Finally, this examination will address the contextualization of mission, asking the

¹⁰⁵

Hirsch, et al., *Reformation*, Loc. 3814.

¹⁰⁶

Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 4.

¹⁰⁷

Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 6.

question, “*What Does Missional Faithfulness Look Like in the Local Context?*” In attempting to address that question, the focus will primarily be on “*Community Influence and Partnership*,” in which the concept of incarnational ministry will be explored.

The goal of this work will be to challenge the church to truly engage in carrying out its mission in a way that is faithful to Scripture, to the corporate nature of the church and to the unique context within which each local expression of the church is located. To that end, we now turn our focus to the Initiator of mission.

God’s Mission or the Church’s Mission?

To address the question of missional faithfulness, we need to come to an understanding as to whose mission it truly is. Much of the research and effort done surrounding the subject of mission within the ecclesial world has been built upon a subtle, unspoken consumeristic understanding that the church is the entity that defines the mission. Consequently, many of the solutions that have been proposed and implemented have focused primarily on the promotion and preservation of the institution. The solutions, and mission statements that have been adopted out of many of these studies have largely focused on “success, size of buildings, budgets and ‘salvations’,” rather than true faithfulness to the ultimate mission.¹⁰⁸ As Woodward and White put it, “We need to move beyond merely counting bodies, buildings, and dollars if we want to be movemental,” or missionally faithful.¹⁰⁹

To accomplish this, the church must be seen and understood, not organizationally, as an institution to be managed, but instead as an incarnational organism to be educated, embraced, and sent into the world as an expression of the inbreaking Kingdom of God. Wesley Granberg-

¹⁰⁸ Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Woodward, White, and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 165.

Michaelson writes, “My conviction, based on experience in the North American context, is that we must come to understand the church less as an organization and more as an organism, if we are to engage the emerging generation.”¹¹⁰ As this understanding is authentically embraced then, it will help the church to realize that the underlying mission to which it has been called to be faithful, is not, in reality, the church’s mission. Rather, it is God’s mission into which the church has been invited to engage. It is God’s mission for which the church was created. The authors of *Participating in God’s Mission* state it very simply, yet powerfully in these words, “God’s mission has a church.”¹¹¹ Ultimately, the understanding of mission “does not begin with the church; rather it begins with understanding the mission of the triune God.”¹¹² In the words of Dr. Ronald Benefiel, “the church exists as a participatory expression of the trinitarian fellowship and relationship of and within God Himself, and an expression of His Kingdom.”¹¹³

As the church embraces this understanding, we discover that God’s mission, the *Missio Dei*, is rooted in the very person of God. Particularly, it is grounded in the relational and sending nature of God in His triune existence. Lesslie Newbigin and numerous others have written extensively on the trinitarian understanding of the *Missio Dei*. Building on VanGelder’s statement that, “God’s mission has a church,” Michael Goheen, in his extensive work on the missional ecclesiology of Newbigin writes, “The church is not so much the agent of mission as the locus of mission. It is God who acts in the power of the Spirit.”¹¹⁴ Considering the trinitarian

¹¹⁰

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), Loc. 588.

¹¹¹ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 36.

¹¹² Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 12.

¹¹³ Ronald Benefiel, “The Kingdom of God” (Models of Christian Leadership and Community Transformation, Los Angeles, California, June 25, 2021).

¹¹⁴

Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 74.

understanding of mission, then, the church embraces and participates in the Missio Dei as initiated by God at creation, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, and carried out by the empowering presence of the Spirit, all as an expression of His triune nature and Kingdom. Lesslie Newbigin affirms, “the church’s mission to all the nations is a participation in the work of the triune God.”¹¹⁵

David Bosch, as quoted in Darrel Guder’s work puts it best:

“Mission is understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It is thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the Missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit is expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”¹¹⁶

Woodward and White, again quoting Bosch, write:

“Missio Dei has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be the bearer of Mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of Mission.”¹¹⁷

Mission in the Old Testament

As we consider the mission of God as the foundational reality and truth upon which the faithfully missional church is built; and, as we understand God’s mission as an expression of His relational and sending triune nature, we turn to Scripture for a brief look at God’s self-revelation and expression of His mission. Goheen writes, “The Old Testament is a redemptive-historical story. It is a story of God’s mighty acts that move toward the healing of the world from sin and

¹¹⁵

Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 68.

¹¹⁶ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Woodward, White, and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 124.

the restoration of God’s sovereign rule over all things.”¹¹⁸ While there are multiple examples and ways in which God’s mission is expressed throughout the Old Testament, for the purposes of this work, we will examine God’s mission as expressed in the Abrahamic covenant, and God’s mission as expressed through the continuation of that covenant through the blessing of God’s people.

In Genesis we read, “Then God said, ‘Let *us* make human beings in *our* image, to be like *us*...So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God, He created them; male and female He created them.”¹¹⁹ As God gave dominion to humankind, and looked over all that He made, Scripture tells us that “He saw that it was very good!”¹²⁰ God created humankind for the purpose of relationship (as a participatory expression of His triune relational nature), and to reflect His image.

Having placed humankind in the Garden of Eden as the centerpiece of His creation, God looked at His whole creation and saw that it was “very good.” This reality is proclaimed by the angelic choir in Isaiah’s vision as they sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with His glory.” The Psalmist echoes this sentiment and God’s creative intention when he writes, “Praise the Lord God...Praise His glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.”¹²¹ From the moment God created and placed humanity as the centerpiece of His creative genius, God instilled in humankind the responsibility to steward His creation for the purpose of reflecting His glory.

¹¹⁸

Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 43.

¹¹⁹ Genesis 1:26-27 (*New Living Translation*).

¹²⁰ Genesis 1:3 (*New Living Translation*).

¹²¹

Psalm 72:18-19 (*New Living Translation*).

In the creation narrative we read, “So God created human beings in His own image... Then God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and *govern it*. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”¹²² Later in the narrative the command to partner with God in the stewardship of His creation as a reflection of His glory is echoed in the words, “The Lord God placed man in the Garden of Eden to tend and *watch over it*...So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He *brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals.”¹²³ From the beginning, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God’s intention, in creating humankind in His image, and in giving humankind dominion over all creation, was for the whole of creation to reflect His glorious presence, and for humanity to reveal His image.

Unfortunately, through humankind’s disobedience, sin entered the world. From that moment “When the cool evening breezes were blowing,”¹²⁴ and God came looking for Adam and Eve, God has been on a relentless mission to restore and redeem all of creation, including humanity, to their intended purpose of reflecting and proclaiming His glory and revealing His image. Even in the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden, God chose to incorporate humanity in His mission of reconciling all of creation as, “He sent Adam out to cultivate (care for) the ground from which he had been made.”¹²⁵ God’s mission is to restore all of creation to its intended glory and to redeem humanity so that His glorious image can be once again revealed, and so that humankind can experience the relational intimacy with the triune God for which they

¹²²

Genesis 1:27-28 (*New Living Translation*).

¹²³

Genesis 2:15, 19-20 (*New Living Translation*).

¹²⁴

Genesis 3:8 (*New Living Translation*).

¹²⁵

Genesis 3:23 (*New Living Translation*).

were originally created. Consequently, “the first healing task of the church is to become a reconciled and reconciling community itself.”¹²⁶

The entirety of the Scripture is God’s revelation of His triune missional existence. That existence and mission is especially pronounced in the missional underpinnings of the Abrahamic covenant, in which the church of today, continues to participate. Genesis 12:1-3 records that covenant in these words,

“The Lord said to Abram, ‘Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.’”¹²⁷

God’s mission would be carried out through Abraham and through all of his descendants; through Abraham’s line, God would bring the reconciliation and redemption of humanity and of all of creation.

Redemption and reconciliation, understood throughout the Old Testament as blessing, becomes a vital component of Scripture and a proper embracing and understanding of God’s mission. Christopher J. H. Wright comments, “Blessing, then, at the very beginning of our Bible, is constituted by fruitfulness, abundance and fullness on the one hand, and by enjoying rest within creation in holy and harmonious relationship with our Creator God on the other.”¹²⁸

Within the context of understanding God’s mission as the church’s underlying mission, then, we must come to an understanding that the church is to live into the “fruitfulness, abundance and fullness” and then live out our “holy and harmonious relationship with our Creator God” in such

¹²⁶

Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 135.

¹²⁷ Genesis 12:1-3 (New Living Translation).

¹²⁸

Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 67.

a way that the world watching would respond so that they, too, would experience the redemption and reconciliation of God.

Wright continues,

“Thus, the blessing of Abraham becomes self-replicating. Those who are blessed are called to be a blessing beyond themselves – and this is one feature that makes it so profoundly missional. For if we see ourselves (as we should, according to Paul in Galatians) as those who have entered into the blessing of Abraham through faith in Christ, then the Abrahamic commission becomes ours also – ‘be a blessing’... (Consequently) if we understand the church from our biblical theology as that community of people chosen and called since Abraham to be the vehicle of God’s blessing to the nations, what else can the church be but missional?”¹²⁹

Perhaps Lesslie Newbigin put it most succinctly, “God’s people have always been a missionary people – that is from the beginning they were chosen to bear God’s purpose for and be a light to the whole world. They have been blessed to be a blessing.”¹³⁰

Mission in the New Testament

This blessing continues throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament, as Christ, through the Davidic and Abrahamic line, comes as the fulfillment of and initiation of the new covenant. In the person of Christ and the incarnation, the existence of the sending nature of the triune God is made starkly visible, as Christ took on human flesh in response to the sending call of God the Father. As Christ began His earthly ministry, He called disciples to leave their occupations to “follow Him so that He could teach them to fish for people.”¹³¹

For three years, the disciples followed Jesus as He performed miracles and taught and carried out the mission of His Father, to bring redemption and restoration to humankind and to the earth that He now inhabited. As Jesus’ earthly life was drawing to a close, He commissioned

¹²⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 73.

¹³⁰ Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 56.

¹³¹ Matthew 4:19 (*New Living Translation*).

His disciples to continue to carry out His Father's mission of redemption and restoration that was ultimately the continuation of the Abrahamic covenant of blessing. This commissioning most are familiar with is found at the end of Matthew's gospel as he records the words of Jesus just before His return to heaven: "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."¹³²

Jesus, in that moment commissioned all of those who had been blessed through the restorative and redemptive covenantal relationship with God initiated with Abraham. Through the blessing of this new covenant, those blessed were to be a blessing to the world around them. While this commissioning may be the most familiar to people, there is another moment, not long before Jesus' crucifixion, in which Jesus blessed the disciples and commissioned them to bless those around them. John 13 contains the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. As He finished, He told them, "I have given you an example to follow (blessed you). Do as I have done to you (bless others)."¹³³ He then, later in the chapter commissioned them with these words, "I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other (bless each other and those around you). Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples."¹³⁴

The mission of God is to make His redemptive and restorative presence known to the world so that all of creation can be redeemed and restored to its created and intended purpose. As participants in the Abrahamic covenant, the followers of Jesus were commissioned to continue to

¹³² Matthew 28:18-20 (*New Living Translation*).

¹³³ John 13:15 (*New Living Translation*).

¹³⁴ John 13:34-35 (*New Living Translation*).

carry out the redemptive and restorative mission of God. Part of that mission was to bring reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles, and thus bring peace between them. Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus makes this clear when he writes, “Christ has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in His own body on the cross, He broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.”¹³⁵ This was the heart of the gospel message according to Christopher Wright who writes, “It is important to see how the ‘peacemaking’ work of the cross – reconciling Jews and Gentiles and creating one new humanity – is not just a byproduct of the gospel but it is at the heart of the gospel itself.”¹³⁶

As previously noted, Paul, the apostle made this point clearly as he wrote to the church in Ephesus, “This is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches (blessing) inherited by God’s children (those blessed by Abraham’s descendants). Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.”¹³⁷ Throughout his letters, Paul

“Saw the work of the gospel as a constant ‘going beyond,’ to places and peoples as yet unreached by the knowledge of Christ...So Paul’s missionary goal was not evangelism only, in the sense of communicating a message for mental assent. Rather, his aim was nothing short of ethical transformation among those who received that message and responded to it by faith,” thus receiving the blessing initiated in the Abrahamic covenant.¹³⁸

For Paul, “the gospel is the power of God at work in history and creation.”¹³⁹

For Jesus and Paul, and throughout the rest of the New Testament, followers of Christ were called, equipped, and commissioned to engage in the blessings of and continuation of the

¹³⁵ Ephesians 2:14 (*New Living Translation*)

¹³⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 192.

¹³⁷ Ephesians 3:6 (*New Living Translation*).

¹³⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 194-195.

¹³⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 197.

mission of God. Having been blessed through the Abrahamic covenant, made manifest in the new covenant of Christ, they were now commissioned to extend that blessing of restoration and redemption to the world in which they were being sent. The followers of Christ in the New Testament “were authoritatively to replicate and extend the ministry of Jesus Himself.” ¹⁴⁰

This expansion of mission exploded as the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and those gathered on the day of Pentecost. On the day typically understood to be the birthing of the church (as an organism, not organization), the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers and empowered them to engage in God’s mission in ways that would ultimately “turn the world upside down.” ¹⁴¹ The followers of Christ who had been invited to engage in God’s mission as participants in the Abrahamic covenant made manifest through the new covenant of Christ, were now blessed and commissioned by the presence of the Spirit to engage and bless the world into which they were called.

In this catalytic moment, the same Spirit that breathed life into humanity at creation, breathed missional life into the community of gathered believers. In this catalytic moment, the same Spirit that implanted the seed of divinity in the virgin’s womb, implanted the incarnational seed of His image in the life of that community of gathered believers. In this catalytic moment “this same Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead,” ¹⁴² settled upon the community of gathered believers, empowering them to engage in God’s mission. It was this catalytic moment in which, in VanGelder’s words, “God’s mission had a church.” ¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 212.

¹⁴¹ Acts 17:6 (*English Standard Version*).

¹⁴² Romans 8: 11 (*New Living Translation*).

¹⁴³ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 36.

Mission Participation: Private or Corporate?

Recognizing the church's mission is founded in the *Missio Dei*, which understood as the redemption and restoration of all of humanity, and ultimately all of creation, we now turn our attention to the church's participation within that missional calling. Darrell Guder tells us that, "Dangers lurk on all sides for churches, but probably the greatest dangers lie within."¹⁴⁴ Perhaps one of the greatest dangers that lurks within the church in the Western world, and particularly with the North American church is the danger, noted previously, of individual consumerism, a danger that is appearing in both personal and corporate ways. Unfortunately, that is having an impact on how missional engagement and participation is viewed and lived out.

In *Participating in God's Mission*, the authors write,

"An operational individualism still lives deeply within American culture and continues to inform much of American church life, including its mission practices. In contrast, the common worldview of many cultures of the majority church in the Global South is shaped around an understanding of community and identity that would rephrase Descarte's maxim: 'We are, therefore I am'."¹⁴⁵

VanGelder and Zscheile continue,

"The danger of this approach is that in a secular age, the church's deeper identity of participation in the triune God's mission is easily eclipsed. The church understands itself as a nonprofit voluntary association of individuals who enter into a social contract in order to meet their self-identified needs or to do some good in society. The kind of theological discernment that shapes the church's life and witness in the New Testament falls to the background or is lost entirely. Human agency replaces the leadership of the divine agency, rather than recognizing God's primary leadership and human participation. When the church reduces its identity to those terms it becomes easy for people to shift their allegiances to another community that promises to meet their needs better ('church shopping') or to abandon (missional) engagement completely. The larger

¹⁴⁴ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 78.

¹⁴⁵ Van Gelder, *Participating in God's Mission*, 27.

narrative of the triune God's life and love for the world becomes instrumentalized and colonized into the culture's predominant stories.”¹⁴⁶

Because of this “operational individualism” engagement and participation are reduced to what may contribute to the individual or congregation feeling good about themselves. Those efforts are much more self-serving than they are missionally focused, as they are engaged in for the individual's or congregation's self-preservation and/or self-promotion. Rather than allowing themselves to engage and participate in the mission of God within the context of the local congregational efforts, or those of the church in general, engagement and participation has been relegated to the choice and preference of the individual person or congregation.

As the church has adopted an operational and individualistic consumeristic attitude, the outcome is a church which has embraced an institutional understanding of mission making the church nothing more than a purveyor of religious goods; and its members nothing more than consumers of those goods.

“It is now assumed that if a congregation no longer meets your needs, no longer gives you the sense that you're living a good life, you're free to find another...A new job or a new marriage might determine what kind of congregation you're looking for...This assumes that you're even looking for a congregation at all during this particular life you're now living.”¹⁴⁷

This consumeristic mindset is a symptom of an age and culture that is, in the words of Andrew Root and Charles Taylor, completely secular. “We live in a secular age because, even in a megachurch of ten thousand, what stabilizes the congregation is completely secular. Completely secular functions and imaginations.”¹⁴⁸ What should stabilize a congregation, and the greater church, should be completely Scriptural: A Scriptural understanding of God and an embracing of and engagement in His mission as revealed in Scripture.

¹⁴⁶ Van Gelder, *Participating in God's Mission*, 284.

¹⁴⁷ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 117.

¹⁴⁸ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 174.

A healthy understanding of engagement and participation in the mission of God is that the invitation is always a corporate or communal invitation. Scripture faithfully records God's self-revelation to His *people*, or to the corporate community who live into the covenantal blessing of His presence and participate in the corporate mission of being a blessing to the world into which God has strategically placed them. While Scripture does have a personal message to each person, the underlying message is corporate. The church must always understand that its invitation to participate and engage in God's mission is always corporate.

The implications of this are simple: for the individual, their participation and engagement are not a solo adventure. They are fundamentally a part of the congregational engagement in God's worldwide, eternal mission. And, for the congregation/denomination, there must be a healthy recognition that engagement is not focused primarily on building a single local church/denomination (as seen in numerical, financial, property and programmatic growth, etc.). Instead, the local church/denomination must operate within the larger, eternal, and global framework of the worldwide, eternal mission of God.

The Corporate Apostolic Calling of the Church

As the corporate body engages in God's mission, the church must recognize that it was created and commissioned to be a sent and sending, or apostolic, organism. The foundation for this understanding of the church as a sent and sending organism is in the essential triune nature of God. God has always been a sending God. Dr. David Busic reminds us of the words of Leonard Hjalmarson, who contends, "Missional (churches) exist in the same rhythm that exists in the life of the Trinity: inward in love, outward in mission. The overflowing love of life in

community results in mission.”¹⁴⁹ Throughout the Old Testament, God sent prophets and messengers to His people to call them into the redemptive and restorative relationship that was present within the Abrahamic covenant. Of course, in the New Testament, not only do we observe the sending nature of the triune God, but we also observe the sent nature in the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnational presence of the triune sent and sending God who came to earth in the confines of humanity. Paul the apostle captured that best in the beautiful hymn in his letter to the church (the corporate body) in Philippi:

(Jesus Christ) “Though He was God,
He did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
Instead, He gave up His divine privileges;
He took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When He appeared in human form,
He humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal’s death on a cross.”¹⁵⁰

It is important to remember these words, written to the church, the corporate body, in Philippi are preceded by the words, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...”¹⁵¹ The Body of Christ, the church (both the individual members and the corporate body) are to have the same mind as Christ, which means that the Body must embrace the sent and sending, or apostolic calling that is engagement in the mission of God.

