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This Doctor of Ministry Project directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Hazelip School of Theology of Lipscomb University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry.

Discerning the Missional Implications of Context: A Demographic Study of Great Falls for the Great Falls Church of Christ

By

Matthew C. Burleson

For the Degree

Doctor of Ministry



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Director of Graduate Program

June 25, 2024

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Date

Project Committee



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## Abbreviations

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABS	American Beliefs Study (2021)
<i>BDAG</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature</i>
COC	Church(-es) of Christ
DT	Discernment Team
FN	Field Notes
GFAFB	Great Falls Air Force Base
GFCC	Great Falls Church of Christ
HH	Household(s)
LT	Leadership Team
MAFB	Malmstrom Air Force Base
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
USAF	United States Air Force
VSCOC	Virginia Street Church of Christ
WBC	Westside Baptist Church

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## CHAPTER 1

### An Overview of the Problem

#### Introduction

The title of this project is “Discerning the Missional Implications of Context: A Demographic Study of Great Falls for the Great Falls Church of Christ.” That or why such a project should be necessary is not immediately apparent. More context and background are needed to establish the problem to which this project is one aspect of a response. Therefore, in this chapter, I will describe the context of the Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC). I will also state the problem this project addresses, this project’s purpose, the project’s significance, and some foundational assumptions operating in the background of the project’s design.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Context

To understand the context of GFCC, it will help to understand its story. GFCC was permanently established on the first Sunday of October 1948.<sup>2</sup> The impetus for its establishment was the January 1947 arrival in Great Falls of a middle-aged family from Indiana (the Chitwoods) who were members of Churches of Christ (COCs). After more than a year of commuting to Helena to worship with the Helena Church of Christ, the Chitwoods placed an ad in the *Great Falls Tribune* (May 9, 1948) attempting to contact existing

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<sup>1</sup> The outline of this chapter is based on Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> For this section, I am drawing on Vera Chitwood and others, April 1951 to April 1954, untitled history, Church Roll and Record, Great Falls Church of Christ Office Records. Mrs. Chitwood’s penmanship indicates that she is the writer of the history until the entry noting LeRoy Hines’ arrival in October 1954. I have supplemented the basic picture with detail acquired through my original research.

members of COCs in or near Great Falls in hopes of establishing a COC. On May 9, 1948, the Chitwoods and their son, the Irbys, and a Ms. Holland met in the YMCA building with Charles B. Middleton of Helena doing the preaching and teaching. Despite their efforts, the initial group dissolved on the first Sunday of August 1948 when the Irbys, Ms. Holland, and Middleton all moved away from Great Falls in a matter of three weeks. With only the Chitwoods remaining, they decided to continue worshipping in Helena. But after just over a month of commuting to Helena for worship, the Chitwoods ran another ad in the *Great Falls Tribune* on September 15-19, 1948. One of these ads caught the attention of James Marion Tolle, Jr., a nationally-known evangelist who had moved that month to nearby Geyser, Montana, to teach high school English for one year.

In response to the ad by the Chitwoods, J. M. Tolle, Jr. began preaching for GFCC on October 3, 1948, and continued through June 1949. Through Tolle's partnership with the Chitwoods, GFCC connected with several members of COCs who had been stationed at the Great Falls Air Force Base (GFAFB), most notably the John and Mary Prater and the "Bud" and Signe Ives families.<sup>3</sup> In December of 1949, GFCC and Tolle together purchased four lots for a building on the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue on the growing east side of Great Falls. As his year in Montana ended, in August 1949, Tolle connected GFCC to the Virginia Street Church of Christ (VSCOC) in Baytown, Texas, who shortly after became a supporting congregation for the young church. Fully supported by VSCOC, L. Q. Robinson arrived in September 1949. Under his three-year tenure (1949-52), GFCC built its first building on the four lots at the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> and Central Ave. and occupied it in April 1951.

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<sup>3</sup> The Ives hosted the church in their home beginning on October 3, 1948. In early December 1948, GFCC contacted John and Mary Prater. John, along with Joe Chitwood, would become a significant leader in the early days of the church.

Situated near GFAFB on the east side of town, GFCC experienced slow but steady growth over the next two decades.

The most critical key to the growth and developing identity of GFCC was GFAFB, which was renamed Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) in October 1955. Despite attempts to find existing members of COCs in Great Falls as early as 1931<sup>4</sup> and 1942,<sup>5</sup> it was not until after GFAFB was established in 1942 that enough members of the COC were in Great Falls to permanently establish a new COC. Because membership consisted largely of Airmen and their families, membership was transient from the beginning.<sup>6</sup> GFCC became a family away from family, a home away from home to Airmen and their families. It was a connection to the church they knew back home, especially in the South. Soon a trend began: many of those who served in the United States Air Force (USAF) eventually returned and settled permanently in Great Falls because of their experiences with GFCC.<sup>7</sup> Over the course of GFCC's history, the number of people who have this story, whether because of the USAF or other connections, is considerable.

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<sup>4</sup> W. Don Hockaday, Advertisement, *Great Falls Tribune*, September 13, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. Gibson, "Wanted: Members of the Church of Christ," Advertisement, *Great Falls Tribune*, October 25, November 1, November 8, and November 15, 1942.

<sup>6</sup> "Bishops Chosen in Great Falls." I have the original article, but no citation references were given. To this point, I have been unable to establish the source. According to this article, "about seventy per cent" (sic.) of GFCC were "Air Force families."

<sup>7</sup> This trend began during the ministry of Gordon Naylor, who arrived in Great Falls in December of 1970 and served until March 1993. Gordon's peaceable way of living and proclaiming the Gospel endeared him to almost all in GFCC. When he stepped aside from his preaching role in March 1993, Gordon had served GFCC for more than half of its existence at twenty-three years.

After approximately forty-five years on this trajectory (1948-1993), Scott Laird's arrival in November 1994 marked the beginning of a new era in GFCC's history.<sup>8</sup> Although GFCC had always depended on MAFB for its growth and survival, the church had become somewhat unresponsive to Airmen and their families. Some assumed that there was little point in connecting with families connected to the USAF because they would leave in three-to-five years anyway and members would be heartbroken by their move. Laird, however, recognized the discipleship potential in these three-to-five-year windows with Airmen. Under Laird's leadership, GFCC came to see itself as an equipping and sending church whose primary target audience were Airmen in the USAF coming to Great Falls through MAFB. In 2000 Scott helped GFCC articulate a new mission statement that captured the essence of this identity shift: "Seek, Save, Strengthen, and Send—All for the Glory of God!"

Under the clarity of this vision, GFCC continued growing. Part of that growth was the beginning of the internship in GFCC 2001. The GFCC elders tasked Chris Crooks, GFCC's first intern, to help the congregation reach Airmen at MAFB.<sup>9</sup> Then, it added a second Sunday morning service in November 2004. Sunday morning worship attendance peaked at 266 in 2006. Symbolic of the vision and the growth it led to during this period, GFCC dreamed of building a new facility to accommodate the growth. This building would be at 46<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, approximately a third of a mile from the main gate at MAFB.

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<sup>8</sup> For this section, I am drawing on Scott Laird, "History of the Great Falls Church of Christ: Changes in Leadership – 1969 to 1994 (Part 2 of 3)" and "Growing Pains – 1994 to 2000 (Part 3 of 3)," *Love One Another*, Vol. 7, Issue 3 (March 2001), Great Falls Church of Christ Office Records. I am also drawing on knowledge acquired through personal conversations with Scott Laird over the course of my time in Great Falls (January 2018 to present day).

<sup>9</sup> Chris Crooks, "A Survey of Military Ministries among Churches of Christ" (A Guided Research Paper, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 2003), 1-2. Chris wrote this guided research paper as part of that effort. He notes that he was given this charge in 2001, when he first arrived in Great Falls. In 2003, GFCC appointed Chris to the role of evangelist. He served GFCC until March 2016. His departure coincides with the end of a vision cycle. See above.

GFCC raised over \$1.5 million through two capital campaigns and explored options to overcome the obstacles to completing the new facility. The consultant who helped with the capital campaign demonstrated just how much buy-in there was for this vision when he shared that GFCC was the only congregation he had ever consulted with that had given four times its annual contribution in the first capital campaign and three times its annual contribution in the second capital campaign.<sup>10</sup>

Somewhere around 2016, movement began to stall. Several factors apparently contributed. First, after September 11, 2001, it became increasingly difficult to access Airmen on MAFB. Given that reaching Airmen at MAFB was a key piece specifically of Chris Crooks' ministry and the vision of GFCC more generally, limited access to MAFB made it difficult to actively complete the mission of "Seeking" and "Saving." Second, difficulties with the City of Great Falls made building on the east side increasingly cost prohibitive, especially if the congregation did not want to take on significant debt to build. These difficulties left GFCC in limbo for many years. Third, Chris Crooks, one of the visionary leaders and the anticipated successor to Scott Laird, left GFCC in March 2016 to pursue another ministry opportunity in Belgrade, Montana. Chris's move was a major loss, especially since he was one of the main connections with the person who was expected to construct the building. By mid-2018, it was clear that GFCC would not be building on the East Side near MAFB.

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<sup>10</sup> Jason Thompson shared this insight with me in a personal conversation in February 2023.

As the reality set in, Scott Lukkason, one of GFCC’s shepherds, called the church to prayer in a sermon in June 2018.<sup>11</sup> After a period of one hundred days of prayer, in the fall of 2018, a realtor reached out to Scott Lukkason to make him aware of a possible ministry space about to go on the market on the west side of Great Falls. GFCC had the opportunity to visit the Westside Baptist Church (WBC) at 1300 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW, and the leaders had meetings with GFCC to discuss the possibility. Purchasing this facility would enable GFCC to almost triple its ministry space square footage and do so debt free. Moreover, WBC was searching for a much smaller facility and expressed interest in purchasing GFCC’s building at 3400 Central Avenue. With strong congregation-wide support, GFCC bought the building debt-free in December 2018. GFCC relocated across the Missouri River to the west side of Great Falls in April 2019 after seventy-one years on the east side of Great Falls, sixty-eight of which were at 3400 Central Ave.

According to Scott Laird, the move from 3400 Central Ave. to 1300 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW constituted “a boundary event in the life of the church.”<sup>12</sup> With the move to the west side, the twenty-three-year-old dream of building on the east side of Great Falls within sight of MAFB—the vision to which the congregation had given so generously—officially died. At same time, one of the dreams that had driven the church for many years was finally realized.

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<sup>11</sup> Kristen Inbody, “Easter Sunday: Church Swap Blesses Two Great Falls Congregations,” *Great Falls Tribune*, April 17, 2019, <https://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/2019/04/17/easter-sunday-church-swap-blesses-two-congregations/3438259002/>.

<sup>12</sup> “Montana Church Move,” *The Christian Chronicle*, April 29, 2019. A “boundary event” is an event so momentous that it marks a shift in the “phases” of a person’s (or, by extension, an organization’s) story. See J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs: Nav Press, 2012), 41.

The church finally had more ministry space, even if, in Bob Alfred's words, "all of a sudden" GFCC found itself "[in] a new field."<sup>13</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since moving into the new facility, GFCC has faced a number of challenges.<sup>14</sup> For the first year, many of those were anticipated by GFCC leaders. Almost a year to the day after GFCC moved into its new facility, however, it faced challenges leadership could not have anticipated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As GFCC lived through the pandemic, it became apparent to many that something was different about GFCC. Many expressed that difference in the undefined language of grief and loss, as if GFCC once had something it no longer had but could not quite name. Many pointed nostalgically to the days when GFCC was still at 3400 Central Avenue as a clear point of reference to a time when whatever was missing had been there. At times the nostalgia manifested as frustration or even anger in conflicts focused on GFCC's leadership, decisions, directions, etc. Since GFCC has come through the pandemic, it seems clear to many that something bigger than COVID is behind the difference, loss, or lack they have experienced. This bigger challenge is the problem this project seeks to address.

One way to conceptualize GFCC's experience before and after the COVID-19 pandemic is through the lens of the congregational life cycle.<sup>15</sup> The congregational life cycle imagines congregations as living organisms whose life unfolds in a predictable cycle that

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<sup>13</sup> Erik Tryggstad, "More Room for Ministry under a Big Sky," *Christian Chronicle*, October 2, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> In this paragraph, I am sharing first-hand observations and reflections based on conversations with multiple GFCC members. These reflections are based on observations and conversations with those at both the center and the periphery of GFCC, leaders, and non-leaders.

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bullard, Jr., *Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005), 90; cf. Robert D. Dale, *Keeping the Dream Alive: Understanding and Building Congregational Morale* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 30-33, 36-37.



begins at birth and ends at death. By studying congregations, many have identified markers of the various life stages congregations experience. These markers not only allow one to discern where a congregation is; they also help predict where it is going if it stays on its current developmental course. Moreover, the life cycle can give a congregation's leadership insight into how it might move most naturally into the next healthy stage of its development.

George Bullard, one practitioner of the life cycle model, identifies ten stages in a church's life cycle. He arrives at these stages by evaluating the relative strength of four dynamics: vision, relationships, programs, and management. GFCC fits George Bullard's sixth stage, which he calls "maturity." According to Bullard,

Maturity is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning well, with some sense of efficiency and effectiveness. However, it is no longer clear concerning its focus and sense of strategic spiritual direction. Signs of malaise exist. Members cannot articulate the vision anymore. They no longer are certain as to who they are and where they are heading in the future.<sup>16</sup>

According to Bullard, the single biggest reason congregations reach this point is because a previous vision cycle ends.<sup>17</sup> As he indicates in his quotation, when a vision cycle ends without another to replace it, the congregation loses its alignment as people begin to go in different directions. For congregations like GFCC who have experienced unity and the blessings of alignment, the misalignment in the absence of vision is frustrating. Competing priorities arising in the absence of vision generate conflict, and such conflict threatens the unity and love that have made so many want to return to Great Falls following their

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<sup>16</sup> Bullard, *Full Kingdom Potential*, 90. Conversations with the elders, evangelists, and key leaders over the course of my doctorate (August 2021 to March 2023) as well as our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis with a broad cross-section of our congregation in March 19, 2022 confirmed that we see ourselves as a "mature" congregation with each of these dynamics present.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 88. Congregations from the mature stage on "are being sustained by their *management* rather than fueled by their *vision*." That is, they are focused on maintaining and surviving. See also Robert D. Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Help Your Church Come Alive* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 63-65, and Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), 71.

retirement from the USAF. The benefit of Bullard’s material on the life cycle is how he traces all these dynamics back to a simple problem: the loss of vision. For a mature congregation like GFCC, the primary opportunities in that problem are to discern new vision and then develop new strategy based on that vision.<sup>18</sup>

Another way to conceptualize GFCC’s experience before and after the COVID-19 pandemic is using William Bridges’ model of organizational transition.<sup>19</sup> Bridges distinguishes change from transition. Change is primarily external and environmental. In the case of GFCC, a change would be the actual move from the east side of Great Falls to the west side on March 31, 2019. Change can often happen quickly. Transition, in contrast, is much slower: “Transition... is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.”<sup>20</sup> Transition begins with an “ending” and ends with a “new beginning.” Between these, people and organizations experience a confusing in-between, which he calls “the neutral zone.” Typical of the neutral zone is increased anxiety, decreased motivation, and feelings of disorientation, of doubt, of resentment, and of self-protectiveness.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bullard, *Full Kingdom Potential*, 90.

<sup>19</sup> William Bridges and Susan Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Da Capo Press: 2016). See also William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes*, 40<sup>th</sup> ann. ed. (New York: Lifelong Books, 2019), 109-60; Ann Salerno and Lillie Brock, *The Change Cycle: How People Can Survive and Thrive in Organizational Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2008), esp. pp. 27-76; Jaco J. Hamman, *When Steeples Cry: Leading Congregations through Loss and Change* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 46-72; Kenneth J. McFayden, *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing our Losses, Finding our Future* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2009), 21-64.

<sup>20</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

In the language of Bridges, GFCC has been in the neutral zone. Some change has brought an end to something valued in GFCC, but the new beginning the change was intended to initiate has not yet completely emerged. Reflecting on GFCC's recent history, there is no shortage of changes or endings. Some of the most prominent seem to be the following: the move of Chris Crooks to Belgrade in 2016, the anticipation of Scott Laird's ministry transition after nearly thirty years of ministry in Great Falls, the loss of the dream to build on east side, the loss of a clear sense of mission as the number of Airmen from MAFB continues to decline, the loss of felt harmony in the misalignment that accompanies the loss of vision, and the loss of membership as some have gone their separate ways for various reasons. All these endings or losses contribute to GFCC's neutral zone experience.

To move through the neutral zone, Bridges suggests that organizations not only need to complete endings, but also to lay hold of new beginnings in order to complete a transition. Four things help an organization lay hold of new beginnings. First, there must be a clear purpose to justify the change and pain it causes. Second, there must be a picture of that purpose lived out. Third, there must be a plan that coordinates the details of living out that purpose. Fourth, there must be a part to play for everyone in the organization.<sup>22</sup> Bridges' model suggests that even though GFCC has experienced change, it has not yet completed transition. For as yet, there is no clear picture or plan to enact the new beginning GFCC desires. Therefore, there is confusion about the part that each member is expected to play in moving GFCC forward.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 68-77.

<sup>23</sup> This confusion creates its own transition as people experience the loss of place in the community (GFCC).

Seeing GFCC through the lenses of these two models illuminates the underlying problem this project addresses. At the end of one vision cycle, in the neutral zone, GFCC needs new vision—a compelling, realistic picture of the difference it can make by participating in the mission of God in its new context.<sup>24</sup> As the definition implies, there is an integral link between a congregation’s context and its vision.<sup>25</sup> This link is the source of both GFCC’s problem and its opportunity. Due to the lengthy process of helping members adjust to a new location, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a period of intense conflict in 2022, GFCC had not yet undertaken any sort of study of its new community. But the lack of such a study was hindering the discovery of new vision. The problem this project addressed was the need to discern the implications of GFCC’s location for the mission and vision of GFCC.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to discern the missional implications of GFCC’s context. Three components comprised the larger purpose. First, the purpose was to survey the mission of God in Scripture with a team made up of members from GFCC. This survey would facilitate the missional aspect of discerning the missional implications. Second, the purpose was to acquaint this team with practices and principles of spiritual discernment. Acquainting the team with these practices would facilitate the discerning aspect of discerning the missional implications. Third, the purpose was to complete a demographic study of GFCC’s context, including both GFCC and Great Falls. The demographics study would facilitate the context piece of discerning the missional implications of GFCC’s context.

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<sup>24</sup> Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 45, 48; John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 71, 74; Jeffrey D. Jones, *Heart, Mind, and Strength: Theory and Practice for Congregational Leadership* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2008), 75-78, provides a helpful overview of the key leadership literature on defining vision.

<sup>25</sup> Rouse and Van Gelder, *Field Guide*, 44-48.

### **Significance of the Project**

This project, if successful, supplies a key missing piece that has kept GFCC stuck for several years.<sup>26</sup> If vision is the contextualization of mission, then vision cannot emerge unless an organization understands its context. By completing a contextual study of demographics, this project gives GFCC's leaders what they need to articulate a new vision and lead GFCC in planning and implementing that new vision. If Bullard and Bridges are correct, this vision and its plans could then realign GFCC, restoring much of the harmony that GFCC perceives it has lost. Moreover, by completing a contextual study of demographics and thereby facilitating vision articulation and planning, this project makes it possible for members to have a clear part in moving forward together. With a picture, a plan, and a part, it makes it possible for GFCC to move into the new beginning it has long desired. If Bullard is correct, such a new vision could carry GFCC forward for 7-10 years. Furthermore, if GFCC's history has any merit as a predictor, GFCC can anticipate reaching new heights of growth spiritually and numerically.<sup>27</sup> In sum, this project is significant in that it addresses the core problem beneath many of the other problems GFCC faces.

Additionally, GFCC is a leader among COCs in the Northwest United States and Southern Canada. Many COCs in this region look to GFCC and its leaders for guidance, especially in the area of congregational leadership. This project could provide insight and

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<sup>26</sup> By several years, I mean at least since late 2018, when it became apparent that GFCC would be moving to the west side at 1300 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW.

<sup>27</sup> Each time there has been a clarity of direction from its leaders, GFCC has thrived and grown. That was the case with Tolle in 1948-49. Under Tolle's clear leadership, the church grew from a dozen to approximately 40. That was the case with L. Q. Robinson, who helped the congregation grow into the 60s between 1949-52. It was the case with Gordon Naylor in 1970-93, during which time the congregation almost tripled in size. Finally, it was the case with Scott Laird (and later Chris Crooks) from 1994. GFCC peaked at 266 in 2006. GFCC's history suggests that clarity is a high value for us, and we thrive with it. It is notable, then, that we have lacked this clarity since 2016.

guidance on one piece of one possible path forward to revitalized ministry in context. Consequently, I envision this project helping GFCC better serve COCs in the Northwestern United States who might face the challenge of bridging the gap between church and community.

### **Basic Assumptions**

First, I am assuming the problem to which this project is a response is not significantly connected causally to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the loss of vision between 2016-18, one would expect the neutral zone to follow. In fact, as described above, this is precisely what happened. GFCC's neutral zone overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the pandemic likely magnified pre-existing neutral zone dynamics.

Second, I assume the reliability of the congregational lifecycle and William Bridges' writings on transition as models for assessing where an organization is developmentally and for designing developmentally appropriate interventions. This assumption stands behind this project's problem and purpose statements.

Third, I assume a framework of strategic planning. Vision discovery is a distinct component of strategic planning. For this project, I especially rely on the strategic planning concept of the integral relationship between an organization and its environment in the articulation of vision.

Fourth, in my foundational reliance upon strategic planning, I also assume that Great Falls is a stable population. Strategic planning is a long-range planning tool that assumes some measure of long-term stability.<sup>28</sup> Based on my demographic study, I believe this

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Reeves, Knut Haanaes, and Janmejaya Sinha, *Your Strategy Needs a Strategy* (Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015), 6-24.

assumption is well-founded for Great Falls, especially within the next three-to-five years. Nevertheless, it is an assumption, and it could be proven wrong.

Fifth, in my approach to this project, I firmly believe that God has given GFCC all it needs to be missionally effective in context (2 Cor. 9:8-11). For this reason, I assume asset-based approaches are more productive than deficit-based approaches to organizational development.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, I will focus on what GFCC has and how its assets can be leveraged to address its needs and growth areas.

Sixth, I assume the validity and utility of the Christian tradition's multifaceted witness to the spiritual discipline of discernment.<sup>30</sup> Spiritual discernment is the process God's people use to notice God's activity, name it, and navigate it through participation. I assume that tradition and draw from it selectively, especially from its applications to group discernment. This assumption is at the foundation of the project's design in forming a team to discern the missional implications of GFCC's context.

Seventh, I assume that it is possible to acquire a realistic perspective of where GFCC is and where it needs or would like to go without involving the entire congregation in the process. I assume that by working with samples of certain groups of people it is possible to get that realistic perspective.

### **Definitions**

*Congregational Lifecycle.* The congregational life cycle is an assessment and intervention model. It imagines congregations as living organisms whose life unfolds in a

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<sup>29</sup> Two invaluable resources here have been Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), and Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> I will discuss this topic in detail in chapter three.

predictable cycle that begins at birth and ends at death. By identifying markers of various stages in a congregation's life, the life cycle attempts to define the developmental challenges a congregation faces in each stage. Based on the stage and developmental challenges, the life cycle offers insight into developmentally appropriate next steps for congregations.<sup>31</sup>

*Demography.* The study of “the characteristics of the people in the community, described in terms of numbers, age, and sex distribution; ethnic and racial profile; and changes in these data over time.”<sup>32</sup>

*Ecology.* The study of the mutually influencing relationship between an organization and its surrounding environment or context.<sup>33</sup>

*Mission.* How the Triune God calls the church to participate locally in God's work of redeeming and restoring all creation.

*Mission of God.* How the Triune God is at work to redeem and restore all creation.

*Neutral Zone.* The neutral zone is the second of three stages in William Bridges' model of transition. It is the psychological process of coming to terms with a change. It is preceded by an ending and followed by a new beginning. Typical characteristics of the neutral zone are increased anxiety, decreased motivation, and feelings of disorientation, of doubt, of resentment, and self-protectiveness.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See notes 15-18.

<sup>32</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *et al. Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 41.

<sup>33</sup> Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 40-43.

<sup>34</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 46.



*Transition.* The term William Bridges coined to describe the psychological process of coming to terms with a change.<sup>35</sup> It includes three stages: an ending, a neutral zone, and a new beginning.

*Vision.* A compelling, realistic depiction of the difference made when a church participates in the mission of God in its context.

### **Delimitations**

First, this project will not complete the process of vision discovery. This project will only lay the groundwork for vision discovery by studying the ecological relationship of Great Falls and GFCC in light of the mission of God and spiritual discernment. The articulation of vision and the planning of ways to implement that vision lie beyond the scope of this project.

Second, although this project will be an exercise in creating change readiness, the execution of vision-oriented action steps in pursuit of hoped-for change lies beyond the scope of this project.

Third, because the mission of God must be contextualized in each congregation, this project will not attempt to discern the missional implications of context for any church other than GFCC. At most, it will illustrate one process one church (GFCC) used to discern the missional implications of its context for the sake of facilitating vision discovery.

### **Limitations**

First, GFCC has approximately two hundred members. This project only directly involved two teams from within GFCC. The discernment team had 12 members who were selected as a representative sample of GFCC. The GFCC leadership team consisted of eight elders, three ministers, and one intern. At most, this project directly involved only 24 of

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<sup>35</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3.

GFCC's approximately 200 members. Consequently, the findings and conclusions of this project are limited to the discernment of those involved and may not completely represent the wisdom of other groups within GFCC.

Second, this project involved processing a significant amount of information in a short time. Many people process information better when they have more time to do so. The compressed timeline for reviewing information therefore potentially limits this study's results. It is possible that the teams involved would have reached more, better, or simply different conclusions had the time for study and reflection been extended.

### **Conclusion**

In the preceding pages, I have established the need for the project "Discerning the Missional Implications of Context." GFCC has reached the end of one vision cycle but has not yet moved into the next one. As such, GFCC has been experiencing the symptoms associated with the declining side of the life cycle as well as the dynamics of the neutral zone. Moving forward as a congregation requires fresh vision and strategy. In the following chapter, I will attempt to establish a theological foundation from which to address GFCC's contextual challenges.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

#### **Introduction**

In the first chapter I outlined the problem and opportunity before GFCC. To move into a new beginning, GFCC needs a new vision from which to develop a new strategy for ministry in context. To establish a biblical and theological foundation for this concept, I will use Titus as my point of departure. In Titus, Paul articulates a clear vision of the difference mission makes in context. He also articulates a clear strategy for participating in this difference. Good works is Paul's shorthand for this vision and strategy. To establish this point and its theological pertinence to GFCC, I will first provide an orientation to Titus. I will then survey Paul's use of the good works motif in the letter. Next, I will explore Paul's theological rationale for good works in Titus. Finally, I will draw these threads together and apply them to GFCC in the conclusion of this chapter.

#### **Orientation to Context**

##### **Orientation to Titus**

When turning to Titus, one is faced with a perplexity to which there is no easy solution. Questions of who wrote the letter, to whom, from where, when, and why all are disputed. Moreover, "resolving with great assurance the issue of who wrote the Pastorals and

when does not respect the evidence.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, because context is a key piece of my argument, and because exploring such questions in detail is beyond the scope of this chapter, I shall simply state my views on these matters. I read the letter to Titus as authentically Pauline, though I am not certain it was written by Paul himself before his death.<sup>37</sup> The notable verbal similarities between Titus and Luke-Acts make Luke a likely amanuensis or possibly posthumous writer.<sup>38</sup> Allowing for either Pauline authorship during a second career or for an early, posthumous dispatch in Paul’s name, I read Titus as a product of the 60s CE, though further precision is difficult.<sup>39</sup> These two possibilities eliminate the most serious objections to trusting the letter’s claim to have been sent to Titus in Crete (Tit. 1:4, 5).<sup>40</sup> Therefore, I read the letter as an authentic address to real situations in Crete in the 60s CE.

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<sup>36</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Yale Reference Library (1997; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 663. Compare the very similar conclusion in David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004), 747-48.

<sup>37</sup> I find Guthrie’s arguments for authenticity (e.g., that the letter was written by Paul himself) compelling. See Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 14, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1990; repr., Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 584-622. At the same time, the second career of Paul, which authenticity almost always assumes, rests on conjecture supported by very little external evidence (cf. Rom. 15:22-24; 1 Clement 5:6-7). For this reason, although I believe Titus is Pauline, I cannot rule out the possibility that it was written shortly after his death (possibly at his instruction) by someone in his close circle.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, *Introduction*, 643, 665. *Pace* Frances Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-23.

<sup>39</sup> Although the possibility of posthumous writing could open the possibility of a late first- or second-century date, the “vagueness of what is described” (Brown, *Introduction*, 643, 665) makes a second-century contest with Gnosticism unlikely (*pace* Frances Young, *Theology*, 1-23). The same vagueness opens the possibility of earlier dates. In view of my belief that the letter is authentic, I prefer to read Titus as close to Paul as possible. Thus I read Titus as a letter written in the mid-to-late 60s.

<sup>40</sup> The most serious objection is that the biographical data of this letter is difficult, if not impossible, to harmonize with what we know of Paul’s career from his letters and from Acts. See Brown, *Introduction*, 664. In affirming a Cretan destination, I respectfully depart from Quinn, who takes the letter as having been written for Jewish Christians in Rome. See Jerome D. Quinn, “Timothy and Titus, Epistles to,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:560-71.

### Orientation to the Ecclesial Situation in Crete

In several places Paul alludes to the situation Titus faces in Crete. Paul says he left Titus in Crete “that you might set right the things that remain and appoint elders in every city” (Tit. 1:5).<sup>41</sup> These two ideas set the agenda not only for chapter one but also for the rest of the letter.<sup>42</sup> After instructing Titus on appointing elders (1:5-9), Paul discusses disorder in Crete (1:10-16). A group with strong Jewish tendencies (1:10, 14, 15-16) was teaching things that were “upsetting whole households” (1:11).<sup>43</sup> Because the household was viewed as “a little state” with “the proper ordering of households [ensuring] the proper ordering of society,” disruptions in a household could be seen as threatening societal order.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, “since the churches would have met in households, the danger is then that the church itself will be ruined by the unrest connected with the false teaching.”<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, as Paul first engages the didactic disruptions on Crete, he does so with distinctly Cretan language: “A certain one of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are

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<sup>41</sup> Translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own and reflect my own exegesis of the letter. For the underlying Greek text, I rely throughout on Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Joahannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, 28<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 677.

<sup>43</sup> The fact that Paul envisions these people as potentially responsive to Titus’ authority (cf. 1:13; 2:15; 3:1, 9-11) suggests that these are Christian Jews and not Jews in general.

<sup>44</sup> Young, *Theology*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 697. See also T. Christopher Hoklotubbe, “Civilized Christ-Followers among Barbaric Cretans and Superstitious Judeans: Negotiating Ethnic Hierarchies in Titus 1:10-14,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 140, no. 2 (2021), 369-90. Although I disagree with his reconstruction of the background, Hoklotubbe notes that the early church was seen as one of the many “foreign and barbaric cults” (384). Christians “were considered among the mistrusted and potentially seditious subordinate groups within the Roman Empire” (378). This placed upon them “the challenge of convincing outsiders that they did not promote a barbaric superstition that threatened Roman ‘civility’ and thus warranted social ostracism, imprisonment, and even execution” (384). Although some aspects of Hoklotubbe’s comments may be anachronistic for Titus, he nonetheless demonstrates that, in general, first-century Christians had to constantly consider how to win a hearing for the gospel within a culture in which they were suspect.

always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons” (Tit. 1:12). Paul quotes the Cretan “prophet” Epimenides<sup>46</sup> in order to compare his opponents to typical Cretans.<sup>47</sup> Like the Cretans, whose claim to possess a tomb for Zeus drew the scorn of the ancient world, the opponents embrace unorthodox views of God.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, their false views of God lead to disorder. With the phrase “evil beasts,” Paul highlights social characteristics for which Crete was well-known. Although Pliny (*Natural History*, 8.83) had noted the absence of wild beasts on Crete, Plutarch (*Moralia*, 86C) saw the population itself as beastly.<sup>49</sup> That is, they were known for predatory violence and injustice in their dealings with one another.<sup>50</sup> This behavior is also characteristic of the opponents who “upset whole households” through dissentious teaching (1:11; 3:9-11; cf. 3:1-2). The final quality in verse 12, “lazy gluttons,” also fits what we

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<sup>46</sup> It is beyond the purpose of this chapter to explore in depth the origins of the quote. Briefly, the opening statement (“Cretans are always liars”) appears verbatim in Callimachus, whereas we have no extant text for Epimenides (Towner, *Titus*, 700ff). Nevertheless, as John Granger Cook [“Titus 1,12: Epimenides, Ancient Christian Scholars, Zeus’s Death, and the Cretan Paradox,” *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 25, no. 3 (2021): 367–94] argues, “There is no apparent reason to doubt that some Christian scholars had access to Epimenidean writings or more probably an old tradition which attributed the verse to the legendary Epimenides” (372-73). Additionally, as Riemer Faber [“‘Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons’: A Neglected Theme in the Epistle to Titus,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 135–45] notes, “Evidently the apostle quotes the entire verse because each phrase in it is relevant to the argument that is developed in the immediate and general context” (137). For these reasons, I favor Epimenides as the “prophet” Paul has in mind.

<sup>47</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 698-99; Reggie M. Kidd, “Titus as Apologia: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 21, no. 1 (June 1999): 205; Faber, “A Neglected Theme,” 138; cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, “The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12,13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in the Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis,” *Biblical Interpretation* 2, no. 2 (July 1994): 213. See Titus 3:3.

<sup>48</sup> According to George M. Wieland, “Roman Crete and the Letter to Titus,” *New Testament Studies* 55, no. 3 (2009): 345, “From ancient times [the Cretans] had claimed to be guardians of both [Zeus’s] birthplace on Mt. Ida and his tomb” (345). It was this claim that led to the widespread prejudice that Cretans were liars. So prominent was this characterization that the language itself transformed “Crete” into verbs (*crētizein*), nouns (*crētismos*), and prepositional phrases (*pros krēta krētizein*) in the semantic domain of falsehood (345). Kidd, engaging with Callimachus’ treatment of Epimenides’ saying, observes that, to the ancient world in the grip of Olympian theology, this claim was nothing less than “deicide.” By blurring the lines between deity and humanity, Cretans had trivialized Zeus. Cook notes that this tradition about Zeus “survives in at least eighty references from the ancient world (pagan and Christian),” making it “reasonable to assume that the Pauline author of Titus was aware of the Cretan belief” (382).

<sup>49</sup> I owe these references to Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 661.

<sup>50</sup> Wieland, “Roman Crete,” 347; Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 190; Faber, “A Neglected Theme,” 139.

know about Cretans, perhaps in an ironic way. Polybius had, in the second-century BCE, noted the Cretans' love of gain and wealth (6.46.3; 6.46.9; 6.47.4).<sup>51</sup> This love for gain showed up in Cretan piracy as well as in the way Crete supplied mercenary soldiers to the countries around the Mediterranean.<sup>52</sup> With this final description, then, Paul characterizes the opponents as controlled by a rapacious appetite for gain (cf. Tit. 1:11). In sum, the disorder in the Cretan churches that Titus is there to correct originates in false views of God. These false views of God then lead to a breakdown of relationships, a breakdown which indicates an ungoverned self-indulgence of a desire for gain. It is easily imaginable how such qualities might not only be disruptive within the household, but also in *politeia*.<sup>53</sup> Paul leaves Titus in Crete to correct this false-teaching-leading-to-false-living by teaching “the truth which is in

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<sup>51</sup> Once again, I owe these references to Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 661.

<sup>52</sup> Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 191.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens, First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 2, “The term referred to the whole of life in the public domain of a city, in contrast to private existence in a household.” *Politeia* is the topic under consideration beginning with 3:1 (cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 768-70; George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 331-32, 334; Jerome D. Quinn, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 35, *The Letter to Titus* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 179; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 223-24). The fact that Paul addresses what is out of order first in reference to the household and then in reference to *politeia* disposes me most favorably toward Marshall's outline of the book: 1:1-4 (Salutation); 1:5-16 (Elders and Opponents); 2:1-15 (Believers in relation to one another in the household); 3:1-11 (Believers in relation to unbelievers in society); 3:12-14 (Instructions); 3:15 (Closing Greetings). See I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 18-24.

accordance with reverence for God” (1:1)<sup>54</sup> in a way that is highly responsive to this context.<sup>55</sup>

### Conclusions

This brief orientation to Titus demonstrates that the challenges Paul commands Titus to address were integrally related to the receiving context (Crete). Paul writes to Titus because he believes that knowing “the truth that is in accordance with reverence for God” (Tit. 1:1) will make a noticeable difference there. Accordingly, not only is the theology of Titus responsive to this context, so also is the strategy that grows out of it. As an example of Paul’s theological engagement with the context of the church, “The letter to Titus is understood most satisfactorily as a product of early Christian mission and an intriguing example of creative missionary engagement with a specific environment.”<sup>56</sup> Titus, then, is a missional letter.

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<sup>54</sup> See John J. Wainright, “*Eusebeia*: Syncretism or Conservative Contextualization?” *Evangelical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1993): 220-23; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 171-74; Raymond F. Collins, “The Theology of the Epistle to Titus,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 76, no. 1 (2000): 62; Stephen Charles Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus 2:10-14 and 3:3-7,” *Novum Testamentum* 20, no. 1 (1978): 23-28. “Reverence for God” translates *eusebeia*. The word is the NT equivalent of the OT’s phrase “the fear of the LORD.” It describes the integration of knowledge of God and one’s behavior—the way devotion to God impacts everything else in one’s life. The word *eusebeia*, which expressed profound respect for the orders of life, significantly overlapped with the OT’s sense of “the fear of the LORD.” Paul and the early church spoke of *eusebeia* likely because it was widely considered to be one of the cardinal virtues. By using this word here, Paul indicates that he sees a close connection between teaching and life.

<sup>55</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 699, notes that verses 12-13 “prepare the way for a description of Christ designed specifically to engage the Cretan social-religious world...” This suggestion supports Kidd’s main argument (“Titus as Apologia,” 186): that 1:12 and 2:12 form a chiasmic pattern in which 2:12 is framed as a response to the claims of 1:12. “Self-controlled” counters “lazy gluttons,” “upright” counters “evil beasts,” and “reverently” counters “always liars.” I find this argument compelling.

<sup>56</sup> Wieland, “Roman Crete,” 354.



## Participating in God’s Mission

If Paul’s letter to Titus can rightly be called a missional letter, “good works” can rightly be called its missional strategy. With six references to “good works” in Titus (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), the theme is more densely concentrated in this letter than anywhere else in the NT.<sup>57</sup> Thomas McCall observes, “One of the perennial challenges in biblical interpretation is making sure that we are defining Scripture’s words and phrases in the same way that the biblical authors do.”<sup>58</sup> Given the negative theological connotations associated with “good works” since the Protestant Reformation, clarity of definition is especially important lest we unwittingly smuggle in assumptions which might distort Paul’s meaning.<sup>59</sup> For this reason, in this section, I will first define Paul’s terminology for speaking of good works in Titus and then survey the letter’s usage of the motif.

### Defining “Good Works”

The phrase “good works” translates two Greek phrases: *ergon agathon* (Tit. 1:16; 3:1) and *kalōn ergōn* (2:7, 14; 3:8, 14).<sup>60</sup> *BDAG* defines *ergon* as “that which displays itself

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<sup>57</sup> See Appendix A (Good Works in the New Testament). A reference to “good works” or “doing good” occurs in six of Titus’ 46 verses. This concentration is denser than 1 Peter (nine occurrences in 105 verses) and 1 Timothy (seven occurrences in 113 verses). The only other NT books that come close to this count are Luke (six occurrences) and Acts (five occurrences), but each of these are significantly longer than Titus, 1 Timothy, or 1 Peter. Although the present study focuses on Titus and addresses other passages only insofar as they impact this study, this appendix serves as an opening to the other passages.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas H. McCall, Caleb T. Friedeman, and Matt T. Friedeman, *The Doctrine of Good Works: Reclaiming a Neglected Protestant Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023), 78.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* Dr. Kent Yinger has demonstrated how Protestant assumptions about good works have colored the study of the underlying lexemes for “work.” See Kent L. Yinger, “Rehabilitating Good Works: The Meaning of ἔργον” (paper presented at the *Evangelical Theological Society Northwest Regional Presentation*, Portland, OR, April 3, 2004). For a general survey of the more positive Protestant treatment of good works, see McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 1-24.

<sup>60</sup> For this section, I am greatly indebted to Dr. Kent Yinger who shared an unpublished paper in which he surveys the history of scholarly treatment of *ergon* diachronically. Kent L. Yinger, “Selected History of Scholarship on ‘works’: Diachronic” (2004): 1-24. Yinger carefully demonstrates how Protestant soteriology (especially regarding the relationship of grace and works) has occasionally led scholars into “illegitimate

in activity of any kind” and recommends the glosses “deed, action.”<sup>61</sup> When used of humans, *ergon* in both singular and plural forms is used for deeds “exhibiting a consistent moral character.”<sup>62</sup> According to Roman Heiligenthal, when Greeks used the language of works, they did so in light of the underlying assumption that a person was known by their works.<sup>63</sup> Works (or deeds) revealed the hidden, inner reality of the person—their moral character. With reference to the NT, Heiligenthal notes that works serve one of three functions: to indicate a person’s character within the church, to indicate the character of the church to those in the world, or to indicate the character of a person in relation to God (especially in judgment).<sup>64</sup> Works, then, were less about achieving something such as salvation, and more about revealing the quality of a person or group’s character.

Because *ergon* is a generic term, it must be qualified either by context or by additional modifiers in order to accomplish its signifying function.<sup>65</sup> In Titus, the primary modifiers are *agathos* and *kalos*. According to *BDAG*, the adjective *agathos* pertains to “meeting a high standard of worth and merit” and, when applied to works, speaks of their

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totality transfer” with reference to *ergon* (4). Because he demonstrates the negative associations often attached to *ergon*, I will focus my observations on the word’s positive meaning.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 390. I will subsequently cite Bauer as “*BDAG*.”

<sup>62</sup> Yinger, “Rehabilitating Good Works,” 4.

<sup>63</sup> Roman Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen, Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung der menschlichen Taten im Frühjudentum, Neuen Testament und Frühchristentum* (WUNT 2/9; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983). Because this work has not yet been translated into English, I am indebted to Dr. Kent Yinger for his summary of the work and representative quotes in his unpublished paper “Selected History of Scholarship on “works”: Diachronic,” 9-13.

<sup>64</sup> The three foci of good works correspond to Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen*, 26-92, 93-134, and 135-311 respectively.

<sup>65</sup> *BDAG*, 390, Definition 1cβ, “The *εργον* or *εργα* is (are) characterized by the context as good or bad... Or they are characterized by an added word.”

“social significance and worth.”<sup>66</sup> It conveys a strong connotation of benevolence or beneficence. In the NT, which has been influenced by Judaism and the LXX, the adjective properly refers to God, who alone is good<sup>67</sup> and only derivatively refers to humans.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, given Paul’s ethical emphasis in Titus in conjunction with the fact that ethics was the territory of philosophers, the philosophical sense of *agathon* as virtue seems more likely in Tit. 1:16 and 3:1.<sup>69</sup> When he speaks of *ergon agathon* in these two verses, then, Paul has in mind deeds that are virtuous.<sup>70</sup> To call works virtuous implies that they help one habitually live in line with God’s design and desire thereby achieving the purpose of human existence.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *BDAG*, 3-4, Def. 2aβ. Paul uses *ergon agathon* in the Pastorals at 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Tit. 1:16; 3:1.

<sup>67</sup> See Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:18; and Luke 18:19.

<sup>68</sup> Walter Grundmann, “*αγαθος*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:15-16. Subsequently I will cite as “*TDNT*.” See especially sections a and c. See Acts 9:36; Rom 2:7; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:10; Phil 1:6; Col 1:10; 2 Thes 2:17; 1 Tim 2:10; 1 Tim 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17. Each of these references to good work (*ergon agathon*) is for Christians.

<sup>69</sup> Grundman, “*αγαθος*,” *TDNT*, 1:11. On ethics as the territory of philosophy, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 319-26. See also James R. Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (2003; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 168-69.

<sup>70</sup> But perhaps the derivative sense is not totally removed. In Titus 1:16, Paul suggests the opponents are disqualified from good works through unbelief and disobedience. In this case, their works cannot be good because (rhetorically speaking, at least) they have no relationship with God through which to derive goodness. By contrast, those in view in Titus 3:1ff are believers (3:8). By virtue of that relationship, their works are good. Moreover, as in 1 Peter 2-4, this relational goodness would then qualify their submission.

<sup>71</sup> For this way of defining virtue, see Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 34-35; see also Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and their Remedies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 6-8.

The adjective *kalos* is a near synonym for *agathos* in Titus.<sup>72</sup> *BDAG* defines the adjective as pertaining to “being in accordance at a high level w. the purpose of someth. [*sic*] or someone.”<sup>73</sup> When the adjective is used of a moral quality, they suggest the glosses “good, noble, praiseworthy, contributing to salvation.”<sup>74</sup> In Greek thought from Plato to Plotinus, not only can the *kalon* be identified with the *agathon*, “The ἀγαθὸν takes form in the καλὸν.”<sup>75</sup> In Hebrew thought, the personal nature of the deity modifies the Platonic thought, making the word a functional synonym for God’s will and therefore a close synonym of *agathos*. The Pastoral Epistles, though possibly reflecting some of this influence, more closely resemble the use of the word in Greek Platonic thought, where the word often has the connotation of visible attractiveness.<sup>76</sup> The combination of Paul’s belief in a personal deity along with his contact with the Greek thought of the day suggests that *kalos* is Paul’s word of choice for the way Christians demonstrate the attractiveness or beauty of God’s will before the eyes of the world.<sup>77</sup> In this more outward-focused respect, Paul may intend a subtle distinction from

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<sup>72</sup> Georg Bertram, “καλός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:544. But significantly, only in the Pastoral Epistles does Paul use *kalon* with *ergon* (1 Tim 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Tit. 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14). In his other letters, he only uses *agathon* (cf. Rom. 2:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:10; 2 Thes. 2:17). This distinction could indicate a slightly different emphasis in these letters to coworkers.

<sup>73</sup> *BDAG*, 504, Def. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Bertram, “καλός,” *TDNT*, 3:540.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Bertram, “καλός,” *TDNT* 3:536-37, 550. Cf. *BDAG*, 504, Def. 1 – “pert. to being attractive in outward appearance, *beautiful, handsome, fine...*”

<sup>77</sup> Bertram, “καλός,” *TDNT* 3:539, notes that because of Socrates’ influence, there is a close connection with the concept of *dikaïosunē*, which indicates the content of *kalos*. For believers called to live righteous lives (cf. Tit. 2:12), living righteously means living lives shaped by God’s character. See Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Living God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 106-10. Righteous living fits what Oden calls the “legislative” aspect of God’s righteousness. Speaking of this aspect, he writes, “God’s actions best express what God requires” (108). In other words, the demonstrated goodness of God as Titus relates it in Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-7 is the standard in accordance to which *kalon* marks conformity. Because

*agathos*, which has a more internal focus.<sup>78</sup> “For the PE good deeds are not enough; they must be visibly good and attractive (*kala* as distinct from *agatha*).”<sup>79</sup>

### Background of Paul’s Language for Good Works

As helpful as understanding the words can be, understanding “good works” in Titus also requires some awareness of certain “patterns of interrelations within collectives.”<sup>80</sup>

Paul’s language of good works reflects the social context of benefaction or patronage.<sup>81</sup> This type of relationship “entails an exchange of different types of resources. The patron provides what the client *needs*...”<sup>82</sup> The needs a patron/benefactor met could be those of individuals or groups.<sup>83</sup> Jerome Neyrey provides a helpful categorization of various kinds of common

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God’s character circumscribes this attractiveness, I disagree with Collins [Raymond F. Collins, “Good” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:1075] claim that Titus invites Christians “to live according to the predominant moral norms of the times; in fact, according to a rather bourgeois ethic.”

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 210-12, 710, 764, 793; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 139-40, 175-76, 227, 243.

<sup>79</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 227.

<sup>80</sup> Douglas C. Mohrmann, “Benefaction, Gratitude, and Reciprocity within the Bible,” *Anglican Theological Review* 103, no. 3 (2021): 272.

<sup>81</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 34-35, 42. Stephan J. Joubert [“One Form of Social Exchange or Two? “Euergetism,” Patronage, and Testament Studies,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 31, no. 1 (2001): 17-25] argues that benefaction and patronage are more distinct than is often recognized. Carolyn Osiek [“The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (2009): 143-52] critiques Joubert’s arguments, convincingly demonstrating that the same dynamics are at play in both, even if the terminology is different. See also David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022), 105-06, who argues that the two are distinct and yet “express a shared ethos.” Much remains to be said about benefaction/patronage. Here I only introduce the aspects most relevant to the survey of passages in Titus. In the next major section, I will return to the concept to correlate it to the theology of Titus underlying good works.

<sup>82</sup> David Briones, “Mutual Brokers of Grace: A Study in 2 Corinthians 1.3-11,” *New Testament Studies* 56, no. 4 (2010): 540.

<sup>83</sup> See Osiek (“Politics and Patronage”) and Joubert (“One form of Social Exchange or Two”). According to Joubert, Greek benefaction was originally more communally oriented, and patronage more individually oriented. Osiek convincingly shows how these categories are somewhat fluid and share a common ethos.

benefactions (and, hence, needs) in the ancient world. Sometimes benefactors offered power (protection), sometimes commitment (loyalty, faithfulness), sometimes inducement (material goods), and sometimes influence.<sup>84</sup> Timothy Brookins cites as examples “funding the construction or refurbishment of public buildings, defraying the costs of public entertainment, or sponsoring civic cults by the maintenance of temples, the provision of sacrifices, or the funding of public feasts and private banquets.”<sup>85</sup> Bruce Winter cites similar examples:

supplying grain in times of necessity by diverting the grain-carrying ships to the city, forcing down the price by selling it in the market below the asking rate, erecting public buildings or adorning old buildings with marble revetments such as in Corinth, refurbishing the theatre, widening roads, helping in the construction of public utilities, going on embassies to gain privileges for the city, and helping the city in times of public upheaval.<sup>86</sup>

The “limited access” to these kinds of material or immaterial goods and services in the ancient world made the practice of benefaction/patronage necessary for survival.<sup>87</sup> To ensure the practice continued, the Greco-Roman world “encouraged a general ethos of benevolence” by honoring benefactors publicly through inscriptions.<sup>88</sup> When Paul speaks of *ergon agathon*

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<sup>84</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 4 (2005): 470-71.

<sup>85</sup> Timothy A. Brookins, “An Obligation of Thanks (2 Thess. 1,3): Gift and Return in Divine-Human Relationships,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112, no. 2 (2021): 204.

<sup>86</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 37. Clearly many of these forms of benefaction would be ruled out for Christians either because of cost or because of their incompatibility with Christian teaching. Even so, these examples do give a sense of the character of good works as things done publicly for the greater good of the community as God’s people “seek the welfare of the city” as Winter, citing Jer. 29:7, puts it.

<sup>87</sup> DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 97.

<sup>88</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 43. See Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 26-40, for the general form of the inscriptions. Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 26-33, argues that given how prominently these inscriptions were displayed in the ancient world, early Christians could not have missed the connection between this language and that convention.

or *kalōn ergōn*, this socio-economic context is the background he likely has in mind.<sup>89</sup> He envisions capable citizens (haves) who offer helpful—sometimes even essential—goods or services to their individual or collective neighbors (have nots). With the language of good works, Paul expands and adapts the benefactor concept so that it encompasses the entire community of God’s people whom he envisions as doing good for the world at large.<sup>90</sup> As Winter writes, “The Christian social ethic... can only be described as an unprecedented social revolution of the ancient benefaction tradition...”<sup>91</sup>

### Good Works in Titus

Having defined the terms and briefly described their socio-cultural background, I now turn to surveying the passages in Titus in which *ergon agathon* or *kalōn ergōn* appear. The purpose of this section is to discern what Paul means by good works in the letter to Titus.

#### *Titus 1:16*

In Tit. 1:15-16 Paul uses the expression *ergon agathon* in a construction that occurs in identical form only in Tit. 3:1 and 2 Tim. 3:17. As in other places where Paul uses a similar expression<sup>92</sup>, the adjective *pan* broadens the conception of virtuous works as widely as possible. Using the same broadening technique in Tit. 1:16, Paul further emphasizes the

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<sup>89</sup> Young, *Theology*, 34; cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 769-70, who applies this language specifically to Tit. 3:1ff.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 201. See also Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 255. Commenting on Paul’s use of similar language in the Corinthian correspondence, Harrison observes that “Christians are encouraged to adopt the role of benefactors themselves.” In this connection, I find David Brione (“Mutual Brokers”) helpful. In his model, there is only one patron (God). Christians broker (mediate) his goodness to one another. I argue that in Titus Paul includes the world (“all people,” cf. 2:11; 3:2, 8) in this brokerage, which constitutes an extension of Brione’s image. On brokerage, see E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020), 111-26.

<sup>91</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 209.

<sup>92</sup> Paul elsewhere uses a very similar expression (a form of *pas + ergon agathon*) in 2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:10; 2 Thes. 2:17; 1 Tim. 5:10; 1 Tim. 5:10; and 2 Tim. 2:21.

moral bankruptcy of his opponents, whose lives demonstrate idleness (*argai* = a contraction of *a* + *ergai*).<sup>93</sup> Such opponents are *adokimoi*, which suggests that good works represent a test they have not passed.<sup>94</sup> They have not passed that test because they lack the requisite purity<sup>95</sup> (hence *bdeluktoi*, in 1:16), which is contingent upon belief and obedience (1:15).<sup>96</sup> Insomuch, then, as good works presuppose a purity dependent upon faith and obedience, their presence exhibits a confessional quality—the embodied evidence that one knows God.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, their absence constitutes an embodied denial (*arnountai*) that one knows God.<sup>98</sup> By denying God in their deeds, the opponents in Crete have functionally removed themselves from God’s elect people.<sup>99</sup> Good (virtuous) works, then, become the identifying mark of the people of God. As such, they represent a way for the church not only to distinguish itself from the opponents but also to distinguish itself from the Cretans whom the opponents so closely resemble. In this sense, good works entail a contrast ethic for God’s people.

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Benjamin J. Lappenga, “‘Zealots for Good Works’: The Polemical Repercussions of the Word Ζηλωτής in Titus 2:14,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2013): 705, n. 5. Lappenga sees 1:10-16 as a polemic against the opponents in Crete. I favor his view over against that of Thiselton (“Liar Paradox”), who argues that readings like Lappenga’s (and mine) misrepresent Paul’s intent in 1:10-16. On the reference to “idle” (*argai*), see Faber, “A Neglected Theme,” 139.

<sup>94</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 711.

<sup>95</sup> The language of 1:15 suggests that Paul is here echoing the tradition underlying Rom. 14:20; Mark 7:14-20 (and parallels in Matt. 15:11 and Luke 15:41). Cf. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 211; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 706-07.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Young, *Theology*, 29. Lacking the proper belief and obedience, their minds and consciences are defiled. Being inwardly defiled, in the underlying logic of the purity tradition (see previous note), they are hence incapable of doing external acts of good. See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 709.

<sup>97</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 710, notes that the verbs “confess” and “deny” normally apply to speaking activities. Here, however, it is the life, seen in one’s deeds, that speaks.

<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, in the absence of belief and obedience, Paul uses the simple noun *tois ergois*. The context indicates that these works represent the counterpart to *ergon agathon*.

<sup>99</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 711.



*Titus 2:7*

At Tit. 2:7, Paul shifts from *ergon agathon* to *kalōn ergōn* when he calls Titus to show himself to be an example of good works.<sup>100</sup> Two considerations indicate the significance of the phrase in this context. First, Tit. 2:7 lies within a longer section addressing life in Christian households in Crete.<sup>101</sup> The location of Tit. 2:7 thus suggests that good works have an internal reference. They refer to intrachurch relations. Second, this section addresses Christian households in relation to onlookers in Crete.<sup>102</sup> In relation to outsiders, good works have both negative and positive apologetic functions. Negatively, good works reduce or even eliminate slander (2:5, 8). Positively, good works demonstrate the beauty of the gospel (2:10). In view of these two considerations, good works not only have both inward (church) and outward (world) reference; they also have to do with the liminal points at which church and world interface<sup>103</sup> and so “represent an opening to an attitude and estimate of such deeds among contemporary nonbelievers.”<sup>104</sup> Should the churches in Crete emulate

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<sup>100</sup> Two segmentation issues appear in 2:7 which impact interpretation. In the first case, I take the opening words of Tit. 2:7 (*peri panta*) as belonging with *sōphronein* in 2:6. In the second case, I take *en tē didaskalia* as going with what follows. See Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 446. In this reading, Paul’s call for Titus to be an example of good works conceptually occupies the second point in a three-point exhortation: (1) exhort young men to be self-controlled in all respects, (2) set an example of good works, and (3) demonstrate certain qualities in your teaching (integrity, incorruptibility, and irreproachability). The accusatives (*typon, aphthorian, semnotēta, akatagnōston*) are complements in an object-complement construction. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 182-89.

<sup>101</sup> Note Marshall’s outline cited above. See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 713-14, who observes that this section gives instructions about Christian life in the household rather than as a gathered people (e.g., church). Because of the unique context in Crete, Tit. 2:1-10 constitutes at best only a modified “household code.” See Wieland, “Roman Crete,” 340ff.

<sup>102</sup> See 2:5, 8, 10. Cf. 1:11.

<sup>103</sup> In this case, the interface is, in some respects, only conceptual. The conceptual interface is tied up in the assumptions the Greco-Roman world brought to their understanding of the *oikos* in the *oikoumenē*. The manner of life inside the house had far-reaching implications outside it. See above in the Orientation section.

Titus' example, the result will be that an "opponent [will] be shamed because he has nothing bad to say about us" (2:8).<sup>105</sup> Relating good works to "us" implies that good deeds reflect not only the character of the one doing them, but also the character of the entire church as the elect of God (cf. 1:16).

*Titus 2:14*

Paul next mentions "good works" (*kalōn ergōn*) in Tit. 2:14. This verse lies within a theological justification for the exhortations in 2:1-10.<sup>106</sup> Within 2:11-14, Paul uses the conjunction *hina* at two significant points, first in 2:12 and second in 2:14. Although the *hina* clause in each verse functions differently<sup>107</sup>, each clause illustrates a similar conceptual structure that sharply contrasts negative terms to positive terms.<sup>108</sup> In addition to similar conceptual movement, both verses share the same agent and the same object.<sup>109</sup> The parallels suggest that the two verses should be read together, as illustrated by the following chart.

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<sup>104</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 142. Cf. Bonnie B. Thurston, "The Theology of Titus," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 21, no. 1 (June 1999): 176. On the contextualization of this household code, see Wieland, "Roman Crete," who demonstrates that the features of this household code which might otherwise be perplexing are perfectly intelligible when the Cretan context is taken seriously.

<sup>105</sup> See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 338, on the importance of first-person plural pronouns in Titus.

<sup>106</sup> The conjunction *gar* in 2:11 indicates that this section is connected to what precedes. On treating 2:1-15 as a single unit addressing the Christian household, see Marshall, 18ff. See also Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 744; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 219.

<sup>107</sup> In 2:12, the *hina* clause functions as a complement to the participle *paideouosa*. In 2:14, the *hina* clause expresses the purpose of Jesus' self-offering. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 472 and 476.

<sup>108</sup> This movement is present even though *hina* in 2:14 governs two coordinate verbs in the subjunctive mood, whereas in 2:12 the adverbial participle *arnēsamenoi* is subordinate to the single subjunctive *zēsōmen*.

<sup>109</sup> Jesus is the subject of Tit. 2:14, and the indirect object of his act is "us," his people. In 2:12, strictly speaking, grace is the subject of the participle *paideouosa*. Kidd ("Titus as Apologia," 201) argues that although this is an unusual way of describing the incarnation, that is exactly what Paul is doing. His unusual way of referencing the incarnation only obliquely is motivated by the fact that Cretans commonly believed that the gods were little more than men elevated to deity through benevolence. Divinity was a bottom-up affair. To avoid giving this impression, Paul uses personification along with the epiphany language in order to clearly convey the message that Jesus was not a human-become-God, but rather a God-become-human. This explanation seems far more convincing to me than Mott's suggestion that the writer personifies attributes of

<u>Negative Pole</u>	<u>Positive Pole</u>
“all lawlessness” (Tit. 2:14)	“good works” (Tit. 2:14)
“irreverence and worldly passion” (Tit. 2:12)	“self-controlled, righteous, reverent lives” (Tit. 2:12)

Reading Tit. 2:12 and 2:14 together, “good works” in 2:14 stand in sharp contrast to “all lawlessness,” which represents the negative pole of the parallel. This contrast suggests that “good works” are in some sense related to God’s law.<sup>110</sup> Paul’s allusions to Exod. 19:5; 23:22 (LXX) as well as his echoes of Ezekiel in Tit. 2:14 confirm this reading.<sup>111</sup> The implied function of God’s law is clarified by the parallel to “all lawlessness”—“irreverence and worldly passions” (2:12).<sup>112</sup> The single root of irreverent disregard for God bears the fruit of desires shaped by this present world. As the antithesis of such lawlessness, disregard

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God in order to safeguard the transcendence of God from direct action (cf. Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 41ff). If Kidd is correct, then Jesus is the implied agent of 2:12, and the direct object there, as in verse 14, is “us.”

<sup>110</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 761, “The Greek term *anomia* was used frequently in the OT to depict opposition to God’s law (see on 1 Tim 1:9), and in the singular denotes ‘wickedness’ or ‘sinfulness,’ which is set in opposition to the concept of righteousness...” Note the allusion to Psa. 129:8 (LXX). All Septuagint references throughout are from Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> Both Exod. 19:5 and 23:22 (LXX) tie Torah observance to being God’s covenantal people (*laon periousion*). Ezekiel 33-39, whose language Paul frequently echoes in Titus, makes the same connection in 36:24-28 (esp. v. 27). Since this section lies beneath Paul’s thought in Tit. 3:4-7, it is possible he already has it in mind in Tit. 2:14. For a similar view, see Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 761-65. Towner writes, “Having already established a distinct OT covenant and New Covenant framework for understanding, ‘zeal for good deeds’ can be seen within that frame. The appropriate response to grace was to be devotion to Torah (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 26:18). From Paul’s eschatological Spirit-perspective, the faith response to covenant grace is the Spirit-generated fulfillment of Torah (suggesting internalization of the law; cf. Jer. 31:31-34 [MT], the reshaping of the heart/will to obey; 3:5; Rom. 8:1-9; Gal. 5:17-18)” (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 764).

<sup>112</sup> *BDAG*, 141, notes that “in general ἀσεβεία is understood vertically as a lack of reverence for deity and hallowed institutions as displayed in sacrilegious words and deeds.” It is the antonym of *eusebeia*, which occurs in Tit. 1:1, on which, see above.

for God, and the concomitant flowering of worldly desires, good works embody the reverence for God that is the goal of God's law (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-11). With this different root, the implication is that good works in some way represent a curbing of worldly passions.<sup>113</sup> As in Tit. 1:16, good works constitute a contrast ethic distinguishing God's people from the world.

On the positive side of the parallel, Paul connects "good works" (*kalōn ergōn*) to the purity enabled by Christ's death.<sup>114</sup> Having been purified, the Cretans are now God's special people (*laon periousion*).<sup>115</sup> This phrase echoes Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; and 26:18 LXX and connotes God's election of Israel. These passages create associations that further explicate the meaning of "good works" in Titus. Exodus 19:4-6 (LXX) connects the concept of being God's special people (*laon periousion*) to Israel's role as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Deuteronomy 7:8 connects God's election to his promises to the patriarchs. Exodus 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 14:2; and 26:28 each explicitly or implicitly call God's special people to covenantal obedience. According to Christopher J. H. Wright, all of these concepts (election, the identity of God's people, covenantal obedience) belong together in the story of redemption. At Sinai, God reconfigures the Abrahamic covenant in Gen. 12:1-3 for the new nation Israel.<sup>116</sup> Priesthood, then, serves the purpose of mediating God's promised blessing to the nations. The necessary condition of blessing the nations is the covenantal obedience of

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<sup>113</sup> The presence of the *sōphron*- language throughout Titus (1:8; 2:2, 4, 5, 6, 12) confirms this impression.

<sup>114</sup> See Ezek. 37:23 (LXX).

<sup>115</sup> This expression has relevance to the meaning of good works because it stands in apposition to *zēlōtēn kalōn ergōn*. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 198-99. See also Lappenga, "Zealots," 704.

<sup>116</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 324, 329.

God's people.<sup>117</sup> Applying these associations to good works suggests that good works have a missional function of both mediating God's Abrahamic blessing and representing God to the world by means of the covenantal loyalty of God's people.<sup>118</sup>

Standing in apposition to "a special people" (*laon periousion*) in Tit. 2:14 is the phrase "zealous for good works" (*kalōn ergōn*). With the adjective "zealous" Paul evokes the world of benefaction, for "The language of zeal... is often employed in the honorific inscriptions to encourage the imitation of civic benefactors."<sup>119</sup> Since good works (*kalōn ergōn*) bear the meaning of deeds that visibly display the beauty of God's way to the world, and since Paul's usage of "zealous" evokes the benefactor/patronage tradition, which was widely recognized as both visible and beautiful, Paul sees benefaction—publicly serving the needs of the community—as one way the Cretan church collectively can bless the world as God's special people.<sup>120</sup> The fact that the expression "zealous for good works" (*kalōn ergōn*) stands in apposition to a phrase used in passages which call for Torah observance suggests that Paul views good works of benefaction as the contextualized form of Torah observance for the Cretan churches.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, the same apposition suggests that such good works in

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<sup>117</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 331, 333.

<sup>118</sup> The associations with Ezekiel strengthen this possibility. In Ezekiel 33-39, the section of the book connected to the post-exilic restoration of God's people, Ezekiel consistently has in view the impression God's people make on the nations for good or ill. A significant part of God's restoration is so that he may be vindicated before the nations. See 36:3, 7, 15, 20-21, 22-23, 36; 38:16, 23; 39:7, 21, 25, 27. Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 786.

<sup>119</sup> Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 317. See the similar argument in Lappenga, "Zealots," 706, 712-13. For a different reading of the language, see Gustaf W. Henriksson, "Grace in Action: Exploring the Intersection of Soteriology and Ethics in the Letter to Titus," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 73 (2020): 338.

<sup>120</sup> It is significant that Paul does not distribute this collective singular noun. Accordingly, here he imagines God's people as a community bearing collective witness to the world through collective good deeds.

<sup>121</sup> The fact that love is the fulfilling of the law (cf. Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; Matt. 7:12; 22:40 [and pars.]; James 2:8) lends credence to the suggestion that "good works" are synonymous (at least in some

fulfillment of God's Torah are an indispensable part of what it means to be God's special people.<sup>122</sup> Once more, good works are a defining mark of God's elect people.

