New Heights Christian Community Center:  
An Effective Strategy of Outreach for the Local Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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Lynchburg, Virginia  
February 14, 2017
Liberty University School of Divinity

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Abstract

NEW HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CENTER: AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY OF OUTREACH FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2017

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New Heights Christian Community Services offers an outreach ministry that creates a viable bridge between two local churches and their neighboring communities. Many churches are declining in their influence and are no longer recognized as a valuable part of their community. Small churches often struggle to find ways to serve their neighbors. The author of this project has dedicated over twenty-five years ministering to disadvantaged youth and families and desires to help churches to effectively connect to the families in their community. This project will investigate the effectiveness of the New Heights program by surveying fifty sets of parents of children who participate in the New Heights ministry. The results of this project will offer a strategy to other small churches so that they may use the New Heights model to effectively bridge the gap between the local congregation and its community.

Abstract length: 121 words.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to the glory of my Heavenly Father. May all praise and glory be offered before His throne.

I would like to thank those who have offered me instruction and direction throughout the journey of pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree. I am indebted to each of them for allowing me to sit at their feet. I am especially indebted to Dr. Charles M. Davidson and Dr. David W. Hirschman for guiding me through the steps of the thesis project.

I am thankful for my friends and fellow-ministers, Danny Camp and John Temple, who have offered continued support and wisdom during many lunch meetings. Their friendship has offered both motivation and encouragement.

I am thankful for the members of James Avenue Church of Christ and Paragon Mills church of Christ who have partnered with New Heights Christian community Services in order to reach out to their surrounding communities. I am also thankful to the elders of Charlotte Heights Church of Christ and Pasquo Church of Christ who encouraged me in my efforts.

I offer my gratitude and love to my family. I am delighted to be the father of two children, Victoria and Justin. I now also have a son-in-law, Alex. I pray that my example will be a source of encouragement for them as they pursue their own interests throughout life. My wife, Gretchen, who has witnessed both my joy and frustration during this process, has been a constant source of encouragement, love, and wisdom. I would not have endured without her. I am also thankful to Penelope for the constant joy that she brings to our family.

Finally, I offer thanks to my mother, Joyce Ewers Jones, who has loved me unconditionally and reminded me over and over again to finish what I have started.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Many small churches struggle to reach out to their communities. Although they may continue to worship, study, and provide fellowship opportunities for their members, they often fail to have a presence in the neighborhoods they inhabit. All too often these churches continue to pursue some of the ministry methods that were once effective, but many of the people within the community do not respond well to the ministry methods of generations past. New Heights Christian Community Services provides a viable service that helps to create a bridge between the local church and the surrounding community. Reaching out to children and families within the community by providing after-school programs and summer programs, and by providing needed resources, New Heights is able to create a partnership between the families they serve and the local church.

New Heights is somewhat of a hybrid of youth ministry, outreach ministry, and benevolence. Neither the concept nor the practices of New Heights are difficult; the goal is to build positive relationships with the children and families within the community and to point them towards the community of God. The foundation of the New Heights ministry to young people is based upon the Word of God. Elmer L. Towns states, “The correct philosophy of youth work grows out of the Word of God and is not a creation of man. Biblical youth work obeys the commands of the Word of God...”\(^1\) Scripture commands that those who follow Christ are to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. It also commands Christians to provide for the physical needs of others. It is not a matter of choosing one of these over the other; it is a matter of seeking opportunities to do both. David J. Ernsberger suggests in *Reviving the Local Church*, “The

church exists because of and for the sake of the Word of God. That is to say; the church was created by God’s Word and exists to proclaim it.”⁡ As a creation of God’s Word that exists to proclaim God’s Word, the church must do all that it can to find effective ways to spread the Word. The proclamation of the Word of God is the fundamental purpose for New Heights. New Heights does not replace the work of the local church but enhances its mission of spreading the Gospel. Ernsberger continues, “Whatever is done, whatever means are used, all that the church does should be for the single purpose of making known in and to the world this atoning and reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ.”³ By combining opportunities of service with opportunities to teach Scripture, New Heights strives to remain focused on the biblical mandate to reach out to those who have yet to establish a relationship with the Lord.

**Statement of the Problem**

Many churches now find themselves in neighborhoods they no longer recognize. In previous years they may have been active, involved, growing, and even thriving; but as time passed, they lost touch with their communities. Communities, like people, change over time. Churches that are resistant to changing along with the community often lose their effectiveness in reaching the people of their community for Christ. Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson note, “Why have so many churches emotionally or physically withdrawn from their communities? Sometimes churches feel unwanted. Whereas the church may once have been the center of the community, the community has changed its focus and left the church behind.”⁴ When the church withdraws from the community and turns its attention inward, it loses any influence it may have once held. The myriad of differences between the congregation and the community can create

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³ Ibid., 5.

barriers that may be difficult to overcome. Church leaders must realize the importance of trying to adapt to the needs of the community. Scott A. Bessenecker comments, “Church leaders and missionaries lose touch when their realities differ greatly from the people they serve.”\(^5\) Church leaders are often so caught up in the struggle to maintain the existing congregation, that they lose focus on the people of the community. Rusaw and Swanson continue by stating, “The church is called to be separate in lifestyle but never to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence. Salt, light, and leaven don’t work very well from a distance.”\(^6\)

New Heights Christian Community Services offers a model of ministry that seeks to reach out to the people of the community through after-school programs, summer programs, and various benevolent endeavors. Housed in local church buildings, New Heights attempts to link its host churches to the surrounding communities. By offering child care, mentoring, and various other services to the community, New Heights is able to establish relationships with the people of the community and also members of the church.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the effectiveness of the New Heights program. The program was created to aid in the educational, physical, spiritual, and social development of elementary school and middle school students. Most of the children served are from low-income households and do not have previous ties to the congregations that have partnered with New Heights. The project will investigate the effectiveness of the model of ministry used by New Heights to aid in the development of the children it serves and its attempts to create a bridge between the local congregations and their communities.


\(^6\) Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Church*, 25.
Statement of Limitations

The body of this work is limited by its focus to aid leaders within congregations among the Church of Christ which comprise a membership of two hundred members or less. The analysis will not be an exhaustive view of outreach ministries within every church setting, but will primarily focus on what is taking place within two Churches of Christ in the Middle Tennessee area that have partnered with New Heights Christian Community Services. This work is not an attempt to produce an exhaustive explanation of all possible methods for outreach. While it may provide insight into the practice of outreach as a whole, its purpose is to aid churches that are limited in both size and resources. It will focus only on a general approach and current methods that can be adapted and applied to the small church setting.

Theoretical Basis for the Project

God established the home as the foundation of the development of faith in children. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Moses boldly declares the will of God to Israel. In these six verses, Moses establishes the foundation for a godly home by stating,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.7

Faith development in children begins with knowledge of God and a love for God that is intended to be implemented and developed within the home environment. Within the provision of this passage, it is the responsibility of the parents to properly impress and integrate the commandments of God into the lives of their children.

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7 The Holy Bible, New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984. All quotes from Scripture used in this project are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.
Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” This verse offers a general principle that parents who train their children while they are young will produce adults that adhere to what has been taught within the family of origin. Generally speaking, while there are other variables involved, such as personal choice, this principle is true. The values instilled and developed in a child will often remain through adulthood. This is a very good thing if the child lives in a faithful Christian home, but what about the children that do not have the opportunity to be raised within a home that expresses faith in God?

There are many children in the world who do not have parents that are faithful to the Lord. New Heights Christian Community Services attempts to aid in the faith development of children by providing daily interaction with Christian role models. While New Heights does not attempt to replace parents in any way, it offers daily instruction to children through devotionals, Bible classes, and regular interaction with Christian mentors. At the core of its existence, New Heights attempts to instill the love of God into the hearts of children. According to the New Heights purpose statement, “New Heights Christian Community Services exists to provide educational, physical, spiritual, and social services to youth and families in the greater Nashville area.”

Currently, New Heights operates two centers in Nashville that provide after-school care and summer care to families. Both programs are in partnership with local congregations of the Church of Christ. The two churches are small in membership and have difficulty reaching out to the people of their communities. While the congregations are aware of the command of the Lord Jesus to go into the world and preach the Gospel, they have struggled to actually reach out to

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their neighbors. Hollis L. Green claims, “Unless the church quickly reinstitutes the concept of individual witness, the lost world can never be won.” The leaders of New Heights want to bridge the gap between the local church and the community. They desire to aid both the congregations and the people of the community by creating a daily presence through the staff and volunteers that are involved in its programs. They simply want to establish a witness for Christ within the community. Green continues by stating, “The key to growth is simple programming that everyone can understand and in which everyone can become involved.”

The New Heights program is a tool used to create opportunities for relationships to be formed. If the program helps to establish a Biblical foundation and diligently works to establish relationships, reaching within the group of children and families served, and always trying to institute a presence among others in the community, then the ministry will be faithful to God’s will. However, if relationships are not established the ministry will fail in its mission. Everett Huffard reminds those involved in such a task, “If our only motive for salvation is the saving of our own souls, we are denying the very reason for our partnership with Christ.” Since relationships are key to the development of any type of ministry, leaders must understand the vital importance of their role in building relationships. They must be available to others and committed to helping them in all circumstances. Trying to convey that a leader must become a friend rather than just a role model, Benjamin B. Blumel writes, “There is joy in this, but there is also pain, because you suffer the things your people suffer.”

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10 Ibid.


Relationships are where the connection of ministry is formed. This is especially true in ministry for young people. Chris Folmsbee offers, “We have learned that students in many of our contexts need a connection to the gospel being proclaimed—and that connection needs to be real and relational.”\textsuperscript{13} As young people gain acceptance and feel as though they belong to a group, they open themselves up to new possibilities. This is made possible by the relationships that are established. It is crucial to the life of the group and to the church for the Gospel message to be presented in the context of relationship. The Gospel must be taught through both words and actions. Folmsbee continues, “As long as the gospel message of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are being proclaimed and lived out effectively in your context, then do what you have to do. But if you aren’t sure that your evangelism methods are effective, it may be time to re-culture.”\textsuperscript{14}

Many church leaders do not realize that their congregations are failing to make connections within the walls of their buildings as well as failing to have an impact on others. Many are even losing their own young people because of a lack of feeling of belonging to the group. The loss of individuals is not because there are not enough activities or opportunities to teach, fellowship or worship. It is simply because they are not making a connection with others. Mike King explains,

Many leaders in youth ministry seem convinced that the solution to this exodus from the church is to do what we’ve done in the past—rail on sin, hire the loudest evangelists, pump in more fun, condemn the evil media—only with more intensity. Others suggest trying alternative ideas, perhaps even radical reformation of youth ministry philosophy and praxis: If the way we’re doing youth ministry is failing, let’s creatively re-think how youth ministry is done.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Chris Folmsbee, \textit{A New kind of Youth Ministry} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 27.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{15} Mike King, \textit{Presence-Centered Youth Ministry: Guiding Students into Spiritual Formation} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 25.
Although King is speaking in terms of what is taking place in youth ministry, what he says may be applied to all aspects of church life. New Heights is an alternative way for the church to attempt to build relationships.

New Heights provides the needed connection between the church and the community. The leadership of New Heights labors to nurture and establish significant relationships among young and old alike, as well as among those who are members of the church and those who are not. The community receives the Gospel through these relationships.

Specifically, regarding young people, Jonathan McKee suggests, “As we build relationships with students, we need to love them for who they are, whether they choose to live for Jesus or not.”16 As these relationships continue to flourish, young people and their families will more likely embrace the concept of being a part of the community of God. They must be able to recognize and experience the presence of God in their lives; a biblical community provides such an experience. As churches work to establish a sense of community among people, both young and old, they will begin to realize the presence of God. Gilbert Bilezikian offers, “The joining together of two independent lives into oneness provides the basic model for biblical community.”17

Through a partnership with both the church and the community, New Heights attempts to bridge the relationships between the church and the community in such a way that the children and families served will feel comfortable in the newly formed relationship with the local church. Without a sense of community, they are isolated from the fellowship that God desires for His people, the mingling of young and old, from all walks of life, living,

16 Jonathan McKee, Connect: Real Relationships in a World of Isolation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 42.

17 Gilbert Bilezikian, Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as a Community of Oneness (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 45.
worshiping, and serving side-by-side. Lyle E. Schaller notes, “Some people contend that the single most influential dimension of a congregation’s ministry with children and teenagers is to offer them first-hand contacts with a variety of models of adult Christians.”

Within the perimeters of a youth program without adult role models, young people have no reference point that will enable them to envision what they are supposed to become. Kenda Creasy Dean, in *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, comments,

> When we shield young people from the intergenerational witness of a congregation, remove them from the interpretive lens of the broader Christian community, and separate them from the fidelity of potential adult role models, we provide an idiosyncratic experience of community that exists nowhere but the youth group.

Church leadership must set the precedence in establishing opportunities for meaningful intergenerational interaction to take place. While New Heights can help to facilitate initial contacts between the church and the participants in the New Heights programs, the church must work to develop and sustain the relationships that create authentic community. This precedence must be systematically taught and nurtured among the entire congregation. Schaller states, “In some congregations, and especially in smaller churches established several decades ago, the commitment of many of the loyal and active members appears to be based to a very substantial degree on a heritage shared by many members of the congregation.” Therefore, for the church to minister effectively to the community, it must be fully committed to the Word of God and the establishment of relationships with its neighbors. As such, this project seeks to find out if the

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20 Schaller, *Small Church*, 50.
methods used by New Heights are effectively helping youth and families to grow in their faith and to develop relationships with the partnering congregations.

**Statement of Methodology**

The goal of this study is to present a biblically-based model of outreach ministry that will allow the small church to effectively reach the children and families of their community. This model includes methods of ministry that will equip small churches with the tools necessary to effectively teach, train, mentor, and develop the faith and practices of those who participate in the program. This paper presents a model of a community outreach ministry by utilizing contemporary research findings and the research of the surveys conducted among fifty sets of parents currently involved in the two centers that are operated by New Heights Christian Community Services.

**Review of Literature**

The following provides a review of some of the literature that is available concerning outreach ministry and youth ministry in small churches. Because of the massive amount of literary resources available for both types of ministry and churches in general, there is some overlap in the material that covers the outreach methods used in the project, including methods of intergenerational ministry and mentoring.

**Books**

*A New Kind of Youth Ministry* by Chris Folmsbee focuses on a re-culturing of youth ministry.\(^{21}\) It speaks of transformational and missional living. The book does not focus on teaching, preaching, or programs, rather, it addresses sharing the journey of faith.

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Presence-Centered Youth Ministry: Guiding Students into Spiritual Formation by Mike King provides guidance on redirecting ministry away from traditional patterns of ministry and turning youth towards a personal relationship with Jesus and a deeply-rooted faith that experiences God’s presence in daily life.\(^\text{22}\)

Connect: Real Relationships in a World of Isolation by Jonathan McKee addresses the importance of developing meaningful relationships.\(^\text{23}\) Many young people feel alone and isolated, so they are in need of the opportunity to open up to others and to share their lives as a journey of faith. This book helps one to understand the importance of building one-on-one relationships with and among young people and the lasting impact it will have in their adult lives.

Successful Biblical Youth Work by Elmer Towns provides information concerning the growth and development of adolescents.\(^\text{24}\) It also provides much information concerning the development of youth programs, teaching programs, and adolescent counseling.

Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional by Jim Belcher offers the reader a view of church from a different perspective.\(^\text{25}\) Within the religious world, there is an ongoing debate among those who hold traditional views of how church is done and those who have sought new directions through the emerging church. This book offers a third view that challenges church leaders to dig deeper to establish churches that are both deeply theological and also practical in their approach. This alternative view embraces the best practices that are offered in both the traditional churches and our present culture.

\(^{22}\) Mike King. Presence-Centered Youth Ministry: Guiding Students into Spiritual Formation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).


Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as a Community of Oneness by Gilbert Bilezikian shows the connection between the concepts of community and oneness as they are presented in Scripture.\(^\text{26}\) Community is seen in various forms in the daily life of the church and offers a sense of belonging to church members and those seeking the Kingdom.

Dr. Tom Phillips, Bob Norsworthy, and W. Terry Whalin, in The World at Your Door: Reaching International Students in Your Home, Church, and School, offer many practical methods for providing meaningful ministry to international students.\(^\text{27}\) It is a powerful reminder of what Jesus commanded his followers concerning the message of the Gospel. The authors help the reader appreciate the importance of obeying the Great Commission and to create opportunities to reach out to everyone within one’s sphere of influence.

Everett Huffard reminds those who read his book, Deciding to Grow: Church Growth Perspectives from 2 Corinthians, that God’s Word must be studied and followed if one desires to see growth in the Kingdom of God.\(^\text{28}\) Growth begins in the individual and continues to spread through the local church and churches throughout the world. Huffard describes the need for churches to maintain a balance between meeting the needs of the local church while also reaching out to those who are not yet Christians.

Mustard-Seed Churches: Ministries in Small Churches, edited by Robert B. Coote, is a collection of reflections of men and women who work in small congregations.\(^\text{29}\) It describes

\(^\text{26}\) Gilbert Bilezikian. *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as a Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).


characteristics of small churches and the ministries found within them. The book provides encouragement for those who work in a small church setting.

In *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, Kenda Creasy Dean considers the passion that young people have for the church.\(^{30}\) Creasy writes to help the reader understand the theology of adolescents and their need to connect to church in deep and meaningful ways.

Also penned by Kendra Creasy Dean, and a co-author, Ron Foster, *The Godbearing Life: The Art and Soul of Tending for Youth Ministry*,\(^{31}\) describes what it means to follow the pattern of compassion that was established by Jesus. It redefines youth leadership and lays out a plan for developing the spirituality of the youth so that they find meaning in all areas of church life.

Doug Stevens, in *Called to Care: Youth Ministry for the Church*, provides information concerning a theology of youth ministry, adolescent development, and contemporary cultural trends.\(^{32}\) He offers practical suggestions on how to connect with teens and addresses the importance of building relationships and resolving conflict.

In *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-Aligners*, Linda Bergquist and Allan Karr establish a challenge for the design of churches that are based on a theology of the local church rather than an implementation of a generic model.\(^{33}\) The book draws attention to the concepts of patterns that honor God, cultivate community, and embrace the

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\(^{32}\) Doug Stevens. *Called to Care: Youth Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985).

current culture. They emphasize the idea of building a church model based on history and tradition that is guided by the overall missiology of the church.

In *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice*, Jonathan R. Wilson establishes the need for church leaders to build churches on the strong foundation of a well-established theology. He writes of the importance of theology in the worship, work, and mission of the church to the surrounding world. He also describes the need for renovation within the church to more effectively witness in today’s changing culture.

Journal Articles

Paul Borthwick offers a description of youth ministry as mission in “Cross-Cultural Outreach: A Missiological Perspective on Youth Ministry.” The article addresses important issues including cultural adaptation, language learning, and thought processes. Borthwick aids those leading youth to understand the ministry concepts that are both incarnational and holistic in nature.

In “Christian Education and Outreach” Sharon Harding discusses the importance of the integration of faith and action. She emphasizes the importance of the involvement of every member. She also offers practical suggestions concerning afterschool programs and outreach opportunities.

Amy Maclachlan describes how to bring people off the street and into a Christian community in “The Ways We Minister: Taking Ministry to the Streets,” published in *The


Maclachlan challenges churches to realize that they do not work and worship within a vacuum, but that they exist within a neighborhood. The article accentuates the need for churches to work as a part of the community instead of isolating themselves from their neighboring institutions.

Don MacVicar and Carole MacVicar describe the work of one urban ministry located in Canada in “An Inner-city Mission: A Ministry of Inner-city Children and Young People in Hamilton, Ontario.” The article stresses the importance of meeting the physical needs of people, which may very well open doors of opportunity for the Gospel to be taught. The authors offer assistance to anyone interested in establishing similar ministries.

**Review of Scripture**

The following is a listing of some key Scriptural references that aid in the development of a biblical theology of youth ministry. This is not an exhaustive list. Rather, the following verses suggest the biblical perspective concerning faith development including youth and children.

In Exodus 20:12, God establishes the fifth commandment by stating, “Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” This is the first command that is concerned with the interaction between man and his fellow man. It refers to the institution of the home that God established to nurture man from infancy. The implication given in the text is that honoring your father and mother will cause you to have a longer life.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses summons the people of Israel to hear and carefully obey the decrees and laws of God. Moses speaks of the oneness of God and commands the people to

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love God with heart, soul, and strength. The command of God is that His laws would be upon the hearts of His people and that they would train their children in everyday living to remain faithful. This passage stresses the importance of training with the home and community of God.

Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” This is not a guarantee that every child exposed to Biblical training will grow into adulthood and remain faithful. Rather, it is a general principle that emphasizes the importance of training children and youth.

Luke records in Luke 2:52 that “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” This verse explains how Jesus grew, but also serves to as an example to guide those involved in training youth. It provides an illustration of the type of growth that should take place in children.

In Matthew 10:24-25, Jesus describes the relationship between a student and his teacher. He also speaks of the similarity of the two. Jesus reminds that a student is not above his teacher.

Jesus washes the feet of his disciples in John 13:1-17. Although he had authority as their master, he did not hesitate in his service to them. He provided an example for all of his disciples to follow in their teaching and service to others. This passage serves as an illustration of the importance of serving others in the ministry and teaching of the church.

In Mathew 28:16-20, Matthew describes the encounter between Jesus and his disciples after his resurrection from the dead. In this passage, Jesus speaks what has come to be known as “the Great Commission.” This passage helps the reader to understand the authority of Jesus, and the importance of discipling and teaching others. Jesus offers encouragement to those teaching by reminding his disciples of his presence.
The description of an encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus is recorded in Luke 19:1-10. This passage is relevant because it reminds the reader that Jesus reached out to those who were undesirable to others around them. It shows that the compassion of the Lord was upon even the unseemly.

In Acts 15:36-41, Luke describes a sharp disagreement that took place between Paul and Barnabas. It is commonly believed that the disagreement was over a young disciple, John Mark, who had deserted them earlier in Pamphylia. Barnabas wanted to take him along on their journey, but Paul wanted to leave him behind. The men departed company. This account provides an example of one who is willing to continue to disciple another even though he has fallen short.

In Acts 18:24-26, Luke writes of two Christians named Priscilla and Aquila. This couple invited a Jewish man named Apollos into their home and taught him in matters that concerned the way of God. Apollos was educated and had a good understanding of Scripture. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was a good speaker, but he needed someone to help him to understand more fully. Priscilla and Aquila were willing to serve as mentors for Apollos.

In Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul describes the relationship between children and their parents. Children are instructed to obey their parents and to show them honor. Paul alludes to the fifth commandment by stating, “…this is the first command with a promise…” He commands fathers not to exasperate the children, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This passage affirms the importance of training children.

In 1 Timothy 4:12-16, Paul gives instruction to his son in the faith, a young man named Timothy. Paul reminds him not to allow others to look down on him, but to set an example for others in speech, life, love, faith and purity. He reminds Timothy of the importance of devotion
to Scripture, preaching, and teaching. He also tells him to be diligent in these matters, to give himself wholly to them. Paul, who had set an example for the young man Timothy, now encourages Timothy to do the same thing for others.

In 2 Timothy 3:10-16, Paul reminds his young disciple, Timothy, of the example he has set before him. He describes the interaction of their lives and how Timothy has been taught the importance of knowing and living Scripture. He challenges him to continue in the things he has been taught and the vital importance of knowing Scripture.

In Titus 2:1-8, Paul instructs Titus to teach what is in accordance with Scripture. This passage addresses how both young and old are to be taught. Emphasis is placed not only in teaching by the things that are spoken but also by the way life is modeled before others.

In Hebrews 10:19-25, the writer of Hebrews challenges Christians to exemplify the confidence that has been given by Christ. He speaks of the importance of drawing near to God and encouraging one another. He emphasizes the importance of being together and promoting love and good deeds.

In 1 Peter 5:1-5, the Apostle Peter, an elder himself, admonishes the elders to be shepherds of God’s flock. He encourages them to oversee the flock of God’s people. He also reminds younger men to be submissive to those who are older. Both the teacher and the student must be clothed in humility.
Chapter 2

Theological Foundation

Biblical theology forms the basis for New Heights Christian Community Services. This chapter provides a theological context of why New Heights Christian Community Services exists and how it strives to carry out its mission. This chapter begins by considering God’s intended purpose for man and how man fell away from that purpose. It reflects on the protection and provision of the people of God within the home environment and how they were trained within the home to fear the Lord. The chapter will consider the model of Jesus’ life as it provides a pattern for training children. Lastly, it deals with the believer's adherence to the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

Using Scripture as a guide, New Heights seeks to teach children concerning God’s love for mankind and to train children to model their lives after the example set by Jesus Christ while living his life on earth. The children receive daily instruction and modeling concerning the precepts found in Scripture. They also get the opportunity to express themselves through worship of God and service to other people.

The Image of God

The Creation account described in the first chapter of Genesis tells how all things came into existence and explained that everything God created was good in His sight. On the sixth day, God declared that He would create man. Genesis 1:26 states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” According to Bill T. Arnold, “God’s speech makes clear the uniqueness of humanity in creation. Rather than create by simple fiat or through surrogates such as earth or water, God himself
directly steps in to make humankind.”¹ After God had spoken, man was formed from the dust of the ground. Genesis 1:27 describes the creation of mankind by adding, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Upon the completion of the sixth day, God saw all that he had made and said that it was very good. Since the beginning, man has been a special component of God’s creation. God intended for man to be separate and different from the rest of His creation in that man is made in God’s very own image. God designed man in such a way that man is unique in his function and purpose. Victor P. Hamilton writes, “Genesis 1:26 is simply stating that to be human is to bear the image of God. This understanding emphasizes man as a unity. No part of man, no function of man is subordinate to some other, higher part or activity.”²

The Fallen State of Man

God created man in his own image and intended for man to enjoy the fellowship that God offers. However, man’s disobedience in the garden hindered the relationship between God and man. When Satan challenged the authority of God before Adam and Eve, they chose to listen to Satan and to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of Good and evil rather than to obey the voice of God. It is through their disobedience that Adam and Eve allowed sin to enter the world and brought about the fall of man. Their sin separated them from fellowship with God because God is holy and can have nothing to do with sin.

The fallen nature of man has been passed down through history and affects all of mankind. Every person, every family, and society as a whole experience the destructive force of sin. The Apostle Paul declares in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

¹ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44.
God.” Later in his same epistle, Paul describes the wages of sin as death. This death, or separation between God and man, cannot be repaired by man alone. But because of His love for man, God provided man with a plan for his forgiveness.

**God’s Provision for His Covenant People**

In the Old Testament, it is within the context of the covenant relationship that God provided for His people that protected them from sin. Through the Torah, the Mosaic Law, God established a system that protected the holy community and allowed the Jewish people to live, to work, and to worship with God at the center of their existence. The Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, is recorded in Scripture in Exodus 20 and again in Deuteronomy 5. These commands were stated as a summary of the Law of Moses and guided the Israelites as to how they could honor God and live honorably among men. Gary H. Hall offers the following insight: “The Decalogue is customarily divided into two parts. The first explicates the vertical relationship between God and his people and demands exclusive loyalty to God. The second half explicates the horizontal relationship between the people and is concerned with social and moral conduct.”

The gracious act of God provided the law in which the people could keep God at the center of their lives both individually and corporately. As written in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, “The Lawgiver places his law in the environment of grace, for it was his gracious act of redemption and deliverance from Egypt that revealed his name, Yahweh.”

*The Interpreter’s Bible* determines, “The law as the outcome of the covenant relationship, is thus

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itself, a form of grace.”\textsuperscript{5} God loved His people, and He desired to protect the people from sin, so He initiated a system of law that would allow them to remain holy. Because of the fallen state of man, Israel – even as the people of God – would continually struggle with sin and its consequences. But God loved them and provided a way to keep them holy in his sight. God’s law required them to practice the law and to remain holy. In His desire for the holiness of the people, God demanded both their holiness and their love. Hall writes, “The declaration of faith explicating God’s uniqueness and oneness is followed by a demand for total and complete devotion to him. Since God loved Israel, he expected love in return.”\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{The Importance of Narrative}

In Deuteronomy 5:1 Moses summoned the people of Israel and reminded them of the covenant between them and the Lord. He said, “Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.” Moses continually reminded the people of the history and the relationship they shared with God. Knowing the history that they shared with God enabled them to know and experience a covenant relationship with Him. Because of the knowledge of what God had done in the past, the people more readily received the law that God had instituted. Thomas W. Mann states, “The meaning of the law is found in the narrative, and the narrative leads to the responsibility of the law. The connection between who we are and how we behave results in ‘righteousness.’”\textsuperscript{7} By understanding the narrative, the story of God and His people, the people of God could understand and appreciate the importance of adherence to the Mosaic Law.


\textsuperscript{6} Hall, \textit{Deuteronomy}, 137.

\textsuperscript{7} Thomas W. Mann, \textit{Deuteronomy} (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 52.
An understanding of the narrative of the relationship between God and Israel was integral within the community of God’s people. The first command given in the Decalogue declared that no other gods precede the God of Israel. God was at the center of their world, so “the law was to be repeated wherever they went and wherever they were.” The focus of life for each Israelite was to be upon his relationship with God, and his purpose for living was to bring honor to God and to remain faithful in His sight. Cairns suggests, “The words of God guided every movement of the hand and eye, every domestic and community activity.” Therefore, by knowing the history of God’s relationship with His people, and by repeating the law wherever they went, the Israelites were prepared to keep God at the forefront of their existence.

The Importance of the Home

God commanded children to honor both father and mother. By following this command, the people of God could expect to receive the fulfillment of God’s promise of a long life upon the earth. It is important to note that this is the first of the commands that relate to the relationship between humans. God establishes the relationship between children and parents as the foundation of the community; the home is the primary institution given by God to keep the covenant relationship intact. Eugene H. Merrill emphasizes the relationship of children and parents by saying, “In the hierarchy of human relationships, that between children and their parents ranks beneath only that relationship to God.”