Darrell Guder speaks powerfully and prophetically to this apostolic calling of the church.

“When the church in North America discards the Christendom mindset it can become truly apostolic. To be apostolic is, literally, to be sent out. This implies a distinction between the church and that to which it is sent. The church exists as community, servant, and messenger of the reign of God during other kingdoms, communities, and powers that attempt to shape our understanding of reality. The world of those kingdoms,

¹⁴⁹ David A. Basic, *The City: Urban Churches in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition*, (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2020), Loc. 134.

¹⁵⁰

Philippians 2:6-8 (*New Living Translation*).

¹⁵¹

Philippians 2:5 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

communities, and powers often opposes, ignores or has other priorities than the reign of God. To that world, the missional church is apostle - sent out on behalf of the reign of God.”¹⁵²

For the church to be faithful to its apostolic calling and nature, and therefore, faithful to the mission of God, it must embrace the reality that it has been strategically sent by God into this secular age for “such a time (and place) as this.”¹⁵³

However, it is not enough for the church to simply embrace its sent-ness; it must also embrace the sending nature of its calling. This is often where the Western-world, North American mindset (rather than having the same mind/mindset of Christ) begins to evidence its consumerist and self-preserving nature. For the church to send individuals will cost the church in resources, in energy and in people. If the church does not embrace the sending nature of its calling and of God’s mission, then no longer is the church blessing those around them. Consequently, the church is being disobedient to the foundational covenant upon which its calling is based.

For that reason, the church must continually and intentionally engage in the process of discipleship – developing Christ-followers into fully devoted disciples to be sent out as apostles. Christopher Wright articulates well the challenge in the North American church today:

“Basically, the New Testament was written by disciples, for disciples, to make disciples. Yet our emphasis has often been on getting decisions, claiming converts, making Christians. Actually, the word ‘Christian’ occurs three times in the New Testament, whereas the word, ‘disciple’ occurs 269 times.”¹⁵⁴

Guder adds to that idea when he writes,

“The apostolic tasks of the church are not complete without an intentional process of teaching within the church. To be sent out on behalf of the reign of God is also to gather people into the reign of God and, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to help form

¹⁵² Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 110.

¹⁵³ Esther 4:14 (*New Living Translation*).

¹⁵⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 284.

each other into citizens of the reign of God, who can preach, teach, and heal in the name of Jesus and can share His sufferings and resurrection life.”¹⁵⁵

If the church is going to be faithful to its mission as it is found in the overarching mission of God, then it must embrace its apostolic calling, to be both a sent community and a sending community. The church must be continually engaged in the process of developing disciples into apostles – those sent out to represent Christ as He carried out His Father’s mission. Christopher Wright’s words, describing the New Testament disciples and apostles speak to the church of today: “They were (the church is) authoritatively to replicate and extend the ministry of Jesus Himself.”¹⁵⁶

What Does Missional Faithfulness Look Like in the Local Context?

As the church seeks to be faithful to its mission, as it is grounded in the mission of God; and as the church seeks to “replicate and extend the ministry of Jesus Himself,”¹⁵⁷ the church must embrace an incarnational identity. God displayed His missional/missionary nature throughout Scripture, but the most vivid demonstration was the incarnation event. Having been blessed by the Abrahamic covenant, and the new covenant in Christ, the church now becomes the living expression through which God’s presence and blessing is to be made known in the world. The church’s calling is to be the modern-day incarnational presence of Christ and the “participatory expression of the Trinitarian fellowship and relationship of and within God Himself.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 141.

¹⁵⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 212.

¹⁵⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 212.

¹⁵⁸ Benefiel, “The Kingdom of God.”

To become an incarnational presence and expression and to be faithful to its mission, the local church must engage in conversation with the community in which God has strategically placed it. Guder challenges the church when he writes,

“The church is always bicultural, conversant in the language and customs of the surrounding culture and living toward the language and ethics of the gospel. One of the tasks of the church is to translate the gospel so that the surrounding culture can understand it and help those believers who have been in that culture move toward living according to the communal identity of God’s missional people.”¹⁵⁹

The church’s challenge is to bring the timeless truth and reality of the blessing of God’s redemptive and restorative presence to the community in which the local congregation has been strategically placed so that the individuals in that community, and the community itself, can begin to experience the relational and covenantal blessing of God. Granberg-Michaelson writes, “It is there, in the flesh-and-blood realities of local congregations, with their wounds, wonderings, and witness, that the incarnational faces an empirical test. What does it mean, in this time, place, and space, to say that we belong to one body?”¹⁶⁰

The time in which the church exists, at least in the Western/American world today is in desperate need for the church to faithfully engage and participate in its mission founded in the mission of God.

“The exhaustion of the consumerist-program paradigm of church offers a welcome opportunity to reclaim the incarnation and reenter the spaces of neighborhood life in simpler ways. The church does not need to compete with the entertainment and shopping industries on their terms. Ordinary disciples can indwell local relationships and spaces as Jesus did, and by doing so they can help American communities rediscover their connectedness.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 114.

¹⁶⁰ Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu*, Loc. 1887.

¹⁶¹ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 273.

That connectedness is possible only as the church faithfully engages in and participates in the mission of God in incarnational ways in the local community in which it has been strategically placed by God.

Community Influence and Partnership

The church that is living and operating as a faithful agent of God's mission is one that finds ways to live as a blessing creatively and authentically within and alongside the context of the community in which it exists. That does not happen by accident. It happens only as the church intentionally listens to the collective and corporate voice of the community while at the same time listening to the voice of God for the purpose of finding ways to engage the community that are contextually relevant and missionally based in order to meet the expressed needs of the community.

Hugh Halter and Walter Smay write, "In order to see Christ's ways enfleshed into society, we must be an integral part of society. Influence does not happen by extracting ourselves from the world for the sake of our values, but by bringing our values into the culture."¹⁶² This was the very heart of Jesus' words when He prayed that His disciples (the church) would be "in the world, but not of the world."¹⁶³ The current state of the North American church would indicate that missionally, it may be more accurate to state that the church has been "of the world, but not in it."

Missional faithfulness demands that the church move out into the local community for the purpose of intentionally engaging in and building relationships to extend the covenantal blessing of God's presence made manifest through the life and lives of the church. "Instead of

¹⁶² Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 31.

¹⁶³ John 17:15-17 (*New Living Translation*).

drawing a line in the sand and imploring them to ‘get right with God or get left behind,’ we step across from a religious side into their all-too real world and ask how we can help.”¹⁶⁴ Woodward and White describe this incarnational presence: “We need to move from being *for* the neighborhood and *with* the neighborhood to being *of* the neighborhood and *in* the neighborhood.” In other words, “we are to let this mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus,”¹⁶⁵ who “became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”¹⁶⁶ As VanGelder and Zscheile put it, “The church as the Body of Christ is incarnationally present in the world, dwelling in and among the neighborhood, participating in life there, but possessing a distinct identity through its rootedness in Jesus.”¹⁶⁷

Alan Hirsch very powerfully states,

“The incarnational big-story gospel will require a place of discovery, where people will be able to see the truth before they hear about it. This place will not be a location but a community of people who are inclusive of everyone. These people will be making eternity attractive by how they live such selfless lives now and will be modeling life in a New Kingdom in ways that will make it easy for other people to give it a try. People like this are not desperate to convert everyone; they are desperate to be like Jesus and to be where Jesus is.”¹⁶⁸

This incarnational expression of the church, according to Dr. David Busic, is what is being called the “parish church model.” Busic writes, “This expression is about moving into and staying in a neighborhood. Incarnational church...is an indwelling. It is more than a going to – it is a living among.”¹⁶⁹ If the church is to live into this incarnational expression, and to therefore

¹⁶⁴ Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 43.

¹⁶⁵ Philippians 2:5 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

¹⁶⁶ John 1:14 (*The Message*).

¹⁶⁷ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 278.

¹⁶⁸ Hirsch, et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 3146-3156.

¹⁶⁹ Busic, *The City*, Loc. 140.

maintain missional faithfulness, according to Awaken Parish Network, there are two crucial questions with which the local congregation must continually wrestle:

“What if the church saw itself engaged in a loving relationship with its neighborhood? What would it look like for the church to ‘romance’ the (community and neighborhood) it worshiped in? To this end, each congregation (should) seek to discern the ways in which God is active its community, and then attempt to partner and get involved.”¹⁷⁰

Missional faithfulness calls the church to make the building of relationships and the passing on of the blessing of God’s covenantal presence a priority, rather than that of making converts. Never once did Jesus command His disciples to make converts; instead, He commissioned them, and empowered them through the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make disciples, who then engage in the mission of the church in being faithful to the mission of God. That is the mission to which the church today is called to be faithful.

Earlier in this work, the words of Woodward and White, “we are in a predicament,” were used to refer to the state of the church.¹⁷¹ While those words ring very true, the truth is that the world in which the church exists is in a predicament, as well. There is a desperate need for the world to experience an authentic expression of the incarnational presence of God. The world needs to know that there is a God who created them for the purpose of relationship in which His presence and glory could be seen. The world needs to know that even in their rebellion, God has continued to pursue them to bring redemption and reconciliation to them, and to His entire creation; that He has established covenant with Abraham so that they, too, could receive and live into the blessing of His presence. The world needs to know that God, in Christ, continued in His relentless pursuit to redeem and restore His created ones. The exciting truth is that He breathed His breath into the living organism that is called the church to be the living expression through

¹⁷⁰

Busic, *The City*, Loc. 141-142.

¹⁷¹

Woodward, White, and Hirsch, *The Church as Movement*, 26.

which His redeeming, restoring, and resurrecting, His covenant-making and keeping relational presence would be made known.

The challenge for the church is to respond in faithful obedience to God's commission to engage in His mission. Missional faithfulness requires the church, as recipients of God's covenantal blessing through the line of Abraham, and through the new covenant of Jesus Christ, to take on the mindset and likeness of Christ as God's sent and sending agency. As such, the church is challenged to incarnationally engage and "*romance*" its community, while engaging in God's eternal, worldwide mission. It is imperative that the church develop adaptive and missionally faithful leaders for that purpose.

CHAPTER 4

FOUNDATIONAL QUALITIES AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MISSIONALLY FAITHFUL ADAPTIVE ECCLESIASTICAL LEADERS

Introduction

Building on the theological framework of what it means to be missionally faithful, the remainder of this work will examine the qualities and characteristics of the missionally faithful leader who operates within an adaptive context. Contained in the countless volumes of leadership material are qualities considered necessary for effective leadership. While most of these qualities are applicable to leaders within the ecclesiastical world, there are certain qualities that are foundational to an ecclesiastical leader's ability to not only be effective, but more importantly to be faithful to the mission of God. This chapter will examine the foundational qualities and essential characteristics of the ecclesiastical leader's ability to lead from an adaptive paradigm. The essential characteristics of the missionally faithful ecclesiastical leader will be briefly defined in this chapter and examined in greater detail using case studies in Chapter 5. The essential leadership characteristics are: Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental. These essential characteristics are built upon two foundational qualities. Those foundational qualities challenge the adaptive ecclesiastical leader to lead in a way that is Relationally Focused, and Resiliently Engaged. To those characteristics, we now turn our attention.

Foundational Qualities: Relationally Focused

A fundamental truth that the ecclesiastical leader must embrace is the truth that she/he, as well as those they lead in missional engagement, are created as reflections of the Imago Dei. Therefore, it is imperative that the ecclesiastical leader remember that God, in His triune nature, exists in an eternal relationship of intimacy. In creating humankind as His reflection, God has intentionally created us to live relationally focused lives. This focus, as Jesus made clear, exists on both a vertical and horizontal plane. When asked by

“One of the experts in religious law, ‘Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?’ Jesus replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God

with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”¹⁷²

Jesus’ call to live the cruciform life, while a call to all Christ-followers, is especially significant to the ecclesiastical leader, for it calls the leader to embrace a paradigm of leadership in which relationships are intentionally developed. Adaptive leadership within the church, and particularly a church that is part of the Wesleyan theological tradition, will always be relational. Lovett Weems states, “Effective leadership begins not with some fixed ideology – although one’s values always will be integral to leadership. Leadership begins with people.”¹⁷³ He goes on to state that “Leaders in the Wesleyan spirit are folk leaders. Such leaders begin with people and their needs because they genuinely love the people.”¹⁷⁴

In Chapter 5, the ministry of John Wesley and the early days of the Wesleyan Revival will serve as the initial case study to illustrate the essential characteristics of adaptive leadership more clearly. However, it is important to note here that John Wesley understood the importance of building relationship with the people to whom he ministered. This affirmation is one of the primary tenets of his understanding of what it means to live a holy life. Referring to Wesley’s preface to the text *Hymns and Sacred Poems* published in 1739, Winfield Bevins quotes Wesley as saying, “‘Holy solitaires’ is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than ‘holy adulterers.’ The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian

¹⁷² Matthew 22:35-40 (*New Living Translation*).

¹⁷³ Lovett H. Weems, *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 17.

¹⁷⁴ Weems, *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 19.

perfection’.”¹⁷⁵ Bevins later writes, “Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in peoples’ belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured.”¹⁷⁶

This community, of course, is the church. Given the fact that the church is the collective expression and reflection of the relational nature of the triune God, the leader within this ecclesiastical framework must be one who is able to lead in a way that is relationally focused. Adaptive leadership, by its very nature, is relational. The genius of adaptive leadership is that it is team oriented. For teams to truly be faithful missionally, there must be an intentional emphasis placed on the building and cultivating of relationship as together they learn what it means to reflect the image and engage in the mission of God. If the local church is to faithfully engage in the mission of God, then leadership must embrace a paradigm that is at its core, relational. While a technical leadership paradigm does not completely deny the importance of relationship, adaptive leadership affords a greater opportunity for building of relationship so that teams can be developed to be missionally faithful.

Within this relationally focused quality necessary for missionally faithful ecclesiastical leadership, it is important to note the importance of its impact on the use and distribution of power. Eric Law states, “The moment I am resurrected into new life of empowerment, I must begin to think about serving and giving away my power and take up the cross again, or I stand the chance of abusing my power.”¹⁷⁷ Relational focus that embraces an identity of all individuals

¹⁷⁵ Winfield H Bevins, *Marks of a Movement: What the Church Today Can Learn from the Wesleyan Revival* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2019), Loc. 77.

¹⁷⁶ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 102.

¹⁷⁷ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Loc. 43.

as reflections of the image of God, is a powerful and necessary bulwark against the exploitation of those being led.

The inherent danger of a technical paradigm is that it is far too easy for the leader to operate in a way that demands adherence and obedience to those being continually empowered, thus increasing their power. At the same time, this danger only serves to continue to marginalize the powerless. Law continues, “(We need) to rethink what empowerment means if (our) own empowerment can cause others to become powerless. True empowerment should empower others at the same time.”¹⁷⁸ The missionally faithful ecclesiastical leader is one who is empowered, not for the sake of dominating others, but for the sake of building others up and empowering them to engage in God’s mission with and alongside the leader.

Dr. David Busic writes of the importance of a proper use and distribution of power within the relational ecclesiastical community. “The use of power is an essential part of becoming a safe community. All power must be wielded for the good of the whole.”¹⁷⁹ This is possible only as the adaptive leader operates relationally within the context of community. Busic goes on to reference Robert Linthicum’s differentiation between unilateral and relational power.

“Unilateral power is power over another person or group of people and, if not kept in check, can degenerate quickly into dominating power that is exercised with force and fear (a danger inherent in the technical leadership paradigm). Relational power is not power *over* another; it is power *with* another that is both mutual and reciprocal. The foundation of relational power is based on respect, a belief in the basic dignity of the other, and the kingdom conviction that every person has something to offer to the community.”¹⁸⁰

The ability to lead with this relationally focused power is possible only as the leader embraces and operates from a mindset that sees those being led as created in and reflecting God’s image.

¹⁷⁸ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Loc. 18.

¹⁷⁹ Busic, *The City*, Loc. 86.

¹⁸⁰ Busic, *The City*, Loc. 86.

Consequently she/he will intentionally build and develop of relationships, recognizing that it in these relationships her/his relationship with, and love for God is demonstrated.

The genius of adaptive leadership is that it is not dependent upon one person for the success of the organization. Instead, members of the organization relationally work alongside the leader for the purpose of full engagement in mission. Within the ecclesiastical world, it is of utmost importance for the leader to be relationally focused, for it is through this relational nature that the relational nature and image of the triune God is most faithfully expressed and reflected, which in turn allows for greater missional faithfulness.

Foundational Qualities: Resiliently Engaged

The task of leadership is to, “disturb people... at a rate they can absorb.”¹⁸¹ To disturb or disrupt people in a way that is transformative to both the individual and the organization lies at the heart of what it means to be an adaptive ecclesiastical leader. While not impossible, this task is much easier when the leader operates from a relationally focused framework, understanding their identity, and the identity of those they lead, as a reflection of the divine image. As the leader lives, learns, and leads in the context of relationship, trust is gained and established, so that they are enabled to disrupt and disturb the status quo for the purpose of facilitating lasting change. Within this relational framework, the leader is best able to discern (learn) the rate at which the disruption and disturbance can occur. Leading relationally into disruption and disturbance is difficult work, and demands that the leader develop the ability to, in the words of Deborah Smith Pegues, “not only recover from a setback but have the endurance to continue and not give up.”¹⁸² This ability requires the leader to be resiliently engaged.

¹⁸¹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 316.

¹⁸² Deborah Smith Pegues, *Lead Like a Woman*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), Loc. 61.

Part of the leader's calling within the context of the church is to prepare the local congregation for future days, and generations, that exist beyond that particular leader; and, to challenge the local congregation to engagement in missional faithfulness that extends beyond the four walls of their building. Winfield Bevins states, "One of the marks of an effective leader is her/his ability to prepare an organization to outlast her/his own leadership."¹⁸³ Simon Sinek adds to this idea when he writes, "A company built for the Infinite (adaptive) Game doesn't think of itself alone. It considers the impact of its decisions on its people, its community, the economy, the country and the world."¹⁸⁴ For the incarnational church, this impact takes place within the unique community in which the local congregation is strategically placed. For the leader to affect these lasting transformational changes, the leader must develop what Tod Bolsinger calls, a "tempered resilience."¹⁸⁵

Diane Coutu notes that when interviewing a senior partner at a respected consulting firm, she inquired about the importance of resilience. The partner being interviewed "paused and then responded, 'Yes, it does matter. In fact, it probably matters more than any of the usual things we look for.'"¹⁸⁶ She notes that Dean Becker, the president and CEO of Adaptive Learning Systems said, "More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That's true in the cancer ward, it's true in

¹⁸³ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 143.

¹⁸⁴ Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game*, 1st Edition (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019), Loc. 9.

¹⁸⁵ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Diane Coutu, "How Resilience Works," *Harvard Business Review*, May 2002, 2.

the Olympics, and it's true in the boardroom.”¹⁸⁷ And it is especially true and essential within the church.