Turning to the positive parallels to Tit. 2:14 in 2:12, one encounters the dependent clause "to live self-controlled, righteously, and reverently." As Quinn notes, "to live" (*zaō* in contrast to both *bios* and *psychē*) has a teleological nuance that invites reflection on one's reason for living.<sup>123</sup> With Paul's adverbial triad, he expresses the purpose of saved life in terms of the ethical aspirations of Greek culture<sup>124</sup> for whom these three terms constituted cardinal virtues.<sup>125</sup> In a list like the one in Tit. 2:12, the three virtues could be viewed collectively (as a reference to virtue) or individually.<sup>126</sup> Because 1:12 appears to reference three discrete but related realities that correspond approximately to 2:12, I take the three terms as related but nonetheless discrete.<sup>127</sup> In this case, it appears that the three terms express relating properly to oneself (*sōphronōs*), to others (*dikaiōs*), and to God (*eusebōs*).<sup>128</sup>

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respects) with works of love and mercy toward the neighbor. See Bertram, *TDNT*, 3:544-49. It is only in this respect that I think we can say with Lappenga that "the author's definition of 'good works' ... has assumed the place of the *law* (νόμος) in the expression ζηλωτῆν καλῶν ἔργων" ("Zealots," 716).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Collins, "Theology," 72; Lappenga, "Zealots," 718.

<sup>123</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 292.

<sup>124</sup> See Wieland, "Roman Crete," 348; Kidd, "Titus as Apologia," 188, 190.

<sup>125</sup> Mott, "Greek Ethics," 23, 47-48; Towner, *The Letter to Timothy and Titus*, 741, 749; Kidd, "Titus as Apologia," 186-88; Hoklotubbe, "Civilized Christ-Followers," 386.

<sup>126</sup> Kidd, "Titus as Apologia," 187.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Kidd, "Titus as Apologia," 186, who provides a detailed outline of what he sees as a chiasmic relationship (ABC`C`B`A) between the two passages. I find this argument persuasive.

<sup>128</sup> On this reading of the triad, see Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 295; Kidd, "Titus as Apologia," 188, 208; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 221; and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 221.

Accordingly, good works have reference not only to God and neighbor, but also to oneself.<sup>129</sup> With reference to self, good works involve maintaining the sort of internal equilibrium which manifests in external equilibrium seen as self-control/-mastery; with reference to the neighbor, good works constitute the sort of living Paul invites in 2:1ff (church) and 3:1ff (world); finally, with reference to God, good works constitute the sort of life that is lived in constant deference to God's will, respecting God's ordering of things. By using the language of Greek ethics expressing ideals to which Greeks typically aspired—ideals conspicuously lacking in Crete and in the opponents—Paul demonstrates that the beauty and attractiveness implied in the expression *kalōn ergōn* considers not only God's claim as covenantal Lord; it also considers the context into which the covenantal Lord sends God's people in mission.

Two further observations are pertinent to good works in Tit. 2:14. First, in 2:12, Paul uses the participle *arnēsamenoi* (“to renounce”) the verb form of which he used in 1:16. The repetition of the cognate, along with the language of purification (*katharisē*), suggests reading 2:11-14 in view of 1:15-16.<sup>130</sup> Doing so reveals the same confessional dynamic in 2:11-14 as was seen in 1:15-16. The good and beautiful life of virtue (*kalōn ergōn*) in relation to self, neighbor, and God constitutes a lived confession that one is a part of God's people. By contrast, the life of vice (“irreverence and worldly passions”) constitutes the corresponding denial. Second, in 2:12, 14, the contrasting poles of the parallel demonstrate

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<sup>129</sup> Cf. McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 1, *et passim*. McCall distinguishes two types of good works: “works of piety,” which have to do with loving God individually and collectively, and “works of mercy” which have to do with loving one's neighbor and living justly (presumably individually or collectively). These roughly correspond to *eusebōs* and *dikaiōs*, respectively. Reading Tit. 2:14 with its positive parallel in 2:12 suggests an additional third category which parallels *sōphronōs*. Quinn's treatment of the *sōphron-* family shows that the word combines the ideas of salvation and the mind. The word typically indicates the sort of external balance (expressed as self-control) which accompanies a corresponding internal balance. See Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 312-15. To express the wholeness of the concept of *sōphronōs*, I prefer to call these “works of integrity.”

<sup>130</sup> Lappenga, “Zealots,” 710-11, argues for this reading on the basis that both sections are “polemical.”

that Paul still views good works as a contrast ethic. Nevertheless, the fact that he frames the positive pole in the language of Greek ethical aspiration suggests he views it equally as a contact ethic. That is, although Paul echoes the biblical call to covenantal distinctiveness, he does not envision the people of God withdrawing from society.<sup>131</sup> As the people of a God who brought salvation for all people (2:11), they must live both in contact with and in contrast to their neighbors whom God hopes to bless through their good works.

*Titus 3:1*

With Tit. 3:1, Paul shifts from addressing private life in the Christian household to public life in society.<sup>132</sup> From this point on, he especially has non-Christians in view.<sup>133</sup> Although one might expect Paul to use the more typical *kalōn ergōn*, in 3:1 he returns to the phrase *ergon agathon*. By repeating the phrase *pros pan ergon agathon* verbatim from 1:16, Paul links his teaching in 3:1ff to the difficulties caused by the opponents (1:10-16).<sup>134</sup> Moreover, by replacing the adjective *adokimoi* (1:16) with *hetoimous* (3:1), Paul exhorts Titus to call the Cretan churches to a way of living that distinguishes them from the opponents. Once again, he depicts good works as a contrast ethic.

In describing how Christians should relate to the unbelieving world, Paul's seven exhortations move from specific to general. He begins with "rulers and authorities" (Tit. 3:1)

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 13, 22, 202. "Christians were not to be a 'withdrawn' community. They were taught to participate in public life in the first and subsequent centuries" (202).

<sup>132</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 714ff, 768.

<sup>133</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 331. The chief evidence for the non-Christian audience reading is the contrast between 3:1-2 and 3:3ff.

<sup>134</sup> Connecting back to 1:10-16 is necessary because, as Marshall's outline illustrates, Paul is now changing subjects, shifting from instruction in the household to instruction on *politeia*. See Marshall, 19-24. Just as Paul connected his teaching on the household in 2:1-15 to the preceding description of life on Crete (by the adversative conjunction along with the emphatic personal pronoun (*su de*, 2:1)), so Paul here conceptually links his teaching on *politeia* to the situation in Crete by verbatim repetition. On the fact that the disruptions in the church/house were negatively impacting the church's public reputation, compare 1:10-11 and 2:5, 8, 10.



but shifts in verse 2 to “all people.”<sup>135</sup> Since the reference to good works precedes the noticeable universalizing shift in 3:2, good works in 3:1 most likely relate to civic rulers and authorities and describe the church’s responsibility as citizens of the empire.<sup>136</sup> This responsibility entails at least the same sorts of exhortations seen in Rom. 13:3-4 and 1 Pet. 2:13-15. That is, good works in Tit. 3:1 likely refer (at least) to obeying the law and paying taxes.<sup>137</sup> But because Paul adopts here the language of benefaction<sup>138</sup> and uses the phrase “good works” in the broadest sense possible,<sup>139</sup> they likely reference more.<sup>140</sup> Paul wants the church to be ready for anything virtuous that promotes the welfare of the state.<sup>141</sup> With this predicate adjective (*hetoimous*), he not only invites them to distinguish themselves from the opponents (who are *adokimoi*, 1:16); he invites the church to “a spontaneous, voluntary readiness for any kind of good activity, over and above accepting and carrying out the directions of public authorities.”<sup>142</sup> Good works, then, are not only responsive, but also

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<sup>135</sup> In Tit. 3:2, “all people” is expressed by the negative universal (“no one”) and then by the positive universal (*pan tas anthropous*, cf. 2:11, 3:8). Cf. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 331.

<sup>136</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 332-33, notes that the call to good works could relate to society in general or the government. “The general form of the statement would incline one to regard it as relating to society in general, but its position immediately after the demand to obey authorities suggests that it goes with this demand and explains what such obedience entails” (333). See also Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 769, and Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 179.

<sup>137</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 771; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 333.

<sup>138</sup> See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 769. On the conventions of benefaction and how these are used in 1 Pet. 2:13ff and Rom 13:3ff, see Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 25-40. By doing so, they can build credibility for the cause of Christ with a watching and suspicious world (on which suspicion, see Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 608-09).

<sup>139</sup> As in 1:16, this universalizing thrust is the significance of *pan*. Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 770.

<sup>140</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 333.

<sup>141</sup> The hint of virtue is implied in the adjective *agathon*. The adjective limits the work to that which accords with the goodness of God. Whatever would compromise reverence for God (cf. 1:1; 2:12) is thereby ruled out.

<sup>142</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 185.

proactive. Good works in some respects entail a posture of political activism to promote the good of the society in cooperation with society's "rulers and authorities."

*Titus 3:8*

With Tit. 3:8, Paul reverts to the expression *kalōn ergōn* when he commands Titus to remind the church of the gospel (3:4-7) "so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds" (NASB).<sup>143</sup> Paul's hendiadys—"good and beneficial"—clarifies the nature of good deeds.<sup>144</sup> They are acts that are good by virtue of the fact that they are helpful (*ōphelima*).<sup>145</sup> Paul contrasts such good works with "foolish controversial questions, genealogies, rivalries, and quarrels about the law," (3:9) which he considers harmful (*anōpheleis*) and fruitless (*mataioi*).<sup>146</sup> Given the verbal parallels between the 3:8 and 3:9, it is possible that the adjectives in 3:9 also form a hendiadys, with the term "fruitless" being

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<sup>143</sup> The verb *proistasthai* is a complementary infinitive, clarifying the meaning of *phrontizōsin* (see Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 351). Although many translations favor some version of "devotion" for *proistasthai* (cf. NRSV, ESV, CSB, NIV, NLT), in my view, the fact that this connotation is already conveyed by the verb *phrontizōsin* makes "devotion" an unlikely gloss. The fact that this verb was frequently used in inscriptions (see *BDAG*, 870) and the likelihood (suggested by *kalōn ergōn*) that Paul intends that sense here, leads me to favor the NASB's translation of "engage." Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 233-35, however, favors the idea of "taking the lead" in good works, which approximates the first definition in *BDAG* (870). Although I am sympathetic to this translation, the subtle contrast with *periistaso* in v. 9, makes it less convincing. That imperative stands as the positive contrast to *proistasthai*. "Taking the lead" does not provide a sufficient verbal contrast with that verb, whose meaning is "avoid" (cf. *BDAG*, 801, definition. 2).

<sup>144</sup> That these two adjectives function as a hendiadys is my conclusion based on my exegesis of the passage. Contra Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 793, reading these adjectives as simple coordinates creates a tautology, whereas subordinating *kala* to *ōphelima*, allowing *ōphelima* to define *kala*, makes better sense here. See Friedrich W. Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 228, §442, item 16.

<sup>145</sup> See *BDAG*, 1108. See the definition of the cognate verb on 1107, defined as "to provide assistance, help, aid, benefit, be of us (to)."

<sup>146</sup> For *anōpheleis* see *BDAG*, 93-93, definition two. I translate the latter term as "fruitless" (cf. *BDAG*, 621) to highlight a contrast with 3:14, where good works are done lest a person be "unfruitful." Cf. 1:9, where Paul uses the term *mataiologoi*. The four predicate adjectives in 3:8-9 appear to form a chiasm in which *anōpheleis* counters *ōphelima* and *mataioi* countering *kala* (Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 248). The centerpiece of the chiasm features a part of terms that contrast helping and hurting.

defined by “hurtful.”<sup>147</sup> Moreover, the fact that in Greek usage works/deeds often function as the counterpoint to words in general suggests that Paul intends a contrast between words that are not helpful (3:9) and works that are helpful (3:8).<sup>148</sup> Whereas the opponents engage in argument, Paul commands Titus to call the church to engage in action. Once again, good works—especially of the sort that benefit others—distinguish God’s people from those who merely profess to be his people (cf. 1:16).

The last words of Tit. 3:8 add another nuance to good works. Paul’s use of *tois anthrōpois* (3:8) recalls 3:2, where Paul speaks of behavior toward *pantas anthrōpous*. The repetition of *anthropos* creates an *inclusio* with 3:1-2.<sup>149</sup> Recognizing the *inclusio* leads to two implications. First, given the connection back to 3:1-2, the same sort of positive/negative parallel pattern observed between 2:12 and 2:14 occurs here between 3:8-9 and 3:1-3. That is, “good works” that are good because they are helpful (3:8) correspond to the first septuple in 3:1-2, and the things that are harmful and therefore fruitless (3:9) correspond to the second septuple in 3:3.<sup>150</sup> Based on this correspondence, all seven exhortations in 3:1-2 fall under the

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<sup>147</sup> The fact that the second term is now explained by the first would make sense especially if Paul uses a chiasmic arrangement of the adjectives in vv. 8-9.

<sup>148</sup> On the contrast between words and deeds presupposed by *εργον*, see *BDAG*, 390, and Hans-Christoph Hahn, “*ergazomai*,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986): 3:1147. It is at this point that I most appreciate Thiselton’s argument (in “Liar Paradox”). Although I do not find his reading of the so-called “liar paradox” in 1:12 convincing, he does rightly point out what appears to be a central theme of Titus: that third-person utterances lack the power of first-person utterances because first-person utterances assume a backing in life (cf. 207).

<sup>149</sup> The *inclusio* is with 3:1-2 rather than only 3:2 because 3:1-2 form a septuple list of virtue which contrasts with the septuple list of vice in 3:3. The sevenfold structure suggests that the two verses belong together. See Towner, *The Letter to Timothy and Titus*, 772, who speaks of a “missiological bracket” formed by 3:2 and 3:8. Cf. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 22-24.

<sup>150</sup> This argument not only depends on structure, but also on the antecedents of *toutōn* and *tauta* in 3:8. The antecedent of *tauta* is most likely “good deeds” (so Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 793; contra Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 352). *toutōn* almost certainly references back to all of 3:1-7—not only the teaching in 3:4-7, but also the practices in 3:1-3 for which the teaching serves as justification (Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 350).

umbrella of *kalōn ergōn*.<sup>151</sup> Good works, then, include not only one's response to civic authorities; they also include civil attitudes and actions in relation to one's non-Christian neighbors, and perhaps especially toward those who are most difficult.<sup>152</sup> Second, good works serve an unmistakable missionary purpose in relation to the non-Christian world. For Paul's emphasis on "(all) people" (3:2, 8; cf. 2:11) in a "missiological bracket" indicates that "the entire section, 3:1-8, is motivated by a missionary impulse."<sup>153</sup>

*Titus 3:14*

The final use of *kalōn ergōn* in Titus occurs in 3:14 in the letter's conclusion (3:12-15). Titus 3:14 is logically connected to 3:13 by means of the two conjunctions, *de* and *kai*.<sup>154</sup> In 3:13, Paul commands Titus to assist two missionaries, Zenas and Apollos, so that they lack nothing when they set out on their way. Quinn maintains that Paul's call to assist Zenas and Apollos is a summons to Christian hospitality in the fullest sense. As such, it would not necessarily be limited to money but might even include food, clothing, transportation, letters of introduction, etc.<sup>155</sup> In 3:14, Paul tells Titus to involve "our people" in supporting Zenas and Apollos so they can learn (*manthanetōsan*) "to engage in good

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<sup>151</sup> Moreover, if this is the case, *kalōn ergōn* and *ergon agathon* are functionally synonymous (at least in Titus).

<sup>152</sup> This conclusion is an implication of 3:3ff. We show kindness to the most difficult precisely because that is what God did for us when we were most difficult.

<sup>153</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 794, cf. 769, 770, 772. See also Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 187, who notes that the last phrase of v. 2 "communicates the missionary vision."

<sup>154</sup> Both function as continuative conjunctions (cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 801). *καὶ* includes "our people" in the action Paul commands Titus to take in 3:13. This understanding fits Paul's instruction in 2:7 that Titus is to go first, setting an example of good works for the church. For a different view of *καὶ*, see Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 359.

<sup>155</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 258, 267.

deeds” (NASB).<sup>156</sup> The repetition of the same phrase used in 3:8 suggests that helping these workers on their way is an example of the good works there enjoined.<sup>157</sup> The pronoun *hoi hēmeteroi* further suggests that such collective good work is a defining mark of God’s people—those identified by the plural pronoun throughout the letter (1:3, 4; 2:8, 10, 13, 14; 3:3, 4, 5, 6).<sup>158</sup> They can learn to do good by joining Titus in the work (cf. 2:7). Good works, then, involve the church and its leaders working together in partnership to advance God’s mission in the world—in this case, by assisting mission workers.

#### Conclusions about “Good Works” in Titus

This survey of the good works motif in Titus points to the following conclusions. Good works are a defining mark of God’s elect people and distinguish them not only from opponents but also from the world. They assume prior grace and are one of the ways God’s covenant people express their faith(-fulness) in response. They may have an inward reference to the church’s private life in households or an outward reference to the church’s public life in the world. Though distinct from teaching, they stand alongside teaching making the gospel message credible in context through embodied, confessional behaviors and attitudes. They win this credibility both defensively (giving the lie to criticism) and offensively (positively showing the desirability of God’s way). Whether in private or public, they pertain to one’s relationship to oneself (works of integrity), to one’s neighbor (works of mercy), or to one’s

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<sup>156</sup> Given that Paul elsewhere shows he had the language of Greco-Roman ethical formation at his disposal (*paideuouosa*, 2:12), it seems significant that he here uses a word which is cognate to the typical NT term for Jesus’ followers (*manthanetōsan*). Alongside the pronoun *hoi hēmeteroi*, it seems likely that Paul is connecting good works and discipleship. In this case, good works represent the lesson, metaphorically speaking, which disciples are to learn. As Quinn notes, the Titus of history would be well-suited to such a task, since he played a similar role in the Jerusalem collection according to 2 Corinthians 8-9 (Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 267).

<sup>157</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 802-03; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 239, 243.

<sup>158</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 358.

God (works of piety). They constitute not only a contrast ethic, but also a contact ethic, whereby God's people speak and live the gospel in ways that enter and engage the longings of the particular culture. They may be done reactively (in response to the requests of others) or proactively (when God's people readily take the initiative). They not only pertain to doing (action) but also to being (attitude). With respect to doing, they involve beneficent activity which mediates God's blessings by serving the needs of the church and/or the world. Leaders model them and involve God's people in doing them in order to help form God's people spiritually. The breadth and variety of Paul's applications of the phrase "good works" in Titus favors Collins' assessment that "good works" is Paul's "summary description of the Christian life."<sup>159</sup> The missionary strategy of Titus, then, is for God's people to make the gospel's attractiveness visible in their life together in highly contextualized ways that the non-Christian world can see and recognize as beautiful.

### **Theological Foundations for Good Works**

Having clarified what Paul means when he speaks of good works, I now turn to exploring Paul's theological rationale for doing them. One of the most distinctive features of Titus is the high concentration of its language for salvation, especially in the way it views God as savior.<sup>160</sup> As Gustaf Henriksson observed, the frequency of the language of salvation "indicates that the letter's ethical teachings occur in a soteriological framework."<sup>161</sup> Good

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<sup>159</sup> Collins, *ABD* 2:1075; Young, *Theology*, 31, notes that good works likely "embrace all the qualities and moral standards approved in these letters."

<sup>160</sup> Young, *Theology*, 50-51; Frank J. Matera, *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 245. Paul uses *sōtēr* six times (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6), *sōterios* once (2:11), and *sōzō* once (3:5).

<sup>161</sup> Henriksson, "Grace in Actions," 333. Cf. Thurston, "Theology," 177, who notes that soteriology constitutes "the key to the theological center of Titus."

works in Titus grow out of the *ordo salutis*, which, in Titus, takes a proto-Trinitarian form.<sup>162</sup> For this reason, I will explore Paul's theological rationale by considering in turn the roles of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation.

### God, the Father

Throughout Titus, Paul calls God the Father "savior" (1:3; 2:10; 3:4) and attributes to him the action of saving (3:5). Titus' first reference to the *ordo salutis* occurs in 1:2, when Paul references God's promise of eternal life before time. According to Philip Towner, "'Promise' theology of this sort is characteristic of the belief that God lives in a covenant relationship with his people..."<sup>163</sup> Even before time began, God desired and planned for a two-way, covenantal relationship with humanity grounded in the loving bestowal of his own quality of life ("eternal life").<sup>164</sup> Eternal life as sharing in the quality of God's life through the power of the Spirit constitutes Titus' theological definition of salvation.<sup>165</sup> This salvation has both future and present reference. As "heirs," we await Jesus, whose return brings the hoped-for blessing (3:7; cf. 2:13). Nevertheless, having been saved (3:5), we live God's quality of life now, especially as we embody its implied ethic.

As a plan in the mind of God, salvation might have remained unknown. But God, in his own time, chose to reveal his hidden plans to the people he desired to save. The language

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<sup>162</sup> According to Collins, "Theology," 69, Titus "stands on the threshold of early Christian trinitarian theology." Cf. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 212; Thurston, "Theology," 181; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 227.

<sup>163</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 669.

<sup>164</sup> On eternity as a quality of God, see Collin, "Theology," 62. By describing eternal life in terms of quality I do not intend to eliminate its temporal quantity. On self-giving as a characteristic of divine love, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 38. On God's eternal plan, see Towner, *The Letter to Timothy and Titus*, 665f. See also Young, *Theology*, 63, 65-66, and Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 371-90. Collins, "Theology," 62, notes that this plan extends "from eternity to eternity."

<sup>165</sup> That Paul thinks of salvation in this way in Titus is indicated by the way he frames the letter with references to it (cf. 1:2, 3:7). See Thurston, "Theology," 182. On sharing in this quality of life through the Spirit, see Tit. 3:5-7.

of epiphany, which Paul uses for this revelation, describes how something invisible is made visible, frequently with connotations of assistance or salvation.<sup>166</sup> Paul envisions three such epiphanies in the letter. The first epiphany refers to the way God reveals his promise of eternal life through Paul's preaching (1:3), the second refers to the incarnation (2:11; 3:4), and the third refers to Jesus' second coming (2:13). Good works relate to all three epiphanies, especially the second—the incarnation.

In the incarnation, God revealed his grace (2:11). The word grace (*charis*) derives from ancient Greco-Roman social conventions surrounding benefaction/patronage.<sup>167</sup> “At the heart of patronage was the social convention which was called giving and receiving.”<sup>168</sup> According to Seneca, this interplay of giving and receiving was like playing a game of catch in which the goal was to keep the ball moving back and forth.<sup>169</sup> In its simplest formulation, the game entailed three responsibilities: the responsibility to give (throw the ball), the responsibility to receive (catch the ball), and the responsibility to return (throw the ball back).<sup>170</sup> All three responsibilities are assumed in the ancient use of grace, since “*charis* in

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<sup>166</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 416. Cf. *BDAG*, 385-86. The verb (and its cognates) was frequently used by the Roman emperor cult to acclaim the saving activity of one widely regarded as a divine son of God. According to Towner, “For anyone in Asia Minor at this time, the term ‘epiphany’ would have called to mind first and foremost the victories of Augustus (Savior) that brought an end to the civil wars and introduced the *pax Romana*, with its benefits, to the imperial provinces” (418). See also Thurston, “Theology,” 183-84; Young, *Theology*, 64ff; Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 203.

<sup>167</sup> Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 1. For a general introduction to patronage, see above. Whereas there I focused on the aspects of benefaction most necessary to understand good works in the letter to Titus, here I focus on the aspects which are most helpful in illuminating the theological justification for good works.

<sup>168</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 46.

<sup>169</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 46; Thomas R. Blanton, “The Benefactor’s Account-Book: The Rhetoric of Gift Reciprocation according to Seneca and Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 3 (n.d.): 398.

<sup>170</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 12; DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 107-08; Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture*, 103-04; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Gift-Giving and Friendship: Seneca and Paul in Romans 1-8 on the Logic of God’s Χάρις and Its Human Response,” *Harvard Theological Review* 101,



each cases [spells] out the appropriate behavior and responsibilities of each party.”<sup>171</sup>

Significant for this study, God’s grace in Paul’s letter to Titus is the initiating act<sup>172</sup> of a relational dynamic,<sup>173</sup> which by definition seeks reciprocation.<sup>174</sup> Receiving God’s grace constitutes our acceptance of the obligation to return it.<sup>175</sup> Neyrey convincingly demonstrates that the return God’s people make to God is commitment—“faithfulness, loyalty,

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no. 1 (2008): 19ff. This same concept is visually represented in the various depictions of the three graces (On which, see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 27; Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 187-88, 207ff; Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture*, 77, 104).

<sup>171</sup> Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 51. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 576-77, who notes that *charis* can be used “of the giver or the gift” (definition ii) or “of the return of favor” (definition iii).

<sup>172</sup> I want to emphasize the prevenience of God’s grace, lest anyone suspect this treatment of slipping into Pelagianism. In every respect, God’s grace precedes and enables good works. See McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 109-10; Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 300-05, cf. 309-10.

<sup>173</sup> The various responsibilities in the game/dance of grace were thought of in relational (rather than strictly transactional) terms. Gifts created ties/bonds of relationship. To eliminate reciprocity was to functionally annul a relationship. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 24, 46; Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 46; DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 97-98; Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture*, 68, 74, 80, 109; Engberg-Pedersen, “Gift-Giving and Friendship,” 20.

<sup>174</sup> According to Stephan J. Joubert, “One Form of Social Exchange or Two,” 17, “we can actually speak of a universal norm of reciprocity.” Barclay’s study of grace in Paul (*Paul and the Gift*) provided a helpful taxonomy of grace based on the concept of perfecting a concept (taking it to its logical end/extreme, 67-70). Barclay’s study of grace in reference to Paul’s writings and their reception history distinguished six perfections of grace: superabundance, singularity, priority, incongruity, efficacy, and non-circularity (70-75). Significantly, Barclay’s study of Romans and Galatians revealed that Paul emphasizes the incongruity of grace and presupposes grace’s priority and superabundance. He does not, however, perfect its non-circularity (568). The implication of this study is perhaps best captured in these words: “We should assume, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, that gifts carry expectations of a return” (23). This conclusion leads Barclay to the observation that “a gift can be *unconditioned* (free of prior conditions regarding the recipient) without also being *unconditional* (free of expectations that the recipient will offer some ‘return’)” (562). Henriksson (“Grace in Action”) applies Barclay’s study to Titus. As in Romans and Galatians, Henriksson sees in Paul’s use of grace in Titus the perfections of superabundance, incongruity, and priority (336f). Moreover, he concludes that “The divine giving... is not non-circular” (337). Henriksson concludes that Titus takes for granted the circularity of grace.

<sup>175</sup> DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 114, “accepting a favor meant accepting an obligation to respond graciously, such that Seneca can refer to the ‘debt of gratitude’ (*Ben.* 1.4.3).” Cf. Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 19. It must be noted that reciprocating by making a return on a gift is not the same thing as repaying it. In fact, given the asymmetrical nature of our relationship with God, repayment is impossible (Brookins, “Obligation of Thanks,” 211; cf. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 151; Engberg-Pedersen, “Gift-Giving and Friendship,” 19). In fact, given the asymmetrical nature of patronage relationships (cf. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 467), the inability (and undesirability) of repaying was taken for granted. I maintain that this principle of reciprocity is one of the key assumptions linking the indicative of salvation with the imperative (cf. Young, *Theology*, 38).

obedience.”<sup>176</sup> In Titus, these qualities manifest in good works, since Paul insists that “the ones who have believed in God... engage in good deeds” (3:8).<sup>177</sup> Good works, then, constitute our faithful return on God’s prior grace, a return that we make not only with our words but also in our attitudes and actions in relation to God, self, and neighbor.<sup>178</sup> Having received grace, we mutually mediate (broker) it to others.<sup>179</sup>

When grace appeared in the incarnation, God revealed two central pieces of the *ordo salutis*. The first is election. Paul first mentioned election in Tit. 1:1, when he identified himself as “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect.” “God’s elect” evokes the election theology associated with Israel as God’s covenantal people.<sup>180</sup> With this language, Paul locates the Cretan churches, which included Gentiles, within the covenantal story of God that goes back to Abraham.<sup>181</sup> God called Abraham as part of his plan to restore his ruined creation.<sup>182</sup> To accomplish that plan, God commanded

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<sup>176</sup> See Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 471, for his definition of commitment. Although Neyrey includes inducement and influence along with commitment as things we offer to God (489), commitment is the item which features in Titus. The language of faith also derives from the world of patronage/benefaction and expresses the trust (faith), loyalty (faithfulness), dependability of the respective parties. See DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 120-21; Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture*, 104-05; McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 83.

<sup>177</sup> Henriksson, “Grace in Action,” 339; Faber, “A Neglected Theme,” 144.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 155-56.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Briones, “Mutual Brokers of Grace.” The mutuality of grace implies that good works might constitute not only giving, but also receiving.

<sup>180</sup> Collins, “Theology,” 61; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 202.

<sup>181</sup> Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 219, “Drawing on Israel’s distinctive understanding of God as the one who elected and chose Israel from all the nations of the earth, Paul applies this election theology to the very Gentiles from whom Israel was called to separate itself.” J. W. Wright, “Election,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 216-17, states that “election” is how the Pentateuch “recapitulates” God’s story with Israel. In Deuteronomy, “Election rhetorically incorporates the audience of Moses’ speech into the same story as Genesis 12, where God promises to Abraham that his ‘descendants’... will inherit than land (Gen 12:7)” (217).

<sup>182</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 205-06.

Abraham to “Go... and be a blessing” (Gen. 12:1, 3).<sup>183</sup> With this language of election, Paul implies that the Cretans are part of God’s covenantal plans to bring his blessing (cf. Tit. 2:13) to all creation.<sup>184</sup>

Having begun the letter with election theology, Paul connects the revelation of election to God’s act in Christ when Jesus “gave himself for us in order to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people of his own, zealous for good works” (Tit. 2:14). The words “a people of his own” (*laon periousion*) echo Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18 LXX, each of which use the same Greek phrase. These texts share in common an emphasis on God’s gracious choice of Israel and Israel’s corresponding obligation to honor God through faithful obedience to Torah.<sup>185</sup> Significantly, Exod. 19:5, echoing Gen. 12:1-3, conjoins to this special privilege a corresponding obligation to mediate God’s blessings to creation as a “kingdom of priests.”<sup>186</sup> Accordingly, Wright seems to be correct in identifying

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<sup>183</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 200-01.

<sup>184</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 665; Young, *Theology*, 63. As “the God who does not lie” (1:2), who makes promises before time and keeps them, Paul no doubt intends to contrast God with Zeus, who was known for deceit (see Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 660 [who notes a reference to Diodorus 3.61.1-6]; Wieland, “Roman Crete,” 346-47; and Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 198).

<sup>185</sup> Deut. 7:8 explicitly connects this identity with the promises made to the fathers. Wright, *Mission of God*, 256, explains the background and meaning of the phrase “special possession.” He writes, “*Sĕgullā*, translated by the NIV as ‘treasured possession,’ is a word that comes from royal contexts. It was used (in Hebrew and Akkadian) to describe the personal treasure of the monarch and his family... This is the metaphor God uses to describe the identity of Israel...” God owns the whole world, but God gave Israel a special place. “What that special position entails is then explained in verse 6. They have a role that matches their status. The *status* is to be a special treasured possession. The *role* is to be a priestly and holy community in the midst of the nations” (256).

<sup>186</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 330-33. Wright notes that Israel stood in the middle position between God and the nations. They were called to collectively represent God before the nations and the nations before God. “The priesthood of the people of God is thus a missional function that stands in continuity with their Abraham election, and it affects the nations” (331).

in these texts an underlying logic of electing grace, obedience to Torah, and missional blessing to the nations.<sup>187</sup>

When Paul uses the language of election and covenant in Titus, he implies at least three things. First, God's gracious election precedes anything that anyone anywhere has done for or in response to God. God's blessing is "not because of works of righteousness which we did" (Tit. 3:5). Second, covenantal, electing grace includes the expectation of a faithful response.<sup>188</sup> Third, the very identity of God's chosen people in Crete is missional.<sup>189</sup> In response to their covenantal election, God's people do good works to mediate God's blessing to "all people" (cf. 2:11; 3:2, 8).

Justification is the second piece of the *ordo salutis* connected to the incarnation as an act of God the Father (Tit. 3:7).<sup>190</sup> God the Father justifies by his grace, which is revealed in the first epiphany of Jesus (2:11).<sup>191</sup> Justification connects with good works in two ways.

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<sup>187</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 357-92. Wright identifies this pattern as identity/election, ethics, and mission.

<sup>188</sup> This perspective is often called "covenantal nomism." See Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 9, "Covenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgressions." Part of the New Perspective on Paul is the idea that one enters the covenant through grace and remains in on the basis of works (which still assume the priority of grace). Although I am grateful for such voices as I. Howard Marshall ("Salvation, Grace, and Works in the Later Writings in the Pauline Corpus," *New Testament Studies* 42, no. 3 (1996): 339-58) and Robert Gundry ("Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Biblica* 66, no. 1 (1985): 1-38) in correcting some of the finer points of the New Perspective on Paul, I nonetheless believe Morna D. Hooker ("Paul and 'Covenantal Nomism,'" in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London: Society for the Publication of Christian Knowledge, 1982), 47-56), 49-50, is correct in her observation that the concept of "covenantal nomism" faithfully depicts the underlying thought of Paul in his letters.

<sup>189</sup> The missional identity of God's people is certainly suggested by 2:5, 8, 10. On the missional significance of Tit. 3:1-8, see Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 187, 228; and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 770, 794.

<sup>190</sup> The grace in view in Tit. 3:7 is that of God (*ekeinou*), who is the subject of the sentence that begins in 3:4 and continues through 3:7. So Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 346, and Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 226. Contra Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 787.

First, justification (*dikaiōthentes*, 3:7) denotes God's action of anticipating the verdict we will receive in the final judgment.<sup>192</sup> Typically in Paul's writings this term has both past and future reference.<sup>193</sup> In Titus, Paul emphasizes the past aspect of justification, which was experienced at the same time God's people experienced washing (3:4-7).<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, given the fact that judgment according to works is elsewhere a consistent theme of Paul's theology,<sup>195</sup> one might expect that the word *dikaiōthentes*, especially in a passage explicitly called a reminder (3:1), would evoke the concept of judgment by works for the original hearer-readers.<sup>196</sup> Frances Young not only sees a reference to final judgment in the letter; she

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<sup>191</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 339-40, is also correct when he notes that the first-person pronouns in Titus 3:4ff also affect the timing of justification. Justification is connected to the past (e.g., to the incarnation), but it is also connected to the present through the work of the Spirit.

<sup>192</sup> On the meaning of the word, see Towner, *The Letter to Timothy and Titus*, 780; Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 103-04; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 974; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 350; Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life in the Spirit* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 155; Nigel M. Watson, "Justified by Faith; Judged by Works – an Antinomy?" *New Testament Studies* 29, no. 2 (1983): 210. On the association of this word with final judgment, see Young, *Theology*, 70.

<sup>193</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 1:109; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 329-30; McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 86-87; Marshall, "Salvation," 345.

<sup>194</sup> Supporting this conclusion about justification is the observation that at no point in this letter does Paul explicitly speak of the judgment. Instead, he sees the return of Jesus, typically associated with judgment (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 419; Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 182; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1207), as a day when our "blessed hope" will be revealed (2:13). Likely the reason for the emphasis on the past act rather than the future is because of the spiritual condition of the young Christians Paul addresses through Titus, for whom that day serves as a hope (cf. Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 234; cf. Watson, "Justified by Faith," 209-21).

<sup>195</sup> On judgment according to works in Paul, see Hans-Christoph Hahn, "*Ergazomai*," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:1151; McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 84-89, 121-23; Watson, "Justification by Faith," 213, lists the following passages as the main passages for this teaching: Rom. 2:1-16; 14:7-12; 1 Cor. 3:1-17; 4:1-5; 5:1-5; 6:9-11; 9:24-27; 11:27-34; 2 Cor. 5:9f.; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-10; Timo Laato, "Salvation by God's Grace, Judgment according to Our Works: Taking a Look at Matthew and Paul," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 82, no. 3-4 (July 2018): 163-78, begins with this observation from Kline R. Snodgrass: "Nowhere in the Biblical material does one find judgment according to grace or faith" (163); Christian Stettler, "Paul, the Law and Judgment by Works," *Evangelical Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2004): 195-215.

<sup>196</sup> Supporting this view is the fact that one of the passages to which Paul alludes in Tit. 3:6 (Joel 3:1, LXX; see also Acts 2:17ff) explicitly connects salvation to the day of the Lord, which for the prophet is a day of

sees in this reference “a major warrant” for the ethical teaching in Titus.<sup>197</sup> We do good works because in judgment God will evaluate our lives (through our works viewed as a whole) to determine whether we became the type of people he declared us to be in justification.<sup>198</sup>

The second way in which justification connects to good works is suggested by means of multiple parallels in terminology. God’s act of justification (*dikaiōthentes*) visibly demonstrated his invisible grace, goodness<sup>199</sup>, and mercy<sup>200</sup>—all parallel terms referencing the benevolence of God.<sup>201</sup> With these terms, Paul explicitly connects justification to the doctrine of God’s goodness, since righteousness is an aspect of divine goodness.<sup>202</sup> In the act

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judgment. According to Quinn, Joel is the main source of Paul’s imagery in 3:6 (see Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 198). On Joel 2:28ff [MT = LXX 3:1ff] see Daniel J. Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Len Approach,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (March 1997): 14-17.

<sup>197</sup> Young, *Theology*, 71. Technically, Young is here referring to the Pastorals in general. Nevertheless, her earlier comments on Tit. 2:11-14 confirm that she sees the judgment theme in Titus (cf. 57-58).

<sup>198</sup> Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen*, 201.

<sup>199</sup> “Goodness” is my translation of part of Tit. 3:4. The underlying Greek (*hē chrēstotēs kai hē philanthrōpia*) forms a hendiadys, where the two adjectives function as a single concept. The singular verb (*ἐπεφάνη*) confirms this reading. Cf. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 338; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 192, 213; Henriksson, “Grace in Action,” 332. On the meaning of *chrēstotēs*, see *BDAG*, 1090, definition 2; Erich Beyreuther, “*kalos*,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986): 2:103; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 579; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 213; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 225. On the meaning of *philanthrōpia*, see *BDAG*, 1055-56, Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 43, 578; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 214-15; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 225; Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 471; Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 36, 37, 43; Collins, “Theology,” 67; Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 177.

<sup>200</sup> *Eleos* is a term rich in covenantal associations. It speaks of the way God has faithfully kept his promise (cf. 1:2). Rudolf Bultmann, “*ελεος, ελεεω, ελεημων, ελεημοσυνη, ανελεος, ανελεημων*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:477-87; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 217; Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 5, 108-10; Collins, “Theology,” 67.

<sup>201</sup> Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 37, “The parallelism of *χάρις* with *χρηστότης* and *φιλανθρωπία* is made sharper by the fact all three terms are benevolent ... virtues, describing God’s motivations.” So also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 578. See the section on benefaction above for background of this language. See above on the imperial background of this language.

<sup>202</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 1:106ff. See pp. 97-130 for a thorough treatment of God’s goodness. See also Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 313-14, and McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 101.

of justification, God's love supplies what God's holiness requires, thereby communicating something to humanity of God's own goodness. This moral goodness, generously shared with humanity by God's own initiative, constitutes another key foundation for good works because God's righteousness is not only judicial (justification as acquittal), but also legislative. Since "God's actions best express what God requires," God's righteous act becomes the relational norm by which he expects the justified to live.<sup>203</sup> The *dikai-* language in Titus illustrates this norm (Tit. 1:8; 2:12; cf. 3:4). Good works as righteous living finds an analogy in God's act of saving righteousness. We do good works because that is what it means to be good and do right as God is good and did right. Good works are a form of *imitatio Dei*.<sup>204</sup>

### Jesus Christ

From the beginning of Titus, Paul calls Jesus "savior" (1:4; 2:13; 3:6) and depicts God the Father and Jesus accomplishing salvation by working in tandem.<sup>205</sup> The initiative of salvation lies with God's promise of eternal life (1:2), and the agency of salvation lies with Jesus.<sup>206</sup> As God's agent of redemption, Jesus acts in Titus as a broker (mediator) of God's salvation.<sup>207</sup> Because it was essential for brokers to share connections with both parties, Paul

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<sup>203</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 1:108. Oden distinguishes between God's essential, legislative, administrative, and judicial righteousness. Cf. Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 176-81, who calls this idea a "love ethic," with our love mirroring God's love.

<sup>204</sup> This is the logic of 3:3ff. See note Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 331, 338-40, 347. Cf. *TDNT* 3:546.

<sup>205</sup> Thurston, "Theology," 178; Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 217, 246; Young, *Theology*, 61, notes that this pairing creates some ambiguity between God and Jesus in Titus "because their activity is seen as one." See also Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 309.

<sup>206</sup> Young, *Theology*, 63-64. The preposition *dia* in Tit. 3:6 identifies Jesus as an agent of salvation (Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 345).

asserts both the humanity<sup>208</sup> and divinity of Jesus, with emphasis on the latter. As human, Jesus shares in all the particularity of humanness, being born in a specific time, place, and culture.<sup>209</sup> Although the term “savior”—by virtue of its OT associations with YHWH—would suffice to convey Jesus’ deity<sup>210</sup>, in 2:13 Paul speaks of “the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,”<sup>211</sup> thereby eliminating any questions. Furthermore, with the epiphany language, Paul strongly implies the preexistence of Jesus, thereby

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<sup>207</sup> Brokerage was a subspecies of patronage. In it, one patron provides access to another. See DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*, 97-98, 142-50; Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture*, 111-26; Briones, “Mutual Brokers of Grace,” 537, 541-43; Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 475-76.

<sup>208</sup> Because of the religious culture in Crete, which widely held that the gods were simply humans promoted to divinity through the acts of beneficence, communicating the incarnation was a delicate matter in Titus (Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 201-02; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 742, 746-47). Although Jesus’ name (cf. Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 60-61) and death (2:14) clearly point to his humanity, in Titus Paul mutes the emphasis on his humanity to avoid confusion with the lie (cf. 1:12) propagated by Cretans.

<sup>209</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *The Word of Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 121. This aspect of the incarnation is sometimes referred to as the scandal of particularity.

<sup>210</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 117-21; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 279-81; Thurston, “Theology,” 180.

<sup>211</sup> The Greek of this text admits different readings because of the fact that the words following “appearing” form a complex genitive chain. There are three key grammatical issues. (1) Is “glory” (*doxēs*) a subjective or attributive genitive? (2) How many persons are in view in the expression *tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn*? (3) What is the relationship of *Iēsou Christou* to what precedes? That is, to what does “Jesus Christ” stand in apposition? (“glory” or “our great God and savior”). Because the phrase *tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn* meets the conditions of Granville Sharp’s rule as clarified by Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 270-90, esp. 271-72; J. Christopher Edwards, “The Christology of Titus 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:5,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (2011): 141ff), I see “our great God” and “our savior” as referring to one person. This reading makes the construction an exact parallel to Tit. 1:3; 2:10; and 3:4. In each of these exact parallels, the genitive substantive immediately following *tou sōtēros hēmōn* stands in simple apposition. I take this to be the case in Tit. 2:13 as well (so Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 326; contra Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 753-55, who reads “Jesus Christ” in apposition to the entire phrase beginning with *doxēs*). Supporting this conclusion is the alternating parallel in which God is first called savior followed by a reference to Jesus as savior (see 1:3 || 1:4; 2:10 || 2:13; 3:4 || 3:6) and the fact that the head noun *epiphaneian* is elsewhere in the pastorals a technical term for the second coming and always assumes a personal subject—namely, Jesus Christ (cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 753; Robert M. Bowman, Jr. “Jesus Christ, God Manifest: Titus 2:13 Revisited,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 4 (December 2008): 739; Kevin Smith and Arthur Song, “Some Christological Implications in Titus 2:13,” *Neotestamentica* 40, no. 2 (2006): 286; Henriksson, “Grace in Action,” 331). If so, this last point suggests that *epiphaneia* here does not take *doxēs* as its subject. I therefore take it as an attributive genitive (cf. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 221-22; contra Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 322), which further strengthens the parallel between “hope” and “appearing” suggested by the expegetical *kai* (cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 751; Smith and Song, “Some Christological Implications,” 285) by adding an adjective to “appearing.”



distinguishing the gospel from the popular theology of Crete.<sup>212</sup> The Christology of Titus, then, is both functional and ontological, illustrating a key Christological principle: “what the work of salvation required, the person of the Mediator supplied.”<sup>213</sup>

Jesus brokers God’s salvation through his incarnation in three ways, each of which are integrally related to good works. First, Jesus mediates salvation through his active obedience by exercising the revealing functions of the prophetic office.<sup>214</sup> As a prophet who is also God in the flesh, Jesus constitutes the fullest revelation of God and therefore of the quality of life that God desires to share with humanity.<sup>215</sup> Paul’s term for Jesus’ prophetic ministry is *paideuouosa* (Tit. 2:12).<sup>216</sup> *Paideia* “expressed the ideal of Hellenistic education—the formation of the human person.”<sup>217</sup> By using this word, Paul not only implies that Jesus’ life reveals the shape of the authentic, truly cultivated human life<sup>218</sup>; he also connects this concept of the true human life to the salvation (2:11) he earlier described as “eternal life” (1:1-3). In other words, living as virtuous people—with the life of Christ as the norm of

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<sup>212</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 417. See note [174] above. On Jesus’ preexistence in Paul, see Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 66-74.

<sup>213</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:193, 345.

<sup>214</sup> On active obedience, see Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:360. Active obedience refers to the way Jesus perfectly embodied God’s righteousness in his life. It is to be distinguished from his passive obedience, which refers to his obedience in bearing the suffering of the cross.

<sup>215</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 274-75, 296; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 215-16; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:286-92.

<sup>216</sup> Henriksson, “Grace in Action,” 333. *paideuouosa* connotes “practical guidance and direction” and is best translated as “training.” Cf. *manthanetōsan* in 3:14.

<sup>217</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 109; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 747, notes that “The *paideia* concept was effectively equivalent to what we would think of as ‘Greek culture’: that is, the whole process by which human (Greek/Hellenistic) civilization was to become civilized (this civilizing activity being expressed by the verb).” According to Hoklotubbe, “Civilized Christ-Followers,” 378, this concept “encapsulated the knowledge and values that were believed to constitute the consummate cultured citizen and urbanite.”

<sup>218</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:106.

virtue<sup>219</sup>—is how the present aspects of eternal life manifest in context for the churches in Crete (cf. *zēsōmen*, 2:12). *Paideia* is one of the ways grace effects salvation.<sup>220</sup> Jesus’ active obedience suggests that we do good works because doing them is part of what it means to follow Jesus (cf. *manthanetōsan*, 3:14) and to conform our lives to his both negatively and positively (*paideuouosa*). Additionally, we do good works because, as his life reveals, doing good works is one aspect of what it means to be fully human.<sup>221</sup>

The second way Jesus brokers salvation is through his passive obedience, by exercising the functions of the priestly office.<sup>222</sup> In Tit. 2:14, Paul grounds good works in Jesus’ act of redemption, which he describes by drawing on the “ransom tradition” standing behind Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:2; and 1 Tim. 2:6.<sup>223</sup> The language of redemption depicts Jesus’ priestly offering with the metaphor of slavery, since the word *lutrōsētai* primarily refers to the liberation of prisoners or slaves.<sup>224</sup> With this word, Paul implies that “Sin is like an oppressive slavery from which one cannot break free by one’s own limited personal strength. In redemption there comes the help of another who pays the price of

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<sup>219</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 275-76, 329; Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 161. On good works in the life of Christ, see McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 61-73.

<sup>220</sup> Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 33.

<sup>221</sup> On this point, note McCall’s treatment of good works as the human vocation based on Genesis 1-2. See McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 25-32.

<sup>222</sup> On the priestly office, see Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:303-14.

<sup>223</sup> See J. Christopher Edwards, “Reading the Ransom Logion in 1 Tim 2,6 and Titus 2,14 with Isa 42,6-7; 49,6-8,” *Biblica* 90, no. 2 (2009): 264, for a schematic of the verbal parallels illustrating the tradition; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 759; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 222.

<sup>224</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 761. See Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 114-17; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:354, 357, 383; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:348; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 350, 354; Thurston, “Theology,” 179.

ransom that the slave cannot pay.”<sup>225</sup> Given the verbal allusions in Tit. 2:14 to Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18 LXX, it seems most likely that Paul is drawing on the imagery of the exodus for his meaning of redemption: “Rescuing the Israelites from slave labor was the very heart of the exodus redemption.”<sup>226</sup> Enslaved, Israel was unable to fulfill their vocation of worshipping and serving God. God’s act of deliverance, then, was not merely for the purpose of liberation from slavery; it was liberation for service, so that Israel could give God the worship of which he alone was worthy.<sup>227</sup> Redemption served as the foundational grace inviting Israel’s covenantal loyalty. Paul applies all these realities to Jesus’ self-offering, which he thereby casts as effecting a new exodus and hence a new covenant.<sup>228</sup> Jesus’ voluntary death is the ransom affecting all that was necessary for our (*hyper hēmōn*) liberation from enslaving vice.<sup>229</sup> In consequence, God’s people are expected to live as his holy, priestly people by keeping God’s covenant.

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<sup>225</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:248; cf. Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 100; see also Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 295, who notes that “Sinners in the PE are prisoners of war.” Cf. 3:3, where one of Paul’s describes of the pre-Christian life as being “enslaved to various passions and pleasures.” As Quinn notes of this verse, “So the liberation... has been here reinterpreted in terms of a slavery not to human rulers but to evil, and not to extrinsic evils but to those which spring up and flourish in human hearts. These... converts had indeed a variety of masters, tyrants, of despots, but they were all within themselves” (*The Letter to Titus*, 205).

<sup>226</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 269.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>228</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 764.

<sup>229</sup> It is not Paul’s purpose to describe a theory of the atonement. Nevertheless, in terms of the classic theories, his language fits very well the description of the cross as victory (*Christus victor*; see McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 334-37, 354). In terms of the recipient of the ransom, I like the approach of Gregory Nazianzen. Gregory acknowledges the language of ransom in Scripture and, with reference to its object, states that “What remains to be said shall be covered with reverent silence” (via Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:402).

Jesus' death is also an act of purification (*katharisē*, Tit. 2:14). Paul's language of purity, recalling 1:15-16<sup>230</sup>, echoes the oracles of restoration in Ezekiel 33-39<sup>231</sup> where God reveals the future liberation he will work for his people (cf. 34:27). In their wickedness (*anomia*, cf. 33:8, 9, 12, 13, 18, 19; 36:31, 33; 37:23; cf. 39:24), Israel, the people of God, were as good as dead (cf. 33:8, 10; 37:1ff). Speaking in priestly categories of cultic purity, God describes this *anomia* in terms of uncleanness (*akatharsia*; cf. 36:17, 25, 29) which defiled both the land and God's people (*miainō*; 36:17; 37:23). Given the fact that the penalty for such *anomia* is death (cf. 33:7-20) Israel asks God, "How then can we live?" (33:10). God responds that Israel must be purified from its wickedness (*katharizō*; cf. 36:25, 33; 37:23), and this purifying is exactly what God promises to do. In consequence of God's promised purification, God calls Israel to walk in the way of the Lord by keeping Torah (cf. 36:27) because observing Torah is part of what it means to be the redeemed, sanctified people of their God (37:23). By using the language of purity for Christ's priestly self-offering, Paul envisions Jesus' passive obedience as the means by which God enabled the purification of his people necessary to initiate the renewed covenant envisioned by Ezekiel (34:25; 37:26). Having been purified, good works now constitute the way God's people live in covenant and experience its blessing.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Lappenga, "Zealots," 711.

<sup>231</sup> I am indebted to Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 761-63, for making me aware of Paul's use of Ezekiel. On the place of chs. 33-39 in Ezekiel, See Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 387; John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 370-74; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 336-38.

<sup>232</sup> In Tit. 3:14, Paul encourages good works lest God's people be "unfruitful." It is interesting that, in the oracles of restoration in Ezekiel, fruit is consistently a sign of God's favor on his restored people (Ezek. 34:27; 36:8, 11, 30; cf. Lev. 26:4, 9; Deut. 28:4, 11, *et al.*). Perhaps, then, Paul is indicating that the blessings of covenant only come through covenant faithfulness, his term for which is "good works."

Both images (redemption and purification) used in Tit. 2:14 to interpret Jesus' passive obedience relate good works to covenant. God's people do good works because doing good works is what covenant loyalty to God entails. Having experienced exodus-shaped redemption and restoration by his grace, God's people now imitate Jesus<sup>233</sup> by living exodus-shaped lives.<sup>234</sup> Jesus "gave himself" to liberate for God a people who can mediate God's blessing to the world. Having experienced God's saving righteousness through Jesus' gift of himself, we now seek to honor God, to live in the freedom of redemption, and to spend our lives working to mediate the same righteousness for others as God's priestly people.<sup>235</sup> "The gift implies a task."<sup>236</sup>

The third way Jesus brokers salvation is through his future epiphany (Tit. 2:13).<sup>237</sup> Whereas in the incarnation Jesus exercised the prophetic and priestly offices, his future epiphany constitutes his exercise of the kingly office.<sup>238</sup> In his second appearance, Jesus will return as judge.<sup>239</sup> But because Paul's hearer-readers stand in a right relationship with God,

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<sup>233</sup> On the imitation of Jesus, see above on 2:14.

<sup>234</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 275, cf. 375.

<sup>235</sup> I do not intend to suggest that our work replaces Christ's. Rather, I see our good works as creating bridges between lost people and Jesus. Jesus is the only way to God; but our good works may be one way that people come to Jesus, through whom they can come to God.

<sup>236</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:356; cf. 2:353. See also Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:211, 253; Olson, *Mosaic*, 296, and throughout the chapter; cf. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 372.

<sup>237</sup> Although I have tried to present Jesus' work chronologically, I have intentionally withheld treatment of Tit. 3:6. I will address Jesus' bestowal of the Spirit in the next section.

<sup>238</sup> On the office of king, see Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:514-24. The fact that this epiphany is described as "glorious" along with the fact that the epiphany language had imperial overtones confirms the link between the second epiphany and the office of king. Whereas what he is he always was (with the exception of flesh), in the second coming the invisible quality of his majesty will be on full display for all to see. Cf. Smith and Song, "Some Christological Implications," 284-94.

<sup>239</sup> Young, *Theology*, 57-58, 64; Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 207-08; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1207. See the section above on justification. It seems to me that this theme is muted in Titus. See note 195 above.

they await this day with confidence because it will bring the promised blessing they have hoped for—eternal life. In other words, Paul envisions Jesus’ second appearance as completing the salvation he lived and died to broker in his first appearance.<sup>240</sup> As such, it provides an eschatological grounding for good works.<sup>241</sup> God’s people do good works because a life of good works befits those who anticipate the verdict of acquittal in the judgment.<sup>242</sup>

### The Holy Spirit

Although Paul never calls the Holy Spirit “savior” in Titus or says the Spirit “saves,” the Spirit also figures prominently in the *ordo salutis*. Paul closely associates the Spirit with the saving work of Jesus. In a sense, the Spirit stands alongside Jesus as a parallel agent of God’s salvation.<sup>243</sup> Even so, the fact that the Spirit is given through the mediation of the Son

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<sup>240</sup> Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 217; cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1192.

<sup>241</sup> Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 183.

<sup>242</sup> As I have stated already, I unequivocally affirm that justification is by God’s prior grace. But it also has both past and future aspects. Paul is explicit that good works have no bearing on initial justification. Nevertheless, in my reading of Paul, he closely connects the future justification (judgment) to works (see discussion above). See McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 84-89; cf. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 329-30. Judgment by works makes sense in light of the previous treatment of grace (see above). As Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 568, notes, “Judgment ‘according to works’ does not entail a new and incompatible principle of soteriology; it indicates that the incongruous gift has had its intended effect in embedding new standards of worth in the practice of those it transforms.” This assessment fits well with Heiligenthal’s study of works (see note 28 above). Ultimately, I think Watson is correct in suggesting that justification and judgment by works constitute a dialectic in Paul (“Justification by Faith,” 220). In contrast to the centuries of Protestant scholars who have attempted to resolve the tension (on which, see McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 1-24), I believe it is far more productive to maintain it. For in the tension between the two is where spiritual formation occurs.

<sup>243</sup> Both Jesus (2:11ff) and the Holy Spirit (3:5) function as dual agents of God in the work of salvation as is suggested by the use of the preposition *dia* in reference to the work of both (3:5 of the Holy Spirit, 3:6 of Jesus)(so Quinn, *The Letters to Titus*, 217).

(Tit. 3:6)<sup>244</sup> suggests that the Spirit is the eschatological agent<sup>245</sup> of the Son, just as the Son is the agent of the Father.<sup>246</sup> Through the Spirit, Jesus applies the salvation he accomplished in his incarnation.<sup>247</sup> Because the teaching about the Spirit's role in salvation is included in the "faithful saying" (cf. 3:8), Paul presents the Spirit's work, along with that of the Father and Son, as a ground of good works.

Having been given by God through Jesus, the Spirit effects salvation by means of "the washing of regenerating renewal" (Tit. 3:5).<sup>248</sup> Although the language of "washing"

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<sup>244</sup> According to Tit. 3:6, God pours out the Spirit through Jesus. Cf. Joel 3:1-2 (LXX); Acts 2:17-18, 33. On the echoes of Joel and the Pentecost tradition here, see Charles Holman, "Titus 3.5-6: A Window on Worldwide Pentecost," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4, no. 8 (1996): 53-62; Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32," 13-26; Wieland, "Roman Crete," 350; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 784-85; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 227; and Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 198, 225.

<sup>245</sup> I based this observation on the fact that the two future tense verbs in Joel 3:1, 2 (LXX; *ekcheō*) have been changed to aorist (*execheen*) in Tit. 3:6. Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 784-85. Through the gift of the Spirit, then, God's people presently enjoy aspects of the final, eschatological salvation (cf. Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 187).

<sup>246</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:55, "As God the Son is sent to do the work of the Father, so God the Spirit is sent to human hearts to accomplish the work of the Son."

<sup>247</sup> Young, *Theology*, 69; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:313.

<sup>248</sup> Tit. 3:5 is grammatically complex genitive chain. The key questions are these: Does the *kai* indicate that regeneration and renewal are coordinate acts, both connected to washing? So Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 783ff; Quinn, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 218-19. Or does the *kai* suggest that regeneration goes with washing and renewal goes with the Holy Spirit (hence, two acts)? So Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 342-44; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 226-27. Both readings are grammatically possible. The strongest support for the latter reading is the parallel with Ezek. 36:25-29a. There, the works of water and Spirit are clearly distinguished. Counting against this view is the fact that Ezekiel attributes a cleansing effect to the washing, whereas Titus attributes to the washing "regeneration." Therefore, they are not, strictly speaking, parallels. Moreover, the two central terms of the genitive chain, regeneration and renewal, are virtually synonymous (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 782; cf. Collins, "Theology," 68, who maintains they form a hendiadys (e.g., "regenerating renewal")). This synonymity suggests that if renewal is the work of the Spirit, then so is regeneration. Moreover, distinguishing the two terms and taking the Holy Spirit as the subject only of renewal raises the question of the implied subject of regeneration. In view of these concerns, I take regeneration and renewal as coordinate genitives of product (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 106) functioning as a hendiadys. They describe the singular result of the singular act (*loutrou*) by the singular agent (the Holy Spirit is a subjective genitive). The verse envisions the Spirit applying the purification Jesus accomplished in his death (cf. Tit. 2:14). It seems to me Paul is interacting with Ezek. 36:25ff but modifying it slightly in light of his knowledge of the practice of Christian baptism.

(*loutrou*) is unique, the Trinitarian reference in 3:4-7 suggests Paul is alluding to baptism.<sup>249</sup> In the washing of baptism (3:5), Paul sees the Holy Spirit doing two things. First, the Holy Spirit effects regeneration (*palingenesias*) and renewal (*anakainōseōs*). According to Quinn, *palingenesia* was a term popularized by the Stoics and would have been understood as a reference to the bodily resurrection.<sup>250</sup> Though Quinn's understanding of the term likely represents the final (not yet) aspect of the definition in view of the eschatological reservation in Paul,<sup>251</sup> in the present context *palingenesias* appears to reference the present (already) manifestation of eschatological salvation.<sup>252</sup> Accordingly, Oden more closely approximates Paul's meaning in Titus: "Regeneration is that new beginning offered by the Spirit by which one is rescued from the dominion of sin and enabled with right affections to love God and keep God's commandments... It is a spiritual remaking, a *re*-creation by which the sinner becomes a child of God."<sup>253</sup> As "the beginning of a radical change in moral character from

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<sup>249</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 212. According to Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 2:170, "Classic consensual exegesis held that regeneration is intimately tied with the grace of baptism, and not ordinarily received without baptism... Regeneration and baptism are viewed as two aspects of a single process of receiving new life..." Cf. Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 175-76. On the distinctiveness of the language, I have seen two possible explanations. One option is that Paul is speaking of the ritual in ways that echo rituals associated with the cult of Isis, which was known in Gortyn (cf. Wieland, "Roman Crete," 350-51). Another option, and the one I think more likely, is that Paul is describing baptism for young Christians using the imagery of the Roman baths (Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 220-21; Collins, "Theology," 67). Going to a Roman bath, according to Quinn, was like entering a new world. The conceptual parallels between this background and the word *palingenesia* are compelling. If so, then this reading of Titus 3:5 is another example of Paul sharing the Christian faith in language that would have resonated with the Cretan context.

<sup>250</sup> Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 195-96, 220. So also Collins, "Theology," 68. The only other usage of the noun is in Matt. 19:28.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 183.

<sup>252</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 344, comes close to the same conclusion when he notes that the second term of this hendiadys, renewal, refers to initial renewal. Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 787.

<sup>253</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:156. Cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 957. By emphasizing the ingressive character of regeneration, Oden avoids the pitfall of Erickson, whose optimistic definition appears to me to downplay the reality of the ongoing life in the flesh which necessitates occasional reminders such as Tit. 3:1ff. Oden's definition could adequately apply to both terms in Tit. 3:5. This way of defining regeneration fits



the inordinate love of creaturely goods to walking in the way of holiness,”<sup>254</sup> regeneration marks the beginning of sanctification.<sup>255</sup>

With the parallel term “renewal,” Paul shifts to a term more common in his writing for sanctification.<sup>256</sup> According to Henriksson, renewal stands as a virtual synonym for *paideuosa* in Tit. 2:12.<sup>257</sup> Paul thus depicts the Spirit as empowering in baptism the subsequent and progressive “habituation” of “stable patterns of responsiveness” such as those in 2:12.<sup>258</sup> Accordingly, good works and the Spirit’s sanctifying work belong together, with the former growing out of the latter. Indeed, to the extent that good works constitute the *imitatio Dei* or *imitatio Christi*, they may also function instrumentally as a means of the Spirit’s post-baptismal sanctifying work.<sup>259</sup> God’s people, made new in the power of the Holy Spirit, do good works not only because the Spirit has made them possible by breaking the dominion of sin; they do good works because they are one of the ways the Spirit makes them more like God and like Christ.<sup>260</sup>

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Ezek. 36:25ff, where Paul emphasizes that the Spirit will enable God’s people to walk in his law (so Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 764; 784, 786).

<sup>254</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:163; cf. Erickson, 955-58, who emphasizes the transformation implied in the term.

<sup>255</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:168; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 957.

<sup>256</sup> See Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10. Cf. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 197, 224.

<sup>257</sup> Henriksson, “Grace in Action,” 338.

<sup>258</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:219.

<sup>259</sup> McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 118-19. “It is at this point that the common Reformed insistence that good works are a *means* of salvation is appropriate. For it is by doing good works of piety... that we are transformed... And it is also by doing good works of mercy... that we are transformed” (118). McCall later adds, “So good works are a means (or ‘medium’) of God’s sanctifying work; indeed, they can rightly be considered instrumental causes that God uses to transform his people” (119).

<sup>260</sup> Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 204, describes Titus’ theological perspective as “a Christology for emulation (2:11-14; 3:4) wedded to a pneumatology of empowerment (3:5-6).” See also Matera, *God’s Saving*

In Tit. 3:7, Paul alludes to a second activity of the Spirit in the *ordo salutis* when he says the Spirit was given in order that “we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” “Becoming heirs” is the relational language of adoption.<sup>261</sup> Though we were once heirs by virtue of our creation in God’s image, with sin we forfeited the right of inheritance, effectively “[voting] ourselves out of God’s family.”<sup>262</sup> But by the Spirit’s act of adoption, made possible because of the mediating work of Jesus, we are readmitted to God’s family and restored to the rights of inheritance. Though separated from the reference to baptism by v. 6, the adoption nevertheless is coincident with the Spirit’s work of regeneration and renewal.<sup>263</sup> As with regeneration and renewal in 3:5, which have both already and not yet aspects, so here. With the language of heir, Paul affirms that believers presently share a relationship with God that, by his grace, entitles them to inherit his promised eternal life.<sup>264</sup> Even so, the full realization of this hope awaits the second appearing of Christ, “our blessed hope” (2:13).<sup>265</sup> In Oden’s words, “To be a child of God is to be given grace to refract once again in time and space the holiness and goodness of the Father.”<sup>266</sup> Accordingly, we do

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*Grace*, 162ff, who refers to this concept as “A Spirit-Empowered Ethic” with the Spirit serving as the “link” between the indicative of salvation and the moral imperative that follows from it.

<sup>261</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 347; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:193-205; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 974-78; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 350.

<sup>262</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 975; cf. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:194, 196-97.

<sup>263</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 974.

<sup>264</sup> On the final clause of 3:7 as the content of hope, see Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 229. Significantly, with Tit. 3:7, God closes the loop, so to speak, on his divine purpose. The Spirit proves the truthfulness and faithfulness in keeping his promise of eternal life (cf. 1:2).

<sup>265</sup> On the already/not yet quality of “heirs,” see Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 788; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 227-28; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 347; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:194.

<sup>266</sup> Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:197.

good works because doing good works is what God expects of his adopted children, empowered by his Spirit, eagerly awaiting our inheritance at the return of Christ.

### Conclusions

Studying Titus reveals that Paul sees a Trinitarian basis for good works, grounded in the role of each divine person in the *ordo salutis*. God's people do good works because God purposes to impart his life to humanity. He has called his people into existence through the prophetic and priestly work of the Son in order to reveal this purpose to the world. By the self-offering of Jesus, God broke the enslaving power of human sin and enabled the purity necessary for being in relationship with a holy God. Through the Son, God poured out the Spirit to apply these benefits to humanity. Through the Spirit's application of the Son's work, humanity can now experience the beginning of complete restoration into the image of true and full humanity as restored heirs in God's family. Because of the Spirit, humanity can face life with hope, knowing that God will complete his work as he makes good on his promise at the second appearance of Christ. At that time, they can enjoy to the full extent of their redeemed capabilities the blessing of God's quality of life. As the recipients of so great a salvation, God's holy, priestly people do good works to make a covenantal return on God's amazing grace by representing him to the world individually and collectively. In so doing, they participate in the dynamic of the divine epiphany.<sup>267</sup> That is, they make visible, in their time and place, the invisible grace, goodness, and mercy of the God who is the very definition of good. In the words of McCall, Friedeman, and Friedeman,

when God's people live into their faith in good works of piety, they are joining into the communion of the triune God. When they worship, they are, by virtue of their union with Christ and represented by his continuing priesthood, included in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And when they serve their neighbors in good works of mercy, they are joining in the mission of the triune God to extend

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<sup>267</sup> Cf. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 794; Henriksson, "Grace in Action," 339.