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8 Hall, Deuteronomy, 139.
10 Deut. 5:16.
In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructed the children of Israel concerning the commands, decrees, and laws of God. He explained to the people that God had directed him to teach His laws to them so that they would know how to live in the land that God had promised. The Interpreter’s Bible succinctly states, “Israel must be holy because God is.”\(^{12}\) God commanded holiness of his people, and he instituted the home as the means to teach children from birth through adulthood to live out their holiness as members of the covenant community. Merrill describes how the transmission of holiness was carried out by writing, “Father must educate son and son the grandson so that the fact and features of the covenant may never be forgotten.”\(^{13}\)

Within the passage of Scripture known as the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses prepared the people for their entrance into the Promised Land by once again emphasizing the importance to love God and to keep his commandments. Moses proclaimed,

Hear, O Israel: The L ORD our God, the L ORD is one. Love the L ORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Moses began by commanding the people to hear what he was about to say. This command was for all of the people; it included every man, woman, and child. Moses proclaimed the oneness of the God of Israel and required that everyone should pay attention to what is commanded of them. Walter Brueggeman comments, “In listening, Israel is summoned, commanded, and assured by the One with authority who takes an initiative and imposes upon Israel a will, purpose, and identity other than any it might have taken for itself.”\(^{14}\)

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\(^{12}\) Buttrick, Genesis, Exodus, 980.

\(^{13}\) Merrill, Deuteronomy, 166-167.

and the strength of the people were found in the relationship that they held with God, so it was very important for them to understand his authority.

Moses commanded the people to love God. This command to love required *all* that they had to offer. It included all of the heart, all of the soul, and all of the strength that they could muster. Hall reminds the reader, “The command to love occurs seven other times in Deuteronomy and is often associated with obedience to the commands.”\(^{15}\) The commands that Moses gave were to be upon the hearts of the people. They were to be taken seriously and honored by everyone within the holy community. In adherence to what Moses commanded, the love the people had manifests itself in their obedience to the will of God. Their obedience implied their willingness to express their love for him openly. Hall comments, “Moses understood that the core of Israel’s relationship with God was not contained in ritual or cult, but flowed out of reverence for and devotion to God. Without the latter, the former was useless.”\(^{16}\) It was because of the love that God continually showed them that the people were able to reciprocate their love and adhere to the commands of God. Their love for God translated itself in love for the commands of God.

**The Training of Children**

It was not enough for the commands of God to be solely in the heart of the individual; the commands were for every person who was a part of the community. So, Moses commanded the Israelites to impress the commands upon their children. It was an act of obedience to God and a showing of their love for God that compelled the children of Israel to teach their children to love and obey the Lord. Hall interjects, “The covenant community had an obligation to pass on the

\(^{15}\) Hall, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 198.
covenant requirements to the next generation. Failure to do so jeopardized the people of God, and God’s witness in the world faced extinction.”

After commanding the people to impress the Law upon the hearts of the children, Moses explains the steps. First, the law had to be upon the heart of the individual. Then the Law was to be impressed upon the children by teaching them at home, by the roadside, at bedtime, and when they arose in the morning. In other words, the teaching of God’s Word took place at any given opportunity. Hall suggests, “The progression implied in verses 6-9 (heart, children, houses, gates) enlarged the sphere of the covenant claim in an ever-growing circle of responsibility, from the father to the extended family, to the entire village.” Every parent, family member, and member of the holy community had the responsibility of teaching and modeling the covenant so that it would be impressed upon the next generation of God’s people.

The writer of Proverbs exclaims “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” The reader must understand that Proverbs 22:6 is to be taken as a general principle rather than a rule that has been set in stone. There are times when, regardless of the efforts and the abilities of the parents to train their children in the way of righteousness, the child chooses to follow a different path that is contrary to the teaching that has taken place in the home. In some cases, it would be unfair to blame the parents for the behavior of the child. In a general sense, the principle holds true. Not only does good training within the home establish a strong foundation, according to The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, “Proper training of a child will endure throughout this life.” Although some children may rebel against the principle stated in Proverbs 22:6, the verse provides encouragement to parents who seek to train their children in

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17 Hall, Deuteronomy, 139.
18 Ibid., 141.
following the paths of righteousness. It is an admonition to take seriously the responsibility of properly training and directing the paths of the next generation.

Parents who deliberately and consistently teach their children prepare them so that they will be equipped to make godly choices and to live their adult lives with an informed understanding of what God expects of them. In contrast, parents who do not train their children in the ways of the Lord cannot expect their children to adhere to godly principles as adults. If parents do not train their children in the way they should go, or if they are inconsistent with their training, there should be no realistic expectation that the children will adhere to a godly standard of life and conduct when they reach adulthood.

The training of the child must begin at birth and continue throughout life. The Interpreter’s Bible notes, “This training must start when the mind of the child is impressionable.” Therefore, it is important to begin the training of the child during his formative years. For the children of Israel, the training of children was part of life within the covenant community. For Christians, it is also within the realization of community that proper training takes place.

The Growth of Jesus as a Pattern

The Gospel of Luke offers a glimpse into the childhood of Jesus. In the first two chapters, Luke tells of the events that surrounded the birth of the Savior. Then he proceeds to jump ahead to an account of Jesus at the age of twelve when he accompanied his parents on a trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. On the way back home, after traveling for a day, his parents realized that Jesus was not with them, so they returned to Jerusalem. After three more days they found him in the temple, and Jesus returned with them to their home in Nazareth. Luke

ends his commentary on the birth and childhood of Jesus by providing the reader with one verse found in Luke 2:52 that states, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men.” Robert H. Stein comments, “Luke provided his readers with a concluding summary of the years between this event and Jesus’ baptism.” There is no more mention of the childhood of Jesus in the remaining twenty-two chapters of Luke’s Gospel, but that one verse is filled with meaning. Luke succinctly describes the growth of Jesus in four aspects of who he was as a person. Mark C. Black ties Luke’s commentary on the childhood of Jesus to the story of the birth and childhood of Samuel, a prophet of God. Black states, “This final statement of the ‘infancy narrative’ summarizes Jesus’ life from age twelve until his baptism in 3:21. In keeping with the frequent echoes of the Hannah/Samuel story, this final sentence is the clearest reference to that story. Jesus is growing intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially.”

The King James Bible utilizes the word “increased” to describe how Jesus grew in each of the four areas that Luke pronounced. Herschel H. Hobbs offers an interesting viewpoint when he comments, “The word ‘increased’ means to cut or chop one’s way forward, as one were cutting down trees or cutting away the underbrush. It speaks of the rigorous effort required by [Jesus] as he developed into manhood.” The growth of Jesus did not simply happen without any effort on his part. Surely, he was diligent to attend to the areas of his growth as described by Luke. Although there is no more information given concerning the growth of Jesus, it is obvious that Jesus grew to manhood and was aptly prepared to enter the ministry that the Father had in store for His son. Hobbs concludes, “Thus Jesus increased in wisdom, stature, and grace until the

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day when his Father said, ‘The time has arrived for your showing to Israel.’ And when God spoke, he was ready.”

The life that Jesus lived upon the earth was marked by his growth from childhood to manhood in every aspect of his life. Part of the reason that Jesus became immersed in the world he had created was to be a living example of what it meant to live the human existence while maintaining holiness and remaining in fellowship with the Father. Jesus is fully God, but during his time on earth, he was also fully human. Jesus exemplified the will of the Father while living as a man. The Interpreter’s Bible comments, “The power and beauty of his life were due to the shining in him and through him of a light whose source was higher than this earth.” Therefore, the way in which Jesus grew should set the standard for growth in those who seek to follow him.

Luke described the growth of Jesus in four aspects: wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man. The first aspect of his growth concerned wisdom which could be a description of his intellect and ability to learn. Jesus was in the temple in the midst of a discussion with the religious leaders when was he found by his parents. He was sitting among them, asking questions of them, learning, and developing his mind in the teachings of Scripture. Already, he was seeking to grow, and he had begun the process to cultivate wisdom. Darrell L. Bock suggests, “The reference to wisdom has to do with growth in Jesus’ insight.” Jesus grew in knowledge, in his ability to understand and apply what he learned, and also in his ability to ask questions that would provide a wider grasp of the religious teachings of his day.

The second aspect of the growth of Jesus involved his stature. While stature generally refers to physical growth, the Expositor’s Bible Commentary suggests, “[It] is ambiguous,

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referring either to physical growth or more likely, personal development, i.e., maturity.”\textsuperscript{28} In either case, the physical body of Jesus grew from that of a child to that of a man. As the son of a carpenter, he would have undertaken tasks that were physically challenging and would cause his body to become stronger. By the time Jesus entered into his ministry, he would have fully developed into manhood.

The last two aspects of the growth of Jesus are closely connected to one another in that they are both concerned with the relationships that Jesus developed. By growing in favor with God and favor with man, Jesus was able to be seen as the perfect example of his Father’s will among men. Bock states, “The mention of both God and humans is a way of saying all perceived this growth.”\textsuperscript{29} Because Jesus continued to remain in fellowship with the Father and solely sought to do the Father’s will, he could aptly speak on his Father’s behalf. As he lived his life among mankind, he could demonstrate the will of God before them. His growth in the favor of man allowed Jesus to befriend those around him and establish a presence among the people. John 1:14 states, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Interpreter’s Bible suggests, “Not only was the life of Jesus related radiantly to the Unseen; it was related also with a happy naturalness to human circumstances. He was not only in favor with God; he had a friendliness which won the respective friendliness of people.”\textsuperscript{30}

In Matthew 9:35-38 Matthew describes the ministry of Jesus. He writes,

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they


were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

The ministry of Jesus included teaching, proclaiming the good news, and healing. Jesus ministered to the people as he traveled from place to place. Matthew writes concerning the compassion of Jesus when he saw the crowds. Jesus not only noticed the crowd, but it also caused something to stir within him. R.T. France notes,

His response is described by the strongly emotional Greek verb *splanchnizomai* which speaks of a warm, compassionate response to need. No English term does justice to it: compassion, pity, sympathy, and fellow-feeling all convey part of it, but ‘his heart went out’ perhaps represents more fully the emotional force of the underlying metaphor of a “gut response.”

While Jesus experienced compassion when he saw the people in their struggles, he was compelled to act on what he saw. Robert H. Mounce states, “In the helplessness of the crowd Jesus sees an opportunity for the proclamation of the Kingdom.” So he spoke to his disciples concerning the harassed and helpless crowd. France describes the actions of Jesus as “not only sympathy with a person’s need but also a poetical response which meets that need.” Jesus was moved by what he witnessed, and his emotions caused him to speak. First, Jesus used the metaphor of sheep without a shepherd to describe the harassed and helpless state of the people. Then he utilized a second metaphor, that of a field in need of harvesting. Both of these descriptions points to the necessity of workers emerging who are willing to respond to needs of the people. The response of Jesus was to tell his disciples to pray that God would send more workers into the harvest field. The Interpreter’s Bible adds, “The work of the ministry is like

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gathering a scattered flock and like harvesting grain. The lost are brought back and new converts are added.”

Jesus had already established his ministry as he moved through the towns and villages by preaching and healing the people in need, and the people had benefitted by the blessings he offered them. It was at this point that Jesus roused his disciples so that they would also see the great needs of the crowd in front of them. The crowd could not be overlooked or ignored, and Jesus instructed his disciples to take action. He desired for them to understand that they needed to respond to what they witnessed. Alexander MacClaren comments, “The right emotion for a Christian looking on the Christless crowds is pity, not aversion; pity, not anger; pity, not curiosity; pity, not indifference.”

It was implied in the words of Jesus that the workers sent by the Lord of the Harvest would include those praying for the harvest to take place.

**The First and Greatest Command**

In the midst of his ministry on earth, Jesus was repeatedly tested by those who opposed him. Matthew 22:34-40 described an occasion when the scribes and Pharisees attempted to test Jesus in matters concerning the Law of Moses. One from among them asked Jesus which of the commandments is the greatest. Without hesitation, Jesus responded to the question by exclaiming, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Jesus emphasized the importance of one’s love for God stemming from all that is within him. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary suggests, “From the viewpoint of anthropology, ‘heart,’ ‘soul,’ and ‘mind’

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(v.37) are not mutually exclusive but overlapping categories, together demanding our love for God to come from our whole person, our every faculty and capacity.”36 MacClaren describes this love for God as, “the sum of man’s duty and the germ of all goodness.”37 When one enters into a relationship with God, the love for God is what sustains the relationship and the obedience that follows. Robert H. Mounce states, “The point is that God requires a love that involves the whole person.”38

Every follower of Jesus should see the command to love God as the core duty of one’s life. It is the central theme of Scripture and the command upon which all others are based. For the Christian, the love for God stems out of an understanding and appreciation of what God has done and continues to do. Every blessing and every good thing point to the love that God has for His people. Therefore, our love for him is an outgrowth of what we experience in daily living. Buttrick’s commentary suggests, “The majesty of the stars, the bounty of daily providence, the pleading of conscience and compassion, the basic awe in us, all command us to love God; and we intuitively recognize the rightfulness of the command.”39

When Jesus responded to the question concerning the greatest commandment, he combined two commands into what should be seen as what is most important. By stating that the greatest commandment is to love God and to love one’s neighbor, Jesus placed an equal value on both commands. What does it profit to exclaim a love for God without that love being acted upon in a meaningful and tangible expression among all of mankind? The Interpreter’s Bible describes Jesus’ response as “a vivid and memorable summary of Christian duty – truth in a nutshell.”40

37 MacClaren, St. Matthew, 137.
39 Buttrick, Matthew, 524.
40 Ibid., 524.
The love of God and the love of our neighbor must be seen as equal components upon which the rest of the commandments rely. Once again, the Interpreter’s Bible states, “‘No wedge can thus be driven between love for God and love for our neighbor, for each dies without the other.’”

Jesus argued that love for God must be the primary focus of one’s life, but that love for one’s neighbor is equally important. McLaren comments, “It is vain to try to create brotherhood among men unless the sense of God’s fatherhood is its foundation.”

The command to love one’s neighbor as oneself assumes that the one loving has a healthy view of oneself. However, the emphasis should be on the outward expression of concern for others rather than building up our natural tendencies. Mounce states, “To love one’s neighbor as oneself does not teach self-love, but requires that we extend to others the same kind of personal concern that we have for ourselves.”

Stemming from a total love and commitment to God, a love for others grows and manifests itself in the way man loves and cares for those around him. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary notes, “The entire biblical revelation demands heart religion, marked by total allegiance to God, loving him and loving one’s neighbor. Without these two commands, the Bible is sterile.” Man must love his neighbor realizing that the love for neighbor is an expression of one’s love for God. Man cannot have one without the other, and man cannot distinguish who is worthy of love and who is not. France states, “The neighbor is everyone, and the nature of the ‘love’ which God expects is equally unlimited…”

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41 Ibid., 524.
42 McLaren, *St. Matthew*, 137.
The Great Commission

God’s plan of discipleship is for those who follow Jesus to share the gospel so that others might follow Him too. A disciple is a follower or student and, as such, must strive to become like the teacher in both word and deed. As disciples of Jesus, we must teach others while continuing to learn ourselves. Mounce states, “A disciple is not simply one who has been taught but one who continues to learn.” After his resurrection, Jesus speaks to his disciples, saying,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed his disciples to go and make other disciples for the purpose of bringing others into relationship with him and also into a relationship with one another. As discipleship takes place, the teacher teaches the student, and the student learns to teach. A true disciple, therefore, will continue throughout his life in both roles, that of student and teacher. As Christians, we must maintain both roles throughout life in order to fulfill our duty as faithful disciples. According to the Interpreter’s Bible, “The end and aim of the Great Commission is to bring men into the possession and the power of God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit who is our guide and advocate.” If we fail to disciple others, then Christianity will fail to grow. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary elaborates on this by stating, “Christianity must spread by an internal necessity, or it has already decayed; for one of Jesus’ commands is to teach all he commands. Failure to disciple, baptize, and teach the peoples

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46 Mounce, Matthew, Vol. 1, 268.
48 Buttrick, Matthew, 624.
of the world is already itself one of the failures of our own discipleship.” As part of our obedience to the Gospel of Christ, we continue to learn and to teach others so that they may learn and teach others as well.