Coutu then states, “When we truly stare down reality, we prepare ourselves to act in ways that allow us to endure and survive extraordinary hardship. We train ourselves how to survive before the fact.”¹⁸⁸ Staring down this defined reality allows the leader and the organization to begin to ask and answer the transformative and adaptive questions of, “What if...?” and “*Who* do we need to *be/become*?” Crucial to the church is a faithful resilient engagement within the *Missio Dei*. Bolsinger quoting Andrew Zolli’s definition of resilience as “the capacity of a system, enterprise, or a person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances,”¹⁸⁹ proves helpful to a better understanding.

This quality of being resiliently engaged is crucial for the leader within the local congregation. That leader is charged with disturbing and disrupting her/his congregants so that they can faithfully engage in not only the mission of the local church, but more significantly and importantly, faithfully engage in the worldwide and eternal mission of God. Being used to establish God’s redemptive and restorative work so that His “Kingdom (would) come soon...on earth as it is in heaven,”¹⁹⁰ is a challenge to the leader to faithfully learn and define their cultural reality within the context of God’s eternal reality. It is the challenge to, in paraphrasing Bolsinger, “maintain God’s core purpose and the church’s integrity in the face of dramatically changing contexts.”¹⁹¹ As the culture dramatically shifts both inside and outside the church, it is

¹⁸⁷ Coutu, “How Resilience Works,” 2.

¹⁸⁸ Coutu, “How Resilience Works,” 4.

¹⁸⁹ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 525-527.

¹⁹⁰ Matthew 6:10 (*New Living Translation*).

¹⁹¹ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 525-527.

imperative that the ecclesiastical leader develop the ability to engage resiliently to lead in a way that is missionally faithful within an adaptive context.

Faithful engagement in the *Missio Dei* that is expressed in contextually appropriate and relevant ways within a local congregation challenges the leader to be resiliently engaged. To that end, Bolsinger writes, “The ultimate goal of adaptive change (and leadership) is not to master a pain-free solution to a pressing problem, it’s to create adaptive capacity: the wisdom, courage, and resilience within a people to learn and survive the losses necessary to be transformed and thrive in a changing world;”¹⁹² to relationally and resiliently “disturb people at a rate they can absorb.”¹⁹³

Adaptive leadership is at times difficult work. Most challenges faced by the adaptive leader will not allow for quick, programmatic solutions. Instead, they will require the difficult work of creating loss to facilitate necessary change. Without resilient engagement, the temptation of the leader will be to revert to the implementation of past programs and technical solutions as an ineffective, but quick solution. The resiliently engaged ecclesiastical leader that operates within an adaptive paradigm, however, is presented the opportunity to lead her/his people through lasting transformation and into the future expression of the Kingdom for which God has created them.

Upon these two foundational qualities are built the essential characteristics of the ecclesiastical adaptive leader. These foundational qualities, though not specifically addressed by name in the case studies of the next chapter, provide the foundation for developing the essential characteristics of adaptive leadership. The four essential characteristics of adaptive leadership

¹⁹² Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 2460.

¹⁹³ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 316.

(Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental) will be briefly examined next in this chapter.

Essential Characteristics: Catalytic

A catalyst is defined as “a person or thing that causes change or action.”¹⁹⁴ The authors of *The Innovator’s DNA* observed in their studies that they “typically find that the catalyst was: (1) a question that challenged the status quo, (2) an observation of a technology, company, or customer, (3) an experience or experiment where something new was being attempted, or (4) a conversation with someone who alerted (the studied leader) to an important piece of knowledge or opportunity.”¹⁹⁵ An adaptive catalytic leader is one who, having experienced a catalyst, seeks to lead in a way that allows their organization to bring about lasting and necessary change, not only within the organization, but within the culture in which it exists. It is crucial for the missionally faithful adaptive leader to embrace her/his catalytic role as they lead engagement in the mission of God.

Simon Sinek in *Infinite Game* distinguishes between finite games (those played by known players according to fixed and known rules) and infinite games (those played by known and unknown players without set and proven rules).¹⁹⁶ These descriptions parallel the technical leadership (finite) and adaptive leadership (infinite) paradigms. Sinek states,

“In the Infinite Game (adaptive leadership paradigm), the true value of an organization cannot be measured by the success it has achieved based on a set of arbitrary metrics over arbitrary time frames. The true value of an organization is measured by the desire others

¹⁹⁴ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “catalyst,” accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst>

¹⁹⁵ Jeff Dyer, Hal B. Gregersen, and Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators*, Updated edition (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press, 2019), 21.

¹⁹⁶ Sinek, *The Infinite Game*, Loc. 3.

have to contribute to that organization's ability to keep succeeding, not just during the time they are there, but well beyond their own tenure... (This organization or leader) doesn't think of itself alone. It considers the impact of its decisions on its people, its community, the economy, the country and the world...An infinite-minded (adaptive) leader does not simply want to build a company that can weather change but one that can be transformed by it.”¹⁹⁷

The role of the adaptive ecclesiastical leader is to lead in such a way that the church becomes a catalyst for a lasting movement of God that takes place within the community and context in which it exists. To paraphrase Sinek, “we have to stop thinking about who's church is the biggest and start thinking about how to build churches that are strong enough and healthy enough to stay engaged in the mission,”¹⁹⁸ in such a way that they become a movement.

In most movements, a leader embraces the catalytic challenge to disrupt and disturb the world in which they find themselves. Winfield Bevins notes that, “Movements are all about change; often movements are committed to bringing about major change, causing upheaval at local and national levels.”¹⁹⁹ For this change or upheaval to take place, the need for a catalytic leader is imperative. Bevins states,

“(Ecclesiastical) Movements often begin with a catalytic leader...whose life has been touched by God. Sometimes the change is a conversion experience. At other times it is a personal renewal that results in a radical commitment to follow Christ. Movements are not primarily about numbers or slogans, but about changed lives that lead to broader cultural transformation.”²⁰⁰

The adaptive ecclesiastical leader is one who embraces her/his role as a catalyst. As one who is willing to disturb and disrupt the status quo, the leader's ability to build and establish relationships of trust are essential. It is within the context of those relationships that the leader is

¹⁹⁷ Sinek, *The Infinite Game*, Loc. 9.

¹⁹⁸ Sinek, *The Infinite Game*, Loc. 6.

¹⁹⁹ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc.27.

²⁰⁰ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 40.

best able to communicate that her/his disturbing the status quo is for the greater purpose of faithful engagement in the Missio Dei; and within the context of those relationships, the leader is best able to graciously assist those being lead in dealing with their perceived loss. This catalytic work is difficult and sometimes painful and will demand that the leader be resiliently engaged in ways that are both relational and missional. However, it is not enough to serve as a catalyst alone. In order to faithfully lead the church in missional engagement, the leader must also be attentive to the context in which they exist.

Essential Characteristics: Attentive

“The power of context says that human beings are strongly influenced by their circumstances and conditions and are particularly sensitive to the environments in which they live.”²⁰¹ The ability to survey these circumstances and conditions within one’s particular environment in an attempt to answer the underlying questions of adaptive leadership is what in this work will be called attentive. From a Scriptural standpoint, this is the Issacharian model in which the leader develops the ability to “understand the times (context) and knows what to do.”²⁰²

Dan Heath, in his work, *Upstream*, adapts a public health parable commonly attributed to Irving Zola:

“You and a friend are having a picnic by the side of a river. Suddenly you hear a shout from the direction of the water – a child is drowning. Without thinking, you both dive in, grab the child, and swim to shore. Before you can recover, you hear another child cry for help. You and your friend jump back in the river to rescue her as well. Then another struggling child drifts into sight...and another...and another. The two of you can barely keep up. Suddenly, you see your friend wading out of the water, seeming to leave you

²⁰¹ Bevens, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 62.

²⁰² 1 Chronicles 12:32 (*New International Version*).

alone. ‘Where are you going?’ you demand. Your friend answers, ‘I’m going upstream to tackle the guy who’s throwing all these kids in the water.’”²⁰³

The adaptive leader is the one who has developed an attentiveness to see not only the children floating downstream, but also the catalytic event upstream in which the children are being thrown in.

Attentiveness demands that the leader pay close attention to the culture in which they and their organization exist, and are then able to formulate the correct catalytic questions to ultimately wrestle with the underlying question, “What *if*...?” This is often referred to as doing the work of cultural exegesis. For the adaptive leader to be attentive, they must develop what has already been referred to and defined as Contextual Intelligence. In a web-based seminar in which Michael Beck and Leonard Sweet were discussing the topic of Contextual Intelligence, Sweet commented that, “Contextual Intelligence is the one factor that all leadership paradigms have in common.”²⁰⁴ Sweet went on to note that the distinguishing mark of the attentive adaptive leader is her/his ability to “attend and abide.”²⁰⁵ In other words, the adaptive leader engages in an ongoing effort to be attentive to the catalytic conversations and questions that arise within their particular context.

The authors of *The Innovator’s DNA* address this attentiveness as a key to innovation. Their research testifies to the fact that these leaders have a “high Q/A ratio, where questions (Q) not only outnumber answers (A) in a typical conversation but are valued at least as highly as good answers.”²⁰⁶ These leaders, “ask lots of questions to better understand what is and what

²⁰³ Dan Heath, *Upstream: The Quest to Solve Problems Before They Happen*, 2020, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2174842>, Loc. 1.

²⁰⁴ Beck and Sweet, “Reading the Signs of the Times.”

²⁰⁵ Beck and Sweet, “Reading the Signs of the Times.”

²⁰⁶ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 23.

might be. They ignore safe questions and opt for crazy ones...(that) hold the potential to cultivate creative insights.”²⁰⁷ In terms of Heath’s parable, the attentive adaptive leader asks, “What is going on upstream?” in order to ask the question, “What *if* we found a way to stop the kids from being thrown in?”

This attentiveness to one’s context is a vital piece in the ecclesiastical leader’s repertoire. Jesus prayed that His followers (those whom He would empower to continue His Father’s mission) would be “in the world, but not of it.”²⁰⁸ To faithfully engage in the mission of God in a way that would allow all of creation to be redeemed and restored, the church is called into the very world God is seeking to redeem. It is impossible to faithfully engage in that mission without an understanding of the context in which the church has been strategically placed. It is the ecclesiastical leader’s responsibility to be engaged in attentive study of the unique context in which she/he exists and leads.

This attentive study, in the adaptive paradigm requires a collective attentiveness. First Chronicles introduces the Issacharian model of attentiveness. In that passage we read, “From the tribe of Issachar, there were *two hundred leaders* of the tribe...all these *men* understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.”²⁰⁹ One of the primary tenets of adaptive leadership is the corporate and team nature of the paradigm. The men of Issachar worked together, relationally, to better understand their times and to formulate a faithful plan to engage in mission. So, too, must the ecclesiastical leader learn the art of relational and corporate attentiveness to best understand her/his context. This ability demands an ongoing, resilient engagement with both the leader’s context as well as with those whom she/he leads. As that

²⁰⁷ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 70.

²⁰⁸ John 17:11-16 (*New Living Translation*).

²⁰⁹ 1 Chronicles 12:32 (*New Living Translation*).

attentiveness reveals the truth of the leader's context, the leader must then find ways to faithfully respond and engage.

Responsive

As the adaptive leader engages in the catalytic work of attentiveness within the specific climate and culture in which they have been strategically placed, they are challenged to respond. Quite often, leaders are much more reactionary than they are responsive. These two words and ideas may appear synonymous, but there is a marked distinction. Reactionary leaders, often operating from a technical paradigm, make quick and emotional decisions, seeking primarily to avert or resolve the crises of the moment. These decisions typically employ programmatic strategies previously used in addressing a similar problem or issue. While often bringing a swift resolution to the pressing momentary crisis, this reactionary effort does not typically provide long-lasting, transformational change. This is often due largely to the fact that this reactionary leadership rarely engages in the attentive work of contextual study, and instead opts for the quick examination of the crisis.

Responsive adaptive leaders, on the other hand, having been attentive to the climate and culture around them; and recognizing the problem/issue as a catalytic moment, formulate an organic (and often innovative) plan of action that will propel the organization into the future in a missionally faithful way. The adaptive leader chooses to do the difficult work, the work demanding resiliency, of responding rather than reacting. A responsive posture yields the ability to ask pertinent and relevant questions. The adaptive leader is adept at studying the circumstances and conditions (understands the times) and can imagine what could be done ("What if...?"). They understand those that they lead while calling them to engage in bringing

about a lasting, transformational change (“Who do we need to be/become?”). While this responsiveness does not necessarily facilitate a quick solution, it does typically provide a lasting transformational solution.

Often, this responsiveness that leads to lasting transformation will call for the leader to initiate and lead the organization through that transformation and into new, and sometimes, uncharted territory, a process that demands resiliency. As previously noted, Heifetz and Linsky, in addressing the leader’s responsibility to help the organization navigate this responsive track contend that the leader is faced with the challenge of mobilizing people to be transformed in a way that they and the organization can thrive.²¹⁰ This transformation, while necessary, is often difficult. Heifetz and Linsky further state, “What people resist is not change per se, but loss.”²¹¹ The responsive adaptive leader, according to the authors, then develops the “capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb...thus, leadership requires disturbing people – but at a rate they can absorb.”²¹²

The adaptive leader, having been attentive to the climate and culture around them, knows and understands the loss that this disturbance or disruption brings, and responds in a way in which this disturbance/disruption and its loss can successfully be experienced and absorbed. As the ecclesiastical leader engages relationally in this work, the leader and those they lead absorb loss together, and the climate for transformation is allowed to develop. This transformational process is not instantaneous. Often, it is time-consuming and painful, making it necessary that the ecclesiastical adaptive leader develop relational and missional resiliency to create a climate in which lasting and necessary transformation can occur. Within that climate, then innovation

²¹⁰ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3889-3895.

²¹¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 4032.

²¹² Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 186, 316.

can begin to take place as the leader and those she/he leads engage in the exciting work of experimentation.

Experimental

Thomas Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, is commonly credited with saying, “I did not fail three thousand times. Rather, I found three thousand ways that a light bulb does not work.” His statement, as recorded in *Harper’s Monthly*, is actually, “I speak without exaggeration when I say that I have constructed three thousand different theories in connection with the electric light, each one of them reasonable and apparently true. Yet only in two cases did my experiments prove the truth of my theory.”²¹³ Edison, “as a great inventor, created a company that specialized in experimentation and failure.”²¹⁴

The fourth and final characteristic of the adaptive leader that will be considered in this work is this: the adaptive leader is experimental. Heifetz and Linsky state that, “Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding certain entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating the new capacity to thrive anew.”²¹⁵ Simply stated, adaptive challenges demand adaptive leaders who are experimental.

Simon Sinek writes,

“When we lead with a finite (technical) mindset in an infinite game, it leads to all kinds of problems, the most common of which include the decline of trust, cooperation and

²¹³ Jesse C. Middendorf, *Edison Churches: Experiments in Innovation and Breakthrough* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2017), 16-17.

²¹⁴ Middendorf, *Edison Churches*, 16.

²¹⁵ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Loc. 3973.

innovation. Leading with an infinite (adaptive) mindset in an infinite game, in contrast, really does move us in a better direction. Groups that adopt an infinite mindset enjoy vastly higher levels of trust, cooperation and innovation and all the subsequent benefits.”²¹⁶

Within this climate, the members of the organizational leadership are liberated to seek new and innovative solutions to new challenges, and these solutions are often found in the ability to ask pertinent questions. As noted above, the authors of *The Innovator’s DNA* found in their studies that those considered to be innovators within the secular world were individuals who created and led in an atmosphere in which questions are the norm and are welcomed as much, or more, than answers.²¹⁷

Bolsinger suggests that question-asking is an essential part of the organizational problem-solving process, as he references the work of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky. He writes, “Adaptive leadership...starts with diagnosis: Is this problem something that an expert can solve or not? Is this something that requires us to apply a solution that already exists, or does it fall outside of our current knowledge and expertise and therefore will require learning (and usually result in loss)?”²¹⁸ Of course, part of this diagnostic work is the ability of the leader and the group to be able to articulate culturally applicable and relevant questions to engage in the mission most faithfully within their particular context. Eric Law notes,

“The definition of a leader is not the same in different cultures because how a person is expected to manage a group is dependent on the group members’ perceptions of their own power. How do you lead a group of people who believe they are equal to you? How do you lead a group of people who defer to you for all the decision making because you are the authority figure? How do you lead a group of people whose perception of their power spreads from one end of the power perception continuum to the other? These are

²¹⁶ Sinek, *The Infinite Game*, Loc. 5.

²¹⁷ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 23.

²¹⁸ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, Loc. 269.

important questions to answer if the church is to raise up leaders who are able to build faithful communities in the midst of a multicultural society.”²¹⁹

Max DePree, in his classic work, *Leadership is an Art*, contends that “the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.”²²⁰ To define reality, though, the art of discovering and asking the right questions within a particular context is essential. Dyer, Gregersen and Christensen remind those who would move into an adaptive paradigm of leadership that,

“Changing our questions can change the world. The key is constantly creating better questions to see that world through new eyes. When this happens, we will find ourselves living the profound observation that Jonas Salk (discoverer of the first polio vaccine) made, that ‘You don’t invent the answer. You reveal the answer’ by ‘asking the right question because the answer pre-exists’.”²²¹

According to the authors of *The Innovator’s DNA*, two things are present in innovators, or adaptive leaders who exist in a climate of asking questions. “First, they actively desire to change the status quo. Second, they regularly take smart risks (in response to the questions) to make that change happen.”²²² Swiss theologian, Hans Kung once remarked, “A church which pitches its tents without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, is being untrue to its calling... (We must) play down our longing for certainty, accept what is risky, and live by improvisation and experiment.”²²³ This idea of “taking smart risks to make change happen,”²²⁴ is what the adaptive leader understands to be experimental. As those who are a part of the incarnational expression of the Kingdom of the One whose “mercies

²¹⁹ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Loc. 30.

²²⁰ Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 2004), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=732768>, Loc. 243.

²²¹ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 86.

²²² Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 25.

²²³ Chandler, *Uptick*, 38.

²²⁴ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 25.

begin afresh each morning,”²²⁵ church leaders, according to Doug Paul, “should be the most wildly innovative and pioneering people the world has ever known.”²²⁶

This innovative, pioneering, and experimental spirit is an integral part of what it means to lead within an adaptive paradigm. In opposition to the proven methods of the technical paradigm that offer temporary and quick, programmatic solutions, the experimentation of the adaptive paradigm requires resilient leaders. As with Thomas Edison, the proper response and course of action most likely will require multiple attempts and failures, but this is the price of innovation and transformation. The adaptive leader will be required to resiliently continue experimenting, while creating a climate that empowers those with whom they lead to experiment, and at times, fail as well. This experimental spirit is best cultivated within the context of lasting and trusting relationships.

Conclusion

Adaptive leadership purposes to bring systemic and organizational transformation, rather than simply to address the current and pressing crisis. Therefore, by its nature, adaptive leadership is corporate and continual. This reality invites the leader to a paradigm in which she/he will be relationally focused and resiliently engaged for the purpose of creating an environment in which individuals are encouraged to engage alongside the leader in missional fulfillment. Within this environment, the ecclesiastical leader is challenged to embody four essential characteristics of the adaptive leadership paradigm: Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental. When the ecclesiastical leader leads according to those foundational qualities and essential characteristics, she/he will be most able to lead in a way that is missionally faithful.

²²⁵ Lamentations 3:23 (*New Living Translation*).