God's grace and share God's goodness in the world. They do so as people who are filled with and empowered by the Spirit of life.<sup>268</sup>

Good works constitute our present participation in the divine life.

### **Contemporary Applications**

Having surveyed Paul's use of good works and investigated the theology supporting them, it remains to relate Paul's theology of good works to Great Falls. I see three main applications. First, like the churches Paul addressed in Crete through Titus, GFCC is God's partner in missionally engaging God's world. We also live within a story of redemption that God is still writing. Though God is unquestionably the main character, the church is essential as supporting cast, especially in its unique context. God at times operates in the world apart from the activity of the church; but to the extent that the church acts, it does so in partnership with God to advance God's purposes. Therefore, GFCC, like any church, must know God and know God's story. Apart from such knowledge,<sup>269</sup> it is possible to be as deceived and distracted as the opponents in Crete. Knowing God and God's story is one of the simplest ways to ensure that God's story is the one in which we continue to live.

Second, as was the case in Titus, the context of the church matters today. Paul went to great lengths to express the gospel in language that would have connected well with Christians living in Crete. The fact that he could communicate so fluently in their idiom implies that he knew their context well. Moreover, he coached Titus to teach the church how to embody the gospel in context in ways that the surrounding culture would recognize as both good and beautiful. Both of these actions imply that Paul was not only a shepherd of culture; he was also a student. In the same way, GFCC must be able to express and embody the

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<sup>268</sup> McCall, *The Doctrine of Good Works*, 109.

<sup>269</sup> I am talking about a relational and (not merely) cognitive knowledge.

gospel in the idiom of Great Falls. But doing so requires that we become students of our context as well. For apart from such thick, contextual knowledge, it will be difficult for us to embody and express the gospel in ways that resonate with our neighbors in Great Falls. Furthermore, unless we can connect our neighbors with the gospel in contextually relevant ways, it will be difficult for us to effectively advance God's mission in our context. The fact that God desires to share his quality of life with all people, then, provides an impetus for us to become students of our context so that we can position ourselves, in deed and word, as credible witnesses to God's saving grace.

Third, good works in Titus constitute Paul's vision of how the church can advance God's mission in context. Reading the letter closely reveals that they emerge not only from the story of God's mission but also from the way that story relates to a specific place at a specific time (e.g., Crete in the 60s). Good works represent the nexus of theology and context. To the extent that GFCC needs a new vision, Titus provides a working model of the way forward. The vision GFCC needs is comparable to Paul's multifaceted expression "good works." Getting that vision requires bringing together both theology—especially the story of God's mission to redeem and restore all creation—and deep, thick contextual awareness. As Titus illustrates, bringing these two together will result in a localized vision and strategy by which GFCC can manifest to the world the goodness of the God in whose story we are (also) supporting cast. Bringing these two together to discover vision and strategy will point to ways we can embody the gospel in Great Falls and thereby make plausible God's truth claim that he wills to impart his own quality of life to the world through his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.

These three applications describe what this project attempts to do. It attempts to help a group of God's people better know God and God's story; to cultivate a deeper, thicker knowledge of context; and to discover in the nexus of theology and context what it would look like to advance God's mission in the context of Great Falls. Accordingly, the pages that follow will further amplify and apply the good works theology of Titus.

## CHAPTER 3

### Review of Literature

#### Introduction

Having established a theological foundation for this project, I now turn to reviewing literature pertinent to this project's design. The project was designed to facilitate discernment of the missional implications of GFCC's context. This purpose and the design formulated to accomplish it affect the nature of this literature review. In this chapter, I survey the literature that provided the foundation of this project and focus on the literature I used to understand the problem and necessary intervention, to understand vision as mission in context, to understand how to discern vision, and to understand the ecological relationship of organization and context.

#### Understanding the Problem and the Opportunity

##### The Congregational Life Cycle

The first category of literature that was helpful supplied conceptual frameworks for understanding GFCC's problems and the opportunities they represent. The first framework I used was the congregational life cycle, a congregational adaptation of an organizational model sometimes called the life cycle and sometimes called the sigmoid curve.<sup>270</sup> The

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<sup>270</sup> See Ichak Adizes, "Organizational Passages—Diagnosing and Treating Life Cycle Problems of Organizations," *Organizational Dynamics* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1979). Several writers drew on Adizes' and others' work in applying the model to congregations. Some of the more influential resources include Jere Allen and George Bullard, *Shaping a Future for the Church in a Changing Community* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1981); Robert D. Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Help Your Church Come Alive* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981); and Martin F. Saarinen, *The Life Cycle of a Congregation* (Bethesda, MD: Alban, 1986). Since

congregational life cycle model imagines congregations as living organisms whose lives unfold in a predictable cycle that begins at birth and ends at death. Between birth and death, practitioners identify various stages, which can be used to suggest developmentally appropriate organizational next steps.

For my project, I especially relied on two key resources, each of which provides various markers for assessing where a congregation is developmentally.<sup>271</sup> Dale claims that it is possible to “read your church like a book,” and he suggests that the life cycle is the alphabet necessary to do this reading.<sup>272</sup> Throughout the book, Dale correlates a congregation’s life cycle to the various components in the rise and fall of the church as an organization.<sup>273</sup> Churches grow in a progression that moves from dream, to beliefs, to goals, to structure, to ministry. As a church begins to decline, Dale maintains that it experiences nostalgia (as it loses structure), questioning (as it loses goals), polarization (as it loses beliefs), and eventually dropout (as it loses the original dream). Dale’s framework helpfully correlates the problems of decline with corresponding opportunities for renewal. Applying

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then, many others have explored the implications of a congregation’s place in the lifecycle for the practice of congregational leadership. As exemplars, see George W. Bullard, Jr., *Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation*, The Columbia Partnership Leadership Series (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 75-96; Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 39-57, 62-63; Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live?: Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Bethesda, MD: Alban, 1999); Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2003), 26-28, 217-27; Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), 57-76; Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People*, Rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 270-99.

<sup>271</sup> To some degree, all versions of the life cycle provide developmental markers. Most, however, simply do so at a narrative/descriptive level. The sources I cite here provide consistent markers to watch for over the course of the life cycle. I have found this more precise approach helpful in explaining life cycle to people who have not encountered it before.

<sup>272</sup> Dale, *To Dream Again*, 18. The quote is the title of chapter one (11-21).

<sup>273</sup> See Dale, *To Dream Again*. Beginning with chapter 3 and continuing through chapter nine, Dale treats these stages in order.



Dale, when I designed the project, GFCC was somewhere in the nostalgia and questioning areas of the life cycle, thus suggesting that what is most necessary at our developmental stage is new goals and structure.

Although I found Dale helpful as a general framework, I primarily relied upon George Bullard's treatment of the life cycle in *Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation*. In his treatment of the life cycle, Bullard describes stages based on four key components: vision, relationships, programs, and management.<sup>274</sup> Whereas on the inclining side of the life cycle, vision is primary and management is secondary, on the declining side it is just the opposite. On either side, relationships and programs can be more or less developed depending on the stage. Based on these factors, Bullard's version of the life cycle includes ten stages, each identified with a descriptive tag marking the dynamics. As I began the design of this project, GFCC's tag was vRPM, marking it as a mature congregation.<sup>275</sup>

In addition to his framework for understanding the various stages, Bullard also describes various developmentally appropriate interventions for each stage on the declining side of the life cycle. For mature congregations (vRPM) like GFCC, Bullard suggests "revisioning."<sup>276</sup> To revision, GFCC must "diminish the *Management* practices of the

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<sup>274</sup> Bullard, *Pursuing*, 76-77. In Bullard's model, when the various dynamics are functioning in healthy ways, their abbreviations are capitalized (e.g., V, R, P, M). When they are not functioning in healthy ways, they are not capitalized (v, r, p, m). Bullard uses this capitalization to mark the ten stages of the cycle: Birth (Vrpm), Infancy (VRpm), Childhood (VrPm), Adolescence (VRPm), Adulthood (VRPM), Maturity (vRPM), Empty Nest (vRpM), Retirement (vrPM), Old Age (vrpM), and death (m).

<sup>275</sup> For a description of maturity, see Bullard, *Pursuing*, 90. The assertion that GFCC was developmentally a mature congregation is based not only on my own view as a leader, but also on the views of several leaders to whom I presented this model in November 2021 and March 2022.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

congregation that control rather than empower.”<sup>277</sup> Doing so will create an environment that is hospitable to new vision, out of which new strategies can be developed. Bullard therefore supplements Dale by clarifying where GFCC is developmentally and what it needs to move into its next developmental stage—namely, a renewed vision that can generate new goals and structures (strategies).

### William Bridges on Transition

A second framework I used to understand the problems and opportunities before GFCC was William Bridges’ material on transition.<sup>278</sup> Bridges distinguishes changes and transitions, defining the latter as the psychological adaptations individuals and organizations make to change.<sup>279</sup> Transition consists of three phases: endings, the neutral zone, and new beginnings.<sup>280</sup> His content on the neutral zone was particularly relevant to GFCC when I began project design. Bridges’ description of the neutral zone helped me understand the dynamics of grief, loss, confusion, and misalignment I saw in GFCC following our move from the east side to the west side of Great Falls.<sup>281</sup> It helped me understand the fact that we had experienced endings and that, in response, the key task of leadership is to help people

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<sup>277</sup> Bullard, *Pursuing*, 90. A book that has shaped my thought about how to facilitate this move from diminishing management to vision is Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, rev. and upd. (n. p.: Pinnacle Publishers, 2003), 35-52. Rainer and Lawless describe a process that can help established churches discover vision in the process of doing ministry. It involves (1) turning the church outward, (2) unleashing the church, (3) rekindling the vision, (4) ministry and growth, and (5) organization and structure. These create a “bottom up” process for “vision discovery” (43).

<sup>278</sup> Bridges has two influential works on transition. The first, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes*, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (New York: Lifelong Books, 2019), applied Bridges’ theory on transition to individuals. The second book, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2016), applies his theories to organizations.

<sup>279</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3.

<sup>280</sup> For a good description of these phases, see Bridges, *Transitions*, 109-80, where he devotes a chapter to each phase. *Managing Transitions* largely assumes prior knowledge of these dynamics apart from the very brief treatment of the dynamics in chapter 1 (pp. 3-11).

<sup>281</sup> See note 19 in chapter one.

move through the neutral zone and into a new beginning. According to Bridges, moving into a new beginning requires four things: a clear purpose, a picture of that purpose lived out, a plan that coordinates the details of living out that purpose, and a part for everyone in the organization to play.<sup>282</sup> The need for purpose suggests the emphasis on mission at the foundation of this project. The need for a picture suggests the need for vision. Finally, the need for a plan/part suggests the need for strategy. Bridges thus provides confirmation of the perspective derived from life cycle theory. Namely, GFCC is in the neutral zone, experiencing the loss of what has ended (e.g., a vision cycle) and eagerly longing for what is yet to come (e.g., a new beginning). Moreover, it provides confirmation that GFCC's path forward involves articulating a new vision and developing new strategies based upon it.

### **Understanding Vision**

#### What Vision is and How to Get It

Because vision is a prominent feature of GFCC's path forward, I sought clarity on the meaning of vision and how to discover it.<sup>283</sup> For the purposes of this project, the most helpful resource in understanding and acquiring vision came from Rouse and Van Gelder. In their book *A Field Guide for the Missional Church*, Rouse and Van Gelder write, "Developing vision answers the question, 'What will it look like if we live out our common purpose in this

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<sup>282</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 68-77.

<sup>283</sup> For a useful survey of some of the most significant literature on vision, see Jeffrey D. Jones, *Heart, Mind, and Strength: Theory and Practice for Congregational Leadership* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2008), 75-81. In all the literature, one of the most helpful definitions for my purposes was that of John P. Kotter in his book *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 71. Kotter defines visions as "a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future" (71). He says that vision functions as a simplifier, a motivator, and a coordinator or organizational activity. To be effective, vision must be imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable (74).

particular context?”<sup>284</sup> The common purpose the authors reference is God’s mission.

Alongside mission, Rouse and Van Gelder emphasize the importance of context. Bringing the two together, they suggest vision must be discerned by seeing mission in relation to context.<sup>285</sup>

The concepts in Rouse and Van Gelder are supported by the works of others who offer additional clarity. Most notable for this project is Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, who elaborate on these concepts in their book *The New Parish*.<sup>286</sup> The writers speak of “the narrative braid,” which is their term for “adaptive presence”—the ways churches follow the Spirit’s lead in demonstrating presence in their neighborhoods. By means of “adaptive presence,” the church can embody “faithful presence.”<sup>287</sup> To discern what “faithful presence” looks like, the writers suggest listening to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit speaks through God’s story, through our story, and through the story of the place where we live.<sup>288</sup> These three strands of the narrative braid roughly correspond to this project’s main emphases. The first term (God’s story) corresponds to this project’s emphasis on the story of God’s mission in weeks two through five. The second two terms (our story, the story of our place) correspond to this project’s demographic study of Great Falls and GFCC in weeks seven through eleven.

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<sup>284</sup> Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 48.

<sup>285</sup> Rouse and Van Gelder, *Field Guide*, 49. Though I was aided in the design of the project by the contributions of many other writers, it was Rouse and Van Gelder who helped me finally connect all the dots of the project’s design. This project’s title is my subtle attempt to acknowledge the debt of gratitude.

<sup>286</sup> Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014),

<sup>287</sup> According to Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen (*The New Parish*), “faithful presence” is how the church lives “with-in” a certain place (ch. 2, esp. 37-39, 43-45, 46-47) accepting both their own limitations as well as the responsibilities that come with living “with-in” a place (see 59ff) as we relate to the world.

<sup>288</sup> Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, *The New Parish*, 121-27.

Their emphasis on discernment corresponds to this project’s emphasis on discernment from beginning to end.

Another key source is Will Mancini, whose book *Church Unique* further clarifies the relationship of vision, mission, and context.<sup>289</sup> The foundation of vision is what Mancini calls the “kingdom concept.”<sup>290</sup> The kingdom concept represents the place where a church’s context (“local predicament”), its capabilities, and its “apostolic *esprit*” converge.<sup>291</sup> These three are similar to the three components of Sparks, Soerens, and Friesens’ narrative braid, though they reflect different emphases. Most significant for my project is Mancini’s argument that the convergence of these three areas constitutes the raw material of the vision to be articulated.<sup>292</sup>

Yet another source that makes an argument almost identical to *The New Parish* and *Church Unique* is the book *The Externally Focused Church* by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson.<sup>293</sup> Rusaw and Swanson describe an externally focused church as one that is engaged in service at the point where the needs and dreams of the city, the mandates and

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<sup>289</sup> Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, Leadership Network (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

<sup>290</sup> Mancini, *Church Unique*, 83-98.

<sup>291</sup> The term “apostolic *esprit*” is Mancini’s term for “the area of focus that arouses an energetic style in its leaders. By apostolic I meant that this source of liveliness and animation is anchored in a missional mindset—the self-understanding of ‘being sent.’ *Esprit* is more than your passion. *Esprit* captures both the empowering direction of the Holy Spirit and the human side of fervor and vitality that springs from team morale” (Mancini, *Church Unique*, 94).

<sup>292</sup> Once one has clarified vision by discovering a kingdom concept, then one articulates vision, on which see Mancini, *Church Unique*, chapters eleven through seventeen.

<sup>293</sup> Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 55-74. Also helpful in expounding on the leadership practices that promote external focus was their companion volume. See Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020). For the purposes of this project chapter six (“Partnering: They Build Wells not Walls”) and chapter eight (“Evangelism: They Deploy Kingdom Laborers, Not Just Community Volunteers”) were helpful in clarifying the nature of the overlap described in *The Externally Focused Church*.

desires of God, and the calling and capacity of the church overlap. Though the writers do not specifically attribute the language of vision to this overlap, their suggestion that the nature of that overlap is a service orientation vis-à-vis the community is most significant for my project.<sup>294</sup>

In sum, these resources suggest a triangular relationship between God's story of mission, the church's context (including the situations of both the church and its surrounding community), and vision.<sup>295</sup> Vision is what mission looks like in context. This concept suggested to me that vision can be discerned by clarifying one's understanding of God's story of mission, clarifying one's understanding of the context of the church and community, and especially by relating these to one another.

### **Understanding God's Mission**

Because a key piece of facilitating vision discernment is the story of God's mission, I consulted several sources to frame a broad overview of mission. After framing the story broadly as the movement from creation, to curse, to covenants, to Christ, to the church, and to the consummation,<sup>296</sup> I drew on several sources to fill out the details. The first was

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<sup>294</sup> This suggestion that the point of overlap represents a service orientation contributed greatly to clarifying my understanding of the five-to-seven implications this project sought to discover.

<sup>295</sup> Some other sources which have shaped the thought behind the project, though much less directly than these are Rick Rusaw and Brian Mavis, *The Neighboring Church: Getting Better at What Jesus Said Matters Most*, Next Leadership Network (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016). See also Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). These two books helped shape this project by helping clarify my thought on the importance of the church being a neighbor to its community.

<sup>296</sup> This formulation is my synthesis of M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997), 441-45, and N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 121-27.

Goheen's book *A Light to the Nations*.<sup>297</sup> Goheen places one foot squarely in the story of God's mission as represented in the biblical text and another foot in the church. But throughout, his eyes are on the world. Goheen reads the biblical story in order to equip and form God's people to join in God's mission in the world.<sup>298</sup> He concisely tells the story of God's mission while highlighting key texts along the way. Chapters two through six were incredibly helpful in formulating my overview of mission for weeks two through five with the DT, as illustrated in the following chapter.

In addition to Goheen, I drew heavily on Christopher J. H. Wright's book *The Mission of God's People*.<sup>299</sup> Whereas Goheen draws the contour lines of the biblical story in roughly chronological fashion, Wright connects them theologically. That is, in *The Mission of God's People*, Wright treats the Bible thematically while still roughly following the chronology of the story of God's mission. Additionally, Wright provides much more detail on key passages in a missional reading of Scripture. Because my approach in weeks two through five was to ground the overview in key texts, Wright was an invaluable supplement to Goheen as his work added depth and clarity particularly with reference to biblical texts.

Three other sources greatly aided my retelling of God's story. First, I drew on Moreau, Corwin, and McGee's book *Introducing World Missions*.<sup>300</sup> Moreau, Corwin, and

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<sup>297</sup> Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

<sup>298</sup> In this approach, he exemplifies the way I try to read Scripture (e.g., missionally). On this way of reading Scripture, see Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 104-20, esp. 113ff, and Michael W. Goheen, ed., *Reading the Bible Missionally* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), chapters two and three.

<sup>299</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

<sup>300</sup> A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, Encountering Mission (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

McGee, like Goheen, seek to tell the story of God’s mission in the Bible with a view to equipping mission workers. I found this source invaluable in distilling the vast detail in the biblical story and providing focus for the very limited time I had with the DT to review the story of God’s mission. As such, it was a great complement to Goheen and Wright.

Second, I drew on Hoang and Johnson’s book *The Justice Calling*.<sup>301</sup> Hoang and Johnson approach the Bible with a distinctly ethical approach, retracing the biblical story to better understand God and God’s justice. Their concern throughout is to understand the church’s individual and collective responsibility to the world. Especially helpful was their treatment of justice in creation, primarily in the way they explored the sabbath as the embodiment of God’s intent for all creation. Also helpful was their concept throughout of “moving toward the darkness.”<sup>302</sup>

Third, I drew on Richard Beck’s book *Unclean*.<sup>303</sup> Beck was especially helpful in formulating a response to a tension that surfaced early in my survey of the biblical story. That tension pertained to conflicting definitions of holiness. Beck addresses the impact of disgust psychology on the way Christians think about purity, which is closely related to holiness. In this connection, he helpfully contrasts two approaches to holiness, one which is rooted in disgust psychology, and the other which is rooted in the incarnation. Beck calls

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<sup>301</sup> Bethany Hanke Hoang and Kristen Deede Johnson, *The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016). Because of similar themes, I also drew selectively on Adam L. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church: Cultivating Communities of God’s Shalom* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), especially his chapter on the church as “Gardeners of Shalom” (76-95). But because his treatment is primarily thematic and only interacts with the biblical text as it fits within his overall argument, I used it significantly less than Hoang and Johnson.

<sup>302</sup> Hoang and Johnson, *The Justice Calling*, 55ff. “Move Toward the Darkness” is the title of chapter three, but the concept appears repeatedly in the book.

<sup>303</sup> Richard Beck, *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).



these “negativity dominance” and “positivity dominance.”<sup>304</sup> These concepts helped me demonstrate how GFCC can be in the community without the fear of being defiled.

### Understanding Discernment

My theological commitments led me to the conclusion that ultimately the vision of the church comes from God. Accordingly, I saw a close connection between spiritual discernment and vision discovery.<sup>305</sup> God’s vision must be discerned. For this reason, I drew upon literature that expounded upon the principles and practices of spiritual discernment in order to draft the Discernment Guide for the DT.

### General Resources on Discernment

Several sources were invaluable in framing the basic principles and practices of spiritual discernment. I first drew on sources like Clark Pinnock’s book *Flame of Love*, Jürgen Moltmann’s book *The Spirit of Life*, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s book *The Holy Spirit*, and Leonard Allen’s book, *Poured Out*.<sup>306</sup> These resources helped me see the connection between discernment and how God works through the Spirit in the world in order to guide and empower his mission between Pentecost and the *Parousia*. Understanding these connections is foundational to the practice of spiritual discernment, especially in

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<sup>304</sup> Beck, *Unclean*, 27-28, 30, 76, 81. “Negativity dominance” is the belief that a contagion is more powerful than a person’s purity. It therefore leads to a form of quarantining. “Positivity dominance” is the opposite. It maintains that a person’s purity is more powerful than impurity and therefore there is not necessarily a need for quarantine.

<sup>305</sup> Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda*, rev. and exp. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 103ff; Cf. Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation*, 226ff, 248ff. For others who have seen the same connection, see notes above on Rouse and Van Gelder, *Field Guide*, and in Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, *The New Parish*.

<sup>306</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Holy Spirit: A Guide to Christian Theology*, Basic Guides to Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), and Leonard Allen, *Poured Out: The Spirit of God Empowering the Mission of God* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2018).

understanding what Daniel Castelo sees as the overall framework of discernment—ends, sources, and criteria.<sup>307</sup> Ruth Haley Barton’s book *Pursuing God’s Will Together* supplies another crucial framework for discernment. She describes discernment in terms of our calling to love God, self, others, and creation.<sup>308</sup> *Pursuing God’s Will Together* effectively served as a key reference for many of the basic principles and practices of discernment as indicated in the Discernment Guide.<sup>309</sup> Richard Foster’s book *Celebration of Discipline* and Darryl Tippens’ book *Pilgrim Heart* were also helpful as general guides to the practice of discernment.<sup>310</sup> David Benner’s book *Desiring God’s Will* was helpful in illuminating the role and nature of desire in the process of spiritual discernment.<sup>311</sup> Benner not only demonstrates that spiritual discernment is integrally connected to desires; he also illustrates the competing dynamics at work in the will that can complicate discernment.<sup>312</sup> Evan B. Howard’s book *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* was helpful in its teaching

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<sup>307</sup> Daniel Castelo, *Pneumatology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 117-34. According to Castelo, ends, sources, and criteria are “a web of interconnected concerns” that create “expectation sets,” “plausibility structures,” and “conceptual and practical desiderata” that help us recognize the leading of the Spirit (123).

<sup>308</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 55.

<sup>309</sup> Alongside Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will Together*, I also found two other works of hers helpful in the general practice of spiritual discernment. These were Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 191-208, and Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 110-29. Although *Pursuing God’s Will Together* pulls together insights from each of these earlier works, at times the earlier works provide emphases I found missing in *Pursuing God’s Will Together*.

<sup>310</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper One, 1998), 175-89, and Darryl Tippens, *Pilgrim Heart: The Way of Jesus in Everyday Life* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006), 133-44. Foster was especially good in highlighting the corporate nature of discernment as well as the value of consensus in the process of group discernment.

<sup>311</sup> David G. Benner, *Desiring God’s Will: Aligning our Hearts with the Heart of God*, exp. ed., The Spiritual Journey Trilogy (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015).

<sup>312</sup> Also helpful in discerning the qualities of the different desires was M. Basil Pennington, *True Self, False Self: Unmasking the Spirit Within* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000).

on impressions. Howard was also helpful in clarifying that the goal of discernment is recognition of the place where the four loves Barton highlighted can be kept in a holistic balance.<sup>313</sup> Closely related to Howard's teaching on impressions was the Blackabys' concept of God's invitations through his Spirit, the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church.<sup>314</sup> An invaluable resource on evaluating impressions, desires, and/or invitations was Mark Thibodeaux's book *God's Voice Within*.<sup>315</sup> Thibodeaux writes from the standpoint of Ignatian spirituality. He provides a very helpful treatment not only of the general process of discernment (chapter seven), but also of the dynamics of consolation and desolation (chapters two and three).<sup>316</sup>

### Discernment and Group Process

The materials on discernment indicate that discernment must take into consideration what is best for the community of God's people. One way of ensuring that this larger consideration takes place is by discerning together as a team.<sup>317</sup> Discerning as a team is one way to discover God's will for a group, but it also constitutes good change practice.<sup>318</sup> A

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<sup>313</sup> Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 391, 377-78. Howard calls this balance "prudence."

<sup>314</sup> Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, rev. and exp. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2018), 56-58. See also chapters eight through fifteen for an expanded presentation of these concepts.

<sup>315</sup> Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ, *God's Voice Within: The Ignatian Way to Discover God's Will* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010).

<sup>316</sup> Also helpful on these dynamics was Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2008), 43-86.

<sup>317</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, part one, "Becoming a Community for Discernment"; Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 191-208; Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 175-89.

<sup>318</sup> On groups as part of a larger change, see Kotter, *Leading Change*, 23, and 53-68. What I would call a discernment team (in a spiritual application of the concept), Kotter would call a "guiding coalition." Forming the guiding coalition is part two of Kotter's eight step change process. For a full treatment of the concept, see *Leading Change*, 53-68.

team can catalyze a change process by discerning what Lyle Schaller calls “the self-identified discrepancy.”<sup>319</sup> By identifying the gap between what is and what could be, the team generates enough discontent to prompt a church to move beyond the status quo toward the future unto which God calls it.

The importance of discerning together as a team required me to consider group/team dynamics. The most helpful overall guide to working as a team was Kate Ward’s book *Personality Style at Work*.<sup>320</sup> Ward provides a general overview of good group process with special attention to both the task and relationally-oriented aspects of teamwork. She also includes helpful insights on different roles within a team. Most helpful in terms of group decision process was Evertt Huffard’s essay “Leading by Consensus.”<sup>321</sup> Huffard explains consensus and how it operates. To allow group participation in the consensus process, I drew upon Fisher, Ury, and Patton’s book *Getting to Yes*.<sup>322</sup> Fisher, Ury, and Patton describe a negotiating technique that they call the “one-text procedure.”<sup>323</sup> This process entails a third party working with other parties to draft a consensus document. In the process, the third party works with the other parties until the document reflects a possible way of addressing a

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<sup>319</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 53. For his treatment of how groups can identify this discrepancy together, see pp. 52-58.

<sup>320</sup> Kate Ward, *Personality Style at Work: The Secret to Working with (Almost) Anyone* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 125-48. Other helpful resources in shaping my approach to teams include Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 43-116; Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation*, part two, “Leading with others”; Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002); Wayne Cordeiro, *Doing Church as a Team* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2001); Leith Anderson and Jill Fox, *The Volunteer Church: Mobilizing Your Congregation for Growth and Effectiveness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 109-18.

<sup>321</sup> Evertt W. Huffard, “Leading by Consensus,” in *Navigating the Storm: Resources of HOPE for Church Leaders* (n. p.: Hope Network Ministries, 2017), 105-29.

<sup>322</sup> Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, rev. and upd. (New York: Penguin Books, 2011).

<sup>323</sup> Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 114-19.

situation in ways that satisfy the interests of all parties. If adapted, this process could serve very well in capturing the consensus of a group of people gathered for discernment. In tandem with Huffard's treatment of consensus, I found Graham Standish's book *Becoming a Blessed Church* and Runde and Flanagan's book *Building Conflict Competent Teams* very helpful in further clarifying the role of the group leader in the process of group discernment.<sup>324</sup> Runde and Flanagan were especially helpful in describing specific practices that leaders can use to help teams work well together for the duration of their collaboration.<sup>325</sup> One of their suggestions that was especially helpful in the DT's work together was the suggestion to make agreements together before beginning the work. The DT made agreements by forming a team covenant.<sup>326</sup>

#### Discernment and Prayer Walking

One particular aspect of discernment deserves its own special treatment: prayer walking. Prayer walking is a practice capable of bringing together the story of God's mission, insights about GFCC, and insights about the community of Great Falls. Although several sources offered helpful minor contributions to my understanding of prayer walking,<sup>327</sup> by far

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<sup>324</sup> See N. Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence, and Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 143-65; Runde and Flanagan, *Conflict Competent Teams*.

<sup>325</sup> Runde and Flanagan, *Conflict Competent Teams*, 119-69. Runde and Flanagan describe helpful practices to implement before the work begins (120-30), during the work together (130-63), and after the work is finished (163-68).

<sup>326</sup> Runde and Flanagan, *Conflict Competent Teams*, 121-23; Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, 152-65, discusses covenant formation in a discernment group. But see also chapters five through seven for the foundational concepts that undergird covenant-making. For a book length treatment of the role of covenant, see Gilbert R. Rendle, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999).

<sup>327</sup> Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, *The New Parrish*, 33, 48, 74, 144-45, 149, 183. I found this work helpful for the way it suggested key questions to ask throughout a prayer walk (cf. 144-45). Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 253-55. Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 129, 271. This book was helpful in its suggestion of journaling

the most helpful resource was Hawthorne and Kendrick's book *Prayer-walking*.<sup>328</sup>

Hawthorne and Kendrick define prayer walking clearly. One piece of their definition that was very useful was the way they highlight where insight originates. Sometimes the insights of prayer walking originate in a response to what the prayer walker encounters; sometimes they originate in research done beforehand; and sometimes they originate in revelation that God gives through prayer.<sup>329</sup> The Spirit works through all three. Another helpful contribution is the way Hawthorne and Kendrick ground the practice of prayer walking in Scripture. One passage they addressed that I found helpful was Num. 13:1-26.<sup>330</sup> Going forth into a city seeking the "fruit of the future" constituted an uncanny parallel to the purpose of the prayer walk in my project.<sup>331</sup> Hawthorne and Kendrick also provided practical guidance on what to do before, during, and after a prayer walk; with whom to prayer walk; when to prayer walk; where to prayer walk; and what to do while prayer walking. This book was invaluable in equipping the DT for its prayer walk.

#### A Fundamental Assumption about Discernment

One assumption shaped my work with the DT at every stage of our discernment work together. That assumption was that God has given GFCC all it needs to be missionally effective in context (2 Cor. 9:8-11). Based on this theological conviction, I sought insight

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impressions while prayer walking. It was also helpful in its suggestions about debriefing (271f). Nancy T. Ammerman et al., ed., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 47-50, 217, was helpful in the way she related the prayer walk to congregational ecology, the overlapping influences of church and community. They also helpfully suggest that driving may function just as well as walking in some cases.

<sup>328</sup> Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, *Prayer-walking: Praying On-Site with Insight* (Orlando: Creation House, 1993).

<sup>329</sup> Hawthorne and Kendrick, *Prayer-walking*, 18-20.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-75.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

from resources on asset-based community development. The most helpful resource I used was Luther Snow's book *Asset Mapping*.<sup>332</sup> Snow describes a congregational process that he calls "asset mapping."<sup>333</sup> He describes this process in three sections, first addressing what asset mapping is, then addressing how to do it, and finally addressing why to do it. One of the most helpful aspects of Snow's material is his emphasis on the mindset of seeking assets rather than pursuing needs in a deficit-based approach.<sup>334</sup> According to Snow, negative thinking leads to negative action ("negative cycle") and positive thinking leads to positive action ("positive cycles") in which everyone benefits ("open sum dynamics").<sup>335</sup> Another helpful feature of Snow is his process for helping people see the assets implicit in needs.<sup>336</sup> The ability to see the assets hidden in needs was an invaluable skill given the vast amount of need the DT encountered in Great Falls. Still another helpful aspect of Snow was the way he

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<sup>332</sup> Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004).

<sup>333</sup> Snow recommends other sources for the broader conversation about asset-based community development. See John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Evanston, IL: Asset-Based Community Development Institute, 1993), and Susan Rans and Hilar Altman, *Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities* (Evanston, IL: Asset-Based Community Development Institute, 2002), and Bob Sitze, *Not Trying too Hard: New Basics for Sustainable Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001). Two other books that shaped my approach to the needs the DT discovered were Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)* (New York: Harper One, 2012). This entire book was valuable as an introduction to helping that is truly helpful. See especially pp. 51-83, 127-46 (esp. 137-42). Another book that heavily impacted my approach to the needs we encountered was Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012). Corbett and Fikkert present a condensed application of an asset-based community development process in chapter five (pp. 119-32). I especially found helpful their d "The Community Organizing Process in America" (pp. 251-57). This project corresponded to part one of step one ("Discovering Care"). Locating my project within a larger process was also helpful in discovering potential next steps.

<sup>334</sup> Snow, *Power of Asset Mapping*, 85ff. Throughout the book Snow describes the process of asset mapping. But in chapter nine (85-101), he describes the why beneath the how and the what.

<sup>335</sup> Snow, *Power of Asset Mapping*, 85-101. For an even more detailed treatment of the asset-based approach and the science supporting it, see Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), 19-41.

<sup>336</sup> Snow, *Power of Asset Mapping*, 8-10, 54-55.

describes different categories of assets (physical, individual, associational, institutional, and economic) as well as different domains of assets (personal, family, congregation, and community assets).<sup>337</sup> These simple categories were invaluable in helping the DT and me pull together insights from the vast amounts of data we considered, providing a sort of filter for the content. They were also helpful for instructing the DT on where to look and what to look for during the prayer walk. Another piece in Snow that was a helpful contribution were his questions throughout the book. Even though I had my questions written before the DT began meeting, these questions impacted informal conversations with the DT as well as with the LT. Finally, Snow's treatment of how asset mapping can be used as a part of a larger discernment conversation helped clarify my thinking about the role of the prayer walk in the DT's work as well as how we would conclude our work together in week twelve.<sup>338</sup>

### **Understanding Context**

Because vision is the contextualization of mission, this project not only necessitated a study of mission but also of context. By context, I am speaking both internally and externally of GFCC and Great Falls (respectively) as well as of the relationship between them. Though this project emphasized the latter, it did not exclude the former.<sup>339</sup> For this reason, I consulted several sources seeking guidance in terms of understanding context.

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<sup>337</sup> Snow, *Power of Asset Mapping*, 3-12, 46-58.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63, 110-11, 123-24.

<sup>339</sup> It emphasized the latter (external focus) because of a principle taught in Roy M. Oswald and Barry Johnson, *Managing Polarities in Congregations: Eight Keys for Thriving Faith Communities* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010), 113-42. In this chapter, "Inreach AND Outreach," the writers discuss the polarity of in-/outward focus. In view of their general theory of polarities (for which, see pp. 1-20), the writers suggest that overfocus on inreach tends to have negative effects on the church. Because inreach and outreach form a polarity, the response is to promote the positive aspects of outreach. Given the consistent feedback I have received over several years as one of GFCC's ministers (that GFCC has been internally focused), I emphasized outreach in this project as a corrective to the imbalance.



## Congregational Ecology

The primary tool informing my thought on the relationship between the church and community came from writings addressing congregational ecology. Chapter two of Ammerman's book *Studying Congregations* was especially helpful.<sup>340</sup> In that chapter, Eiesland and Warner helpfully distinguish various layers of ecology, including demography, culture, and organization.<sup>341</sup> Especially helpful were their suggestions for understanding this ecology. They suggest constructing a congregational timeline, doing a space tour, and exploring members' network maps, all three of which this project did at least in part.<sup>342</sup> Their treatment of demography was also helpful.<sup>343</sup> Though dated, their case study demonstrates the value of census data in understanding the demographics of a population as one component of ecology. Finally, I also found their treatment of organizational ecology (culture) helpful although more in terms of moving forward with the project's results after its completion.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Nancy L. Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner, "Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context," in Nancy T. Ammerman et al., ed. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 40-77.

<sup>341</sup> Eiesland and Warner, "Ecology," 42.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-55. Supplying a version of the congregational timeline, specifically the recent timeline, was a major part of meeting one, when I oriented the DT to our work together. Our prayer walk was the same as what they call a space tour. Network maps were more implicit in the project, surfacing in the different paths DT members took during their prayer walks.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-63.

<sup>344</sup> Eiesland and Warner, "Ecology," 66-74. Prior to reading this section it had not occurred to me that the culture of a congregation was related to ecology. This section showed me what now seems obvious: that a congregation's culture has an impact, for good or ill, on the context in which the church is located. P. 71 especially provided good insights on how to harness congregational culture in order to make an external impact. Although I reference culture heavily in chapter six, because the literature on congregational culture had almost no impact on the design of the project, I reserve further comment for chapter six.

## Internal and External Investigation

Within the ecological paradigm suggested in *Studying Congregations*, I also found two sources especially helpful in studying both the internal environment and the external environment. The first source, Gil Rendle and Alice Mann's book *Holy Conversations*, includes an ecological study within their larger strategic planning framework.<sup>345</sup> The ecological study happens very early in their process—immediately after team formation and needs assessment. One piece that helped clarify my thinking on ecological study was their distinction between what they call an “external audit” and an “internal audit” in the data gathering phase.<sup>346</sup> Most helpful in Rendle and Mann was their treatment of the external piece of ecology. In chapter ten, they suggest many tools for generating contextual awareness. These include a timeline exercise, a pin map exercise, walk-around and drive-around exercises, network maps, interviews with community leaders, demographics and psychographics, and larger cultural trends.<sup>347</sup> What distinguishes Rendle and Mann from Ammerman, however, are the 25 appendices. Each appendix offers a practical guide for implementing some aspect of the larger planning process. For my purposes, I found appendices O (Membership Pin Maps), P (Whom Do We Draw?), Q (Neighborhood Walk) and R (Network Maps) especially helpful for framing questions as well as implementing various pieces of the external scan.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 35-46 is where they overview the planning process.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 36, 75-78. Chapter nine expounds upon the internal audit, and chapter ten expounds upon the external audit. Because of the fact that my project concentrated on the demographic layer of ecology, some of what Rendle and Mann encourage in pp. 75-78 was irrelevant to my purposes.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 127-37.

<sup>348</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 269-73.

Another key resource was Aubrey Malphurs' book *Advanced Strategic Planning*.<sup>349</sup> Malphurs was helpful in the way he added detail to the concepts first explored in Rendle and Mann. Like Rendle and Mann, Malphurs writes about strategic planning, which includes ecological study within a larger process. Malphurs' sixth chapter, "Scanning the Environment," provided a detailed catalog of factors one could possibly explore in surveying a church's environment. Malphurs distinguishes multiple environments within the general environment. These include the social environment, the technological environment, the economic environment, the political environment, and the philosophical environment.<sup>350</sup> I found helpful the way that Malphurs further subdivides each of these environments because it provided clarity for my study by suggesting some areas that would be more pertinent to my purpose and others that are less pertinent. For example, based on Malphurs' categories, my project focused on the social environment, the economic environment, and the philosophical environment.<sup>351</sup> It practically ignored the technological environment and the political environment.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

<sup>350</sup> Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 118-22.

<sup>351</sup> Within the social environment, Malphurs identifies eight subcategories: lifestyles, cities and suburbs, aging, mobility, race relations, gender issues, crime, and families. Within the economic environment, Malphurs also identifies eight subcategories: trade, taxes, downsizing, poor versus rich, saving, inflation, investing, and debt. Within the philosophical environment, Malphurs identified five subcategories: religions, cults, secularization, churched and unchurched peoples, and worldviews. See Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 119, 121, and 122. Though my project did not explore every one of these twenty-one factors equally, it did touch on almost all of them at some point.

<sup>352</sup> Part of the reason for avoiding these two areas was the consideration of the church. My working assumption was that whatever vision (mission in context) emerges will involve an overlap of church and community. Technology is a weak spot for us. A communications survey I conducted independently of this project in the Fall 2023 revealed that GFCC is a low-tech congregation with less than twenty-five percent navigating current technologies with ease. Moreover, based on six years of observation, GFCC as a congregation works hard to maintain an apolitical stance. Though most of our members are political, this culture

By far the most useful resource in conducting the external, demographic portion of the ecological study was Thomas Bandy's book, *See, Know, and Serve the People within Your Reach*.<sup>353</sup> Bandy offers an insightful historical survey of applied demographics, which was useful in terms of explaining to people—including the DT—why demographic study is necessary.<sup>354</sup> This survey not only demonstrates the necessity of demographic study; it also demonstrates the insufficiency of it unless supported by other “lenses.”<sup>355</sup> Before reading Bandy, I had not considered that demographics, although a layer of ecology, had layers of its own. He distinguishes four of these: pure demographics, lifestyle segments, psychographics, and finally heartburst affinities.<sup>356</sup> Bandy's categorization provided the framework for the DT's demographic study for week seven (pure demographics), week eight (lifestyle segments), week nine (psychographics), and week ten-eleven (heartburst affinities). Each layer allowed the DT to progressively deepen our understanding of Great Falls. Bandy provides helpful guidance by which a church can apply the insights of each layer. His guidance was invaluable in the external study portion of this project.

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favors an individual rather than congregational approach to politics. Accordingly, I judged these two areas as being less relevant in terms of this project.

<sup>353</sup> Thomas G. Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve the People within Your Reach* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2012).

<sup>354</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 17-29, esp. pp. 22ff, which highlight the complexity of the mission field today as society continues to subdivide and socially sort.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 31ff. “Lenses” is Bandy's term for the various layers of demographic research.

<sup>356</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 31-66. Pure demographics includes factors such as average age, gender, race/ethnicity, language, phase of life, marital status, household occupancy, parenthood status, educational level, occupation, mobility, home ownership, income, debt, generosity, and religion. Lifestyle segments looks at various subgroups of people within populations. Psychographics “explores the attitudes, social perspectives, worldviews, and values of various publics living proximate to each other” (52). Finally, heartburst affinities explores the “mission attitude” of the church. It describes how the local church spiritually yearns to bless a community in specific ways.

## MissionInsite

Undertaking an external, demographic scan of the sort described by Bandy requires access to a staggering amount of data. To acquire such data, I secured a paid subscription to MissionInsite. MissionInsite is an online tool produced and maintained by ACS Technologies to help churches and nonprofits better understand their context. MissionInsite provided detailed data on the population within a fifteen-mile radius of GFCC's church building. This tool proved invaluable to my purposes with this project in multiple ways.<sup>357</sup>

### *Study Area*

One of the first uses of MissionInsite was in defining a study area. Using the "people plot" function, I was able to upload the addresses of GFCC's membership and easily generate a pin map revealing the geographical distribution of GFCC.<sup>358</sup> I was also able to plot a sixteen-minute travel polygon. A travel polygon is a shape generated by MissionInsite that shows on map all the places a person might reach within a certain amount of time. I plotted this travel polygon based on Bandy's insight that "The primary mission field of a church is defined by the average time or distance required for people in the area to go to work and shop."<sup>359</sup> Based on the overlap of these two factors, I was able to define a clear study area for this project and generate a map showing this study area.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> One of these ways was their overview of how to do demographic study. See MissionInsite, "Demographic Reference Guide." For other ways in which MissionInsite was helpful see below and chapters four and five.

<sup>358</sup> See above in Rendle and Mann.

<sup>359</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 67. For Great Falls, that time is approximately sixteen minutes. See chapter four.

<sup>360</sup> See the next chapter for more detail on defining the study area.

### *Custom Demographic Data*

In addition to maps, MissionInsite contains a wealth of demographic data drawn from The United States Census Bureau, the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Pop Stats from Synergos Technologies, Epsilon TotalSource Plus household data, The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and practices, and the Mosaic USA: Consumer Lifestyle Segmentation for the United States.<sup>361</sup> One of the great values of MissionInsite is that any subscriber can mine this dataset in all the categories set forth above by Malphurs and Bandy. Doing so, I was able to not only supplement predefined reports drawn from MissionInsite but also generate custom reports based on the desired parameters.<sup>362</sup>

### *Predefined Reports*

Once I had a clear study area, MissionInsite allowed me to generate a variety of predefined reports. Here I will focus on the ones that were most useful to the project.

#### *The ExecutiveInsite Report*

The ExecutiveInsite Report was the most helpful predefined report I found in providing an analytical overview of the pure demographics of Great Falls without overwhelming the reader. The purpose of this particular report is to “tell the demographic story” of the defined geographical area.<sup>363</sup> To do so, it explores pure demographics through the lens of “twelve insites.” These include population and household trends (insite one), racial and ethnic trends (insite two), age trends (insite three), school aged children trends

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<sup>361</sup> ACS Technologies, “Demographic Intel,” data sets, MissionInsite, accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.acstechnologies.com/missioninsite/tools/demographic-intel/>.

<sup>362</sup> For a description of these custom reports, see chapter four. Also see Appendices B, C, M, N, O, P.

<sup>363</sup> “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 1.

(insite four), household income trends (insite five), household and children trends (insite six), marital status trends (insite seven), adult educational attainment (insite eight), employment and occupations (insite nine), Mosaic household types (insite ten), generations (insite eleven), and religious program or ministry preferences (insite twelve).

#### Resources on Mosaics

Through MissionInsite I was also able to access a vast amount of data that facilitated a study of lifestyle segments in Great Falls. The first of these tools was *Mosaics USA E-Handbook*, a 188-page document on population segments published by Experian. This tool segments the US population into nineteen groups, labeled A through S. It further subdivides the population into seventy-one segments. Combining groups and segments, Mosaics describes seventy-one distinct population segments, labeled A01 through S71. According to *Mosaics USA E-Handbook*, “More than 300 data points have been used to build Mosaics USA.”<sup>364</sup> These include various demographic, socio-economic, and financial factors, among others. The *Mosaics USA E-Handbook* includes two pages of raw data for each group (A-S) and an additional two pages for each segment (D15, F22, etc.), representing an almost overwhelming amount of lifestyle data. Therefore, for each Mosaic group (A-S) as well as for each individual segment (whether B09, M45, etc.) MissionInsite includes a “Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide” written by Thomas Bandy. The guides for each group (A-S) are two pages each and describe each group in broad strokes. The guides for each segment (A01, A02, etc.) are approximately six-to-seven pages each and provide more

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<sup>364</sup> “Data Sources” in *Mosaics USA E-Handbook* (Experian, 2021), 3. This handbook provides a helpful family tree (“Family Tree,” 4) as well as a full listing of the seventy-one types (“Group and Type Table,” pp. 5-6).

detail.<sup>365</sup> With the raw data in one hand and Bandy’s “Impact Guide” in the other hand, one can acquire a feel for each Mosaic type. Using these resources with “The ComparativeInsite Report”<sup>366</sup> yielded great insights on the culture of GFCC. It also generated greater understanding of populations GFCC could potentially reach in Great Falls.

#### American Beliefs Study (2021)

The next set of resources I used drew on the 2021 American Beliefs Study (ABS) to provide psychographic data on Great Falls. Because the ABS assumes that “human beliefs, preferences and practices correlate to particular demographic profiles,”<sup>367</sup> it is capable of generating a remarkably detailed report of an area on the basis of that area’s distribution of the various Mosaic types.<sup>368</sup> I drew on two MissionInsite reports that present the findings of the American Beliefs Study in reference to Great Falls. The first of these was “The ReligiousInsite Report.” This document was helpful in the way it revealed the religious makeup of the population of Great Falls. It was also important because it reveals the “Beliefs about Social and Moral Values” in Great Falls. Using this report, it was possible to recognize points where GFCC’s values overlap with those of GFCC.

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<sup>365</sup> For each segment, Bandy’s report describes “Religious Experience in a Nutshell,” basic characteristics that identify each segment in churches, other groups who might influence this type, and general comments to help a reader get the feel for each type. Next, the guides distill insights from the Mosaics USA data to offer detailed guidance on each segment’s general preferences in terms of leadership, hospitality, worship, education, small groups, outreach, facilities, church finances, and church communications.

<sup>366</sup> “The ComparativeInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite) shows the demographic breakdown of Great Falls in comparison to GFCC, including the breakdown of the Mosaics in GFCC and more broadly in Great Falls.

<sup>367</sup> “The American Beliefs Study Methodology,” 6.

<sup>368</sup> “The American Beliefs Study Methodology,” 10, states that “The maximum margin of error of this study is  $\pm 1.97\%$  at the 95% confidence level within any US Census Region. The study carries a maximum margin of error of  $\pm 5.0\%$  at the 95% confidence level within any Mosaic cluster.”



The second document based on the American Beliefs Study (2021) that I drew on was “The MinistryInsite Report 2021.” This report is valuable for the way it highlights the “life concerns” of the population of Great Falls. These represent areas of great opportunity where a ministry might serve a need in our community. It is also valuable for the two sections titled “Reasons for Non-participation.” These two sections, speaking first from the perspective of the religiously unaffiliated and then from the perspective of the religiously affiliated, provide understanding as to why some are either not participating or considering stopping their participation. These sections provide further insight into reaching the population of Great Falls. The report was valuable, finally, because of its treatment of the “Program and Ministry Preferences” of Great Falls. This section describes ministries to which the participants in the study area indicated they would be responsive.

This content from the American Beliefs Study was invaluable in doing psychographic study. Looking at these different components in tandem, especially in view of the pure demographics and the interests/needs of various lifestyle segments, provided clarity on ways GFCC might missionally engage Great Falls.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have surveyed the literature most pertinent to this project’s problem, purpose, and methodology. I have noted the most significant contributions of these sources to provide a genealogy of the thought underlying this project. Having established this foundation, which further builds upon the theological foundation of the previous chapter, I am now ready to set forth the project’s methodology. I turn to this task in chapter four.

## CHAPTER 4

### Project Methodology

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain the methodology of this project, which attempted to discern the missional implications of GFCC’s context. First, I will provide a high-level overview of the project design. Second, I will describe the twelve DT participants. Third, I will describe the project’s sessions in detail. Finally, I will describe the methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of this project.

#### Format of the Project Intervention

This project was an exercise in “descriptive research,”<sup>369</sup> which provides contextual analysis on the basis of which programs can be designed and implemented leading to change.<sup>370</sup> The specific variety of descriptive research approach for this project was ecological study, which investigates the relationships between an organization and its environment.<sup>371</sup> Ecology suggests three potential *topoi* for study: GFCC, Great Falls, and the relationship between them. By exploring the demography of Great Falls and GFCC descriptively, this project attempted to discern the missional implications of context for the GFCC.

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<sup>369</sup> Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 52, 53-56, 64, 80-83.

<sup>370</sup> Vyhmeister and Robertson, *Quality Research Papers*, 64.

<sup>371</sup> Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 41-42. On the congregational context, see pp. 43-55. On the community context, see pp. 55-74.

To complete this descriptive research, I first formed the DT utilizing principles of “purposive sampling” to build a team that proportionally approximated the demographics of GFCC.<sup>372</sup> Six data points were considered in formulating team population criteria: stakeholders vs. non-stakeholders,<sup>373</sup> demographic expertise vs. no demographic expertise,<sup>374</sup> male vs. female,<sup>375</sup> age segments in the congregation,<sup>376</sup> married vs. unmarried,<sup>377</sup> and children at home vs. no children at home.<sup>378</sup> Using these criteria, I compiled an invitation list, initiated contact, informed participants of what would be involved in DT participation, and invited them to join the team.<sup>379</sup> Team members who signed the informed consent form and completed the Pre-Study Questionnaire (See Appendix D) became a part of the DT. The final

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<sup>372</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 83-84. Sensing offers twelve descriptors of purposive sampling. From another perspective, this team represents what John Kotter calls the “guiding coalition” in larger change processes. See Kotter, *Leading Change*, 53-68.

<sup>373</sup> By “stakeholder” I mean someone who is in a position of leadership in GFCC. For my purposes, a stakeholder could be an elder, evangelist, deacon, or LIFE Group leader. A non-stakeholder is someone who does not hold one of those positions of leadership. Because so many in GFCC are involved in leadership across the different layers of the congregation, I did not set a ratio of stakeholders to non-stakeholders.

<sup>374</sup> Given that this project was an exercise in corporate discernment, I attempted to create a dynamic in which there was enough expertise in the room to be helpful, but not so much that people felt uncomfortable speaking up. My assumption was that at some point the DT would likely venture into such unfamiliar demographic territory that it would help to have at least some on the team who knew that terrain well.

<sup>375</sup> Based on demographic data from GFCC, this ratio set at 5:7 male to female.

<sup>376</sup> Since this study only involved those 18 or older, I based DT formation on the membership of GFCC that was 18 or over. Five age segments were considered: Ages 18-24, Ages 25-34, Ages 35-54, Ages 55-64, and Ages 65 and older. Although the team was intended to reflect the age distribution across these segments in GFCC, the likelihood of attrition meant that some segments needed to be weighted. For example, based on the age segments of GFCC, we should have had one participant in the 18-24 and 25-34 brackets. But because of the likelihood of attrition, I adjusted this number to 2 for each segment. Adjusting these numbers meant I also reduced the 35-54 and 65 and older groups by one member each.

<sup>377</sup> Based on demographic data from GFCC, this ratio was set at 9:3 married to unmarried.

<sup>378</sup> Based on demographic data from GFCC, this ratio was set at 3:9 children at home to no children at home.

<sup>379</sup> Leith Anderson, and Jill Fox, *The Volunteer Church: Mobilizing Your Congregation for Growth and Effectiveness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 60-61, 76-78. Nelson Searcy, *Connect: How to Double Your Number of Volunteers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 122-23.

DT roster included a twelve-person team who were a representative sampling of GFCC. The average age of this team was 48.4 in comparison to GFCC, whose average age was 50.27.<sup>380</sup>

The DT met twelve times between August 8 and December 12, 2023, on Tuesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in the teen room of GFCC's building.<sup>381</sup> Meetings typically lasted between 90 to 120 minutes<sup>382</sup> and focused on three areas of study. First, DT meetings introduced principles and practices of spiritual discernment so that the DT was equipped to do the discernment work that was its *raison d'être*. It introduced these principles and practices by means of a Discernment Guide distributed to each team member in meeting one with exercises to be done between meetings one through five as homework. Homework was discussed at the beginning of meetings during the first six weeks and frequently referenced in discussions in subsequent weeks.

Second, DT meetings overviewed the mission of God in the story of Scripture. This overview was broken up into four different blocks over weeks two through five. Block one highlighted missional themes from Creation and the Fall; block two highlighted missional themes from the story of Israel as told in the Old Testament; block three highlighted missional themes from the life of Jesus as he bore witness to the eschatological Kingdom of God; and block four highlighted missional themes from the early church as it continued

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<sup>380</sup> I point this age similarity out because, along with the other six criteria, it demonstrates just how closely this team mirrors the demographics of GFCC. These data points on age reflect my demographic study of GFCC for the purposes of team recruiting. For the sake of clarity, these ages reflect a data of July 31, 2023.

<sup>381</sup> Meeting dates were at 6:00 p.m. on the following Tuesdays: August 8, September 5, September 19, September 26, October 3, October 10, October 24, November 14, November 21, November 28, December 5, and December 12.

<sup>382</sup> Meeting one was approximately 1:30:00; meeting two was 1:39:02; meeting three was 1:33:26; meeting four was 1:37:06; meeting five was 2:00:04; meeting six was 1:58:01; meeting seven was 1:37:03; meeting eight was 1:55:01; meeting nine was 1:52:45; meetings ten-eleven were 1:53:28; meeting twelve was 1:39:49. These times are based on the length of the recording. See FN, 126.

Jesus' kingdom witness. In week six, the team met to collect its most important insights about both discernment and the mission of God. Together these insights formed the lens through which the DT would evaluate the demographic data.

Third, DT meetings focused on studying demographic reports acquired through MissionInsite.<sup>383</sup> I presented this content to the DT in four layers.<sup>384</sup> Layer one explored pure demographics, the overall trends that shape cultures. These trends were the focus of meeting seven. Layer two focused on “lifestyle segments,” the lifestyles and habits of distinct groups (“segments”) within a population. These segments were the focus of meeting eight. Layer three focused on psychographics, “the attitudes, social perspectives, worldviews, and values of various publics living proximate to each other.”<sup>385</sup> This psychographic content was the focus of meeting nine. Layer four focused on “heartburst affinities,” manifestations of compassion for a specific population or issue in a community. To discern heartburst affinities, the DT broke into four smaller teams of two or three persons and completed a 2.5-hour prayer walk/drive of Great Falls during weeks ten-eleven. Reflecting on weeks seven through nine and introducing this prayer walk were the focus of meetings ten-eleven.

After exploring all four demographic layers in meetings seven through ten, the DT met in week twelve to debrief the prayer walk and collect its most important insights from

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<sup>383</sup> “MissionInsite,” ACS Technologies, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.acstechnologies.com/mission/insite/>. MissionInsite is a tool produced by ACS Technologies to help churches and nonprofits better understand their context. According to their website, this tool helps “identify community needs, serve people strategically... understand your communities... make informed decisions.” I subscribed to MissionInsite in June 2023 at a cost of \$31.50/month for a “MissionInsite 15 Mile Radius Subscription.” Using this tool also required \$1,000 for five hours of one-on-one training.

<sup>384</sup> Thomas G. Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve the People within Your Reach* (2013), 31-66.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

the demographic portion of the study. With the input of the DT, I then compiled these insights into a report that described seven missional implications of GFCC's context.

After completion of the DT's study together, I began the process of evaluating the DT's work. DT members were assigned the final task of completing the Post-Study Questionnaire (See Appendix R). Part one of this Post-Study Questionnaire asked the same questions as the Pre-Study Questionnaire. This Questionnaire explored participants' understanding of the mission of God and opportunities to engage it in context. Part two of the Post-Study Questionnaire asked for DT members to evaluate their Pre-Study and Post-Study responses, ranking each on a 0-to-10 scale. This ranking system allowed me to qualitatively assess how much this project helped the DT, as a representative sampling of GFCC, to discern the missional implications of GFCC's context.

The final piece of this project was a focus group with GFCC's leaders. Elders, evangelists, and interns were invited to meet at the GFCC fellowship hall on Saturday, December 16 at 9:00 a.m. for approximately three hours. The focus group would orient the leadership to the problem the project addressed and the missional theology supporting it. It would then present the findings of the DT. Finally, it would engage the leadership to discern their perspectives of the implications the DT discovered. With the focus group complete, the project was complete.

### **Description of Participants**

As described above, two teams were involved in the discernment work of this project. The first team was the DT. The team was built to mirror the basic demographics of GFCC. It

consisted of twelve members, whom I will refer to as D1 through D12. In the following section, I will attempt to describe these twelve participants.<sup>386</sup>

#### Participant D1

D1 is a male. He is one of two participants in the Age 18-24 segment. D1 is 20 years old. He is a non-stakeholder in GFCC. Currently, D1 is unmarried and has no children living at home. D1 was invited to participate not only because of his age, but also because of his demographic expertise as a licensed realtor. Additionally, as a newcomer to GFCC, he brings a perspective, perception, and awareness that insiders rarely match. Despite his intentions of completing his work with the DT, D1 dropped out after the third meeting of the DT.

#### Participant D2

D2 is a male. He is one of two participants in the Age 25-34 segment. D2 is 33 years old. He is a stakeholder in GFCC. He is one of the nine married participants on the DT and one of three participants who have children at home. D2 brings limited demographic expertise and therefore falls somewhere between an expert and non-expert. He does, however, bring theological expertise along with a broad repertoire of leadership and group facilitation skills. Additionally, he brings a great desire to missionally engage Great Falls with the gospel.

#### Participant D3

D3 is a male. He is one of three participants in the Age 35-54 segment. D3 is 45 years old. He is a stakeholder in GFCC. He is one of the nine married participants on the DT and one of three participants who have children at home. D3 brings very little demographic expertise to the team. But he does bring a great contextual awareness as a lifelong resident of

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<sup>386</sup> All ages reflect a date of July 31, 2023.

Great Falls. Additionally, he, perhaps more than any other member, models the desire to grow into the fullness of what it means to embody Jesus in the context of Great Falls.

#### Participant D4

D4 is a male. He is one of three participants in the Age 65 and older segment. D4 is 69 years old. He is a stakeholder in GFCC. He is one of the nine married participants on the DT. D4 is one of nine participants who do not have children at home. D4 brings very little demographic expertise to the team. One advantage of having D4 on the team, however, is that his family has lived in Great Falls for less than three years, and he frequently sees things that lifelong residents might overlook. D4 brings the willingness to challenge the status quo by trying new things in order to missionally engage the community.

#### Participant D5

D5 is a male. He is one of three participants in the Age 65 and older segment. D5 is 65 years old. He is a stakeholder in GFCC. D5 is one of nine married participants on the DT. He is also one of the nine participants who do not have children under the age of 18 living at home.<sup>387</sup> D5 brings no demographic expertise to the team. He does, however, bring a deep, prayerful spirituality befitting the discernment purposes of the DT. He also brings an unshakeable desire to missionally engage Great Falls with the gospel.

#### Participant D6

D6 is a female. She is one of two participants in the Age 18-24 segment. D6 is 21 years old. She is a non-stakeholder in GFCC. She is one of three nonmarried DT participants and one of nine who have no children at home. D6 has no demographic expertise. She was

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<sup>387</sup> For the sake of consistency, I adopted the US Census Bureau's definition of child as a person under the age of eighteen. D5 has adult-children living at home, but no children (under the age of 18).



invited to be a DT member not only because she fits the demographic criteria, but also because of her passion for mission in Great Falls.

#### Participant D7

D7 is a female. She is one of two participants in the Age 25-34 segment. D7 is 29 years old. She is a non-stakeholder in GFCC. D7 is one of the nine married DT participants as well as one of the three who have children at home. Although D7 brings some demographic expertise, D7 was invited to participate because of her wisdom in discernment. Along with an investigative nature, she brings an uncanny ability to recognize trends in culture and population segments.

#### Participant D8

D8 is a female. She is one of three participants in the Age 35-54 segment. D8 is 53 years old. She is a stakeholder in GFCC. D8 is one of the nine married DT participants. She has no children living at home. Although D8 brings some demographic expertise, she brings a combination of the qualities of several other team members. Like D5, she brings a spirituality befitting the discernment purposes of the team; like D7, she brings an investigative spirit; and like D6, D8 brings a compassionate desire to engage God's mission locally in Great Falls.

#### Participant D9

D9 is a female. She is one of three participants in the Age 35-54 segment. D9 is 54 years old. She is a non-stakeholder. D9 is one of nine married participants, and she has no children living at home. D9 brings some demographic expertise, but like D5 and D8 she brings a prayerful spirituality befitting the discernment purposes of the team. Also, perhaps

more than any other DT member, D9 brings a balanced compassion that seeks to bless the church internally and the community externally.

#### Participant D10

D10 is a female. She is one of two participants in the Age 55-64 segment. D10 is 64 years old. She is a non-stakeholder. D10 is one of three unmarried participants, and she has no children living at home. D9 brings some demographic expertise, especially in reference to poverty and its impact in Great Falls. Like D4, this team member is willing to challenge the status quo in order to be more missionally responsive to Great Falls. Like D9, however, this team member brings a keen sense of balance to the compassionate external impulse.

#### Participant D11

D11 is a female. She is one of two participants in the Age 55-64 age segment. D11 is 61 years old. She is a stakeholder. D11 is one of the nine married participants, and she does not have children living at home. Of all twelve DT participants, D11 brings by far the highest level of demographic expertise as a contracted worker with the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey.<sup>388</sup> D11 not only brings a tremendous contextual awareness; she also brings the desire to seek balance in ministering internally to GFCC and externally to the community in Great Falls.

#### Participant D12

D12 is a female. She is one of three participants in the Age 65 and older age segment. D12 is 67 years old. She is a stakeholder. D12 is one of the nine married participants, and she does not have children at home. As a resident of Great Falls for the majority of the last sixty

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<sup>388</sup> This participant conducts nearly seventy interviews a month in her work with ACS. Much of the demographic material we used in weeks seven through ten included data points that she regularly solicits through her interviews.

years, she brings a wealth of contextual awareness of Great Falls. Nevertheless, as part of her unique religious heritage, she brings a valuable, fresh perspective on ministry. Particularly, she brings the awareness of what it looks like for churches to neglect the community and become irrelevant by disengagement. She therefore does not mind challenging the status quo in order to missionally engage the community.

Beyond the DT, this project also involved the GFCC leadership team. That team consists of GFCC's two other ministers, one intern, and eight elders. Because these are pre-existing groups, no attempt was made to correlate the focus group's participants to the composition of GFCC. Including the researcher, the discernment team, and the leadership team, this project incorporated the perspectives of twenty-three different people within GFCC.

### **Description of Project Sessions**

#### DT Meeting 1 – August 8, 2023

The first meeting of the DT was for the purpose of legitimizing, introducing, and orienting. Prior to this meeting, team members had signed their informed consent documents and completed the Pre-Study Questionnaire. But they had not yet signed the Media Release that would enable me to legitimately record meetings or offer a Zoom option. Before we did anything else, we signed Media Releases and then launched Zoom.<sup>389</sup>

Next, I distributed resources for the evening, including the PowerPoint for meeting one with lines for notes, a copy of the Discernment Guide for weeks one to five, and copies of the main questions the DT would be considering in the first part of our work together.

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<sup>389</sup> Unfortunately, the Zoom option did not work well. The audio was especially difficult to hear, and it did not allow the participant to see very much of what was happening in the room. In short, we did not have adequate technology to facilitate Zoom. Because of this technological difficulty, I did not have a good recording of meeting one. All insights for meeting one are based upon my field notes.

Prior to the meeting, I had printed and assembled these resources and placed them in a three-ring binder for each DT member. Gathering materials would enable the DT to not only follow along, but also have much of my content without having to reproduce it. Not needing to take copious notes would allow for greater engagement in the discussion.

We moved into introductions next. It was surprising to me how some participants hardly knew other participants. I asked the DT to share their name and what made them interested in being a part of the DT. Most responded that they joined either because they “loved Matt” or simply “because Matt asked me” (FN, 8). When DT members had finished their personal introductions, I introduced the selection criteria that supplied the basis for the composition of the DT.