The theological basis for New Heights Christian Community Services is not exhaustive, but it is firmly rooted in Scripture. At the very core of its existence, New Heights dedicates itself to reaching the lost and sharing the message of salvation that Jesus provides. In keeping with the Biblical mandate to love God and to love our neighbors, New Heights attempts to be inclusive in reaching out to the neighborhoods in which the two centers exist. Those involved in the work of New Heights understand the importance of the foundation of a godly home, but also realize that not all of the children live in a home that is centered on honoring God. The children and families who are involved in the New Heights programs come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds. Some find their circumstances to be difficult to manage. Terry Briley comments, “[God] has never promised a way that is easy assures his people that he will never place them in a position without providing them sufficient resources to endure.” New Heights does not discriminate against its neighbors. Instead, those involved strive to lovingly embrace persons with different backgrounds, hoping to create opportunities where the gospel can be modeled and shared. All of those who are involved in the work of New Heights Christian Community Services, whether staff members, volunteers, or participants and their families, are able to find both purpose and hope through a relationship with God. Briley states, “Regardless of the cultural circumstances, God’s people can rest assured that their circumstances have a place in the wise, 

sovereign purpose of God.” By sharing lives and working together, those involved in New Heights can each benefit from discipleship in Jesus Christ as they strive to be inclusive in reaching out to children and families in the community and to train them in the four areas that were evident in the life of Jesus: wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man. Lives are changed and God is glorified as well as the New Heights community learns and grows together.

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Chapter 3

Conducting the Research

New Heights Christian Community Services Background

The purpose of this project is to investigate the effectiveness of the ministry of New Heights Christian Community Services. New Heights operates two community centers that are housed in local church buildings in Nashville, Tennessee. New Heights strives to attract children and families so that they may enter into a relationship with the local church. John H. Westerhoff III writes,

The early church did not convert people in the world and then bring them to church. They attracted people because of the life they lived, and when people came to them and asked them why they lived as they did they said, “Come live with us, model your life after ours. Imitate us. Be formed by living with us. We are not going to do something to or for you but with you.” That process of nurturing was also converting. It transformed lives as well as formed lives; the process is the same.¹

While the organization ministers to the needs of all children and families, most of the families involved in the program are considered low-income households. Both centers are strategically located in lower-income areas within the city.

The first center was established in November 2006 in partnership with 49th Avenue Church of Christ located at 4900 Illinois Avenue in West Nashville. The New Heights ministry was formed under the oversight of West Nashville Heights Church of Christ where the Executive Director served as the congregation’s youth minister. There was an understanding between the executive director and the elders of the church that the ministry would be established as a non-profit entity and would branch off from the church as soon as it was possible to do so.

The church held a school supply giveaway in the community during the summer of 2006. During that event, it was decided that there was a need for an outreach program in that particular area of West Nashville. Members of West Nashville Heights Church of Christ established a volunteer board to create a new ministry that would benefit the children and families of the community. They desired to provide after-school care, summer care, and various benevolent events during the year. In August of the same year, the elders of the West Nashville Heights congregation met with the four elders of 49th Avenue Church of Christ to discuss the possibility of a partnership in this new endeavor. The elders of the 49th Avenue congregation agreed to the partnership and allowed New Heights to use the 49th Avenue church building as a community center.

The New Heights board of directors relocated the center from its original location in January 2015, and it presently operates out of the church building that houses James Avenue Church of Christ at 613 James Avenue in West Nashville. Although established in 1939, the James Avenue congregation has remained small in number. However, it has maintained a continual presence within the community. Currently, James Avenue does not have elders or deacons, but they do have a minister and a youth minister. One of the men in the congregation serves on the board of directors for the New Heights ministry. At present, there are approximately fifty children enrolled in the after-school program. A center director, assistant director, and some volunteers facilitate the program. The children involved in this center are dropped off and picked up each day by a parent or guardian. Most of them attend either Cockrill Elementary School or Charlotte Park Elementary School. Each school has an enrollment of approximately five-hundred students.
Although the West Nashville center began as a Tuesday-Thursday program, the board soon voted to open the center four days each week, and eventually, when funding allowed, the center became a full five-day program. This is significant as opening five days per week added stability to the programming and gave consistency to the overall effectiveness of the ministry. The center is currently open from 3:45 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. each afternoon during the school year and offers extended hours during the summer months.

The New Heights board voted during summer, 2014 to establish a second center at the Paragon Mills Church of Christ at 4828 Aster Drive in South Nashville. The Paragon Mills congregation, established in 1965 was a mid-size congregation of approximately two-hundred and fifty members for several decades before experiencing a significant decline in the 1990’s. Presently, the congregation has a leadership consisting of three elders, three deacons, a minister, and a youth minister. The minister of the congregation also serves as a member of the New Heights board of directors.

After a meeting with the elders of Paragon Mills Church of Christ, the New Heights program obtained an allocation of space at the building there. The main office of the New Heights ministry subsequently relocated from the 49th Avenue church building to the Paragon Mills church building. The after-school program opened in October 2014 with four students and had since grown to an enrollment of approximately forty-five students. The majority of the students attend Paragon Mills Elementary School which has an enrollment of over nine-hundred students. The center is open during the school year each weekday afternoon from 3:15 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. Like the other center, Paragon Mills offers extended hours during the summer months.
Core Offerings

Both centers are required to provide various programs each day. The core offerings include tutoring, snacks, chapel, arts & crafts, and physical activity. Other activities may be included in the day-to-day operations as each center director deems appropriate.

![Core Offerings](image)

Figure 1 – Core Offerings

Although the students are not required to attend the program every day, and there is no set amount of permitted absences within the program, the children eagerly participate in the after-school program on a regular basis. The program offers a safe environment where children can enjoy being together and explore new opportunities that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. The various activities and events provide the children exposure to learning opportunities that they may not have at home or school.

A Simple Foundation

Scripture provides the basis for the New Heights program. Luke 2:52 describes the development of Jesus as a boy by stating, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor
with God and man.”

This verse offers insight into the way that Jesus continued to develop into manhood. The New Heights program adopts the four concentrations of growth found in Luke 2:52, educational, physical, spiritual, and social growth. All of the activities and events developed by New Heights keep these four concentrations of development in mind. Therefore, the goal of the program is to aid all of the children who participate so that they might grow in all four of these areas. Paul Borthwick comments, “This principle highlights the biblical priority of Christlikeness – that every follower of Jesus Christ would grow to reflect his character and his love in society.”

There are many other Christian organizations, such as community centers, daycares, camps, and schools, which adopt the same premises that New Heights uses. They each believe in establishing a pattern for the growth and development of children which will result in them becoming members of the church and faithful Christian adults. The ministry of New Heights is associated with Churches of Christ but is not considered a church. Rather, New Heights serves as means by which Christians can form relationships with children and their families. Patricia J. Boone and Michael A. Boone suggest that relationships are a key component in the development of faith in children by stating, “Because faith develops within the context of relationships, this is a two-way process. It is a mutual ministry whereby children contribute to our emerging faith as we contribute to theirs. They bring to us a simple trust and an eager desire to enjoy the world and the people God has placed in their lives.”

New Heights seeks to provide such opportunities so that children may develop into godly men and women.

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New Heights seeks to partner with local congregations to establish bridges into the communities where the churches reside. Churches are prone to turning inward and pursuing only the relationships between existing members. J. R. Howard writes, “When we become members of the church, we take on God’s “way of being,” and this way of being is in communion with God and community with others.” Congregations need to be taught to enter into the broader community as ambassadors of Christ. Christians must constantly and consistently seek out opportunities to share their faith with others. Graham Hill adds, “The community of faith is to bear witness to the world of the one who has liberated them to joy and hope, in the midst of uncertainty, suffering, and opposition.” New Heights provides an easy way in which the local church can bear witness to the surrounding community and to genuinely represent Christ to others.

New Heights also seeks to help children to grow in the same ways associated with the growth of Jesus. While the concept of using Luke 2:52 as a guide is not a new one, the New Heights program is unique in that it works with children and families in their own settings and circumstances. New Heights also offers programs that are unique in their settings and situations. Therefore, the inquiry of this thesis project is not concerned with the measurement of success of other programs; this thesis project is solely concerned with the effectiveness of the ministry of New Heights Christian Community Services. The four concentrations of development that stem from Luke 2:52 are considered the basis for all of the activities that take place. The development within each of the areas will aid in the formation of a life-long view of God and help each child

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to begin a relationship with Him. Judith Allen Shelley states, “What a child learns about God during the school years undergirds an ongoing relationship with God.”

Figure 2 - The Four Concentrations of Development

New Heights strives daily to incorporate all four growth areas into the programs that are used with the children that are enrolled. Every day the children participate in the core activities which include homework assistance, snacks, and chapel. They have the opportunity to take part in a variety of other activities that cause them to interact with their peers. The children also have the opportunity to interact with Christian adults. Through meaningful interaction, Christian adults build relationships with the children. The relationships enable the adults to positively influence the children in their participation at the center and the life choices that they make. Gary C. Newton writes, “These informal relationships become important opportunities to reward the children through encouragement, hugs, accountability, affirmation, and challenge.” The relationships develop through simple activities. Board games, puzzles, art and craft projects,

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team sports and field trips play an important part in the operations of the program, but they also provide the setting for meaningful interaction to take place. Newton also notes, “Building relationships with at-risk children is identified as the most effective aspect of most ministries. Children at risk desperately need healthy relationships to compensate for the problems within their homes and communities. Quality relationships must be the foundation of every effective ministry to at-risk children.”

Rationale for the Research Project

The leadership of New Heights desires to benefit the children and families that are served through its programs. Although the after-school program provides the opportunity to connect with many households, the actual connection comes through the meaningful interaction that takes place. Rick Richardson writes, “The connecting point is our shared humanity, our common struggles and sufferings, needs and longings. So we ask God for discernment and opportunity to share out of that shared humanity.” Many children enrolled in the after-school and summer programs over the last eight years. They participated in various field trips, summer camps, and other opportunities associated with the New Heights ministry. The leadership is confident that the ongoing ministry efforts are effective. However, the confidence in the effectiveness of the ministry is based on informal conversations, monthly operational reports given by the executive director, as well as the observations from the limited involvement of board members in the day-to-day operations of the two centers. In the past, New Heights has not endeavored to seek input from the parents of children involved in the program. Many informal conversations have taken place over the history of the organization, and the parents have been complimentary of the ministry efforts, but no other attempt has been made to gather information

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9 Newton, 394.

from the parents to find out if they thought their children were benefitting by their involvement in the New Heights Ministry.

The rationale behind this thesis project is a desire to investigate the effectiveness of the New Heights program, based on written information gathered by surveying the parents of the children that participate in the New Heights ministry. Because New Heights functions as a ministry to children and families, the primary concern of the leadership is to meet the needs of the participants while establishing a Christ-like example for them to witness first-hand. Jack Reese states, “In a world largely suspicious of religious people and institutions, we are free to give without expecting return.”11 Based on the belief that parents are intended to be the primary caregivers of their children, the attitudes and thoughts of the parents concerning their children’s involvement in the New Heights Ministry will help to indicate whether or not New Heights is effective in their development. Therefore, this thesis project was designed to find out if the parents believe that their children are benefitting from the ministry.

A Survey of Parents

New Heights conducted a survey of parents whose children participate in the New Heights ministry. On October 28, 2014, the parents were invited to a meeting. At the meeting, each set of parents received a letter explaining the purpose of the survey. They also received an informed-consent document, a copy of the survey, and a blank envelope. The parents could either fill out the survey at the meeting or take the survey home to complete it and return it in the sealed envelope at a later time.

There were fifty sets of parents who completed the survey. The surveys were anonymous, no signatures were required, and a box facilitated the return of completed surveys. One of the

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directors welcomed the parents and thanked them for their participation he then explained the purpose of the study and gave the parents an opportunity to ask questions and to express any concerns before taking the survey. After the allotted two-week period, the surveys which were returned to the main office along with the ones collected on the survey day were unsealed and tabulated. The author of this project compiled the results electronically and stored all of the completed forms securely in the main office of New Heights Christian Community Services.

**Components of the Survey**

Each survey had two separate components of five questions each. The first component asked the question, “How is New Heights helping?” The intent of this component was to measure the growth of the children in the four areas that the New Heights ministry stresses: educational growth, physical growth, spiritual growth and social growth. Each of the first four questions in the respective areas provided the option of choosing responses from three categories: no improvement, some improvement, or significant improvement. The fifth question was concerned with whether or not the parents perceived growth in their children in any other areas of development. Surveys that left any questions unanswered were also considered. The researcher sorted surveys according to which center they represented. The findings of the surveys show the responses from each of the two centers as well as the combined responses.

1. How is New Heights helping?

2. What is your relationship to the church?

Figure 3 - The Two Components of the Survey
The second component of the survey involved the question, “What is your relationship to the church?” This component consisted of five questions that addressed the relationship that exists between the families involved in the program and the two congregations that host the New Heights centers. The questions sought to establish a better understanding of where the families attend church, their impression of the host churches, and the amount of interaction that has taken place between the host churches and the families. The final question addressed ways in which the host churches could further assist the children and their families.

Educational Growth

The first inquiry on the survey concerned educational growth. It measured the parents’ perceived growth of their children in academic pursuits. The leadership of New Heights is aware of the academic struggles of the children that participate in the Metropolitan Nashville Public School system. Overall, the students within the public school system in Nashville are academically weak, especially in those schools which work directly with low-income families. Makeda Amelga states, “Far too many students—especially at-risk, special education, and minority students—are not receiving an education that adequately prepares them for life following high school.”12 New Heights strives to adequately prepare students so that they will succeed in their academic pursuits. According to performance data measured through the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System in 2014, all three of the schools of the New Heights participants were projected to have less than fifteen percent of their students ready to attend college upon graduation from high school.13

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Because education is one of the core concentrations of the New Heights ministry, the after-school program is set up to aid the children with their homework and academic needs on a daily basis. Each day, the children are required to bring their homework with them so that they can work on their assignments with adult supervision. The goal of the New Heights program is for each child to complete all homework assignments correctly each day. New Heights is committed to aiding each child by providing adequate resources for the children to complete their assignments. Many of families cannot afford basic school supplies, so New Heights collects and distributes supplies throughout the school year. Staff members and volunteers aid the children by offering instruction and correction on each assignment. When each child leaves the center, the homework has been completed and corrected, which affords the child the opportunity to begin the next school day with the confidence of knowing that he is prepared to move forward in his academic endeavors.