²²⁶ Doug Paul, *Ready or Not: Kingdom Innovation for a Brave New World* (100 Movements Publishing, 2020), Loc. 447.

John Wesley, Phineas Bresee and Nina Gunter are such leaders and will be the focus of the case studies presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS: CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Adaptive leadership is a paradigm that challenges the leader to be engaged in the process of continual observation and transformation. Consequently, the programmatic implementation of such a paradigm would be antithetical. For that reason, this chapter will be dedicated to the examination of case studies of three individuals whose leadership has been crucial to the development of the Church of the Nazarene. It is not the intent to present these case studies as a technical and programmatic solution to the crisis of leadership facing the North American church. Rather, they are presented as illustrative models of adaptive leadership from which the leader can develop her/his own missionally faithful leadership within an adaptive context.

Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of John Wesley

The Wesleyan Revival of the 18th Century gave birth not only to the Methodist church, but to the entire movement known as Methodism. This movement now includes “75 million

adherents across the globe in over a hundred denominations.”²²⁷ The very name Methodist seems to run contrary to the idea of adaptive leadership in that it implies the adherence to a set of pre-determined, proven guidelines or methods. However, during the initial days of the Wesleyan Revival, which took place under the leadership and guidance of John Wesley, and his brother Charles, these “methods” were anything but pre-determined and proven. As the Wesleyan Revival took place, many of the strategies and ideas practiced by the Wesley brothers were extremely innovative.

John Wesley, a life-long member, and minister in the Church of England, desired for the church to embrace a deeper and more personal understanding and experience of holiness. Wesley did not set out to create a movement or develop a new denomination, he simply longed to bring renewal and revival to the church he loved. Unfortunately, that church was not receptive to much of what Wesley was preaching and teaching, nor was it willing to embrace new strategies and methods. As Howard Snyder writes, “Using innovation and creative means, he organized Methodism around the ancient call of the church: making disciples of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.”²²⁸ Snyder continues, “Hold to the old. But if the old hinders the gospel, then changes and innovations must be made. Wesley’s ecclesiology was a working synthesis of old and new, tradition and innovation.”²²⁹ Wesley was revolutionary in his adaptive leadership abilities in a time in which much of the religious world was content to rely on proven methods and hierarchical leadership.

²²⁷ Henry H. Knight, *John Wesley: Optimist of Grace*, Cascade Companions 32 (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), ix.

²²⁸ Howard A Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*, Kindle edition, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), Loc. 68.

²²⁹ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 167.

This revolutionary spirit in Wesley's ministry and leadership was not widely embraced, particularly within the Anglican Church in which Wesley was a minister. Criticism and marginalization became the heartbreaking norm for Wesley throughout the formative days of the Methodist movement. Despite this reality, Wesley remained courageously and resiliently committed to what he understood to be his God-given calling to challenge the church to engage in the redemptive and restorative *Missio Dei* more faithfully.

Part of the genius of the Wesleyan revival, and subsequent Methodist movement, was the relational nature in which individuals were discipled. For Wesley, the assimilation of believers into the corporate body through various small groups and fellowships was pivotal in the development of the movement. Wesley understood that in these relationships, one would discover the relational nature of the triune God. Consequently, Wesley himself was relationally focused in both his ministry and leadership. Through that relational focus and resilient engagement, the Wesleyan revival spread, and the Methodist movement became firmly grounded, as John Wesley embraced his challenge to lead in a way that would be Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental.

Catalytic

The emergence of the Wesleyan Revival and the Methodist movement testifies to the fact that John Wesley was “a person...that caused change or action.”²³⁰ The change that took place was not solely an ecclesiastical change. The Wesleyan Revival and Methodist movement ushered in much needed cultural transformation across England that eventually would spread to the United States.

²³⁰ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “catalyst,” accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst>

Winfield Bevins, reflecting on the words written on John Wesley's tombstone remarked,

"Once upon a time, a man named John Wesley helped start a movement that led to the cultural transformation of the English nation, a movement that eventually spread around the world...Some historians have suggested that the Wesleyan revival saved England from a bloody revolution like the one France would shortly experience...Wesley's leadership created a contagious movement that proactively engaged the culture, preparing the church to be a force of change in society rather than simply reacting to cultural change."²³¹

Wesley's intent was never to start a worldwide movement. He simply longed to see the church in which he had grown up and in which he ministered be renewed and revived. A few years before his death, as the Wesleyan Revival was sweeping across England, Wesley himself expressed this desire for the newly formed Methodist movement: "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without power."²³²

This desire served as a catalytic moment within Wesley, which allowed Wesley to be a catalyst to the renewal and reform that spread worldwide through the Methodist movement. Howard Snyder states that "Wesley's first conscious consideration of ecclesiological questions can be traced to...when he began in earnest his quest for inward holiness."²³³ Problems arose when this quest began to exhibit itself in his preaching. As Wesley's emphasis in preaching on inward holiness increased, his opportunities to preach within the context of the Anglican Church diminished until, ultimately, he was banned from those churches, and finally, the Anglican Church altogether. Despite being banned, Wesley resiliently continued boldly preaching the message of inward holiness.

²³¹ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 18-22.

²³² Richard B. Wilke, *And Are We Yet Alive? The Future of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 34.

²³³ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1118.

During this time, George Whitefield, who had been engaging in open-air preaching, or “field preaching,” began to invite Wesley to join him in those efforts. These invitations, initially, were rejected by Wesley. In his journal, Wesley wrote,

“In the evening I reached Bristol and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this *strange* way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls *almost a sin* if it had not been done *in a church*.”²³⁴

Wesley would then write that he “submitted to ‘be more vile’”²³⁵ as he went to preach in the open air.

This event, as “vile” and as “sinful” as it may have seemed to Wesley originally, was catalytic to the entire Wesleyan Revival and emergence of Methodism. As Wesley began to preach the message of inward holiness to the masses, sometimes numbering in the thousands, in the open air, the Holy Spirit began to move, and lives were transformed. At the same time, Wesley himself was discovering a passion for evangelism and reaching lost people that he had not known before.

“This event marked the beginning of his evangelistic ministry to the masses, as Wesley did more and more preaching outside to large crowds. From this point forward, Wesley began bringing the message of Christ to everyone he came into contact with, driven by a new evangelistic zeal...rather than hindering Wesley’s ministry, open-air preaching allowed the message to be heard by thousands of ordinary people, many of whom were poor and wouldn’t have been welcome in the established churches.”²³⁶

Bevins notes, “As with most movements, the Methodist revival began with a catalytic leader who experienced a life-changing encounter with God, one that resulted in a rediscovery of the gospel. For some leaders, this encounter is best described as a conversion experience, while

²³⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1986), I:185.

²³⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, I:185.

²³⁶ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 65-66.

for others it is a call to a deeper commitment to the Christ they have already known or met.”²³⁷

The catalytic event for Wesley is what is commonly referred to as his Aldersgate Experience. This was not an isolated event. Rather, it was the culmination of the work of the Holy Spirit in Wesley’s life as he continued to pursue and preach inward holiness, the influence of the Moravians, and an increased “evangelistic zeal” that would create the prime opportunity for Wesley’s heart to be “strangely warmed,”²³⁸ upon hearing Martin Luther’s preface to Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.

From that point on, Wesley’s life was a catalytic force to not only the Methodist movement, but to the advancement of the Kingdom and mission of God on earth. “His life was an effort to infuse the institutional church with the life of renewed Christian community and active discipleship.”²³⁹ This effort, then, according to Weems, “produced social reform and service of massive proportions. The spirit of revival sparked fires of change never predicted... Methodist men and women provided leadership for a long succession of social reforms, including the trade union movement, prison reform, and the abolition of slavery.”²⁴⁰

John Wesley serves as a tremendous example of an adaptive leader who, by allowing catalytic events to transform his thinking and way of operating, became catalytic himself in leading a world changing movement of God. Doug Paul writes, “The challenge before us (is)...to put something into the water of Christian culture that allows us to instinctually innovate so that the gospel, and the transformation it offers every human and all of society, is always accessible:

²³⁷ Bevens, *Marks of a Movement*, 44.

²³⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 18:249-50.

²³⁹ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1207.

²⁴⁰ Weems, *Leadership In the Wesleyan Spirit*, 37.

to keep reforming.”²⁴¹ Following Wesley’s example, leaders charged with engaging in the mission of God should be the catalysts for continual transformation and reformation.

Attentive

The catalytic nature of adaptive leadership challenges the leader to be strictly attuned to the context in which they lead. This ability to observe the cultural context and conditions within his environment was a crucial characteristic evident in the ministry of John Wesley as the Wesleyan Revival spread. This attentiveness is visible in numerous ways in Wesley’s leadership, particularly within the experience of his initial experiences of field preaching.

Because Wesley continued to preach a message of inward holiness, it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to find a church in which to proclaim this message. It would have been simple for Wesley to revert to what was expected within the culture of the church at the time. Instead, in attentiveness to the climate and the culture around him, Wesley sought other ways and avenues in which to proclaim the gospel. One of those ways was through the avenue afforded him by Whitefield’s invitation to engage in “field preaching.” This opportunity ultimately found Wesley standing upon his father’s tombstone, near the east end of the church that had moments before denied him, and proclaiming, “The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”²⁴² Commenting on that moment, Wesley would record these words in his journal, “Accordingly, at six I came, and found

²⁴¹ Paul, *Ready or Not*, Loc. 413-447.

²⁴² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, I:377.

such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before,”²⁴³ a testimony to Wesley’s resilient spirit.

Had Wesley not been attentive to both his God-given calling to proclaim the message of inward holiness and the desperate need of the people to whom he was called to hear this message, he could have easily acquiesced to the voice of the church. Wesley, true to his calling and in obedience to the Spirit, attended to, and abided by embracing a methodology that he once thought “sinful” and “vile.” Ultimately, this obedience would find him preaching while standing upon his own father’s grave, who for forty years had ministered within the church that now denied his son entry to preach. Wesley, writing to his friend John Smith, penned these words that speak to the importance of his attentiveness in this moment:

“If either by a natural or an acquired power of persuasion I can prevail upon sinners to turn to God, am I to bury even that talent in the earth? ‘No; but try if you cannot do more good in a College or in a parish.’ I have tried both, and I could not do any substantial good, either to my pupils or my parishioners. Among my parishioners in Lincolnshire, I tried for some years; but I am well assured I did far more good to them by preaching three days on my father’s tomb, than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.”²⁴⁴

John Wesley, in his attentiveness, chose to “accurately diagnose his context,”²⁴⁵ and opted to “ignore the safe questions in order to embrace the crazy ones.”²⁴⁶ In doing so, the creative option of field preaching and standing on his father’s grave allowed him to proclaim the Scriptural message of inward holiness, that continued to strangely warm his heart, to the community of people who so desperately needed to hear and experience that truth. In Wesley’s

²⁴³ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, I:377

²⁴⁴ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, XII:90.

²⁴⁵ Beck, Michael Adam, *Contextual Intelligence*, viii.

²⁴⁶ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 70.

own words, “A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel wherever I am in the habitable world.” ²⁴⁷

Wesley’s concern was not to simply repeat proven methods and methodologies. Instead, his concern was, as his brother Charles wrote in his hymn, *A Charge to Keep I Have*, “To serve the present age, (his) calling to fulfill. Oh, may it all (his) pow’rs engage to do (his) Master’s will.” ²⁴⁸ That was Wesley’s life goal – to do his Master’s will. That goal would lead him to incorporate lay preachers, live and eat with the poor and disenfranchised, argue for the rights of women, and preach in “vile” places (even cemeteries), all as a result of his attentiveness. Wesley understood that the call of God supersedes the call of the church. For the leader to embrace the call of God demands embracing the work of remaining resiliently attentive to the climate and the culture in which God has strategically placed them.

Responsive

Wesley, having been attentive to the climate and culture in which he ministered; and in recognition of the challenges and crises facing the Anglican Church, and the church at large, responded in a way that was culturally applicable and relevant. A careful study of John Wesley’s life and ministry reveals clearly that it was not his intent to cause what would ultimately become an “upheaval at local, national,” ²⁴⁹ or even global levels. Instead, in responsiveness to his calling and the world in which God had strategically placed him, the Wesleyan Revival and Methodist Movement took place, and began with Wesley responding in such a way that he was able to

²⁴⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 2:257.

²⁴⁸ Charles Wesley, “A Charge to Keep I Have,” *Sing to the Lord*. (Kansas City, MO. Lillenas Publishing Company, 1993), 536.

²⁴⁹ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 27.

“disturb/disrupt his followers at a rate that they could absorb,”²⁵⁰ and in which they could engage.

A large part of the genius of the Wesleyan Revival and the Methodist Movement was due to Wesley’s relationally focused responsiveness. As noted earlier, Snyder observes, “Using innovative and creative means, he organized Methodism around the ancient call of the church: making disciples of Jesus Christ.”²⁵¹ Later, Snyder would add, “He was out to make disciples – disciples who would renew the whole church.”²⁵² In responding to the church’s ancient call to making disciples who would renew the whole church, Wesley

“Quickly discovered, as he preached to large crowds, that preaching alone was not enough; people needed ongoing support, community and structure to help them continue on the spiritual journey. To remedy this, he developed a holistic ecosystem designed to help people grow at every stage of their journey. This involved an interlocking discipleship group structure. Each of these structures gathered people into groups of different sizes focused on different aspects of the discipleship process in order to help individuals grow in their faith.”²⁵³

Snyder adds, “The class meeting thus became the primary means of grace for thousands of Methodists. It served an evangelistic and discipling function. Wesley, ‘wisely discerned that the beginnings of faith in a (person’s) heart could be incubated into saving faith more effectively in the warm Christian atmosphere of the society than in the chill of the world’.”²⁵⁴

Wesley, having been attentive to the hunger in individuals as they were embracing the scriptural message, responded in a way that would allow for true faithfulness to the church’s ancient mission to make disciples of Christ. His responsiveness allowed him to lead change

²⁵⁰ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 316.

²⁵¹ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 68.

²⁵² Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1110.

²⁵³ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 41.

²⁵⁴ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 989.

(disrupt/disturb at a rate that could be absorbed) to provide an opportunity for spiritual growth to occur, not in the mass gatherings, but rather within the intimate relational context of smaller groups.

“In other words, Wesley did not form Methodist societies (congregations) and then divide them into small groups, as we might be inclined to think. It worked the other way around. The entry point and key place of belonging was a face-to-face community where everyone knew (or got to know) everyone else. This was primary; the Methodist society was, in effect, the result.” ²⁵⁵

Ultimately, the Methodist society was the result of Wesley’s ability to be responsive.

Doug Paul, nearly three centuries later, would articulate the responsive heart of John Wesley:

“If you’re a pastor, the mission of your church probably isn’t to get people to show up and then hopefully stick around long enough to get nicer over time and throw some money in the offering plate. No, you want something much bigger for them, don’t you? You want them to have a life utterly transformed by the power of God. A life so transformed that God then uses them to transform other lives, businesses, cities, culture, and beyond.” ²⁵⁶

Often that transformation requires adaptive leaders with the ability to be responsive to “disrupt/disturb individuals at a rate they can absorb.” ²⁵⁷ John Wesley’s responsive ability allowed for this transformation to take place, both in those who would become Christ-followers through his ministry, and for generations that would follow.

Experimental

As opportunities to minister within the context of the Anglican Church continued to diminish, John Wesley, having been attentive and responsive to that climate, learned to minister

²⁵⁵ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 950.

²⁵⁶ Paul, *Ready or Not*, Loc. 908.

²⁵⁷ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Loc. 316.

and to lead experimentally. The experiment with Whitefield in field preaching was a pivotal moment in Wesley's ministry and the birthing of the Wesleyan Revival. However, this was not the only place in which Wesley's experimental spirit is visible.

“At the heart of the Wesleyan revival was the rediscovery of ‘the pure apostolic doctrines and practices of the early church.’ But Wesley did more than read and study the past. He took what he learned and reapplied it, contextualizing it (attentiveness and responsiveness) to his own time and place. More than that, he used what he learned to create a disciple-making movement that equipped and empowered thousands of people to join in God’s mission.”²⁵⁸

One such experimentation that was catalytic to the spread of the Wesleyan Revival, to the “rediscovery of the pure apostolic doctrines and practices of the early church,”²⁵⁹ and most significantly, the spread of the gospel was Wesley's experiment with lay preachers.

Wesley, having experienced the catalytic event of being excluded from his own church and being introduced to field preaching; having spent time “attending and abiding” with the people to whom he would minister; and, having responded with the establishment of various small groups for the purpose of discipleship, now realized the pivotal role that “ordinary men and women”²⁶⁰ could play in spreading the gospel. As Henry Knight illustrates, “To spread this message, Wesley employed a connection of lay preachers to travel throughout Great Britain.”²⁶¹ Through this connection of lay preachers, the Wesleyan Revival and the gospel spread in exponential ways that would have never been possible apart from Wesley's lay preacher experiment. “During the Wesleyan Revival, while Wesley and other leaders were effective in preaching to large crowds, it was ordinary men and women who were most effective in spreading

²⁵⁸ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 22.

²⁵⁹ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 22.

²⁶⁰ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 40.

²⁶¹ Knight, *John Wesley*, x.

the Christian message across England and into North America, resulting in the faith of millions of new believers.”²⁶²

Wesley’s experimental approach was met with significant opposition from both inside and outside the Church of England. Given the tradition and hierarchical (technical) nature of the church, this empowerment of the people to proclaim the gospel (a privilege only afforded those with the proper credentials and education) was unheard of in Wesley’s day.

“Wesley’s concern with reform and vital Christian experience naturally led to the question of how and through whom the church minister’s God’s grace...The question of orders of ministry arose sharply when Wesley began appointing assistants to help him and Charles in the work of preaching. How was this new body of preachers, most of whom were unordained, to be understood theologically? In what sense were they ministers? What authority did they have? And what was the meaning of Wesley’s act of appointing them? These were inevitable and crucial questions given the rather specific theories and procedures of ordination and ministry within the Church of England.”²⁶³

These questions disturbed and disrupted the leaders of the Anglican Church at a rate that they could not, or would not, absorb. But that disturbance caused by Wesley’s experiment was crucial to the spread of the Wesleyan movement.

Despite the way that the authorities within the Anglican Church responded, Wesley continued with this experiment, making every effort possible to remain under the authority of the Anglican Church, and to bring these lay preachers under that authority as well. “Wesley insisted he was appointing preachers, not pastors, and that his appointment was not ordination to the priesthood. Yet he saw his actions as consistent with the Anglican church order and with early church practice.”²⁶⁴ Wesley, in an attempt to remain true to the orders of ministry within the Anglican Church, distinguished between pastor-priests and preacher-evangelists. “Wesley saw

²⁶² Bevens, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 40.

²⁶³ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1460.

²⁶⁴ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1477.

pastor-priests as the ordinary established institutional ministers of the church while preacher-evangelists were extraordinary ministers raised up by more immediate divine inspiration somewhat outside institutional channels.”²⁶⁵ While not ordaining these individuals immediately, Wesley did in fact finally “ordain ministers for American Methodism.”²⁶⁶

This lay-preacher experiment was crucial to the spread of Methodism and the Wesleyan revival in that it allowed for more preachers to travel the countryside and proclaim the gospel. What had once been confined to the professionals within the cathedral, was now a movement of God’s Spirit taking place within the local communities where people lived. The resulting early church type of movement that was a by-product of Wesley’s willingness to experiment.