Following personal introductions, I introduced the DT to the problem the project addresses by walking through a basic overview of the congregational life cycle and the William Bridges transition material. There was much affirmation in the group regarding the idea that GFCC was a “mature” congregation, especially when we read the descriptions Bullard provides of what such a congregation is like. The DT affirmed that, although GFCC is a church whose relationships, programs, and management are all intact, GFCC currently lacks vision. From the life cycle, I turned to introducing and overviewing William Bridges and his material on transition. The conversation was especially energetic when I used the transition model of endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings to retell GFCC’s story since 2016, which I called “the year of endings.” The verbal and nonverbal engagement of team members suggested to me that this exercise (retelling the story of GFCC’s past seven years using the transition model) named something that they had been feeling but had never been able to articulate clearly. They seemed especially intrigued to see that the challenges we are

facing are, at their roots, a result of the faithfulness and success of the church through the years. A vision faithfully discerned and executed has been completed, and now it is time to discern anew. GFCC's challenges do not indicate that it has failed or has been unfaithful; rather, the challenges are normal signals that it is time to take another developmental step. Concluding this part of our discussion, I shared that the two models converge in their suggestion that what GFCC needs most in order to move into its next healthy developmental stage is a new vision and new strategy based on that new vision. The DT's work facilitates one necessary piece of vision discovery: discernment of the missional implications of GFCC's context.<sup>390</sup>

After orienting the DT to the problem, I shifted focus to the basic practices and principles of spiritual discernment. I drew their attention to the Discernment Guide I had included in their binder. I realized in this moment that most of the DT had participated in GFCC's 100 Days of Prayer and Share Triplets the previous summer in which small groups of three individuals used an earlier version of the Discernment Guide. Recognizing their likely familiarity with the material, I chose not to spend as much time working through that material again. Instead, I explained that we would use the material as homework and then discuss it near the beginning of meetings in weeks two through six.

Next, I gave an overview of part one of the DT's work, weeks two through six, in which we would acquaint ourselves with the mission of God in Scripture. I provided an outline of the different blocks for weeks two through five. To divide our topics, I presented

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<sup>390</sup> By "one piece" I am alluding to one critical delimitation of this project. This project will not complete the process of vision discovery. At most it is merely facilitating the basic condition necessary to vision discovery: an investigation of the context. One model that illustrates the work that precedes and follows the team's work is John Kotter's change model. The DT's work follows Step 1 (Creating a sense of Urgency) and precedes Step 4 (Defining the vision). The DT represents what Kotter calls the "guiding coalition" whose formation is Step 2. The work of this team is *part* of the process of Step 3 (Defining the Vision).

the DT with a high-level outline of the story of Scripture:<sup>391</sup> Creation and Curse (meeting two), Covenants (meeting three), Christ and Consummation (meeting four), and Church (meeting five).<sup>392</sup> Then, I gave an overview of part two of the DT's work, weeks seven through eleven. Finally, I crystallized what we were working toward as a team through these two parts of our study: five-to-seven clear ideas about how GFCC might missionally engage its context.

One of the last major topics for meeting one was to establish a covenant to serve as our mutually agreed upon way of being together over the course of the project.<sup>393</sup> I invited the DT to reflect on what might hinder our work together. Then, I invited them to reflect on what commitments we could make to each other to prevent these disruptions. As they discussed, I took detailed notes. Based on those notes, I told the team I would attempt a synthesis. Then, when we returned for our next meeting, they could make any edits they desired.

Finally, before we finished, we worked out some logistical matters. We discussed where we would meet. The consensus of the team was that it was best for everyone if we met

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<sup>391</sup> This framework represented my synthesis of M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1997), 441-45, and N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 121-27. Using this synthesized framework, I drew content primarily from Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, and Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006).

<sup>392</sup> Although chronologically it made more sense to treat the final three in the order "Christ," "Church" and "Consummation," I placed "Christ" and "Consummation" together in order to demonstrate the reality that in Jesus, the new creation has already come proleptically in demonstration and anticipation of the "not yet" aspects of the eschatological kingdom. By presenting Christ as the embodiment of God's eschatological future, I was able to help the team see the church's ministry as not only continuing Jesus' ministry, but also demonstrating God's eschatological future in the present.

<sup>393</sup> Gilbert R. Rendle, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban, 1999); Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, 152-65; Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 121-23.

in the teen room at the GFCC building. We set our next meeting for September 5. Finally, we discussed communication preferences to address some communication difficulties we had experienced prior to meeting one.<sup>394</sup>

#### DT Meeting 2 – September 5, 2023

The purpose of meeting two of the DT was to begin discussing the practices and principles of spiritual discernment (from week one of the Discernment Guide) and to begin overviewing the mission of God in Scripture. The focus of meeting two was missional themes from creation and the fall. Prior to the meeting, I printed the PowerPoint with lines for notes as well as the draft of the synthesized DT covenant based on the discussion in meeting one.

We began the meeting with prayer and then processed several preliminaries to our main discussion topic. First, we discussed anything still with the DT following meeting one. One of the most significant points still with the DT was the discussion of the life cycle. D7 stated that the life cycle had been a key learning and expressed fascination with how the life cycle made it possible to “quantify when a church loses its footing” (FN, 11). The discussion then turned to the material from week one of the Discernment Guide, which focused on Scripture’s witness to the goodness of God. Next, we briefly reviewed some of the orientation material from week one on the life cycle and Bridges’ transition model for the sake of DT members who had been unable to attend meeting one. Finally, we reviewed the draft of the synthesis of the covenant discussion from week one. We clarified concerns about

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<sup>394</sup> At least two members of the DT had trouble receiving updates because we had been communicating in a DT group text. As a result of this discussion, we agreed to continue communicating in the Group Text, but I would personally copy the message to the group and send it individually to those who had been affected. Additionally, we worked out some basic Group Text etiquette so we would not frustrate one another. I would communicate to the DT through the Group Text (with individual supplementation), but DT members would respond to my communication individually. With these adjustments, everyone was content. This system worked exceptionally well for the duration of the project.

confidentiality, practicing grace and forgiveness, and keeping in view “what is best for the church” as D10 put it. The final product was an eight-point covenant, which all DT members willingly consented to practice together.

With preliminaries complete, we shifted focus to the main content of the night—missional themes from creation and the fall. Reflecting on Gen. 1:1–2:3, we surveyed God’s creation of all things, and we saw how God calls all things “very good.” Additionally, we observed that God’s pronouncement in Gen. 1:31 permits no dualism or reductionism. God made all things, God cares about all things, and this cosmic concern had to be foundational to our view of mission. In surveying this text, a major missional insight for the DT was realization that the Sabbath is the apex of creation. Not only does it represent the climactic seventh day; it is the only day that God calls “holy.” As the climax of creation, we reflected on God’s desire through the Sabbath to bring *shalōm*—holistic flourishing with reference to God, neighbor, self, and creation—to all creation. It is for this end that God creates humanity as God’s missional partners. God creates humanity in the divine image as God’s earthly representatives to extend God’s good rule of holistic *shalōm* into all creation. As we discussed these things, D7 captured the implication best. Grounding mission in creation “adds a layer” to our understanding of mission (FN, 13). In fact, it adds multiple layers. This insight about *shalōm* was one of the most significant missional insights from the DT.

From discussing creation, we turned to “the fall” in Genesis 3. I emphasized that sin is the inversion of *shalōm*. Just as *shalōm* is cosmic, touching all aspects of God’s good world, so also is sin. At this point, I helped the DT to see that salvation, as God’s response to sin, must be at least as big as Scripture’s doctrine of sin. This idea in turn has major missional ramifications. If mission is partnering with God to promote *shalōm* in response to



sin's disruption, then mission cannot merely respond to broken relationships with God. It must also address broken social relationships, broken personal relationships, and broken relationships with God's creation. Mission, like sin and *shalōm*, is holistic.

At this point, another major missional theme emerged as we observed God's response to humanity's sin. In the words of D2, paraphrasing Gen. 3:8-9, "He showed up in the middle of that garden that is now infested with sin." The idea that God does not remain aloof but instead draws near to humanity in its sinful mess was another highly significant theme to the DT. The DT drew the parallel to humanity's role in God's mission: just as God draws near to the messiness of sin, so must we for the sake of partnering with God in his mission of restoring *shalōm* by making all things new.

As we prepared to conclude, I first introduced the One-Text procedure.<sup>395</sup> Fisher and Ury describe the One-Text procedure as a negotiating tool to help diverse parties reach consensus. I invited the DT to collaborate in a similar way to create a consensus document of the DT's most significant insights about discernment, mission, and eventually demographics. In meeting two, after discussion, we agreed to do that using Dropbox. One DT member would draft initial reflections, and other DT members could then follow up and edit until the document reflected the DT's collective, shared understanding of their most important missional insights. This tool was intended to be part of this project's evaluation strategy. Next, we worked out the remaining meeting dates. The DT agreed that Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. in the Teen Room of the GFCC building worked best, and we scheduled the remaining meetings. Finally, I assigned the week two portion of the Discernment Guide for homework.

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<sup>395</sup> Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 114-19.

Following the meeting, I created the Dropbox file for the One-Text. I uploaded the questions for the One-Text document, the PowerPoint from meetings one and two, and the recording from meeting two. I then followed up with team members to provide a link to access the Dropbox account.

#### DT Meeting 3 – September 19, 2023

The purpose of meeting three of the DT was to explore Israel's role in the mission of God. Prior to the meeting I printed the PowerPoint with lines for notetaking, and I distributed these as the DT arrived. This meeting was unusual in that only half of the DT—six members—were able to attend. Had I known further in advance that so many would be absent, I would have attempted to reschedule the meeting. Because, however, I planned to record the meeting and post the PowerPoints in the Dropbox, I decided to proceed.

The meeting began with prayer and then our normal preliminaries. First, I invited the DT to share notable insights from the previous meeting. Then, we discussed the One-Text procedure. Several DT members had been confused about what to do. Because of this confusion, we reviewed the One-Text questions, and I invited the DT to use the questions to help navigate the material in this meeting. If they wanted to respond or discuss any of these questions, they were invited to get my attention, and we would stop to discuss their questions.<sup>396</sup> Next, we discussed Dropbox. Some DT members had trouble the previous week

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<sup>396</sup> This format worked extremely well. Although in earlier plans I had anticipated doing distinct blocks of teaching and discussion, by giving these questions up front and then inviting engagement throughout, we were able to accomplish the same purposes of my original design. But this way it felt more natural, more conversational, and less forced. This more conversation approach was the format I chose for the remainder of DT meetings. At the beginnings of the meetings, I would give them several questions to use as reflection guides throughout the meeting. Then, we would follow their questions and engagement with my questions as we went along.

in accessing Dropbox, so we worked to resolve those issues. Finally, we reviewed our covenant together.<sup>397</sup>

To discuss Israel's role in the mission of God, I selected several key texts to read and process together. The first of these was Gen. 12:1-3. We saw how God calls Abraham and his family to "bless" all nations. Abraham's call directly counters the "curse" described in Genesis 3-11, which had spread from two individuals to all nations on the earth. This "blessing" is God's response to sin and represents God's mission to restore all things to "very good" *shalōm*. In Gen. 18:17-19 God explains to Abraham how his family will bring God's blessing to the nations. Reading this text together, we focused on the middle clause of Gen. 18:19. God wants Abraham to teach his family to "keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19, ESV). In discussing this verse, we saw how God wants us to imitate him and extend his goodness into all creation, restoring situations to align with God's goodness. We looked at Genesis 18-19 and saw illustrations of righteousness and justice in the hospitality of both Abraham and Lot. We also saw illustrations of unrighteousness and injustice in the example of Sodom. From these two chapters we came to see that we bless the nations when we embody God's goodness in a world full of cities like Sodom.

From Genesis 18, we next read Exod. 19:3-6. After God redeemed Israel from Egyptian slavery to keep his promise to Abraham, God commissioned his people, now a nation, to keep his covenant and so be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6, ESV). With this verse, we identified one of the key tensions of mission in Scripture. On the

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<sup>397</sup> Reviewing the covenant meant reading it together. One member would start reading point 1, then another would take point 2 (etc.) until we had read through the entire covenant. Following that reading, I invited any edits to the covenant. Reading through it together each week was helpful in that it kept our commitments to each other top of mind as each meeting began.

one hand, God called his people to be priests, holding the middle position between God and the nations. They would both represent God to the nations and represent the nations to God. Priesthood, then, implies Israel had to maintain a missional relationship or connection to the nations. On the other hand, God called his people to be holy. Although D3 and D4 suggested that holiness implies separation, D9 countered that separation does not fit the example of Jesus who was present with people and even ate with sinners. D9 went on to suggest that holiness is more about being distinctive than moving away from sinful people. I identified the relationship between separation and distinction as a missional tension with two dangers at either extreme. If D3 and D4's position is taken to an extreme, it can become a posture of withdrawal from the world that negates God's call to be priestly mediators of God's blessing to the nations. But if D9's position is taken to an extreme, it can become a posture of assimilation to the world that negates God's call to be a holy (distinct) people who walk in the way of the LORD. As we discussed these things, the DT identified navigating these two extremes—withdrawal and assimilation—as the key missional challenge for GFCC. I had intended for us to briefly survey the book of Daniel for one potential *via media*. But because of time, I directed us to Jer. 29:4-7. To a people in exile, who faced the temptation to withdraw from the nations, God still called them outward to seek the *shalōm* of their city. I then shared a quote from Goheen that summed up the situation in Daniel, when Israel faced the threat of assimilation.

They are able to carry out their tasks in public life precisely because they remain rooted in a different story. Consequently, they remember their identity, remember which community they belong to, and remember which God they serve. Daniel and his companions are “bilingual,” knowing the speech of the empire and being willing to use it, but never forgetting the cadences of [their] “mother tongue.” As they struggle to be faithful at the crossroads between the biblical story and the immensely powerful story of the empire, committed to the Lord yet serving the *shalom* of an arrogant world kingdom, their lives consist of “endless negotiation” of when to

acquiesce and when to resist. How does one remain faithful in the midst of a pagan world?

The missional calling of the people of Israel to be a blessing to the nations is not silenced when they are carried off to Babylon, nor when they live in the midst of the powerful world empires of Persia, Greece, or Rome, nor when they live in diaspora in Egypt or elsewhere. Their social life takes different forms in these new contexts, and their missional identity must be nurtured in fresh ways. But they are still a “so-that” people, blessed so that they might in turn be a blessing. They are still a “come and join us” people, inviting the world to participate in God’s own purpose and mission.<sup>398</sup>

Comparing Jeremiah and Daniel indicates that God sees neither withdrawal nor assimilation as options for his priestly, holy people whom he sends into the world to bless the world. Both D3 and D4 embraced this correction. As the conversation concluded D3 said with the affirmation of D4, “God wants us to get out of our comfort zone.” In the context of that statement, this statement was his recognition that withdrawal, the comfortable option, is not always the most faithful option for God’s people.

As we concluded, I reminded the DT about homework in the Discernment Guide (week three). I once again invited them to record their reflections in the One-Text document. Following the meeting I uploaded the meeting recording and the PowerPoint for meeting three so that DT members who were absent could catch up before the next meeting the following week.

#### DT Meeting 4 – September 26, 2023

The purpose of DT meeting four was to study missional themes from the life of Jesus. In preparation for this meeting, I printed the PowerPoint with lines for notes. As the team members arrived, I distributed these. We then began with prayer.

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<sup>398</sup> Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 65, 66.

After the prayer, I invited the DT to share anything that was still with them from the previous weeks as well as to ask any questions. D8 spoke up immediately and made two observations. She was struck not only by the fact that God’s “purpose is so much bigger than just getting people saved at a moment,” but also by “how Jesus went near people in their messes, and he wasn’t afraid to pursue and just enter that” (FN, 21). D4 commented about discernment, noting how important Scripture was, given the fact that Jesus’ sheep often do not immediately recognize his voice the first time. They must learn it through immersion in his Word. I tied D4’s comment to our work in weeks two through five. The reason we were refreshing ourselves on mission was so that we would be able to recognize his call as we look at the community around us. Following this initial engagement, we reminded ourselves of our purpose and reviewed our covenant.

Although the main focus of meeting four was Jesus’ role in the mission of God, this material served as a response to the tension the DT had recognized in week three—the tension between withdrawal and assimilation. As we turned to Matthew 1,<sup>399</sup> we read Matt. 1:18-23. God’s way of “[saving] his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21, ESV) was to enter the world as a human. I noted a connection from the question about the missional tension to the incarnation: “Jesus steps right down in the middle of our mess with us as God in flesh” (FN, 23). As God in the flesh, Jesus’ incarnation becomes the pattern for our participation in the mission of God. Our definition of mission must look like the incarnation. If we are to missionally engage our community, we will not remain distant. Rather, we will step into it, incarnating God’s goodness, just like Jesus. At this point D4, who, in the previous meeting, had initially defined holiness as “separation,” commented, suggesting that it is our purpose to

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<sup>399</sup> For the sake of simplicity and focus, I chose to limit our study of Jesus and mission to Matthew’s Gospel.

do “what God did for us for other people” even if doing so “can take us out of our comfort zone” (FN, 23). D9 affirmed D4. Then, responding to the question, “What does the mission of God call us to be?” she answered “Patient.” “Love is patient. It’s like the number one thing in the definition of love” (FN, 23). Stepping into someone’s “mess” requires us to be patient as God transforms lives.

From Matt. 1:18-23, we turned to Matt. 3:16-17 and identified the Spirit as the power of Jesus’ ministry. As we sought clarity about Jesus’ ministry, I asked how Jesus saves his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Reading Matthew’s summaries of Jesus’ ministry in Matt. 4:17 and Matt. 9:35, we observed that Jesus brings salvation by preaching the kingdom and demonstrating its presence through healing (Matt. 4:23-25; 9:35-38). I helped the team understand the Kingdom as the restoration of God’s good and rightful rule over creation. In this sense, the Kingdom is Jesus’ way of bringing heavenly, future *shalōm* into the earthly present. The Kingdom is the fulfillment of God’s desire to bless all nations through a holy, priestly people.

Jesus bears witness to and embodies the kingdom in two ways. First, both Matt. 4:23-25 and 9:35-38 connect Jesus’ kingdom ministry to teaching. Jesus’ words bear witness to the Kingdom. I pointed the DT to Matt. 5:16-17, 20; 6:33; and 25:37, each of which highlights the importance of righteousness. Jesus taught his people to seek God’s kingdom righteousness first, and Matt. 25:37 identifies the righteous as those who spent their lives doing good, mediating God’s blessing to the hungry, thirsty, naked, displaced, sick, and imprisoned. Jesus’ teaching, then, instructs God’s people on “[keeping] the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice” (cf. Gen. 18:19, ESV). Matt. 5:16 connects the doing of

such good works to being the Old Testament city on the hill, which shines the light that draws all nations to God's dwelling at Mt. Zion.

Second, both Matt. 4:23-25 and 9:35-38 also connect Jesus' kingdom ministry to demonstration. Jesus practiced what he preached. In his good deeds, he reveals what life will look like when God's will is finally done on earth as in heaven. For sake of time, the DT focused on two particular vignettes. In Matt. 8:1-4 the DT recognized a model for ministry. This passage demonstrates one aspect of how Jesus navigated the tension between withdrawal and assimilation. Using Richard Beck's terminology, Jesus rejected "negativity dominance," the idea that we become spiritually defiled through contact and therefore must "quarantine" ourselves from the "unclean" in order to be holy.<sup>400</sup> In contrast, Jesus demonstrates "positivity dominance." That is, the purity in him overcomes the impurity in the leper. Because of "positivity dominance," Jesus does not need to heal the leper before he touches him. As Matt. 8:1-4 shows, Jesus touches the leper first and only then heals him. This observation helped the DT recognize a basic principle of mission: contact precedes change. We saw these same themes again in Matt. 9:18-26 as Jesus confronts the ultimate defiler: death.

Although the team embraced these ideas as the teachings of Scripture, they met these teachings differently. D10 welcomed them without reserve, referencing a memory from her childhood of how a church had completely rejected these teachings. D7 expressed ambivalence. Although she was in support of showing compassion to the community, she expressed concern about the impact undiscerning compassion might have upon those in the church. She expressed that Christians "need a good base so that we don't become like the

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<sup>400</sup> Richard Beck, *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 28-30, 52, 75-76, 81.



world” (FN, 26). As soon as D7 finished speaking, D9 shared transparently about her experience planning her daughter’s graduation celebration. Because her daughter’s girlfriend was to be there many in GFCC did not attend. Or, if they did, they did not bring their children. D9 contrasted these people’s impact with that of Chris Crooks, who not only brought his entire family, but also spent the time engaging her daughter, her daughter’s girlfriend, and the girlfriend’s family. D9 emphasized the importance of what Jesus demonstrates in Matt. 8:1-4 and said that “we must build bridges, or we’re never going to reach anybody.” Relating this conversation to today, she noted that she expected her daughter to be home with her wife over the holidays. She expected her daughter to attend worship with her, but she said, “[her daughter’s wife] will never come” (FN, 26). D2 responded, “Being the kind of church where [her daughter] AND [her daughter’s wife] could show up is really what these stories are calling us to,” and this view was affirmed by D11 and D4. D11 added: “God took that away from us, that need to judge.” As we concluded this discussion, D5 acknowledged that GFCC is “not there yet” as a congregation.

As the meeting concluded, I once again made efforts to help the DT access Dropbox. Because it had been difficult to access and edit the One-Text document in Dropbox, D7 volunteered to set up a Google Doc file and email a link to DT members. With these details resolved, I reminded the DT of their homework in the Discernment Guide (week four) and encouraged them to take advantage of the new Google Doc format for the One-Text. Then, we ended the recording. After I stopped the recording, however, D11 openly shared about a health challenge she had been facing with much dread. D5, the same DT member who acknowledged that GFCC is “not there yet” when it comes to being a church that welcomes people like D9’s daughter and her wife, led the DT in a prayer for D11. In that prayer, D5 not

only prayed for D11; he also prayed with conviction that God would help GFCC to become the kind of church that welcomed the lepers.

Following the meeting, I uploaded the recording and PowerPoint into the Dropbox. Since we decided to use the Google Doc format for the One-Text, I turned the Dropbox into the collection point for all DT materials.

#### DT Meeting 5 – October 3, 2023

The purpose of meeting five of the DT was to conclude our survey of the mission of God through Scripture. After distributing the PowerPoint pages with lines for notes and beginning with prayer, I opened the discussion for reflections on the Discernment Guide from week four. D8 reflected that she sensed God’s invitation for GFCC to spend more quiet time with him in contemplation and stillness. She also noted a desire to see people with more compassion. Other DT members reflected similar desires. D3 reflected on how he sometimes struggles with projecting his own failures onto others. At the same time, he expressed a desire to love his neighbors better. D10 expressed a desire to not allow her anger “about a lot of things” to “color everything.” D11 perhaps summed this discussion up best: it is so easy to allow our inner struggles and shortcomings to “blind us” to other people. This discussion was significant for many reasons, but especially for how it demonstrated the safety DT members felt with one another to be so transparent and candid. Wrapping up the discernment conversation, we naturally transitioned to reinforcing our covenant—the very thing that helped facilitate the safety demonstrated in the previous conversation.

For this final portion of our survey of the mission of God through Scripture, we began with four readings (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; and John 20:19-23), which summarized Jesus’ commission to his people. Based on these commissioning

passages, I highlighted seven themes from Goheen.<sup>401</sup> First, Jesus changes the direction of mission from centripetal to centrifugal. Rather than merely attracting the nations to come to Zion, Jesus sends his disciples to the nations as his emissaries. Second, Jesus commissions the entire community, not merely select individuals within it. Third, the community of Jesus' people continues God's mission through Israel. Fourth, this community is no longer defined by ethnicity or geography. Fifth, the authority of this mission is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. On the basis of the resurrection, Jesus' disciples summon all creation to recognize Jesus' lordship over all things. Sixth, Jesus' disciples continue Jesus' mission. We do what he did and teach what he taught. Seventh, the Spirit is the power by which and through whom disciples continue the witness of the resurrected Lord.

After reflecting on these seven themes from Jesus' commissioning, we then turned to Acts to reflect on how Jesus' earliest disciples responded to this commission. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke describes four formative practices of the earliest Christians. As the church engaged these practices together, what grew out of them was "outreach," in D3's words. Acts 4:32-35 demonstrates how, when the church collectively joined in these formative practices, they formed a community that embodied the ideals of the Sabbath (cf. Deuteronomy 15). That is, as they were formed spiritually, they became a community that mediated God's blessing because "everyone was *shaloming*," as D5 put it. The early days of the church in Acts demonstrate that the church continued Jesus' ministry through teaching, sharing life together (fellowship), sharing their table with their Lord and neighbors (breaking of bread), through prayer (Acts 2:42), and doing good works such as those described in Acts 4:32-35 or 6:1-7.

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<sup>401</sup> Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 114-28.

After surveying these passages, I asked the DT which of these five practices represent GFCC’s growing edge. That is, where does GFCC need to grow most—in teaching, in fellowship, in breaking bread, in prayers, or in good works? D3 noted that GFCC “[falls] short in serving the community.” D1 spoke very highly of GFCC’s worship and fellowship, but he concurred: “[serving] is the one we can grow in the most.”<sup>402</sup> D5 and D11 identified two ministries in which GFCC serves the community—our general benevolence ministry and an annual clothing giveaway in the Fall. I probed this identification a little more closely, asking “Who is the ‘we’?” I asked this question because, in my observation, neither of these ministries involve very many of GFCC’s approximately two hundred members. I suggested to the DT that, from my perspective, we have a lot of activity, but almost all of it is directed inward toward the needs of GFCC’s members. Moreover, although GFCC has organizational structures that help us learn the Scriptures, connect with one another, and worship, we have very few organizational structures that help us collectively engage in good works that bless GFCC’s community through the practice of righteousness.<sup>403</sup> Having identified this discipleship gap, we spent the remaining time reviewing what the New Testament says about doing good works.

In our study of “good works,” we first read Matt. 5:14-16. Jesus refers to his people collectively, in the plural, as “the light of the world.” The fact that the pronouns are plural helps clarify what he means when he speaks of “good works.” The “good works” are not merely the isolated deeds of a select few; they are the church’s collective witness to the

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<sup>402</sup> This observation from this participant was significant. D1 only attended two meetings of the DT, and this was one of the only times he shared. His impression as a newcomer is that we have work to do in serving the community.

<sup>403</sup> Moreover, to the extent that these exist, like the clothing giveaway, they usually involve only a very small number of GFCC’s membership.

community of the righteousness of God. We then turned to Titus 2-3. In Titus, “good works” encapsulate the mission between the first and second appearances of Jesus. Paul calls the church at Crete to do such good works for apologetic purposes. In doing good, they will make the gospel attractive as they bear witness to the goodness and lovingkindness of God, the Savior. They will thereby boost their credibility within a culture that does not know the Savior. Finally, we surveyed the “good works” theme in 1 Peter 2-3. Peter directly connects “good works” to the priesthood of God’s people (1 Pet. 2:9). “Doing good” is how God’s people “bless,” a chief priestly function and echo of Exod. 19:3-6. But Peter adds another nuance to the “good works” motif. In 1 Pet. 2:12, he links “good works” (*kala erga*) to “honorable conduct” (*tēn apostrophēn ... kalēn*). This link suggests the content of “good works” has a highly contextualized nature. In Peter, “good works” are how the church contextualizes the incarnational ethic of Jesus. Verse 12 implies that “good works” must be such as can be perceived as “good” even by those who have no knowledge of God. Such a view once again speaks to the tension between withdrawal and assimilation the DT encountered repeatedly. Though disciples must never assimilate by compromising the “fear of God” (cf. 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17), we must give thought to what is perceived as “good” in the eyes of unbelievers, seeking points of overlap. Finding overlapping views of “good,” we then renounce “self-indulgence and worldly passion,” do good in ways that unbelievers cannot miss (1 Pet. 2:12), thereby stepping into the world of the unbeliever just as Jesus stepped into our world. 1 Pet. 3:8-12 elaborates on this “overlap” by quoting from Psalm 34. The Psalmist exhorts hearer-readers to “seek peace and pursue it” (Psa. 34:14; 1 Pet. 3:11). The points of overlap we pursue are those areas which represent the common good of all humanity—*shalōm*.

After we surveyed the “good works” theme in the New Testament, the DT discussed it together. D5 expressed the difficulty in what we had been seeing. What we discussed could “change our paradigm on what being a Christian is.” This material constitutes a paradigm shift for not only this member, but also for GFCC.<sup>404</sup> D11 confirmed this portrait. As the longest-attending member of GFCC on the DT, she described how our Christianity “can bias us against doing these things.” Citing 1 Cor. 15:33, she noted how we can use Scripture as an excuse to not do what Scripture calls God’s people to do (FN, 35). A more recent attender who just became a member of GFCC in mid-2023, D7 expressed the challenge of not being able to imagine what this new paradigm looks like lived out. According to D7, many model being “in the world,” and many model being “not in the world.” But she has never seen anyone live out truly “being in the world, but not of the world,” demonstrating the balanced tension between withdrawal and assimilation. As the conversation unfolded, it became clear, however, that there are notable examples at the individual level. D11 shared a story about connecting with non-believers at the bowling alley every week. D9 shared a helpful encouragement that GFCC “not [insist] that people bend to us.” Referencing her daughter and her daughter’s wife and the tensions their relationships causes with her (D9’s) own beliefs, she pointed out that she and her husband relate to them by seeking “common ground” and “affirming what we can” without compromising their own views of their daughter’s choice. D7 recognized this approach and acknowledged these two exemplars of doing the good we can in the points of overlap. Nevertheless, D7’s point remains. Though we can find such examples at the individual level, it is harder to find examples of churches that live well

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<sup>404</sup> This insight was affirmed the following day when, in a text exchange with D8, she referenced this quote, affirming that “the church as a whole will have a slow time changing the paradigm, as [D5] said... We are going to have to be very patient.” See FN, 38.

in the tension. One thing that seemed to motivate the DT to press forward into the unknowns of this posture was the reality that doing so, in the words of D7, “opens conversations” for “little slivers of light” by “[making] other people interested in what we have to say” (FN, 36). As 1 Pet. 3:15 suggests, when we live lives characterized by good works, we create scenarios in which people want to know why we are doing what we are doing, or “a reason for the hope that is within you” (ESV). Sometimes, however, doing good in highly contextualized ways just might win people even without a word (1 Pet. 3:1, 2).

After the discussion of the good works theme, we began wrapping up. I encouraged the DT to continue working on the One-Text in the Google Doc format. I also reminded the DT to complete the last week of homework in the Discernment Guide. After dismissing, I uploaded the recording as well as the PowerPoint in the Dropbox folder.

#### DT Meeting 6 – October 10, 2023

Meeting six of the DT was a transitional meeting between the two parts of the project. As a hinge, it had two purposes. First, it summarized meetings one through five for the purpose of drawing out the most significant insights from our survey of the mission of God and spiritual discernment. Second, it introduced part two, the demographic study portion of our work together.

As meeting six began, I distributed the PowerPoint for the meeting with lines for notes and briefly overviewed the plan for the meeting since it was different than our typical meetings. Next, we reviewed our covenant and prayed together. Finally, before we jumped into our main material, I encouraged the DT to retrieve from their binders and briefly review the questions we would use for our discussion. We focused on the questions from

“Orientation to Mission and Spiritual Discernment,” a handout I had distributed in meeting one.<sup>405</sup>

The first thing we reviewed was the orientation material from meeting one. Given the paradigmatic shifts discussed in meeting five, I emphasized the timeline aspect of this material, underscoring the fact that the shifts we discussed would not completely materialize in less than two years, according to Bullard. They might take as much as six years according to Kotter’s model. As we reviewed the life cycle model, D10 raised the question of why GFCC is a declining church. I directed her back to the material from meeting one and connected the decline to the loss of vision—a problem this project is intended to help address.

Following the review of week one, we spent a good bit of time reviewing the principles and practices of discernment. I asked questions eighteen and nineteen from the “Orientation to Mission and Spiritual Discernment” question guide and invited the response from the team. I asked the DT, “How can we be sure we are hearing from God and not from someone (-thing) else?” and “What might God be inviting you to set aside so that you can be open to his guidance?” With each of those questions we had a lively discussion as DT members dialogued together. I both discussed these things with the DT and facilitated, summarizing or elaborating on what DT members shared to keep the discussion coherent.

We then moved into a fifteen-minute review of the content from weeks two through five. Prior to meeting six, I had reviewed the slides and my field notes, and compiled what I discerned to be the most important content from those weeks. I compiled all of that material

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<sup>405</sup> Formulating the questions in advance, distributing them to the DT allowed me to conduct a semi-structured interview with the DT. It freed me up to draw selectively from the questions. See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 107.



into the week six PowerPoint, which was distributed to DT members at the beginning of meeting six. When we had completed this review, I used questions five, thirteen, six through eight, and twenty to engage the team in discussion. I asked, “What is the mission of God?” “What sort of relationship do you believe ... the mission of God calls GFCC to develop with the surrounding community?” “What does the mission of God invite us to be/say/do?” and “What desires stir within you as you reflect on these things?” As with the discussion on discernment, I served as both participant and facilitator.

As the meeting concluded, I provided the DT with a tentative overview of where we would be going next in weeks seven through twelve as we began the demographic study portion of our work together. D7 sought clarification about the “product” of our work. I clarified that we were looking for five-to-seven ideas of how GFCC might missionally engage its context, and I offered her several potential examples based on my research to that point. I encouraged the DT to use the “One-Text” Question Guide to finalize their insights from meetings one through six so that they might reference the DT’s shared understanding as we studied the demographics of GFCC and Great Falls. Finally, we closed with prayer. Following the meeting, I uploaded the PowerPoint and recording of meeting six into the Dropbox folder.

#### DT Meeting 7 – October 24, 2023

With meeting seven, the DT began part two of its work together—the portion in which we did demographic study of both Great Falls and GFCC. Before the meeting began, I obtained the necessary subscription to access demographic data through MissionInsite by ACS technologies.<sup>406</sup> I printed and compiled materials for this meeting, including the

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<sup>406</sup> See note 383.

PowerPoint, Question Guides for weeks eight and ten, “The Executive Insight Report,” “Great Falls/GFCC Demographics Comparison,” “GFCC Demographics – MAIN DOCUMENT,” and “GFCC Demographics Comparison: Mosaic Groups.” As DT members arrived for our normal 6:00 p.m. meeting in the teen room of the GFCC building, I distributed this material.

Since we would no longer be spending as much time in Scripture as we did in meetings two through six, I decided to begin every meeting in part two of the DT’s work with a time in Scripture. In meeting seven, we read and reflected upon Neh. 1:1-4 and 2:11-18. This text, in some respects, served as a model for our demographic study. Nehemiah’s ministry in Jerusalem began with a demographic study. Reflecting on these two chapters, we drew analogies to our own work together.

Following the time in Scripture, we completed our normal preliminaries. We reviewed our purpose and our end-product. We reviewed our covenant. Finally, I asked DT members to retrieve the question guides for week eight and for week ten.<sup>407</sup> Using our typical semi-structured approach, I introduced the questions I hoped would guide our reflection. From the week eight questions, we would consider questions one and questions six through ten. From the week ten questions, we would consider questions one, three through six, ten through thirteen, and fourteen.

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<sup>407</sup> In my original methodology, I had assumed we would treat the demographics of Great Falls in week eight and then the demographics of GFCC in week ten. Implementing the project using MissionInsite, however, convinced me that maintaining such a sharp distinction would not be helpful because of how that demographic data looked at both together. Additionally, reading Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, chapter 3, convinced me that a far better approach was to treat the demographics one layer at a time. Using this layered approach, I decided to focus on “pure demographics” in week 7, “Lifestyle Segments” in week eight, “psychographics” in week nine, and “heartburst affinities” in week ten. This structure meant I had to combine questions from the original week eight and week ten question guides to collect the data needed for the project.

After presenting the questions, I shifted the focus to demographics. I first explained the rationale I used to define our study area. After careful consideration, I designated as our study area the 5.5-mile radius around GFCC's building. Two considerations informed this decision. First, according to Bandy, an area's average commute time is an indicator of the average time people in the area's population are willing to drive to worship. According to the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, the average commute time is sixteen minutes in Great Falls. Using MissionInsite, I generated a sixteen-minute Travel Polygon from GFCC's address.<sup>408</sup> The second consideration was where GFCC's membership lives. Using MissionInsite, I "plotted" GFCC's members on the map. "Plotting" members places a green dot on the map at the address of every member. I then overlaid that member plot with the sixteen-minute Travel Polygon. The comparison indicated a significant overlap. Of GFCC's diverse membership, 84.79% live within the sixteen-minute travel Polygon, and the farthest point on that travel polygon from the GFCC building is approximately 5.5 miles. For this reason, I define the DT's study area as this 5.5-mile radius. All MissionInsite reports are based on this study area.

Next, I presented an overview of the demographics portion of our study.<sup>409</sup> In this meeting, we would focus on "pure demographics" using the materials distributed earlier in the meeting. In meeting eight, we would focus on "lifestyle segments" using Experian Mosaics and the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guides developed by Thomas G. Bandy. In meeting nine we would focus on "psychographics" using the 2021 American

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<sup>408</sup> A "travel polygon" is a tool MissionInsite uses to show every place in a designated study area that a person can reach within a set period of time by a designated method of travel.

<sup>409</sup> See note 384.

Beliefs Study. Finally, in meeting ten we would prayer walk in Great Falls to discern heartburst affinities.

We began our pure demographics study by reviewing the GFCC/Great Falls Demographic Comparison. This document contains information from MissionInsite about the population of Great Falls. To facilitate a comparison between the demographics of GFCC and Great Falls, I created a demographics report of GFCC using the same categories as the data points from MissionInsite. This document compares the numbers and percentages of GFCC's membership to Great Falls' population,<sup>410</sup> of both family and non-family households in both GFCC and Great Falls, of males and females in GFCC and Great Falls, of married to unmarried persons in GFCC and Great Falls, of the population with children at home and no children at home in GFCC and Great Falls, of households with children at home and without children at home in GFCC and Great Falls, and of the population in every age segment beginning at birth in both GFCC and Great Falls.<sup>411</sup> It also lists the average age of GFCC and Great Falls. Although most of these categories are the same as those used as criteria for DT formation, the data in the demographics comparison reflect slight differences from the GFCC demographics data used to select the DT because the demographic data used to select the DT considered only GFCC members who were eighteen or older, whereas the demographics comparison considered the entire church from birth and older.

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<sup>410</sup> Every category of this report includes both numbers and percentages. The GFCC numbers and percentages reflect the entire membership, along with children and grandchildren of members. It does not include guests or children of guests. The data points on Great Falls focus only on the numbers and percentages of the population within the 5.5-mile radius that is our study area.

<sup>411</sup> The age segments considered are Ages 0-4, Ages 5-17, Ages 18-24, Ages 25-34, Ages 35-54, Ages 55-64, and Ages 65 and older. The 5-17 age segment was further subdivided into Ages 5-9, Ages 10-14, and Ages 15-17.

After reviewing the GFCC/Great Falls Demographics Comparison, I guided the DT through The ExecutiveInsite Report from MissionInsite.<sup>412</sup> The ExecutiveInsite Report includes “Twelve Insites” about the demographics of a designated study area. For the DT’s purpose in meeting seven, we focused on Insites one through nine. Insite one describes population and household trends. It not only investigates the past, but it also projects trends both five and ten years into the future as almost all of the Insites do. I supplemented this section of the ExecutiveInsite report with additional content on population change in the last twelve months, housing units and occupancy, and a thumbnail guide to expected population change in the next ten years. Insite two describes racial and ethnic trends. I supplemented Insite two with the community diversity index as well as more detailed data on diversity and racial trends. Insite three describes age trends. I supplemented this material with a detailed age forecast that compared 2023 to 2028 projections. Insite four describes school-aged children’s trends. I supplemented this material with a thumbnail guide to expected change in this segment of the population. Insite five describes household and family income trends. I supplemented this material with data that describes poverty in Great Falls and the number of vehicles per household in Great Falls. Insite six describes household and children’s trends.<sup>413</sup> Insite seven describes marital status trends. I supplemented this material with three data sets

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<sup>412</sup> After selecting the study area, I printed and reviewed multiple demographics reports from MissionInsite, including the QuickInsite report, the ExecutiveInsite report, the ComparativeInsite report, and both the larger and smaller versions of both the Ministry Priorities and Religious Priorities reports. Additionally, I generated a custom report that included almost every demographic data point available through MissionInsite. After reviewing the reports, I concluded that the ExecutiveInsite report, presented most fully the data I thought would be most helpful to acquiring a big picture, “pure demographics” perspective of Great Falls. For this reason, I selected the ExecutiveInsite report as our main “pure demographics” report. I then supplemented it as I thought necessary with other demographic data from other demographic reports. The PowerPoint from meeting seven includes my supplementations to the ExecutiveInsite report.

<sup>413</sup> This report describes households that have children under the age of eighteen. It describes the number and percentage of these households with a married couple and with an unmarried householder.

that describe marital status trends. The first describes the female population age fifteen or older, the second the male population age fifteen or older, and the third the entire population age fifteen or older. Insite eight describes adult education trends. Finally, Insite nine describes the population by employment status. I supplemented this material with two data sets. The first describes the employment status of all adults aged sixteen or older. The second describes the various occupations and industries in Great Falls.

As we concluded this survey of the “pure demographics” data, I encouraged the DT to review this material again for greater understanding, especially since we had only overviewed it together. I encouraged them to do so in light of what had emerged in our first six meetings. Finally, I encouraged them to use the One-Text Google Doc to record their most significant insights.

#### DT Meeting 8 – November 14, 2023

In meeting eight of the DT, we focused on “lifestyle segments.” Prior to this meeting, I printed and assembled information packets for each DT member. This packet included the PowerPoint with lines for notes, Data sources for Mosaics USA by Experian<sup>414</sup>, a family tree of the seventy-one Mosaics segments, a chart that listed the nineteen Mosaic groups and seventy-one Mosaic segments by name,<sup>415</sup> the “Comparative Mosaic Segment Report” from MissionInsite’s ComparativeInsite report, a document I created called “GFCC Mosaics –

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<sup>414</sup> Mosaics USA is a demographic segmentation tool produced by Experian. It segments the US population into nineteen groups. Groups are labeled A-S and given a name (Group A is “Power Elite,” B is “Flourishing Families,” etc.). Within these nineteen groups, Mosaics USA further identifies seventy-one distinct population segments. These are numbered 01-71. Each of the seventy-one segments has an identifying group letter (A-S) and number (01-71). For example, B09, or S68. Each Mosaic segment (e.g., B09 or S68) also has a name. For example, B09 is “Family Fun-tastic” and S68 is “Small Town Sophisticates.” I accessed Mosaics USA through a subscription to MissionInsite.

<sup>415</sup> These last three resources were printed from the Mosaic USA E-Handbook, pages 3-6.

Lifestyle Compatibility,”<sup>416</sup> a document I created called “Target Mosaics: Growing Younger with Children,”<sup>417</sup> and finally a document I created called “The Target 10 Report.”<sup>418</sup> I distributed these packets to DT members as they arrived for the meeting.

The meeting began with a time in Scripture. We read and reflected upon Acts 16:7-10, where Paul has a vision in the night calling him to Macedonia. I pointed out to the DT that God used discernment to help Paul change directions in ministry. Seeing the face of the Macedonian man, Paul heard God’s call to go to Philippi. In the same way, the Mosaics material we would be discussing could help us see faces and discern future directions for

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<sup>416</sup> Each Mosaic type connects well with some types and poorly with others. In Tom Bandy’s Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide for each of the seventy-one segments, he identifies “Lifestyle Compatibility” for each group. These are the other segments with whom each segment best connects. In the “Lifestyle Compatibility” document I considered the household connections GFCC had with other segments within GFCC and with other segments in the community not represented in GFCC. This consideration allowed me to generate two different reports: GFCC’s actual reach and potential reach, both based on Mosaics lifestyle compatibility. For each report, I evaluated “household connections.” I define “Household Connections” as the number of other households of any segment plus the number of households in other compatible segments. For example, B09 represents three households within GFCC. But two other types, A04 (four households in GFCC) and D15 (one household in GFCC) are compatible with it. Accordingly, B09 has 8 “household connections.”

<sup>417</sup> This report describes the population the DT discerned as GFCC’s “Target 10” population. It includes data on ten Mosaic types that help GFCC grow younger. These include B08, B09, D15, F22, H29, M45, N46, O51, O54, and O55. For each type, I include the average age, the percentage of this type with children at home, the number of households in Great Falls represented by this type, the number of households this type represents in GFCC, an index comparing the population of this type in GFCC to Great Falls, information about the percentages of households GFCC has reached and not reached in this type, and the number of the population of Great Falls that falls in the unreached category. I also identify where each type ranks in Great Falls/GFCC in terms of households. Using this ranking system, I used a four-color system to identify priority. The darker the color, the higher the priority of the group in terms of unreached population.

<sup>418</sup> Thomas Bandy produced a “Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide” for each of the Mosaics segments. For each segment, this report describes “Religious Experience in a Nutshell,” basic characteristics that identify each segment in churches, other groups who might influence this type (this section includes Lifestyle Compatibility), and general comments to help readers get the “feel” of each type. Then, the guide distills insights from Mosaics USA to offer detailed guidance on each segment’s general preferences in terms of leadership, hospitality, worship, education, small groups, outreach, facilities, church finances, and church communications. Because each report is between five to seven pages of small font text, reading all ten reports for the GFCC “Target 10” Mosaics would have required approximately 65-70 pages of additional reading. For this reason, I read this material and distilled the insights into a five-page report with five major themes and several subthemes. The report listed (1) Themes related to promoting and helping them maintain balance in a busy lifestyle, (2) Themes related to family and children, (3) Themes related to outreach and community engagement, (4) Themes related to Sunday school, and (5) Themes about Small Groups.

GFCC. With this insight, we reminded ourselves of our purpose and the product we were seeking, and we reviewed our covenant together.

After preliminaries, I reminded the DT to consider the discussion questions in the Question Guide for weeks eight and ten. Specifically, we engaged questions six through ten from week eight and questions ten through fourteen from week ten. We then engaged these questions together for approximately fifteen minutes before I moved the meeting forward to reviewing the basic points about our study area and our meeting topics for weeks seven through ten.

Next, I introduced the DT to Mosaics USA by Experian, drawing their attention to the first three pages in their handout. I explained what Mosaics USA is, how it was compiled, and how it segments the population of the USA into nineteen groups and seventy-one segments. I also helped the DT understand the significance of Mosaics for our discernment purposes by explaining the “lifestyle compatibility” concept with a comparison to dominos.<sup>419</sup> Just as certain dominos can only connect to certain dominos, so it is with Mosaics. Not every segment connects best with every other segment. This reality means that understanding GFCC in terms of Mosaic segments allows us to understand not only whom we are currently reaching but whom we have the potential to reach based on whom we already have.<sup>420</sup> At this point I presented the numbers on Mosaics segments for both Great Falls and GFCC in order to raise a question: upon which segments should GFCC focus?

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<sup>419</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 67-68.

<sup>420</sup> A key assumption I employed through this meeting was that GFCC must take an asset-based rather than deficit-based approach to discernment and planning. In other words, we build with what we have rather than worrying about what we do not have. See Luther K. Snow, *Asset Mapping*, (Herndon, VA: Alban: 2004).



Having raised this question, I submitted a suggestion to the DT: that we focus our Mosaics segmentation study on segments that help GFCC grow younger.<sup>421</sup> One theme from week seven had been that the GFCC is a demographic mirror of Great Falls, and Great Falls as a city is continuing to grow older.<sup>422</sup> Along with this theme, we had also observed that GFCC was “top heavy” with a higher representation of the 65 and older age segment and a lower representation of the 18-24 and 25-34 age segments. Two additional factors suggested a focus on growing younger. First, part of my job description when the GFCC elders called me in December 2019 was to help GFCC grow younger. Second, in the midst of my consideration of which segments to focus on, I received an unsolicited text from one of GFCC’s elders reinforcing the theme of growing younger. Based on the discernment principle of “synchronicity,” I perceived this text as a confirmation.<sup>423</sup> When I presented all of this to the DT, three different members voiced support. D3 agreed with the idea of growing younger. D11 voiced strong support, sharing a story which illustrated her point that if we grow younger, we will also reach the older.<sup>424</sup> D7 spoke up last and emphasized the idea that GFCC’s ministry should be about “breaking cycles.” She stated that it is “much easier to break cycles with young people rather than fix a broken adult.” Although these were

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<sup>421</sup> I ensured that the DT understood that this suggestion about focusing on growing younger segments was a true suggestion. Had it met with great resistance by the DT, I would have changed direction.

<sup>422</sup> Our study from week seven revealed that the average age of Great Falls was 41 and the average age of GFCC was 41.5.

<sup>423</sup> Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2008), 66, discusses synchronicity as a discernment principle. Based on my field notes, I was considering which Mosaic segments to focus on between Saturday, October 28, 2023 and Tuesday, October 31, 2023. I identified the “Target 10” population on Monday, October 29, 2023. But at the same time, I had felt a good bit of desolation at the possibility that I might be trying to “play God” by limiting focus to one group over another. The text from the elder came in early Wednesday, November 1, 2023, and said, “I was just thinking about our vision and I believe we just need to continue the idea of building younger.” I never experienced desolation about the “Target 10” after this text.

<sup>424</sup> D11 also reinforced this theme later in this meeting as well as in subsequent DT meetings.

the only three participants that vocalized support, there was no resistance, verbal or nonverbal, from any other member of the DT who was present.<sup>425</sup>

Since the DT supported the idea of focusing on the Mosaic segments that helped GFCC grow younger, I proceeded to share the demographic information pertinent to this goal using “GFCC Mosaics – Lifestyle Compatibility,” a document I had distributed at the beginning of the meeting. I identified the thirty-nine Mosaic segments in Great Falls that would help GFCC grow younger, the ten Mosaic segments that help GFCC grow younger who are currently represented in GFCC, and the additional thirteen Mosaic segments that help GFCC grow younger who are not represented by GFCC but whom GFCC has the potential to reach. Presenting all of this Mosaic data, I invited the team to consider an asset-based approach to this material, focusing on whom GFCC has and how we can work with these people assets for the future growth of GFCC.

Next, I presented more detailed information about the “Target 10” population using the “Target Mosaics: Growing Younger with Children” document I had distributed at the beginning of the meeting. I shared with the team that the population in Great Falls that falls within our “Target 10” population target is 99% unreached by GFCC and represents almost 9,000 unreached households in Great Falls.<sup>426</sup> Currently, GFCC is reaching only twenty-seven of the 8,973 households in Great Falls that represent our “Target 10” population.

With this data in mind, the DT next considered how GFCC might reach the “Target 10” population of Great Falls. To help us consider this question, we used the “Target 10

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<sup>425</sup> D9, who was not present for this meeting but rather listened later, pointed out later that she initially had reservations about the idea of focusing on the younger. But she had since embraced the idea. See One-Text, 11.

<sup>426</sup> By “unreached,” I am speaking solely in terms of GFCC. By “unreached” I mean that these persons are neither members nor regular guests of GFCC. I do not intend to imply any judgment on the nature of the “reach” of any other classically Christian congregations in Great Falls.

Report,” which synthesized Bandy’s “Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide” for each of the ten segments in our “Target 10” population. This report identified seven segments as “similar” to GFCC, two segments as “dissimilar” to GFCC, and one segment as a combination of similarities and differences.<sup>427</sup> It also identified five major themes pertinent to reaching the “Target 10” population. As I guided the DT through the report, D3 asked a question in reference to theme one. He asked, “What does that look like, trying to provide a ‘portable spiritual life’?” Engaging that question opened up what proved to be one of the most significant, energetic conversations the DT had in reference to missional implications.<sup>428</sup> Almost every major missional implication in the final report appeared *in nuce* in this discussion.

As the meeting began to wind down, I invited the DT to review the material, especially the “Target 10” Report. I invited them to use the discussion questions to capture their most significant insights in the One-Text Google Docs file. I also notified them that the Focus Group with the GFCC leadership would be on December 16 and any DT members who wished to be present were invited to show up so they could share their perspective on the DT’s work with the GFCC leadership directly.

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<sup>427</sup> This is a subjective observation based upon careful reading of the Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide” for each of the ten types. Reading each guide, you can really get a feel for each group. This description of similarity vs. difference is based on my subjective perception of the culture of GFCC in comparison to the “feel” of each Mosaic segment. It was intended only as a reference point for the team, not a hard and fast rule. Even so, I serendipitously discovered a startling confirmation of this assessment in the Lifestyle Compatibility document. Based on household connections, the three groups that are either dissimilar (O51 and O54) or a combination of similarities and differences (N46) only connect with their own type and no other types. Based on this observation, I classified them as “vulnerable” populations. The other seven types whom I classified as “similar” to GFCC all have significantly more connections with other segments in GFCC than with their own segment.

<sup>428</sup> I reserve further comment for the discussion of findings and results.

After I concluded this DT meeting, D8 and D12 sought additional clarification regarding the Mosaics data. They wished to know how it was able to generate such a detailed view of the population, especially the population within GFCC. The tone was cordial but mildly concerned. As I explored their question, it became apparent that they were asking a question about privacy. In response, I explained that the Mosaics segmentation was generated about the population in general using the data sources we had mentioned in the beginning of the meeting. It had no specific references to GFCC members. Rather, based on the trends from the population at large, it was able to isolate population segments. I explained to them that MissionInsite disclosed only the numbers and percentages of the Mosaic segmentation distribution in GFCC based on the addresses I plotted. But I was not able to identify individual members as this segment or that segment or know exact information about any single member. This reassurance put them at ease, and the topic never again arose.

When we finished the discussion about privacy and Mosaics, I uploaded the recording and PowerPoint into the Dropbox file.

#### DT Meeting 9 – November 21, 2023

Meeting nine of the DT focused on “psychographics.” Prior to the meeting, I assembled packets for DT members. This packet included the PowerPoint for meeting nine with lines for notes, a photocopy of a chart from p. 136 of Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw’s book *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community*, an explanation of the ratios for the American Beliefs Study<sup>429</sup>, “The ReligiousInsite Report

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<sup>429</sup> Every MissionInsite report that draws on the American Beliefs Study uses a ratio system to compare “agree” responses (“Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat agree”) and “disagree” responses (“Strongly Disagree” and “Somewhat Disagree”). It does not consider neutral responses. Based on this comparison, a score of 1.0 indicates that there was an even distribution of “agree” and “disagree” responses. On the other hand, a ratio of 2.0 indicates that twice as many “agreed” as “disagreed.” In general, then, the larger the number (especially if it is 1.3 or greater), the stronger the concern for the topic in question. The smaller the number

2021,” and “The MinistryInsite Report 2021.”<sup>430</sup> I distributed this material as the DT arrived. Before the meeting began, I also asked the team about their interest in celebrating together with our families after the DT work was complete. They embraced the idea enthusiastically, and we agreed to work out details at a later time.

We began with Mark 6:30-37a. After reading through the text, we reflected together on Jesus’ response to the crowds. Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion, he heard God’s call to feed sheep as the “good Shepherd” (cf. Ezek. 34:5, 8, 11-16), and therefore he acted to bless. In contrast, the disciples asked Jesus to “send them away” (Mark 6:36a, ESV). I suggested that perhaps one reason they asked Jesus to send the crowds away was because they did not have the same experience of call because they did not feel the same compassion because they did not see the crowd the same way Jesus did. Applying this insight to our work, I told the DT that we would be hearing from a number of “hungry” people tonight, and Jesus’ call is “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37a, ESV). I invited the DT to see the demographics data we would review in this meeting through the eyes of Jesus’ compassion as the good shepherd. After this invitation, we prayed.

After the devotional and prayer, we engaged our preliminaries. We reminded ourselves of our purpose. As we discussed the product, I invited them to retrieve the copy of p. 136 from *The Externally Focused Church*. I used Swanson and Rusaw’s Venn diagram to help the DT think through the DT’s product (five-to-seven ideas of how GFCC might best

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(especially if it is less than 1.0), the weaker the concern for the topic in question. I included this explanation in the team materials because it is not immediately obvious how to read it.

<sup>430</sup> MissionInsite offers two versions of the last two reports that present the findings of the American Beliefs Study. The smaller, more concise reports include the word “priority” in the title before the word report. I chose to use the fuller reports for the sake of those DT members who preferred the detail, especially since the fuller report included the “priority” pages. For those DT members who preferred less detail, I pointed out the “priority” pages in the PowerPoint, so they did not get overwhelmed by detail.

missionally engage Great Falls). Swanson and Rusaw identify three categories of ministry that I wanted the DT to consider: opportunities to develop new ministries, opportunities to collaborate with others, and opportunities to support the servants doing other good works. Finally, we reviewed our covenant. D5 suggested an edit with unanimous approval: “We will joke when it is appropriate. And we will have fun.”<sup>431</sup>

After the preliminaries, I asked the DT to retrieve the “Target 10” Report from week eight’s meeting along with the questions we had used for that meeting.<sup>432</sup> DT members took a few minutes to review the report. Then we spent several minutes discussing points that were significant to DT members. The tenor of that conversation suggested strong support for the main ideas outlined in the “Target 10” report. In fact, not one note of dissent was voiced. Rather, the comments from DT members mostly expressed how much the ideas of the “Target 10” report had resonated with them. Noticing this resonance, I concluded the discussion time with a reminder that reaching the “Target 10” who help GFCC grow younger would also help GFCC reach older populations within GFCC.<sup>433</sup>

Next, I introduced the DT to the main tool for our “psychographics” study: the American Beliefs Study (ABS). I presented a background/genealogy on the study, its frequency (every four years), the particular time period during which the 2021 ABS was conducted (October 2020 to February 2021), the research firm who conducted the surveys upon which the 2021 ABS is based (Campbell-Rinker), the pool from which the study population was selected (more than 2 million Americans), the population studied (14,942

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<sup>431</sup> In fact, laughter was no stranger to any of our meetings. But at last, we made it official.

<sup>432</sup> Questions six through ten from week eight and questions ten through fourteen from week ten

<sup>433</sup> The way the “Target 10” resonated with the DT was confirmation of this truth. Only four DT members (D1, D2, D6, and D7) fell within the “Target 10.” But the report, which sketched ways to reach them, resonated greatly with the other eight DT members.

Americans), the population criteria (balanced representation of Mosaic segments and groups), the core assumptions of the study,<sup>434</sup> and the margin of error for the study.<sup>435</sup> As detailed and reliable as the 2021 ABS appears to be, I emphasized to the DT that this material does not take the place of having actual conversations with local people in order to nuance its findings. Even so, the 2021 ABS does identify helpful directions for a church within a given population.

Following this introduction, I guided the team through “The ReligiousInsite Report.” One thing I emphasized as we began was that this psychographic data involves not only our “Target 10,” but also the entire population of our 5.5-mile radius study area. We first reviewed pages 20-30, which discuss “Religious Preferences” and “Involvement.” On p. 20, I highlighted the strong preference in our study area for “classically” Christian traditions, which was the religious preference of 71.8% of the population.<sup>436</sup> Of all the classically Christian preferences, the groups that are growing fastest in Great Falls are the independent, non-denominational churches, which was encouraging to the team since this is a good description of GFCC. Despite the high preference for classical Christianity, the number of

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<sup>434</sup> According to p. 6 of MissionInsite’s “The American Beliefs Study Methodology” document, “a core concept of our study methodology is that human beliefs, preferences and practices correlate to particular demographic profiles. For this reason, survey respondents were coded to the 19 Mosaic clusters.” This “core concept” makes the ABS unique among psychographic studies. Because the 2021 ABS is based on the Mosaic clusters (groups), knowing the Mosaic clusters (groups) for any given study area allows the 2021 ABS material to be customized to reflect local populations.

<sup>435</sup> According to p. 10 of “The American Beliefs Study Methodology,” “The maximum margin of error of this study  $\pm 1.97\%$  at the 95% confidence level within any US Census region. The study carries a maximum margin of error of  $\pm 5.0\%$  at the 95% confidence level within any Mosaic cluster.”

<sup>436</sup> The 71.8% is my conflation of the percentages for the traditions that I considered “classical” Christianity. In this category, I included Adventist, Anabaptist/Mennonite, Baptist, Catholic, Congregational, Episcopalian/Anglican, Holiness, Lutheran, Methodist, Non-denominational/Independent, Orthodox Christian, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and Presbyterian/Reformed. In the “Religious, non-Christian” category I included non-Christian religious traditions as well as non-classical Christian traditions (e.g., Baha’i, Buddhism, Hindu, Jehovah’s Witness, Judaism, Mormon/Latter Day Saints, Muslim/Islam, Native American, New Age, and Unitarian/Universalist). The final category I conflated was “Nones” and “Spiritual, Not Religious.”

those involved in a religious community in Great Falls contrasts sharply with the expressed preferences. Although 71.8% of Great Falls identify classical Christianity as their religious preference, only 38.8% of Great Falls is involved in any religious community. This disparity suggests that there are many in Great Falls who likely hold similar views and beliefs as GFCC but are not engaged in any religious community. If the population for our study area is 68,798, then this means that more than 19,000 in Great Falls may fit this description.<sup>437</sup> With this recognition, I encouraged the team with John 4:35b-38: the fields of Great Falls are “white for harvest” (ESV).

Building on this encouragement, we next considered how GFCC might reach this population. I reminded the DT of our discussion from meeting five about “good works,” when we discussed finding points where the church and the world define “good” in similar ways. Based on this reminder, we directed attention to pages 10-19 of “The ReligiousInsite Report,” which focuses on “Beliefs about Social and Moral Values.” I reminded the team that the findings in this section reflected the views of not only GFCC, but also Great Falls. To facilitate easy communication, I asked the DT to label the lines on pages 10-14 with letters A through Y. For pages 15-17, I asked them to label the lines with letters A through Y skipping the letter N.<sup>438</sup> Based on this labeling, the DT observed that letters D, G, J, L, N, T, W, and W on pages 10-17 reflected remarkable convergence with themes from the “Target 10 Report.” This observation confirmed a principle that had been voiced repeatedly in the previous two meetings: if GFCC reaches the “Target 10,” it will also reach other populations.

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<sup>437</sup> This figure is an informed guess. 38.8% of 68,798 is 26,694. If we could assume that the religious preference of this 26,694 is approximately the same as the 42,104 who are a part of a religious community, then that means we could expect 71.8% of the 26,694 to prefer classical Christianity. 71.8% of 26,694 is 19,166.

<sup>438</sup> Pages 15-17 compared the findings from the 2017 and 2021 ABS. But the particular finding labeled “N” in pages 10-14 was not a question asked in the 2017 ABS. Therefore, “N” was omitted in these pages.



Having identified overlapping values, we turned to “The MinistryInsite Report 2021.” As a courtesy to DT members who preferred less detail, I highlighted the priority pages with the less detailed summary reports (pp. 11, 16, 21, 24-25). Then, we directed our attention to the “Life Concerns” section of the report (pages 2-11), especially the summary report on page 11. On that page, which listed fifteen number life concerns in order of importance, I directed the DT’s attention to numbers two, four, six, eight, eleven, and twelve. These points touched on themes that had surfaced in previous weeks.

Next, we moved to “Reasons for Non-participation—Those Outside of a Religious Congregation or Community” (pages 12-16) and “Reasons to Consider Non-participation—Those Inside a Religious Congregation or Community” (pages 17-21). In both sections, we focused on the “Personal Life” reasons.<sup>439</sup> The reasons in this section offered much additional confirmation of some of the themes from the “Target 10” Report.

Finally, we concluded our psychographics study by reviewing pages 22-25 of “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” the “Program and Ministry Preferences” section. To facilitate easier communication, I asked the DT to number these preferences (on pages 22-23) from one to thirty-two. Having numbered the document, I directed the DT to pay attention to numbers four, eight, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-two. These were areas where there was significant overlap between the general ministry/program preferences of Great Falls and the “Target 10” Report. Once again, this overlap was confirmation that reaching the “Target 10” will simultaneously allow GFCC to reach into a larger population within Great Falls. I also reflected to the DT that, based on this report, GFCC need feel no pressure to be anything

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<sup>439</sup> The reason for this focus was that, comparing the 2017 and 2021 ABS, the personal life reasons were the only ones that had remained consistent. Almost every reason both outsiders and insiders might consider for non-participation diminished between 2017 and 2021 except for those in the personal life category.

other than who it is as a fairly conservative, middle-of-the-road, independent, non-denominational church. GFCC can be who it is and still reach neighbors in Great Falls.<sup>440</sup>

As we prepared to dismiss, I encouraged the DT to review this material along with the “Target 10” Report for homework. I encouraged them to feel no pressure to memorize anything, since I assumed that if something was important, the Spirit would remind us of it at the appropriate time.<sup>441</sup> After we concluded in prayer, I asked the DT, “Are you seeing the connection between what we did in weeks one through six and what we’re doing now?” They affirmed that they were seeing the connection. After the meeting, I uploaded the recording, PowerPoint, and other meeting documents into the Dropbox.

#### DT Meetings 10-11 (and Prayer Walk) – November 28, 2023

The purpose of meetings ten-eleven<sup>442</sup> was to review the material from meeting nine and to prepare the DT for its prayer walk. Prior to this meeting, I printed and assembled packets of the material for the meeting. That packet included the PowerPoint for meetings ten-eleven with lines for notetaking, the Question Guide “Processing the Prayer Walk/Drive Together,” “Discerning the Missional Implications of our Context: Top 5-7 Implications,”<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> I pointed out this insight to the DT because when we spoke about “good works” in meeting five, multiple team members used the language of “paradigm shift.” Given that they were expecting GFCC to undergo a major change, I wanted to allay some of the potential fears by pointing out what need not change.

<sup>441</sup> I shared this guidance based on John 14:26, when Jesus shared that the Holy Spirit would remind his disciples of his teachings. My application of this verse to this situation is based on my experience as a disciple of Jesus. See also notes 450-51.

<sup>442</sup> Originally, we planned twelve meetings together. But, anticipating the necessity of more preparation time, we cancelled the October 17 meeting and combined meetings ten and eleven into one evening.

<sup>443</sup> To help the team deliver its product of 5-7 clear ideas about how to missionally engage Great Falls, I drafted a detailed outline of five key themes (with subthemes) from our DT meetings. I drafted this document after reviewing pages 1-94 of my field notes, which covered everything the team had studied together in the first nine weeks, along with any files we had reviewed together. My intent was to give this document to the team and invite them to reflect on it before our final meeting when we would attempt to pull together the top 5-7 implications from our work together.

a journal for the prayer walk, and a document providing demographic information on the other sixteen Mosaic segments in GFCC,<sup>444</sup> and a document titled “Outreach Preferences.”<sup>445</sup> After distributing this packet to each DT member as they arrived, we prayed together and then reviewed our purpose, product, and covenant together.

Following preliminaries, I invited the DT to spend some time reviewing the ABS material from meeting nine. We took approximately twelve minutes in review. Following this quiet review time, we returned to the same questions we had used in meetings eight and nine. A lengthy discussion followed in which DT members shared their observations and processed these together in discussion. This discussion surfaced almost every major missional implication that made it into our final report.<sup>446</sup>

When we finished discussing the ABS material from week nine, I directed the DT’s attention to the document on “the 16+,” the sixteen Mosaic segments in GFCC not discussed in the “Target 10” report. Reviewing this document, I highlighted A04. Although A04 does not fall within the “Target 10,” the percentage of this segment who have children at home (90.6) was notable.<sup>447</sup> Having read the “Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide” for A04, I pointed out to the DT that the only significant difference between them and the “Target 10”

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<sup>444</sup> After meeting nine, I became curious about the other sixteen Mosaic groups in GFCC (which we called “The 16+”). Apart from the fact that this report included “The 16+,” this document was identical to the document used in meeting eight titled “Target Mosaics: Growing Younger with Children.” See note 417.

<sup>445</sup> This document collects in one place the data on “Outreach Preferences” described in the “Mission Impact Mosaic Applications Guide” for all twenty-six Mosaics segments represented in GFCC. It breaks down “Outreach” into seven categories and identifies areas where each segment has a “personal need.” It also identifies where each segment is “ready to volunteer.”