The results of the survey showed that the parents noted improvement concerning the academic abilities of their children since becoming involved in the New Heights program. Fifty-six percent of the parents surveyed cited significant academic improvement in their children, and twenty-eight percent cited some improvement. Only six percent stated that they had observed no improvement, while ten percent did not respond. The positive results from each center were similar. Eighty-two percent of the parents from the Paragon Mills center and eighty-six percent of the parents from the James Avenue center noted improvement in the academic progress of their children. Eleven percent of the parents from the James Avenue center claimed that there was no improvement in their children’s academic growth. While none of the parents from the Paragon Mills center claimed there was no improvement in their children’s academic growth, eighteen percent did not respond to the inquiry.
The second inquiry on the survey concerned the physical growth of the children involved in the New Heights program. New Heights encourages every child to participate in the activities offered. If an activity is new to the child, the New Heights staff is diligent to instruct the child in how the activity is conducted and attempts to encourage each child to have fun while learning something new. It is critical to the development of children that they are exposed to new opportunities to involve themselves and that they learn to step out of their comfort zones to learn from varying experiences. The staff also encourages the children to help their peers learn how to play the games. While children are encouraged to participate in the physical activities offered, they are never forced to do so. Often, however, when a child watches a particular activity that he may be hesitant to attempt, he may decide to participate after observing how the game is played.

The youth of America are not as physically active as they need to be, and they continue to display poor eating habits. As a result, America in now faced with an ever-increasing dilemma.

Figure 4 – Educational Growth

Physical Growth
concerning childhood obesity. According to a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Approximately 17% (or 12.7 million) of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years had obesity.”\textsuperscript{14} This problem does not only affect America’s youth. The problem with obesity is now affecting every generation. The answer to the problem of obesity is in the education of children concerning the importance of good eating habits and daily physical activity.

New Heights encourages children to eat healthily and to remain physically active. The children receive snacks each afternoon during the school year, or lunches and snacks during the summer months. Cooking classes are a regular part of the rotation of activities that New Heights offers its participants. Periodically, classes that teach healthy eating habits and promote good health and hygiene are also offered from time to time. Special guests or volunteers that work in health professions conducted many of these classes.

In the survey, the parents were asked to rank their child’s improvement in physical activity since becoming involved in the New Heights program. Out of the combined responses of the two centers, four percent of the parents did not respond to the question. Of those who did respond, another four percent stated that there was no improvement in the physical activity of their child. However, twenty-eight percent of the parents stated that their child had shown some improvement and sixty-four percent had noted significant improvement. Four percent of the parents whose children were involved in the James Avenue center replied that they had not witnessed improvement in their child’s physical activity. Thirty-six percent of the parents cited some improvement, while sixty percent saw significant improvement. Five percent of the parents from the Paragon Mills center saw no improvement in their child’s physical activity. However,

eighteen percent saw some improvement, and sixty-eight percent saw significant improvement.

Nine percent of the parents from the Paragon Mills center did not respond.

Figure 5 – Physical Growth

Social Growth

Challenging children to interact socially is one of the integral functions of the New Heights program. Of course, interaction naturally takes place as a large number of children gather together at each of the two New Heights centers. The planned activities and games provide an outlet for the children to get to know one another and to learn social skills that will aid them throughout life. The after-school program, summer program, and summer camping experience all lend themselves to aiding each child in his social development.

All New Heights activities require adult supervision. The paid staff, interns, and volunteers are carefully selected to ensure the safety and well-being of the children involved in the programs. The New Heights leadership carefully considers how each adult will interact with
the children and determine whether or not the adult will project a positive Christian influence. They are also informed about the importance of consistency in working with children. It does not benefit the children if adults to begin to build relationships with them only to become sporadic or altogether absent in their involvement in the New Heights program.

New Heights invites and encourages the members of the host congregations to visit the centers and to volunteer in the program. Acting as a bridge between the church and the community, New Heights provides the conduit for relationships to develop. As members of the churches visit the children, the children learn how to interact with adults effectively. They learn to greet and shake hands, to make eye contact, and to be respectful and courteous. Over time, the church members and children become familiar with each other, learn one another’s names, and begin to make connections to the congregation that will allow for opportunities to encourage the children to participate in the activities of the church. It is beneficial for the children because they are able to get to know the members in an environment in which they are comfortable. They will see familiar faces if they attend church services or other church-sponsored activities. It is also beneficial for the church members because the interaction allows them to match children’s faces to names. Because of the personal connection, the church members are more likely to remember the children and their families when praying and to take more interest in involving them in the life of the church.

New Heights also purposefully provides social growth opportunities for the children through specific activities such as field trips and community involvement. Many of the field trips are free services offered to the community, some are educational, some geared towards cultural awareness, and others are focused on service. By providing a variety of activities, New Heights
is able to expose the children to the world around them and help them to interact in meaningful ways.

New Heights also provides the children with a variety of classes and teachable moments that help them to learn the importance of valuable life skills such as respect, manners, hygiene, and communication. Although the classes are fun for the children, the underlying purpose is to teach them social skills that will aid them throughout life.

When asked in the survey to respond concerning the social development of their children, eighty-one percent of the parents replied that their children had experienced either some improvement or significant improvement in their ability to interact with others. Six percent of the parents did not respond to the question while another six percent cited no improvement in the social interaction of their children. Twenty-one percent of the parents from the James Avenue Center noted some improvement among their children, while sixty-four percent of the parents responded that their children had experienced significant improvement. Eleven percent cited no improvement, and four percent did not respond. Nine percent of the parents from the Paragon Mills center did not answer the question. However, all of the parents who responded noted improvement in their children. Fourteen percent of the parents cited some improvement, and seventy-seven percent stated that their children had experienced significant improvement in their social interaction.
The fourth inquiry on the survey concerned the spiritual growth of the children involved in the New Heights ministry. The leadership of New Heights places more emphasis in this area than in any of the other areas of focus. Underlying the planning and development of each of the activities and events is a desire to help the children and families to continue to develop a relationship with the Heavenly Father. Each of the centers begins their respective program with a song of praise and with prayer. The staff and volunteers strive to establish a Christian atmosphere for the children. They offer chapel services and Bible classes as part of the regular daily routine. During the Chapel services, new songs are taught, and Biblical age-appropriate lessons are presented to the children. They are also challenged to learn memory verses and to keep them in their minds and hearts so that their spiritual foundation will be grounded in Scripture.
The children and parents are regularly invited to participate in the events of the host congregation. Anthony B. Robinson suggests, “It is not up to us to make people come or to compel them to join the church or to become Christians. It is ours to share an invitation.” While both of the sponsoring congregations are small, each holding memberships of under one-hundred people, they are both very active in conducting a variety of activities for their congregations and the surrounding communities. Members of the congregation are encouraged to reach out to the New Heights families, and they often visit the after-school programs and summer programs to become acquainted with the participants. The ministers of the congregations are periodically invited to speak during chapel or to host Bible classes; they also drop by on occasion to visit. This creates a welcoming church environment and continues to build the bridge between the church and the community.

The familiarity of the church members and ministerial staff with the children and parents helps to create a sense of belonging amongst the families, and it aids in the potential success of families attending church services and other activities. Although the church members attempt to bridge the gap and to create a welcoming atmosphere, some of the parents continue to have a difficult time adapting to the church setting.

While the other three areas of growth, educational, physical, and social, are reasonably easy to measure, it is much more challenging to attempt to measure spiritual growth. However, the parents that responded to the surveys favorably noted a measure of spiritual growth had taken place. Overall, ten percent of the parents chose to disregard the question, and another two percent replied that they had seen no growth take place. Twenty-four percent cited some improvement, and sixty-four percent claimed that there was a significant improvement. Four percent of the

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James Avenue participants cited no improvement was evident. Twenty-nine percent cited some improvement was seen, while fifty-seven percent remarked that there was a significant improvement. Ten percent did not respond to the survey. Among the participants from Paragon Mills, nine percent did not respond to the question. However, all of those who did respond to the question claimed that they had seen a measure of spiritual growth take place. Eighteen percent noted some improvement, and seventy-three percent noted significant improvement in the spiritual development of their children.

![Figure 7 – Spiritual Growth](image_url)

**Other Areas of Improvement**

Although the first four inquiries on the survey dealt with a specific area of growth, the fifth question gave the parents the opportunity to note other areas of growth they had seen in their children since becoming involved in the New Heights program. Overall, twelve percent of the parents surveyed did not respond to the question. Three percent of the parents from James Avenue did not respond, while twenty-three percent of the parents from Paragon Mills did not
answer the inquiry. Forty-two percent of the combined parents who chose to respond replied that they did not notice other areas of improvement in their child. Fifty-four percent of the parents from James Avenue and twenty-seven percent of the parents from Paragon Mills stated that they had witnessed no other type of growth in their child. Forty-six percent of the combined number of parents responded to the question with an affirmative answer. This included forty-three percent of the James Avenue parents and forty-six percent of the Paragon Mills parents.

The written responses of the parents to the fifth question on the survey provide insight into other areas of growth that were not specifically covered in the first four questions. The parents cited growth in attitudes, respect, behavior, Bible knowledge, church attendance, friendship, independence, compassion, community involvement, and English-speaking skills. These areas of growth are essentially connected to the educational, physical, social, and spiritual growth that is emphasized by the New Heights program. It is important to note that the areas of growth emphasized within the New Heights program have a positive effect on the attitudes and behaviors of the children as they interact outside of the New Heights program. One parent wrote, “I have one child that is very active and the staff at New Heights has helped me significantly with his behavior.” Another parent concurred, stating, “Within [my child’s] behavior there has been a big change… very respectful.” Several parents noted that their children had shown more interest in singing church songs and learning about the Bible. One parent commented, “My children sing songs and pray more at home. They show more respect.” The emphasis in one area of growth aids in the development of other areas of growth as well. One parent wrote, “Yes, he has been teaching his brother and cares more about our family.” Another stated, “He talks about Jesus to his friends.”
The responses of the parents offer valuable insight into the effectiveness of the New Height program. They affirm the mission of the organization and contribute positive feedback to the effectiveness of the programs. The responses also provide additional insight concerning other ways in which the programs are effective that have not been previously considered.

Figure 8 – Other Areas of Improvement

Church Affiliation

The sixth inquiry on the survey explored whether or not the parents were currently affiliated with a church. Forty-six percent of the combined responses confirmed that the families had a church affiliation and forty-eight percent of the responders noted no affiliation. Another six percent did not answer the question. While all of the parents from the James Avenue Center responded to the inquiry, only thirty-nine percent stated that they were affiliated with a church. Sixty-one percent of the parents from James Avenue claimed to have no church affiliation. The surveys of the parents from the Paragon Mills center were different in that over half of the responses affirmed affiliation with a church. Fifty-four percent of the parents claimed to have a
church affiliation, while thirty-two percent stated that they had no church affiliation. Fourteen percent did not respond to the survey.

Figure 9 – Church Affiliation

Several of the parents also provided the name of their churches in the survey. The denominations listed included Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Free-Will Baptist, Non-Denominational, and Seventh-Day Adventist. Several parents listed New Heights Christian Community Services as the church with which they had an affiliation. As expected, many of the parents from the Paragon Mills center were affiliated with predominantly Hispanic congregations.

Impression of the Host Church before Child’s Attendance

The seventh inquiry helped to establish an understanding of the impression parents had concerning the host congregations of the two centers before their children attended the New

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16 The listing of New Heights Christian Community Services as the current church affiliation of several of the parents indicates some degree of confusion concerning the role of New Heights in its partnership with the local church. The goal of New Heights is to point families to the host churches rather than take their place.
Heights program. This inquiry required a written response. Therefore, only thirty-three percent of the parents responded to the question. Overall, twenty-six percent of those who responded stated that they had no knowledge of the host church prior to their child attending the New Heights program. While one parent expressed great love for the church, citing attendance at the James Avenue congregation since childhood, others only spoke in general terms concerning the impression the church had left on them. Although the inquiry was concerned about the impression the parents had of the host church before participation in the New Heights program, several parents either incorrectly read the question or their opinions were confused by their current relationship with the church. Most of the comments, though general, were positive in nature. However, one parent commented that the church did not have any contact with Hispanic people.

Since one of the goals of the New Heights program is to act as a bridge between the local church and the community, the seventh survey question was integral to a better understanding of how families perceived the host churches before their involvement with the New Heights program. There was difficulty in assessing the responses because many of the parents provided answers based on their current experience with the church through their involvement with the New Heights program. One of the James Avenue parents responded by commenting, “We love it. This is our second year here.” Another stated, “[It is] a great place for kids.” A parent from the Paragon Mills Center stated, “[It is] just like any other church – they go to talk and pray.” Several parents described both the New Heights program and the church as “nice.” Others mentioned that they were well-organized.

Two of the responses given by parents described a better impression of the church since their children began participating in the New Heights program. One James Avenue parent stated,
“He didn’t go [to church] until he started New Heights. But since then he has really enjoyed it.” Another parent, one from the Paragon Mills center, expressed personal involvement with the church since partnering with the New Heights program. The parent commented, “I visited Paragon Mills before, but now I think I know more about it.” These two responses indicate that New Heights ministry is helping the host church to become more visible and reflect a positive image in the community.

Current Impression of the Host Church

While the seventh question in the survey was concerned with the impression of the parents concerning the host churches before any involvement with the New Heights program, question eight was concerned with the current impression of parents whose children are involved. Only thirty-seven percent of the parents responded to the question. However, most of the parents from both James Avenue and Paragon Mills responded in a positive manner. Twenty parents from James Avenue and seventeen parents from Paragon Mills offered written responses.

The parents from the James Avenue center described the church with words such as “alright,” “wonderful,” “great,” “awesome,” and “perfect.” Many parents stated their love for the church and the programs it offers. One parent specifically mentioned a love for the “Princess of God class,” which is a class offered to elementary age girls to help them with self-image, self-esteem, development, and spirituality. Another parent mentioned that new youth leader was an asset. One parent stated, “…haven’t been ever since.” It is undetermined whether the parent is referring to the child or the family not attending church. It is also undetermined whether the

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17 The “Princess of God class” is actually the “Princess Training Class” that was developed by members at James Avenue church of Christ many years before the New Heights program partnered with the James Avenue church.

18 Approximately one month after the surveys were conducted, the youth minister left the congregation and became the youth minister for a much larger and more affluent congregation in a nearby city.
person or family stopped attending church because of the New Heights program or if it is merely a coincidence. Another parent added, “I just want them to help famil[ies] more.”

All of the responses offered by the parents from Paragon Mills were positive, describing the church in words such as “good,” “very good,” and “great.” The after-school program was described as being very helpful to the children, and a way to keep children physically active. One parent stated, “I love to know about this program and I appreciate so much your help.” Another commented, “I wouldn’t change it. I love the people I am surrounded by.” One church program mentioned was the Vacation Bible School. Last year, most of the children involved in the congregation’s Vacation Bible School were children who received invitations through the New Heights program. They attended because the staff of New Heights distributed flyers and some of the leaders of the church personally encouraged them to participate. Many of the children and parents associated with the New Heights program visited the Paragon Mills Church for the first time during the Vacation Bible School. Another positive connection between the congregation and the New Heights families highlighted the church’s Hispanic ministry. One parent noted, “Yes, they have members that talk Spanish. The after-school program is so helpful to children. Thanks.”  

One parent brought attention to the issue of trust between the families and the church, stating, “Well, right now I see that my son likes to be there and [I] know that they are in good hands because I trust that you’re good people.” Another commented, “I think the program is very helpful to the community and I am grateful for your help.”