Conclusion

Ron Benefiel, in an unpublished paper entitled, “John Wesley’s Mission of Evangelism” writes,

“Wesley’s movement...was kenotic and incarnational. That is, it was a movement from places of power and privilege to the margins. It was a movement that resembled the movement of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Wesley’s pragmatism in combination with this incarnational/kenotic movement resulted in the development of creative and unorthodox programmatic methods of evangelism such as field preaching and small accountability groups for seekers and converts. While the methods he used were decidedly pragmatic, they were always at the service of the mission of the Methodist movement which was grounded theologically in his doctrine of Christian Perfection.”²⁶⁷

The church of today, a beneficiary of the Wesleyan Revival and John Wesley’s ministry and leadership, needs kenotic and incarnational adaptive leaders like Wesley. “While Wesley was a traditional high church Anglican priest who honored church tradition, at the same time, he was

²⁶⁵ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1495.

²⁶⁶ Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, Loc. 1612.

²⁶⁷ Ron Benefiel, “John Wesley’s Mission of Evangelism,” 2007, 15.

an apostolic leader who was willing to innovate, willing to bring change to the structure and methods of the church in order to see the gospel shared and lives changed.”²⁶⁸

John Wesley serves as an example of a leader who embodies adaptive leadership in his ability to be Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental in ways that were relationally focused and resiliently engaged. Throughout church history, many other leaders with these same adaptive characteristics have served to help shape and guide the church in ways that allowed the church to be missionally faithful.

“It’s worth saying that Wesley was not the only innovator in church history. He was merely responding to the unique context in which he lived and addressing the vital needs of his day. In many ways, he was simply one Christian leader in a long line of innovators and reformers who challenged institutional excess and corruption that needed to be corrected. This list includes people like John Wycliffe, the great Bible translator; Martin Luther, who wrote the ninety-five theses to address church corruption; John Calvin, who brought reform to Geneva; and even Billy Graham, who challenged the status quo among modern evangelicals by working with Christians across denominational lines. Each one uniquely addressed a problem of his time, each one came under fire by the powers that be, yet each one helped to bring needed change and correction to the church.”²⁶⁹

The founder of the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. Phineas Bresee, was another such adaptive leader.

Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of Dr. Phineas Bresee

The story of the Church of the Nazarene is one of a church birthed into a changing world; a story of a church birthed with a heart for faithfully engaging in the Missio Dei while addressing the changing culture and ecclesiastical world. Like the Nazarene’s theological forefather, John Wesley, Dr. Phineas F. Bresee and the other early founders of the denomination were not necessarily intent on creating a new church or denomination. They were simply intent on trying

²⁶⁸ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 123.

²⁶⁹ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 125.

to maintain God’s core purpose and mission so that His people could faithfully and with integrity engage in that mission.

The Church of the Nazarene embraced two essential traits from days before the denomination came into existence: the doctrine of Entire Sanctification (holiness) and the intentional emphasis on ministry alongside the poor and disenfranchised. Dr. Ron Benefiel, former pastor of Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene (the first official Nazarene congregation) reports that in the founding minutes of the church, the following words were recorded:

“We seek the simplicity and the power of the primitive New Testament church. The field of labor to which we feel called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house to house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying. To this end we strive personally to walk with God and to invite others so to do.”²⁷⁰

In the days in which the Church of the Nazarene was birthed, there was much taking place in the Protestant church’s place in the culture. There appeared to be an intentional disengagement of the church from the lives of those in the inner cities and the poor. The founders of the Church of the Nazarene, and Dr. Bresee in particular sensed that the *Missio Dei* demanded that the church re-engage with the “least of these.”²⁷¹ This required that efforts be made to bring the redemptive and restorative message of God in a manner that their lives could be transformed and restored to the *Imago Dei* in which they, and all of humanity had been created; and so that they could then grow daily in the image of Christ (entire sanctification).

Crucial to this effort was the relational focus that Dr. Bresee embodied, particularly within the community of those who had previously been marginalized and ostracized by the

²⁷⁰ Ron Benefiel, “Historical Overview of the Mission of Mercy in the Church of the Nazarene,” 2021, 1.

²⁷¹ Matthew 25:40 (*New Living Translation*).

church. Bresee's intentional welcome of and engagement with these individuals allowed the message of heart holiness to be not only proclaimed in word, but in action, as Bresee intentionally developed relationships for the purpose of fulfilling the two great commands to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength... and to love your neighbor as yourself."²⁷² This relationally focused transformative work was not always quick and easy, and demanded that Bresee be resiliently engaged in the face of adversity and criticism.

This case study will not serve as an historical overview of the denomination but will examine illustrative moments and events in the formative days of the Church of the Nazarene under the leadership of Dr. Bresee who exhibited the key characteristics of adaptive leadership: Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive, and Experimental. It is important to note that in the days in which Dr. Bresee lived and ministered, and in which the Church of the Nazarene came into existence, leadership was primarily technical in nature, in that it was almost exclusively hierarchical and autocratic in nature, a reality that was equally present in secular and ecclesiological worlds.

This examination is not intended to portray Dr. Bresee as a definitive, and completely adaptive leader, instead the purpose of this work is to highlight the ways in which the four characteristics of adaptive leadership were present in his ecclesiastical leadership. These characteristics allowed for Dr. Bresee's innovative and pioneering work to take place and for the denomination to come into existence in a way that was missionally faithful and congruent with the eternal *Missio Dei*.

²⁷² Mark 12:30-31 (*New Living Translation*).

Catalytic

It is difficult to identify a specific “life-changing encounter or rediscovery of the gospel,”²⁷³ or one specific question, observation or conversation that was the catalytic event in Bresee’s experience. However, there were certain ideas and beliefs, as well as experiences upon which Bresee drew as the early Church of the Nazarene began to take shape. Dr. Bresee was deeply committed to a belief in transformational heart holiness, or what the Church of the Nazarene calls Entire Sanctification. It was his unwavering belief that Christ-followers were called to the experience of entire sanctification, in which the sin nature would be cleansed, and the believer empowered to live a continually growing and maturing life of Christlikeness. John Wesley’s message of Christian Perfection, or Perfect Love was the message that Bresee preached wherever he went.

Bresee was also firmly convinced that this message was for all people, and that the church should be intentional about proclaiming this message of holiness to those who were being disenfranchised and marginalized by not only society, but by the church as well. Dr. Bresee himself wrote, “The imparted power by the Holy Ghost thrills and fills and burns in living testimony... Men and women can hear the message and get saved. Drunkards and harlots, the unlettered, every humble, earnest, longing soul can know the power of God to save to the uttermost.”²⁷⁴ Bresee was concerned that this message be proclaimed to the poor and was strongly influenced by the ministry of Phoebe Palmer, “of New York City who led the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness.”²⁷⁵ The authors of *Our Watchword and Song* note,

²⁷³ Bevins, *Marks of a Movement*, Loc. 44.

²⁷⁴ Ron Benefiel, “Languages of Holiness: The Autobiography of a Seeker,” March 15, 2012, 1.

²⁷⁵ “Nazarene Essentials: Who We Are and What We Believe,” n.d., <https://nazarene.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/NazareneEssentials1.2.pdf>, Loc. 8.

“Believing like John Wesley that perfect love would necessarily flow out to neighbors in need, Phoebe Palmer invested time and energy in ministries of compassion. She considered Wesley’s concern for the poor ‘the glory of Methodism’ in its founding days and she worked to keep it central for Methodists in the nineteenth century.”²⁷⁶

Bresee and Palmer and others within the holiness revival did not suddenly discover this need to reach out in love and proclaim a message of transformational holiness to the disenfranchised and those caught in the oppressive grip of poverty. They simply noticed that the church, along with society, was slowly marginalizing these individuals created in the image of God; opting, instead to focus efforts on the middle and upper class. In response, Bresee and others like him attempted to awaken the church from what Tom Nees, former pastor of Washington, D. C. First Church of the Nazarene and founder of Community of Hope in the inner-city of the nation’s capital, called “spiritual amnesia.” For Bresee, the church needed to be reminded that Jesus came as “one of the least of these,”²⁷⁷ and commanded His followers to care, physically and spiritually for those same individuals. Consequently, for Bresee, “the mission of the Church of the Nazarene was thus to ‘Christianize Christianity’ in America.”²⁷⁸

As those various groups, committed to the catalytic work of “Christianizing Christianity” in America while proclaiming the message of transformational holiness for all people, came together, united in mission, the Church of the Nazarene began to take shape. Dr. Bresee, as happened often throughout his ministry in Iowa and on the West Coast, rose to prominence as a catalytic leader and voice in the formation of this new incarnational expression of God’s

²⁷⁶ Stan Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 43.

²⁷⁷ Matthew 25:40 (*New Living Translation*).

²⁷⁸ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 107.

Kingdom. What was said of Bresee in one of his congregations also applies to what was happening as the denomination began to take shape: “Bresee was being tested, but the laity resolved his dilemma. Bresee did not ‘found’ a church as much as consent to be the pastor of a church that (was being birthed) into existence.”²⁷⁹ Bresee himself noted that the “Church of the Nazarene was born in a holiness revival,”²⁸⁰ not as an intentional birthing of a denomination, but in response to the questions, “*What if we intentionally proclaimed the transformational message of holiness to those who are being marginalized?*” and “*Who do we need to become in order that this message can be heard?*”

Dr. Bresee was a catalytic leader, committed to a God-given vision and mission that the Scriptural message of transformational holiness is a message for all people. This vision and mission is founded in the Scriptural understanding of the *Missio Dei*, in which all of humanity, including the disenfranchised and poor, can be restored and redeemed in the image of God. This catalytic belief and vision in Dr. Bresee’s heart was shared by other leaders across the nation within the holiness movement. This catalytic conviction would lead to the birth of the Church of the Nazarene.

Dr. Scott Daniels writes, “The Church of the Nazarene was formed more by the merging of people with similar passions and values than it was the leaving of disgruntled people from other traditions and denominations. Bresee was so devoted to the (catalytic) vision of holiness that many other nonessentials clearly became secondary”²⁸¹ “Amid these crosscurrents, Bresee appealed to the formula of the 16th century Lutheran Petrus Meiderlinus: ‘in essentials unity, in

²⁷⁹ Carl Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee: Pastor to the People*, Abridged edition (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 139.

²⁸⁰ Timothy Lawrence Smith, *The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years*, Called unto Holiness 1 (Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 91.

²⁸¹ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 10.

non-essentials liberty, in all things charity (love)’.”²⁸² Dr. Bresee’s twofold catalytic vision for Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene became the catalytic vision for the birthing of the denomination: “to proclaim holiness throughout the land and to minister to and among the poor.”²⁸³

Attentive

The ability for one to be attentive to both the God-given vision and mission, while also being attentive to the cultural context in which He has placed the leader was evident in much of Dr. Bresee’s life and ministry. Carl Bangs, in writing about the time in which Dr. Bresee was still a Methodist preacher in Chariton, Iowa, notes, “Wesleyan standards were clashing with new middle-class prosperity, a dynamic that increasingly shaped Bresee’s ministry.”²⁸⁴ This clash came because of the increased attention given to the middle- and upper-class individuals while ignoring the needs and lives of those less fortunate. This, in Bresee’s mind, was not who Methodists were called to be. More importantly, this was not the attitude and mindset that should be present in the life of a Christ-follower. As Bresee surveyed the landscape of the church, observing the circumstances and conditions around him, he became increasingly aware (attentive) to the need to intentionally minister to the needs and proclaim the message of transformational holiness to those being ignored by the Body of Christ, a message most faithfully proclaimed in the context of relationship.

In response to this attentiveness,

²⁸² Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 165.

²⁸³ Benefiel, “Historical Overview of the Mission of Mercy in the Church of the Nazarene.” 7.

²⁸⁴ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 48.

“The Church of the Nazarene (was) shaped by Bresee’s passion for the poor...the denomination’s name came not just from the connection to Jesus of Nazareth, but from the understanding that the word ‘Nazarene’ had derogatory overtones...Bresee’s church would be centered on Jesus the Nazarene but would also be oriented toward those marginalized persons from whom nothing good was expected to come.”²⁸⁵

Cunningham and Ingersol record,

“On the morning of the church’s official organization J. P. Widney preached from Matthew 4:19, Jesus’ call to Peter and Andrew to ‘follow Me.’...The New Testament accounts of Jesus’ life revealed one who mingled with outcasts - prostitutes, tax collectors, and the physically disabled, and who brought good news of God’s grace and forgiveness to such forgotten people. The New Testament depicted a Jesus who was mocked and reviled by people with power and influence because of his close identification with lowly and powerless people. Even the town where he was brought up, Nazareth, was a source of scorn: ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46).’ Thus, according to Widney, the most fitting name for a Christian Church, a gathering of followers of Christ, was the ‘Church of the Nazarene,’ a name that symbolized ‘the toiling lowly mission of Christ and the mission of Christ’s followers’.”²⁸⁶

Having attentively observed the condition and circumstances of both the church and the poor, Bresee concluded, “We can get along without rich people, but not without preaching the gospel to the poor.”²⁸⁷

Bresee’s attentive leadership became increasingly apparent as he traveled to various cities and observed the conditions and circumstances of the church and the marginalized poor in those places. In Chicago, Bresee called believers to pray, noting that,

“Chicago is a great city, the possibilities for a great work are large. It is the object of this article to enlist every follower of Jesus that is in the blessing of entire sanctification to pray more than earnestly for the marvelous presence and power of God to be displayed, that the work of organizing a Church of the Nazarene may be accompanied with an open heaven, sending down the flood tides of glory. Chicago needs a good, strong holiness church, and with the stalwart men and women who are behind the invitation in the

²⁸⁵ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 9.

²⁸⁶ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 101.

²⁸⁷ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 9.

movement, it is sure to be an epoch for religious people to have a Church of the Nazarene come into their midst.”²⁸⁸

Bresee then went on to state his understanding of the times, or his attentive observation of what was going on particularly within the church.

“There are hundreds of clear, definite holiness people there who want a home. The old Wesleyan doctrine of holiness as a second, definite work of grace, is not acceptable to hundreds of churches and preachers, who are substituting suppression or repression, or ‘get-it-all-at-conversion’ for the old, time-honored preaching of Jesus, Saint Paul, Saint John, and Wesley, that entire sanctification is a second, definite work of grace in the heart of a regenerated child of God.”²⁸⁹

Bresee’s catalytic vision and belief in the necessity of the proclamation and experience of transformational holiness opened his eyes to the desperate need in Chicago for a church, or as Bresee often called churches, “a center of holy fire”²⁹⁰ that would proclaim this message, but in a way that it would be available to all people. Consequently, Bresee concluded, “It is providential that the Church of the Nazarene is thus to be organized. It has a bright future. We ask all holiness people to bear this important work up before the throne, that God may marvelously show forth his power.”²⁹¹

Near the turn of the century, Bresee was with E. A. Girvin in California. Girvin, in his biography of Dr. Bresee, records the events of that evening:

“On Wednesday, October 21, 1896, I attended the prayer meeting. There were from 130 to 140 present, and it was a grand meeting. I remember well the trip to South Pasadena with Doctor Bresee, on the evening of October 19, 1896, for it was on that occasion that I told him how much I would like to have a Church of the Nazarene in Berkeley. He replied that, if I meant business, and would become the pastor of the church he would come up there at any time and hold a 10 days’ meeting, for the express purpose of

²⁸⁸ Girvin, E. A., *Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1916), 220.

²⁸⁹ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 220.

²⁹⁰ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 129.

²⁹¹ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 220.

organizing a Church of the Nazarene. I told him that I would do so but asked for time in which to pray over the matter, so that I might be plainly led as to just when to take that important step...Early in January of 1897, Doctor Bresee went to Berkeley, a Church of the Nazarene was organized, of which I became the pastor; and the center of holy fire then established in that place, has been maintained there ever since. ” ²⁹²

Bresee, continually attentive to the conditions and circumstances around him, recognized the genuine need for a church intent on proclaiming transformational holiness to all people in this area of California. Bresee was able to recognize the condition of Girvin’s heart and desire, which allowed Bresee to see the potential pastoral leadership ability in Girvin. Sometime later, concerning the work of God being done through the obedience of E. A. Girvin, Bresee wrote,

“Our church at Berkeley is doing excellently well under the able, enthusiastic and judicious leadership of brother Girvin. The church and congregation are steadily growing. It is a perennial fountain of spiritual life and power. A goodly number of efficient men and women are now gathered within its folds. Full Salvation is clearly taught and testified to, and people are pressed into the experience. The services...are full of enthusiasm and power...it has been nearly a year and a half since his work began under what seemed the most unpromising conditions. The one great fact was that God had here raised up a man and anointed him to preach the gospel in its fullness and power. A little band of heroes answered to the call...This little church is an Oasis in a desert...here is a place where the waters of life flow. Brother Girvin and his fellow workers are as happy and triumphant a band that can be found.” ²⁹³

Perhaps the work in Spokane, Washington is where Bresee’s attentiveness is most on display. Upon his visit on December 22, 1904, Bresee wrote,

“There are fine blocks lining the streets, good systems of railways, and all of the appliances and conveniences of a modern city. Like all the cities that we have seen in this great northwest, it is greatly cursed by the saloon, and as a result, there is much drunkenness. How this liquor blight everywhere is turning strength into weakness, and beauty to ashes; yet it is licensed by the people, who share the spoils of its robbery of the poor, and who are thus guilty of its crimes. When will the American people learn righteousness and wisdom?” ²⁹⁴

²⁹² Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 122-123.

²⁹³ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee* 155-156.

²⁹⁴ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee* 244.

Again, Bresee's commitment to his God-given vision of proclaiming the message of transformational holiness, along with his God-given mission of ministry with the poor opened his eyes to the condition and circumstances of the culture, the church, and the individual in the city of Spokane. Recognizing the deep need, and in answer to the adaptive questions of "What if...?" and "Who do we need to be?" Bresee writes these hope-filled and missionally focused words:

"But the Church of the Nazarene has a life-saving station in the darkest place in the city- in a block almost literally filled on its four sides with saloons and places of wickedness. Here, a few heroic souls started a mission about five years ago opposed by the church of which they were members, because it took them from the work of the central church, whose energy was spent largely in other directions than in getting people saved. About three years ago they determined to organize the Church of the Nazarene in which they found sympathy and cooperation in this mission work, so much needed, and upon which they had already entered. They organized the church in the midst of much opposition and misrepresentation from those with whom they had previously associated. But the blessing of the Lord has been greatly upon the work, he has made it a lighthouse, not only for this part of the city, but for this whole northwest." ²⁹⁵

Through the resilient obedience of those few individuals, and the resilient attentiveness of Dr. Bresee, a new center of holy fire was established in which lives were radically transformed by God's grace. That transformation within those individuals ultimately had an impact upon the very city of Spokane itself. On July 4, 1905, seven months later, Dr. Bresee reflected on the last evening of the Northwest District Assembly,

"Here are men from the depths of sin, whose lives were wrecked, every hope blasted, who were unable to break the chains that bound them, and yet were delivered, the broken, a new life imported, the years which the cankerworm had eaten restored- good citizens and good men triumphantly on their way. No wonder that police officers, city officials, and good citizens feel that this work is a benediction to the city." ²⁹⁶

Dr. Bresee's attentiveness was not limited to the condition and circumstances of the city, he was also attentive to societal needs and continued to ask the adaptive questions within that

²⁹⁵ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 244.