<sup>446</sup> Because the content of this discussion is reflected there, I will not unpack it here. See chapter five.

<sup>447</sup> By comparison, none of the other fifteen segments had a percentage of more than 25.48 with children at home. So, although the average age of A04 is 46-50, this statistic was significant.

type is A04's insistence on high quality ministries, which was not so highly valued by the "Target 10."

Next, we reviewed the "Outreach Preferences" document. I explained the seven categories of outreach to the team (basic survival, health and wellness, quality of life, addiction intervention, interpersonal relationships, human potential, and salvation and human destiny). I also pointed out the distinction in "personal need" categories and "ready to volunteer" categories. As DT members observed which of the twenty-six segments in GFCC fall in each category, I voiced my observation that there was significant overlap in both the "personal need" and "ready to volunteer" categories for both the "Target 10" and the "16 +." This overlap was further confirmation that, by reaching the "Target 10," we can also reach the "16 +" within GFCC. Growing younger would not alienate the older members of GFCC.

I then directed the DT to the "Discerning the Missional Implications of our Context: Top 5-7 Implications" page. I explained to the DT that I was attempting to make their lives easier by drafting this document of what I perceived to have been our most significant implications based on my review of field notes and meeting materials. I asked the DT whether they would prefer to discuss this document during the meeting or wait until meeting twelve. They unanimously opted to wait until meeting twelve. For that reason, I asked them to review it before meeting twelve. I also assured the DT that everything about this document was editable and subject to their input so that, when finished, it would reflect the voice of the team and not merely my own voice.

Finally, I led the DT in an orientation for the prayer walk. Prayer walking is "praying on site with insight," and it generates various kinds of insights: researched, responsive, and

revealed.<sup>448</sup> We then read Num. 13:1-26 together. Reflecting, we drew several analogies and applications from that text to our upcoming prayer walk. First, prayer walking is an attempt to explore what God is doing and intends to do in an area. Second, it is a way to get a glimpse of the future into which God is leading his people as he changes the seasons. Third, prayer walking is our opportunity to see challenges in light of God. Accordingly, it includes both the good and the bad of the area we explore in the report. But it sees the bad in light of God and God's promises. Fourth, prayer walking shows us where God is inviting our partnership in his unfolding mission.

With these principles in the background, we then shifted the discussion to the logistics of prayer walking. Although I had originally expected DT members to prayer walk individually, Hawthorne and Kendrick repeatedly encouraged pairs or triplets. I invited the DT to share their preference. Overwhelmingly they preferred teams. On the spot, we formed four prayer walking teams. Team one consisted of D8, D7, and D12; team two consisted of D5, D11, and D2; team three consisted of D3 and D4; and team four consisted of D9, D6, and D10. With teams formed, I gave the teams three instructions about where to prayer walk. First, they should start in one of Great Falls' overlooks, which would allow for a panoramic view of the city. Second, with the "Target 10" Mosaic segments in view, teams should "go where they are." We quickly generated a lengthy list of potential places where the "Target 10" might be. Within this broad framework, I left it to the discernment of each team to determine specifically where they would go for the central portion of the prayer walk. Third,

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<sup>448</sup> Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, *Prayer-walking: Praying On Site with Insight* (Orlando: Creation House, 1993), 12, 15, 18-20. All of the material I presented to the team on prayer walk draws on insights gleaned from Hawthorne and Kendrick.

they should conclude their prayer walk at the GFCC campus. I specifically encouraged them to prayer walk through the auditorium and the rooms where GFCC's leadership usually met.

Along with helping teams work out logistics, I shared several points of encouragement to help with the practicalities of prayer walking. I especially encouraged the DT to review the Discernment Guide before their prayer walk. Then, as they went, they were to use the journal distributed at the beginning of meetings ten-eleven to capture their most significant impressions.<sup>449</sup> I encouraged the team to "Expect [God] to highlight the truths you have hidden in your heart and apply them to what is around you."<sup>450</sup> I also encouraged them to "trust that God will illuminate whatever the team truly needs to see."<sup>451</sup> Finally, I reminded them of the agreed-upon logistics in their signed Informed Consent Form from the beginning of our work together, specifying to their great amusement the risks involved as well as the opportunity for reimbursement of their expenses.

As we wrapped up, I reminded the DT that December 5, the following Tuesday, would be our last DT meeting. Therefore, they should have completed their prayer walk prior to that date. I encouraged DT members to continue revising the One-Text Google Doc. I asked them to review the "Discerning the Missional Implications of Our Context: Top 5-7 Implications" document in preparation for the final meeting. Finally, I reminded them about the Focus Group on December 16, which they were welcome (but not required) to attend. D5 then led the DT in the song "Lead me to some soul today," and we dismissed in prayer.

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<sup>449</sup> Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 391, defines "impressions" as "thoughts, feelings, and such that may or may not be indications of God's presence or guidance."

<sup>450</sup> Hawthorne and Kendrick, *Prayer-walking*, 32.

<sup>451</sup> Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2003), 129.

After the prayer, the four prayer walking teams worked together to determine when they would prayer walk. Team one planned their prayer walk for Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. Team two planned their prayer walk for Saturday, December 2, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. Team three planned their prayer walk for Saturday, December 2, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. Finally, team four planned their prayer walk for Sunday, December 3, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. All prayer walks happened as planned.

Once we had completed the arrangements for prayer walking teams, I saved and uploaded the recording. I also uploaded all the files from meetings ten-eleven.

#### DT Meeting 12 – December 5, 2023

In the final meeting of the DT, I did not provide any additional resources since any materials we might consult had already been distributed in previous meetings. As the meeting began, we first prayed together and then engaged in our normal preliminaries, reviewing our purpose, our product, and our covenant. Then, I encouraged the DT to retrieve the “Processing the Prayer Walk/Drive Together” question guide.

The first main task of meeting twelve was debriefing the four prayer walks the four prayer walking teams had completed in the previous week.<sup>452</sup> Each team was invited to share about their prayer walk. I specifically invited them to describe where their prayer walks took them. Team one (D8, D7, and D11) shared first, followed by team two (D5, D11, and D2), team three (D3 and D4), and team four (D9, D6, and D10).<sup>453</sup> Although each team began and ended in similar places, in the middle part of the prayer walk the DT covered most of the 5.5-mile radius study area, and they did so across most of the major times of the day. Teams one

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<sup>452</sup> Since the conclusions from the prayer walk will be reflected in the next chapter, I will not repeat them here.

<sup>453</sup> Full details about where the four teams prayer walked are recorded in my field notes, pp. 112-13.

and two prayer walked in the mornings, team four in the afternoon, and team three in the evening.

After each team had related where they prayer walked, I invited the DT to share reflections in response to questions one and three through ten.<sup>454</sup> Confining my observations to the strictly methodological, this discussion revealed how significant the prayer walk was as a part of the methodology of this project. Multiple members of the DT (D3, D11, D5, and D4) identified this experience as convicting. The nonverbal behavior (heads nodding, for example) of other team members suggests even more may have felt the same way. D3 perhaps best expressed the “convicting” aspects of the prayer walk:

I never actually 100% focused on God. [The prayer walk] really opened my mind a lot more. It really allowed me to take a gut punch. [[Choking up]]... and just realize what I have been doing and how much more I need to be doing... I feel like I am just glancing the surface of where I need to be. And I just need to punch through and do more. It was just really enlightening and really getting the focus was powerful.

Expressing slightly different thoughts, D5 connected his conviction to the fact that “the areas where we went were areas where I normally don’t go or think about. I don’t care about yet. Or I haven’t.” He proceeded to imply that the prayer walk had been a routine-breaking experience, which opened his eyes to missional opportunities he normally misses. These same thoughts were echoed by D4. In sum, the discussion identified the prayer walk as especially valuable in breaking routines, in awakening compassion, and in generating awareness of previously missed opportunities.

After debriefing the prayer walk, I directed the DT’s attention to the first draft, detailed outline “Discerning the missional implications of our context: Top 5-7 Implications.” Slightly adapting question fourteen from the week ten question guide, I

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<sup>454</sup> I omitted question two because, in meeting eight we had essentially identified our “neighbor.”



centered our discussion of the top five-to-seven implications with this question: “In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and the prayer walk/drive, what do you see as the [5-7] most significant implications for the future mission of GFCC?” Then, I simply facilitated the discussion as different DT members shared their insights. Although the question was broad enough to allow for many inputs, after a while of hearing from the DT, I directed attention to the drafted five-to-seven implications document in hopes of pulling together the diverse themes that had emerged. I invited the DT to look through the outline, add anything they felt was missing, take away anything they felt should not be there, or edit something that did not reflect their understanding. Although D11 and D10 both reflected to the DT one theme they felt did not appear clearly enough in this document, most of the discussion reinforced what was already there or nuanced it with further definition.<sup>455</sup> Since this material will be presented in the next chapter, I will not duplicate that content here.

As we concluded, I encouraged the DT to make any final alterations to the One-Text Google Doc by December 12, 2023. I also reminded the DT of the focus group with GFCC leadership on December 16, 2023, and invited the DT to attend if they so desired. I once again invited their input on what to share with the GFCC leadership. Finally, I distributed part one of the Post-Study Questionnaire. I explained that I would give them part two of the Questionnaire once they had completed part one. I set a soft deadline for Post-Study Questionnaire completion for December 19, 2023. Finally, I reminded the DT of our celebration the following Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. I shared with the DT

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<sup>455</sup> They spoke up, encouraging me to add a sixth implication about the need to continue growing inward as well as outward. I complied with their request.

that we would conclude our time together with a period of blessing and by allowing each DT member to share his or her top takeaways from the entire process.

After the meeting ended, I uploaded into the Dropbox the recording and the PowerPoint for meeting twelve. I had neither used nor distributed this PowerPoint, since it referenced material they already had. Nevertheless, I wanted them to have it for reference should they want it.

#### DT Celebration – December 12, 2023

The DT met for a celebration on December 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the GFCC fellowship hall.<sup>456</sup> All DT members were invited to attend with their spouse/partner and children.<sup>457</sup> The only DT member who was unable to attend was D9. D11 worked with my wife, Hannah, to plan the celebration and decorate the fellowship hall. DT members were invited to bring a dish. Most of the first hour was spent eating and enjoying each other's company. When it was clear that everyone was moving to dessert, however, I got everyone's attention, started our recording, and invited the DT to share what impacted them most about our work together. Next, because they had asked, I updated them on the plan for the focus group with GFCC leadership on Saturday, December 16, 2023. Then, we spent the remainder of our time together in a period of blessing. Almost every DT member shared a blessing with someone else on the DT. One member, D8, had prepared a blessing for every single member of the DT. Multiple members blessed D9, who had been unable to attend.<sup>458</sup> Several team

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<sup>456</sup> Although this celebration was technically not part of our work together, I include a description of it because the discussion offered so many confirmations cited in the following chapter.

<sup>457</sup> Because the Informed Consent had ensured confidentiality, I did not push the DT to open the celebration up to spouses. Having spouses present was our unanimous desire.

<sup>458</sup> D9 later listened to the recording and expressed her gratitude that we had recorded audio of the celebration.

members also expressed appreciation to the spouses of DT members. When everyone had spoken the blessings they had prepared, D5 led us in the song “Lead me to some soul today,” and then we dismissed with Paul’s prayer from Eph. 3:20-21.

Following this celebration, I contacted D7 and asked her to close the One-Text Google Doc. When she had done so, I requested that she send me a PDF of the final version. I also uploaded the recording of the DT celebration to Dropbox.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

Following completion of the project with the DT, I began the process of evaluating the project. This project had to satisfy two criteria to be successful. First, it had to accomplish its purpose of discerning the missional implications of Great Falls for GFCC by delivering five-to-seven of the most significant missional implications of context for GFCC. Second, these implications had to be confirmed with support from three angles or perspectives—the researcher perspective, the insider perspective (represented by the DT), and the outsider perspective (represented by the GFCC leadership).<sup>459</sup>

Assessing satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the first criterion was simple: Did the DT generate a report of the most significant five-to-seven missional implications discerned in its work together? If it did, then it satisfied this criterion. If it did not deliver this report, then it did not satisfy this criterion.

Assessing satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the second criterion was a bit more complex as it involved multiple angles or perspectives. First, to assess the researcher’s perspective, I relied upon my researcher observations collected throughout the project in my

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<sup>459</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 195, 197-98.

field notes. These field notes collected observations as well as my personal discernment insights throughout the project and the project's evaluation.

Second, to assess the insider perspective, that of the DT, I employed two different angles. I first used a Pre- and Post-Study Questionnaire. The Pre-Study Questionnaire and part one of the Post-Study Questionnaire were identical and had to be completed before DT members could complete part two of the Post-Study Questionnaire. Both assessed the DT's current understanding of the mission of God and of opportunities for GFCC to advance that mission in the context of Great Falls.<sup>460</sup> By asking DT members to complete these questionnaires both before and after completion of the DT's work together, I facilitated the possibility of comparing where the DT began and where it ended.<sup>461</sup> Part two of the Post-Study Questionnaire invited DT members to compare their own responses to the four questions in both the Pre- and Post-Study (part one) Questionnaires. DT members used a 0-to-10 scale to evaluate themselves by comparing their two sets of responses.<sup>462</sup> This scale allowed me to quantify the impact of the project upon the DT. I logged individual DT members' responses in a spreadsheet, noting the difference in the numerical responses to

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<sup>460</sup> I assessed awareness of the mission of God with two open-ended questions. (1) What is your current understanding of the mission of God? (2) What sort of relationship with our community does the mission of God invite the Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC) to cultivate? I also assess the opportunities for mission in context with two questions. (1) Based on your current understanding of Great Falls, who is GFCC's "neighbor"? (2) Based on your current understanding of the mission of God, how might GFCC advance that mission on the west side of Great Falls?

<sup>461</sup> This comparison between Pre-Study and Post-Study (part one) questionnaires became a part of my field notes. See pp. 154-66. As the researcher, I was able to evaluate DT responses against the control of the material presented in the DT's twelve meetings. Therefore, although these two pieces of the questionnaire were completed by the DT, they facilitated evaluation from the researcher perspective.

<sup>462</sup> The scale was as follows: I had an almost complete understanding (10); I understood more than I misunderstood (7.5); I understood about as much as I misunderstood (5); I misunderstood more than I understood (2.5); I had almost no understanding (0).

questions seven/eight and nine/ten of the Post-Study Questionnaire (part two).<sup>463</sup> I also noted the DT's collective average to each question and noted the difference in the averages of questions seven/eight and nine/ten.<sup>464</sup> These differences and averages gave me one angle of insight into the effectiveness of the project from the insider perspective of the DT.

In addition to Questionnaires, I also evaluated the insider perspective by means of DT engagement and responses to the content throughout the project. I accessed their responses in two ways. The first means of access was meeting recordings (audio) and my field notes. After each DT meeting, I reviewed the audio recording and noted enough detail to narrate discussions of DT engagement, and I transcribed significant quotes verbatim. The second means of access involved the One-Text Google Doc facilitated by D7. This document was created after meeting two and remained open for DT input throughout DT meetings, including the team celebration. It closed on December 13, 2023, and I accessed a PDF copy of the final version on December 14, 2023. The final version of the One-Text was an eleven-page, single-spaced document capturing DT members' most significant insights through the project. These insights were prompted by means of the Question Guides distributed throughout the course of the DT meetings.

Third, to assess the outsider perspective, I conducted two focus groups with the GFCC leadership. I intended to conduct only one, three-hour focus group on December 16,

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<sup>463</sup> Questions seven and eight compared the DT member's understanding of the mission of God before the study (question seven) and after the study (question eight). Questions nine and ten compared the DT member's understanding of how GFCC might advance the mission of God in Great Falls before the study (question nine) and after the study (question ten).

<sup>464</sup> I measured averages in two different ways. In one measurement, I included my own responses to the questionnaires in the team average. In another measurement, I did not include my own responses. Because I had done so much research preparing the project before it began, I hypothesized that including my responses might not show a completely accurate picture. Because D1 dropped out, these numbers were averaged without his responses (which I never got from him).

2023. I planned three “blocks” for this group. Block one would take one hour to focus on content presented of DT meetings one through six. It would orient the GFCC leadership to the problem and purpose of the project and provide an overview of the DT’s most significant insights on discernment and the mission of God. Block two would take one hour to cover the content of DT meetings seven through twelve. It would summarize the DT’s most significant insights from its study of pure demographics, lifestyle segments, psychographics, and from “heartburst affinities” discovered through the prayer walk. To facilitate a summary, I drafted an “Implications Report” which summarized the top seven missional implications the DT discerned as it studied the demographics in light of the mission of God. Block three would engage the leadership in a semi-structured discussion to get their perspective of the work the DT had done. It would also provide time for the DT to share any of their thoughts with the GFCC leadership based on the work we had done together. Unfortunately, this plan did not materialize as planned. Block two went for one hour and fifty-one minutes.<sup>465</sup> Because I had promised the DT that I would offer time for them to share their perspectives with the GFCC leadership, I honored that commitment and did not complete block three.<sup>466</sup>

Following the meeting, one of GFCC’s shepherds enthusiastically expressed his desire to duplicate this focus group with the rest of GFCC’s leadership.<sup>467</sup> Moreover, because I needed part three to complete evaluation from an outsider perspective, I arranged a second focus group with GFCC leadership for January 28, 2024, which followed the same basic plan

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<sup>465</sup> The length was a surprise. The content was so engaging, and we hit such a “flow” that it felt as though the time had passed in a flash. I expressed surprise when D9, who had facilitated recording for the Focus Group, told me the time. She then expressed that “it did not feel that long.”

<sup>466</sup> In addition to me, five DT members attended the focus group. These were D8, D12, D4, D9, and D5.

<sup>467</sup> Four of GFCC’s eight shepherds were able to attend, along with Scott Laird, GFCC’s other evangelist. Four shepherds, one evangelist, and one intern still needed to be exposed to this material.

for blocks one and two.<sup>468</sup> Following block two, we completed block three along with the four GFCC shepherds who attended the December 16, 2023, focus group. Completing this focus group provided what I needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the project from an outsider perspective.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have set forth the methodology used to discern the missional implications of GFCC's context. I have overviewed the project, described the project's participants, summarized project sessions in detail, and described the project's evaluation methodology. In the next chapter, I will describe the implications this methodology allowed the DT to discern.

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<sup>468</sup> Having learned from the first group, I adapted the content slightly. For block one, I was more concise than I was in the December 16 group. Conciseness created additional time for block two. In block two, I did not spend nearly as much time overviewing the data sources for the demographics. I spent a lot of time doing this data-source review in December because all of our analytical, strategic thinking shepherds were present, and they had asked questions about the sources in conversations prior to the meeting. For the January 28 meeting, I mentioned these very briefly and invited follow-up conversations outside of the focus group. I planned ninety minutes to cover the implications report. Then, I allowed an hour for part three. In total, this focus group lasted approximately three hours.

## CHAPTER 5

### Findings and Results

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I overviewed the methodology used to conduct this project. Now I turn to the findings—seven missional implications. These implications began to form as I prepared for meeting ten-eleven of the DT. In preparation for that meeting, I determined that it would be easier for the DT to complete its task of discerning the missional implications of GFCC’s context if I drafted a document collecting our most significant insights rather than asking them to generate the list out of thin air. For this reason, I completed an exhaustive review of all our meetings (via my field notes) and the demographic data we had processed together. Based on that review, I drafted an outline version of five missional implications. I distributed this draft outline to the DT in meeting ten-eleven, invited their feedback and input, and gave them a week to review in preparation for a discussion in our final meeting (meeting twelve). When we reviewed the draft outline in meeting twelve, the DT voiced strong support for the implications document as it stood, provided I made one change: D10 and D11 requested that I add a sixth implication, the point about growing internally. This point was implicit in the other five implications, but they wanted to see it made more explicit.

With this modification, after meeting twelve I completed another exhaustive review of field notes and data sources from our work together to write the final report. In doing this



review, I discerned that the same principle behind adding implication six suggested a seventh implication—the one about LIFE Groups. Using this seven-point outline, I compiled all supporting data from meeting notes as well as from the demographic data sources reviewed by the DT. The final product was a 21-page, single spaced report on the seven missional implications the DT discerned based on the study of the mission of God, principles and practices of discernment, and the demographics of Great Falls and GFCC. This report represented not only the perspective of the DT but also my perspective as the project's primary researcher.

The implications report was the main resource I used to present the DT's findings to the GFCC Leadership Team (hereafter LT)<sup>469</sup> in two focus groups. The first group met on December 16, 2023, and the second met on January 28, 2024. After guiding the LT through the implications report in both meetings, I invited their feedback in part three of the January 28, 2024, focus group to assess the outsider perspective of the DT's work. Using a semi-structured interview process, I facilitated a conversation with the LT in which they shared their perspectives on the DT's findings.<sup>470</sup> Following the January 28, 2024, focus group, I incorporated the LT's perspectives into the implications report.

In this chapter, I will describe the seven implications that resulted from this project. Before describing the implications, two final comments are necessary. First, the seven implications that follow not only represent the perspective of the researcher and the insider

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<sup>469</sup> To protect confidentiality, I assigned each member of the GFCC leadership team a number (e.g., LT1, LT2, etc.).

<sup>470</sup> The actual conversation focused on the following questions: How do the discernment team's conclusions about how GFCC might advance the mission of God on the west side land with you? What surprises you most about what you have heard today? What was confirmed for you today as you have listened? What was called into question for you today as you listened? What is your most significant insight regarding opportunities for mission in context?

(represented by the DT), but also the perspective of the outsider (represented by the LT). These findings have been triangulated, confirmed by (at least) three angles of investigation. Accordingly, this chapter's presentation of the seven implications satisfies both criteria of the project's evaluation. Second, this chapter represents a thick description of the project's findings by incorporating both the pertinent demographic data and interpretations of that data by the researcher, the DT, and the LT.

### **Seven Missional Implications of GFCC's Context**

#### **Implication One: GFCC Must Prioritize Growing Younger.**

As the DT evaluated demographics comparing Great Falls and GFCC,<sup>471</sup> we discovered significant similarities.<sup>472</sup> One of the most significant pertains to age. Including children, the average age of Great Falls is 41, and the average age of GFCC is 41.5.<sup>473</sup> Nevertheless, we also discovered significant dissimilarities in GFCC and Great Falls. GFCC has a much lower percentage of representation than Great Falls in two age segments: 18-24 (3.93% in GFCC vs. 8.55% in Great Falls) and 25-34 (7.42% in GFCC vs. 12.47% in Great Falls). At the same time, GFCC has slightly more representation than Great Falls in two age segments: 35-54 (26.64% in GFCC vs. 23.70% in Great Falls)<sup>474</sup> and 65 and older (27.51% in GFCC vs. 20.47% in Great Falls). The collective import of this data is that GFCC, like

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<sup>471</sup> In this chapter, I will cite three sources parenthetically due to frequent reference in the topic of this chapter: first, my researcher field notes (FN); second, the DT's One-Text document (One-Text); and third, references to the individual Mosaic segments of Thomas Bandy's Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide (e.g., M45:1).

<sup>472</sup> See Appendix M (GFCC/Great Falls Demographics Comparison).

<sup>473</sup> Excluding children aged seventeen and below, the average age of GFCC is 51.61. This number was alarming to LT8 during the January 28 focus group. He expressed surprise, thinking it would be much lower. See FN, 175.

<sup>474</sup> Of the sixty-one members GFCC has in the 35-54 bracket, the average age is 43.98, which is greater than the average age of the city and church. Only twelve of the sixty-one members in this group are at/below the average age of the city/church (41).

Great Falls, is aging.<sup>475</sup> Therefore, unless GFCC is intentional in its efforts to reach younger populations, it will likely see its average age continue to rise.<sup>476</sup> Growing younger must be a key value for GFCC moving forward.<sup>477</sup>

Mosaics USA by Experian provides GFCC with insight on how we can make growing younger an actionable value.<sup>478</sup> Of the twenty-six Mosaic segments represented in GFCC, ten help GFCC move toward or below the average age of 41.

B8	Babies and Bliss	Avg. Age = 36-45	1 HH in GFCC
B9	Family Fun-tastic	Avg. Age = 36-45	3 HH in GFCC
D15	Sports Utility Families	Avg. Age = 36-45	1 HH in GFCC
F22	Fast Track Couples	Avg. Age = 31-35	1 HH in GFCC
H29	Destination Recreation	Avg. Age = 36-45	1 HH in GFCC
M45	Growing and Expanding	Avg. Age = 25-30	2 HH in GFCC
N46	True Grit Americans	Avg. Age = 36-45	6 HH in GFCC
O51	Digitally Savvy	Avg. Age = 25-30	8 HH in GFCC
O54	Influenced by Influencers	Avg. Age = 25-30	3 HH in GFCC
O55	Family Troopers	Avg. Age = 25-30	1 HH in GFCC

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<sup>475</sup> “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 4. See Insite # 3.

<sup>476</sup> This factor is significant because as GFCC’s average age rises, it potentially loses the age segments who are in their childbearing years.

<sup>477</sup> “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 14 supports this conclusion with its description of the generational breakdown of the project study area. Increasingly, currently GFCC’s Target 10 audience represents 51.5% of the population. The next generation just beyond the Target 10 (Generation X) represents an additional 25% of the population. The populations GFCC has reached best over the years now represent only 23.4% of the population of GFCC’s study area.

<sup>478</sup> Mosaics is a tool that segments the population into nineteen groups (A-S) and seventy-one segments (A01-S71) based on more than three hundred Factors. Every Mosaic segment is a composite of multiple characteristics, but each segment has its own distinctive patterns. Great Falls sixty-seven of the seventy-one Mosaic segments in all nineteen groups, and GFCC has twenty-six of the sixty-seven segments in fourteen of the nineteen groups. Accordingly, there are forty-one segments in five groups that GFCC is not currently reaching. A key principle of Mosaics is that like attracts like. Based on this principle, Mosaics provides not only an accurate picture of whom GFCC is currently reaching, but also whom GFCC has the potential to reach.

The DT called these ten Mosaic segments “the Target 10.” The other sixteen Mosaic segments in GFCC we called “the 16 Plus.” The Target 10 represent approximately 9,000 HH in our study area and are more than 99% unreached by GFCC.<sup>479</sup> Seven of these Target 10 types are very similar to GFCC, two are very dissimilar, and one is a mix of similarities and differences.<sup>480</sup>

Within the Target 10 populations that help GFCC grow younger, the DT discerned two specific focus areas in terms of age. Demographically, Great Falls is projected to experience moderate growth (3.2%) in the next 5-10 years.<sup>481</sup> But not all the population is growing at the same rate. The 18-21 age segment is projected to grow by 6.52%, the 22-24 age segment is projected to grow by 6.45%, and the 40-44 age segment is projected to grow by 7.82%. These two groups (18-24 and 40-44) form a parenthesis around the groups that help GFCC grow younger. Significantly, groups within GFCC’s growing younger target are projected to grow at more than twice the rate of the city in the next 5-10 years.<sup>482</sup> This growth represents a bright spot for potential growth and suggests two focus groups to grow younger: young adults and young families within the 18-44 age bracket.

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<sup>479</sup> In no Target 10 type has GFCC reached more than 1% of the population in the study area. See Appendix N (Target 10 and 16 Plus Reach Data).

<sup>480</sup> This assessment is based on reviewing descriptions of the ten Mosaic segments and their preferences in light of my knowledge of the culture of GFCC.

<sup>481</sup> “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 2. See Insite # 1. See also “The QuickInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 2. See the section “Story View.”

<sup>482</sup> “Age Forecast: 2023 to 2028” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite).

### *A Description of the Target 10*

Having discerned the Target 10 as a key demographic focus area, the DT attempted to understand who they are and how GFCC might reach them. The Target 10 represent twenty-seven (31.76%) of the eighty-five GFCC HH in our study area.<sup>483</sup> These Target 10 are, in general, “hectic households” with “busy lifestyles” who are always “on the go” (D15:3; F22:2). Their lives are characterized by “speed, flux, and blur” (F22:2). The challenge these households face is balancing work, family, and personal time (B8:4; F22:1). For these segments, the church is in constant competition for a scarce resource—time. “The church must compete with many other social clubs, sports teams, and family outings in addition to the work schedules of parents and other members of the extended family” (D15:1; cf. H29:1). Because this challenge comes to church with them, they “prefer flexible programming that can adjust to their busy lifestyles” (B9:1) and that prioritizes health and wellness (H29:4). They seek churches who have lower expectations of them and help “bring some sanity and direction to their hectic lives” (M45:1; cf. O55:1). One key to reaching the Target 10 is assuming that, for many of them, GFCC will only have one—or at most two—opportunities each week to connect with them. Considering this reality, GFCC must make the most of the time we have with them each week (H29:2), doing what we can to help them cultivate “a ‘do-able’, portable spiritual life for themselves and their families” (M45:2).

### *Key Insights about Reaching the Target 10*

GFCC’s Target 10 represents only ten of the thirty-nine Mosaic segments in Great Falls that would help GFCC grow younger. Because every Mosaic segment connects best with not only their own segment but with specific others (Mosaics compatibility), it is

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<sup>483</sup> Consideration was based on our study area, a 5.5-mile radius from the GFCC campus. Eighty-five of GFCC’s one hundred ten HH live within this radius.

possible to get a clear sense of how much potential GFCC has to reach each Mosaic segment by looking at what I call “household connections.”<sup>484</sup> With reference to the Target 10, GFCC has fourteen HH connections, and ten of these HH connections fall within the Target 10. In other words, only four HH connections to the Target 10 exist in the 16 Plus. Accordingly, the Target 10 segments are critical to GFCC’s efforts to reach the Target 10. But they are also critical to GFCC’s efforts to reach those GFCC can reach in the remaining twenty-nine segments that would help GFCC grow younger. Of those 29 Mosaic segments, GFCC is currently capable of reaching 13 based on Mosaics compatibility.<sup>485</sup> Seventeen HH connections to these 13 segments fall within the Target 10, and 11 fall in the 16 Plus. In sum, the Target 10 are the key to GFCC’s efforts to reach not only Target 10 segments outside GFCC but also the other 29 segments in Great Falls that would help GFCC grow younger.

The data on Mosaics compatibility and HH connections point to several key conclusions. First, because the Target 10 segments in GFCC are the key to reaching other younger age segments in Great Falls, GFCC must prioritize their voice if it hopes to grow younger. GFCC stands the best chance of reaching the Target 10 and their peers by empowering them and supporting them. Therefore, the voice of the Target 10 must be given greater weight than the voice of the 16 Plus.

Second, prioritizing the Target 10 helps GFCC achieve its mission of “Growing Forward by Growing Upward, Growing Inward, and Growing Outward.” Prioritizing the Target 10 promotes inward focus because the Target 10 represents three out of every ten GFCC members. But it also supports outward focus because reaching them allows GFCC to

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<sup>484</sup> See Appendix O (Mosaics Compatibility).

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

extend its reach outward into Great Falls. Finally, prioritizing the Target 10 represents a forward focus because reaching them potentially extends the life of GFCC into the coming generations. In sum, making the Target 10 GFCC's target group and aligning GFCC around that vision would help GFCC achieve its mission.

Finally, prioritizing the Target 10 to accomplish GFCC's mission suggests that GFCC should consider moving from meeting in two Sunday morning services to meeting in one service (FN, 69, 100-01). To demonstrate why, it is helpful to recall that only two of the Mosaic segments in the Target 10 represent more than three HH in GFCC. Eight Mosaic segments of the Target 10 have three HH or fewer. Supposing that a B08 guest visits and the one B08 HH in GFCC attends the other service, that B08 guest could leave with the impression "There is no one there like me."<sup>486</sup> The Mosaics compatibility principle suggests that this impression would significantly reduce the likelihood that the B08 guest would return. The possibility of this scenario would be greatly reduced if GFCC met in one service. Worshipping together in one service would make it more likely for guests in the Target 10 to connect with GFCC members in the Target 10 (FN, 101). Since meeting in one service would require renovations, this factor should be considered as GFCC explores possible building modifications in 2024.

#### *The LT on Implication One*

The LT embraced implication one with almost unqualified support. LT9 commented in the January 28 focus group that "growing younger" is a "no-brainer" (FN, 181), and LT2 identified "growing younger" as one of the most exciting ideas the DT discerned (FN, 186).

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<sup>486</sup> Although there are similarities in Mosaic segments and groups that allow them to be considered together, the individual segments and groups are distinct enough that this scenario represents a realistic possibility.

Both LT9 and LT4 appreciated the definition and clarity generated by identifying the Target 10 as a key focus of GFCC. They appreciated the clarity not only about who this group is but also how to reach them (FN, 186-87). LT9 heartily affirmed his support for the idea that reaching the Target 10 will also help GFCC reach the 16 Plus (cf. FN, 178, 181). He added that the GFCC leadership must choose to “go with” those in the congregation who embrace the idea of growing younger (FN, 186).

Another piece of implication one that generated significant discussion with the LT was the suggestion about considering moving GFCC from two services to one service. I noted from my review of the first focus group on December 16 that this idea had received a lot of nonverbal support from participants (FN, 142). It generated the same sort of response in the second focus group. LT7, who joined the meeting via phone, commented that he “fully agrees with one service” (FN, 178). His comment prompted the additional comment of LT10, who noted that during a trip the previous Friday his wife had shared her desire to move to one service for “fifty-to-sixty miles going down the road” (FN, 178). In the third part of the January 28 focus group, LT9 noted that moving to one service would require expansion of GFCC’s auditorium, since one service would currently “violate the 80% rule.”<sup>487</sup> He was not unwilling for the expansion to happen; in fact, he was excited about the possibility and expressed optimism about raising the funding for this project. He also noted, however, that it would be “a year or two of complete disaster” (FN, 182). LT3 added that, at present, very few guests attend the first service; the majority attend the second service (FN, 182). Although in some ways LT3’s point challenges the argument I made in support of one service, it does

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<sup>487</sup> Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strong Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 88-91. This rule says that a church building is “uncomfortably crowded” when it reaches 80% capacity.



not completely overturn it because several Target 10 families still attend GFCC's first service.

#### Implication Two: GFCC Is Too Busy.

The 2021 American Beliefs Study asked participants for reasons for nonparticipation or considering nonparticipation in a religious community.<sup>488</sup> It classified the participants' reasons into one of three categories: personal life, personal faith, and the church.

Significantly, although the four years between 2017 and 2021 saw a decrease in almost all factors in the personal faith and church categories, the personal life categories held relatively stable. One of the personal reasons given for both outsider nonparticipation and insider potential nonparticipation was "No time/less time available."<sup>489</sup> Though the American Beliefs Study presented findings representative of all seventy-one Mosaic segments, these findings are especially representative of GFCC's Target 10.<sup>490</sup>

One surprise from my work with the DT was how strongly the DT, which was a representative sampling of GFCC, felt and expressed this reality from the beginning of our work until its conclusion. As we surveyed the story of God's mission through Scripture, the DT was captivated with the Sabbath concept. In the words of D7, "It's like we force ourselves to unlearn it... 'Be busy, make sure you're always working and doing toward X, Y,

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<sup>488</sup> "The MinistryInsite Report 2021," The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 12-16, 17-21.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 14, 19. In both areas (outsider, insider) there was a drop in the percentage who selected this option as a reason for nonparticipation. With outsiders it went from 29.6% in 2017 to 28.6% in 2021. With insiders, it dropped from 64.5% in 2017 to 42.6% in 2021. Two observations are especially pertinent here. First, this section of the study appears to one of a few areas where the shadow of COVID-19 hangs over the survey, which was conducted between October 2020 and February 2021, when much of the country was still locked down. Second, even with the noticeable decline in insiders' percentages, these data offer support for a trend our team observed: any reason that an outsider might give for nonparticipation is felt even more strongly by those who are inside a religious community. For more detail on this observation, see also 12-16 and 17-21.

<sup>490</sup> See implication one.

Z... We spend all this time unlearning what God is trying to make us learn” (FN, 12, 13). As we processed desires as part of our discernment training, D8 voiced the desire for “more quiet time with [God] in contemplation, stillness...” (FN, 30) The next meeting, D8, who frequently gave voice to this yearning in the DT, commented about doing outward focused good works: “There’s a lot already happening [in Great Falls] if we just... had more margin” (FN, 43). As this reality sank in through time, the DT concluded “We, as a church, are just too busy” (FN, 68, cf. 88). Not only are we potentially adding to the hecticness and busyness of the Target 10; by our busyness we are also moving at a pace where we are unavailable to reach them (FN, 68).

GFCC’s current pace of ministry also has inward implications. At one point, D5 noted a recent sermon Scott Laird had preached on 1 Thess. 2:7-8 and pointed out that we “Gotta have room in our lives to be with each other... and just live” (FN, 80). But as I noted in field notes as I prepared for meeting eight, “as it is, our current way of doing things is edging service out, saying in action that it is optional or not as important as other things” (FN, 70). D8 voiced the same thoughts in our final meeting: “Right now I don’t have the margin to do something in the community. And I even stopped doing something that was in the community that I really enjoyed...” (FN, 120). Several minutes later D9 added that “We are so busy. So busy that we can’t love on each other. Cause love is an action, and it’s not just words...” (FN, 121). In sum, the DT saw GFCC’s busyness as a burden (FN, 120-21)<sup>491</sup> and voiced suspicion that many in GFCC may be experiencing “service fatigue” (One-Text, 9). The DT also saw GFCC’s busyness as a barrier, not only to external mission, but also to

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<sup>491</sup> Not only do DT members feel this burden themselves; they also are burdened for others who are burdened. In meeting twelve, D10 shared that she feels burdened for an individual in GFCC who needs care, but they are unable to receive it because their service is needed in other areas. See FN, 121.

internal mission (FN, 125). Until GFCC can free up capacity, we will be unable to love our neighbors well (FN, 131).

*Key Insights about GFCC's Busyness*

One suggestion that met a lot of approval was the idea that GFCC needs to adapt its ministry to the reality that we will only have one (or at most two) shots a week to disciple a large percentage of the people we are trying to reach. “As a rule of thumb, most people will participate in only two time slots a week... In a two-time-slot world, [having far too many things on the docket] can be a huge drain. It creates excessive competition for the limited time people do have to give.”<sup>492</sup> I illustrated this concept to the DT using Legos (FN, 78-79). In the past, especially before most households had two working adults, families had more connecting points (to use the Lego imagery)—much more time availability—for church involvement. As both adults began working, a cascading series of changes followed, one effect of which is that church involvement has now been reduced from a 2X8 Lego brick to a 1X2 Lego brick—and for some within our Target 10 population it is even less.<sup>493</sup> Finding a way to adapt our discipleship to this new paradigm, making the most of the time GFCC members, especially the Target 10, have already carved out, is a major piece of what it means to help the Target 10 find “a ‘do-able,’ portable spiritual life for themselves and their families” (M45:2).

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<sup>492</sup> Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church*, The Leadership Network Innovation Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 91-92.

<sup>493</sup> It is instructive to reflect on the involvement of GFCC members who fit this Target 10 demographic. Many of them, especially those who have one stay-at-home-parent, are able to give more time than 1X2 Lego brick image suggests. But thinking about those in our church who have two-working adults in the home is even more instructive. How many times do we get to connect with them throughout the week? What are they attending? What are they missing? Their involvement patterns are the ones we especially need to be paying attention to because their involvement patterns are indicative of the capacity of many we are trying to reach in the demographics who will help us grow younger.

Supporting the 1X2 Lego brick paradigm shift, the DT recognized a major opportunity in rethinking the way GFCC uses the time that members have already carved out of their busy schedules. For the sake of loving believing and unbelieving neighbors well, the DT concluded that it is important for GFCC to prioritize, simplify, and streamline ministry to promote our goal of making disciples of all nations (FN, 68, 70, 79, 89). The new reality of busyness has major implications for the way GFCC facilitates not only LIFE groups<sup>494</sup> but also Sunday school. Almost all segments in our Target 10 value Sunday school. But their busy lifestyle impacts the way they think about it. The Target 10 “may want Christian spirituality to be a natural part of home life, but the reality in their hectic lives is quite different. Children’s Sunday school may be the one intentional Christian education time each week, and parents would like to make the most of it” (M45:3). Compared to others, especially retired people who have more time, the Target 10 has less discretionary time (FN, 80), making Sunday school a greater investment for these segments. Therefore, when they are intentional about being in Sunday school, they appreciate the intentionality of churches that empathize with their busyness.

There are different ways to adapt our educational efforts in light of the busyness of the Target 10. Many in the Target 10 prefer that Sunday school run concurrent with worship (B8:3; B9:3; F22:3; O55:3), since they are often “too busy or in a hurry to get to sports events and other family commitments” (B9:3; cf. F22:3). Others in the Target 10 appreciate online, digital supplements to what is offered on the church campus. For one segment, “Online education is probably even more important than online worship... families are more likely to do home-based Sunday school as individual families or as clusters or pods” (B8:3).

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<sup>494</sup> See implication six.

Several segments in the Target 10 appreciate when churches create a digital library of Internet resources not only for studying Scripture but also for practical growth in areas like financial management or parenting (B8:3; B9:3, 5; H29:3; M45:3; O55:5). Finally, they appreciate a broader repertoire of material in Christian education, not merely traditional Bible study: “Christian education can attract their interest if it connects with community college content or encourages them to use and experiment with creative arts” (O54:3; cf. O51:3). In sum, they value Christian education. GFCC could build on that value by adapting its education ministry in ways that took into consideration the busyness of their lives.

Along with rethinking how GFCC uses time that people have already carved out in their schedules to more intentionally disciple, the DT discerned that GFCC needs to reduce the volume of its activity. As D8 put it, “I would like personally to do less churchy things and be in the community more. I feel very strongly about that” (FN, 120). In the words of D4, “We need to be careful about what we do because we have a finite number of people to do an almost infinite amount of work” (FN, 117). That is why “Sometimes we really need to cut out the good to go bigger and go to the great...” as D3 put it (FN, 120). In Osborne’s words, “The secret is to find as many ways as you can to cut the competition and to do away with as many nonessential meetings as possible. It’s why I always like to ask, ‘What would happen if we stopped doing this?’”<sup>495</sup>

But cutting may not be GFCC’s only option or even the most prudent option in some cases. Based on Will Mancini’s book *Church Unique*, GFCC needs greater alignment, to get

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<sup>495</sup> Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 99.

the church pulling in the same direction (FN, 131).<sup>496</sup> When there is missional confusion, Mancini recommends communicating vision (which reduces misalignment), coordinating ministries (pruning “activity branches”), and then collaborating so that all ministries pull in the same direction. He highlights five key tools leaders can use to facilitate the alignment process: catapulting (“lifting it up as high as you can to capture the attention of your congregation”), combining (pairing ministries up that do the same things), contributizing (using an existing ministry that does not align with vision as a feeder or entry point to a ministry that does advance vision), caging (cutting off new resources and promotion, allowing a ministry to continue in a way that does not take away from other, more mission-driven ministries), and cutting (when a ministry does not fit and is not effective). In sum, GFCC may need to make cuts in some areas, but other options may also be appropriate in some cases.

One final principle that especially fits with the Target 10 group is “shorter-term everything.” Overwhelmingly, GFCC’s Target 10 groups favor shorter-term commitments for service, small groups, and for church events/functions in general (B8:1; B9:4; D15:4; F22:3; H29:1, 3; O51:1; O54:4). They are sprinters more than marathoners.<sup>497</sup> This idea of “shorter term everything” not only describes our Target 10; it also resonated with the DT, which was a representative sampling of GFCC (FN, 101, 122).

### *The LT on Implication Two*

The LT overwhelmingly agreed with the DT’s assessment that GFCC is too busy. When I first named implication two in the December 16 focus group, it was met with

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<sup>496</sup> Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, Leadership Network (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 197-206.

<sup>497</sup> Callahan, *12 Keys*, 30-36.

laughter and confirming head-nods (FN, 142). LT3 commented that previously, GFCC had taken summers and holidays as downtime, but for the last few years GFCC has kept adding to the calendar to the point that there is no longer room for anymore “jars on the shelf” (FN, 142). LT3 reiterated and elaborated on this point in the January 28 focus group. He suggested that GFCC has become “activity centered” in contrast to “being centered.” Although being activity-centered is not entirely bad in his view, he stated his belief that we are out of balance to the point that our outer life may currently exceed the capacity of our inner life (FN, 180-81). LT8, LT9, and LT6 all voiced support for what LT3 had shared (FN, 181).

Although there was, in general, high support for the idea that GFCC is too busy, a productive counterpoint emerged in both focus groups, voiced by LT6. In the December 16 focus group, LT6 expressed concern about “losing church activities without gaining community activities” (FN, 142). In my reflections following our December 16 focus group, I raised the question whether LT6’s concern might represent an “assumption that [church] activity is good in itself” (FN, 149). If so, however, LT6 had apparently continued reflecting because in the January 28 focus group, he voiced a more nuanced perspective. On January 28, LT6 emphasized the need for the LT to communicate to GFCC that “everybody does something, but no one does everything” (FN, 183). He even suggested that the LT should be willing, when necessary, to limit what members can do and sometimes even tell people they are doing too much.<sup>498</sup> When LT8 then countered with concern that important things might not get done if we did that, LT3 and LT6 both shared examples proving their observations that GFCC steps up when needed. Therefore, if people are not stepping up, it could be the

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<sup>498</sup> LT6 especially connected his suggestion (limiting others and being willing to tell them they are doing too much) to those who have the tendency to “keep saying yes.” He commented that continuing to say “yes” when people should say “no” ends up hurting them and others around them. See FN, 183.

“system” is “healing itself” and correcting an imbalance (FN, 183). In response to the idea of healing and promoting balance, I shared an observation, based on Peter Steinke’s work, that leadership promotes the health of the body by tolerating pain and refusing to overfunction by colluding in cycles of immaturity that reward those who take on too much responsibility for the immature. By refusing to overfunction, we promote the responsible functioning of all membership.<sup>499</sup> Hearing this concept, LT6 connected responses to GFCC’s busyness to the LT’s efforts to lead in more empowering ways. GFCC leadership needs to model empowerment in which “everybody does something, but no one does everything,” promoting the healthy functioning of the whole body.

#### Implication Three: GFCC Has Work to do in Cultivating Empathy.

The American Beliefs Study asked in 2021 about “program or ministry preferences,” ways that people in our community might be reached. Surprisingly, the top response was neither a program nor a ministry but rather “warm and friendly encounters.”<sup>500</sup> The ratio of those who said this top response was important compared to those who said it was unimportant was almost eight to one. “Warm and friendly encounters” was more than twice as important as the next highest ranking “ministry or program preference”—Quality Sermons. The DT interpreted this data to mean that many of GFCC’s neighbors are looking for empathy, compassion, and non-judgmental acceptance from people who recognize themselves as standing in need of God’s grace rather than projecting the image that they have arrived (One-Text, 2). In the words of D7, “This is a nation of lonely people. Many don’t

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<sup>499</sup> Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 65-67.

<sup>500</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” *The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices* (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 22-25.



have a family they are close to. They are looking for connection, tradition, love...” (One-Text, 9)

Great Falls is eager for “warm and friendly encounters,” for contact, and the DT frequently noted the transformational impact of contact. Just as with Jesus and the leper in Matt. 8:1-4, contact precedes change. Based on our discussion of that Scripture and its implications, the DT discerned that GFCC has work to do in “becoming contactable” (FN, 27). Many in Great Falls have “messy” lives, and “we want to be ready to minister to those who are in a mess rather than avoid them until they look cleaned up” (One-Text, 4). Based on where GFCC is currently, the DT discerned that “[God] is calling [GFCC] to love without condition or expectation so that He can change people. He is calling us to love one another well so we can be that light on the hill for others to see” (One-Text, 5). God is calling GFCC to be a people who are willing to enter the darkness as light, moving toward brokenness with compassion, meeting people where they are and as they are (One-Text, 2). God is calling GFCC to “WALK with others and know that change takes time” (One-Text, 4). Accordingly, GFCC must embrace the reality that quite often change comes “through the acceptance of the individual” (FN, 43) rather than “insisting on people bending to us” (FN, 36). But embracing this reality comes with a cross. Before we can accept people, “there’s probably something in [each of us] that needs to meet Jesus on the cross... unless [we are] willing to let that thing in [us] die with him so that it can rise with him, [we’re] probably not gonna be able to do it” (FN, 45).

Moving towards our neighbors with empathy not only requires us to meet Jesus in our own personal transformation; it also requires us to ask, “What are my neighbors going through?” (One-Text, 4) Empathy requires us to see beyond our neighbors’ behavior to the

longing and desire underneath (FN, 44), holding a deep listening posture that seeks to see and understand people (FN, 42). As one DT member put it, “The world needs us to listen... we can reach people if we hear them, I think... Listening is loving... It is love in action” (One-Text, 5-6). D7 perhaps best expressed the DT’s desire for GFCC to love by listening well:

I think we get caught up in judging people versus realizing... the lifestyle they’re living, they’re living in the flames. And we have to remember... even though they look like they’re having a good time whatever lifestyle they’re doing... if you pull back the veil on what’s going on behind the scenes, when they’re not at the bar, or they’re not with this person living with their [partner], when they’re not in these public moments, [there is] hurt and ... pain that exists behind that... [we would be more effective in reaching our neighbors] if we kept that more in mind versus thinking “Oh that’s a little taboo for me,” [if] instead of saying that, you know, [we could be] brokenhearted for the life that they live versus just thinking, “Gross.” (FN, 44)<sup>501</sup>

Other DT members expressed similar thoughts. “We need to see the world the way [Jesus] sees it, remember[-ing] that he created all of the world out of ecstatic love” (One-Text, 5, cf. 1, 4). If we could do that, we would be better positioned to tolerate difference long enough to show people the difference Jesus makes (FN, 109).

Getting to empathy not only requires personal transformation and seeing as Jesus saw; it also requires us to realize that, as D11 put it, “God took that away from us, that need to judge” (FN, 26). In the similar words of another participant, “We can trust the Word/Holy Spirit to convict people” and that “God is the one to pass judgment/sort it out” (One-Text, 2). God’s job is to judge; our job is care because, in D8’s words, “Our care brings people to them. It gives them hope for the broken parts [of their lives]” (FN, 21).

One reason this empathy is so important is that it counters a common tendency we have not only with people in general, but especially with those in the Target 10. When

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<sup>501</sup> The original transcription of this quote includes verbal/conceptual gaps which were perfectly intelligible in the moment. Brackets supply phrases that fill out the thought of this quote as expressed in context.

mature Christians see people with lives as hectic and busy as those in the Target 10, people who might prioritize family time over a specific church event, it is not uncommon for church people to move to judgment and suggest to them that their priorities are out of order (cf. FN, 78). We must find a way to get to empathy specifically with the Target 10; otherwise they will slowly (and silently) disengage and/or disappear.<sup>502</sup>

If there is a single practice of empathy that the DT sees the need to cultivate immediately, it is the practice of being mindful in how we talk about sin and culture in GFCC (FN, 93). As D9 reminded me after meeting nine, we are never more than one or two family (or friend) connections from someone who is dealing with any given issue. People we love have people they love who are struggling with things that are out of line with God's will. Being sensitive to this reality, mindful of the tone of our conversations, our sermons, and our class discussions is a step toward the sort of warmth that draws the people we are trying to reach. We need to continue moving toward Jesus, who was full of truth and grace.

### *The LT on Implication Three*

No other implication generated anywhere near as much dialogue within the LT focus group on January 28 as implication three. This point was especially significant to LT4. He connected implication three with a quote from D9 about "getting beyond the temptation of expecting people to bend to us before we accept them" (FN, 181). He noted that he believed this implication would become more important the more missional GFCC becomes (FN, 181).

As the LT discussed implication three, it was apparent that, in some ways, GFCC is doing well with this implication, and in some ways, there is still room to grow. On the one

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<sup>502</sup> Based on the Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide by Bandy, many segments in the Target 10 are conflict averse. They will more likely disappear quietly rather than struggle through a church conflict.

hand, LT3, LT4, and LT8 identified several positive examples of situations when GFCC showed empathy (FN, 181, 184). LT9 even ventured that “we are pretty empathetic” (FN, 181). On the other hand, notable examples surfaced indicating that GFCC has room to grow. Though identifying an area where GFCC did well with empathy recently, LT3 also highlighted a recent example when a member completely misread a situation with a new family. This member’s assumption potentially set back attempts to pull this family in (FN, 184). LT9 also recognized the room to grow, mentioning a specific example from the past where a young woman who attended GFCC was driven away at least partly by the judgment of some GFCC members (FN, 178). LT2 brought up a family who left GFCC to attend another church. This couple was, according to LT2, living in sin. LT6 later referred back to this couple and noted that one thing keeping them away from GFCC is their belief that if they show up and confess their sin, there may be more judgment than acceptance (FN, 183). LT10, who apparently knew the situation LT2 and LT6 were referencing, immediately affirmed “there would be.” LT3, however, gently challenged this assertion, reminding the LT that Satan is an accuser, and he often uses accusation in these situations to convince people that they will not be accepted even if they would be accepted (FN, 184). In light of this situation, LT6 and LT10 noted that it often only takes one person to convince someone that they are not accepted, even if ninety-nine people out of a hundred accept them (FN, 184). The LT reached consensus on the reality that, although GFCC sometimes does well with implication three, we clearly have room for growth.

The point about implication three that generated the most discussion was the difficulty of balancing truth and grace, as LT3 described this challenge (cf. FN, 184). After LT2 shared about the couple living in sin, he raised what was for him the most pressing

question in the entire implications report: “How do we call people higher in an attractive way?” (FN, 182) Later, LT4, for whom implication three was one of the most significant implications, raised a similar question. In some churches, he has observed this principle of empathy degenerate into a “live and let live” posture. He emphasized the importance of GFCC not being a “smack-down people,” but then raised the question of how to be “a church that is based on truth, admonishment, and exhortation” (FN, 184). LT8 shared this concern. In his words, “I struggle with where the line is... If I’m living in sin, I’d be real upset if y’all didn’t come to me” (FN, 185).

In response to LT8’s struggle, LT6 engaged him in a hypothetical scenario contrasting two different approaches to sharing truth with an unbeliever. In one hypothetical approach, he led with Scripture but demonstrated little or no concern for building a relationship. He speculated that a guest approached in this way would be unlikely to return for more conversation. In another hypothetical approach, he described building a relationship first and then communicating truth through that relationship. He claimed that “relationship helps [unbelievers] move toward belief” (FN, 185). LT6 tied the second approach to Jesus’ example, even though he (LT6) personally found it challenging, and he suggested that GFCC should “love first” and “form relationships” trusting that “At some point, the Holy Spirit will orchestrate a conversation where we have the opportunity to tell them what the Bible says” (FN, 185-86). In sum, Jesus modeled earning a hearing through acceptance (cf. FN, 185). People listened to him because he accepted them first.

In response, LT8 shared another hypothetical scenario, this time about a member having an affair. “Do we just turn our heads?” he asked (FN, 185). This scenario prompted LT3’s observation that there is a difference in “discipline” and “an evangelistic opportunity”

(FN, 186), which led LT6 to clarify his belief that membership comes with “a different level of accountability” (FN, 186). LT6 repeatedly made the point that GFCC has to trust that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts of sin and the church must allow time for the Spirit to do the convicting work in members’ lives (FN, 185). He emphasized that the goal is to “help [others] hear the voice of the Holy Spirit” through relationships (FN, 186). LT8 seemed receptive to this response, but he did express multiple times that “This is what we will be facing” (FN, 186). He also expressed the concern that it may take a lot of preaching and teaching to help GFCC change its mindset (FN, 186).

The major takeaway from the discussion about implication three was perhaps best captured by LT6. In both focus groups, he referenced something I have taught in the past: belonging comes before believing and becoming (FN, 143, 182).<sup>503</sup> In his view, “I think that needs to be something we push. It’s powerful to help us shift thinking and help others feel accepted” (FN, 182). To the extent that we can continue trusting the Holy Spirit to do the convicting of sin, we can continue moving forward in the good direction we have been going (FN, 183, 184).

#### Implication Four: GFCC’s Growing Edge is Outward Focused Service.

One key finding about GFCC’s Target 10 group is that they “connect with churches that... have practical visions to improve the community” (D15:1) and the world (O54:1, 2). This theme not only fits the Target 10; it also fits the sixty-seven Mosaic segments within Great Falls. Number seven (of twenty-four) on the list of the American Beliefs Study’s “Ministry or Program Recommendations Based Upon This Study Area” is “Opportunities for

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<sup>503</sup> I first gleaned these insights from Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 48-55, 69.

volunteering in the community.”<sup>504</sup> Between community and world outreach, the Target 10 especially prefers local outreach, where they can serve hands-on, perhaps even as a family (B9:1, 4; H29:5). The balance toward local ministry also supports the possibility that they can engage in lower-expectation (H29:1; M45:1) and shorter-term forms of outreach (B8:1; B9:4; D15:4; H29:1; O51:1; O54:4). Through such low-expectation, shorter-term volunteer outreach efforts with the church, the Target 10 not only experience the character of the church (O54:1) but also develop relationships with members (O54:4). Since the church is, in some cases, their only contact point with the community (M45:1), a church that does not provide such opportunities will not help them reach their full potential in Christ and therefore they are unlikely to stick around or engage.

This finding on growing outward as a longing of outsiders also reflects a longing in the DT, especially after the prayer walk. As the DT processed our prayer walk, many shared that they had experienced either conviction or awakening care (FN, 112ff). They expressed a desire for routine-breaking opportunities that take them beyond their comfort zones, where they can meet people from the community they might not otherwise encounter (cf. One-Text, 11). Outward-focused good works provide one such form of routine-breaking activity.

As the DT wrestled with how Christ continues his work through the church, we discerned that developing outward focused good works represents a growth area for GFCC. As D3 noted, “We fall short in serving the community” (FN, 32). D1 echoed this observation: “Serving is the one we can grow in the most.” Seeing the religious interest of those in Great Falls not associated with GFCC and recognizing that GFCC has much that

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<sup>504</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 24.

Great Falls wants based on the American Beliefs Study, I asked the DT, “So where’s the disconnect?” D3 responded.

I think the disconnect is just that we’re not going out from here. They’re coming here, trickling in from time to time, and we’re like ‘Oh, this is amazing!’ And we have a bunch of people who give them a warm welcome and they continue conversation... but we are not putting ourselves out in a good spot to reach people... [We do stuff here, and] then we go home. And there’s far less... far smaller group of people that we can meet between our couch and our TV than we could elsewhere... We need to be out there. (FN, 99)

Though the DT was quick to acknowledge that many GFCC members are doing good works at the individual level and making an impact in Great Falls, we recognized a similar need at the congregational level because the broken trust that creates barriers for the gospel with outsiders is not only at the individual level but also at the organized, congregational level.<sup>505</sup>

We concluded that corporate trust issues cannot be completely resolved merely at the individual level; they must be resolved at the level of the organization through forms of outreach that represent GFCC as a congregation. In sum, the DT saw outward focused service to the community as a growth area for GFCC (FN, 121).

#### *Insights on Outreach from Mosaics USA*

Surveying the Mosaics USA data revealed some of GFCC’s greatest opportunities for growth in outreach. Bandy’s Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guides distinguishes seven categories of outreach: basic survival, addiction recovery, health and wellness, quality of life, interpersonal relationships, human potential, and salvation and destiny.<sup>506</sup> Each guide also identifies areas of personal need and readiness to volunteer for each Mosaic segment.

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<sup>505</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 13, 15, 16, 18, 20.

<sup>506</sup> Thomas G. Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve the People within Your Reach* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013), 171-80. I will elaborate on these categories below.



Processing these data from the perspective of both the Target 10 and the 16 Plus revealed distinct needs and distinct volunteer preferences for the twenty-six Mosaic segments represented in GFCC.<sup>507</sup>

Considering areas of need first, the top three needs of the Target 10 fall in the following outreach categories: (1) Human Potential, (2) Interpersonal Relationships, and (3) Quality of Life. The top three needs of the 16 Plus are: (1) Health and Wellness, (2) Interpersonal Relationships, and (3) Quality of Life. The DT found it noteworthy that, although the first needs for each group differ, the second and third needs are identical. Combining these lists, suggests four areas of neediness within the twenty-six Mosaic segments represented in GFCC.

Human Potential	Need within the Target 10
Interpersonal Relationships	Need within all 26 Mosaic Types in GFCC
Quality of Life	Need within all 26 Mosaic Types in GFCC
Health and Wellness	Need within the 16 Plus

Considering readiness to volunteer proved just as illuminating. The top three areas where the Target 10 are ready to volunteer are (1) Quality of Life, (2) Interpersonal Relationships and Health and Wellness, and (3) Basic Survival. Looking at the 16 Plus, they are most ready to volunteer in (1) Quality of Life, (2) Basic Survival, and (3) Health and Wellness. The top three areas of readiness to volunteer were identical, apart from the fact that the Target 10 and the 16 Plus reverse the order for numbers two and three, and the Target 10 includes a tie between Interpersonal Relationships and Health and Wellness for its second

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<sup>507</sup> See Appendix P (Outreach Preferences).

preferred area of service. Combining the insights from outreach needs and outreach readiness to volunteer categories revealed five categories of outreach appropriate for GFCC given the needs and volunteer preferences of its current membership: human potential, interpersonal relationships, health and wellness, quality of life, and basic survival. For this reason, the DT explored these five categories for greater insight.

#### *Outreach That Promotes Human Potential*

Almost every segment in the Target 10 is interested in outreach that promotes the discovery and development of human potential (B9:4; F22:4; cf. M45:4; O51:4; O54:4). Many in this group “feel they have yet to tap their real potential as human beings.”<sup>508</sup> Churches can connect with them through growth-oriented ministries, especially ministries that promote “personal and vocational fulfillment, higher education, specialized training, and career counseling.”<sup>509</sup> This theme is especially prominent for those in transition, like O55—the segment in the Target 10 most often connected to military bases.<sup>510</sup>

Bandy’s Mission Impact Guides for the Target 10 highlights opportunities that help youth and adults develop their potential. With youth, Bandy identifies opportunities such as sports ministries which require inexpensive equipment (basketball, baseball, soccer, etc.), daycare centers, after-school programs, tutoring programs. For adults, Bandy highlights ministries that offer them opportunities to discern their mission in life and develop their capacity to fulfill that mission. Such opportunities could involve talent discovery, ministries that teach life skills, spiritual gift discernment, personality inventories, career coaching, etc.

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<sup>508</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 178.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

In sum, almost anything that helps them develop their capacity to reach their potential in life is opportune.

Based on the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guides by Bandy, human potential is not an area of need where GFCC is interested in serving. Nevertheless, because human potential is the top need of our Target 10, however, it must be addressed in some way. Perhaps this area of service is best suited for GFCC's staff. With the support of staffing, others in GFCC could be invited to support this work, or perhaps this is an area of ministry in which GFCC should consider partnering with another organization, whether a church or a non-profit.

*Outreach that Promotes Interpersonal Relationships*

Interpersonal relationships represented one of the most significant needs across all Mosaic segments in GFCC. For many in GFCC, a "top priority" is:

Safe, healthy, stable intimacy. This is particularly true for college-town communities, younger singles and families, and people starting out in new phases of life. It is also true for people in military service, people living in rural or remote regions, and seniors who live separately from their children or who are widows and widowers in an aging population.<sup>511</sup>

This description fits Great Falls in many ways. Therefore, it is not surprising that this theme should be a need to so many not only in GFCC, but also in Great Falls.

One important theme for the DT was that "fellowship" does not have to be "its own area" (FN, 79) since any form of ministry can be a venue for deepening relationships and increasing awareness of relational dynamics. Rather, cultivating strong interpersonal relationships with both believers and unbelievers should be a key aspect of everything GFCC

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<sup>511</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 177.

does.<sup>512</sup> In our final meeting, D10 shared about an experience that illustrates how almost anything we do can serve the purpose of deepening relationships with insiders or outsiders. D10 recalled worshipping with a church in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, during their annual “Red Ants Pants” festival. The church hosted an event during the festival called “Pie and Praise.” After a brief time of worship, those who attended enjoyed pies and fellowship together. D10’s enthusiasm generated excitement in the DT for those kinds of events (FN, 119, 122). Her sharing evoked ideas of other similar short-term, low-expectation opportunities to which GFCC could invite the community and build interpersonal relationships.

Although interpersonal relationships are a significant need within all twenty-six Mosaic segments in GFCC, only the Target 10 are ready to volunteer in this area. Interpersonal relationships represented its second preferred category of service. Perhaps, then, interpersonal relationships could be one area where the Target 10 could serve GFCC in a way that blesses the entire congregation.

#### *Outreach That Promotes Health and Wellness*

According to Tom Bandy, “worry about health is universal as the population ages,” but it is especially a concern to “well-established communities—older suburbs, small towns, and rural communities.”<sup>513</sup> Since Great Falls fits this demographic pattern, it is not surprising that it would be a major theme here.<sup>514</sup> In meeting nine, the DT processed the American

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<sup>512</sup> See implication five on “Growing Internally.”

<sup>513</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 175-76. Bandy gives a number of examples of how churches have served this need.

<sup>514</sup> Health and Wellness was not an area that the DT explored in detail. We did survey the factors that are reported here in meeting nine, but we did it in passing, partly because I had not yet completed the “Outreach Preferences” report that indicated health and wellness was such a significant area of outreach to our twenty-six

Beliefs Study together, part of which included The MinistryInsite Report 2021. One section of this report listed fifteen “Life Concerns” in the category of “Personal Health and Life”: alcohol/drug abuse, anger management/losing my temper, bullying (including cyber-bullying), depression, finding a mate/spouse, getting over the past/dealing with guilt, losing weight/diet issues, making friends/loneliness, mental health issues, ongoing impact of COVID-19, personal health problems, sexual abuse, sexual addiction/pornography, struggling with my sexual orientation, unemployment/losing my job.<sup>515</sup> The areas of top concern in “personal health and life” (excluding the “Ongoing Impact of COVID-19”) are (1) personal health problems, (2) losing weight/diet issues, (3) making friends/loneliness, (4) mental health issues, (5) depression, and (6) getting over the past/dealing with guilt.<sup>516</sup> When the “personal health and life” concerns are ranked alongside the other categories of life concerns (“home and family,” “community,” “careers and financial matters,” and “future hopes and possibilities”) in terms of greatest concern, personal health problems and losing weight/diet issues are listed ninth and tenth (out of forty-four life concerns from all categories).<sup>517</sup>

Although health and wellness are not needs for the Target 10, they are for the 16 Plus. Nevertheless, both the Target 10 and the 16 Plus identified both as areas in which they are

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Mosaic types in GFCC. I generated the “Outreach Preferences” material and distributed it in meeting ten-eleven. Even then, however, I did not realize just how significant this area was. It was an unfortunate oversight on my part as the researcher.

<sup>515</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023 through MissionInsite), 2.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid. I cut the list off there because there is a noticeable drop in the points from this point to the next important health matter. For our context, I did think it was important to note that “sexual abuse” is number ten on the list and was a “concern” (Modest + Significant) to 24.4% of the population in our study area.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 11.

ready to serve. Therefore, health and wellness could be a great area of intergenerational ministry in serving the needs of GFCC's older membership.