Although all of the comments made by the parents were brief, they help to provide insight into the families’ perception of the local congregations that partner with the New Heights ministry. By reviewing the comments given, it seems that the parents have a greater appreciation

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19 It is interesting to remember the comment made by a parent concerning question seven who commented that the church didn’t have contact with Hispanic people. This lends itself to a consideration of the importance personal involvement of the church members has on the perception of those within the community.
for the local congregation because they are more familiar with the congregation after they become involved with New Heights. It seems that New Heights ministry is effectively establishing points of contact between the church and community.

**Personal Interaction with the Local Congregation**

The ninth question in the survey was concerned with whether or not the parents had any interaction with the partnering congregations since involvement with the New Heights program. The question also included an opportunity to describe the interaction. Although all of the parents responded to the question, only fourteen percent offered a written response concerning how interaction had taken place. The combined responses from the two centers revealed that only thirty-four percent of the parents had any interaction with the partnering churches. Twenty-one percent of the parents from James Avenue and fifty percent of the parents from Paragon Mills affirmed that they had interacted with the respective congregations.

![Figure 10 – Interaction with Host Church](image_url)
Parents from James Avenue provided four written responses. The first response mentioned the “Princess of God” class. This class is a church ministry to elementary aged girls, and an invitation is extended each year to those who participate in the New Heights program. A second parent commented, “My family attends [James Avenue].” However, there is nothing in the written response that indicates whether or not the family was attending worship at James Avenue Church of Christ before its involvement with the New Heights program. The third response indicated that the parent had interaction with James Avenue through the youth minister, and the fourth response cited the executive director of New Heights as the point of contact.

Parents from Paragon Mills returned six written responses. Two of the responses cite the executive director as the initial point of contact between the parents and the church. Two more responses cite members of the congregation as points of contact. One of the parents described interaction taking place with “both Hispanic[s] and American[s].” Another parent indicated family participation in Vacation Bible School. The final responder described the church as, “…helping my family evolve around people in a great way.” Although the statement is somewhat awkward, it shows that the parent perceives the church as being helpful and that the family is benefitting from interaction with the church.

According to the responses, the New Heights program has had some success in creating involvement between the parents and the host congregations. However, sixty-six percent of the parents responded that there was no interaction between their families and the local church. Larry Deason writes, “Everything the New Testament teaches concerning the universal church is to have visible expression and practical application in the local congregation.”

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host congregations, interaction is beginning to take place among the New Heights families and the local church. The visible expression and practical application are beginning to form. However, there is much more work to do in this area.

Additional Assistance to the Family

The final survey question inquired how the host congregation could provide additional help to the families involved in the New Heights program. The question gave the parents an opportunity to offer suggestions and to address areas that the other questions may not have addressed. Sixty percent of the parents provided a written response.

Fifty-four percent of the parents surveyed at James Avenue provided written responses. Many of the responses, such as “Continue doing what they do,” “Keep on keeping on! Loving my children,” and “Keep doing the great work you are doing” affirm that the program is meeting the needs of the families. These responders provided no additional suggestions for areas of assistance. One parent stated, “They have helped enough.” Another claimed, “This place is a true blessing! The kids love it and so do I. Thanks for all you do.” One parent mentioned, “[James Avenue] has always been there for me and my family since I was young.” The parent continued by explaining, “They [help] me and my kids out a lot with bring[ing] me and my kids back and [forth] to church.” A few of the responses noted the need for aid at Christmas and with school. However, both New Heights and the two host churches already have programs in place to address those needs.

Sixty-eight percent of the parents surveyed at Paragon Mills provided written responses to the final survey question. Similar to the replies given by the parents from James Avenue, the Paragon Mills parents affirmed what the New Heights program and host churches are already doing. Several of the parents addressed the homework assistance their children receive through
the after-school program. They claimed the assistance already provides a great deal of help to their children. Many of the parents expressed thankfulness for the support their children receive. Some of the parents focused their responses on the spiritual benefits of the partnership between New Heights, the local church, and their families. One parent commented, “It helps a lot by looking to see my daughters are in God’s path.” Another parent stated, “When we see whole families come to the church it is a good example for my family.” It is important to note that several parents requested prayers for their families. Although the church surely remembers the families in prayer, it is important for the families to know that the church is indeed praying for them. One parent responded to the question by commenting, “Just being a loving community is enough.” The families within the community seem to desire a relationship with the church that not only helps to meet the needs of the community but also to show them the love of God.

The ten-question surveys were given to the parents to investigate the effectiveness of the New Heights program in two ways. First, the results of the survey would demonstrate the parents’ perceptions regarding the efforts of New Heights to assist children with their educational, physical, spiritual, and social development. Second, the results would demonstrate the parents’ perception of the type of relationship they share with the local congregation. The results of the survey will be used to establish an improved strategy for New Heights and the local church in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Assessment of the Findings

The purpose of the thesis project was to investigate the effectiveness of the program offered by New Heights Christian Community Services. The project involved distributing a survey to fifty sets of parents whose children were actively engaged in the New Heights ministry. The first portion of the study was an assessment of whether the program effectively promoted the four desired aspects of growth in children. These aspects included educational, physical, social, and spiritual growth. The second portion of the survey considered the relationship between the New Heights families and the host congregation. First, it determined whether or not the families had any affiliation with a church. Secondly, it considered if there was a pre-existing relationship between the local church that hosted the New Heights program and the families before their involvement with the New Heights ministry. Thirdly, it determined if there was any current involvement between the families and the host congregation. Finally, it considered other ways in which the church could offer assistance to the families.

The results of the survey demonstrate that the parents believe the New Heights program effectively impacts the growth of their children. An overwhelming majority of the parents cited either some improvement or significant improvement in each of the four concentrations. Based on the survey results, New Heights is effective in aiding the educational, physical, social, and spiritual growth of the children it serves. The results of the survey affirm that the New Heights program is beneficial to the children and families currently involved in programming and that the parents are pleased with the progress made.

While the results concerning the first component of the survey are overwhelmingly positive, the results of the second component concerning the involvement of the parents with the host
congregation demonstrate a need for further improvement. While just over half of the families are affiliated with a church, most of them had not attended either of the host congregations before the involvement of their children with the New Heights program. When asked about their current impressions of the host congregation, sixty-three percent of the parents declined a response. This demonstrates that a lack of connection still exists between a majority of the parents and the host congregation. Although the leadership of New Heights desires to bridge the gap between the church and community, it seems that weaknesses exist within the current program. The leadership of New Heights must place a greater emphasis on building the relationships between the parents and the members of the host congregations. This is addressed in the improvement strategies that follow. Those who offered a response were positive in their views concerning the host congregation, citing the after-school program, Vacation Bible School, Wednesday night Bible study, and the church’s Hispanic ministry as beneficial roles in the lives of their children. However, only thirty-four percent of the parents had any personal interaction with the host congregation.

An Improved Strategy

While the responses to the surveys show that New Heights Christian Community Services is effective in aiding the growth and development of the children involved in the after-school and summer programs, they also show that there is very little interaction between the host congregations and the New Heights families. Change needs to take place. John Maxwell states, “The keys to dealing with change successfully are having a good attitude toward it and being prepared to meet it.”  

Therefore, the leadership of New Heights must be prepared to embrace necessary change. A renewed focus needs to address the lack of connection between the host

congregations and the families involved in the New Heights program. The following offers an improved strategy for the ongoing efforts of the New Heights staff and board of directors. The new strategy leverages the responses provided by the parents in the surveys. It comprises of three sections: inclusion, expansion, and communication. Addressing each of these areas of concern will aid New Heights in becoming a more effective bridge between the local congregations and their respective communities.

Inclusion

New Heights Christian Community Services requires the involvement of many volunteers to maintain effective ministry within the community. A board of directors which consists of men and women who volunteer their time and resources oversees the ministry. Currently, six part-time employees lead the day-to-day operations. The members of the staff include the executive director, two center directors, and three assistant directors. A limited staff alone does not allow for the ministry to grow. Therefore, volunteers are integral to the health and growth of the organization.

In the ten-year history of the New Heights ministry, the leadership has not cultivated a substantial base of volunteers. At present, there are only a few individuals who volunteer on a regular basis and a few others who occasionally participate. The New Heights leadership must resolve this issue in order to maintain the current ministry and to promote the growth and expansion of the ministry in the future. They must seek to include others in the ministry efforts if it desires to carry out its programs effectively and to create meaningful relationships between the local church and its community. Ray Bakke provides great insight into the need to create relationships and work together to do the work of the Lord. Bakke, writes, “Remember, you are never more like God than when you are living in relationships with God’s people and working in
partnerships for the re-creation and redemption of God’s world.”

Seeking to be a bridge between the host congregation and the community, New Heights must encourage the participation of multiple groups of people to carry out the ministry it seeks to provide.

The New Heights ministry cannot sustain itself with a limited staff and a handful of volunteers. The leadership must loosen the reigns and allow the opportunity for others to become more involved in the ministry. Andy Stanley poignantly states,

> It is sobering but unavoidable. One day it will be over. One day someone else will be doing what you are doing. One day you will be replaced. Whether you have an exit strategy or not, you will ultimately exit. And on that day, everything you’ve dreamed, and everything you’ve built will be placed in someone else’s hands.

The inclusion of Volunteers should not be viewed as a threat to the ministry. Rather, volunteers are a necessary asset to the value of the ministry and serve to help the ministry meet the needs of the whole community.

The first facet of an improved strategy for New Heights will be to include more volunteers to partner in the ongoing ministry efforts. Volunteers will come from three groups of people: members of the host congregation, parents of the students involved in the New Heights program, and volunteers from outside of the other two groups. Each of these three groups will have the opportunity to impact the day-to-day operations and the overall goals of the ministry.

As such, it is imperative that New Heights thoroughly conduct a background check on each volunteer to ensure the safety of the children and the reputation of the ministry. Local and national background checks is needed for every person that works directly with the children. New Heights leadership will provide the proper training and supervision. It is the responsibility

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2 Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 35.

of each center director to properly train and supervise each of the volunteers that participates in any of the programs offered.

**Volunteers from the Host Congregations**

As a part of the strategy to strengthen the ongoing efforts of New Heights, the leadership of New Heights will seek to include volunteers from the two host congregations. Recruitment attempts in the past were minimal, so a more aggressive approach is now in order. Involving the members of the host congregations is the best way to bridge the connection between the church and the community effectively. While the ministry efforts of the current New Heights staff are effective, all of them do not attend the host church. Even though they encourage the children and families to get involved with the host congregations, the staff members are not present at the services of the host church and cannot aid in making the guests feel comfortable in an unfamiliar atmosphere. The best possible solution to this is to include more of the host church members in the day-to-day activities of the New Heights ministry. Involvement in the New Heights program will allow the members the necessary opportunities to get to know children and their parents. Through their involvement, they will begin to build relationships and show the children and families that they care. The presence of the church members will also aid the children and their parents as they begin to familiarize themselves with church members and to become more comfortable with the idea of visiting the local church during times of worship, classes, or special events.

It is the responsibility of the leadership of New Heights to recruit volunteers from the local congregation. Admittedly, leadership handled this poorly in the past. In the first decade since the founding of New Heights, minimal effort has been made to recruit volunteers from among the host congregations. The assumption that people would hear about the ministry efforts
and immediately volunteer without being asked was unjustified. The time has come to take a
more proactive and aggressive approach. Stanley comments, “A simple announcement or church
bulletin insert is rarely successful in finding volunteers. Why? Because leaders don’t volunteer;
they are recruited.”

New Heights will have to make an effort to seek out volunteers from within
the host congregations intentionally.

Jesus commanded his followers, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations…” Leaders must teach this message and remind the members of the host congregations of their
ongoing commitment to the commands of the Lord to lead others to him. The leadership of New
Heights will seek to recruit the members of the host congregation which will give the members
yet another opportunity to follow the commands of the Lord. Aubrey Malphurs observes, “God
desires that all who know the Savior be involved in ministry to some degree. Our loving Father’s
plan is to bless us and others through our involvement in serving Him and the church.”

By recruiting members to volunteer, New Heights will strengthen its ministry and the relationship
between the church and the New Heights families. It will also aid the members in fulfilling the
commitment to the Great Commission.

Merely acknowledging the necessity of change in the methods New Heights uses to
acquire its volunteers is not enough. Three things must take place. First, the leaders of New
Heights must set a meeting with the elders of the church to explain that there is a crucial need for
member involvement in the New Heights program. New Heights will request an opportunity to
make a presentation during a congregational gathering. Second, New Heights will recruit
members to become volunteers in their ministry efforts. They will share the needs of the ministry

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4 Stanley, Seven Practices, 164.
5 Matthew 28:19.
with the members of the host congregations and provide information on volunteering to help get a commitment to serve. And third, training sessions will be provided for the church members so that they will be more comfortable and grow in their roles in serving.

The recruitment of volunteers from among the congregation will be an ongoing effort. The volunteers will need training, guidance, and encouragement. They will have the opportunity to ask questions and to grow in their roles, and sometimes they may even fail in the tasks set before them. It is important for the leaders to remain patient and to encourage them as they grow in their ministry to the children and families. The efforts of everyone involved will be worthwhile as they serve others and spread the Gospel in obedience to the Great Commission.

**Volunteers from the Parents and Other Family Members**

The second group of volunteers that is also integral to the continued success of the New Heights ministry is the group of parents and other family members of the children enrolled in the program. Although very little recruitment from this group has taken place in the past, it seems that the involvement of family members would be a viable way to include families in the day-to-day activities and to promote the formation of relationships with more people from the community.

Most of the time, the involvement of the parents is limited to picking up and dropping off their children at the church building. Occasionally there are events that parents and other family members are invited to attend, but they are seldom asked to play a larger role in what is taking place in the New Heights ministry. Over the years several of the parents have asked to be more involved in the activities; they want to help. However, the leadership of New Heights has not yet explored the possibilities of including the parents in various volunteer roles. This has to change. The organization has missed opportunities to create relationships by failing to include them in
activities where relationships can develop. Dewey M. Bertolini points out, “Parents who may be on the fringe will be exposed to the ministries of the church. And parents who formerly did not know one another will meet each other.” 7 If New Heights wants to be a bridge between the church and the community the leadership must create an environment where family members and members of the congregation come together for a common cause.

Parental involvement may cause some issues. New Heights has a responsibility to support and protect the children involved in the program. Background checks are a must for all volunteers, including parents and other family members. People volunteer for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, not all of the motivations for volunteering to work with young people are above reproach. A policy to disqualify anyone who fails to give permission for a background check must have no exceptions. New Heights also has a responsibility to protect the influence of its ministry and the reputation of the host church. Many of the parents do not have any church affiliation. Therefore, their values may not match the values of the New Heights ministry or the church. This does not necessarily disqualify them from volunteering. However, there needs to be a clear understanding with all of the volunteers that they must follow certain guidelines. This needs to be communicated upfront and reinforced on a regular basis.

Including parents as volunteers in the New Heights ministry has many advantages. It will allow the staff and current volunteers the opportunity to get to know the family members better and allow positive opportunities for family members to serve side by side. Additional hands and feet will help alleviate the burden of the tasks that need to be carried out. Other minds will offer fresh new ideas that may be adopted by the ministry. The greatest advantage, however, is the

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addition of more souls involved in a shared community of people working together to accomplish the work of God.