²⁹⁶ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 260.

context. This was especially evident within the temperance movement and the abolitionist movement. Within the temperance movement, Dr. Bresee observed the devastating effects that alcohol was having on individual lives, on the lives of families and on society as a whole. Consequently, he urged abstinence within the infant denomination, a stance that continues to this day.

Bresee's attentiveness within the abolitionist movement was equally as prominent as his efforts within the temperance movement. "While at Grinnell (Iowa), Bresee actively supported the abolition of slavery. The Bresee family's move to Iowa had coincided with the Dred Scott Decision in which the U. S. Supreme Court had ruled slaves were not citizens and did not have the legal rights or protections of citizens."²⁹⁷ Bresee's commitment to ministry to the disenfranchised and marginalized simply would not allow Bresee to live or minister within a church or society that viewed another person or people group as a lesser reflection of the Imago Dei; and therefore, unworthy of the gift of the message of transformational holiness.

Bresee's attentiveness in the cities that he visited and in which he ministered, as well as his attentiveness to the societal issues of the day is apparent. However, for Bresee and those who would lead from an adaptive paradigm, this attentiveness must not be an end in itself. Bresee's attentiveness compelled him to continue to wrestle with the key questions of adaptive leadership in an attempt to not only "understand the times,"²⁹⁸ but to know how to respond. To that characteristic we now turn our attention.

Responsive

Bresee's ability to respond, rather than react was based in his vision and understanding of God's mission and of who the church is to be in order to faithfully engage in that mission. For

²⁹⁷ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 82.

²⁹⁸ 1 Chronicles 12:32 (*New Living Translation*).

Bresee this meant the intentional proclamation of the doctrine of holy love or entire sanctification, and the intentional ministry with and alongside the poor. For Bresee, this holy love of God that was to be “shed abroad in our hearts,”²⁹⁹ was the basis for how he would respond to those places and issues, and most importantly people of which his attentiveness had made him aware.

Bresee’s response to those places, issues and people was especially focused on and visible in how he lived with and led during the formative days of the Church of the Nazarene.

Paulo Freire writes,

“Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation.”³⁰⁰

Bresee’s responsiveness was based in this loving commitment to free individuals, communities and even the nation from the oppressive forces, especially the oppressive force of sin, which held so many prisoners. As mentioned in the previous section, this was evident in Bresee’s commitment to the temperance movement and the abolition of slavery.

Bresee’s efforts within the temperance movement were not limited to the realm of the church. It was Bresee’s belief that the church was responsible to address these issues within the context of society as well. For that reason, Bresee took a very vocal role within the temperance movement across the nation. In a newspaper article reporting on a rally held in Red Oak, Iowa, the reporter recorded these words:

²⁹⁹ Romans 5:5 (*King James Version*).

³⁰⁰ Paulo Freire, Donald P. Macedo, and Ira Shor, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 50th anniversary edition (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), Loc. 89.

“Rev. Bresee addressed the meeting for about 20 minutes in his usual animated manner, against the scent of intemperance. While he would be charitable to the drinker and seller, and use no harsh language, duty compelled him to class the latter among the worst of criminals...the seller could stand unmoved amid scenes that would meltdown the most hardened of any other class. The cries of starving children, the tears of mothers...all these he was proof against. A pen dipped in hell could not portray in color sufficiently black the crime and misery entailed upon the country by the infernal traffic. He had sworn eternal enmity to alcohol and expected to fight it as long as he lived.”³⁰¹

In *Our Watchword and Song*, the authors point out that “Bresee led the fight to keep Pasadena dry and to keep anti-prohibition forces at bay. He supported a boycott against businesses that refused to enforce the city’s law, as well as businessmen who would not openly support the prohibition cause. As a result, his opponents sometimes disrupted his services and attacked him in the public press.”³⁰²

At one point, as Carl Bangs points out, “Bresee opened his church to a temperance rally in January 1887 and joined the 540 people who pledged to boycott businesses that did not support ‘ordinance 39’ (prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages).”³⁰³ This was not a very popular stance within the business community. However, because Bresee understood and was committed to the message of perfecting holy love, he realized that his response to the oppressive power of alcohol was to be a response from a posture of “courage and bravery... (and demanded a) commitment to the cause of others and to their liberation,”³⁰⁴ regardless of the personal sacrifice (thus, the need for leadership resiliency).

Bresee’s friend, E. A. Girvin writes, “Dr. Bresee took a very prominent part in the prohibition conflict in Pasadena, so much so, indeed, as to draw the fire of the enemy upon

³⁰¹ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 64.

³⁰² Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 90.

³⁰³ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 114.

³⁰⁴ Freire, Macedo, and Shor, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Loc. 89.

himself. The opponents of prohibition were so aroused that they burned him in effigy and attacked him in the most vituperative manner in a public press of the city.”³⁰⁵ In spite of the attacks, Bresee “remained a strong prohibitionist, believing this to be methodism's historic position. He carried this emphasis into his new denomination whose twin purposes he later said were holiness and temperance”³⁰⁶

Bangs observes that, “Bresee’s leadership in the temperance movement went along with his revivalism and church building. American Methodism had followed John Wesley’s rule against ‘drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, except in cases of extreme necessity...Bresee embraced ‘total abstinence.’”³⁰⁷ Bresee, true to his Methodist roots, and more importantly, true to his convictions regarding the importance of ministry to the oppressed and poor led the Church of the Nazarene in becoming a strong voice in the temperance movement.

It has already been noted that Bresee’s attentiveness made him acutely aware of the oppressive sin of slavery. As one would imagine, though, his commitment to the abolition of slavery at this point in history, was not well received in all places. In 1859, Dr. Bresee was appointed to his own circuit of churches within the Methodist church in Pella, Iowa. By 1861, he had been ordained. Not long after his ordination in 1861, Bresee requested a transfer from Pella. His request came, “because he found that his antislavery convictions were an offense to certain people of southern blood. The heritage of abolitionism from the ‘burned-over district’ of western New York (where he was born and raised) always lay close to his heart.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Freire, Macedo, and Shor, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Loc. 88.

³⁰⁶ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 114.

³⁰⁷ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 63.

³⁰⁸ Smith, *The Story of the Nazarenes*, 92.

Bangs notes that during Bresee's ministry, "slavery was the unresolved tragic issue that had simmered for years."³⁰⁹ Bresee himself, commenting on one of the churches that was a part of his Grinnell circuit, noted that this appointment, "was made up largely of Southern people. They were very strong in their feeling of sympathy with the rebellion, and I was very strong in my loyalty and anti-slavery conviction."³¹⁰ Ultimately, "Bresee, faithful to what he understood the gospel to say about human equality and love for neighbor, angered his Southern-sympathizing parishioners by preaching what they considered to be abolition doctrine."³¹¹

Bresee's understanding of, and commitment to the *Missio Dei* compelled him to respond in a way that would allow his ministry and the church that he was leading into existence to faithfully engage in that mission so that lives and communities could be transformed and liberated from the oppressive forces that held them captive. This was long and difficult work, but Bresee's resilience in the face of criticism and opposition enabled him to assume a posture of responsiveness as he relationally engaged in his calling.

Experimental

Dr. Bresee, a catalyst for a new expression of the inbreaking Kingdom of God, attentive and responsive to the culture and people around him, embodied an experimental posture as the Church of the Nazarene into existence. There are many evidences of Bresee's innovative and experimental leadership in the formative and early days of the denomination. Bresee's emphasis

³⁰⁹ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 40.

³¹⁰ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 41.

³¹¹ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 82.

on education, having served faithfully in places such as Simpson College, the University of Southern California, and Pacific Bible College (which would later become Point Loma Nazarene University), where he served as President, compelled Bresee to lead the Church of the Nazarene into the field of providing quality higher education. Bresee's experimental ventures into the world of education continues to be a primary place of ministry within the Church of the Nazarene to this day, as the denomination boasts fifty-one colleges, universities, and seminaries worldwide.

Bresee was very committed to the inclusion of women in the life and ministry of the Church of the Nazarene as well. Bangs notes, "Bresee was a man of his times. With contemporaries, he struggled over the slavery issue. He favored women's rights and, in the 1890's, ensured women's full equality in the Church of the Nazarene."³¹² This favoring of women's rights led Bresee to work for the inclusion of women in the congregational life of the blooming denomination. In addition, he was strongly committed to women being embraced and included in ministry, as well. Women such as Phoebe Palmer and Mary Lee Cagle, co-founder of the New Testament Church of Christ (one of the groups that united with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in 1908) were extremely influential on Bresee and the formative days of the new denomination.

Perhaps Bresee's experimental spirit with regard to women in ministry and leadership was best seen in the person of Amanda Smith. Smith, a former slave who preached holiness to whites and blacks across the globe, established an orphanage and urged greater equality for blacks and women. Girvin, writing about Amanda Smith states that she,

"Came to Los Angeles and helped at the meetings for a few days. Dr. Bresee gives the following eloquent description of this mighty woman of God: 'she preached one Sabbath

³¹² Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 202.

afternoon, as I have never heard her preach before, and as I have rarely heard anybody preach, in strains of holy eloquence and unction, almost equal to Bishop Simpson in the zenith of his power and sacred oratory. The Lord opened heaven on the people and mighty tides of glory’.”³¹³

To this day, women play an important and integral role in ministerial leadership within the Church of the Nazarene, largely because of Bresee’s experimental posture in welcoming and embracing these tremendous and necessary servants of God.

Bresee’s experimental posture is seen best, though, in the place of the actual local church itself. As has been previously mentioned, the name of the denomination, proposed by J. P. Widney to Dr. Bresee was intentionally focused to convey the church’s responsibility to minister with the poor and disenfranchised. Carl Bangs notes that even though Bresee may have had some disagreement with Widney regarding what was considered his,

“Low Christology and low ecclesiology, Bresee accepted the name because the name Church of the Nazarene, ‘expressed Bresee’s desire for a church that welcomed rich and poor like, where all could accept the message of Christ without the encrustations of overgrown ecclesiasticism and formality and without embarrassment over poverty or wealth.’”³¹⁴

This desire led to Bresee’s experiment with both worship style and architecture. While the modern church considers the more recent “worship wars,” in which the style of music was the focus, to be a more modern experiment, the truth is that it has been going on for centuries. For Bresee, this was a crucial experiment in the formation of this new denomination that was carried out through much of his ministry. In his time at both Red Oak and Clarinda, Iowa, Bresee incorporated both classic hymns as well as what at that time were modern gospel songs. Bangs recounts, “the church in Clarinda was noted for its singing, and Bresee introduced modern gospel

³¹³ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 91.

³¹⁴ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 141.

songs. At Red Oak he had employed a songbook with choruses by Phillip Phillips. This new music was a turning point for Bresee and American Protestantism generally.”³¹⁵

More significant than the type of music, though, was the general sense of freedom and excitement in the worship experiences. Bresee engaged in a much more relaxed and conversational style of preaching, and the congregants engaged in what can only be called a very lively expression of worship. This liveliness found expression in both the robust singing, but also in the outbursts of praise during the preaching services. It was not at all unusual to hear shouts of “Hallelujah,” and “glory” multiple times during the service. In addition, as worshipers would experience the presence of God’s Spirit in powerful ways, they would often rise from their seats to run up and down the aisles while waving their handkerchiefs. While charismatic in nature, these outbursts of praise were not outbursts of speaking in tongues. Ultimately, in 1919, the Church of the Nazarene dropped the word Pentecostal from its name, so as not to be confused with the charismatic movement.

This experiment in increased freedom in expressive worship was significant in the development and growth of the Church of the Nazarene. For Bresee, this was a part of the expression of the church’s commitment to the experience of transformational holiness. However, more significant to the two-fold vision of the denomination was the construction of the buildings in which these congregations were to worship. During his time in Pasadena, Bresee’s experiment with church architecture came to the forefront. While there, the church grew to the point of overcrowding. Rather than building a beautiful, new cathedral-type structure, as most churches of his day did, Bresee, instead helped to erect a “large board Tabernacle (like those that could be found at some camp meeting grounds at the time) seating 2000 next door to the church. Bresee then added evening street corner meetings to reach transient construction workers who were in

³¹⁵ Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 71.

town building houses in rapidly rising neighborhoods.”³¹⁶ This simple structure, allowed for those transient workers to feel welcomed and embraced.

Unfortunately, this experiment was not necessarily embraced by the members of the church or community.

“Financial difficulties, and perhaps some class conflict, plagued the congregation. Bresee’s aggressive leadership of temperance forces in Pasadena stirred opposition in the business community. This distressed some wealthy and influential people in Bresee’s congregation. This church lost members due to an exodus of people from Pasadena after its early boom collapsed. The church had overextended its resources in the building of a new sanctuary, and conflict arose over the crude Tabernacle built adjacent to the large, attractive new sanctuary, which was to have been a showpiece of a socially and economically respectable Methodism. The board Tabernacle harkened back to an earlier, rural and rustic era of Methodism, when Methodists were poor outsiders. The Tabernacle would not appeal to the sort of person that Pasadena First wanted to attract.”³¹⁷

In *The Innovator’s DNA*, the authors suggest: “Most innovative entrepreneurs we studied felt that mistakes are nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, they are an expected cost of doing business.”³¹⁸ Although this experiment did not ultimately work in Pasadena, it simply solidified in Bresee’s heart and mind the need for an expression of God’s Kingdom that, even in its architecture would welcome all people. In Bresee’s words, “It had been my long-cherished desire to have a place in the heart of the city, which could be a center of holy fire, and where the gospel could be preached to the poor.”³¹⁹ In Los Angeles, that place was properly known as Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene but was affectionately referred to by those who attended and the surrounding community as, “The Glory Barn.”

³¹⁶ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 89.

³¹⁷ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 89.

³¹⁸ Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator’s DNA*, 26.

³¹⁹ Busic, *The City*, Loc. 11.

Bresee spoke of his continual desire to have a place where the gospel could be preached to the poor when he wrote, “We do not ask for, we do not desire costly churches. We do desire the power and glory of the manifest divine presence. We rejoice in him. In this board Tabernacle the poor are made rich, the soaring to rejoice. Heaven greets and fills our souls.”³²⁰ He went on to state,

“We want places so plain that every board will say welcome to the poorest... We do not covet the fine churches of our neighbors; we only long after a richer anointing with the Holy Ghost, that we may be committed to reach the poor and the outcast, for whom our Redeemer lived and died. Let the Church of the Nazarene be true to its commission; not great and elegant buildings; but to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and wipe away the tears of the sorrowing; and gather jewels for his diadem.”³²¹

While a tent at Pilot Point, Texas in 1908 serves as the place of organization for the Church of the Nazarene, a barn in the middle of Los Angeles, California stands in denominational memory as the birthplace that contains the very heart of the people called Nazarenes.

“This building, little more than a great barn, enters into the history of the Nazarene movement, and becomes one of the sacred places, full of hallowed memories. In connection with it, we cannot but recognize the divine Providence which began more and more to be made manifest with reference to the work. Truly a plan of God could be seen in the fact that this place, so unpromising in all outward things, should be made a center, or point of converging conditions, for multitudes. Here it was that the outgoing of great tides of spiritual life and influence began to mark more clearly the divine call that entered into this work. It could not be more evident that the very place of beginning was arranged with divine wisdom.”³²²

In an editorial in the 1898 *Nazarene Messenger*, Dr. Bresee wrote,

“We were convinced that houses of worship should be plain and cheap, to save from financial burdens, and that everything should say welcome to the poor. We went feeling that food and clothing and shelter were the open doors to the hearts of the unsaved poor,

³²⁰ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 109-110.

³²¹ Bryan P. Stone, *Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996), 115.

³²² Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 107-108.

and that through these doors we could bear to them the life of God. We went in poverty, to give ourselves- and what God might give us- determined to forego provision for the future and old age, in order to see the Salvation of God while we were yet here. God has not disappointed us. While we would be glad to do much more, yet hundreds of dollars have gone to the poor, with loving ministry of every kind, and with it a way has been opened up to the hearts of men and women, that has been unutterable joy. The gospel comes to a multitude without money and without price, and the poorest of the poor are entitled to a front seat at the Church of the Nazarene, the only condition being that they come early enough to get there.”³²³

Bresee himself, then would stand at the door and welcome every person who walked in, intentionally engaging in relationship as an expression of the loving heart of God. “If a man came in poor clothing and with obvious embarrassment, the pastor would put his arm around him and usher him to the best seat in the house.”³²⁴

In the heart of a city in Southern California stood a simple barn, a monument to Dr. Bresee’s desire and to his commitment to the two-fold vision of preaching holiness and ministry with the poor, that God had given him. This barn stood in direct opposition to the Gothic style buildings that were being erected across the nation. But in all its simple beauty, this barn stood as a testament to the experimental posture of Dr. Phineas Bresee and his efforts to birth a church and a people called the Nazarenes.

Conclusion

This case study was in no way intended to be an exhaustive look at the life and ministry of Dr. Bresee, nor was it considered to be a comprehensive history of the formative days of the Church of the Nazarene. Instead, in recognizing the 21st century North American church’s desperate need for missionally faithful leaders operating out of an adaptive paradigm, this has simply been an overview of the leadership of Dr. Phineas Bresee. Dr. Bresee’s adaptive

³²³ Smith, *The Story of the Nazarenes*, 114.

³²⁴ Smith, *The Story of the Nazarenes*, 120.

leadership was seen in his Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental posture and efforts all throughout the formative and early days of the denomination.

Dr. Bresee, in those formative days wrote,

“‘God is our strength’...He puts in human souls the strength, courage, infidelity, and hope, and love which mean victory. God has raised up human souls above all self-seeking; above all ambition or seeking for worldly gain or place, far above seeking for entertainment- even religious entertainment. God has raised up men and women of fidelity, true to God, and their fellow workers, those whom God his trusted, and men could trust, who have not been a disappointment to heaven and earth. They have stood in their places, and with steadfast gaze and finished faith, have held fast their testimony, without wavering, and have shown us lights in the world. The presence of such men and women, who could not be turned aside or held back, being filled with the fullness of God has made it possible for God to work.”³²⁵

Although Bresee wrote these words about those who came alongside to help bring the Church of the Nazarene into existence, he himself embodied this steadfastness, faithfulness, and resiliency as he served as the catalytic, attentive, responsive, and experimental leader that God had strategically empowered and equipped to raise up this new expression of His Kingdom.

Upon the actual organization of the Church of the Nazarene in Pilot Point, Texas in October 1908, Dr. Bresee as General Superintendent proclaimed,

“When history is being made and great things are coming to pass, those who are in the often hard and difficult places, struggling for the birth of the greater things to come are so taken up with the burden of toil which taxes their being to the utmost, that they little realize new heights which are being won. Some one or a few may have the vision of what is really being done; but mostly the actors are covered with the dust and smoke of battle. But they whom God leads build better than they know, and when the years reveal the unveiled structure they are as much surprised as any - possibly the most surprised.”³²⁶

Whether or not Dr. Bresee was surprised will never be known. What is known is that because of his obedience to be the adaptive leader God had created him to be, the Church of the Nazarene

³²⁵ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 168.