*Outreach That Promotes Quality of Life*

Every segment in the Target 10 and fourteen of the 16 Plus segments are interested in outreach that promotes quality of life—“personal, family, and community life.”<sup>518</sup> Twenty-four of GFCC's twenty-six segments wish to use their life to make life “better” for others (FN, 42-43). This vision of improving the quality of life for others was the most significant practical implication of how the DT envisioned GFCC living out the mission of God. In the words of D7, “Jesus wants us to make the lives of our neighbors better and more peaceful... shining the light of Jesus into this broken world” (FN, 42). D3 put it differently: we “meet people where they're at. But leave them better than they were.” The DT connected D7's and D3's comments to the theme of *shalōm* and the way God invites humanity's partnership in pursuing the flourishing of all creation (One-Text, 1, 5). D10 tied this reality to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In D10's words, “If they are struggling day to day... in that survival mode, it's really hard to get them to think about anything outside that survival mode” (FN, 88). Addressing quality of life concerns is, according to D8, “giving hope to people” (FN, 42). Echoing this thought, Tom Bandy writes, “The goal of mission is really not to generate faith. It is to generate hope... The goal of mission is to give faith a chance.”<sup>519</sup> Quality of life ministries do that.

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<sup>518</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 176.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

## Better for the Target 10

One way for GFCC to promote “quality of life” with the Target 10 is by making children a priority especially by helping parents “cope” with or manage the “demands of raising children” (cf. B8:1). The “demands of raising children” are not only the reason that 17.7% gave for not participating in religious communities; they are also one of the reasons that 36.2% who are participating in a religious community are considering dropping out.<sup>520</sup> But this concern is much bigger than participation in a religious community. When people in our study area were asked what concerns them about “Home and Family,” they noted the following concerns, ranked from greatest to least importance: health crisis/illness, time for friends/family, stress/time to relax, quality of children’s education, caring for aging parents, balancing work and family, conflict resolution/arguing too much, struggles with adult children, avoiding homelessness, marriage problems, raising a teen, divorce, raising children as a single parent, child who is LGBTQ+, and domestic violence in the family.<sup>521</sup> Reviewing program and ministry preferences with these “home and family” life concerns in view, the DT noted several possible ways GFCC could engage these concerns: having daycare/after-school programs, family oriented activities, parenting development, holiday

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<sup>520</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 12, 14, 17, 19. This section is another place where it seems you can see the shadow of COVID-19 looming over the responses to the American Beliefs Study. On page 19, “The MinistryInsite Report 2021” compares responses about the “Demands of raising children” in 2017 and in 2021. What is fascinating is that, for those who are involved in a religious community, the number 36.2% represents a 6.4% drop from 42.6% who listed “demands of raising children” as a reason for nonparticipation in 2017. Now that we are out of the pandemic, it seems probable that the number is closer to the 2017 number than the 2021 number. In other words, “demands of raising children” is a highly significant factor that prompts participants of communities to consider nonparticipation. Of twenty-five reasons for nonparticipation, this reason falls in eighth place (p. 21).

<sup>521</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 4. I added the “Modest Concern” and “Significant Concern” numbers to get an overall percentage of the study area population to whom these were important concerns. I ranked this combined number from one to fifteen.

programs/activities, and youth social activities, and more.<sup>522</sup> As D7 commented after reviewing this data, “This seems like them trying to round out their children’s experiences... their families’ experiences” (FN, 93). Her comment about “rounding out” experiences suggested an area where GFCC can do something secular organizations cannot do: we can minister to people from within a Christian worldview, supplying a spiritual dimension of life that is missing in a secular world.

Addressing finances is another way GFCC can help improve quality of life. Finances represent a significant life concern for our study area. In the category of “careers and financial matters,” the top three “life concerns” of people in our study area are, in order of importance from greatest to least: financing the future/savings/retirement, day-to-day financial matters, and reaching goals/being successful.<sup>523</sup> In a prioritized list of the top fifteen of forty-four life concerns from all areas of concern, “Financing the future/savings/retirement” is number four, and number eleven is “Day-to-day financial matters.”<sup>524</sup> These findings especially are especially true of the Target 10. Many of the Target 10 HH have two working adults, depend on both incomes, and some “are trying to raise children on lower middle-class incomes” (M45:1). Even though some have significantly higher incomes, debt is a consistent theme across most of the segments in our target group

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<sup>522</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023 through MissionInsite), 22-23. Other areas of ministry appeared in this list which would, it seems, have more impact on these concerns. But the ones noted here were the ones that represented the greatest “concern” to people living in the area as indicated by the ABS Religious Survey Ratio Scores.

<sup>523</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023 through MissionInsite), 5.

<sup>524</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023 through MissionInsite), 11.



(F22:5; H29:5; M45:5; O51:5; O55:5). Not surprisingly, then, most Target 10 segments are interested in—even eager for—financial coaching (B9:5; F22:5; H29:5; M45:5; O51:5; O55:5). In a statement that seems representative of the Target 10 as a whole, “They value any program that helps them set priorities, manage money, build investments, and save for the future. They are eager to learn how money works and how they can develop both a self-sufficient and generous lifestyle” (O54:5). The numbers on “life concerns” suggest these same themes could also apply to Great Falls as a whole, not just the Target 10.

### Better and Poverty

The DT’s “pure” demographics study during meeting seven highlighted some concerns pertinent to improving quality of life that are especially relevant for GFCC. Despite the fact that average household income in Great Falls is on an upward trend that is projected to continue into the near future,<sup>525</sup> 1,586 families (8.8%) and 4,358 households (14.8%) still live below the poverty level in Great Falls.<sup>526</sup> Although 16,457 families (91.2%) and 25,094 households (85.2%) in Great Falls live above the poverty level, the fact that GFCC’s building is located on the edge of one of the hot spots for poverty in Great Falls makes the findings on poverty especially significant (FN, 56).<sup>527</sup> Promoting a better life for GFCC’s next-door neighbors must take into consideration these findings on poverty.

One aspect of poverty in Great Falls that caught the DT’s attention was the number of vehicles per household. Data for this topic considered 22,947 households in our study area.

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<sup>525</sup> “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 7.

<sup>526</sup> “Families: Poverty Detail 2023” and “Households: Poverty Detail 2023” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite).

<sup>527</sup> The northwest bypass marks a boundary line between two very different populations. Poverty is fairly low on one side and much higher on the other. GFCC is located approximately two blocks north of the northwest bypass.

9.1% of this population (2,098) have no vehicle. Given the need for transportation in order to work, the DT inferred a significant correlation to what we had learned about poverty in Great Falls. We wondered if some sort of ministry that helped people with vehicle repair could be part of our way of improving the quality of life for our neighbors (FN, 56; One-Text, 11).

Another correlation to poverty also caught the DT's attention. In surveying demographics regarding marriage and family, we noticed that the number of single families is increasing at the very same rate the number of married couple families are decreasing (1.5% between 2023 and 2028).<sup>528</sup> The numbers indicate that divorce impacts females more than males.<sup>529</sup> As the marriage rate slows and the divorce rate holds steady, it is likely that more and more of those single families (41.7%) will be single mothers. This particular area (ministry to single parents, especially single mothers) represented a special concern to the DT (cf. FN, 60, 80, 121). Not only did the DT fondly remember bright spots from the past where GFCC was "the other parent" to single families (FN, 80); we also demonstrated concern in the present for single-parent families.

One final demographic correlation to poverty that caught the DT's attention was the trends we observed in education in Great Falls. "The overall educational attainment of the adults in this community is lower than the state."<sup>530</sup> The area that was most noticeable to us compared the number of people in Great Falls and in Montana who have less than a ninth-grade education. Currently, 1.6% of Montanans have less than a ninth-grade education. For

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<sup>528</sup> "The ExecutiveInsite Report" (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 9. Currently 58.7% of HH in our study have a married couple as parents, and 41.3% have a single parent.

<sup>529</sup> "The ExecutiveInsite Report" (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 9.

<sup>530</sup> "The ExecutiveInsite Report" (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 11.

Great Falls, that percentage was 2.2% in 2023, and it is projected to increase to 2.3% by 2028. This fact is significant, given that GFCC is located just a few hundred feet from the campus of Valley View Elementary School, the school with the highest representation of poverty in Great Falls. These correlations strongly suggest that serving our adopted school and possibly branching out to serve in ways that promote high school graduation are great opportunities for GFCC to bless Great Falls in ways that promote quality of life (cf. FN, 110-11, 113, 115, 123).<sup>531</sup>

### Better Housing

Another quality of life theme that generated a lot of discussion was the idea of helping GFCC's neighbors, believing and unbelieving, improve their housing. As of 2023, there were 31,655 housing units within our study area, 29,452 (93.7%) occupied and 2,203 (6.3%) unoccupied.<sup>532</sup> Though this theme did not receive significant attention in our earlier discussions, it was a major theme after our prayer walk when we met to debrief and process together. Reflecting on the prayer walk on behalf of prayer walking team two, I noted how frequently this theme surfaced in my team's prayer walk. A significant insight I had during our team's prayer walk was the link between housing realities in GF and the findings on finances with the Target 10 (FN, 109, 111, 113, 115). After I reflected this theme back to the DT in meeting twelve, much of the subsequent DT discussion centered on blue-collar forms of service that would address housing concerns in the church and community (FN, 116-18; One-Text, 1). DT members mentioned practical, hands-on varieties of service opportunities

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<sup>531</sup> During our team's prayer walks, many of us ended up not only at Valley View but also at Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School. Though we currently have students in our congregation who attend Valley View, we do not have any who are currently at CMR. We finished our meetings with the sense of expectation that God will open doors into CMR.

<sup>532</sup> "Housing" and "Housing Units by Occupancy" (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite).

to help clean up houses, paint, trim trees, mow lawns, clean up garbage, fix up houses, or put on roofs. The DT expressed interest in providing the labor that costs so much in maintaining housing (FN, 33, 117). Other ideas that emerged related to housing were sponsoring a Habitat for Humanity house or pulling together to build tiny homes as a part of our response to the homelessness problem in Great Falls. The DT consensus was that by doing this sort of quality of life ministry for members and nonmembers, we could increase male involvement (FN, 117).

#### A Key “Better” Principle

Beyond some of these specific areas of interest pertinent to quality of life, one meta-theme from the DT occurred when I asked them to define what “better” looks like, since “better” was a key piece of how they understood the mission of God. D3 voiced the perspective of the DT well: “It depends on their situation. Everybody’s ‘better’ is something different. Gotta [*sic*] go where they are. Listen. Understand” (FN, 42). D8 added that knowing what “better” is requires “hearing people and seeing people.” Tying the discussion together, D7 pointed out that “Better... doesn’t have to fit what we think as better” (FN, 43). Different people have different starting lines, and therefore, as D7 continued, “Better [in the situation she was describing] for him does not necessarily look like what it would for us.” The DT embraced without prompting the counsel of Steven Corbett and Brian Fikkert. In their book *When Helping Hurts*, Corbett and Fikkert describe the “poison of paternalism” and plead with readers to avoid “knowledge paternalism,” which happens “when we assume that we have all the best ideas about how to do things.”<sup>533</sup> Instead of assuming we know what

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<sup>533</sup> Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 109, 110. See also Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

“better” looks like, the authors encourage listening. “Humility, caution, and an open ear are in order.”<sup>534</sup> It was in view of this point that I shared with the DT that, although we have the general direction (emerging vision) on the compass (e.g., N, NW), we do not yet have the exact heading (e.g., 359 or 319; FN, 90). Accordingly, before we jump in and begin serving, we need to do more listening, perhaps through focus groups involving those alongside of whom we are seeking to serve (cf. FN, 46).

### Conclusions on Quality of Life

Both the Target 10 and the 16 Plus identified quality of life as a need. Both groups also identify quality of life as the area where they are more willing to volunteer than any other area. It represents another great opportunity for intergenerational ministry between the Target 10 and 16 Plus. To the extent that GFCC tries to identify one form of outward-focused congregational ministry, the convergence of need and readiness to volunteer makes this area of outreach a strong candidate.<sup>535</sup>

### *Outreach That Promotes Basic Survival*

Basic survival outreach has to do with securing the basic necessities of life, whether these needs are emergent or non-emergent (cf. H29:4). These are Matt. 25:31-46 (the “Great Compassion”) and Luke 10 (“Good Samaritan”) kinds of mercy ministries. Although basic survival is not a major need for the vast majority of GFCC, volunteer opportunities in this area interest seven of the Target 10 segments and thirteen of the 16 Plus.<sup>536</sup> With respect to readiness to volunteer, basic survival was the number three outreach preference of the Target

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<sup>534</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 111.

<sup>535</sup> Mancini calls this convergence a church’s “kingdom concept.” The kingdom concept is where contextual need, community potential, and apostolic “esprit” overlap. See *Church Unique*, 84-98.

<sup>536</sup> See Appendix P (Outreach preferences).

10 and the number two preference of the 16 Plus. Since basic survival is an area of service that does not necessarily benefit GFCC, basic survival represents the most disinterested form of outward focused service GFCC could offer Great Falls.

Outreach efforts noted in Bandy's Impact Guides for these group include the following: food ministries (food bank, healthy diets and easy cooking, famine relief); clothing ministries; health related ministries (free health clinics, especially for children; wellness centers; blood drives; medical missions); mental health ministries (counseling services, recovery groups [alcohol; pain killers; illicit drugs; gambling; advocacy ministries for single parenting, spousal abuse, domestic violence, and divorce recovery]); ministries related to shelter (low-cost housing); ministries related to house furnishings (housewares, used furniture); ministries related to public safety (crime prevention); ministries related to various kinds of emergencies; and ministries that provide inexpensive entertainment (picnics, trips to the zoo, inexpensive family fun options). Bandy notes that for longer-term varieties of basic survival ministries, care often involves "depot ministries" that collect, store, and distribute goods.<sup>537</sup> Using Corbett and Fikkert's terminology, GFCC has a heart for "relief" and perhaps the earliest stages of "rehabilitation."<sup>538</sup>

#### *A Major Theme on the Topic of Outreach*

Given the almost infinite amount of human need in this area, several DT members voiced the possibility of being "paralyzed" by the amount of need (FN, 31). D8, reflecting on this vast need, remarked that it is "overwhelming" and makes them want to "walk away and

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<sup>537</sup> Bandy, *See, Know, and Serve*, 173.

<sup>538</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 99-116. The inclination toward relief is an asset in many ways because it suggests GFCC is very responsive to what we perceive as emergent needs. The downside, potentially, is that providing relief when relief is not needed actually hurts more than it helps. Careful discernment is needful here. Even more needful is the need to do what relief we do in developmental ways. On this point, see pp. 105-08.

say ‘Go be well’”(FN, 88).<sup>539</sup> Seeing this mountain of need, one theme that surfaced repeatedly in the DT was the idea that “we do not have to reinvent the wheel” (FN, 58, 60, 74, 88, 120, 124; One-Text, 7). Rather, as D8 said, “We could also start with exposure by volunteering. There’s like a million non-profits in this town. And they do so many good things. We do not have to recreate things. There’s a lot already happening if we just ... had more margin” (FN, 43). Volunteering would be a way to partner with and support the work other organizations—and possibly other churches—are already doing to promote *shalōm* (FN, 58).<sup>540</sup> Furthermore, not only would it give us a toe in the water sort of experience (FN, 74), it would also present possible opportunities to share the gospel with those we would be serving alongside who may not know Jesus either (FN, 43). Even partnering, however, we still are finite and limited. Therefore, another idea that surfaced was developing a resource list of agencies who do the sorts of things GFCC either cannot or simply does not do (FN, 120).

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<sup>539</sup> This statement came in a moment of transparency, and the DT appreciated D8’s honesty. In her defense, her statement does not reflect how she actually responds to the poverty in Great Falls.

<sup>540</sup> Partnering is a key piece of what Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw see as the DNA of an externally focused church. In their book *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020), they encourage churches to “partner with any organization that is morally positive and spiritually neutral” (79). This challenge counters the “knee-jerk” reaction of most churches to simply “create new opportunities” anytime needs come along, a response which often creates antagonistic relationships between churches and nonprofits (85). “Partnering and collaboration are not essential for becoming the best church in the community but are absolutely essential if you want to be the best church for the community” (79). To get there, they recommend that churches move from the question “Do you believe what we believe?” to “Do you care about what we care about?” (79-81). In their earlier book together—*The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), Rusaw and Swanson not only made this argument (30), they also added a compelling observation. Speaking of a partnership that involved multiple religious groups, the writers (one of whom is in the Independent Christian church), wrote, “To us there is no contradiction between standing in unity in meeting the needs of the community during the day and vigorously debating our belief systems at the university by night” (188).

*Final DT Thoughts on Implication Four*

Great Falls is a field of opportunity ready to be harvested through good works. Some of this harvest will perhaps be reaped by others with giftedness or capacity GFCC does not have. Some of this harvest will perhaps be reaped by GFCC and others working together in collaborative partnerships. Some of this harvest will perhaps be reaped by primarily by GFCC, since we are uniquely positioned in Great Falls and among its churches to reach people others may not.<sup>541</sup> By partnering with others and being mindful of GFCC's limitations, we can avoid burning ourselves out under the mountain of the human needs that surround us. But by pushing ourselves beyond where we have been, GFCC can build a trellis that will help all the individual good works going on grow into something bigger that can bless the community as a congregation (FN, 46). And by seeking surgeon-like "precision" with our service, we can be good stewards of our time and resources as we seek to do good and bless our community (One-Text, 9).

*The LT on Implication Four*

The discussion about implication four, serving church and community, also met with support from the LT. LT6 identified the insights from this implication about "finding ways to stretch ourselves and get into the community" as his most significant insight from the focus groups. Similarly, LT7 identified a distinction between being the best church in the community versus being the best church for the community as his most significant insight. He expressed interest in learning how GFCC can do more to get out into the community.

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<sup>541</sup> This paragraph is based on a Venn Diagram on p. 136 in *The Externally Focused Quest*. One attractive possibility for us as a congregation is to move toward discerning one key ministry that we all support together as a church. We could have multiple congregational teams to serve in this one area, and these would rotate. This sort of rotation would allow us to serve long-term as a congregation in short-term ways. Serving short-term fits the demographic we are drawing. Serving longer-term blesses the people we are seeking to serve.



Though this implication was met with interest, the LT acknowledged challenges in this area. LT3, reflecting on this implication, suggested that currently “We are going in way too many different directions for the volunteer power we have” (FN, 182). He expressed a desire to move toward greater focus with greater alignment. Using a hunting metaphor, LT3 suggested that GFCC has been “shooting a shotgun,” and he stated that he would like to see us move toward the “high-caliber rifle,” achieving greater ministry focus through attention to giftedness, energy, health, physical ability, season in life, and what is most productive (FN, 182-83). As it is, LT3 suggests the shotgun approach is either generating or expressing anxiety in the congregation (FN, 186).

LT10 especially expressed interest in this area (FN, 181). He affirmed a key learning from the DT—that serving with other brothers and sisters has led to some of his closest relationships through the years. He recalled a time when more than twenty men from GFCC met over multiple Saturdays to renovate a home for one of GFCC’s widows. He shared that, although he is getting older and would not be able to do as much of this kind of work himself, he would be interested in taking along some younger men and teaching them. I reflected back to LT10 that what he was describing fit not only under quality of life ministries, but also in human potential ministries. By teaching, he would be helping younger men and women develop life skills, which is one of the things they are most interested in developing (FN, 181).

The only other significant engagement in this area came from the LT8, who expressed surprise that “counseling” did not come up in the findings (FN, 181). I assured him that it did, but the labels for the seven categories of outreach might have obscured the connection. I

shared with him that it falls under health and wellness as well as under quality of life ministries and possibly human potential ministries.

Implication Five: GFCC Must Balance External Growth with Internal Growth.

Though outward focused service is an important piece of growing forward, the DT believes that GFCC must seek balance here (FN, 40). GFCC can neither disregard Great Falls in order to bless GFCC; nor can GFCC disregard GFCC in order to bless Great Falls. We must balance love for neighbors who are members of GFCC with love for neighbors who are not members.<sup>542</sup>

D10 expressed one aspect of inward ministry important to GFCC when she spoke of her desire to heal wounds so that GFCC members can be closer to one another (FN, 118). There was speculation that with smaller LIFE groups some of the closeness that some GFCC has missed would return (FN, 100, cf. 89, 99, 114). But by far the suggestion that resonated the most with the DT was D7's insight that fellowship need not be its own category (FN, 79). D10 agreed. Shortly after she (D10) shared about the need for healing in GFCC, she connected healing to serving, noting how projects bring people together (FN, 118). D8 affirmed the connecting power of service, observing that "[people] get this just as much by serving with us as things that are highly relational" (FN, 78). D9 agreed: "Some of the most bonding times I have ever had with other Christians has been while serving together..." (One-Text, 10; cf. 2; FN, 80).

The DT recognized that GFCC has an almost limitless opportunity to serve Great Falls together. But as D9 pointed out in our last DT meeting, Jesus elevates love for one another by making it the definitive sign by which people know we follow him. She also

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<sup>542</sup> Balancing love for God, family in Christ, and the world was a key emphasis of the DT's "Discernment Guide" material for meetings four and five.

observed how Paul calls us to “especially” do good for Christian family. After alluding to these Scriptures, she observed:

There’s something to be said for... people hearing ‘Somebody in your church did that for you?’ And we just don’t want to forget the people here that have needs that are brothers and sisters. And so, balancing it out with service to the community... The best times, some of the most bonding times I’ve had is when we were serving together with other brothers and sisters... The service is huge to one another. (FN, 121)

From the perspective of the DT, serving one another together is a powerful form of witness that has the potential to knit GFCC together and promote healing in the body. As was described under implication five, this idea especially resonated with LT10, who expressed an interest in leading ministries that would facilitate connection through serving together. The idea of building greater connections also proved to be the most significant insight for LT8 and LT10 (FN, 186).

#### Implication Six: Reimagining GFCC’s LIFE Groups May Be Our Next Step.

Given the busyness of the “Target 10” (and the rest of GFCC), the DT recognized the importance of helping them develop a “‘do-able,’ portable spiritual life for themselves and their families” (M45:2) within the one or two slots per week that they are giving us. Every single segment in the “Target 10” values small groups. Moreover, it is apparent from the way GFCC is “voting with its feet” that LIFE Groups really matter to GFCC.<sup>543</sup> Reimagining GFCC’s LIFE groups would allow us to maximize time together (H29:2) for discipleship. Therefore, the DT discerned that redesigning GFCC’s LIFE Groups could be a key first step in growing younger, reaching the Target 10, and growing both outward and inward.

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<sup>543</sup> Based on GFCC office records, GFCC has averaged 78% participation in LIFE Groups since 2001. Since 2020, the yearly percentages are 90.91% (2020), 88.46% (2021), and 78.88% (2022). These numbers indicate the importance of LIFE Groups to people in GFCC.

Although every Target 10 segment values LIFE Groups, they value them for different reasons. Some value them for educational and/or formational purposes (B8:4; O54:3). Others emphasize the fellowship, support, relationship, friendship, or even pastoral care dimension of small groups (B9:4; F22:3; M45:4; N46:4; O55:4). One theme across the Target 10 is that most prefer a more flexible small group structure than what GFCC currently offers (cf. D15:4).<sup>544</sup> Many prefer small groups midweek and not on Sunday (B8:4; F22:3; H29:3; M45:4; O54:3). Many also prefer shorter terms for small groups (D15:4; F22:3; H29:3). Some want small groups to include an online option, possibly one that incorporates social media, as individuals in the Target 10 segments are increasingly finding community online (M45:4; O51:4). Some are especially interested in virtual small groups that address specific topics more relevant to their stage in life (O51:4).

As the DT processed these findings about the importance of small groups to our “Target 10,” several themes emerged. GFCC’s LIFE Groups “do not have to be another mini-Bible study where we rehash what we heard in Sunday school or in worship” (FN, 79). Rather, as D8 noted in meeting nine, “small groups could be completely restructured so that they meet some of the other needs... if we didn’t have people so locked in” (FN, 89). D4 shared from personal experience in another congregation what LIFE Groups could become if we restructured as D8 had described. Generating much excitement from the DT, D4

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<sup>544</sup> Currently, GFCC selects LIFE Group leaders who “draft” members of the congregation to their LIFE Group in a selection process. Members do not get to choose their LIFE Groups. All groups are intergenerational. Groups stay together for two years, meeting twice each month (usually) between September and May. Groups do not meet regularly during the summer months. Groups almost always happen on Sundays after morning worship, although some meet later in the day. Groups typically meet for a couple of hours for a meal and a discussion of the Sunday morning message using a LIFE Group discussion guide. Beyond this regular meeting, LIFE Groups form the core of GFCC’s pastoral care strategy as the (typical) first point of care and communication for members. In sum, all groups follow essentially the same meeting plan.

described LIFE Groups based on affinity/need/interest (FN, 89, 100).<sup>545</sup> Attempting to meet the different needs of GFCC and its guests through small groups would make possible “almost a plug-and-play kind of thing...” as D7, who fits the Target 10, observed (FN, 89). In this format, we would have multiple LIFE Groups doing different things, depending on the interest, need, or affinity of the LIFE group. This diversity would likely boost the sense of camaraderie in the congregation by putting together people in groups who are fighting the same battles (cf. FN, 100-01). It would also facilitate evangelism, since members could invite friends who share their interests, needs, or affinities to a short-term small group (FN, 101).

Another idea that resonated with the DT was the idea of forming smaller groups—smaller in terms of both size and duration. With a smaller number, the DT believed we could deepen relationships within GFCC. But with a smaller duration, we would accommodate the Target 10, who prefer shorter term commitments (FN, 100-01). D8 raised the possibility, with much affirmation, of starting with as short as a four-week term (FN, 102). No one on the DT was in favor of continuing GFCC’s current pattern of having a second year in the same LIFE group.

The DT really resonated with D8’s suggestion to stop “assigning” members to LIFE Groups and to “let people choose.” They enthusiastically embraced D12’s suggestion of signing up for various LIFE Groups with the size of the group determined in advance. When a particular group is full, members have to sign up for another group (FN, 101-02).

The DT saw potential in recognizing that all living things have “life cycles.” Just as GFCC placed Bible classes on a seven-to-ten-year evaluation cycle to facilitate regular

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<sup>545</sup> This discussion on rethinking small groups came up in multiple meetings. Each time, it was by far one of the most energetic discussions we had together. In one meeting, team members were stepping on each other trying to get into this conversation. I had to play referee at this point in order to make sure that we all had the chance to share.

curriculum review, we could do the same thing for LIFE Groups so that they continue to serve in the present and future just as they have in the past (FN, 84).

*The LT on Implication Six*

Implication six resonated with the LT, especially with LT9. The resonance with LT9 was significant because LT9 was the one who helped GFCC establish LIFE Groups approximately thirty years ago. When I shared this finding from the DT, LT8 noted that LIFE Groups had worked well for a long time. I affirmed LT8 and suggested that it was precisely because LIFE groups had worked so well that it was now time to revision (FN, 179-80). LT9 then observed that the groups “really haven’t changed that much in thirty years. It’s time” (FN, 180). A little bit later, he extended his thought: “I started LIFE Groups [in GFCC], and I have thought we have needed change for a long time. Not sure what it needs to look like, but it needs to change” (FN, 181-82). He connected this need for change to the “major cultural shift in the last thirty years” (FN, 182). LIFE Groups need change so that they can be adapted to meet needs in light of this shift.

Not everyone shared LT9’s enthusiasm. LT3, who currently leads GFCC’s LIFE Groups, expressed openness to the idea of reimagining life groups. Nevertheless, he also expressed some ambivalence. He had heard rumblings of frustration with LIFE Groups, but he expressed concern that some of the frustration was coming from circles where people are less engaged (FN, 182).<sup>546</sup> In response to his concern about practical steps toward adapting LIFE Groups, I shared a suggestion that D4, who had shared the vision for modified LIFE groups with the DT, pair up with LT1 and that together they co-lead the revisioning process.

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<sup>546</sup> In fact, lower engagement is precisely one of the reasons for considering adapting small groups. Many of those who are disengaged are Target 10 families. It is their personal frustrations with the apparent inflexibility of LIFE Groups that makes it difficult for them to attend.

D4 would supply the vision, LT1 could supply the managerial skills necessary to implement that vision, and together they could equip a third person who could continue their efforts.

This suggestion was welcomed.

#### Implication Seven: GFCC Has Work to do in Extroverting Its Life Together.

One area explored by the 2021 American Beliefs Study was “Reasons for Non-participation—Those Outside of a Religious Congregation or Community.”<sup>547</sup> The single greatest reason outsiders gave for nonparticipation was “Couldn’t find right faith community in the area.”<sup>548</sup> The same reason showed up when participants in religious communities were asked about reasons why they may be considering non-participation. In 2021, 52.6% of those currently involved in a religious community gave the same reason—“Couldn’t find right faith community in the area.”<sup>549</sup> This data suggests that many are doubting whether they are in the right church, but they do not know where else to go.

Another data point seems illuminating when seen alongside this reality. When the American Beliefs Study asked about Religious Preferences for our study area, it discovered significant changes between 2012 and 2021. While almost every religious group experienced noticeable decline, one classically Christian religious preference experienced a surprising rise: non-denominational, independent Christianity.<sup>550</sup> This rise occurred even as the four

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<sup>547</sup> “The MinistryInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 12-16.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. In 2021, this reason was cited by 30.3% of respondents who were not currently part of a religious community.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>550</sup> “The ReligiousInsite Report 2021,” The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023, through MissionInsite), 20.

largest Christian groups in Great Falls (Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian) saw notable declines.<sup>551</sup> This data implies that many in Great Falls are interested in the very thing GFCC offers—independent, non-denominational Christianity. Many just have not found it yet.

When we processed these realities as a DT, we collectively discerned that the majority of Great Falls still knows very little about GFCC. Although many connect with individual Christians in GFCC, few in the community connect with GFCC as a congregation (FN, 107).<sup>552</sup> To put it differently, GFCC is really good at “line” fishing, but we have some work to do in “net” fishing. Consequently, few in Great Falls know who GFCC is, where GFCC is, or why GFCC is. Using Martha Grace Reese’s imagery, to such people, GFCC may be compared to a castle—perhaps even an impenetrable fortress—with a raised drawbridge.<sup>553</sup> In response to such people, churches must work especially hard at lowering the drawbridge.

The DT sees a great opportunity to lower the drawbridge by getting our “name” out into the community (FN, 92). One of the major ways we imagine ourselves lowering the drawbridge is by being in the community doing good as a congregation (FN, 44). Simply seeing GFCC in the community doing good would raise a lot of awareness. D11 shared knowledge of local radio and TV stations’ desire to highlight “public interest” good news stories (FN, 123). As D10 shared in meeting twelve, “We just need to really not be shy about putting our name out there” (FN, 122). When we do good, we should not be bashful about

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<sup>551</sup> I noted every group that represents  $\geq 5\%$  of the population in GF.

<sup>552</sup> If for no other reason than that we do so little in the community as a congregation (in contrast to doing good individually).

<sup>553</sup> Martha Grace Reese, *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008), 94, uses this analogy for how the church often appears to those who are outside.



who we are as we do it. In general, “extroverting our life together,” finding a way to show the community what GFCC is about internally, is a great opportunity for GFCC moving forward.

#### *The LT on Implication Seven*

The strongest support for implication seven came from LT7. He shared just how hard this implication had hit him over the 2023 holiday season. While walking downtown in Great Falls during a Christmas event, he noticed that other congregations had set up stations to distribute hot chocolate and simply meet people. They had their banners out, making known which congregation they represented. He commented that, seeing these churches downtown, he realized that “we are missing a golden opportunity where people might not even realize we are here” (FN, 180). Later, as each LT member shared their most significant insights, he connected this insight to being the best church for the community. He had realized that it is hard to be the best church for the community when “people out there are looking, and they don’t even know we’re here” (FN, 186). In sum, he expressed strong support for the need for GFCC to extrovert its life together.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described the findings of the DT based on our study of the mission of God, the practices and principles of spiritual discernment, and demographic data of both GFCC and Great Falls. These seven implications not only include the data the DT reviewed, but also the interpretations of that data from the perspective of the researcher, the DT, and the LT. By delivering seven implications that met with approval from three perspectives, the project satisfied evaluation criteria. Therefore, as this chapter demonstrates,

the project was effective in its attempt to discern the missional implications of Great Falls for the GFCC.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that this project was successful in its attempt to discern the missional implications of Great Falls for GFCC. But this conclusion rests on several assumptions. For example, it assumes that the findings accurately reflect data, that the researcher did not overly bias the results, and that the findings were true to the words and intentions of the DT. Granting that these assumptions are well-founded, more questions remain. What is the significance of these findings for other contexts, for me as the researcher, and most importantly for GFCC? What would I do differently if I conducted the project again? The purpose of this final chapter is to answer these questions.

#### Trustworthiness

##### Dependability

Although I believe chapter five illustrates the fact that “the results are consistent with the data collected,”<sup>554</sup> three additional factors also suggest the dependability of our findings. First, to discern the missional implications of GFCC’s context, the DT (and LT) considered both independent, outside data on Great Falls and custom inside data on GFCC. We acquired independent demographic reports through MissionInsite, who generated these reports based on data from multiple sources, including The United States Census Bureau, the US Census

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<sup>554</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 219.

Bureau's American Community Survey, Pop Stats from Synergos Technologies, Epsilon TotalSource Plus household data, The American Beliefs Study: Religious Preferences and Practices, and The Mosaic USA: Consumer Lifestyle Segmentation for the United States.<sup>555</sup> Over several weeks, I completed five hours of one-on-one training through MissionInsite to learn how to use this tool and its data (FN, 2-3. 16). Immediately after the fourth training, almost four months before the DT used this data in meeting seven, I began acquiring and familiarizing myself with reports from a 15-mile radius around GFCC's building. This early familiarization was invaluable for using and guiding the DT in using the content well. I later generated predefined reports based on our 5.5-mile-radius study area (FN, 49).<sup>556</sup> This combination of reports and data gave the DT a demographically thick description of the population within our study area. All findings were based upon close engagement with this material.

In addition to the demographic data acquired through MissionInsite, I also developed a custom demographic profile of GFCC using our church software, Faith Teams, and selected data from MissionInsite resources.<sup>557</sup> Developing this report was necessary in order to populate the DT. It was also useful in facilitating a close comparison of GFCC and the population of GF in meeting seven. This comparison led to one of the DT's most significant insights, now implication one. I began preparing these reports nearly four months before we

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<sup>555</sup> ACS Technologies, "Demographic Intel," data sets, MissionInsite, accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.acstechnologies.com/missioninsite/tools/demographic-intel/>.

<sup>556</sup> MissionInsite calls these reports "Predefined" because the format of each report is set and does not change. The data in this preset format changes, however, based upon the designated study area. In July 2023, I generated these predefined reports based on our 15-mile radius subscription. Later, before meeting seven, I generated reports based on a 5.5-mile radius.

<sup>557</sup> See Appendix M (GFCC/Great Falls Demographic Comparison).

used them, and I carefully reviewed the data and updated the profile as necessary before we used it in meeting seven.<sup>558</sup>

With both the MissionInsite data and the custom GFCC data, beginning the review and creative processes early allowed for time to learn to read the reports, time to select the best reports for the DT's purposes from the voluminous data available, time to review them multiple times, time to return to the data with new questions, and time for new insights to emerge. This careful approach to the data strengthens the credibility of the results.

Second, the DT's role in the discernment process supports the dependability of the results. One criterion for the formation of the DT was that it would include some demographic expertise. D11 contributed demographic expertise based on her experience conducting surveys for the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (FN, 46). Other DT members brought significant demographic awareness, though perhaps less expertise because of their jobs (D1, D8, D9, D10, D11, D12), their educational background (D2, D4, D7, D12), their relative newness to Great Falls (D4, D6, D7, D8), or their longevity in Great Falls (D3, D5, D9, D10, D11, D12). The diversity of the DT with its varying levels of demographic awareness qualified it for its invaluable contribution to this study.

The DT was given full access to all data I acquired through MissionInsite and all custom reports of GFCC referenced in our DT meetings. At the beginning of meetings seven, eight, nine, and ten, I shared hard copies of all data referenced in our meetings (FN, 50-51,

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<sup>558</sup> One significant update involved who was included in the report. To populate the DT, I needed demographic data on GFCC's 18-and-older members. But to facilitate a side-by-side comparison with Great Falls, and to get a better sense of the average age, I realized that I needed to include the 0-17 aged population. I made these updates in preparation for meeting seven. See FN, 49. Another significant update involved the Outreach Preferences document. Updating the original document to include total GFCC Mosaic segments represented by the need/interest, the percentages of the Target 10/16 Plus represented by the need/interest, a ranking of the need alongside other needs/interests, and interpretive notes led to significant new insights, now reflected in chapter five. See FN, 127. For other instances of generating and/or updating reports, see FN, 3-5, 48-50, 73, 106.

73, 87, 98). Following meetings, I added all these files to the DT's Dropbox. Additionally, I told participants multiple times that, if they wanted more data, they needed only to ask (FN, 54, 57). Only D7 and D8 sought additional data following meeting eight. D7 took home my notes and the reports on each of the Target 10 Mosaic segments (FN, 81). Seeing her interest prompted me to add these files to the Dropbox.

Though all data was made available to the DT, I carefully avoided overwhelming them. In fact, my desire to not overwhelm was one of the reasons I narrowed our study area to a 5.5-mile radius (FN, 49). It was also the primary reason I chose to limit our meetings to the ExecutiveInsite Report (meeting seven), the Target 10 Mosaic segments (meeting eight), and the ReligiousInsite and MinistryInsite pieces of the American Beliefs Study (meeting nine).<sup>559</sup> In each meeting, I guided the DT through the report in enough detail that they were able to read and reflect upon the reports at home (FN, 54). I encouraged them to review the material before the next meeting (FN, 57, 80, 93). At the beginning of meetings eight, nine, and ten, I began meetings with time for the DT to discuss the reports based on their week of review (FN, 74ff, 84ff, 98ff). My general observation after meeting seven was that "It was a lot, but I didn't get the impression that it was overwhelming. They caught the big points" (FN, 59). The way we engaged the material each week in discussion suggested to me that the understood the content of the meeting.

Having processed all data together, the DT was a significant part of formulating the seven implications. Although I drafted a sketch of five implications based upon our

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<sup>559</sup> The American Beliefs Study has both larger and smaller versions of the ReligiousInsite and MinistryInsite reports. I chose to use the larger report for those who wanted the details. Since the priority pages of the smaller report were included in that larger report, I pointed these out to those who might want less detail. In this way, I avoided overwhelming those who preferred less detail while simultaneously offering desired information to those who wanted more (see FN, 84-85).

discussions, I shared this sketch with the DT in meeting ten-eleven and gave them a week to review and reflect on it with an open invitation for their edits (FN, 103). Returning to it in meeting twelve, I invited the DT to add what they perceived to be missing, to remove what they felt should not be included, or to alter anything they wished to frame differently (FN, 122). Taking me up on this invitation led to one additional implication—now implication five in the final report of seven implications. Based on their input, I reviewed all DT materials (FN, 127-29, 134) to write the implications report, now chapter five.<sup>560</sup>

In sum, the DT's formation, its review of the data, and its involvement in discerning the missional implications of GFCC's context all point to the dependability of the results. Multiple eyes and ears reviewed the data multiple times over multiple meetings. Given the expertise on the DT, had anything been amiss, it is most likely that I, a DT member, or even an LT member would have recognized it.<sup>561</sup> Therefore, whatever survived the scrutiny of the twenty-one individuals involved in this project can safely be regarded as dependable.<sup>562</sup>

Third, this project's findings may be regarded as dependable because they were in no way pre-determined. When this project began, I expected its final five to seven implications to closely resemble the content of implications four and seven, which pertain to outward focus and ministering to GFCC's community. I did not expect implications two, three, five, or six, which point to GFCC's need for significant internal work. As I commented in the December 16 focus group, "we landed in places I didn't expect to go. The surprise is the

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<sup>560</sup> See the beginning of chapter five for more description of this "thick" implications report.

<sup>561</sup> I mention the LT because, although they had less time exposure to the DT's content, I made all of our resources available to them as well. I gave physical copies of the most relevant material and extended to them the same offer I gave to the DT: if you need more information, you need only ask.

<sup>562</sup> Twenty-one persons includes the eleven DT members who completed the project as well as the ten LT members who participated in one or both of the LT focus groups.

confirmation” (FN, 146). To put it differently, the surprise indicates that the DT did not merely impress its biases onto the data; rather, it allowed its biases to be reshaped by the Spirit of God through the data. As DT5 reflected on being a part of the DT, he stated how “Cool [it was] to see the Spirit of God working in this process because I saw Him working” (FN, 145). The findings of the DT represent the leading of the Spirit of God as we discussed the demographics of our church and city with an awareness of God’s desire to bless and promote *shalōm*.

### Reflexivity

There can be no doubt that my participation had a significant impact on the DT’s findings and results. First, I influenced the work through the recruitment process. Although I developed selection criteria for the DT, multiple GFCC members met the criteria for each DT position. Though honoring the criteria, knowing the commitment this project would require, I first invited those meeting the criteria with whom I had the best relationships. This affiliative approach was an effective strategy because only two of those I invited to join the DT declined, and, in their words, only because of other commitments (FN, 4-5). Though effective, it concerned me when, in meeting one, I invited members to share why they had accepted the invitation, and the most common responses were “because Matt asked me” or “because I love Matt” (FN, 8). My concern was that this positive regard might cause the DT to be guarded with dissent. The work of the DT proved this concern to be unfounded, as the following paragraphs demonstrate.

Second, I also influenced the results by helping “set the tone,” to use D9’s words after meeting five (FN, 36). I believe I helped set the tone by guiding the DT through the process of forming a covenant for how we would be together during our work. This covenant



contributed to creating a climate of trust and psychological safety, both of which led to the honesty, openness, and transparent vulnerability of DT members throughout our work. A turning point in our group dynamics occurred near the end of meeting five when D9 shared transparently about her family's experience of living with a challenge that surfaced in our study of mission (FN, 26). The DT (not only me, but also D4, D5, D7, and D11) supported her as she shared. I followed up with D9 after the meeting to encourage her and thank her for her courage to speak. After D9 spoke, I observed that other DT members opened up much more frequently. This dynamic marked the beginning of meeting six and was a near constant mark of our work together from that point forward. For some, this realness was one of the most impactful aspects of our work together (FN, 58), especially for D10, who contrasted it to the breakdown in civil discourse in the larger society (FN, 130). Multiple DT members especially attributed the vulnerability dynamic within the group to D9 (FN, 132-33). D9, however, attributed her openness to the fact that I had "[set] the tone" and "[created] a safe space" (FN, 36). Although I also modeled appropriate vulnerability (FN, 30, 41, 45-46, 59, 79, 131), I believe the tone had much more to do with our covenant (FN, 22, 31, 39, 51), which we reviewed at the beginning of every meeting. The covenant allowed us to speak transparently about ourselves, to disagree with dignity and without destroying each other,<sup>563</sup> and to call other DT members back to our agreed upon standards.<sup>564</sup> Each of these contributed greatly to forming the sort of collegiality that allowed us to discern together.

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<sup>563</sup> Point seven of our covenant stated, "We will disagree with dignity, refusing to destroy team members." See Appendix F.

<sup>564</sup> Using our covenant, DT members frequently called for us to be patient with one another (see below), and we also frequently invited others to speak rather than remaining silent (FN, 30, 88, 98, 133). At the same time, in week seven we added the words "without interruption" to point five (about listening to each other) to address a pattern I had observed where one member would frequently interrupt other DT members

Third, I impacted this project by exercising the prophetic function of challenging complacency.<sup>565</sup> I challenged complacency mostly by either introducing or maintaining tension in conversations, especially in terms of how we navigate the withdraw-assimilate polarity implied by Exod. 19:3-6 and seen throughout Scripture.<sup>566</sup> Drawing on the concept of polarity management, because GFCC is exhibiting the negative pole of withdrawing (inward focus), the temporary solution is to aim for the positive pole of the assimilation pole (outward focus).<sup>567</sup> I held this tension with the DT throughout the study of mission (FN, 26).

Reflecting this prophetic role, one of the few times throughout the project when I felt tension in the room occurred when I asked the DT where GFCC's "growing edge" was, where it most needed to grow. D1 and D3 recognized outward focus as a growth area, but there was a counterpoint to this suggestion from D11 and D5. This was one of a few times when I directly challenged an assumption/interpretation of (a) team member(s)—that of D5 and D11—in order to create tension.<sup>568</sup> I reflected to the DT the fact that, although GFCC has

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mid-thought. Following this amendment, which was agreed upon by the team, this issue almost completely disappeared (FN, 74).

<sup>565</sup> "Too comfortable" was LT7's way of describing where GFCC was after I shared the congregational lifecycle with the LT in the January 28 focus group (FN, 176). The DT frequently spoke of how the material we studied challenged their or others' "comfort zone" (FN, 19, 23; cf. 26, 37, 148).

<sup>566</sup> I am using the term "polarity" in the same sense as Roy M. Oswald and Barry Johnson in their book *Managing Polarities in Congregations: Eight Keys for Thriving Faith Communities* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2010). On page 19, they define a polarity as "interdependent pairs of truths that are a natural and integral part of our daily lives." Our discussions, both as a DT and less directly as an LT, indicated the incredible difficulty of finding a fixed, middle point of balance in the pairs withdrawal/assimilation and truth/grace. This difficulty—impossibility—is a hallmark of polarities (see p. 10)

<sup>567</sup> Cf. Oswald and Johnson, *Managing Polarities*, 9.

<sup>568</sup> Interestingly, the tension fell along the lines of Target 10 and 16 Plus. D1, D3, and I all fall within the Target 10. D5 and D11 both fit the 16 Plus. The generational divide was significant since, in my reading of Bandy's Mission Impact Mosaic Application guide, these two groups define mission differently. The 16 Plus has a much larger definition of outward focus than the Target 10. What the 16 Plus sees as outward focus the Target 10 often sees as inward focus (FN, 97).

occasional forms of outreach (such as the clothing drive), these good works directly involve a very small percent of GFCC. Later in the meeting, I made this tension-holding function even more explicit to the DT. After a robust discussion of the withdraw/assimilate polarity, I reflected back to the team that

I know [outward focused] good works are not the only thing that matters. But so much of what we do in this body has an inward orientation. And we're going to have to intentionally create some tension on this point if we're ever going to do that outward movement that Jesus calls us to do... if we're ever going to step into worlds where people's messes can collide with the gospel. We're going to have to take those first steps, and that's going to mean that, in some ways, we're going to have to... over-correct... to even begin creating some balance in this area. And so if I seem like I am out of balance here, it's not that I don't see the other [view]... I do... it's just that the older churches get, the more they tend to turn inward, and they tend to resist the very thing they need, which is [outward focus]. (FN, 36)

In retrospect, I believe that had I not held this tension, the implications report would have read very differently because whenever I relaxed this tension, the momentum of the 16 Plus, who generally prefer attractional forms of mission, gained ascendancy.<sup>569</sup> One of the most notable examples of this dynamic happened in meeting twelve, represented by our discussion of D10's experience of "Pie and Praise" at the Red Ants Pants Festival (FN, 119). This idea was heartily affirmed by the DT, but especially by D9 (FN, 122). Reflecting after the meeting on the traction this suggestion received, I wrote in my field notes that it seemed as though we had "reverted to inward focus" (FN, 124).<sup>570</sup> Although this initial observation was not entirely true, it did reveal the extent to which my voice and presence influenced the results by supplementing an attractional posture with a more missional one. Given this reality, I believe

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<sup>569</sup> I am, again, basing this observation on my read of the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide by Bandy. D4, D5, D8, D9, D10, D11, and D12 were all in the 16 Plus. Only D3, D6, D7, and I were in the Target 10, and D6 rarely spoke in meetings. It was natural, then, that when I released the tension, the pull of the seven 16 plus DT members would prevail.

<sup>570</sup> Subsequent reflection revealed that this initial reflection was skewed. Listening to the meeting audio, I heard not only the inward focus, but also a longing to grow outward. My first read was incomplete and therefore not completely accurate (FN, 125).

had I not been a part of the team, the DT would have likely retained a strong inward, attractional focus.

At the same time, I did not dominate the DT or refuse to listen to them. In the fifth point of our covenant, we committed to “welcoming the voice of difference/dissent/diversity in the recognition that we can (and often do) balance each other out.” To the extent that the final implications reflect an emphasis on outward focus, I believe it is because the DT embraced the tension I maintained. But to the extent that they reflect an emphasis on inward focus, I believe it is because I embraced the DT’s counter-tension. Although I had a clear bias toward outward focus, I nonetheless heard and accepted the 16 Plus DT members’ point about the need for internal growth. In preparation for meeting nine, I noted that GFCC had “significant work to do internally in modifying systems and structures to accommodate the needs of a people not yet here en masse” (FN, 84). In meeting twelve, although I felt some ambivalence about it, I accepted the DT’s suggestion to add implication five about growing internally (FN, 122-23, 144). Furthermore, I followed the discernment of the DT, even when it led in directions that surprised me. For example, when we began our work, I expected that our implications would resemble the content of implications four and seven (cf. FN, 32-37, 84). Our final product, however, included an additional five implications. As I told the LT, “We landed in places I did not expect to go” (FN, 146), and this fact indicates that, although I exercised a challenging role on the team, I was equally willing to embrace the challenge of the data and the discernment of the DT.

### Credibility

This project’s primary product was the report of seven missional implications of GFCC’s context. Several attempts were made to ensure that the report was faithful to the

discernment of the DT as a whole.<sup>571</sup> Additionally, there were several other indicators that this project’s findings “rang true” for participants<sup>572</sup>—DT input on the implications, reflective confirmations, the post-study questionnaire, and the One-Text final document.

#### *DT Input on the Seven Implications*

The DT contributed significantly to the process of shaping the final implications. Although I drafted a sketch of five implications based upon our discussions, I shared this sketch with the DT in meeting ten-eleven and gave them a week to review and reflect on it with an open invitation for their edits (FN, 103). Returning to it in meeting twelve, I invited the DT to add what they perceived to be missing, to remove what they felt should not be included, or to alter anything they wished to frame differently (FN, 122). Taking me up on this suggestion led to one additional implication—now implication five in the final report of seven implications. Based on their input, I reviewed all DT materials (FN, 127-29, 134) to write the implications report, now chapter five.<sup>573</sup> Incorporating DT input on implication topics and building the implications report around the actual discussions of those topics helped ensure that the findings were true to the voice of the DT.

#### *Reflective Confirmations*

Throughout the DT’s work, I invited them to attend the December 16 focus group with GFCC’s leadership (FN, 79, 81, 83, 93, 105, 123, 131). I even invited their input on what to share with the leadership and how to share it (FN, 94, 131). I wanted them to be present, if they so desired, as a way of testing whether I was true to the intent of the DT.

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<sup>571</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 219ff. See the introduction to chapter five for my notes on triangulation and thick description, both of which Sensing connects to the theme of credibility.

<sup>572</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 223.

<sup>573</sup> See the beginning of chapter five for more description of this “thick” implications report.

Besides me, five additional DT members attended the LT focus group on December 16: D4, D5, D8, D9, and D12. Prior to sharing the implications report with the LT, I reminded the LT that the DT was a representative sampling of GFCC and that within it had emerged “a very clear consensus on the seven implications” I would present (FN, 138). As I guided the LT through the implications report, I frequently paused to invite any DT members to add comments. When I paused for any additional DT input on implication two, D8 responded, “You’re saying it perfectly... keep going” (FN, 142).

When I had finished presenting the implications report, I invited the DT to speak for themselves, sharing anything they desired to share with the LT. D5 affirmed that he believed the Holy Spirit had been at work through our team and that “[he] saw Him working” (FN, 145). D4 reemphasized key points from the presentation, especially regarding implications three and four (FN, 145). He later added that serving together would “tighten us up” as a church, which sounds like implication five (FN, 145). D9 also affirmed the need for outward focused growth in service. She connected implications four and five, suggesting that serving together in the community could help us grow internally. Finally, she invited us to lean into the challenge of implication three as we pursue holiness (FN, 145). D12 commented mostly on the impact of being a part of the team (FN, 145). Finally, D8 reinforced her conviction that I had represented the findings of the team well (FN, 145-46). After all DT members had shared, I attempted to reiterate that I had attempted in the implications report only to represent what had emerged in the DT’s work together. That was why I included so many direct quotes of team members or direct references to specific DT discussion (FN, 146).

Following the focus group, I received additional confirmations from DT members. D9 followed up with me and shared that she “felt [I] did a good job distilling it all” (FN,

147). D8 also texted later, “Awesome job! The amount of material you distilled is incredible! You represented our group’s findings SO well. Couldn’t say it any better! Thank you!” (FN, 148). On Sunday morning, D4 echoed these same sentiments before worship. He expressed his belief that I had done a good job representing the findings of the DT (FN, 152). The DT’s representative presence, verbal affirmations, and lack of dissent in the focus group all indicated to me (and to the LT) that the implications report was true to their intentions. At the very least it was true to the intentions of the five in attendance. Since five DT members were unable to attend, I included a PDF of the final implications in the Dropbox for their review, but I have not received any pushback from any DT member about anything in the report.<sup>574</sup>

#### *Post-Study Questionnaires*

The post-study questionnaire indicates the degree to which DT’s meetings impacted DT members.<sup>575</sup> DT meeting impact is significant because it was the discussion within these meetings that led us to our seven implications. Every single member indicated that they grew in their understanding of God’s mission. When asked to evaluate their understanding of mission before and after the study based on a ten-point scale, these were their responses:

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<sup>574</sup> After the project, GFCC conducted a WIN analysis on February 10. WIN stands for “Well,” “Improve,” and “Next Steps.” We focused this WIN analysis on exploring where GFCC is currently in light of the seven implications the DT discerned. Present were the LT (and spouses) plus whoever on the DT (and spouses) wished to attend. Seven DT members attended, two of whom had not been in the focus group. Prior to the WIN analysis, I did a refresher on the seven implications for any who had not been through them yet. Judging by body-language, comments, and subsequent engagement in discussion, there was tremendous buy-in from all in the room. I only heard one note of push-back from either the LT or DT. LT4 commented to the effect that “we need to quit talking about it and start doing it.” Even the pushback was a form of confirmation.

<sup>575</sup> For the Post-Study Questionnaire, see Appendix R.

	<b>Response to Q7</b>	<b>Response to Q8</b>	<b>Difference in Q7 and Q8</b>
D3	6	8	2
D4	5	7.5	2.5
D5	2.5	7.5	5
D6	5	7.5	2.5
D7	7.5	10	2.5
D8	4	9	5
D9	5	7.5	2.5
D10	5	7.5	2.5
D11	5	7.5	2.5
D12	3	9	6

The DT as a whole moved from a team average<sup>576</sup> of 4.8 in response to question seven to 8.1 in response to question eight for a net growth of 3.3 points.<sup>577</sup> In other words, prior to this project, the DT—a representative sampling of GFCC—said they misunderstood as much as they understood (4.8). After the project, however, they said they understood much more than they misunderstood (8.1).

Just as every DT member indicated they grew in their understanding of mission, every DT member except one indicated that they increased in their awareness of how to advance GFCC’s mission in context.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> The team average does not include my questionnaire numbers. As the researcher, I believed I would get a truer reading of the impact of the project by excluding my own numbers.

<sup>577</sup> I find it especially significant that the three greatest increases from Q7 to Q8 came from two of GFCC’s elders’ wives (5, 6) and our deacon of missions (5).

<sup>578</sup> Of the entire DT, D8 had, in my view, one of the clearest understandings (pre-study) of any DT members about how GFCC could advance God’s mission in Great Falls (cf. FN, 156-60). I do not, therefore, believe that her “0” (difference in Q9 and Q10) is evidence that this project did less than it intended. In fact, her confirmations throughout this project argue just the opposite.



	<b>Response to Q9</b>	<b>Response to Q10</b>	<b>Difference in Q9 and Q10</b>
D3	6	9	3
D4	2.5	6	3.5
D5	3	7	4
D6	2.5	7.5	5
D7	2.5	10	7.5
D8	7.5	7.5	0
D9	5	7.5	2.5
D10	5	10	5
D11	2.5	7.5	5
D12	5	9	4

The DT as a whole moved from a team average of 4.15 in response to question nine to 8.1 in response to question 10 for a net growth of 3.95 points. In other words, prior to this project, the DT said they misunderstood more than they understood (4.15). After the project, however, they said they understood more than they misunderstood (8.1). Both sets of responses indicate that the project was effective in teaching mission and in contextualizing it through demographic study.

These post-study questionnaire responses from DT members confer a great deal of credibility upon the DT's discussions of God's mission and GFCC's context. DT members indicated that these meetings helped them grow significantly in both areas. Because the seven implications were drafted based upon these discussions, the DT's affirmation of the meetings' impact also applies to the implications based on them. At the very least, it implies that the foundation of the implications report was well-founded in the view of the DT.

### *One-Text*

Similar to the project’s questionnaires, the One-Text procedure did not materialize as I had hoped.<sup>579</sup> Nevertheless, for those who participated, it was a forum in which they could freely share their thoughts about what the DT had been studying. They could share their thoughts by engaging the One-Text questions, or they could simply insert their thoughts. The final product—an eleven-page, single-spaced document—proved incredibly valuable in crafting the implications report as its numerous citations indicate. It most often echoed meeting discussions. At other times it extended the discussion. Occasionally it even represented counterpoints to meeting discussions. All of these are reflected in chapter five. As a discussion forum, it provided invaluable indications of where and how the material was impacting DT participants.

### *An Incipient Vision*

A final indication of the credibility of this project is suggested by the eight-step change process developed by John Kotter.<sup>580</sup> The DT’s work of discerning the missional implications of GFCC’s context fell within stages two and three. Although this project did not complete the process of “developing a vision and strategy” (stage three),<sup>581</sup> it did lay the foundation for subsequent work by studying the ecological relationship of Great Falls and GFCC in light of the mission of God and spiritual discernment. Because “*Vision* refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive

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<sup>579</sup> See below under “Applicability.”

<sup>580</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 23ff. Italics original.

<sup>581</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 23.

to create that future,”<sup>582</sup> if this project was successful, then one would expect to see the early outlines of vision as a result of the DT’s work.

In my experience as the researcher, I perceived the project pointing to a clearly discernible outline of emerging vision. In week eight, as I attempted to discern which Mosaics USA segments the DT should focus upon, I concluded—and the DT subsequently confirmed—that we should focus upon the ten segments that help GFCC grow younger (FN, 61-67, 76ff). Having narrowed the focus, I invested several days in studying the Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide by Bandy for these ten segments. While completing this study, I wrote in my field notes for November 1, 2023, “One of my biggest takeaways [is] how clearly this data helps us see our target audience” (FN, 68). Even though I could not know which GFCC members fit which Mosaic segments, the information was sufficiently detailed that, as I read through the ten reports, the faces of different GFCC members appeared in my mind. I was able to clearly see who within GFCC represents the Target 10. Seeing faces and recalling local details based on my pastoral knowledge of GFCC only further nuanced the content in Bandy’s Mission Impact Guides. Pulling together insights from these ten segments, I drafted a report I called the “Target 10 Report.” As I shared with the DT in meeting eight, this report “gives us a roadmap for reaching [the Target 10]” (FN, 77).

Not only was I able to see clearly who these people were and what it might look like for GFCC to reach them, the DT was able to see too. At one point, D3 raised a question about an idea in the Target 10 Report. He asked, “What does that look like, trying to provide a ‘portable spiritual life...’?” (FN, 78). In response, I shared (and the DT discussed) the Target

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<sup>582</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 71.

10 report for the last thirty-five minutes of meeting eight. Engaging D3's question together in light of the Target 10 report led to what was, up to that point, the DT's most energetic discussion (FN, 81).<sup>583</sup> In that discussion, almost every theme in the final Implications Report surfaced in at least incipient form. Reflecting on meeting eight, I wrote in my field notes,

One meta-reflection is that... there is a real vision emerging... we can see faces... we can envision ways of reaching into these populations... and the vision is really compelling, resonating with the people in the room. (FN, 82).

I noted, following meeting eight, that the material had especially seemed to resonate with D3 (just outside the Target 10); D7 (in the Target 10); and D5, D8, D10, and D11 (each of whom have children in the Target 10) (FN, 81-82). In other words, it resonated with those who had the clearest connections with the Target 10.<sup>584</sup> Subsequent discussion in week nine confirmed that the Target 10 report had resonated with the DT (FN, 88-90). In fact, the material resonated so much with the DT that I had to clarify that the Target 10 report did not exhaust the work necessary to articulate vision. I shared with the DT that, although this material gave GFCC a broad direction (northwest or north-northwest), it did not give us the exact compass heading number (FN, 90); that would require work subsequent to the DT's work. The need for such a clarifying statement to the DT indicates the degree of clarity produced by the emerging vision of growing younger and developing future GFCC ministry around reaching the Target 10 population.

Just as the DT recognized an incipient vision, so did the LT. In the December 16 focus group, having processed the implications report together, the questions the LT

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<sup>583</sup> This theme of rising energy continued in meeting nine and meetings ten-eleven. The clearer the emerging vision got, the higher the energy in the room.

<sup>584</sup> The possible exception to this observation is D6, who was almost always very quiet in the DT's meetings. Given her pattern of speaking up in other areas of the church where she disagrees, I interpreted her silence as assent.

members present asked were not vision but strategy questions. For example, after hearing from the DT members present, LT5's only question was, "How do we move to activation?" (FN, 146) I received a similar response from LT4 who asked about next steps, curious about where we start and where we go next (FN, 147). Though normally LT4 is cautious about moving quickly, he demonstrated a surprising eagerness to move forward, expressing concern that we not "lose momentum" (FN, 148). These conversations with LT4 and LT5 indicated to me that there was enough clarity about vision that they were ready to move to discussing strategy. To get this feedback implies that the DT's findings clearly resonated with the LT.

In sum, as I told the LT focus group on December 16, 2023, "We do not yet have a fully discerned vision. But we have the seedling of vision. Ready for planting. But not full-grown yet" (FN, 138). Because vision is what mission looks like in context, its emergence demonstrates the credibility of these findings. That is, the emergence of incipient vision demonstrates not only that the DT successfully discerned the missional implications of GFCC's context but also that these seven implications resonated to the point that the individuals involved exhibited readiness—even eagerness—to move forward into implementation.

## Applicability

### *Applicability to Other Contexts*

This project attempted to discern the missional implications of GFCC's context. Its purpose and design limit its applicability to other contexts because the main data sets behind the DT's seven implications are highly contextualized. Multiple sets of data specifically considered the demographics of our 5.5-mile-radius study area in Great Falls. These data sets

included the ExecutiveInsite Report as well as both the ReligiousInsite and MinistryInsite reports, which were based on the 2021 American Beliefs Study. The latter two reports apply the findings of the ABS based upon the distribution of Mosaic groups in any area.<sup>585</sup> In all three cases, the reports would differ significantly if they were based upon different study areas. Additionally, the seven implications took shape as the DT considered insights drawn from the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide by Bandy for B8, B9, D15, F22, H29, M45, N46, O51, O54, and O55—our Target 10. These segments represent a specific subsection of the population of Great Falls, but there are seventy-one total segments one could consider. Presumably, had the DT identified a different target group, the implications would have been different. Therefore, if a church identified other Mosaic groups or segments as their focus, they would likely discern different implications, especially considering the exigencies of the local context/congregation. In sum, the highly contextualized nature of the data used to discern the missional implications of GFCC’s context means the seven implications in the previous chapter should not be applied thoughtlessly to other contexts. They do not represent universal truths, nor do they even represent subjective truths about the universal population; rather, they represent highly contextualized implications based on study of a highly particular study area and population grouping.

At the same time, these implications may not be as idiosyncratic as the previous paragraph might imply. I began to understand this possibility through two serendipitous re-discoveries. While preparing for the December 16 focus group, I remembered that there was a book with a title very similar to implication one—*Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies*

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<sup>585</sup> “The American Beliefs Study Methodology,” 3. This PDF is accessible through GFCC’s subscription to MissionInsite.

to *Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*.<sup>586</sup> Though this book in no way contributed to the DT's conclusions, in reviewing it, I was struck by how similar the six strategies are to our seven implications.<sup>587</sup> Reviewing the table of contents, I recognized a close correspondence between several of the DT's implications and chapters three, five, six, and seven. Implication one corresponds to chapter six ("Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere: From Rhetoric to Reality"), implication three corresponds to chapters three ("Empathize with Today's Young People: Why 25 Is the New 15, and 15 Is the New 25") and five ("Fuel a Warm Community: Warm is the New Cool"), implication four corresponds to chapter seven ("Be the Best Neighbors: Loving and Shaping Your World Well"), and implication five overlaps with chapter five ("Fuel a Warm Community: Warm is the New Cool").<sup>588</sup>

My second serendipitous re-discovery showed me that the seven implications also resemble many conclusions in Thom and Jess Rainer's book *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*.<sup>589</sup> Growing younger means reaching people who help GFCC move toward or below its average age of 41.5. As of this writing, such people would have

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<sup>586</sup> Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad M. Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). According to pp. 29-30, this book specifically focused on 15-to-29-year-olds. In other words, this book's findings are speaking more in terms of the younger segments in what we called the Target 10.

<sup>587</sup> I never referenced this book in sharing with the DT. Nor was it consciously in my mind as we discerned together. Although I had read *Growing Young* in 2018, it had not occurred to me to review until I serendipitously laid eyes upon it while searching for another book in my office.

<sup>588</sup> *Growing Young* adds many insights which did not surface in the DT's work. But there was remarkable convergence in terms of broad themes.

<sup>589</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Sam Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 253-77. Material on reaching Millennials is relevant because they are a significant demographic group within the Target 10. If *Growing Younger* speaks to much of the younger (Generation Z) population, *Millennials* speaks to the older age segments within the Target 10. As with *Growing Young*, I never shared nor consciously considered this book as the DT did its study. Similar to *Growing Young*, it was my attempt to get perspective on a frustrating ministry experience in November 2023 that led to my serendipitous re-discovery of chapter 11.

been born beginning in the early 1980s to the present day. The early 1980s is the approximate time at which many begin speaking of a new generation—the Millennials.<sup>590</sup> It is significant, then, that the Rainers’ insights about reaching millennials are especially similar to implications four and seven. Rainer and Rainer write,

Most Millennial Christians see local churches as business as usual, focused inwardly, more concerned about the needs of the members than the needs of the community and the nations... most American churches are not attractive to Millennials because of the inward focus of these congregations.<sup>591</sup>

In response to this reality, the Rainers call churches to “Become radically committed to the community.” Many Christian Millennials “see themselves as missionaries wherever they are in the community.” They “reject churches that tend to view the community as little more than a population pool from which growth in attendance and budget can come. But they will embrace churches that teach members to love the community.”<sup>592</sup> Corresponding to this local, community interest, the Rainers also encourage churches to “Love the nations,” noting that “Churches that attract Millennial Christians must demonstrate unwavering love for the nations.”<sup>593</sup> They also encourage churches to “Direct revenue outwardly,” adding that

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<sup>590</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *Millennials*, 2, identify 1980 as the year a new generation, the Millennials, began. Haydn Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn’t Dying, Millennials Aren’t the Problem, and the Future is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 81, suggests 1981 as the first year of the Millennial generation. See also “The ExecutiveInsite Report” (Great Falls Church of Christ – 5.5 Mile Radius, accessed October 21, 2023 through MissionInsite), 14. According to this report, the first Millennial was born in 1982. In general, then, there is broad agreement that the early years of the 1980s represents a change in generations.

<sup>591</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *Millennials*, 257-58.