Volunteers from Outside Sources

The third group of volunteers that needs to be included in the ministry of New Heights comes from outside sources. Outside sources would include those who are not a part of the volunteer circles of the host church or immediate family members of the children. The potential volunteers that could be gleaned from this group are innumerable. There is a whole world full of available resources that can be used to offer more services and greater exposure to the world in which the New Heights children live. Failing to tap into the available resources, the scope of the ministry remains limited. However, with additional volunteers from outside of the immediate program, the ministry can expand, and more lives will be blessed.

Some of the resources outside of the immediate circle of New Heights may include neighbors from the communities around the host congregations. Many neighbors are somewhat familiar with what activities are taking place at the church and may be interested in getting involved with the after-school program or summer program. They could serve as homework tutors who would aid the limited staff at New Heights. This would not require a great amount of time or commitment from the volunteer.

Local businesses are another great outlet for potential volunteers. Many businesses are involved in benevolent works within their communities. Some may be willing provide financial sponsorship, free services, or materials that would benefit the New Heights program. Others may desire to take a more “hands-on” approach and offer a service project or community day. It will require New Heights to reach out to the businesses and ask if they are interested in pursuing some partnership, but the effort could prove to be very beneficial.
Other churches besides the partner churches may be interested in getting involved with the New Heights ministry. Churches often look for service opportunities for their members and New Heights would greatly benefit from their service. They could volunteer to tutor, cook meals, conduct devotionals or serve in many other ways on an ongoing basis. They could also plan and conduct other activities or events that New Heights does not currently offer. Many churches look for short-term mission experiences, especially for their teens. New Heights could provide the venue for camps, Vacation Bible School, or other experiences that would benefit both the service groups and also the New Heights ministry.

Volunteers can also contribute to one-time opportunities. Many sports, television, and radio personalities are willing to speak to groups of children about items of special interest. Even not-so-well-known individuals have talents and hobbies that they would enjoy sharing with children. These types of volunteer opportunities can provide many new experiences for the children involved while also exposing the ministry efforts to other individuals.

The inclusion of other people as volunteers will enable New Heights to maintain existing programs and to expand its ministry to reach more children and families. It will also provide avenues of blessing to the children that participate. Harold Shank writes, “Today’s children need blessing. The lack of being cherished by significant adults in their lives leaves them lonely, vulnerable, confused, and fearful. Children who have been blessed know they are not alone, that there is a protector, that someone knows the answers and that there is security.”8 New Heights will forever bless the children, and even their families, by encircling them with kind and caring adults. The relationships that develop will help to provide growth, security, and confidence that will benefit them throughout their lives. It will also help them to see and experience the beauty

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that is found in the diversity of human life as they begin to build relationships with those that volunteer for New Heights. God created a world that is bright, beautiful and full of the wonders of His creativity. A broad and diverse group of volunteers will provide greater opportunities for the children to grow and expand their minds and hearts to experience the greatness of the world around them.

Communication

Enhanced communication is the second component of an improved strategy for New Heights. Ramsey Coutta warns, “Communication that is not handled well can lead to a variety of unintended outcomes...”9 Although New Heights has existed for nearly a decade, poor communication created multiple mishaps. The responses to the surveys also point to the fact that a lack of good communication exists between the New Heights leadership, the parents, and the host congregations. This was made evident by the comments that were made in the surveys; it was also made evident by the lack of responses given. When the parents were questioned concerning their current impression of the host congregations, only thirty-seven percent offered a response. In part, the likely reason is that they did not know how to respond.

A lack of communication is among the greatest weaknesses within the New Heights ministry. Trying to enhance communication efforts will offer new challenges to the leadership of New Heights and also the host congregations. It will require stepping out of comfort zones and boldly moving forward. It will require the removal of set practices and the acquisition of some new ones. It will require change. It will also require openness and a willingness of the people involved.

9 Ramsey Coutta, A Practical Guide for Successful Church Change (Bloomington: IUniverse, 2008), 76.
Communication among the Board of Directors

Communication efforts within the New Heights organization are limited. The board of directors meets once per month with the executive director to discuss the business of New Heights. During the meeting, an operations report and a financial report are presented. Each meeting usually lasts about an hour and a half. Other than an occasional email or an informal conversation among individual board members, this is the only communication among the board members that takes place on a regular basis.

Communication among Staff Members

The executive director meets with other staff members several times each month. These meetings can take place as full-staff meetings or meetings with the individual center directors. The ongoing meetings help to establish a better understanding of what is taking place at each center and to identify the existing needs. Each center director also prepares weekly and monthly reports. The reports include information concerning enrollment, attendance, daily activities, and budgeting concerns. These means of communication afford the executive director the opportunity to communicate expectations with the staff members, to promote the ministry, and to encourage them to continue their efforts. Henry Blackaby offers, “When people sense they are part of something God is doing, there is no limit to what they will be willing to do in response.”

Communication with the Host Congregations

Most of the communication with the host congregations is usually initiated by the executive director or by one of the center directors. More often than not, the communication

10 Henry Blackaby, and Richard Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 77.
takes place in the form of a phone call, an email, or a chance meeting. The leadership of the host congregations does not require reports or updates concerning the New Heights ministry.

**Communication between New Heights and the Parents**

Most of the time, the communication that takes place between the New Heights staff members and the parents is limited to the times when parents are picking up or dropping off their children. Conversations are polite but short in length because of the timing and nature of the setting. New Heights invites parents to participate in several special activities that are planned throughout the year. Talent shows, plays, art shows, holiday dinners, and a Christmas presentation are some of the activities that create opportunities for the New Heights staff to interact with the parents. On occasion, parents will request a meeting to discuss various matters of concern.

**Communication between Host Congregations and the Parents**

Responses to the surveys verified that a few of the parents attend one of the host congregations either on a regular basis or during special events. However, most of the parents had had little or no communication with the members of the host congregations either before or during the time that their children were involved in the New Heights program. This reality demonstrates that New Heights does not effectively bridge the gap between the local congregation and its community.

**Creating Avenues for Communication**

New Heights must strive to have a welcoming presence for everyone. This requires the creation of avenues for interchange to take place. New Heights must strive to create intentional opportunities for fellowship. One way to do this is by inviting all parents, board members, and church members to participate in each of the events that take place throughout
the year. It is already standard practice for the children from each center to share in activities together. Field trips, summer camp, and other special events provide opportunities for fellowship to take place. The children from each center have the chance to make new friends and to assimilate as one group. If this practice works with the children, the same should prove to be true with their parents and other adults.

New Heights will begin to implement more meetings where everyone can be invited to participate. Board members and church leaders need to be encouraged to support the events so that they can have personal contact with the families that are involved in the New Heights program. Church members will be encouraged to participate so that they can interact with the neighbors from the community.

Another way to strengthen communication is through the use of email and social media. Daily updates will help to include those connected to the ministry and help them to be more informed of what is taking place on a daily basis. This will aid board members and church leaders in a better understanding of the ministry that they oversee, and it will help parents to know more about the ministry. Although it will require some time and additional effort from the New Heights staff, this simple form of communication will help to create more awareness and involvement in the ministry.

Although it may seem to some to be an antiquated system, New Heights will increase its use of printed materials to share with the parents. This form of communication is the easiest way to keep the families informed of what is taking place at each center. The information will be given to the children to take home to their parents. Although this has been standard practice at New Heights through the years, information has not been shared
consistently. In the future, emphasis will be given to providing this form of communication in a more consistent and more frequent manner.

A lack of sensitivity to language barriers is another breakdown in communication that was exposed in the responses to the surveys. Many of the New Heights parents, especially from the Paragon Mills center, have little or no understanding of the English language. No one on the New Heights staff has an understanding of Spanish, which is the primary language of many of the families represented. New Heights has relied on the children to translate for their parents. To better communicate with the families, New Heights will begin to send out information written in both English and Spanish. If New Heights distributes information in the native tongue of the people it seeks to serve, most likely those who receive the materials will feel more welcome to participate.

Expansion

The third component of an improved strategy for New Heights involves expansion of the ministry to connect with more people. The survey responses showed that the parents believe New Heights aids in the growth and development of their children. Many of the written responses were very complimentary of the programs and the overall impact the ministry makes. Although there is still much work to be done towards bridging the gap between the host congregations and the communities in which they exist, New Heights programming clearly benefits the children and families it serves. Therefore, it seems reasonable for New Heights to consider opportunities to expand its ministry to other neighborhoods through the city of Nashville.

Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection from the grave. During his time with them, he commanded his disciples by saying, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all
nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you…” 11 The Lord told those who follow him to go forth. As a ministry that seeks to do the will of the Savior, New Heights must expand its ministry.

The Outgrowth of More Effective Methods

The beginning of the expansion should take place as a result of the successful implementation of the first two components in the improved strategy for New Heights. If those who are already connected to the ministry are more effectively included in the work of the ministry and better communication is cultivated, then they will be more likely to reach out to others so that they also may become involved in the ministry as well. Those who feel welcome will invite others to participate. The ministry will be stronger and more effective if a greater emphasis is placed on inclusion and communication which will allow the program to grow successfully.

Additional Host Congregations

When Luke wrote the Book of Acts, he began his brief history of the early church by describing the moments before the Lord’s ascension into heaven. As Luke writes of the happenings, he offers insight into Jesus’s desire for his disciples to spread the Gospel. Luke offers a direct quote from the mouth of the Lord who stated, “It is not for you to know the time or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 12 Jesus tells the disciples to start where they are,

spread out a little farther, and then keep going until they reach around the world. That is how evangelism should take place; begin where you are and continue your reach.

While New Heights currently has two centers in Nashville, the possibility of expansion by developing other centers is favorable among the members of the New Heights board of directors and current members of the staff. There are many congregations in the Metropolitan Nashville area that could serve as host churches to launch other New Heights Ministries. Nashville is home to more than one-hundred Churches of Christ. There are also many denominations of churches located in the area that could adopt similar ministries. Many of these churches are in neighborhoods comparable to the neighborhoods where the existing New Heights centers are. There are children and families within reach who could benefit from the ministry that New Heights seeks to provide.

Several conversations concerning the expansion of New Heights in other locations are already taking place. Seeds of thought are being planted and cultivated in the minds and hearts of leaders in churches throughout the city. Some of the conversations that have taken place will never go any farther than that initial conversation, but others will spark an interest that may lead to more conversations and future expansion of the New Heights ministry. Even though most of the conversations that take place will not necessarily bring about the development of a new partnership with New Heights, it is important to continue to initiate these conversations with others. In doing so, more and more people will hear about the current ministry and may be interested in learning more.

**Other Partnering Churches**

Although some congregations may not be interested in developing a New Heights center in their facilities, they may be interested in other types of involvement. Many of the
churches that would benefit by hosting a New Heights center may not have the funding or other necessary resources to maintain a new ministry. Ira North, who served as the minister to the largest congregation among Churches of Christ, made the following observation, “The simple truth is when a program of work is scriptural, sound and needed, and we are convinced that God wants it done, a way can be found.”\(^{13}\) New Heights is already funded by several congregations that do not seek to host centers. Rather, they donate necessary resources so that more needful congregations can sustain the responsibilities of hosting a center. By partnering with multiple churches in a variety of ways, New Heights can continue to offer services within the congregation that could not afford to maintain ministry efforts on their own.

**Implementation of an Improved Strategy**

The survey responses of the parents have offered valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of New Heights Christian Community Services. They have aided in developing a better understanding of the current relationship between the host congregations and the surrounding communities. The survey and the subsequent study strategized improvements in three areas: inclusion, communication, and expansion. New Heights will seek to implement the ideas introduced in this chapter to become more effective in bridging the gap that exists between the local congregation and its community. As the New Heights ministry continues to grow and make necessary changes, much emphasis will be placed on more effective communication. It is integral to all of the desired future endeavors of the New Heights ministry, the host congregations, and the children and families that are blessed by our efforts.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

Some churches struggle to reach out to their surrounding communities. This thesis project shows how New Heights Christian Community Services attempts to bridge the gap between two local churches and the families within their neighborhoods. The purpose of the thesis was to establish the effectiveness of their efforts.

Function of the New Heights Organization

New Heights began its first community center over a decade ago with the intention of providing ministry to unchurched children and their families. The program quickly grew, and another center was opened in a separate location, thereby offering services to more families. Both of the community centers are now housed in church buildings that are affiliated with the Church of Christ.

The board of directors and the staff of New Heights are committed to the biblical principle of reaching out to the world with the gospel of Christ. While there are many ways to extend the gospel message, New Heights utilizes the approach of a community center to create an atmosphere conducive to building relationships. Unchurched families are less intimidated in a community center than they are in a church setting.

While both of the New Heights centers operate within established church buildings, they are under the administration of New Heights Christian Community Services rather than under the host congregations. Each center partners with its host congregation to promote activities that will provide opportunities for meaningful interaction between families and members of the church. Members are encouraged to volunteer in a variety of ways so that relationships with the families served can develop.
The New Heights staff attempts to create a daily presence in the lives of the participating children and families. They focus primarily on providing mental, physical, social and spiritual nourishment for every child that attends. Consistently placing adults with strong Christian values in front of the children helps to provide a model for teaching children how to live with a biblical perspective. First, the adults serve as mentors and role models to help the children see what it means to live one’s life for Christ. As the children witness firsthand Christian adults living out their lives before them, they see how Christians conduct themselves in a different manner than the rest of the world. Second, meaningful interaction with their peers in a supervised environment helps them to begin to develop their thoughts and conduct based on what has been modeled before them.

Both centers offer programs that promote the educational, physical, social, and spiritual development of the children that participate. They provide services five days a week and strive to keep the program ongoing to establish a consistent daily influence for the children. Simple programming offers a variety of opportunities for children to interact with others without overloading them. Although other activities may vary from day to day, homework assistance is a mandatory requirement for children enrolled in the program, and it is offered every day during the school year. New Heights also requires participation in a daily devotional or Bible class.

The New Heights concept is just one of many tools that can be utilized by a local congregation to reach out to the surrounding community. It emphasizes the importance of developing relationships to reach others with the Gospel of Christ. There are many other tools that churches can attempt to implement the Great Commission. The New Heights model originated from the passion, talents, and available resources of those who began New Heights
Christian Community Services. It was an opportunity at the right time and location for this type of ministry to be effective.

It is the belief of the author of this thesis project that the New Heights model is an effective way to reach children and families with the Gospel of Christ while helping the children to develop in the same ways that the Lord Jesus grew while living his life on earth. Ray Bakke comments, “We all know a healthy person needs a healthy family, and a healthy family needs a healthy community.”¹ New Heights strives to promote the presence of a healthy community where children and families can grow and prosper. It also endeavors to promote a healthy relationship between the community and the local church. The survey conducted as a part of the thesis project was an inquiry as to whether New Heights Christian Community Services is impactful in its attempt to help churches reach their communities. The parents of the children were chosen as the participants in the survey because they are the ones primarily responsible for the development of their children.

**Theological Emphasis**

The ministry of New Heights has a strong theological foundation. The staff and volunteers that make up the workforce, and those that serve on the board of directors, are all committed to a similar view of the fundamental beliefs of the organization. Those beliefs are as follows: first, God created man in his image. God created everything that is good and all that is profitable for man’s existence and livelihood. God created the world from nothing and created man to inhabit it. He created all living things, and mankind is unique in that man has an eternal soul. Man was created in the image of God to bring Him Glory. Second, Man separated himself from God because man chose to sin. God is a Holy God and can have nothing to do with sin.