³²⁶ Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee*, 412.

today stands to boldly proclaim the message of transformational holiness to all people in all places.

Adaptive Leadership as Revealed in the Ministry of Dr. Nina Gunter

Nina Griggs Gunter, “a country girl, raised on a farm, picking cotton,” ³²⁷was born September 4, 1937, in Marlboro County, South Carolina. She grew up in a home in which attendance at the first and oldest Nazarene church in South Carolina was a part of their weekly life. As the youngest of eight children, Dr. Gunter stated that her “parents from the start, empowered her and her siblings to be leaders.” ³²⁸ Early on, this empowerment became evident in her life as she and her siblings would often “play church,” with Nina serving as the preacher, an obvious sign of things to come.

Dr. Gunter was ordained an elder in the Church of the Nazarene on the Joplin (Missouri) District in 1960. She served faithfully alongside her husband, Dr. Moody Gunter as pastors in Tennessee, Missouri, and South Carolina. In those years, as Dr. Gunter expressed, “the church began to recognize that God had gifted (her) as a leader with skills and abilities in organization and team-building.” ³²⁹ Consequently, she was elected to serve as the South Carolina District Missions President for fifteen years as her husband served as the District Superintendent. Eventually, this led to her election to the General Church of the Nazarene Missions Council (which was “unusual for such a small district” ³³⁰) and ultimately, to be elected by the Board of

³²⁷ Nina Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, September 9, 2021.

³²⁸ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³²⁹ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³³⁰ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

General Superintendents and General Board to serve as the denominational General Missions Director, becoming the first ordained elder to hold that position.

On June 29, 2005, Dr. Nina Gunter was elected on the 24th ballot to the office of General Superintendent, the highest elected position within the Church of the Nazarene, becoming the first female elected to that position. While the ministry of women has always been a significant part of the Church of the Nazarene, the unfortunate reality is that the ability for women to serve in leadership roles, for decades, was nearly non-existent. While affirming God's call upon women's lives, the church did very little to afford opportunities for leadership at any level to them. Janine Metcalf, as recorded by the authors of *Our Watchword and Song*, notes "Though women 'continue to receive glowing endorsements from our General Superintendents and a growing number of division leaders,' there is a hidden resistance in high and low places to women, unless they are willing to fill secondary roles."³³¹ That would change drastically with the election of Dr. Gunter and other key female leaders in the early 2000's. "With the election of Josie Owens as District Superintendent of the New England District in 2004, of Corlis McGee as President of Eastern Nazarene College in 2005, and of Nina Gunter as General Superintendent in 2005, Nazarenes placed women in key leadership roles in North America."³³²

As Dr. Gunter assumed the various roles and responsibilities of leadership presented to her, the qualities and characteristics of adaptive leadership became increasingly apparent. In her book, *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Dr. Gunter writes of her philosophy of leadership which is reflective of the adaptive paradigm. She contends that "most leaders lead by one of two styles: control or influence."³³³ To lead with control, according to Gunter, is what is understood

³³¹ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 533.

³³² Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 535.

³³³ Nina G Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, 2014, <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3379767>, Loc. 1101.

to be the power-centric technical paradigm of leadership. She continues, “To say that leadership methods and practices today are power-oriented is to say that kids like ice cream. Virtually nothing is higher on the leadership wish list than power.”³³⁴ This, according to Gunter is antithetical to the challenge placed before an ecclesiastical leader in which one is challenged to reflect the Imago Dei as they engage in the Mission Dei.

In so doing, the leader, according to Gunter, is called to recognize their place within the relational context of the Body of Christ. She writes,

“Today’s individualist emphasis influences us to think of our relationship with Christ as exclusively personal – an ethos of ‘Jesus and me’ in a journey for two. This philosophy tempts us to see the narrow road as a private lane, making our own decisions in a vacuum and looking first to our personal interests. As C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *The Weight of Glory*, ‘No Christian and, indeed, no historian could accept the epigram which defines religion as ‘what a man does with his solitude’.”³³⁵

Spiritual solitude, according to Gunter, has only served to reinforce the technical and autocratic leadership paradigm present in much of the North American church today. She concludes, “Autocratic leaders are a mockery to God and a failure to laity and ministers who have God-given gifts to think without being told what to think. Roles and titles within the Kingdom, denominations, and local churches do not come with the automatic authoritarian right to speak for God...Indeed, within the body of Christ, autocratic leadership is an oxymoron.”³³⁶ Rather than embodying this technical and autocratic leadership paradigm, Dr. Gunter’s leadership reflects the characteristics of a missionally faithful leader operating within an adaptive context.

³³⁴ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 500.

³³⁵ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 754-757.

³³⁶ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 808.

In her various leadership assignments, Dr. Gunter's focus on leading relationally was apparent. She refers in her reflections on leadership to missiologist and theologian E. Stanley Jones who writes, "We enter the Kingdom personally, but we live in it corporately."³³⁷ Dr. Gunter adds "We operate as a team, not as opposing single players. We combine advice, knowledge, expertise and experience to become the best the church can be."³³⁸ Her relational focus and ability to build and lead within the context of a team is what Dr. Gunter considers to be one of her greatest leadership strengths.

Equally as important to her ability to lead faithfully was her resiliency. As noted already, the leadership opportunities for women within the Church of the Nazarene were extremely limited, if available at all. As Dr. Gunter entered the general leadership ranks within the denomination, it was a largely pioneering work to which she was called and elected. As would be expected, this was viewed with skepticism, opposition and at times criticism. Despite that, Dr. Gunter stood firm and resilient as she led in ways that were Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental.

Catalytic

While much of Dr. Gunter's ministry served as a catalyst within the denomination, the "thing that caused change and action"³³⁹ for her personally was her God-given call to preach. Above all else she considers herself a preacher. This is clear when she says repeatedly that the leader must "know, know, know that God has called you."³⁴⁰ It was the certainty of her calling to

³³⁷ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 743.

³³⁸ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 874.

³³⁹ Merriam-Webster, s.v. "catalyst," accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst>

³⁴⁰ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

preach that served as the foundational catalyst for all that she was to do and become throughout her leadership ministry. In her words, “the foundation of my leadership has come from my call to be a preacher.”³⁴¹

This catalytic moment was one that Dr. Gunter embraced early in her life. Nina’s family (Griggs) would often host visiting preachers and evangelists when they would come to town. As a three-year-old, Nina followed the visiting female evangelist around during the time in which she was there and told her that one day she would be a preacher just like her.³⁴² This calling was confirmed when Nina was entering her early teenage years.

“While searching the Scripture to affirm God’s will for her life, she was drawn to 1 Samuel 1:18. ‘Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child.’ Although she wrestled with this call for a couple of years, Nina accepted God’s plan. Immediately, her pastor had the 14-year-old speak at a prayer meeting, and then helped her obtain a local minister’s license. Nina then began to write sermons and speak in neighboring churches.”³⁴³

This catalytic calling would allow Dr. Gunter to step boldly and resiliently into ministry and into the various leadership opportunities to which God and His church would invite her. While at times there was resistance due to her gender, her assurance that God had called her and would continue to validate and affirm her calling gave her the courage to lead in a way that was catalytic. Her leadership was evident most clearly in her willingness to step into leadership roles that had at that time been occupied only by men. Though the denomination affirmed the call of God on women’s lives, for years it failed miserably to afford opportunities for leadership.

³⁴¹ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁴² Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁴³ Gail Sawrie, “Nina Gunter: A Woman Called,” *Holiness Today*, June 2009, <https://holinesstodaymagazine.com/nina-g-gunter-a-woman-called>.

The primary place in which women could exercise leadership in these earlier days of the denomination was known as the Women's Missionary Society. Later, as men were allowed to join and participate, the name was changed initially to Nazarene World Mission Society (NWMS) and eventually changed to Nazarene Missions International (NMI) under the leadership of Dr. Gunter. This auxiliary ministry of the church for decades was a "preserve for women in the denomination – the only general church organization in which women had a significant voice...While the missionary society provided a warm enclave for women, leadership opportunities elsewhere waned." ³⁴⁴

Jane Brewington, an ordained elder spoke out at the 1993 General Assembly, "claiming there was a 'glass ceiling, suffocating godly women called to ministry.' Clearly women were not trusted in leadership beyond the level of associates to men in spite of being acknowledged as 'equally called'." ³⁴⁵ Seven years prior to Brewington's comments, Dr. Gunter had assumed the leadership of the preserve and enclave of the mission auxiliary of the church. It was this auxiliary that provided the opportunity for Dr. Gunter to display her adaptive leadership abilities, leading to her election as the 35th General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, finally breaking through the glass ceiling of which Brewington correctly spoke.

A year following her election as General Superintendent, Dr. Gunter wrote, "I pray that my election as General Superintendent will not be anecdotal but will be the opening of the door for inclusive thought and action that becomes the norm." ³⁴⁶ In the four years that Dr. Gunter served as General Superintendent, it quickly became clear that her election was much more than anecdotal. In Papua, New Guinea, she ordained the first three female leaders as elders in the

³⁴⁴ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 532.

³⁴⁵ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 533.

³⁴⁶ Nina G. Gunter, "Serving the Lord as a General Superintendent," *New Horizons*, September 2006, 2.

Church of the Nazarene. The first female District Superintendent of the Japanese district was elected as Dr. Gunter presided over that assembly. And, in South Korea, she became the first female of any denomination to ordain elders.³⁴⁷ In Africa, in a climate that was largely opposed to female leadership of any sort, one of the African District Superintendents approached Dr. Gunter following the district assembly and confessed his skepticism. He then went on to say to her, “I never thought a woman could be a General Superintendent, but you came here and that totally changed me. It showed me that God does empower women to hold this position.”³⁴⁸

Following her retirement from the superintendency in 2009, the catalytic impact of Dr. Gunter’s leadership and commitment to her catalytic calling continues to be evident. When selected to serve for a few years as a contributing editor for the *Leadership Journal* of *Christianity Today*, Dr. Gunter was introduced as “one of the church leaders admired most for being faithful and innovative in contributing to Christ’s mission in the world.”³⁴⁹ Today, Dr. Carla Sunberg admirably serves as the second female elected to the office of General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, largely due to the leadership of Dr. Nina Gunter that has provided the catalyst for “inclusive thought and action to become the norm.”³⁵⁰

Attentive

As a catalytic leader, particularly in the realm of opening opportunities for female leadership, Dr. Gunter was an attentive leader keenly aware of the circumstances and conditions

³⁴⁷ Sawrie, “Nina Gunter: A Woman Called.”

³⁴⁸ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁴⁹ Wilson, David P., ed., *Journal of the 2009 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 95.

³⁵⁰ Gunter, “Serving the Lord as a General Superintendent.”

in which she would lead and minister. In each role of leadership in which she found herself, Dr. Gunter embraced the adaptive challenge to understand the context and culture in which she ministered. Having grown up in the southern United States, in a region that was heavily influenced by the Southern Baptist movement, she was intensely aware of the attitude of many toward women in ministry.

This geographically cultural attitude created somewhat of a dichotomy for Nina as she began to embrace her calling. The Nazarene church in which she grew up was extremely welcoming of female preachers and evangelists, which “made her calling seem normal.”³⁵¹ As noted, these preachers and evangelists often stayed in the Griggs’ home, allowing Nina to learn from them. However, the overall negative attitude of the southern mindset toward female ministers sometimes made it difficult for Nina to truly embrace the idea that she could, indeed, become a preacher. During these years, Nina learned the art of being attentive to the correct voices to fulfill the call that God had placed upon her life.

In this dichotomous setting, it became crucial for Dr. Gunter to develop a deep and authentic attentiveness first and foremost to that of the Holy Spirit. This became a lifelong pursuit. She contends that “Spirit-led relational leaders never stop learning. The three years of Jesus’ earthly ministry were filled with teaching His disciples, even after His resurrection. Holy leaders are lifelong learners, growing in the Word and in the guidance of the Spirit.”³⁵² It was this attentiveness first to the voice of God that, on the morning before she was elected as General Superintendent, “awakened Dr. Gunter and her husband at 3:00 a.m. sensing the need to pray for God’s will on their lives.”³⁵³ In accepting this election, Dr. Gunter continued, “It has always

³⁵¹ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁵² Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 1364.

³⁵³ “Persona of a Miracle,” *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*, June 30, 2005, 2005 Convention edition.

been our utmost desire to follow the leading of the Spirit and we have always desired to know and accept God's direction.”³⁵⁴

This attentiveness to the voice of the Spirit enabled Dr. Gunter to authentically engage in conversation in the various contexts in which she would find herself. This attentiveness taught Dr. Gunter early the importance of learning boundaries. In one of the communities in which she and her husband co-pastored (which will be addressed later in this chapter), she found herself being invited to participate in and officiate the funeral of a woman with whom she had developed a deep relationship. Unfortunately, that funeral was to be held in the Baptist church in town. The pastor of that church made it clear that Dr. Gunter's ministry was not welcome as he proclaimed, “No woman will be behind the pulpit in my church.”³⁵⁵ Not wanting to create more stress in an already stressful situation, Dr. Gunter says she, “simply stepped back and attended the funeral.”³⁵⁶

Dr. Gunter notes that this attitude, though not as vocally expressed, became apparent as she moved into greater roles of leadership within the denomination. To paraphrase that Baptist preacher, she was discovering that while she could stand behind the pulpit, no woman was going to sit in the chair of leadership. This attitude, she says was not as prevalent during her time as Global Missions Director. However, she became keenly aware that there were voices within the denomination and greater ecclesiastical world that did not embrace female leadership at that level. She realized that, in her own words, “I was observed more than my male colleagues. I did feel the tension. I felt as if I could not afford to make a mistake.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ “Persona of a Miracle.”

³⁵⁵ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁵⁶ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁵⁷ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

Through her ministry and leadership roles, Dr. Gunter has, and continues to champion the cause of female leadership as she seeks to help not only shatter, but completely remove the aforementioned “glass ceiling that has suffocated godly women called to ministry.”³⁵⁸ This has demanded a strict attentiveness to both the voice of the Spirit of God and the voice of the circumstances and conditions of the environment in which she was strategically placed. The cause of women in leadership, however, was not the only place in which her attentiveness has been evident.

Throughout her ministry, her attentiveness made her increasingly aware of the need for collaborative and relational efforts, both within and outside the denomination. She writes,

“As Thomas Friedman wrote in *The World is Flat 3.0*, ‘The best companies are the best collaborators. In a flat world, more and more business will be done through collaborations within and between companies.’ The Kingdom is at its best when we collaborate, each leader bringing his or her gifts and skills at the involvement level of his or her ability. We operate as a team, not as opposing single players. We combine advice, knowledge, expertise, and experience to become the best the Church can be.”³⁵⁹

It was through these collaborative efforts that numerous missions programs were initiated in response to her attentiveness to the voice of God and the circumstances and conditions around her. These programs, initiated while she served as Global Missions Director, allowed the denominational “annual missions giving to increase from \$30 million to \$62 million, for a grand total of one billion dollars given to missions during her 20-year tenure.”³⁶⁰

More recently, during her superintendency, Dr. Gunter had the honor of ordaining hundreds of men and women into the ministry of the Church of the Nazarene. Part of that privilege is to pronounce the denominational ritual over those ordinands. As she was acutely

³⁵⁸ Ingersol et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 533.

³⁵⁹ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 871-874.

³⁶⁰ “Citation for Dr. Nina Gunter: General Superintendent Emerita,” *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*, June 2009.

attentive to this honor, she sensed that the ritual needed revising to better reflect the denomination's Wesleyan theological heritage. So, in consultation with retired General Superintendent and theologian, Dr. William Greathouse, Dr. Gunter re-wrote the ritual of ordination that is being used by at least two currently serving General Superintendents.³⁶¹

Dr. Gunter, by her own admission, has sought earnestly through her ministry and leadership roles to be attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, she has been extremely attentive to the culture and context in which she and the church are placed. This attentiveness has allowed her to lead in a way that has been faithful missionally and has afforded her avenues through which to be responsive.

Responsive

While attentiveness to the leader's context and culture is important, that alone only makes one an anthropologist. To be a missionally faithful leader, one must find culturally and missionally appropriate ways in which to respond to that context. This responsiveness characterized Dr. Gunter's years of ministry, and in particular, the years in which she served in general church leadership.

In the years that she and her husband pastored in Charleston, South Carolina, Nina had the frequent opportunity to preach to youth and children. Her reputation as a passionate and engaging speaker grew to the point that district leadership began to take notice. Eventually, she received a call from the district Nazarene World Mission Society (NWMS) president informing her that she had been appointed as the district children's director for NWMS. She had never heard of the position and had no idea what the position would entail. But, always attentive to the

³⁶¹ Nina Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, Part 2, September 15, 2021.

voice of God, the voice of the church and the voice of her context, Nina accepted the invitation to “come to our next council meeting to get acquainted with the rest of the council.” ³⁶²

She entered that meeting with a great deal of trepidation and uncertainty, which was only compounded by the fact that the other women of the council were all over forty years old. “Before the meeting ended, however, Nina knew she was among friends. The council ladies shared their vision and burden for missions so enthusiastically that Nina was capture by their zeal...The president explained that her position was a newly created one. She was urged to go out and challenge local churches to launch a missions program for children.” ³⁶³ Dr. Gunter responded in such a way that children’s mission education became a driving force on the district, which ultimately was catalytic to expanding her leadership opportunities.

Reflecting upon her various roles and responsibilities, Dr. Gunter noted that the early leaders of the denomination understood the need for responsive creativity, saying that “the church today needs leaders who can recapture that creativity.” ³⁶⁴ She went on to note,

“Throughout my ministry, in whatever roles in which I found myself, that’s what I tried to do. I tried my hardest to respond to needs. In the local church, on the district, and serving in global and general offices, I constantly asked, ‘What is the need of the local church? The district church? The general church?’ To answer those questions, we are called to build relationships with the people so that we can respond to their needs.” ³⁶⁵

That responsiveness became an underlying theme throughout Dr. Gunter’s years of leadership. Ultimately, her experience as the district children’s mission director opened the door for greater involvement and influence at both the district and general level, evidenced by her

³⁶² Helen Temple, *Preacher with a Mission: The Story of Nina Griggs Gunter*, 1998-99 NWMS Reading Books (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1998), 52.

³⁶³ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 52.

³⁶⁴ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁶⁵ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

election as the district NWMS President and eventual “election to the general missions council.”³⁶⁶ It was during this time that under her leadership, programs such as Work and Witness (in which teams would travel to foreign and domestic sights for short-term mission projects), Youth in Mission, and Compassionate Ministries would become crucial to responding to the needs of the district for greater world mission exposure. As those initiatives began to actively function, “it was easy to have men elected to the district NWMS council, as well as young adults and teens. Missions was no longer thought of as old ladies making quilts. People of all ages wanted to get in on the action.”³⁶⁷

Dr. Gunter took this same responsive leadership to the position of Global Missions Director upon her election. One of the ways in which the denomination underwrites the work of global evangelization is through a program called Faith Promise, in which individuals are encouraged to pledge, in faith, to give a certain amount over and above regular tithes and offerings during the course of a year. While this program had been in existence for years when Dr. Gunter assumed this new role, she quickly became aware that most local churches were not sure how to plan for or conduct a Faith Promise campaign. In response to this expressed need, Dr. Gunter enlisted the help of Beverlee Borbe (who would later become the General NWMS President). Recognizing that it is in this relationally focused “living (and working) in the Kingdom together... (that the church can) become the best the church can be,”³⁶⁸ they together developed the *Faith Promise Planning Notebook*. According to Dr. Gunter, this effort was undertaken “to put some structure and form in the hands of the local churches.”³⁶⁹ Eventually

³⁶⁶ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁶⁷ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 64.