<sup>592</sup> See Rainer and Rainer, *Millennials*, 259-61. All quotes from p. 261. See also pp. 274-75. On p. 274, Rainer and Rainer note that “if you see a church with a large number of Millennials, you are likely to see a church that is passionate about serving its community and passionate about reaching the nations with the gospel... Simply stated, Millennial churches are others-focused rather than self-focused.”

<sup>593</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *Millennials*, 264-66. Quote from p. 265.



Millennials quickly recognize the difference in “Great Commission” and “Great Comfort” churches.<sup>594</sup>

Although these two resources by no means exhaust the field of literature about growing younger, multiple generations in churches, or reaching them, I see it as significant that they reference five of the DT’s seven implications. This correspondence suggests that the DT’s seven implications could be more applicable than the methodology might initially lead one to believe. In view of this possibility, perhaps the best application of the specific insights in other contexts is using them to deepen curiosity and to formulate better questions leading to greater local insights about one’s neighbors and/or one’s context. Acting and reflecting on these new insights will likely prove far more productive than implementing the seven implications in a “one size fits all” approach.

Notwithstanding the potential applications of this project’s content, I see its most valuable application to other contexts as its process. Churches seeing a gap growing between them and their communities, may find in this project’s process a map for moving toward what Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen call “faithful presence.”<sup>595</sup> All three key components of this project’s purpose—discerning the missional implications of GFCC’s context—point to such a goal. First, this project’s emphasis on mission promotes Biblical faithfulness by planting the study in Scripture’s story of God’s mission. Second, this project’s emphasis on context, accessed through demographic data, promotes presence by rooting Scripture’s

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<sup>594</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *Millennials*, 266-68.

<sup>595</sup> Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014). Although the writers use this phrase multiple times, I especially appreciate their definition on page 59: “It means that in each situation we are listening for what our relationships require of us and responding according to our capacity. Each relationship might require a nuanced response. That is why presence is so important. We must be present to our situation, listening for what the Spirit is calling us toward.”

missional invitation to particular locales. Third, this project’s emphasis on discernment ensures that each church engages in God’s mission in particular places in ways that best fit their church culture. Discernment of mission in context facilitates “faithful presence,” and this project—along with the proposed modifications which follow—demonstrates one possible way of discovering what it would look like. Although each church that goes through this process will likely discern different implications, the process could potentially work across contexts.

*Insights in Hindsight for Future Researchers*

As I consider how others might glean applications from this project in other contexts, I offer the following suggestions. First, consider including discernment as part of the teaching time in DT meetings. The reason I did so little with discernment in this project during DT meetings was that in the summer before this study (2022), GFCC had used a similar version of my Discernment Guide for its “100 Days of Prayer and Share Triplets.” Because two-thirds of the DT had participated in the “100 Days,”<sup>596</sup> I chose to use the DT meeting time to discuss the “Discernment Guide” without teaching through it. Other researchers whose churches have not previously undertaken such study might find it helpful to do so during DT meetings.

Second, consider making more use of prayer walking. Throughout this study, the DT recognized how seeing need up close impacts us and compels us to act. D8 expressed this reality in meeting seven, we discussed this theme from Mark 6:30-37a in meeting nine (FN, 87), and several DT members (D3, D4, D5, D11) shared that they had experienced conviction and awakening care during their prayer walks (FN, 115ff). I encourage future researchers

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<sup>596</sup> Eight of the twelve DT members participated in the “100 Days.”

replicating this project to consider adding at least one additional prayer walk between the study of mission and the initial meeting to discuss demographics (cf. FN, 104). Not only will including more prayer walks likely improve the team's read of the demographics; it will also better equip them for the final prayer walk.

In addition to a second prayer walk, I encourage future researchers to consider assigning specific areas to prayer walk. Using MissionInsite, it is possible to isolate census tracts or block groups and target prayer walking to specific areas having high concentrations of target demographics. Focusing on specific areas will, I think, add greater depth and insight to the discernment of the group by decreasing the time teams spend driving or walking without clear direction.

Third, consider regularly incorporating times of blessing. At the end of meeting seven, I shared with the DT that I had almost begun the meeting with a period of blessing because after reviewing field notes prior to the meeting I had been overwhelmed with gratitude for how God had been working through each DT member. In response, they asked if we could stay for extra time for that time of blessing. We stayed for twenty minutes for this period of blessing (FN, 58-59). Having seen the impact, I planned for a time of blessing at the DT celebration (FN, 131). Every member received a blessing, and almost every member shared a blessing. Each time we blessed each other, the effect was glorious. For a moment, it was as though we saw through the veil of eternity and glimpsed each other not only as we are in Christ, but as we will be. The effect was incredibly bonding. I encourage future researchers to consider utilizing this practice regularly in the work with their teams.

Fourth, consider carefully, before beginning, how you will use the One Text procedure. Work out any technical issues in advance. Provide a step-by-step guide to help

members access the file. Assign and pre-brief at least one team member to coordinate this key task. Finally, monitor the One Text document throughout to ensure it was working as intended.<sup>597</sup>

Fifth, consider ways to create a Zoom option for participants. Adding a virtual option will make it possible for participants to engage the meetings from a distance, even when they cannot participate in person. Such increased participation will only strengthen the potential for discernment.

Sixth, consider teaching specifically on the concept of neighbor in Scripture. Just as Paul recognized the Macedonian in his vision as the neighbor God was calling him and his companions to serve in one particular season of his ministry, this research project can help the DTs identify who, specifically, God is inviting their congregation to serve in a particular season (cf. FN, 73f). To do so, consider helping the DT see the idea of neighbor not only in the context of Luke 10 but also in the context of Paul's missionary activities. Broadening the team's view of neighbor will help them understand that neighbor in Scripture references specific people or populations (like the Macedonians) and not merely a universalized humanity.<sup>598</sup> Making this connection will help the DT draw a direct link from the greatest commands to mission in context.

Seventh, consider investigating all Mosaic segments in your church's target demographic and not merely those represented in your congregation. Broadening the study will help you not only grow inward by better understanding those you are currently reaching.

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<sup>597</sup> I believe the DT's lack of clarity about the purpose of the One-Text reflects my own lack of clarity. As the project unfolded, I began to wonder if the One-Text was necessary to the project. I strongly considered eliminating it altogether (FN, 16). Given my belief that it was not, I did not monitor it closely, except for at first when I was attempting to ensure that it was operational.

<sup>598</sup> I especially see this treatment of neighbor in the Thessalonian letters, but I could also have helped them see it in Acts.

It will also help you grow outward by helping you understand the populations you are trying to reach. Understanding those in your church and those not in your church who meet your target demographic can lead to greater insight for future ministry.

Eighth, consider involving the DT much earlier in the articulation of missional implications. Ensure that the DT has a direct role in the formation of the implications. Perhaps conclude every DT meeting with a discussion of the most significant missional implications based upon study to that point. These insights could be further discussed in the One-Text document. Subsequent meetings may modify the implications in light of further study. This approach will ensure that the DT has a significant role in the articulation of the missional implications.

### **Significance**

#### Sustainability

The DT's seven missional implications represent a significant amount of change. To paraphrase LT3 in the January 28 focus group, every one of these represents adaptive change for GFCC.<sup>599</sup> Given the challenging nature of this level of change, GFCC must take some steps to develop an environment where these seeds can germinate and bear fruit. I see seven such steps.

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<sup>599</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). See also Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), and Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009). In *Leadership on the Line*, Heifetz and Linsky distinguish adaptive challenges and technical problems. A technical problem is a problem in which we already possess the knowledge necessary to solve the problem. Adaptive challenges are problems for which we do not have the answers. "Without learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and behaviors—people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment" (13).

First, GFCC must prioritize prayer in everything (FN, 165).<sup>600</sup> As the DT recognized in week five, prayer was a formative practice of the early church (FN, 31). Even today, it is one way God speaks to and guides his people in mission (FN, 40). In the DT's prayer walk, four DT members (D3, D4, D5, and D11) experienced God forming their hearts for mission (FN, 115ff), and prayer walking led the team as a whole to a clearer vision of how GFCC might join in God's mission by blessing Great Falls.<sup>601</sup> Prioritizing prayer and even prayer walking could provide opportunities for God to form the hearts of GFCC's membership for mission by breaking routines, awakening greater awareness of needs, and stirring hearts that care about the mission that lies before us (cf. FN, 125).<sup>602</sup>

Second, GFCC's leadership must complete the process of defining the vision and developing strategies based on it. Early in the DT's work, I connected our role to stage two and part of stage three of John Kotter's eight-stage process of creating major change. The DT did the work of contextual analysis to facilitate vision emergence. Now, having done our work, it is time for GFCC's leadership team to take the DT's findings and articulate a vision for GFCC based on it.<sup>603</sup> In Kotter's view, the first draft can come from an individual. Then, these ideas can be refined in the larger group.<sup>604</sup> Gil Rendle and Alice Mann's congregational

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<sup>600</sup> Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 123-45. Prayer is a way we "embrace the life of Jesus." Stetzer and Rainer write, "As we embrace life with Jesus, we embrace His priorities. As we embrace His priorities, they will become our practices" (132).

<sup>601</sup> I am basing this assertion on the fact that we formulated the seven implications immediately after we had prayer walked together.

<sup>602</sup> D9 even suggested doing a weekly time of prayer, possibly on Wednesday nights, as one piece of the plan for moving forward. See FN, 165, 171.

<sup>603</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 23,

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, 82ff. Given my role as part of the DT and the LT, I would probably be the one to draft this initial statement. GFCC's elders, evangelists, and interns would then refine it together.

application of strategic planning supports this tactic. Now that the DT has completed its task by writing up its learnings from data gathering through internal and especially external audits, the next step is to convert these learnings into mission statements, vision statements, and objectives, goals, and recommendations.<sup>605</sup> Malphurs also locates vision development immediately following the environmental scan, and he follows vision development with strategy development.<sup>606</sup> Mancini adds further confirmation. Now that the DT, with the additional input of the LT, has discerned GFCC's "kingdom concept," the task is to articulate vision.<sup>607</sup> Based on the DT's work, a key piece of the vision will be prioritizing growing younger by progressively implementing the other six implications (FN, 63).

Third, GFCC must practice good communication.<sup>608</sup> In the words of D4, "this is all going to circle around communication" (FN, 139). We must be careful to communicate the emerging vision because communicating well is the first step in aligning GFCC so that it works together going one direction.<sup>609</sup> As we do communicate, it will be critical to emphasize common interests to prevent the congregation from polarizing along generational lines. The

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<sup>605</sup> Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2003), 71-81, 83-90.

<sup>606</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 51-54.

<sup>607</sup> Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, Leadership Network (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 83-98 explains what Mancini calls the "Kingdom Concept," which is where a congregation's context, potential, and collective esprit overlap. Part three of *Church Unique*, which follows, addresses how to "articulate" this vision. Mancini distinguishes "vision proper" from what he calls the "vision frame." In his view, vision is dynamic and must be continually discerned. The stabilizing elements that allow for this ongoing discernment are the missional mandate ("What are we doing?"), missional values ("Why are we doing it?"), the missional map ("How are we doing it?"), and missional measures ("When are we successful?"). Vision proper grows out of all of these and describes not only the "missional mountain top," but also the "milestones" which indicate that we are on our way. See p. 113 for a one-page overview of part three.

<sup>608</sup> See Kotter, *Leading Change*, 22, 87-103. "Communicating the change vision" is step four of the change process, following immediately after developing a vision and strategy.

<sup>609</sup> Mancini, *Church Unique*, 199-201.

DT saw these common interests as we considered the ABS data on ministry or program preferences. Although we had carefully studied the interests of the Target 10 Mosaic segments, the ABS considered all sixty-seven segments in Great Falls. We were surprised by how much the interests of the Target 10 dovetailed with the population of our study area as a whole. We saw this reality again when we considered outreach preferences. The needs and interests of GFCC's Target 10 and 16 Plus revealed surprising similarities. Although their top needs are different, their secondary and tertiary needs are identical. Moreover, their interests—in terms of outreach—showed remarkable consonance. In other words, the interests of the two groups overlap in significant ways. Emphasizing this overlapping, shared interest will be a key piece of communicating the vision. Growing younger also helps GFCC reach older people. It not only helps us reach outward; it also helps us reach inward.

At the beginning of the change process, we must be diligent to communicate with a core group of 21 to 24 percent of GFCC, or 44-51 members as of February 2024.<sup>610</sup> For GFCC, this group includes the GFCC leadership team (eight elders, three evangelists, one intern, and twelve spouses), eight deacons (and eight spouses), and three additional LIFE Group Leader and co-leader couples.<sup>611</sup> This group totals forty-six members for GFCC.<sup>612</sup> Beyond these groups, we should be diligent to communicate the vision with the entire church, who make up what Rendle and Mann call the “central seventy-two percent.”<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 163-65, cf. 51-55. See also Bullard, *Pursuing Kingdom Potential*, 44-53.

<sup>611</sup> These three couples are the remaining LIFE Group leaders who are not in the previous groups.

<sup>612</sup> The twelve DT members fit in several of these categories. The LT included the elders, evangelists, and interns. Accordingly, the composition of the DT and LT suggests we are on our way in terms of communication.

<sup>613</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 53-55.



Communicating well involves not only speaking but also listening intentionally (FN, 138).<sup>614</sup> I believe intentional listening is appropriate, first, with the Target 10 (FN, 150). Implication one calls GFCC to prioritize growing younger. Although this project led to many insights about reaching younger demographics, the data the DT studied cannot replace local conversations (FN, 90). We cannot assume we know what “better” looks like for them; rather, we must enter their world and listen, allowing them to define their “better” (FN, 42-43, 46, 179). We must be open to differing definitions of better because no Mosaic group or groups are a monolith; even within a segment or group of segments there is significant diversity. Additionally, the ABS, while still highly reliable and accurate, still admits a potential margin of error.<sup>615</sup> Therefore, GFCC needs to do more intentional listening—perhaps through additional focus groups, surveys, or questionnaires—with the Target 10 (cf. FN, 70, 144, 150).

But GFCC also needs to listen to the 16 Plus. The language of priority in implication one could be an indication that GFCC could face generational conflict as one or more generations’ needs or interests are given greater weight than other generations’ needs or interests. In his book *Sticking Points*, Haydn Shaw recommends five practices for churches facing conflict rooted in generational differences. The first two are acknowledging the generational nature of the conflict and appreciating the different needs and interests of the generations involved. Congregations can then resolve conflict by adapting to the interests of one another and leveraging the strengths of the generations involved. But when flexing and

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<sup>614</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 101-03. Kotter emphasizes listening as a critical step in vision communication. He writes, “The downside of two-way communication is that feedback may suggest we are on the wrong course and that the vision needs to be reformulated. But in the long run, swallowing our pride and reworking the vision is far more productive than heading off in the wrong direction—or in a direction that others won’t follow” (103).

<sup>615</sup> See “The American Beliefs Study Methodology.”

leveraging are not enough, congregations can resolve the issue by “[determining] which option will yield the best results.”<sup>616</sup> One key insight from Shaw is that all resolution begins in intentional listening. In D7’s words, “If [we] start getting a ton of resistance, and it’s like every time [we] keep hitting a wall, [we] should start listening to that” (FN, 40). That is, we should be discerning with resistance, learning from it, so that we can better pursue God’s mission in ways that honor the highest and best interests of all involved (cf. FN, 41).<sup>617</sup>

Communicating and listening will help GFCC’s leadership address a key issue: the timing and pace of changes. In my field notes, I noted that, in a ranked listing of all 26 Mosaic segments represented in GFCC, the Target 10 segments fall near the bottom of the list (FN, 66). For this reason, prioritizing them will, in a sense, turn GFCC upside down, giving greater weight to the interests and needs of members who are far less represented than many in the 16 Plus. Many will feel the loss these changes represent even if they cannot name them. Given the adaptive nature of this potential change, it is critical that leadership exercise the greatest sensitivity. As LT9 reminded me after the December 16 focus group, GFCC has many older members, and many of them are slower to change than younger members (FN, 153). LT6 also reminded the LT on January 28 that “it takes a long time for culture to shift” (FN, 184). D8 feels these things are especially true of GFCC: “I think the church as a whole will have a slow time changing the paradigm” (FN, 38). In the December 16 focus group, LT1 prepared the LT for the fact that “There will be some who won’t want to

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<sup>616</sup> Haydn Shaw, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 31. See pp. 31-38 for more description. The rest of the book applies this process to twelve common generational sticking points.

<sup>617</sup> Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1998), 143-45. I especially appreciate Rendle’s treatment of “force field analysis.” While supporting the drivers of change, Rendle recommends learning from resistance. Based on what one learns, one adapts the changes to embrace the interests of those resisting and thereby diminishes resistance. Supporting the change while diminishing resistance allows the change to move forward.

go along with this, no matter what” (FN, 138). Supporting LT1’s observation, D4 shared his conviction that moving too quickly and doing too much at once will be one of the surest ways to lose the rest of the church (FN, 153).<sup>618</sup> Listening well, especially to the 16 Plus, will be one important way for GFCC’s leaders to avoid moving faster than GFCC can integrate the changes. Considering the congregation in this way will do much to get the buy-in of many in the church (FN, 139).

Fourth, GFCC must find ways to reduce its busyness. After the project, during the team celebration, D8 shared one of her top takeaways in words that represent the collective longing of the DT, as indicated by implication two:

I think I’ve wrestled this whole time just with capacity... I feel that everybody is very strapped for time, attention, what we have to give... I would love to see us pulling in the same direction in simpler ways so that we’re not all burnt out. And... personally, I would love to have enough margin [for] quiet, and contemplation, experiencing the presence of God, so that I have something to give, and so that I have time to notice people, and I have time to check in with people, and time to be aware, and not just feeling so busy that I’m just going from one good activity to the next. But I want to be more purposeful. And I want to have time to be involved in the community, whether it’s partnering with a nonprofit, or whatever, however it plays out. I just want to redo my schedule so it’s more diverse than just church stuff. Cause I think it will have a wonderful impact, and it will change me too. And I want to be changed.

D8’s words connect busyness to almost every other implication, suggesting that, until GFCC frees up some “capacity,” it will not have the time to participate more fully in God’s mission in Great Falls (cf. FN, 79, 153). LT3 drew the same conclusion in the January 28 focus group with his observation that GFCC is currently “going in way too many directions for the volunteer power we have” (FN, 182). Therefore, to enable GFCC to participate more fully in God’s mission in Great Falls, leadership must help align GFCC’s ministries around a common vision. According to Mancini, alignment begins by communicating vision, then

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<sup>618</sup> I appreciate the wisdom of D11 on this point. She reminded the DT that “Things that begin in haste often end in haste” (FN, 81).

coordinating ministries around the vision, and finally moving to collaboration around the vision.<sup>619</sup> Mancini recommends “persistent modification” by increasing attention to a ministry, combining it with another ministry, limiting a ministry’s resources, or cutting the ministry.<sup>620</sup> Mancini writes that “if the church is generally successful and more than twenty years old, achieving collaboration can’t be done in less than three years.”<sup>621</sup> Therefore, beginning the process of alignment sooner rather than later is critical.

A key piece of addressing the needs of GFCC and Great Falls without increasing busyness is reimagining GFCC’s LIFE Groups. D7 explicitly connected the two themes in meeting nine (FN, 89). This theme was so significant to the DT that it became implication six. Reflecting on the project as a whole, I believe that reimagining GFCC’s LIFE Groups would be a productive step to take to address its busyness (FN, 179). Considering both the need to address busyness and the time it would take to reimagine GFCC’s LIFE Groups, D4’s advice to begin “sooner rather than later” seems appropriate (FN, 89).

Fifth, GFCC leadership must teach and preach to support and equip GFCC for vision implementation. During the course of this project, multiple times in this project it became apparent that embracing the missional implications of our context would require further teaching. I see five themes in which further teaching could help us move forward. One theme for future teaching is the breadth of God’s mission. Reading Scripture through the lens of God’s mission revealed that (at least a portion of) GFCC defines mission in a much narrower

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<sup>619</sup> Mancini, *Church Unique*, 199-201.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-06. Cf. Brandon Guindon, *Disciple Making Culture: Cultivate Thriving Disciple-Makers throughout Your Church* (Laverne, TN: HIM Publications, 2020), 101-10. See also Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples*, updated ed. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011).

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

sense than Scripture (cf. FN, 12). The pre- and post-study (part one) questionnaires bear out this conclusion. Question nine of the pre-study questionnaire asked DT members to share their current understanding of God’s mission. The most common response was a paraphrase of either Matthew 28:19a or Luke 19:10 along with some connection to serving or blessing.<sup>622</sup> The same question in the post-study questionnaire revealed significantly more definition. In this questionnaire, the DT connected God’s mission to his efforts to promote *shalōm* for all creation, especially in terms of human flourishing at all levels.<sup>623</sup> Many also noted that mission includes God’s invitation for his people to participate in his work.<sup>624</sup> In D8’s words, God’s mission “is just so much bigger than just getting people saved at a moment” (FN, 21)—an insight that was D5’s most significant takeaway from the project (FN, 130; cf. 13). Helping GFCC understand the vastness of God’s mission will likely be a major component of growing outward (cf. FN, 38).

Another theme for future teaching is the meaning of holiness. Our DT discussions of mission surfaced a tension in the way we define holiness (FN, 19ff).<sup>625</sup> On the one hand, to be holy is to be separate from moral impurity; but on the other hand, Jesus, the incarnate God, connected with sinners. The teaching opportunity is to help GFCC understand that holiness is less about staying separate from sinners than maintaining an ethical, pure life (FN,

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<sup>622</sup> Matthew 28:18-20 appears in responses from D3, D6, D9, and D10. Luke 19:10 appears in responses from D4, D8, and D12. D5 and D11 connect God’s mission to salvation. Some also connect mission to serving or blessing (D3, D5, D8, D9). In general, compared to our study of the mission of God, the DT’s responses, while accurate, are much narrower than Scripture’s depiction of God’s mission. See FN, 156-57.

<sup>623</sup> This connection corresponds to our discussion of the inverse relationship of sin and shalom in meeting two. See FN, 11-15.

<sup>624</sup> D3, D5, D8 all wrote of human flourishing. D5, D7, D9, and D12 wrote about shalom (or peace/wholeness). The partnership theme appeared in the responses of D3, D5, D8, and D9. See FN, 161-62.

<sup>625</sup> This tension on the DT is significant because the DT was a representative sample of GFCC.

34). Until we address these conflicting understandings of holiness, it is possible that our own Christian convictions will serve as barriers to our engaging God's mission in Great Falls (FN, 35; cf. 25-27).

Still another theme for future teaching is how we can faithfully adapt our mission efforts in order to better connect with our culture. In meeting five, I challenged the DT with 1 Peter's exhortation to first-century Christians in Asia to faithfully live out the gospel in ways the surrounding culture would find winsome (cf. 1 Pet. 2:12). This exhortation implies at least some measure of contextualization. As I reviewed the meeting notes, I sensed tension on this point and noted, "I think this is a barrier for [GFCC]. We do not understand how we can adapt without being unfaithful" (FN, 35). Subsequent conversation in the meeting helped me understand the barrier. D7 shared that she had never seen contextualization demonstrated in real life. Interestingly, as she connected with D9 and D11, her resistance to the dynamic of faithful adaptation significantly diminished (cf. FN, 35-36). Reviewing notes from this episode after the study, I sensed in it a way forward for GFCC. We will need to provide abundant examples of how people have adapted to particular contexts without compromising their core convictions. If we can show GFCC what faithful adaptation looks like, they will fear it and resist it much less.

Another theme for future teaching has to do with how GFCC can accept people as they are without affirming their sin. This theme has to do with implication three about growing in empathy. As the LT discussed implication three during the January 28 focus group, LT8 helped us understand that many in GFCC may struggle to understand the difference between an "evangelistic opportunity" or a "discipline" scenario, to use LT3's words (FN, 186). LT8 suggested that it would take a lot of teaching and preaching to help

GFCC shift its mindset. LT6 connected the teaching opportunity to the phrase “belong, believe, become” with the recognition that the Spirit is the one who convicts of sin (FN, 182, 183). He believes that teaching on that progression will help GFCC’s culture shift over time and that such teaching will become progressively more important the more GFCC seeks to grow outward (FN, 184).

A final theme for future teaching is the Mosaic principle that like attracts like. All 26 Mosaic segments within GFCC need to understand this principle: they will likely connect best with the people who are most like them (FN, 62). Although Jesus certainly called us to love those who were different from us, he simply assumed that we would love those who are like us (cf. Matt 5:46-47). I wonder how well this assumption holds, given the busyness of contemporary life. Not wishing to reduce love merely to the homogeneous unit principle, it nonetheless seems important to remind GFCC’s members that they are most likely to reach those who are like them. Therefore, their first-mile efforts (cf. Matt. 5:41) should be to engage those who are most like themselves. Teaching members the Mosaics compatibility principle and then equipping them with the skills necessary to engage their peers (FN, 80) will help make GFCC as sticky as possible, not only for those we are currently reaching, but also for those we could potentially reach.<sup>626</sup>

Sixth, GFCC’s leadership must continue to grow in its ability to empower (FN, 136, 138, 183), especially if it intends for GFCC to grow younger (FN, 103, 177). As Jonathan and Thomas McKee write, many volunteers today—especially in the younger generations—are knowledge workers:

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<sup>626</sup> The “sticky” imagery comes from Larry Osborne, whose writings have made a significant impression on my approach to ministry.

A knowledge worker is someone who wants to make decisions. Knowledge workers want to be empowered. They want to volunteer, but they want to influence how the volunteer project should be accomplished.<sup>627</sup>

For these younger volunteers, empowerment means that leaders encourage them to “make the next move, and then tell me about it.”<sup>628</sup> In other words, when leaders have communicated vision and strategic expectations, they “enhance self-determination” by giving volunteers the freedom and latitude to exercise their judgment and make choices about things that affect them without the need to get approval first.<sup>629</sup> These principles especially apply to teams (or ad hoc committees) who are taking point on key aspects of GFCC’s mission and vision.<sup>630</sup>

According to Kotter, empowerment is a matter of removing barriers that limit the power and freedom of volunteers.<sup>631</sup> Facilitating empowerment by removing barriers is essential for the vision to take root in GFCC.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> Jonathan McKee and Thomas W. McKee, *The New Breed: Understanding and Equipping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Volunteer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Loveland, CO: Group, 2012), 16.

<sup>628</sup> McKee and McKee, *The New Breed*, 124.

<sup>629</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017), 224-29, 232. See also Leith Anderson and Jill Fox, *The Volunteer Church: Mobilizing Your Congregation for Growth and Effectiveness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 103, who write, “leaders should diligently seek to push authority and decision making onto those who are closest to the actual ministry.” Using a soccer analogy, they add, “Within the boundaries and rules, the players and coaches can do whatever they want to win” and encourage church leaders to set “basic rules for ministry” and then “[give] freedom to the volunteers in that ministry to operate however they think is best.”

<sup>630</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 45, 54ff, 74, 80-89, 104-05, 121, 123. Schaller advocates for the power of ad hoc committees to help a congregation change. Whereas standing committees tend to maintain the status quo, the singular purpose of ad hoc committees (or teams) often makes them more effective in challenging the status quo.

<sup>631</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 105-19, identifies four barriers to empowerment: structures, lack of training, misaligned systems, and troublesome supervisors.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, identifies “empowering broad-based action” as the fifth stage in the process of creating a major change.



Finally, GFCC leaders need to help GFCC experience some “short-term wins.”<sup>633</sup> Short term wins, or “quick successes reassure the believers, convince the doubters, and confound the critics.”<sup>634</sup> Although, to this point, I have seen buy-in at every level as the DT has shared its findings, the level of change means that change may happen more slowly than many would like. Short-term wins will help sustain and build momentum (FN, 146, 148, 184). In reviewing the project, I think the short-term win approach is how GFCC can move forward with implication four—at least for now. As LT4 reminded the LT in the January 28 focus group, because the Target 10 prefer lower expectation, shorter-term commitments, “Whatever we do does not have to be a massive effort” (FN, 187). Given how the DT connected serving to healing the body and strengthening internal relationships, and also given GFCC’s longing to do quality of life forms of ministry, I see a great opportunity to do short-term forms of service together that improve life for our members and our non-member neighbors. If the DT’s view of what happens when people serve together is even close to accurate, serving together could unleash incredible energy to “build up sufficient momentum to blast through the dysfunctional granite walls found in so many organizations.”<sup>635</sup>

### Personal and Professional Significance

Having reviewed my field notes and meeting materials multiple times, I see four insights as especially significant to me both personally and professionally.

First, my first “read” is very often wrong. By “read” I mean my first impression or first instinct. This theme emerged multiple times and in multiple ways throughout the project.

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<sup>633</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 23, 121-35. On p. 127, Kotter notes, “As a general rule, the more cynics and resisters, the more important are short-term wins.”

<sup>634</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016), 80.

<sup>635</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 135.

I completely underestimated the amount of change this project would ask of participants and GFCC. Not until D5 commented that our study of mission would “change our paradigm on what being a Christian is” (FN, 34) did I begin to see how unrealistic my expectations had been for GFCC (cf. FN, 59). My first read had led me to believe that we were further along than we were. Even seeing it, it was not until after the December 16 focus group when I was driving home that I actually felt the demands of the change implied in what I had shared with GFCC’s LT (FN, 148). Additionally, I underestimated how much internal work would be required for GFCC to begin moving outward. In fact, it was not until after meeting eight, as I was preparing for meeting nine, that I even began to realize how much work would be involved (FN, 84). Furthermore, my first impressions during my team’s prayer walk (FN, 113, 115), my first impressions of meeting twelve (FN, 115, 124-25), and my first impressions after reading the post-study questionnaires (FN, 153, 171, 172) all were completely wrong. Finally, my first instinct was often wrong. I often felt the desire to directly challenge the DT on one point or another. But I did not act on instinct; instead, I waited until I had time to reflect. About two-thirds of the way through the project, I realized that, in almost every example I have referenced, my first instinct looks a whole lot more like “the wisdom from below” than “the wisdom from above” (cf. James 3:13-18). Through the last third of the project, I came to see that the “mind of Christ” often came only through slowing down and looking or listening again.

Second, given the poor quality of my first read, I need to be a part of a covenanted community for the sake of spiritual formation, spiritual discernment, and spiritual leadership. The DT began its work by forming a covenant,<sup>636</sup> and the commitments we covenanted to

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<sup>636</sup> See Appendix F (DT Covenant). Especially significant to me personally were points 3, 4, 5, and 6.

each other were deeply formative, especially for me. In terms of spiritual formation, it was significant how often I discerned God's voice in the voice of a team member (FN, 131). His voice was most recognizable in the repeated call to be patient. I did not realize the extent to which I struggle with patience until I did this project. But throughout its duration, I consistently heard God calling me to greater patience and forbearance, waiting on God to change people (see FN, 19, 23, 34, 36, 37, 38, 45-46, etc.). He often called me through the voice of a DT member. The other thing the DT helped form in me spiritually was hope. In our discussion of discernment in meeting six, I asked the DT, "What might God be inviting you to set aside so that you can be open to his guidance?" D10 replied, "My cynicism. It has really grown a lot in the last five years" (FN, 41). It was as though she had been speaking for me, and I shared that I too struggled with cynicism and sensed God's call to set it aside. As the DT continued its work, that cynicism began to evaporate (cf. FN, 59, 93). As glimpses of vision began to emerge near the end of the project, I wrote, "If we end up moving the direction this team is seeing, everything [GFCC has] been through here will have all been worth it! This emerging vision gives me hope and makes me excited about church again" (FN, 106). Through my participation in the DT, God challenged me to embrace patience and reject cynical despair. Both contributed to my spiritual formation.

Being a part of a covenanted team was also important for spiritual discernment. Reflecting back on the project as a whole, I see clearly now that I had blind spots. I could see clearly the need to help GFCC grow outward—a need affirmed by the DT in implication four, in the Post-Study questionnaires, in the One-Text, and in the December 16 focus group with the LT. What I could not see clearly were the internal barriers to growing outward. For example, the DT helped me recognize the importance of addressing GFCC's busyness

(implication two), its attitude toward those who may not be like us (implication three), and its desire for closer relationships (implication five). In retrospect, I now see that doing these things is actually the door outward, into the community. Given my blind spot, I could not have seen this path forward without the DT.

Lastly, being a part of a covenanted team was also important for spiritual leadership. One place I saw this principle with pristine clarity was in the way different DT members emerged as champions for ideas and leveraged their credibility to win a hearing. Two examples stand out. In the DT, D9 emerged as the champion of what would become implication three—growing in empathy. Even before the DT’s work, she had embraced a key missional idea I wanted to help the DT understand—that belonging precedes believing and becoming. She championed this view to the DT (see FN, 26, 36, et al), and the way she shared transparently about her life experience with this truth significantly impacted others on the DT, especially D7 (FN, 132). LT6 did essentially the same thing with the LT. When LT8 expressed concerns about implication three, LT6 engaged him to help him understand not only how belonging precedes believing and becoming, but also how accepting people as they are does not imply affirming their sin (FN, 185-86). In both cases, I saw a DT or LT member take a concept further faster than I could. This experience impressed upon me the importance of leading in community and complementing my weaknesses with the strengths of other team members.

Third, my role on the DT helped me better understand and appreciate my role in GFCC’s leadership team, which includes GFCC’s elders, evangelists, and intern(s). This project suggested to me that I fit Kate Ward’s description of the team roles of “initiator” and

“investigator.”<sup>637</sup> The DT’s affirmation and encouragement helped me recognize that God has gifted me with the ability to “distill mountains of data” (FN, 132), synthesize it, and interpret it in ways that move groups forward.<sup>638</sup> In the midst of the project, I got a preview of how the data would impact the leadership. As I was uncovering the demographics about the 18-24-year-old population, I sensed that there might be a need for young adult ministry in GFCC. Concurrently, I received an unexpected call from LT2, who was then a student in a Christian mission institute. He expressed interest in moving to Great Falls and doing young adult ministry. Although this opportunity did not fit the timeline of the LT’s staffing plans, I shared with them the data that I had been finding on young adults in Great Falls (FN, 60). Seeing this data helped them—and later GFCC—appreciate the opportunity God was giving us through the possibility of bringing LT2 on staff.<sup>639</sup> D8 confirmed this perspective to the DT in meeting eight (FN, 75). Later, as the LT debriefed the focus groups, both LT4 and LT6 noted how much they appreciated the data and research-driven process (FN, 187). Reflecting on the whole project, I now see that part of my role is to help the LT recognize God’s activity by sharing and interpreting relevant data. This realization suggests my role is not only that of an “initiator” and “investigator” but in some respects that of a teacher.

Understanding my role more clearly shed significant insight on the times when I struggle in my role(s). I did not realize until after the December 16 focus group how great a struggle it had been to carry the knowledge of what the DT was seeing without the ability to

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<sup>637</sup> Kate Ward, *Personality Style at Work: The Secret to Working with (Almost) Anyone* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 140.

<sup>638</sup> This observation was reflected back to me multiple times by the DT, especially by D8 (FN, 136, 148), D9 (FN, 147), and D12 (cf. FN, 144-45).

<sup>639</sup> The eventual hire of LT2 only strengthened GFCC’s efforts to grow younger, as LT9 implied in a text from November 1, 2023 (FN, 68).

share it with the LT.<sup>640</sup> After that focus group, I wrote, “I feel so much relief having all this out in the open rather than having the burden of staying so quiet about it the whole time only to be frustrated by this or by that with no real ability to help people understand why” (FN, 148).<sup>641</sup> Apparently the relief was noticeable because D9 recognized it and explicitly commented about it on Sunday, December 17 (FN, 152). The relief was that of achieving a common understanding. To that point, it was as though the LT and I had been using the same words but completely different dictionaries (cf. FN, 97, 149). The focus group revealed that we had different understandings of where vision came from and different understandings of the role of leadership in relation to discovering and articulating that vision (FN, 137-39, 148-49). Whether we saw everything exactly the same after the focus group is immaterial; we were finally able to communicate with mutual understanding. I realized in reflecting on this experience that I struggle when I cannot share what I need to share and when communication breaks down because of unsurfaced assumptions.

Understanding my role better also helped me understand when I thrive in it. I thrive when I can investigate, analyze, synthesize, and share. I enjoy teaching and facilitating tremendously. Despite the fact that sickness had left me with no energy in the week prior to

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<sup>640</sup> I stayed silent about the data until the full implications emerged. I felt that staying silent was necessary so that I did not unfairly bias the LT in any direction, since I was a member of both the DT and the LT. To attempt to influence them apart from the team seemed to me, in this case, to be an abuse of my role and a devaluation of the DT’s work. The one exception to this silence was when LT2 initiated contact to discuss the possibility of joining GFCC’s staff as an intern. As the LT considered this possibility, I shared with them what the pure demographic findings (meeting seven) had revealed about our opportunity in the area of young adults ministry. When, in meeting eight, DT8 cited a congregational meeting in which I shared these same findings with a large section of GFCC as a discernment confirmation of our insights from meeting seven, I directly addressed this lone exception. I explained to them why I had gone to the LT apart from them. They understood and demonstrated support for my having gone to the LT first with the data. See FN, 75.

<sup>641</sup> Apparently LT5 also picked up on the relief I was feeling. After the December 16 focus group, he commented that he felt like hearing what he heard explained some things recently. He was referring to my frustration with the LT, which had surfaced in surprising ways in a recent meeting. See FN, 148. That had happened on November 30, according to my field notes (107).

the January 28 focus group, I found the presentation and engagement incredibly energizing. I felt more energy the longer the meeting continued. This project helped me see that using my teaching gifts to generate shared understandings that help a group begin taking its next steps forward is when I am at my best in ministry.

Fourth, corporate practices are not value neutral. As I explored the Mosaic segments, I was astounded by how much I saw GFCC in the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guides by Bandy for J34 and E20, the two Mosaic segments with the greatest HH representation in GFCC (FN, 97). Reading through the descriptions and preferences of these two segments I saw almost every description and almost every preference in GFCC's current culture. Recognizing the correlation between these preferences and the high representation of these households sparked an insight: corporate practices are not value neutral. Rather, they form a distinct culture/ethos over time that not only attracts some, but also repels others. Accordingly, if GFCC desires to grow younger, practices must shift more toward the preferences of those in the growing younger segments.

#### Ecclesial Significance

For this project's seven implications to make a lasting impact in GFCC, GFCC's leadership must carefully consider the impact of GFCC's identity, culture, or climate. For as J. R. Woodward writes:

More than a strategy, vision or plan, the unseen culture of a church powerfully shapes her ability to grow, mature and live missionally... The unstated assumptions embedded in a congregation's culture either aid or hinder it in its mission.<sup>642</sup>

Samuel R. Chand echoes this reality in *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*. According to Chand, "Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization...

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<sup>642</sup> J. R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*, Forge Partnership (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 19.

You can have a good strategy in place, but if you don't have the culture and enabling systems, the [negative] culture of the organization will defeat the strategy."<sup>643</sup> No matter how good our vision or strategy, "people always gravitate back to 'who we are.'"<sup>644</sup> This reality places a significant responsibility upon GFCC's leaders to continue shaping a culture receptive to these potential changes.<sup>645</sup>

In our current state, I do not believe GFCC has yet reached consensus on who we are.<sup>646</sup> In the summer of 2022 while doing other research, I concluded that GFCC was experiencing a mini-culture war—what Gilbert Rendle and Alice Mann call a "culture clash."<sup>647</sup> Rendle and Mann attribute culture clash to three factors: generational differences, demographic change surrounding the church, and size transitions. In some ways, GFCC has been dealing with all three. First, GFCC is in a succession process as I succeed GFCC's longest serving minister, Scott Laird. Scott is a Baby Boomer, and I am a Millennial.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration*, Leadership Network (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>644</sup> Guindon, *Disciple-Making Culture*, 22.

<sup>645</sup> Paul M. Dieterich, *Foretaste: Leadership for the Missional Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019). In part one, Dieterich argues that "climate is a missional issue" (14-19) which is connected to things we can and cannot see. He argues for adjusting what we can see, the behavior of leadership. He compares the climate-shaping ability of four different styles of leadership (coercive, competitive, consultative, and team collaborative). Similarly, J. R. Woodward connects culture and leadership styles in *Creating a Missional Culture*. His major contribution is the way he connects missional culture to five different kinds of leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (see chs. 3-4 and chs. 11-15). Guindon also does the same, writing that "Culture is created through consistent behavior over time, a lifestyle of living out core values that govern our actions" (22). I think Guindon's process would likely best connect with GFCC. He recommends beginning with Scripture (Part 1), modeling the culture through consistent leadership behavior (Part 2), embedding the culture in relational environments (Part 3), and reproducing it through discipleship (Part 4).

<sup>646</sup> I base this observation in part on recent conflicts in GFCC (especially in mid-2023). As Ammerman, et al, noted in *Studying Congregations*, "the most intractable conflicts occur when members of the congregation have no consensus on their fundamental identity" (75).

<sup>647</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 123-24.

<sup>648</sup> Cf. William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 148, "The age difference between the outgoing pastor and the incoming pastor is one of



Second, GFCC relocated in 2019 placing us in a demographically different neighborhood. Third, GFCC has changed sizes during the past four years. Given these three factors, GFCC is no longer clear about who it is.

I see this culture clash at play in multiple ways, but I will illustrate it with two approaches. The first approach is size dynamics. According to Gary McIntosh, GFCC is a medium, “stretched cell church,”<sup>649</sup> a concept he illustrates with a rubber band. A rubber band can stretch significantly beyond its original size. But without constant tension, the rubber band returns to its original size. As a medium sized church, this image suggests that GFCC always feels the pull back to smaller church dynamics, especially back to more relational rather than programmatic orientations.<sup>650</sup> The size-change GFCC experienced during and after COVID only increases this tension. Numerically, we went from being an obviously medium church to a small church.<sup>651</sup> According to Rendle and Mann, “Size determines a great deal about your congregation’s culture... When congregations change size, they undergo significant cultural change.”<sup>652</sup> Changes in size partially explains a desire frequently manifesting in GFCC for a more relational orientation.<sup>653</sup> Given the obvious size

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the biggest predictors of how much the congregation will change over the next several years of the new pastor.” The anticipated changes I potentially represent were a significant point in the conflict in 2023.

<sup>649</sup> See Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Bringing out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 143-44, for a chart that lists characteristics of medium, stretched cell churches compared to small, single cell churches.

<sup>650</sup> McIntosh, *One Size*, 25-35. People in smaller churches know (almost) their entire church family, but people in medium churches know only some (26). Additionally, in smaller churches, knowing one another is often more important than impacting the world with the gospel (31). I see both dynamics in GFCC.

<sup>651</sup> Based on GFCC office records, GFCC’s in-person attendance averaged 243 (2019), 121 (2020), 156 (2021), 161 (2022), and 172 (2023). In 2019, membership was 231. In 2023, it was 209.

<sup>652</sup> Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations*, 119, 121.

<sup>653</sup> Implication five suggests that GFCC has a longing for a more relational orientation.

change, we are no longer sure whether we are a medium-sized church with its more programmatic orientation or a small church with its relational orientation.

The second approach considers the many works on congregational identity. As one notable example, considering a church's "mission orientation" to the community surrounding it, McKinney, Roozen, and Carroll described four church identities: activist, civic, sanctuary, and evangelistic.<sup>654</sup> Having observed GFCC's behavior closely for the last six years, I see GFCC as the sanctuary church—a church with an otherworldly view of salvation and a generally private (individualistic) approach to ministry in the community.<sup>655</sup> At the same time, there is a clear desire within GFCC for a more this-worldly gospel and a more public and potentially corporate presence in ministry.<sup>656</sup> Another work, that of Weese and Crabtree, specifically considers congregations in pastoral successions.<sup>657</sup> Their model considers what drives the culture's approach to leadership (knowledge or personality) and how the church evaluates ministry (style or effectiveness). GFCC fits their description of a replication culture (knowledge + effectiveness), but we have recently experienced a pull toward the archival culture (knowledge + style). In other words, we have experienced the tension between

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<sup>654</sup> David A. Roozen, William McKinney, and Jackson W. Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1984), 32-36. Their classification system considers whether a congregation is more this- or other-worldly focused. It also considers whether the church approaches mission in a more public or private way.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36. The DT's study of mission confirmed this. See FN, 11-15.

<sup>656</sup> See chapter five, implications four and seven. The "this worldly + public" orientation is what McKinney, Roozen, and Carroll identify as an "activist" posture (35). Although GFCC does not fit the entire description of the activist type, the activist type nonetheless represents an apparently desired corrective. As the polar opposite to GFCC's current "identity," that it should be the corrective is not surprising. See Oswald and Johnson, *Managing Polarities*, 1-20.

<sup>657</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020), 57-68.

effectiveness and style,<sup>658</sup> which suggests that we have disagreements about who GFCC fundamentally is.<sup>659</sup> Still another work, that of Israel Galindo, offers further insight. In his exploration of church identity, Galindo considers nine different church stances—“how [churches] views [their] mission and ministry and how [they relate] to the world around [them].”<sup>660</sup> Of the nine stances Galindo considers, GFCC best fits the “outreach stance congregation,” who defines outreach as “evangelism” and sees the highest good as reaching the lost.<sup>661</sup> This stance corresponds to Dulles’s model four, “church as herald.”<sup>662</sup> According to Galindo, some evangelistic churches balance their evangelism with social concern. Or, to use Dulles’s categories, they complement model four (“herald”) with model five (“servant”).<sup>663</sup> As the DT indicated, this desire exists within GFCC.

If the foregoing observations are reliable, GFCC may not be entirely clear about who it is, and this lack of cultural clarity stands as a potential ecclesial obstacle to our implementing the seven implications over time. These observations also suggest that GFCC is in the midst of a complex renegotiation of important aspects of its identity. If the changes

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<sup>658</sup> Weese and Crabtree, *Elephant in the Boardroom*, 61, “In a style-based church, the members evaluate the success of the church by how well the leadership preserves a certain style or tradition regardless of effectiveness.” In GFCC, style especially relates to our heritage as part of the Stone-Campbell movement. Particularly, we have struggled with allowing freedom for mission in view of our strong commitments to restoration and unity.

<sup>659</sup> I made these observations about our identity in the summer of 2022 while preparing for GFCC’s upcoming pastoral succession. Disagreements about our identity were also the key point of the conflict in 2023. Although I think GFCC has mostly resolved this matter, it is my observation that many in GFCC still hold style as more valuable than the church as a whole.

<sup>660</sup> Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), 117. See pp. 117-23 for the nine stances.

<sup>661</sup> That GFCC is an “outreach stance” church was apparent from the DT’s pre-study questionnaires, especially their responses to question nine. That question asked, “What is your current understanding of the mission of God?” See FN, 156-57.

<sup>662</sup> Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 76-88.

<sup>663</sup> Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 89-102.

this project represents are to have the impact the DT, LT, and I desire, then GFCC's leadership especially must give careful attention to its use of language, artifacts, narratives, rituals, structures/systems, and ethics.<sup>664</sup> Or, to use Chand's acronym, we must focus on GFCC's CULTURE.<sup>665</sup> That is, we must give thought to control (empowering others), to understanding (clarity about vision and role), to leadership (developing others), to trust (honest, open, and transparent communication), to remaining unafraid (demonstrating courage in the face of risks and even failure), to being responsive (communicating across the organization), and to execution (enacting decisions through delegation and accountability). By giving attention to these things, we can help GFCC grow in knowledge, adapt more faithful attitudes, change individual behaviors, and eventually even alter institutional behavior.<sup>666</sup> Failing to do so will sabotage our progress, but strengthening our culture will eventually serve as "an accelerant" for our vision.<sup>667</sup>

### Theological Significance

I see one major theological implication for GFCC: GFCC must continue pursuing clarity about who God is in relation to his creatures and how he calls us to be in relation to one another. Throughout Scripture God calls his people to be holy as he is holy. Since we cannot be holy as God is holy in the ontological sense, holiness is apparently both ethical and relational. The fact that holiness is a theological attribute suggests that it derives meaning from the nature of God. To be holy is to be ethically and relationally as God himself is. The question for GFCC to continue exploring is this: What exactly does this ethical/relational

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<sup>664</sup> Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 34-44.

<sup>665</sup> Chand, *Culture Code*, 41-60.

<sup>666</sup> Chand, *Culture Code*, 103-06.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

characteristic look like lived out in Great Falls, especially at the corporate level? Or, phrased differently, how should the church relate to the world?

As the DT considered this question, we encountered what I have called the “withdraw/assimilate polarity” (FN, 18-19, 22-23, 25-26, 34, 139, 145). While exploring this polarity, I engaged the DT about the meaning of holiness. Doing so surfaced two very different definitions. On the one hand, some understood holiness as separation (FN, 18-19). Out of this understanding, some have been taught and have internalized a relational ethic of disengagement based upon Scriptures like 1 Cor. 15:33 (FN, 35, 41). On the other hand, D9 highlighted how Jesus reveals a very different approach. To paraphrase D9, Jesus was “with” the world while “being different.” He did not physically separate or move away from sinful people. His distinctiveness was one of internal purity of heart. These two poles represent an ever-present paradox in holiness: it is both separation and engagement. But D9, in my view, is correct in her approach: allowing Jesus’ incarnation to reshape GFCC’s understanding of holiness is essential if GFCC is to grow forward.

Additionally, GFCC has a great opportunity to better appreciate the role of the Holy Spirit. As surfaced multiple times in the DT discussions and in the LT’s focus group, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin (FN, 21, 27, 168, 183, 185-86). To do so, the Spirit will “orchestrate” situations where people learn the truth of God’s Word. Because the Spirit convicts, GFCC is, to some degree, relieved of that responsibility (cf. FN, 44).<sup>668</sup> Rather than doing the Spirit’s work, our role is to follow the lead of the guiding Spirit who

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<sup>668</sup> Given our church culture, emphasizing the Spirit’s role in convicting of sin is a necessary corrective, but it cannot be absolutized. For although Scripture indicates that God convicts those outside (1 Cor. 5:13; cf. John 16:8; Jude 15), at times it suggests the church has a convicting role vis-à-vis outsiders and the surrounding culture. See 1 Cor. 14:24, Eph 5:11, 5:13, and possibly Tit. 1:13. Each of these passages use the same Greek verb (ελεγχω) used in John 16:8.

may use us as part of his convicting work. Whether he uses us or not, he will certainly produce in us the love that is his defining mark (cf. Rom. 5:5, Gal. 5:22). Learning how to walk in the Spirit more consistently would resolve one of the key obstacles voiced in the DT and LT meetings surrounding the withdraw/assimilate polarity and its related, practical concern on the ground in Great Falls—growing in empathy. More closely following the Spirit would provide abundant opportunities to witness God’s holiness—his engaging separateness—lived out (cf. FN, 35). The Spirit, whose job it is to guide the church in mission, would help us navigate the tension of accepting people while also not affirming their sin (FN, 183-87).

If GFCC is to reach the Target 10 or those in Great Falls whose lives may still be a mess, it needs to grow in empathy (implication three). The primary obstacle to doing so, however, is quite possibly a misunderstanding of what holiness means. Better understanding the Triune God could help us better understand and appreciate what holiness does and does not mean. Better understanding could then help us better engage our community and be even more faithful while doing so.

### **Questions Warranting Further Research**

Having completed this study, I see several great opportunities for future study. First, I see the benefit of doing more study on balancing truth and grace. Implication three, on growing in empathy, was one of the strongest implications from the DT, and it received more discussion with the LT than any other implication. Nevertheless, I do not perceive the question has been resolved. Specifically, D7, LT2, LT4, and LT8 all struggle with the balance, or “where the line is” in LT8’s words (FN, 185). D7 expressed the need to see an example of this balance lived well (FN, 35ff). Although she eventually recognized D10 and

D11 as the examples she desired, I do not know that the LT yet sees what she saw. Helping them to better understand and manage this polarity will be the purpose of the ongoing study.

Second, I think it would be productive to do further study on the principles and practices of healthy, intergenerational churches. GFCC is an intergenerational church but prioritizing the Target 10 will disrupt what equilibrium currently exists. Although there is likely no way around some level of disruption, perhaps learning from other churches who steward the generations within their congregation well would help us avoid unnecessary missteps and minimize GFCC's discomfort. Beyond avoiding mistakes, perhaps learning would also help us reach levels of health not even imagined.

Third, I think it would be helpful to pursue additional demographic study.<sup>669</sup> Several topics would be worthy of additional study. Great Falls and Cascade County has a much greater population than the 68,798 within our 5.5-mile-radius study area. GFCC's subscription to MissionInsite allows us to extend that radius outward by another 9.5 miles. Although the population of these additional 9.5 miles is significantly less than that of our study area, investigating them would add depth and possibly new insights to our findings about Great Falls. It could also increase our understanding of GFCC. Of GFCC's 110 HH, 85 lie within our study area. But within the 15 radius (5.5 + 9.5) lie 21 additional GFCC HH. Studying these additional 21 HH might add depth and possibly new insights to our findings.

Additionally, it would be helpful to continue demographic study of the Mosaic segments. Because DT time was limited, we focused almost all our attention on the Target

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<sup>669</sup> MissionInsite regularly updates their demographic content as new information becomes available. Simply returning to MissionInsite one year post-study would potentially generate demographic data that is significantly different than what we considered. Especially worthy of future consideration is the American Beliefs Study (ABS). The next version should go live in 2025. For this reason, I see benefit to reviewing the demographic data annually, especially in the years when the ABS is updated.

10. Although I read through the Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide by Bandy for the 16 Plus Mosaic segments, I did only enough study to get a general sense of how the implications might impact them. But given our discernment about the need to grow younger, neither I nor the DT studied the 16 Plus nearly as in-depth as the Target 10. Doing this study could help GFCC move forward with sensitivity to and consideration for the interests of the 16 Plus segments.

Beyond the 16 Plus, I also think it would be helpful to study the 22 Mosaics segments in Great Falls that GFCC has the potential to reach. Thirteen of these segments would help GFCC grow younger. It would be interesting to compare the Target 10 report to the profiles of these thirteen types for similarities and differences. How, if at all, would consideration of these 13 segments modify our understanding of growing younger? In addition to these 13 segments, GFCC also has the potential to reach nine older segments. I am interested in learning about these segments and how GFCC might reach them as well.

Fourth, I think the busyness of the Target 10 and the culture in general is worthy of further study. On the one hand, I see the wisdom in D3's belief that GFCC should "meet people where they're at. But leave them better than they were" (FN, 42). The Target 10 are living busy lives, and denying this reality is futile. On the other hand, though not wishing to deny their reality, I see value in discipling it. The lifestyle of the Target 10 contrasts sharply with that of Jesus of Nazareth. The disparity makes me wonder how GFCC might not only engage the Target 10 where they are but also invite them to allow Jesus' way to reshape their lives, especially as it pertains to the busyness. What might the gospel have to say to this busyness and the concerns or values that it implies? How might the kingdom realign these concerns or values? Although meeting the Target 10 where they are would certainly bless



them, I am curious about the potentially greater blessing for these segments that lies on the other side of the cross. In further study, I wish to learn how, if possible, churches can offer both blessings without shortchanging one or the other.

Fifth, I would like to pursue additional study of small groups. In these groups, I am thinking not only about GFCC's LIFE Groups, but also its Bible Classes. The Mission Impact Mosaics Application Guide by Bandy provides detailed information on each Mosaic segment's preferences in terms of education and small groups. I would like to study this content more systematically to get a better sense of what sort of ministry would connect with GFCC and with those we are capable of reaching. Additionally, as I gain clarity on the different preferences, I would like to do further study of other churches who practice small groups (LIFE Groups or Bible Classes) in the ways suggested by the Mosaics data.

Sixth, I would like to do some additional study about reaching neighbors in the everyday goings on of life. Specifically, I would like to study how members at work, school, or wherever they find themselves can use everyday encounters with people to help people move closer to Jesus. Although I desire to see GFCC as a whole do good works that will help us collectively represent Jesus to Great Falls, in the meantime, and as we do some of the preliminary internal work necessary to move outward, such a study could benefit members eager to pursue evangelistic or benevolent opportunities at the individual level.

Seventh, as we anticipate doing greater works in the community, I believe there is wisdom in doing further study to learn what is already being done in Great Falls to address the needs the DT identified in our study. What good works are churches doing? What non-profit organizations are in Great Falls? What good works are they doing? What good works are happening in our schools or neighborhoods? Learning what is (and is not) being done by

whom can help GFCC gain a clearer understanding of where we could and could not partner or volunteer. Pursuing such an understanding would also help us build relationships with and receive some mentoring from those who are already serving. It might also show us gaps or areas of need. As we pursue such understanding and communicate these gaps back to GFCC, it could help us discern heartburst affinities for the congregation as a whole. As we find these affinities, we can zero in on the unique role we have been equipped to play in extending God's *shalōm* further into Great Falls.

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## APPENDIX A GOOD WORKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chart, I list all references to the good works motif in the NT based on parts of speech.<sup>670</sup>

Verbs	Noun	Adjective + <i>ergon</i>	Adjective as Object	Adverb
<i>agathopoieō</i> Mark 3:4 Luke 6:9, 33, 35 1 Pet. 2:15, 20; 3:6, 17 3 John 11	<i>agathopoiia</i> 1 Pet. 4:19  <i>agathopoiios</i> 1 Pet. 2:14  <i>kalodidaskalos</i> Tit. 2:3  <i>euergesia</i> Acts 4:9 1 Tim. 6:2	<i>agathos</i> Acts 9:36 Rom. 2:7; 13:3 2 Cor. 9:8 Eph. 2:10 Phil. 1:6 Col. 1:10 2 Thes. 2:17 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17 Tit. 1:16; 3:1  <i>kalos</i> Matt. 5:16 John 10:32, 33 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18 Tit. 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14 Heb. 10:24 1 Pet 2:12	<i>agathos</i> <sup>671</sup> Matt. 19:16, 17 Mark 3:4; 10:17-18 Luke 18:18-19 Rom. 13:3 Gal. 6:10 Eph. 4:28 1 Pet. 3:11, 13 3 John 11  <i>kalos</i> Rom. 7:18, 21 2 Cor. 13:7 Gal. 6:9 Jas. 4:17	<i>kalōs</i> Matt. 12:12 Mark 7:37 Luke 6:27 Acts 10:33 1 Cor. 7:37, 38 Phil. 4:14 Jas. 2:8 2 Pet. 1:19 3 John 6
<i>agathoergeō</i> 1 Tim. 6:18				
<i>agathourgeō</i> Acts 14:17				
<i>kalopoieō</i> 2 Thes. 3:13				
<i>euergeteō</i> Acts 10:38				

<sup>670</sup> References drawn from W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *Concordance to the Greek New Testament*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., fully rev., ed. I. Howard Marshall (New York: T&T Clark, 2002).

<sup>671</sup> Adjectives are given here in their lexical form. These adjectives are used as substantives with verbs (most commonly *poieō*).



### Concentration of Terminology for the Good Works Motif in the New Testament

	Lexical/Syntactic Links <sup>672</sup>	Verses referencing Good Works <sup>673</sup>
Matt.	4	4
Mark	5	4
Luke	6	6
John	2	2
Acts	5	5
Rom.	4	4
1 Cor.	2	2
2 Cor.	2	2
Gal.	2	2
Eph.	2	2
Phil.	2	2
Col.	1	1
1 Thes.	0	0
2 Thes.	2	2
1 Tim.	8	7
2 Tim.	2	2
Tit.	6	6
Phlm.	0	0
Heb.	2	2
Jas.	3	3
1 Pet.	9	9
2 Pet.	1	1
1 John	0	0
2 John	0	0
3 John	2	2
Jude	0	0
Rev.	0	0

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<sup>672</sup> Lexical/Syntactic Links refers to how many of the kinds of ways of referencing the good works motif appear in total in the book in question. Although in terms of semantics words and concepts are not identical (see Craig L. Blomberg, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 123), the concentration of the terminology in some books suggests these as the places from which to define the terminology, which can then be further nuanced in various contexts. Based on the definition of the words in these higher-concentration books, it will be possible to see the concept of good works more clearly in other places in the New Testament.

<sup>673</sup> Each verse may have multiple lexical/syntactic links. Hence, this number may be less than the number in the previous column.

## APPENDIX B - GFCC DEMOGRAPHICS FOR DT FORMATION

DT FORMATION CRITERIA	# or % of DT	Target # for DT	Adjusted #
>= Age 18	12	12	
Stakeholders	Unspecified	Unspecified	
Non-stakeholders	Unspecified	Unspecified	
Concerned about Mission	12	12	
Know the Dem of GF/-CC	4	Up to 4	
Do not Know Dem	8	Up to 8	
Males	5.33%	5 to 6	5
Females	6.67%	6 to 7	7
Average Age	50.27%		
Age 18-24	0.63%	1	2
Age 25-34	1.26%	1	2
Age 35-54	3.93%	4	3
Age 55-64	1.89%	2	2
Age 65+	4.28%	4	3
Married	9.05%	9	9
Unmarried	2.95%	3	3
Children at Home	2.67%	Up to 3	3
No Children at Home	9.33%	Up to 9	9

APPENDIX C - DT TEAM DEMOGRAPHICS BREAKDOWN

DT PARTICIPANT CODE	MALE/ FEMALE	MISSION- MINDED	>/= 18	STAKEHOLDER	MARRIED/ SINGLE	CHILD IN HOME	AGE BRACKET	AGE	
D1	M1	YES	YES	NO	SING	NO	AGE 18-24	20	
D2	M2	YES	YES	YES	MARR	YES	AGE 25-34	33	
D3	M3	YES	YES	YES	MARR	YES	AGE 35-54	45	
D4	M4	YES	YES	YES	MARR	NO	AGE 65+	69	
D5	M5	YES	YES	YES	MARR	NO	AGE 65+	65	
D6	F1	YES	YES	NO	SING	NO	AGE 18-24	21	
D7	F2	YES	YES	NO	MARR	YES	AGE 25-34	29	
D8	F3	YES	YES	YES	MARR	NO	AGE 35-54	53	
D9	F4	YES	YES	NO	MARR	NO	AGE 35-54	54	
D10	F5	YES	YES	NO	SING	NO	AGE 55-64	64	
D11	F6	YES	YES	YES (LGL)	MARR	NO	AGE 55-64	61	
D12	F7	YES	YES	YES	MARR	NO	AGE 65+	67	
		41.67%	MALE		58.33%	25%	25% Child in Home	AVG AGE:	48.4
		58.33%	FEMALE		Stakeholders	Single			



### **Section 3: Opportunities for Mission in Context**

11. Based on your current understanding of Great Falls, who is GFCC's "neighbor"?

12. Based on your current understanding of the mission of God, how might GFCC advance that mission on the West side of Great Falls?

## APPENDIX E - ORIENTATION TO MISSION AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

### Potential Questions

**Overview:** During the first six weeks, the discernment team will familiarize itself with the mission of God and spiritual practices of discernment most pertinent to the design of this project. After brief presentations each week, I will engage the team in a discussion using the following questions selectively, depending on the purpose in view each week.

### **Covenant**

1. What behaviors or attitudes might *promote* our work together as a discernment team?
2. What behaviors or attitudes might *hinder* our work together as a discernment team?
3. What behavioral/attitudinal commitment(s) could we make to one another to prevent these things from hindering our discernment work?
4. Are you willing to make these commitments so that we can accomplish our discernment purpose together?

### **Topic Setting**

5. Based on the component of God's story in Scripture we have reviewed tonight, what is the mission of God?

### **Interpretation**

6. Who does this aspect of the mission of God invite GFCC to *be*?
7. What does this aspect of the mission of God invite GFCC to *do*?
8. What does this aspect of the mission of God invite GFCC to *say*?

### **Coming to Terms**

9. If GFCC accepted the invitation in this aspect of the mission of God, how might it require GFCC to think differently about its involvement in the mission of God?
10. If GFCC accepted the invitation in this aspect of the mission of God, what might it require GFCC to *start doing*?
11. If GFCC accepted the invitation in this aspect of the mission of God, what might it require GFCC to *do more of*?

12. If GFCC accepted the invitation in this aspect of the mission of God, what *ways of being* might it require us to develop?

### **Church and Community**

13. What sort of relationship do you believe this aspect of the mission of God calls GFCC to develop with the surrounding community?
14. What aspects of mission has God best equipped GFCC for?
15. What implications might this equipping have for discerning the missional implications of GFCC's context?

### **Spiritual Discernment**

16. How do you typically "hear from God"?
17. How did God communicate with persons in Scripture?
18. How can we be sure we are hearing from God and not from someone (-thing) else?
19. What might God be inviting you to set aside so that you can be open to his guidance?
20. What desires stir within you as you reflect on these things?
21. What Scripture(s) come(s) to mind as we process together?
22. What have you been "noticing" in the past week?
23. What (if anything) have you been stirred to pray about as you have reflected on the mission of God this past week?

### **Addendum: Potential Probes following Questions**

24. Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?
25. Would you help me understand \_\_\_\_\_?
26. Could you share an example of \_\_\_\_\_?

APPENDIX F - DT COVENANT  
Final Version

***What behaviors or attitudes might promote our work together  
as a discernment team?***

***What behaviors or attitudes might hinder our work together  
as a discernment team?***

***What behavioral/attitudinal commitment(s) could we make to one another to  
prevent these things from hindering our discernment work?***

- 
1. We will show up, we will be prepared, and we will participate in the discernment process.
  2. We will honor confidentiality. We will not share identifying information or share in a way that allows anyone on this team to be identified.
  3. We will embrace a growth/learning stance that is hopeful, open to change, and receptive to hearing/trying new things.
  4. We will be considerate of others on the team as well as GFCC, seeking what is in the best interest of the other.
  5. We will communicate with one another. We will encourage one another to speak up, and we will listen without interruption when others speak, welcoming the voice of difference/dissent/diversity in the recognition that we can (and often do) balance each other out.
  6. We will be patient with one another, attempting to understand without judgment.
  7. We will disagree with dignity, refusing to destroy our team members.
  8. We will stay solution focused if/when we encounter problems, people, or “problem people.” We will be willing to bend (compromise) if necessary.
  9. We will joke when it is appropriate. And we will have fun.
- 

***Are you willing to make these commitments so that we can accomplish our  
discernment purpose together?***



## APPENDIX G - “ONE-TEXT” Question Prompts

**Overview:** In order to assess the effectiveness of this project’s intervention, I will involve the discernment team in generating a written synthesis of our most salient insights relative to the mission of God and GFCC’s best opportunities to advance it on the West side of Great Falls. To complete this written synthesis, we will adapt the “one text” negotiating procedure.<sup>675</sup> One person, whom the group will select, will draft a document stating his or her understanding of our consensus, and every person on the team will be encouraged to help edit it until the document states the consensus of our team.

### **Part 1: Covenant**

1. What behavioral/attitudinal commitment(s) do we make to one another to promote our work together as a team?

### **Part 2: The Mission of God and Spiritual Discernment**

2. What is our current understanding of the mission of God?
3. What aspects of mission has God best equipped GFCC for?
4. What sort of relationship is God inviting GFCC to develop with our community?
5. What is God calling GFCC to *be*?
6. What is God calling GFCC to *do*?
7. What is God calling GFCC to *say*?

### **Part 3: Demographic Data from MissionInsite on Great Falls**

8. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, and the demographic data we reviewed, what are our most significant learnings from the demographic data?
9. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, and the demographic data we reviewed, who is GFCC’s neighbor?
10. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, and the demographic data we reviewed, what do we see as the most significant implications of the demographic data for the future mission of GFCC?