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¹ Raymond J. Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 37.
God created mankind with the ability to choose, but man chose to sin and thereby caused a separation to exist between fallen man and God. Third, God provides for His covenant people, as individuals holy or a holy community. God desires for people to live their lives in full realization of His eternal love and provision which is available to all who enter into fellowship with Him through faith. Fourth, relationships are important through the course of the history of mankind. The primary relationship between man and God is above all others and it affects every other relationship, particularly between an individual and his fellow man. Fifth, the family is the primary institution created by God. The training of children is the responsibility of parents while the community should encourage and support them in the development of children. Sixth, Jesus is the standard and the model for the development of children. He is the only way of salvation, to be free of the burden of sin and to return to a proper relationship with God. Jesus sets the perfect example for those who desire to follow in his steps. Seventh, God is the source of love and desires for love to reign in the hearts of those who seek Him, through loving Him and sharing their love with others. Loving Him and others is expressed in the greatest command. Eighth, every Christian should obey the command of Christ to reach out to others to proclaim him as Lord and Savior.

The eight principles listed above establish the theological foundation of New Heights Christian Community Services. These beliefs aid in setting the course for the direction of the programs and activities offered to the families. New Heights desires to assist in strengthening the family. It also seeks to guide children and families towards the local church and to encourage the local church to reach out to the families involved in the New Heights program. Bakke states,

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2 Matthew 22:36-40.
“The tension will always be there between the need to spiritually transform persons and the need to socially transform places.” New Heights has the potential to affect both.

**Major Aspects of the Program**

The first aspect of the New Heights Christian Community Services is daily programming. New Heights offers programming that enhances the growth of its participants in each of the four areas of emphasis adopted from the commentary found in the Gospel of Luke concerning the growth of Jesus. The areas of focus are wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man which translates to the ministry of New Heights as educational, physical, spiritual, and social growth. All of the daily activities stem from one or more of these four areas of emphasis.

Day-to-day programming includes tutoring, providing a snack, chapel, and physical activity. While the first three are mandatory activities, the physical activities can vary in form. Various activities are part of a rotation, so that children can experience many different means of expressing themselves and interacting with others. In addition to the after-school and summer programs, New Heights also offers multiple field trips, a summer Bible camp, a school supply giveaway, and a Christmas store. These activities help to stimulate opportunities that will affect the participants as a part of the greater community.

The second aspect of New Heights Christian Community Services is the ability to create a partnership with the local church and the community in which it exists. New Heights has partnered with two local congregations to establish community centers within their buildings. The intent is to build a bridge between the church and the community so that families will become more comfortable in their interaction with the local congregation. While the after-school programs and summer programs reach out to children, other activities are intentionally planned

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4 Bakke, *Theology as Big*, 37.
so that parents and members of the local church are invited to participate. These events, usually center on the children, but they allow for interaction to take place among members of the New Heights staff, parents, and church members. It is essential to plan inclusive events because they provide a natural opportunity for connections to form. Shank, Wood and Bergeron suggest, “Communication and understanding enhance strong relationships.” The planning and implementation of inclusive events allow communication to take place and for relationships to develop.

**Survey Results**

New Heights was established as a ministry over a decade ago, so there have been many activities and events that have taken place. Although the after-school program began as a two-day program, it has operated as a full-time five-day program for many years. The staff has consistently carried out the ministry that was established by the board of directors. To ascertain the effectiveness of the ministry a survey was conducted with the parents of the children who participate in the New Heights ministry. The survey offered data that would aid New Heights in determining whether or not the parents perceived that the programs were effective in the development of their children. While there are other ways in to make these performance measurements, the author of this thesis believes that the parents are the best judges of their children’s development.

The results of the first part of the survey demonstrate that New Heights exceeds the expectations of the parents who have children who participate in its programs. The results provide documented information that indicates the majority of parents perceive that their children have experienced either some improvement or significant improvement within each of

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the four concentrations emphasized by New Heights Christian Community Services. In other words, the children are benefitting from the programs that New Heights offers. However, the results of the second part of the survey indicate that the interaction between the families and the sponsoring congregations needs to improve. While the parents spoke positively concerning their impressions of the host congregations, there was very little interaction between the two groups. Efforts to improve communication must take place to promote healthy relationships between the families and the churches.

**Proposed Strategy**

The new strategy for New Heights includes needed changes in three areas: inclusion, communication, and expansion. By making these adjustments, New Heights can more efficiently aid both the church and the community by providing a more viable bridge between the two. Both New Heights and its partnering congregations need to embrace the concept of inclusion. While both entities are friendly towards the other, neither goes out of its way to include the other in the work that is taking place. The simplest way to promote inclusion is to seek out volunteers from additional sources. New Heights must endeavor to involve parents in the daily operations of each center. By including parents, they become more invested in the efforts of the ministry and also become better acquainted with others that are involved. More church members, both members of the host congregations and others from different churches, should also be included in the opportunities to volunteer.

New Heights must also develop a better system of communication among its staff, host congregations, and parents. Cultivating an atmosphere of openness will enable all parties involved to feel comfortable to participate in the ongoing conversations. The host congregations must be encouraged to be proactive in their attempts to engage the families to let them feel
welcomed and wanted; otherwise, they will more than likely not participate in the other activities of the church.

The third aspect of change that must take place is a deliberate effort to expand the New Heights ministry. Communicating the work of New Heights in a clear and consistent manner will create awareness of what the ministry is and does. It will also expose the ministry to more areas to serve. New Heights must aggressively pursue additional congregations to serve as host churches and partnering churches. Host churches provide the setting for ministry to take place while the partnering churches provide the funding that makes additional ministry opportunities possible. Both are necessary for expansion to occur.
Appendix A

NEW HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

A Survey of Parents Concerning New Heights Christian Community Services
Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey!

I. (How is New Heights Helping?)
Please rank your child’s progress in the following areas since becoming involved in the New Heights program:

1. Academics - no improvement some improvement significant improvement
2. Physical Activity - no improvement some improvement significant improvement
3. Social Interaction - no improvement some improvement significant improvement
4. Spiritual Growth - no improvement some improvement significant improvement
5. Are there other areas in which you have seen improvement in your child? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, please specify:______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

II. (What is Your Relationship with the Church?)
6. Are you currently affiliated with a church? ___ Yes ___ No  If so, which one?___________________________________________________________
7. What was your impression of James Avenue Church of Christ before your child began the New Heights program?___________________________________________________________

8. What is your impression of James Avenue Church of Christ now?___________________________________________________________

9. Have you had any interaction with church members from James Avenue Church of Christ since your child has been involved in the New Heights program? ___ Yes ___ No  If so, how?___________________________________________________________

10. How can James Avenue Church of Christ help your family?______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
# NEW HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

**A Survey of Parents Concerning New Heights Christian Community Services**

*Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey!*

## I. *(How is New Heights Helping?)*

Please rank your child’s progress in the following areas since becoming involved in the New Heights program:

1. **Academics**
   - no improvement
   - some improvement
   - significant improvement

2. **Physical Activity**
   - no improvement
   - some improvement
   - significant improvement

3. **Social Interaction**
   - no improvement
   - some improvement
   - significant improvement

4. **Spiritual Growth**
   - no improvement
   - some improvement
   - significant improvement

5. Are there other areas in which you have seen improvement in your child?  ____ Yes  ____ No

   If yes, please specify: ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

## II. *(What is Your Relationship with the Church?)*

6. Are you currently affiliated with a church?  ____ Yes  ____ No  If so, which one?

7. What was your impression of Paragon Mills Church of Christ before your child began the New Heights program?

   ____________________________________________________________

8. What is your impression of Paragon Mills Church of Christ now?

   ____________________________________________________________

9. Have you had any interaction with church members from Paragon Mills Church of Christ since your child has been involved in the New Heights program?  ____ Yes  ____ No  If so, how?

   ____________________________________________________________

10. How can Paragon Mills Church of Christ help your family?

    ____________________________________________________________

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New Heights Christian Community Services, Inc. • P.O. Box 92228 • Nashville, TN 37209
Phone: (615) 463-8810 • web: newheightsnashville.org

* a ministry of the church of Christ
Appendix B

Survey Results

James Avenue – 56% of surveys (28)
Paragon Mills – 44% of surveys (22)

**Question #1:**
Please rank your child’s improvement since becoming involved in the New Heights Program:

*Academics*

(Johnes Avenue)

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<th>Some Improvement</th>
<th>Significant Improvement</th>
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(Paragon Mills)

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<td>6%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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Question # 2:

Please rank your child’s improvement since becoming involved in the New Heights Program:

**Physical Activity**

(James Avenue)

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(Paragon Mills)

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<td>28%</td>
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Question # 3:

Please rank your child’s improvement since becoming involved in the New Heights Program:

**Social Interaction**

(James Avenue)

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<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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**Question # 4:**
Please rank your child’s improvement since becoming involved in the New Heights Program:

*Spiritual Growth*

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**Question #5:**

Are there other areas in which you have seen improvement in your child?

**(James Avenue)**

9 written responses

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**(Paragon Mills)**

8 written responses

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17 written responses

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**Written Responses to Question #5**

**(James Avenue)**

1. Leadership Strengths
2. Friendship
3. Attitudes
4. She has loved learning the music and learning about God.
5. For example, my child speaks more English.
6. I have one child that is very active and the staff at New Heights has helped me significantly with his behavior.
7. In their behavior and they work.
8. They try to be involved in a lot of community activities.
9. Behavior

(Paragon Mills)
1. My girls have learned to separate from me with no problem.
2. Learning about [the] Bible.
3. When he talks about Jesus to his friends.
4. Yes, he has been teaching his brother and cares more about our family.
5. They are having more friends.
6. My children sing songs and pray more at home. They show more respect.
7. One of them did not do his homework. Usually he would do his homework. They would get excited about going to church.
8. Within behavior there has been a big change. Very respectful.

Question #6:
Are you currently affiliated with a church?

(James Avenue)

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Current Affiliation with Churches Include:

(James Avenue)

1. New Beginnings
2. River Road Church of Christ
3. Sylvan Park (Free-Will Baptist)
4. James Avenue Church of Christ (4)
5. Baptist
6. New Heights Christian Community Services (2)

(Paragon Mills)

1. Saquado Corazon de Jesus
2. Saturn Drive Baptist Church (2)
3. Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic)
4. Seventh Day Adventist (4)
5. Iglesia Hispana de Nashville
6. Grandview Church of Christ
7. New Heights Christian Community Services

Question #7:

What was your impression of Paragon Mills Church of Christ before your child began the New Heights program?

(James Avenue) Nineteen written responses

1. Did not have an Impression.
2. Ok
3. Wonderful
4. Children have been before
5. We love it. This is our second year here.
6. Did not know about it.
7. Did not know about it.
8. Did not know about it.
9. A great place for kids.
10. I did not have an opinion. The kids seem to enjoy their time there.
11. I have went to JA since I was a kid. I love the church.
12. They help with kids homework.
13. Did not know about it.
14. Never had any problems.
15. Good. [I had] not been over there in [awhile].
16. I did not know of it until [my children] started going.
17. Good.
18. He didn’t go until he started New Heights. But since then he has really enjoyed it.
19. It is good.

(Paragon Mills)

1. I didn’t know about it.
2. It is a good church.
3. Good.
4. Just like the other churches they go to talk and pray.
5. Is really good.
6. That they didn’t have contact with Hispanic people.
7. Good.
8. Good
9. It is a nice school well organized.
10. It seemed like a nice church – well organized.
11. It seemed nice.
12. I visited Paragon Mills before but now I think I know more about it.
13. I did not know about this church.
14. Love it.

Question #8:

What is your impression of James Avenue/Paragon Mills Church of Christ now?

(James Avenue)

1. I love the Princess of God class
2. Alright
3. Wonderful!
4. Love it!
5. Love it!
6. The kids seem to like it.
7. I love it and so does my kid.
8. My kids love it.
9. My kids love the church and I feel the same.
10. Great
11. Seems to be a good ministry.
12. Same as before (I love the church). I like the new youth leader.
13. I just want them to help family more.
15. Never had any problems.
16. Love it. Good place.
17. Great.
18. Great church.
19. I mean my son really likes it a lot and what I seen and heard it’s awesome.
20. Haven’t been ever since.

(Paragon Mills)

1. Good.
2. It is a good church and the people are nice,
3. Family attended VBS.
4. Very good!
5. Well, right now I see that my son likes to be there and know that they are in good hands, because I trust that you’re good people.
6. I’m happy for you[r] help!
7. Yes, they have members that talk Spanish. The after-school program is so helpful to children. Thanks.
9. Good. And fine, excellent.
10. Its great. It has taught my child many things to stay physically active, with God and others.
11. Really good. It teaches my child about God. It’s a great church.
12. It helps my child stay in God’s footsteps. It’s a nice way to stay with God in a way they understand.
13. It seemed like a nice way to interact with God.
14. I love to know about this program and I appreciate so much your help.
15. I think that program is very helpful to the community and I am grateful for your help.
16. It is very helpful toward the children.
17. I wouldn’t change it. I love the people I am surrounded by.
**Question #9:**

Have you had any interaction with James Avenue/Paragon Mills Church of Christ since your child has been involved with the New Heights program?

(James Avenue)

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(Paragon Mills)

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If so, how?

(James Avenue)

1. Princess of God class
2. My family attends JA.
3. Brandon (Youth Minister)
4. Marc has helped us a lot in hard times and in good.

(Paragon Mills)

1. Mr. Mark when I come and pick-up and drop off my girls.
2. We went to VBS.
3. Both Hispanic and American.
4. Just a little with Mr. Marc.
5. Talk to members when picking-up children.
6. Helping my family evolve around people in a great way.
Question #10:

How can James Avenue/Paragon Mills Church of Christ help your family?

(James Avenue)

1. Open more to the community
2. Don't know
3. Keep doing the great work you are doing.
4. This place is a true blessing!! The kids love it and so do I. Thanks for all you do.
5. They have helped enough.
6. Continue doing what they do.
7. Continue the program.
8. Keep on keeping on! Loving my children.
9. JA has always been there for me and my family since I was young.
10. They [help] me and my kids out a lot with bring[ing] me and my kids back and forward to church.
11. In any way possible.
12. Christmas and with life.
13. Helps out with Christmas and school
14. Maybe reach out and help needy families like at Christmas.
15. With anything.

(Paragon Mills)

1. It is already doing it by helping my girls after school.
2. Nothing.
3. When we see whole families come to the church it is a good example for my family.
4. Well you help my son with his homework and his been learning more about God. Thanks for been there for the kids. They are enjoining.
5. Children under that program should not eat snacks with a lot of sugar.
6. Yes, help for my daughter.
7. Homework help for my daughter.
8. It helped a lot. Thanks!
9. It has already helped my family with my daughters.
10. It helps a lot by looking to see my daughters are in God’s path.
11. It helped a lot.
12. Pray for my family.
13. Praying and with the same program.
14. They helped already because my kids have learned a lot.
15. Just being a loving community is enough.
Bibliography


Bakke, Raymond J. *A Theology as Big as the City*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.


September 29, 2014

Marc Stuart Jones
IRB Exemption 1971.092914: New Heights Christian Community Center: An Effective Strategy of Outreach for the Local Church

Dear Marc,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
   (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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