³⁶⁸ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 743-874.

³⁶⁹ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

approved and adopted by the general church, through this initiative, records were set in missions giving toward the General Budget (World Evangelism Fund).

One of the foundational tenets of the Church of the Nazarene is its emphasis on the expansion of global evangelization. While serving as Global Missions Director, Dr. Gunter visited the country of Fiji. Attending an official function, and attentively realizing the need for the denomination to establish a Wesleyan holiness presence within this nation, Dr. Gunter boldly asked to visit with the prime minister who was intimately acquainted with the Wesleyan holiness theological tradition. To everyone's surprise, following the function, the prime minister was escorted to meet Dr. Gunter. "She expressed her appreciation for his speech and then said, 'My church, the Church of the Nazarene, teaches the principles taught by John Wesley. We have recently applied for permission to bring our church to your country. We are waiting for the permission to be granted'." ³⁷⁰ The prime minister encouraged Dr. Gunter to write him a letter personally, which she did, and in a few months, "the approval was received in the World Mission office, granting registration to the Church of the Nazarene and permission to work in Fiji." ³⁷¹

The responsive nature of Dr. Gunter's leadership is best seen in an initiative that has significant impact upon clergy education. While serving as Global Missions Director, Dr. Gunter, attentive to the contexts in which the denomination was serving, realized that many pastors (both international and domestic) had limited resources available for theological and exegetical study. In response, she began an initiative called, "Books for Pastors." Originally the goal was to raise enough funds to provide basic theological and exegetical resources for 7000

³⁷⁰ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 90.

³⁷¹ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 90.

pastors. The response from the denominational churches was overwhelming, ultimately raising enough money to provide resources for over 14,000 pastors instead.³⁷²

That initiative continued to expand so that ultimately, it has become what is today called the Wesleyan Holiness Digital Library. Through this initiative, free access to online resources is available in ninety content languages. This invaluable resource now provides theological and exegetical resources for pastors, students, and educational institutions across the globe and across denominational lines. Attentive to the voice of God and the context in which she found herself, Dr. Gunter repeatedly responded in ways that would allow for faithful missional engagement, and in which an experimental spirit was welcomed and encouraged.³⁷³

Experimental

As Dr. Gunter embraced the catalytic challenge to adaptively lead in a way that was attentive and responsive, she also embraced a leadership that was experimental. She encourages her readers in her book, *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, to “Follow Mark Twain’s advice and set the standard high: ‘Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover’.”³⁷⁴

From early on, this experimental spirit was a part of Nina Gunter’s life and ministry. Nina’s call to ministry came at a very early age, as she “committed herself to God’s call in joyous abandonment to Him.”³⁷⁵ Immediately upon returning home, Dr. Gunter, at age 14, told her pastor, Rev. John Y. Todd. Rather than encouraging Nina to spend more time in prayer or

³⁷² Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, Part 2.

³⁷³ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, Part 2.

³⁷⁴ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 1408.

³⁷⁵ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 25.

prepare for her education, Pastor Todd asked her to preach in the mid-week prayer meeting just two days later. Nina excitedly agreed to “explore, dream and discover”³⁷⁶ in this experiment of preaching that would ultimately be the catalyst for her entire life, ministry, and leadership. She continued to welcome opportunities to preach and regularly wrote sermons for her pastor to review.³⁷⁷

Even in her educational pursuits, Dr. Gunter’s experimental spirit was on display. Longing to prepare for ministry, Nina asked to enroll in the high school affiliated with Trevecca Nazarene College (now University). “There was just one obstacle – students had to be 16 years old to live in the dormitory, and Nina would only be 15 in September when school began.”³⁷⁸ Though initially denied by the president, Nina finally gained admission and began her education to prepare for ministry.

The years in which Dr. Gunter and her husband served in the local church were years of experimentation. Together, she and Moody co-pastored in Tennessee, Missouri, and South Carolina.³⁷⁹ This experiment in co-pastoring was not the norm of the day, nor of the cultures in which they found themselves.

“Several months after beginning their dual ministry in Sumter, two men who were strong leaders in the church came to Nina. ‘We had serious reservations about calling you folk,’ they confessed. ‘We really didn’t think it would be acceptable to have a woman preaching every Sunday. And we were afraid that your enthusiasm for missions would drain all our money into that cause. But we didn’t want to stand in the way of your coming since the others seemed to want you. Now we understand why. You preach better than a lot of men we’ve heard’.”³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 1408.

³⁷⁷ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 25.

³⁷⁸ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 32.

³⁷⁹ “Persona of a Miracle.”

³⁸⁰ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 65-66.

In title, “Moody was always the senior pastor.”³⁸¹ However, in function, they shared duties equally, including leadership roles in a way that was reflective much more of a partnership or collaboration, than that of hierarchy. In speaking about this experimental effort, Dr. Gunter referred to it as a “shared ministry,”³⁸² indicating that they would rotate the preaching evenly, including the numerous times that they were invited to preach revivals in neighboring churches.³⁸³ She did admit that she would preach more often on Sunday evening. However, this was not due to the fact that she was a female. Rather, it was because she had started a young adult/couples Sunday School class that grew to become the largest class in the congregation, and this demanded her energy and time on Sunday mornings. In addition, Sunday evening services in that time tended to be much more evangelistic which seemed to allow her to use her preaching abilities to a greater degree.³⁸⁴

Dr. Gunter did not leave this experimental spirit behind when she and Moody left the local church pastorate to assume district and general leadership assignments. Realizing that the title General budget needed to be changed, Dr. Gunter and those she led experimented with various options. They settled on what is now known as the World Evangelism Fund. This experimental change was approved by the General NWMS Convention, and subsequently, by the General Assembly.³⁸⁵ Four years later, still under the leadership of Dr. Gunter, the name of the global missions department was changed from Nazarene World Mission Society (NWMS) to

³⁸¹ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 66.

³⁸² Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁸³ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁸⁴ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁸⁵ “NWMS Convention Closes With Hope for the Future,” *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*, June 21, 1997, 3.

Nazarene Missions International (NMI) to maintain symmetry with the youth auxiliary of the church (Nazarene Youth International). While these may seem like trivial experimental changes, they were extremely significant in that not only did they contribute to the denominational symmetry in language, but in Dr. Gunter's words "allowed the titles to better define and give meaning to that which they were referring."³⁸⁶

Throughout her leadership career, constantly embracing Mark Twain's experimental challenge to, "Explore. Dream. Discover,"³⁸⁷ Dr. Gunter kept what she called a "Dream File,"³⁸⁸ in which she would make notes of ideas and innovative experiments that could possibly allow the denomination to engage in the eternal and worldwide mission of God more faithfully. "A number of those dreams became realities when she was general NMI director, such as the creation of convention packets, prayer initiatives including Nazarene World Week of Prayer, and prayer for the persecuted church, Faith Promise resources, regional NMI coordinators, NMI resource notebooks and the Award of Excellence."³⁸⁹ Nina Gunter's leadership, displayed in the adaptive characteristics Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental, continues to have a significant impact on the ongoing missional faithfulness of the Church of the Nazarene. Gail Sawrie articulated it best when she wrote upon Dr. Gunter's retirement, "Nina Gunter may be retiring as General Superintendent, but her call remains. She will continue ministering, leading, and dreaming."³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ Gunter, Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter.

³⁸⁷ Gunter et al., *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*, Loc. 148.

³⁸⁸ Temple, *Preacher with a Mission*, 84.

³⁸⁹ Sawrie, "Nina Gunter: A Woman Called."

³⁹⁰ Sawrie, "Nina Gunter: A Woman Called."

Conclusion

The case studies presented in this work have not been intended to portray any one individual leader as the epitome of adaptive leadership. Instead, they have been presented with the intent of illustrating ways in which the leader is able to relationally and resiliently engage in leadership that is Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental within their particular and unique context. In so doing, it has been the intent to illustrate a leadership paradigm that is missionally faithful while operating within an adaptive context.

CONCLUSION

The crisis facing the North American church by all appearances is daunting. Alan Hirsch describes the crisis as something much deeper than a metrics or programmatic crisis. He writes,

“The issue is not just a loss of traditional religious faith and a declining church but a more profound loss of our whole sense of transcendence, our spiritual instincts, and our consciousness of the divine...We have little in terms of common language or concept within which to frame a true knowledge of God. The real problem at this moment in history is that God is ‘disappearing’ from the human horizon.”³⁹¹

This crisis makes itself known on various fronts and multiple levels, and more particularly in the realm of leadership.

Church leaders have largely been trained to operate in a world and culture that is no longer in existence. Having relied heavily on more programmatic and autocratic paradigms of technical leadership, the church now finds itself in unprecedented times in which proven leadership methodologies and programs are rendered virtually obsolete. Hirsch challenges

³⁹¹ Hirsch et al., *Reframing*, Loc. 652-676.

ecclesiastical leaders to “proclaim the gospel afresh in new ways to each generation since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipients are repeatedly changing their place of address.”³⁹²

In the rapidly changing culture of North America, the challenge before the church can seem overwhelming; and, if the church continues to operate within a technical leadership paradigm, the challenge and crisis will only grow greater. To faithfully engage in and carry out the redemptive and restorative *Missio Dei*, the church must be willing to discard paradigms of leadership that are no longer useful to embrace the more organic, incarnational, and collaborative adaptive paradigm of leadership. It is this paradigm that will allow for greater innovation and creativity for the purpose of “forwarding the gospel to the new address”³⁹³ of the continually changing culture in which the North American church now finds itself.

Through the course of this dissertation, it has been the intent to articulate the crisis of leadership facing the North American church; to present the sources that have contributed to the conversations surrounding leadership paradigms and faithfulness to the *Missio Dei*; to examine the theological framework from which an understanding of missional faithfulness emerges; and to express the foundational qualities and essential characteristics of adaptive leadership. It has not been the intent of this work to present a technical program of implementation. Instead, through three case studies of individuals whose relationally focused and resiliently engaged leadership has been significant within the Wesleyan theological tradition, the essential characteristics of an adaptive leader (Catalytic, Attentive, Responsive and Experimental) have been illustrated. The goal has been to allow the reader to develop her/his own adaptive leadership abilities within the context in which God has strategically placed them.

³⁹² Hirsch et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 306.

³⁹³ Hirsch et al., *Reframation*, Loc. 306.

While the challenge is great, the opportunities that lie before the church are even greater. Today's ecclesiastical leader is charged with the privilege of leading people to faithful engagement in the redemptive and restorative *Missio Dei*, and in so doing, to re-discover and reveal the transcendent God. For this purpose, it is imperative that the church discover and develop missionally faithful leaders who operate within an adaptive context.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akkerman, Jay Richard, and Mark Maddix. *Missional Discipleship: Partners in God's Redemptive Mission*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2014.
<http://qut.ebiblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=3379704>.

Andrews, Dale P. *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Bangs, Carl. *Phineas F. Bresee: His Life in Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995.

_____. *Phineas F. Bresee: Pastor to the People*. Abridged edition. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013.

Beck, Michael Adam. *Contextual Intelligence: Unlocking the Secret to Mission on the Front Lines*. S.l.: HIGHERLIFE DEVELOPMENT SE, 2021.

_____. "Cultural Intelligence: One Intelligence to Serve Them All." Digital Commons @ George Fox University, 2019. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/359>.

_____. Leonard Sweet. "Reading the Signs of the Times." Accessed October 28, 2020.
<https://freshexpressionsus.us>.

Benefiel, Ron. "Historical Overview of the Mission of Mercy in the Church of the Nazarene," 2021.

_____. "John Wesley's Mission of Evangelism," 2007.

_____. "Languages of Holiness: The Autobiography of a Seeker," 2012.

- _____. “The Kingdom of God.” Presented at the Models of Christian Leadership and Community Transformation, Los Angeles, California, June 25, 2021.
- Bevins, Dean G., ed., Rodes, Stanley J., ed., Sowden, Terry S., ed., Spear, James W., ed., and Wilson, David P., ed. *Manual: Church of the Nazarene*. Vol. 2017–2021. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017.
- Bevins, Winfield H. *Marks of a Movement: What the Church Today Can Learn From the Wesleyan Revival*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2019. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2380095>.
- Bolsinger, Tod. *Leadership For a Time of Pandemic: Practicing Resilience*. InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- _____. *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed In the Crucible of Change*. Kindle Edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- _____. *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books/ an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Borden, Paul D. *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan Francisco Martínez. *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2011.
- Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York, NY: Avery, 2015.
- Basic, David A. *The City: Urban Churches in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition*. Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2020.
- Chandler, John P. *Uptick: A Blueprint for Finding and Forming the Next Generation of Pioneering Kingdom Leaders*. 100 Movements Publishing, 2019.
- “Citation for Dr. Nina Gunter: General Superintendent Emerita.” *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*. June 2009.
- Coleman, Robert. *Nothing to Do But to Save Souls*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Francis Asbury Press, 1990.
- Cormode, Scott. *The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World*, 2020.
- Coutu, Diane. “How Resilience Works.” *Harvard Business Review*, May 2002, 9.
- Crouch, Andy. *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk & True Flourishing*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016.

De Pree, Max. *Leadership Is an Art*. New York: Currency/Doubleday, 2004.

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=732768>.

Dyer, Jeff, Hal B. Gregersen, and Clayton M. Christensen. *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators*. Updated edition. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press, 2019.

Freire, Paulo, Donald P. Macedo, and Ira Shor. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 50th anniversary edition. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Friedman, Edwin H., Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. 10th anniversary revised edition. New York: Church Publishing, 2017.

Girvin, E. A. *Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1916.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. 1st ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 2000.

Goheen, Michael W. *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018.

Granberg-Michaelson, Wesley. *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.

Green, Gene L, Stephen T Pardue, and Khiok-Khng Yeo. *The Church From Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology In the Majority World*, 2018.

Greenleaf, Robert K., and Larry C. Spears. *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. 25th anniversary ed. New York: Paulist Press, 2002.

Guder, Darrell L., and Lois Barrett, eds. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. The Gospel and Our Culture Series. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998.

Gunter, Nina G. "Serving the Lord as a General Superintendent." *New Horizons*, September 2006, 3.

_____. Leonard, Gay L, Filley, Darlene, and Sharon Page. *Holy Leadership in a Hectic World*. Kindle edition., 2014. <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3379767>.

_____. Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, September 9, 2021.

_____. Leadership Interview with Dr. Nina Gunter, Part 2, September 15, 2021.

Halter, Hugh, and Matt Smay. *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community: The Posture and Practices of Ancient Church Now*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Hart, Drew G. I. Roundtable on Race Relations, November 18, 2020.

_____. *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*. Harrisonburg: Herald Press, 2016.

Hearn, Roland, Kling, Sheri D., and Oord, Thomas Jay. *Open and Relational Leadership: Leading with Love*. SacraSage Press, 2020.

Heath, Dan. *Upstream: The Quest to Solve Problems Before They Happen*, 2020.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2174842>.

Heifetz, Ronald A., Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky. "Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis." *Harvard Business Review*, no. Special Issue (Summer 2020): 11–17.

_____. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press, 2009.

_____, and Martin Linsky. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

Hempton, David. *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Hirsch, Alan, Mark Nelson, Danielle Strickland, and Michael Frost. *Reformation: Seeing God, People, and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames*. Cody, Wyoming: 100 Movements Publishing, 2019.

Ingersol, Stan, Floyd Timothy Cunningham, Harold E. Raser, and D. P. Whitelaw. *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009.

Jones, L. Gregory. *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness*, 2016.

<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4332898>.

Knight, Henry H. *John Wesley: Optimist of Grace*. Cascade Companions 32. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018.

- Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. 3rd ed. The Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Law, Eric H. F. *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multi-Cultural Community*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993.
- Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. *Leadership in the Way of the Cross: Forging Ministry from the Crucible of Crisis*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018.
- McKnight, Scot. *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*, 2016. <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781441221476>.
- Middendorf, Jesse C. *Edison Churches: Experiments in Innovation and Breakthrough*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2017.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. 1st Fortress Press ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Mulder, Patty. "Adaptive Leadership." *Toolshero.Com*, August 27, 2019. <https://www.toolshero.com/leadership/adaptive-leadership/>.
- "Nazarene Essentials: Who We Are and What We Believe," n.d. <https://nazarene.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/NazareneEssentials1.2.pdf>.
- "Nina Gunter: A Woman Called." *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*, June 2009.
- "NWMS Convention Closes With Hope for the Future." *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*. June 21, 1997.
- Obolensky, Nick. *Complex Adaptive Leadership: Embracing Paradox and Uncertainty*. Burlington, VT: Gower Publishing Company, 2014.
- Paul, Doug. *Ready or Not: Kingdom Innovation for a Brave New World*. 100 Movements Publishing, 2020.
- Pegues, Deborah Smith. *Lead Like a Woman*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2020.
- "Persona of a Miracle." *Nazarene Communication Network General Assembly Daily Summary*. June 30, 2005, 2005 Convention edition.
- Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

- Rah, Soong-Chan. *Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014. <http://qut.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=2033945>.
- Root, Andrew. *The Congregation in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time Against the Speed of Modern Life*. Ministry in a Secular Age, volume three. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021.
- Sawrie, Gail. "Nina Gunter: A Woman Called." *Holiness Today*, June 2009. <https://holinesstodaymagazine.com/nina-g-gunter-a-woman-called>.
- Schnase, Robert C. *Seven Levers: Missional Strategies for Conferences*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014.
- Sinek, Simon. *The Infinite Game*. 1st Edition. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019.
- Smith, Gregory A., Alan Cooperman, Besheer Mohamed, Elizabeth Podrebarac Sciupac, Becka A. Alper, Kiana Cox, and Claire Gecewicz. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at a Rapid Pace." *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, October 17, 2019. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.
- Smith, Timothy Lawrence, *The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years*. Called unto Holiness 1. Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962.
- Snyder, Howard A. *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*. Kindle Edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Stone, Bryan P. *Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. First Harvard University Press paperback edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Temple, Helen. *Preacher with a Mission: The Story of Nina Griggs Gunter*. 1998-99 NWMS Reading Books. Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1998.
- Tickle, Phyllis. *Great Emergence, The: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012. <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781441241726>.
- Van Gelder, Craig. *Participating In God's Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church In America*. The Gospel and Our Culture Series. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018.
- Weems, Lovett H. *Leadership In the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Wesley, Charles. "A Charge to Keep I Have," *Sing to the Lord*. Kansas City, Missouri: Lillenas Publishing Company, 1993.

Wesley, John. *The Works of John Wesley*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1986.

Wiens, Greg and Turner, Dan. *Dying to Restart: Churches Choosing Strategic Death for a Multiplying Life*. Emeryville, CA: Exponential Interactive, 2018.

Wilke, Richard B. *And Are We Yet Alive? The Future of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986.

Wilson, David P., ed. *Journal of the 2009 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009.

Woodward, J. R., Dan White, and Alan Hirsch. *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2010.