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<sup>675</sup> On the *un*-adapted “one text procedure,” see Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to YES: Negotiating without Giving In*, ed. Bruce Patton (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 114-19. I adapted this procedure along the lines of current practices in Great Falls pertinent to editing creating group documents.

#### **Part 4: Demographic Data from MissionInsite on GFCC**

11. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what are your *most significant learnings* from the demographic data on GFCC?
12. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what do you see as the most significant implications of this demographic data for the future mission of GFCC?

#### **Part 5: Observations from our Prayer Walk/Drive**

13. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and our prayer walk/drive, what were our most significant observations from our prayer walk/drive?
14. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and our prayer walk/drive, who is GFCC's neighbor?
15. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and our prayer walk/drive, what do we see as the most significant implications of the prayer walk for the future mission of GFCC?

#### **Part 6: Missional Implications of our Context**

16. Synthesizing our previous insights, how might GFCC advance the mission of God on the West side of Great Falls?

APPENDIX H - PROCESSING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON GREAT FALLS  
Week 8 Questions

**Overview:** During week seven, the discernment team will familiarize ourselves with demographic data on Great Falls from MissionInsite. With a week of reflection, the team will return to process these data together in week eight.

### Potential Questions

1. What would you like additional clarification on?
2. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, and this demographic data, who is GFCC's neighbor?
3. What missional "assets" (thinking in terms of the abilities, strengths, etc. of *people*) do you notice in our context?
4. What missional "assets" (thinking in terms of *places*) do you notice in our context?
5. Where do you observe life and energy in our context?
6. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what are your *most significant learnings* from the demographic data?
7. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what does this data *confirm* for you?
8. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what does this data *call into question* for you?
9. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what *new insights* does it prompt?
10. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what do you see as the most significant implications of this demographic data for the future mission of GFCC?

### Addendum: Potential Probes following Questions

11. Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?
12. Would you help me understand \_\_\_\_\_?
13. Could you share an example of \_\_\_\_\_?

APPENDIX I - Processing Demographic Data on GFCC  
Week 10 Questions

**Overview:** During week nine, the discernment team will familiarize ourselves with demographic data on GFCC from MissionInsite. With a week of reflection, the team will return to process these data together in week ten.

### Potential Questions

1. What would you like additional clarification on?
2. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, and this demographic data, who is GFCC?
3. How is GFCC *similar to* Great Falls?
4. What are the points of greatest overlap between GFCC and Great Falls?
5. How is GFCC *dissimilar to* Great Falls?
6. What are the points of least overlap between GFCC and Great Falls?
7. What missional “assets” (thinking in terms of the abilities, strengths, etc. of *people*) do you notice in our congregation?
8. What missional “assets” (thinking in terms of *neighborhoods where our members live*) do you notice in our congregation?
9. What missional “assets” (thinking in terms of *ministries*) do you notice in our congregation?
10. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what are your *most significant learnings* from the demographic data on GFCC?
11. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what does this data *confirm* for you?
12. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what does this data *call into question* for you?
13. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what *new insights* does it prompt?
14. In light of our understanding of the mission of God and Spiritual discernment, what do you see as the most significant implications of this demographic data for the future mission of GFCC?

**Addendum: Potential Probes following Questions**

15. Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?
16. Would you help me understand \_\_\_\_\_?
17. Could you share an example of \_\_\_\_\_?

APPENDIX J - PROCESSING THE PRAYER WALK/DRIVE TOGETHER  
Week 12 Questions

**Overview:** During week eleven of our work together, the discernment team will participate in a prayer walk/drive of Great Falls. With a week of reflection, the team will return to process the prayer walk/drive together in week twelve.

### Potential Questions

1. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and the prayer walk/drive, what were your *most significant impressions* from our prayer walk/drive?
2. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and the prayer walk/drive, who is GFCC's neighbor?
3. What missional "assets" (thinking in terms of the abilities, strengths, etc. of *people*) do you notice in our context?
4. What missional "assets" (thinking in terms of *places*) do you notice in our context?
5. Where do you observe life and energy in our context?
6. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what did the prayer walk/drive *confirm* for you?
7. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what did the prayer walk/drive *call into question* for you?
8. Regarding your understanding of the missional opportunities on the West side of Great Falls, what *new insights* the prayer walk/drive prompt?
9. In light of our understanding of the mission of God, Spiritual discernment, the demographic data we reviewed, and the prayer walk/drive, what do you see as the most significant implications of the prayer walk for the future mission of GFCC?

### Addendum: Potential Probes following Questions

10. Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?
11. Would you help me understand \_\_\_\_\_?
12. Could you share an example of \_\_\_\_\_?

APPENDIX K – DISCERNMENT GUIDE

A  
Discernment  
Guide

Summer 2023

Dear Discernment Team Member,

Thank you for your partnership in our effort to discern the missional implications of our congregation's new location on the West side of Great Falls. In part through your efforts, our church will eventually be able to explore new ways and improve old ways of advancing God's Kingdom mission here in Great Falls. Learning who our neighbors are and what loving them well invites and requires of us as a congregation is our first step. That's the "discernment" piece of discerning missional implications.

Hebrews 5:14 implies that discernment is something we must practice. It takes some "training" to get good at discernment. Because our work together as a team depends on our ability to discern well, I have produced this discernment guide to help us *practice* discernment. This guide will introduce (or re-introduce) you to some good principles and practices pertaining to spiritual discernment.

In our first team meeting, I will help us come to a shared understanding of what discernment is and why it is important for our purposes. We will also review the first Overview. In subsequent weeks, the Overview will be a part of our discussion as well. Between team meetings, I will encourage you to use the reflection questions throughout the week. These questions can prompt you to pay attention to new things in new ways.

I hope this whets your appetite for the work we will be doing together. In the meantime, may God bless you, your preparation, and our team's work together!

Matt Burleson  
Summer 2023



## Instructions

- Please bring this guide with you to each team meeting. We will review the “Overview” sections together.
- Throughout the week, you might consider re-reading the Overview and possibly meditating on some of the Scripture references.
- Throughout the week, use the questions as prompts to help you pay attention to God’s activity in and around you. I encourage you to **journal** (some of) your responses to (some of) the questions. **Specifically, pay attention to your desires and what Scriptures are emerging through the process.** Also note any insights that arise as you consider these things.
- Pray about what comes up in your reflections.
- Please feel free to bring any questions to our team meetings.
- Remember, you need to spend no longer than 30 minutes between meetings in preparation.

## Week 1

### *Discernment, Scripture, and God's Character*

#### Overview

Discernment is the process of *noticing* and *naming* the presence and activity of God and then *navigating* our lives in light of God's presence and activity. This process involves Scripture at every point.

Scripture plays a central role in discernment. The "*sacred writings*" are an inspired, reliable, and authoritative witness (cf. **John 5:39**) to God's work *in* and *beyond* history (cf. **2 Tim 3:16-17**; **2 Pet 1:16-21**). They not only tell us *what God has done*, but also *who God is* and *what God will do*.

Scripture bears witness to a Triune God who pours himself out for the goodness of God's creatures. God the Father sends the Son in the power of the Spirit for the salvation—the life—of the world (**1 John 4:9, 14**). God, in Christ and by the power of the Spirit, *descended* that we might *ascend* (cf. **Eph 4:7-10**); laid life down in Jesus so that we might take life up (**1 John 3:16**; **John 10:11, 14-15, 17-18**; cf. **Rom 5:6-10**; **2 Cor 5:14-15**); became poor that we might become rich (**2 Cor 8:9**); emptied himself that we might be filled; and humbled himself that we might be exalted (**Phil 2:5-11**). And these are not mere historical facts, glorious as they are; they represent the unchanging heart of God. In Paul's words, "*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*" (**Rom 8:32**) God *remains* the "*good father*" who gives *good* gifts to those who ask (**Matt 7:11**), a God whose purpose is forever compassionate and merciful (**James 5:11**).

Out of Scripture's witness to God's nature and activity comes the *instructive* character of Scripture. In **2 Timothy** Paul emphasizes that the inspired, Sacred Writings (Scripture) are "*useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work*" (**3:16-17**). In other words, Scripture is one of God's ways of not only guiding us (conviction, correction) but also outfitting (teaching, training) us. "*Speaking the truth in love*" is one of the ways the body grows into the full stature of Christ (**Eph 4:13, 15**). Through its narrative(s), through its principles, and through its occasional rules, Scripture, working in tandem with the Spirit who inspired it (cf. **1 John 2:18-27**; **2 Cor 3:1-4:6**; **John 14:25-26**), becomes "*a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path*" (**Psa 119:105**).

As God continues breathing into these holy words, just as He did with humanity, these Words live with life from God (cf. **2 Tim 3:16-17**; **Heb 4:12**) and do things that only God can do. Through the Word and Spirit, God continues to call things into existence (cf. **Gen 1**; **Rom 4:17**; **Heb 11:3**; **Rev 21:5**). Through the Word and the Spirit, God may even wish to call forth *new* things in our congregation. These new things would not be inconsistent with previous revelation; to the contrary, these new things would help us realize and live out the faith, hope, and love to which Scripture has always been summoning the people of God.

#### Question Prompts

- *What Scriptures arise in your heart as you consider these things?*
- *What attribute of God is most significant to you right now?*
- *How confident are you in the goodness of God's purpose for you/us?*
- *What desires (for you, for GFCC) does God's love stir in your heart? (cf. 2 Cor 5:14)*

## Week 2

### *Discernment, the Spirit, and Desire*

#### Overview

When Jesus' time to return to the Father came, He assured His disciples that He would not leave them alone (**John 14:18ff**) but would send the Holy Spirit to guide them (**John 14:25ff; 16:8-11, 12-14**). The Holy Spirit would work alongside the message heard from the beginning (**1 John 2:18-27**), which we now have in Scripture. This leading of the Spirit was one of Jesus' first experiences following His baptism (**Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1**), and Paul singles it out as one of the defining marks that we are children of God (**Rom 8:14**).

In **Galatians 5:1ff**, Paul emphasizes the *freedom* we have in Christ. Being saved places us in *wide open places* with *many* good options for honoring God. This multiplicity of options to do good is one reason Paul writes, *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* (**Eph 5:15-17, cf. 8b-10**). For *disciples of Christ*, life in the Kingdom is not *good vs. evil* (we have died to sin!), but *good vs. better vs. best*. The Spirit's leading can help us to discern the difference as we press forward (**cf. Phil 3:12-16**).

In **Galatians 5:16-17**, Paul describes how the Spirit leads and how we can walk in the Spirit. *"But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh are against the [desires of the] Spirit, the desires of the Spirit are against the [desires of the] flesh."* The Spirit leads us through *desire*. In the same way we experience desires that lead us *away from* God (e.g., the "flesh"), we can also experience desires that lead us *toward* God (e.g., the "Spirit"). As Paul affirms in **Col 1:9-12**, the Spirit is the source of wisdom, and that wisdom often lies hidden in Spiritual desires (see also **1 Cor 2:6-16**). Though we must be discerning with desires (**cf. 1 Thes 5:21; 1 John 4:1-6**), attending to *desire* is one of the first steps in discernment. Doing so ensures that we *continue* living in the Spirit just as we *began* in the Spirit (**cf. Gal 3:3**).

#### Question Prompts

- *Pay attention to your desires. Perhaps even spend some time in silence for the purpose of paying attention to these desires.*
  - *What are your desires, dreams, hopes, longings for your personal walk with the Lord?*
  - *What are your desires, dreams, hopes, longings for the future of the Great Falls Church of Christ?*
  - *At this point, simply notice and name the desires. Future discussions as a team will provide plenty of guidance on navigating desire. In the coming weeks, keep a journal (in some form) of these desires—any way that helps you keep these desires top of mind.*
- *In the coming weeks, the Spirit might bring Scriptures to your mind that illuminate what the Spirit is wishing to say to the church (cf. John 14:25-26). If/when these Scriptures come to mind, do what Mary did: hold them in your heart, perhaps even writing them down, even if the full significance of them is not clear at the moment. Trust that in due time God will grant the clarity that is needed. What Scriptures arise in your heart as you consider these things?*

## Week 3

### *Discernment and Impressions*

#### Overview

In **John 10**, Jesus compares his relationship with his people to that between shepherds and their sheep. The sheep will not follow the voice of a hireling; they only follow the voice of their Shepherd. Jesus draws the analogy full circle: “*My sheep bear my voice and I know them, and they follow me*” (**10:27**; cf. **10:1-6, 14**). Jesus’ words make an *impression* on us, and we can learn to recognize this *impression* the same way we would recognize a familiar voice.

Since we are still “sheep” and Jesus is still a “shepherd,” we might expect that he *continues* to calling His sheep here or there today. If this surprises us, it might suggest that we do not always *bear* His calling. But this shouldn’t alarm us. People blind to God’s presence and activity is a subplot of Scripture. The Scriptures illustrate that there is a *lot* of “God activity” going on which saints may simply *miss*. Elijah prays for God to open his eyes. God does, and the servant sees things previously hidden (cf. **2 Kings 6:8-23, esp. v. 17**). Paul prays that God would enlighten the eyes of the Ephesians’ hearts so that they might see what they had missed (**Eph 1:15-19ff**). James affirms that God *will* answer such prayers. “*If any one of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him...*” (**James 1:5ff**). If we ask, God will help us see and hear—*perceive*—the leading of Jesus through the Spirit.

But how do we recognize Jesus’ leading us through the Spirit? One way is that taught by Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius said that desires from God and desires *not* from God have very different characteristics. According to Ignatius, desires not from God (Desolations)...<sup>1</sup>

1. ...lead us *away from* faith, hope, and love, leaving us less trusting, less optimistic, and less loving.
2. ...lead us *away from* a sense of God’s closeness. We feel abandoned by God, doubtful of our relationship with God.
3. ...lead us *away from* peace and into *peacelessness, disquietude, and agitation*.
4. ...lead us *away from* clarity regarding the goal of our existence.
5. ...lead us to boredom, tepidity, and apathy, like a sea without wind.
6. ...fill us with (mostly) irrational fear and worry.
7. ...cause us to desire to hide in secrecy.
8. ...divert us to the “seemingly holy”—the wrong mission for us, the right mission at the wrong time, the right mission but the wrong method/emphasis.

On the other hand, desires from God (Consolations)...

1. ...lead us toward faith, hope, and love.
2. ...lead to a sense of God’s closeness.
3. ...lead to peace and tranquility, even in the midst of pain or difficulty.
4. ...lead to great desires, as if we are dreaming with God.
5. ...lead us to transparency—nothing to hide.

Sue Pickering suggests another way to recognize the guiding voice of Jesus today. Jesus once taught that out of the *heart* the mouth *speaks* (**Matt 12:34; 15:18; Luke 6:45**). If this is true, then what our shepherd *says* is a reflection of who our shepherd *is*. In other words, the touchstone of any supposed “word” of God is the character of God himself, as revealed in Scripture (cf. **Exod 34:6-7; John 1:17-18**). Scripture’s many descriptions of *who God is* provide a way of *testing* whether we are hearing the Lord’s voice or some other voice. They help us recognize when we are being led by the Spirit of Jesus and when we are being drawn by a “hireling,” to use Jesus’ word.

Based on these ideas, Pickering shares three lists to help us distinguish the voice of the “good shepherd” not only from the voice of our own personality/ego, but also from the voices of spiritual sources other than God.<sup>2</sup> According to Pickering...

**Typically, the “voice” of the Good Shepherd is...**

- consistent with what we know of God, particularly God as revealed in Jesus, in Scripture;
- encouraging and helpful;
- relevant to our situation—like an answer to an unspoken prayer;
- patient and loving, even in reproof;
- sometimes surprising and challenging in a way that deepens our character and commitment;
- practical and relevant to our situation;
- open to reflection and scrutiny;
- not generally needing to be acted on right away (unless in times of imminent danger).

**Typically, “the interior voice of our own personality and ego has the qualities of...**

- a thought-through process, resulting from applying logic and reasoning to a situation;
- making us feel good about ourselves, i.e., it appeals to the ego;
- varying, depending on what information we receive and the outer circumstances;
- helping us to ‘save face’ in front of others or to look good;
- positive or negative ‘self-talk’—our interior conversation with ourselves;
- a replay of ‘old messages’ from parents or significant adults, which we still use as reference points, and which may contain criticism that as adults we have yet to set aside.”

**Typically, voices from spiritual sources *other than God* are...**

- accusing, nasty, putting us down, playing on our vulnerabilities;
- causing confusion, promoting fear, panic, anxiety, and guilt;
- disturbing our peace, unsettling us;
- misrepresenting God’s character;
- undermining our faith;
- attacking our confidence in God;
- ‘pushy’, insistent, trying to compel a sudden reaction.

In sum, desires from the Spirit lead us *toward* God, and desires *not* from the Spirit lead us *away from* God. Recognizing the difference in the “spirits” or “desires” is the heart of discernment. Use these lists of characteristics as some classic indicators of which direction our desires are taking us.

## Question Prompts

- *How familiar are you with the voice of the Shepherd?*
- *Spend some time reviewing (and even updating) your desires in light of Consolation/Desolation.*
  - *Which desires reflect consolation?*
  - *Which desires reflect desolation?*
- *What Scriptures arise in your heart as you consider these things?*
- **NOTE:** *In the coming weeks, keep these concepts (consolation and desolation) with you as you consider each of the following topics related to discernment.*

## Week 4

### *Discernment and the Greatest Commands*

#### Overview

If God is moving all things toward reconciliation in Christ, how might the Spirit of God invite us to participate? The Scriptures answer in one word: love. God's Spirit pours God's love in our heart (**Rom 5:5**), and love is the fruit (**Gal 5:22-23; Eph 3:14-19**). Holy love is the heart of God, and God's heart is the *beginning* and *end* of discernment. Love is the key to discernment, which is perhaps why Jesus says there is no commandment greater (**Mark 12:28-30**). Jesus identified three objects of love in his teaching on the great command: love for God, love for self, and love for neighbor.

Love for God is our motivation as disciples (**cf. 2 Cor 5:14**); it is also the goal, the target of our lives (**1 Tim 1:5ff**). It is the summation of our duty toward God, the path of life and blessing (**cf. Deut 6:4-6; 10:12-13; 11:1, 8-9, 13, 22-23, 26-28**). Despite his brevity, Jude prioritized this simple exhortation: "*Keep yourselves in the love [for] God while you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life*" (**Jude 21**). Loving God supremely brings us closer to the Kingdom of God (**cf. Mark 12:34**). Consequently, the simplest way to frame discernment may be to simply ask, "*What does my love for God invite (from me/us)? What does it require of me/us?*"

But love for God does not end *with* God. In both Testaments, when God speaks of loving Him with everything we are, He includes a form of *self*-love as well. In what is called the "ritual decalogue," the priestly equivalent of the Ten Commandments, God tells us, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (**Lev 19:18; cf. Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; and James 2:8**). Scripture not only reveals who God is; it reveals who the *self* is that I should love. When we are baptized and receive the gift that is God's Spirit (**cf. Acts 2:38**), God pours his love in our hearts (**Rom 5:5**) by whom we cry "Abba, Father!" (**Rom 8:15-17**) marking us as His dearly-loved children who are His delight (**Eph 5:1; Matt 3:16-17**). This dearly-loved *true* self is hidden with Christ in God (**cf. Col 3:3**), and it can only be gained in the loss of the *false* self—the self that stands in the way of God's purposes (**cf. Mark 8:31-38; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:5ff**). As we die to the *false* self ("*I am crucified with Christ*"), we find the *true* self, the resurrection life of Jesus, at work in us ("*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,*" **Gal 2:20; cf. 2 Cor 4**). This true self, this "*Christ in [me], the hope of glory*" (**cf. Col 1:27**), a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (**1 Cor 6:19-20; cf. Eph 3:14-19; John 14:23**), and therefore destroying it means destroying God's temple with all that implies (**cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17**). Accordingly, we must not only ask the question "*What does love for God invite/require?*" but "*What does love for my true self invite/require?*"

But even self-love is not an end in itself. Eight times across both covenants in Scripture God repeats this statement: "*you shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (**Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; James 2:8**). James referred to this as "*the royal law*" (**James 2:8**). So important is love for *neighbor* that John will say there is no love for *God* without it (**1 John 4:20**). Once, a Biblical scholar wishing to get himself out of the royal law, attempted to force Jesus to narrow the definition of neighbor. In response, Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25-37**), the point of which is that *no human* falls outside of the command to "*love your neighbor as yourself.*" Jesus further illustrated this when he told the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in **Matt 25:31-46**. Jesus showed up, unrecognized, in the hungry, in the thirsty, in the unwelcome, in the naked, in the sick, and in the imprisoned. To the extent the righteous loved these "least" ones, they loved Jesus, and to the extent the unrighteous did *not* love these "least" ones, they did *not* love Jesus. In Jesus' parable, judgment, when all else was equal, boiled down to love for neighbor.

Love for neighbor not only includes earthy, practical love (cf. **Lev 19:2, 9-18**); it also compels witness. Jesus not only “*went about doing good*” (**Acts 10:38**), but also “*preaching good news of peace*” (**Acts 10:36**). In the same way, “*the love of Christ compels us*” to be “*ambassadors of Christ*” (**2 Cor 5:14, 20**). Because of Jesus’ great love and our love for Jesus, we plead with others to be reconciled to God through Him (**2 Cor 5:18-20; Jude 20-23**). As we go into all the world, our love for Christ compels us to be witnesses for Him as we share the Gospel (cf. **Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-8; 2:1ff; John 20:19-23**). And this we do not only as *individuals*, but also as *congregations*. Like the Thessalonian church, we work together to share our faith with the world (cf. **1 Thes 1:8**). We partner with the Triune God so that the message of reconciliation in Christ is proclaimed to all creation (cf. **Eph 3:10-11**). Love for Jesus, both as individuals and as a congregation, includes not only the Great Compassion (e.g., **Matt 25:31-46**), but also the Great Commission (e.g., **Matt 28:18-20**). Accordingly, we must not only ask the question “*What does love for God and myself invite/require?*” but “*What does love for my neighbor invite/require?*”

Love is *the* all-encompassing law of the Kingdom, the one that fulfills every other requirement (cf. **1 Cor 16:14; Rom 13:8-11; Gal 5:13-14; 1 Tim 1:5-11**). Love is not only how we participate in the redemptive movement of God in Christ and by the power of the Spirit; it is the key to discerning well and “*approving what is excellent*” (**Phil 1:9-11**).

## Question Prompts

- *What does love for God invite/require you to do/be in this season?*
- *What does love for your true self (“Christ in you, the hope of glory”) invite/require you to do/be in this season?*
- *What does love for your neighbor invite/require you to do/be in this season?*
- *What Scriptures arise in your heart as you consider these things?*
- *Review (and update) your list of desires in light of the Great Command, the Great Compassion, and the Great Commission. Which desires most exhibit love for neighbor? Which desires least exhibit love for neighbor? What insight does this generate for you?*

## Week 5

### *Discernment and the Community*

#### Overview

Discerning God's redemptive movement in this world in Christ and by the power of the Spirit leads us to love God, to love our (true) selves, and to love our neighbor in word (evangelism) and deed (good works). But love is no solo act. Love not only reaches out to others; it *includes others* in the attempt to discern what is loving. Nowhere is the *inclusive, communal* dimension of discernment more apparent than in churches attempt to discern God's will together.

Discernment is a communal act of love (cf. **Phil 1:9-11**) that considers how the body has been knit together (cf. **Col 2:2-3; Eph 4:16**). *"We are members of one another"* (cf. **Eph 4:25; Rom 12:5**), and as we pursue the Great Compassion and the Great Commission, we must also consider the body. Paul's word for this consideration of the life and health of the body is *"sound"* (cf. **1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2, 8**). Something that is *"sound"* is *"healthy"* for the body of Christ, and something that is *"unsound"* is something that is *unhealthy* for the body of Christ. Discerning the Spiritual wisdom from above leads to the *health* of the body. *"The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere"* (**James 3:17**) in contrast to *"earthly, unspiritual, and demonic wisdom"* that leads to *"bitter jealousy and selfish ambition... and every vile practice"* (**James 3:14, 16**). Spirit-led love does *not* destroy the body; it leads to its upbuilding (cf. **1 Cor 12:7, 24-25; ch. 13; 14:1, 12, 26**).

Because we must consider the body, not every *open door* is appropriate for us to pass through. In **2 Cor 2:12-13**, God opened a door for Paul in Asia. But Paul did not pass through it because his spirit was not at rest. Consideration of himself and his brother in Christ, Titus, took him a different way. Note that Paul does not describe walking away from this open door as sinful. This lesson is important: *sometimes* we must walk away from *even good or permissible* opportunities out of loving consideration for the body of Christ (cf. **Rom 14-15; 1 Cor 8:1-11:1**). On the other hand, sometimes we must follow our cruciform God in redemptive suffering. At such times, we must die to ourselves and take up our crosses and follow Jesus.

To help us discern the difference, God does two things. First, God places Shepherds in the body of Christ *"to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it"* (**Titus 1:9; cf. Eph 4:11-13**). Discerning as a body, we must be willing to submit to those whom the Holy Spirit has made overseers (cf. **1 Pet 5:1-5; Acts 20:28-31**), to those who are keeping watch over our souls as those who will give an account (**Heb 13:17**), to those charged with preserving the health of the body so that it can be built up and grow into Christ in every way. Second, God empowers the body to *continue* all that Jesus began to do and teach through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father (cf. **Acts 1:1, 4-5, 8; 2:13, 14-21, 32-33, 38-39**). We receive this gift, the promised Spirit, at baptism (cf. **Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 12:13**). The Spirit then empowers *us* to do what Jesus did and teach what Jesus taught. This empowerment comes in the form of *gifts* given for the upbuilding of the body of Christ (cf. **1 Cor 12:12-31; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:7-11; 1 Pet 4:7-11**). Characteristic of this gifting is *variety*. Not all have the same gifts. To the contrary, the Spirit apportions the gifts as *God wills* (cf. **1 Cor 12:12, 24, 28**). *"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose."* (**1 Cor 12:18**). If this is the case, then not only must members of the body tend the field God has assigned (cf. **2 Cor 10:13-15**), so also must churches. As individuals have different gifts, so apparently do churches. *Not every church is equipped by God for every kind of ministry*. Attending to this reality is simply a recognition of how *God* has chosen to design the body. When God has given, we must employ our gifts as faithful stewards (cf. **Matt 25:1-30**) following the Spirit even as far as the ends of the earth (cf. **Acts 1:8**). But



where God has *not* gifted, we must do as the Apostles did: stay put, pray, and wait (**cf. Acts 1:4**). It may be in the waiting and praying that we once again experience a fresh call of God (**cf. Acts 13:1-3**).

Loving consideration of one another and of all leads to the holiness that enables us to stand blameless before God (**1 Thes 3:12-13**). Such love might lead us to walk through open doors; it might even lead us to walk away (**2 Cor 2:12-13**).

## Question Prompts

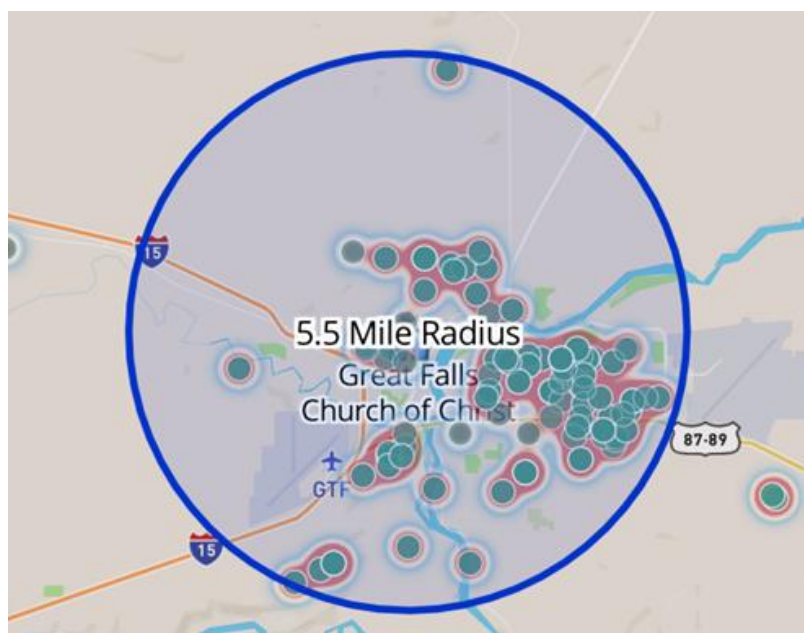
- *How would you describe the role of Shepherds in relation to discerning what is best for the body?*
- *How would you describe the role of Spiritual Giftedness in relation to discerning potential ministries for the body?*
- *Review (and update) your list of desires.*
  - *Based on your knowledge of the Great Falls Church of Christ, which desires would lead to the upbuilding, life, and health of this body? Which most likely would not? What insight does this generate for you?*
  - *Based on what you know about GFCC, for which desires are we most gifted? For which are we most likely not gifted? What insight does this generate for you?*
- *What Scriptures arise in your heart as you consider these things?*

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Thibodeaux, SJ, *God's Voice Within: The Ignatian Way to Discover God's Will* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010). See especially chs. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 78-79.

## APPENDIX L - STUDY AREA MAP

16-Minute Travel Polygon and GFCC Member Pin Map<sup>676</sup>5.5 Mile Radius from GFCC's Building<sup>677</sup>

<sup>676</sup> In this map, the green polygon is a travel polygon. It illustrates every destination within a sixteen-minute drive (the average commute time in Great Falls) from GFCC's campus. The dark green dots represent the homes of GFCC's membership. Significantly, 84.79% of GFCC's membership lives within this sixteen-minute polygon.

<sup>677</sup> The blue circle indicates the DT's study area. From GFCC's campus to the far eastern edge of the densest membership cluster is almost exactly 5.5 miles. This was the determining factor in defining the study area.

APPENDIX M - GFCC/GREAT FALLS DEMOGRAPHICS COMPARISON

CATEGORY	#	% of GFCC	CATEGORY	#	% of GF	Page Ref
Total Membership (> 18, located in GF)	177	77.29	Total Population (> 18)	53,695	78.05	4
Ages 0-17 -- Child/Grandchild of Member)	52	22.71	Ages 0-17 Population	15,103	21.95	4
<b>Total # of HH in GFCC</b>			<b>Total HH in GF</b>			
Family HH	84	76.36	Family HH	18,043	61.26	30
Non-Family HH	26	23.64	Non-Family HH *	11,409	38.74	30
<b>Average Age</b>			<b>Average Age</b>			
	41.55	100.00		41	100 **	30
Female Members/(Grand-) Children of	119	51.97	Female Population	34,870	50.7 **	5
Male Members/(Grand-) Children of	110	48.03	Male Population	33,928	49.3 **	5
<b>Married Members</b>			<b>Married Population</b>			
Unmarried Members/Children	96	41.92	Unmarried Population	40,104	58.29**	7
<b>Members with Children in Home</b>			<b>Population with Children in Home</b>			
Members without Children in Home	136	76.84	Population without Children in Home			
<b>HH with Children</b>			<b>HH with Children</b>			
HH with no Children	85	77.27	HH with no Children***	22,442	76.20	16, 19
<b>AGE SEGMENTS</b>			<b>AGE SEGMENTS</b>			
Before Formal Schooling (Ages 0-4)	9	3.93	Before Schooling (Ages 0-4)	4,263	6.20 **	4
Formal Schooling (Ages 5-17)	43	18.78	Formal Schooling (Ages 5-17)	10,840	15.76 **	4
Early Elementary (Ages 5-9)	16	6.99	Early Elementary (Ages 5-9)	4,187	6.09 **	8
Late Elem/MS (Ages 10-14)	16	6.99	Late Elem/MS (Ages 10-14)	4,028	5.85 **	8
High School (Ages 15-17)	11	4.80	High School (Ages 15-17)	2,625	3.82 **	8

College/Career Starts (Ages 18-24)	9	3.93	College/Career Starts (Ages 18-24)	5,883	8.55**	4
Singles and Young Families (Ages 25-34)	17	7.42	Singles and Young Families (Ages 25-34)	8,580	12.47**	4
Families and Empty Nesters (Ages 35-54)	61	26.64	Families and Empty Nesters (Ages 35-54)	16,305	23.70**	4
Enrichment Years Singles/Couples (Ages 55-64)	27	11.79	Enrichment Years Singles/Couples (Ages 55-64)	8,841	12.85**	4
Retirement Opportunities (Age 65+)	63	27.51	Retirement Opportunities (Age 65+)	14,086	20.47**	4
	229	100.00		68,798	100	

The blue font in the GFCC column indicates that these numbers represent not only members 18+ but also children/grandchildren of members in the 0-17 age range. Adding the 0-17 group makes our demographics more comparable to the demographics of GF, since GF's demographic data includes the entire living population from birth on up.

\* "Non-family HH" is my conflation of what the Custom Demographic Report calls "One Person Households" (9,523) and "Non-Family Households" (1,886)(see Custom Demographics Report, p. 30).

\*\* These percentages are based on the entire population (68,798) of the study area (Custom Demographics Report, p. 19).

\*\*\* "HH with no children" is my conflation of "Families: No Children" (11,033; Custom Demographics Report, p. 19), "Non-Family Households" (1,886; Custom Demographics Report, p. 16), and "One Person Households" (9,523; Custom Demographics Report, p. 16). When you conflate this category and add it to "HH with Children" (7,010), it totals 29,452, the total number of HH in GF.

## APPENDIX N - TARGET 10 AND 16 PLUS REACH DATA

	Mosaic Type in GFCC	Age Range	% of Type with Children	HH in GF	Rank in GF	HH in GFCC	Rank in GFCC	Index	% HH Reached	% HH Unreached	# HH Unreached
1	B9	Ages 36-45	66.19	704	14	3	7	146	0.43	99.57	701
1	B8	Ages 36-45	99.86	125	40	1	9	300	0.80	99.20	124
1	D15	Ages 36-45	91.16	524	19	1	9	67	0.19	99.81	523
1	F22	Ages 31-35	68.89	544	18	1	9	67	0.18	99.82	543
1	H29	Ages 36-45	41.68	410	23	1	9	86	0.24	99.76	409
1	M45	Ages 25-30	82.14	711	13	2	8	100	0.28	99.72	709
1	N46	Ages 36-45	39.86	1127	7	6	4	187	0.53	99.47	1121
1	O51	Ages 25-30	48.27	3266	1	8	3	85	0.24	99.76	3258
1	O54	Ages 25-30	16.58	863	10	3	7	121	0.35	99.65	860
1	O55	Ages 25-30	92.74	699	15	1	9	50	0.14	99.86	698
10				8973		27					8946

31.76%

	Mosaic Type in GFCC	Age Range	% of Type with Children	HH in GF	Rank in GF	HH in GFCC	Rank in GFCC	Index	% HH Reached	% HH Unreached	# HH Unreached
1	A02	Ages 51-65	10.40	315	25	2	8	218	0.63	99.37	313
1	A04	Ages 46-50	90.60	413	22	4	6	336	0.97	99.03	409
1	C11	Ages 51-65	1.83	928	9	4	6	147	0.43	99.57	924
1	C12	Ages 76+	4.86	38	47	1	9	1200	2.63	97.37	37
1	E20	Ages 51-65	25.48	2488	2	10	2	140	0.40	99.60	2478
1	E21	Ages 51-65	3.82	508	20	3	7	206	0.59	99.41	505
1	H27	Ages 46-50	18.03	288	27	1	9	120	0.35	99.65	287
1	J34	Ages 66-75	5.40	2354	3	13	1	191	0.55	99.45	2341
1	J35	Ages 66-75	18.23	142	34	1	9	240	0.70	99.30	141
1	J36	Ages 51-65	20.73	434	21	1	9	80	0.23	99.77	433
1	L42	Ages 51-65	5.93	1563	6	5	5	111	0.32	99.68	1558
1	Q62	Ages 76+	1.16	618	17	3	7	167	0.49	99.51	615

1	<b>Q64</b>	Ages 76+	1.57	2142	4	6	4	97	0.28	99.72	2136	
1	<b>Q65</b>	Ages 76+	3.30	1026	8	1	9	34	0.10	99.90	1025	
1	<b>S68</b>	Ages 51-65	24.75	653	16	2	8	109	0.31	99.69	651	
1	<b>S71</b>	Ages 51-65	7.18	286	28	1	9	120	0.35	99.65	285	
				<b>16</b>	<b>14196</b>			<b>58</b>				<b>14138</b>

68.24%

- 1st Priority
- 2nd Priority
- 3rd Priority
- 4th Priority

The four colors (to the left of this box) indicate the priority of emphasis for each of the Target 10 segments with the darker colors representing a higher priority and the lighter colors representing a lesser priority. The determining factor in my assignment of priority was how many households were represented by each Target 10 segment. The darker colors have more GFCC HH, and the lighter colors have less GFCC HH.

**APPENDIX O - MOSAICS COMPATIBILITY**

**Actual Reach**

	Mosaic Code	# of HH in GFCC	Rank in GF	% in GF	Compatible Mosaic Groups	Actual Reach		GFCC		
						Occurrences	HH #	Rank		
1	J34	13	1	15.30	E20, I30, L42, Q62	1	A02	1	3	# 16
1	E20	10	2	11.80	H26, H27, L42, D16	1	A04	1	7	# 12
1	O51	8	3	9.50	G24, K37, M44, R66	1	B08	2	7	# 12
1	N46	6	4	7.10	E20, E21, O55, Q64	1	B09	2	8	# 11
1	Q64	6	4	7.10	E21, J35, L41, L43	1	D15	4	10	# 9
1	L42	5	5	5.90	E19, E21, H27, J36	1	E20	7	36	# 1
1	A04	4	6	4.70	B07, B08, B09, D15	1	E21	5	27	# 3
1	C11	4	6	4.70	E19, E21, J34, L42	1	F22	1	4	# 15
1	B09	3	7	3.50	A04, D15, E20, H29	1	H27	3	19	# 5
1	E21	3	7	3.50	B07, H27, I30, J34	1	H29	2	5	# 14
1	O54	3	7	3.50	F22, G24, G25, H26	1	J34	2	20	# 4
1	Q62	3	7	3.50	E19, E21, J35, L41, L43	1	J35	3	11	# 8
1	A02	2	8	2.40	B08, B10, C14, K37	1	J36	2	7	# 12
1	M45	2	8	2.40	P56, O52, O55, R67	1	L42	4	33	# 2
1	S68	2	8	2.40	Q65, N47, N48, N49	1	M45	1	3	# 16
1	B08	1	9	1.20	A02, A05, D15, G24	1	O55	2	9	# 10
1	C12	1	9	1.20	L41, Q64, Q62	1	Q62	3	18	# 6
1	D15	1	9	1.20	I30, H29, B09	1	Q64	4	15	# 7
1	F22	1	9	1.20	C14, G24, G25, M45	1	Q65	2	4	# 15
1	H27	1	9	1.20	C13, D16, E20, L41	1	S68	1	3	# 16
1	H29	1	9	1.20	D15, I30, I32, J35	1	C11	4	4	# 15
1	J35	1	9	1.20	E20, L42, Q64, Q65	1	C12	1	1	# 17
1	J36	1	9	1.20	E20, L43, N47, Q62	1	N46	6	6	# 13
1	O55	1	9	1.20	H26, H28, I30, R67	1	O51	8	8	# 11
1	Q65	1	9	1.20	E20, J36, L43, S68	1	O54	3	3	# 16
1	S71	1	9	1.20	Q64, N47, N48, N49	1	S71	1	1	# 17
26		85		100.50		26		75		

**Mosaics Compatibility  
Potential Reach**

	Mosaic Code	# of HH in GFCC	Rank in GF	% in GF	Compatible Mosaic Groups	Potential Reach	Occurrences	GFCC HH #	Reach Rank
1	J34	13	1	15.30	E20, I30, L42, Q62	1	A05	1	# 12
1	E20	10	2	11.80	H26, H27, L42, D16	1	B07	7	# 8
1	O51	8	3	9.50	G24, K37, M44, R66	1	C13	1	# 12
1	N46	6	4	7.10	E20, E21, O55, Q64	1	C14	3	# 10
1	Q64	6	4	7.10	E21, J35, L41, L43	1	D16	11	# 5
1	L42	5	5	5.90	E19, E21, H27, J36	1	E19	12	# 4
1	A04	4	6	4.70	B07, B08, B09, D15	1	G24	13	# 3
1	C11	4	6	4.70	E19, E21, J34, L42	1	G25	4	# 9
1	B09	3	7	3.50	A04, D15, E20, H29	1	H26	14	# 2
1	E21	3	7	3.50	B07, H27, I30, J34	1	H28	1	# 12
1	O54	3	7	3.50	F22, G24, G25, H26	1	I30	19	# 1
1	Q62	3	7	3.50	E19, E21, J35, L41, L43	1	K37	10	# 6
1	A02	2	8	2.40	B08, B10, C14, K37	1	L41	11	# 5
1	M45	2	8	2.40	P56, O52, O55, R67	1	L43	11	# 5
1	S68	2	8	2.40	Q65, N47, N48, N49	1	M44	8	# 7
1	B08	1	9	1.20	A02, A05, D15, G24	1	N47	4	# 9
1	C12	1	9	1.20	L41, Q64, Q62	1	N48	3	# 10
1	D15	1	9	1.20	I30, H29, B09	1	N49	3	# 10
1	F22	1	9	1.20	C14, G24, G25, M45	1	O52	2	# 11
1	H27	1	9	1.20	C13, D16, E20, L41	1	P56	2	# 11
1	H29	1	9	1.20	D15, I30, I32, J35	1	R66	8	# 7
1	J35	1	9	1.20	E20, L42, Q64, Q65	1	R67	3	# 10
1	J36	1	9	1.20	E20, L43, N47, Q62				
1	O55	1	9	1.20	H26, H28, I30, R67				
1	Q65	1	9	1.20	E20, J36, L43, S68				
1	S71	1	9	1.20	Q64, N47, N48, N49				
26		85		100.50		22		49	



### Explanation of Mosaics Compatibility Chart

The two charts above illustrate what is called Mosaics compatibility. Every Mosaic segment naturally connects best with other Mosaic segments. Based on this principle, chart one illustrates actual reach. Actual reach describes the population with whom GFCC is currently connecting. In other words, it describes current membership in terms of Mosaics segments. Based on the compatibility principle, it is possible not only to describe whom GFCC is currently reaching, but also those with whom GFCC could most naturally connect based upon current membership Mosaics.

#### Chart Key:

- The red/green/yellow colors in the “Mosaic Code” column are keyed to the comparative index for each Mosaic segment. The comparative index compares the proportion of each Mosaic segment in the study area to the proportion of the segment in the state. Red indicates that the study area has a lower proportion of the segment than the state of Montana. Yellow indicates almost equal proportions of the segment in the study area and the state of Montana. Green indicates a higher proportion of the segment in the study area than in the state of Montana. To see the actual index numbers, see Appendix N.
- Occurrences describes how many times the type appears in the “Compatible Mosaics Groups” column.
- “GFCC HH” # describes how many households GFCC has that could connect with this segment. It includes (if applicable) the number of HH of that segment currently represented in GFCC. It also includes the number of GFCC HH in other Mosaic segments that are compatible with it.
- “Reach Rank” ranks each of the segments GFCC could potentially reach based on the number of GFCC HH.
- Orange Highlights – Vulnerable Populations, defined as Mosaic segments that only exhibit Mosaics compatibility with others of the same Mosaic segment. They are vulnerable because they do not have significant Mosaics connections to other segments.
- Red Text in Compatible Mosaics Groups column – Mosaic segments not currently represented in GFCC but with whom we have some Mosaic compatibility.
- Blue Text in Compatible Mosaics Groups column – Mosaic segments we could potentially reach but who are not represented in the population of Great Falls.
- Green Highlights – In the first chart (actual reach), the green highlights identify the Target 10 types in GFCC. In the second chart (potential reach), they identify the thirteen types that GFCC has the potential to reach, which would help GFCC grow younger.

## APPENDIX P - OUTREACH PREFERENCES

FORM OF OUTREACH	PERSONAL NEED	TOTAL	PERCENT	RANK	NOTES
<b>BASIC SURVIVAL</b>	Q62; S68; S71	3	18.75	5	Not a need in either
	M45; N46; O55	3	30	5	
<b>HEALTH AND WELLNESS</b>	A02; C11; C12; E20; E21; H27; J34; J35; J36; L42; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	14	87.5	1	<u>Top</u> need in 16+
	M45; N46; O55	3	30	5	Not a need in Target 10
<b>QUALITY OF LIFE</b>	A02; A04 E20; E21; H27; J34; J35; J36; L42; S68; S71	11	68.75	3	<b>Need in 16+ AND</b>
	D15; F22; H29; M45; N46; O55	6	60	3	<b>Need in Target 10</b>
<b>ADDICTION INTERVENTION</b>	S68; S71	2	12.5	6	Not a need in either
	O55	1	10	6	
<b>INTERPERSONAL R'SHIPS</b>	A04; C11; C12 E20; E21; J34; L42; Q62; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	12	75	2	<b>Need in 16+ AND</b>
	D15; F22; M45; N46; O51; O54; O55	7	70	2	<b>Need in Target 10</b>
<b>HUMAN POTENTIAL</b>	A04; C11; H27; S71	4	25	4	Not a need in 16+
	B08; B09; D15; F22; M45; O51; O54; O55	8	80	1	<u>Top</u> need in Target 10
<b>SALVATION AND DESTINY</b>	S71	1	6.25	7	Not a major "need" in either
	B08; B09; M45; O55	4	40	4	

FORM OF OUTREACH	READINESS TO VOLUNTEER	TOTAL	PERCENT	RANK	NOTES
<b>BASIC SURVIVAL</b>	E20; C12; A04 H27; J34; J35; J36; L42; Q62; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	13	81.25	2	Significant Inv Opp for 16+ AND
	<b>D15; H29; M45; N46; O51; O54; O55</b>	7	70	3	Significant Inv Opp for Target 10
<b>HEALTH AND WELLNESS</b>	E20; E21; H27; J34; J35; J36; L42; Q62; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	12	75	3	Significant Inv Opp for 16+ AND
	<b>B08; B09; D15; H29; M45; N46; O54; O55</b>	8	80	2	Significant Inv Opp for Target 10
<b>QUALITY OF LIFE</b>	E20; C12; C11; E21; H27; J34; J35; J36; L42; Q62; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	14	87.5	1	<u>Top</u> Inv Opp for 16+ AND
	<b>B08; B09; D15; F22; H29; M45; N46; O51; O54; O55</b>	10	100	1	<u>Top</u> Inv Opp for Target 10
<b>ADDICTION INTERVENTION</b>	J35; S71	2	12.5	7	Not an Inv Opp for either
	<b>F22; N46; O54; O55</b>	4	40	5	
<b>INTERPERSONAL R'SHIPS</b>	C11; C12; L42; S68; S71	5	31.25	6	Not a top Opp for 16+
	<b>B08; B09; D15; M45; N46; O51; O54; O55</b>	8	80	2	Significant Inv opp for Target 10
<b>HUMAN POTENTIAL</b>	A04; C11; C12; E21; H27; S71	6	37.5	5	Staffing?
	<b>F22; M45; O51; O54; O55</b>	5	50	4	
<b>SALVATION AND DESTINY</b>	A04; E20; J34; J35; J36; Q62; Q64; Q65; S68; S71	10	62.5	4	Not an Inv Opp for either
	<b>D15; N46; O55</b>	3	30	6	

**Chart Key:**

- Abbreviations – Inv (Involvement); Opp (Opportunity)
- Blue Font – Indicates the needs/readiness to volunteer for the Target 10 Mosaic segments.

## APPENDIX Q - FOCUS GROUP WITH GFCC LEADERS

### Interview Questions

**Overview:** In this focus group, I will present the conclusions of the discernment team to the leadership team of the Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC; Elders, Evangelists, and Interns). Then, I will help the leadership team process the discernment team’s findings using a focus group format.<sup>678</sup> The primary purpose of this focus group is to assess how well the discernment team discerned the missional implications of the GFCC’s context on the West side of Great Falls.

### **Section 1: Pre-presentation Questions**

1. What is your current understanding of the mission of God?
2. Based on your current understanding of the mission of God, how might GFCC advance that mission on the West side of Great Falls?

### **Section 2: Mission of God and Spiritual Discernment**

3. How does the discernment team’s understanding of mission compare to your own view?
4. How does the discernment team’s understanding of mission compare to *your perception of the view of GFCC?*
5. What missional implications do these comparisons (Questions 3-4) have for the future of GFCC?
6. What aspects of mission has God best equipped GFCC for?
7. What sort of relationship is God inviting GFCC to develop with our community?
8. What is God calling GFCC to *be*?
9. What is God calling GFCC to *do*?
10. What is God calling GFCC to *say*?
11. What aspect of mission or discernment is most significant to you?

### **Section 3: Opportunities for Mission in Context**

12. Based on these findings, who is GFCC’s neighbor?
13. What conclusions do you draw from the demographic data about how GFCC might advance God’s mission on the West side of Great Falls?

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<sup>678</sup> This focus group will follow a “semi-structured” approach. See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 107.

14. How do the discernment team's conclusions about how GFCC might advance the mission of God on the West side land with you?
15. How do you expect the discernment team's conclusions about how GFCC might advance the mission of God on the West side would land with the congregation (GFCC)?
16. What missional implications do these data have for the future of GFCC?
17. What surprises you most about what you have heard today?
18. What was confirmed for you today as you have listened?
19. What was called into question for you today as you listened?
20. What is your most significant insight regarding opportunities for mission in context?

**Addendum: Potential Probes following Questions**

21. Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?
22. Would you help me understand \_\_\_\_\_?
23. Could you share an example of \_\_\_\_\_?

## APPENDIX R - POST-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 1)

**Instructions:** Thank you for your participation in this study. To help assess its effectiveness, please complete the following short answer questions (section 1) and the more extensive questions (sections 2-3). Following completion of Part 1, you will be given the opportunity to complete Part 2.

**Section 1: Basic Information**<sup>679</sup>

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Mission of God**

2. What is your *current* understanding of the mission of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What sort of relationship with our community does the mission of God invite the Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC) to cultivate?

**Section 3: Opportunities for Mission in Context**

4. Based on your current understanding of Great Falls, who is GFCC's "neighbor"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Based on your *current* understanding of the mission of God, how might GFCC advance that mission on the West side of Great Falls?

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<sup>679</sup> Adapted from Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations*, 250-53.

## APPENDIX R - POST-STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 2)

**Instructions:** Thank you for your participation in this study. To help assess its effectiveness, please complete the following short answer questions (section 1) and the more extensive questions (sections 2-3).

**Section 1: Basic Information**

6. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Mission of God**

**Instructions:** For the second section of this Questionnaire, please evaluate your understanding of the mission of God *before* this study and *after* this study using the discernment team's completed "one text" document as your point of reference. Your responses will be given back to you for your reference.

7. Using the following 0-10 scale with the benchmarks as a guide, how would you rate your understanding of *the mission of God* in your first questionnaire compared to the discernment team's completed "one text" document? \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 10  | I had an almost complete understanding.        |
| 7.5 | I understood more than I misunderstood.        |
| 5   | I understood about as much as I misunderstood. |
| 2.5 | I misunderstood more than I understood.        |
| 0   | I had almost no understanding.                 |

8. Using the following 0-10 scale with the benchmarks as a guide, how would you rate your understanding of *the mission of God* in your second questionnaire compared to the discernment team's completed "one text" document? \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 10  | I had an almost complete understanding.        |
| 7.5 | I understood more than I misunderstood.        |
| 5   | I understood about as much as I misunderstood. |
| 2.5 | I misunderstood more than I understood.        |
| 0   | I had almost no understanding.                 |



### Section 3: Opportunities for Mission in Context

**Instructions:** For the third section of this Questionnaire, please evaluate your understanding of how the GFCC might advance that mission on the West side of Great Falls *before* this study and *after* this study using our completed “one text” document as your point of reference. Your responses will be given back to you for your reference.

9. Using the following 0-10 scale with the benchmarks as a guide, how would you rate your understanding of *how GFCC might advance the mission of God on the west side of Great Falls* in your first questionnaire compared to the discernment team’s completed “one text” document? \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 10  | I had an almost complete understanding.        |
| 7.5 | I understood more than I misunderstood.        |
| 5   | I understood about as much as I misunderstood. |
| 2.5 | I misunderstood more than I understood.        |
| 0   | I had almost no understanding.                 |

10. Using the following 0-10 scale with the benchmarks as a guide, how would you rate your understanding of *how GFCC might advance the mission of God on the west side of Great Falls* in your second questionnaire compared to the discernment team’s completed “one text” document? \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 10  | I had an almost complete understanding.        |
| 7.5 | I understood more than I misunderstood.        |
| 5   | I understood about as much as I misunderstood. |
| 2.5 | I misunderstood more than I understood.        |
| 0   | I had almost no understanding.                 |

**DISCERNING THE MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONTEXT: A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF  
GREAT FALLS FOR THE GREAT FALLS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Discernment Team**

**Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the implications the new location of Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC) on the West side of Great Falls has on the mission of GFCC. This study is being conducted by Matthew Burlison, a graduate student in the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Dr. Earl Lavender, a faculty member in the Hazelip School of Theology. You were selected as a possible participant in this research for three reasons. First, you have talents and abilities that I believe can be valuable in this research. Second, you have consistently demonstrated high interest in the mission of God. Third, you, along with the rest of the team, represent an approximate cross-section of GFCC. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to study GFCC's new context on the West side of Great Falls in light of an understanding of the mission of God and the practice spiritual discernment. By investigating GFCC's new context in light of mission and with the eyes of spiritual discernment, this project will attempt to discover some possible areas of mission in which God might be calling GFCC outward. Approximately twenty-three people are expected to participate in this research. 7-12 of these will participate on the team you are being invited to—the “discernment team.” 7-11 of these will be members of GFCC's leadership team—the elders, evangelists, and interns.

**Procedures:**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to commit approximately two hours each week for twelve weeks. This study will take approximately twenty-five hours total. Participants may freely give more time to this study, but that will be only if they so desire. This study is designed to accommodate the unforeseen circumstances of life. It is therefore understood and completely acceptable that not every team member will be able to make every team meeting. After a *third* absence, however, a team member will no longer be considered part of this study.

- Prior to the first team meeting, you will be asked to complete a Pre-Study Questionnaire. This questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- Following the completion of the questionnaire, the first six weeks of the study will involve teaching, discussion, and homework designed to train the team in the practice of spiritual discernment. Each of these six weeks will involve a team meeting, at a time selected to accommodate the greatest convenience to team members. Each meeting will last up to ninety minutes.
- In each of these first six weeks homework will be given to prepare for the next meeting.
  - This homework will entail collaborating to edit a document summarizing our team's collective understanding of the things discussed (“One Text”).
  - During the first five weeks, homework will entail practices of spiritual discernment meant to help us learn to notice and name God's activity.
  - As we transition into the second part of our study at week 6, homework will entail familiarizing ourselves with the reports to be discussed in week 7.
  - Time for homework does not need to exceed thirty minutes per week per team member.
- In Weeks 7-12, the discernment team will complete a demographic study of Great Falls.
  - In week seven, the team will work through (a) demographic report(s) of Great Falls. This meeting will last up to ninety minutes. For homework, participants will be asked to reflect on the demographic information discussed in week seven. This does not need to take more than thirty minutes per team member.

- In week 8, we will discuss the demographic report(s) of Great Falls together in light of our understanding of the mission of God and the practice of spiritual discernment. This meeting will last up to ninety minutes.
  - In week 9, the team will work through (a) demographic report(s) of GFCC. This meeting will last up to ninety minutes. For homework, participants will be asked to reflect on the demographic information discussed in week seven. This does not need to take more than thirty minutes per team member.
  - In week 10, we will discuss the demographic report(s) of GFCC together in light of our understanding of the mission of God and the practice of spiritual discernment. This meeting will last up to ninety minutes.
  - In week 11, we will participate in a prayer walk/drive of sections of Great Falls most pertinent to this study. Activities this week may take *up to* three hours. For up to thirty minutes, we will meet to discuss the prayer walk/drive and get instructions. For no more than two-and-a-half hours, discernment team members will complete the prayer walk/drive. You will be invited to journal your reflections before, during, and after your prayer walk/drive.
  - In week 12, the team will discuss the prayer walk/drive together in light of our understanding of the mission of God, the practice of spiritual discernment, and the conclusions we drew from the demographic data of Great Falls and GFCC. This meeting will last up to ninety minutes.
  - Throughout weeks 7-12, team members will be invited to continue editing the team's "One Text" document, so that, at the end of our work, we have a consensus statement of our most salient insights regarding the missional implications of our location on the West side of Great Falls for the mission of GFCC.
- Following the finalizing of our "one-text" document, team members will complete a Post-Study Questionnaire in two parts. With the completion of this questionnaire, your commitment will be complete. Part of this final questionnaire will involve evaluating the impact this study has had on your understandings before and after its completion. This questionnaire may take between fifteen and forty-five minutes, depending on how extensive you choose to be with your responses.

### **Risks and Benefits:**

The study has minimal risks. First, it is likely that this study will result in some measure of disorientation, anxiety, or fear as you encounter potentially unfamiliar aspects of mission, spiritual discernment, Great Falls, or GFCC that stretch you beyond current ways of thinking/operating. Second, it is likely that you will experience the frustration typical of attempting to process unfamiliar or new information in a compressed period of time. Third, it is likely that you will face some level of interpersonal conflict as you dialogue with team members who may hold different views or similar views with different levels of intensity. Low-grade conflict may also result over the difficulties of aligning seven-to-twelve schedules for meetings, for example. Fourth, it is possible that you could encounter harmful situations through the prayer walk (or drive). If walking, it is possible you may encounter animals, unruly neighbors, be temporarily exposed to the elements, or even be exposed to disease such COVID-19. If driving, it is possible you could be involved in an accident or get a traffic citation. Though these scenarios are not any more likely than in the normal course of daily life, they cannot be ruled out of the realm of possibility. Therefore, although efforts will be made to mitigate these risks, no participant will be pressured or coerced in any form to continue this study should he or she wish at any time or for any reason to withdraw their participation.

The benefits to participation are that, first, you will gain significant experience in the practice of spiritual discernment, which will help you to better discern God's leading in other areas of life. Second, you can take satisfaction in knowing you helped GFCC better position itself to advance the mission of God in Great Falls. Third, participating on a team like this has the potential to both form and deepen relational bonds with other likeminded individuals in the congregation. Fourth, the missional implications this study discerns will be used (following the completion of this study) to guide GFCC in building missional bridges into our neighborhood and empowering members of GFCC for ministry in these areas. Your investment will return to you in the form of increased opportunities to join God in mission in Great Falls.

**Compensation:**

If you participate, you will receive compensation for expenses incurred in the prayer drive of week eleven. To receive compensation, receipts must be submitted to Matt Burleson, and funds will be disbursed within the month by the GFCC's financial team.

In the event that this research activity results in an injury (incurred, for example, on our prayer walk/drive), we/I will assist you by getting you the appropriate level of medical help needed, whether that means driving you to the hospital or a walk-in clinic in Great Falls. Any medical care for research-related injuries should be paid by you or your insurance company. If you think you have suffered a research-related injury, please let me/us know right away.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. Hard copies of documents with any identifying information will be kept in a lock box/safe in the GFCC church office. Digital copies will be protected by a Password only known to Matthew Burleson so as to guard confidentiality. Only I and my advisor will have access to these records with potentially identifiable information while I work on this project. For the thesis portion of this project, participants will each be given a participant number, and any information shared will be referenced only to this participant number.

Based on Lipscomb University and OHRP guidelines, I am required to maintain research records for at least three years after completion of my research (Lipscomb IRB Policies and Procedures Manual, p. 27). The same safeguards for maintaining the confidentiality, rights, privacy, and well-being of subjects during the study will be maintained for three years from the completion of the study, a date which I will verify with my project advisor and the DMin director. After this three-year mark, I will replace any remaining identifiable information with participant codes and destroy any documents with identifiable information. The only participant information I will leave behind will be the participant code that corresponds to the participant responses. I will maintain audio recordings, but these will be accessible only by me, and nothing beyond what appears in the finished thesis, linked to participants only through participant codes, will be shared from these recordings without the written consent of the one(s) involved in the portion I might wish to share.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to stop participating at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Lipscomb University in any way.

**New Information:**

If during the course of this research study we/I learn about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, we/I will inform you of these findings.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Matthew Burleson, at 501-253-6094 or [mburleson@mail.lipscomb.edu](mailto:mburleson@mail.lipscomb.edu). You may ask questions now or later, and my faculty advisor, Dr. Earl Lavender (615-426-1542, [earl.lavender@lipscomb.edu](mailto:earl.lavender@lipscomb.edu)), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. Justin Briggs, Chair of the Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board at [jgbriggs@lipscomb.edu](mailto:jgbriggs@lipscomb.edu).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study, and I agree to allow my voice to be recorded in the discernment team's meetings.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

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Signature of Parent, Legal Guardian, or Witness

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Date

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Signature of Researcher

---

Date

**DISCERNING THE MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONTEXT: A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF  
GREAT FALLS FOR THE GREAT FALLS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Leadership Team**

**Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the implications the new location of Great Falls Church of Christ (GFCC) on the West side of Great Falls has on the mission of GFCC. This study is being conducted by Matthew Burluson, a graduate student in the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Dr. Earl Lavender, a faculty member in the Hazelip School of Theology. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because of your official leadership role as an elder, an evangelist, or an intern of GFCC and the responsibility that places on you in terms of discerning how to fulfill the mission of GFCC.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to study GFCC's new context on the West side of Great Falls in light of an understanding of the mission of God and the practice spiritual discernment. By investigating GFCC's new context in light of mission and with the eyes of spiritual discernment, this project will attempt to discover some possible areas of mission in which God might be calling GFCC outward. Approximately twenty-three people are expected to participate in this research. 7-12 of these will participate on the "discernment team." 7-11 of these will be part of the team you are being invited to join—the leadership team.

**Procedures:**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet on a Saturday morning in the GFCC fellowship hall for approximately three hours. The date of this Saturday will be scheduled by coordinating with the team *after* the dates for the discernment team's meetings have been set. Because of the nature of the leadership team's work, this meeting will necessarily follow week twelve of the discernment team's work.

On the Saturday selected, I will lead a focus group with you and others on the leadership team. I will present the leadership team with the findings of the discernment team regarding the mission of God and opportunities to advance it in our new context on the West side of Great Falls. Before, during, and after the presentation, I will engage you in a discussion of these findings. Your participation will help determine the effectiveness of this study, since you, as an elder/evangelist/intern have a unique role in helping the body (GFCC) discern the will of God relative to our mission.

**Risks and Benefits:**

The study has minimal risks. First, it is possible that the findings of this study will result in some measure of disorientation, anxiety, or fear as you encounter unfamiliar or unsettling new insights about mission, spiritual discernment, Great Falls, or GFCC. Second, it is possible you will experience the frustration typical of attempting to process unfamiliar or new information in a compressed period of time. Third, it is possible that you may face some level of interpersonal conflict as you dialogue with team members who may hold different views or similar views with different levels of intensity. Efforts will be made to mitigate these risks; nevertheless, no participant will be pressured or coerced in any form to continue this study should he or she wish at any time or for any reason to withdraw their participation.

The benefits to participation are, first, that you can take satisfaction in knowing you helped GFCC better position itself to advance the mission of God in Great Falls. In this way, you are fulfilling your role by equipping the saints for ministry and by building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. Hard copies of documents with any identifying information will be kept in a lock box/safe in the GFCC church office. Digital copies will be protected by a Password only known to Matthew Burluson so as to guard confidentiality. Only I and my advisor will have access to these records with potentially

identifiable information while I work on this project. For the thesis portion of this project, participants will each be given a participant number, and any information shared will be referenced only to this participant number.

Based on Lipscomb University and OHRP guidelines, I am required to maintain research records for at least three years after completion of my research (Lipscomb IRB Policies and Procedures Manual, p. 27). The same safeguards for maintaining the confidentiality, rights, privacy, and well-being of subjects during the study will be maintained for three years from the completion of the study, a date which I will verify with my project advisor and the DMin director. After this three-year mark, I will replace all identifiable information with participant codes and destroy any documents with identifiable information. The only participant information I will leave behind will be the participant code that corresponds to the participant responses. I will maintain audio recordings, but these will be accessible only by me, and nothing beyond what appears in the finished thesis, linked to participants only through participant codes, will be shared from these recordings without the written consent of the one(s) involved in the portion I might wish to share.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to stop participating at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Lipscomb University in any way.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Matthew Burleson, at 501-253-6094 or [mburleson@mail.lipscomb.edu](mailto:mburleson@mail.lipscomb.edu). You may ask questions now or later, and my faculty advisor, Dr. Earl Lavender (615-426-1542, [earl.lavender@lipscomb.edu](mailto:earl.lavender@lipscomb.edu)), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. Justin Briggs, Chair of the Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board at [jgbriggs@lipscomb.edu](mailto:jgbriggs@lipscomb.edu).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study, and I agree to allow my voice to be recorded in the leadership team's focus group meeting.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

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Signature of Parent, Legal Guardian, or Witness

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Date

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date



**IRB RESEARCH STUDY MULTIMEDIA RELEASE**

<b>To be completed by the researcher</b>	
Principal Investigator:	Matthew C. Burleson
Research Study:	Discerning Missional Implications of Context: A Demographic Study of Great Falls for the Great Falls Church of Christ
Type of Release (check all that apply):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> Photo

**To be completed by the research participant**

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

In consideration for participating in the research study referenced above, I hereby grant to Lipscomb University ("Lipscomb"), and those acting pursuant to its authority, a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide, irrevocable license to record, use, reproduce, exhibit and distribute my presentation, likeness, voice, name and/or identity on a video, audio, photographic, digital, electronic, Internet or other medium without restrictions or limitations (the "Recordings") for the following purposes and uses (*please initial and check all of the following that apply*):

Initials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recording Purpose
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used for scientific publications.
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used for scientific conferences or meetings.
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used for educational purposes.
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used for public presentations to non-scientific groups.
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used on television or the audio portion can be used on radio.
6. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be posted on a Lipscomb website.
7. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Recordings can be used for reports/presentations to any research funding agencies.

I hereby agree to defend, hold harmless, indemnify, release and forever discharge Lipscomb and its trustees, officers, agents, representatives and employees from and against any and all liability, claims, actions, causes of actions and damages (including reasonable attorneys' fees) of any kind whatsoever in law and in equity, both past and present and whether known or unknown, arising out of or related to (a) the use of my name, likeness, identity, voice, photographic image, video graphic image and voice, and the Recordings, and (b) any personal, intellectual property (including copyright), proprietary or other rights that I may have in connection with any use of the Recordings. To the extent required, I hereby grant and assign to Lipscomb all copyright in the Recordings and any video, audio, photographic, digital, electronic or other medium utilized in connection therewith. I hereby acknowledge and agree that Lipscomb shall have exclusive ownership of the copyright and other proprietary and property rights in the Recordings. **I acknowledge and understand that my name will not be used in any publication.**

I have read and understood this Multimedia Release, am at least eighteen (18) years of age and fully competent, and execute the same as my own free will.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If the participant is under the age of eighteen (18), the undersigned parent/guardian of the participant agrees to the terms of this Multimedia Release on behalf of the above-named participant:

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_