LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Transitioning to a Televised Worship Service via Internet to Provide for the Continued Existence for a Small, Declining Congregation

A Thesis Project Submitted to

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in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

Clifford L. Herd

Lynchburg, Virginia

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Liberty University School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

<u>Dr. James Zabloski</u>
  Mentor, Asst. Prof. School of Divinity

<u>Dr. Rick Rasberry</u>
  Reader, D. Min

Liberty University School of Divinity

Signature Sheet

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Clifford L. Herd

Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

Mentor: Dr. James Zabloski

Prince of Peace (POP) congregation, Ft. Payne, Alabama has less than twenty members and is struggling to survive. POP needed another option for her continued existence and sustainability as a small, declining congregation. Utilizing Internet technologies, it was possible for this small congregation to connect with a host congregation to receive their worship service and message on a large screen television. The thesis project investigated if POP congregation could make a transition from a live person-led worship service/message to a televised worship service/message to enable them to continue to worship and survive as a congregation.

The congregation was prepared to make the transition to a televised service/message through an intensive six-week process. A series of six messages, take home Bible studies to be used during the week, and sharing times after each worship service to discuss experiences and perceptions in accepting the change were presented. A pre-transition inventory was given to all congregational members. After the six-week intensive preparation, the congregation was introduced to the televised services/messages for a period of four weeks. During this transition process, perceptions and experiences were processed at the end of each worship service. After the fourth week, a post-transition inventory was given to all the members. The results between pre- and post-transition inventories were tabulated. Through this intensive preparation process, the congregation made a positive transition to using Internet technologies to accept the use of televised worship services/messages and thus enable them to survive and continue their ministry in making more and better disciples for Jesus.

Key words: declining congregations; internet services; positive transition; televised worship

Acknowledgements

This thesis project is dedicated to my wife, Nancy, my bride and beloved of fifty-one years. On September 1, 2018, the Lord called her to her eternal rest after six years of battling metastatic breast cancer that moved into her bones and her brain. It was her encouragement that prompted me to begin this journey into the Doctor of Ministry program. She supported me each step of the way and for that I am grateful. I am also grateful for the working and the power of the Holy Spirit that has provided the strength to see this degree to its completion even amidst my grief and sorrow in my loss of my best friend, helpmate, companion and partner in ministry for the Lord Jesus.

I also acknowledge the patience, guidance, and support of my mentor, Dr. James Zabloski and my reader, Dr. Rick Rasberry. They have provided invaluable help, direction, and encouragement throughout the entire process of this research project and the writing of this paper.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the saints of Prince of Peace Lutheran congregation in Ft. Payne, Al. They were willing to walk with me on this journey and to be open to the leading, guidance, and direction of the Holy Spirit to see if an older, small, declining congregation could transition to a televised worship service and message via the internet. They have embraced the new technology, although still preferring an in-person pastor to lead the service and share the message.

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17

+ In the name of Jesus + To God Alone Be The Glory +

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Abbreviations

DMIN   Doctor of Ministry

LC-MS   Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

LUSOD   Liberty University School of Divinity

NIV   New International Version of the Holy Bible

PrTI   Pre-Transition Inventory

PoTI   Post-Transition Inventory

POP   Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Chapter One

Introduction

Over eighty percent of American congregations are either plateaued or in decline.[1] Prince of Peace (POP) congregation in Ft. Payne, Alabama is one of these small, declining congregations. POP congregation is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), a conservative international church body with over six thousand congregations in North America and a membership of two million members.[2] There are seventy-two LC-MS congregations in the state of Alabama with twenty thousand members. A number of these congregations are small and declining congregations. The Lutheran presence is small in the state of Alabama (seventy-two congregations with twenty thousand members) compared to over three thousand Southern Baptist congregations with one million members.[3] It is estimated that there are another one million Baptist members in other conventions or associations, such as the African-American Baptist Convention.[4] According to the 2010 Census, thirty-seven percent of church members in Alabama (two-fifths of the state population) identified themselves as Baptist.[5] The overall population of the state is

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[1] Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21ˢᵗ Century,* (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2007), 15.

[2] Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Church Locator, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www. LCMS.org.

[3] Wayne, Flynt, "Southern Baptists in Alabama," Encyclopedia of Alabama, accessed November 15, 2019, http://www.encyclopediaof alabama.org,/article/h-1836.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

4.3 million.[6] The challenges of growing as a congregation and reaching more people for discipleship would essentially be the same for any congregation. However, as larger congregations, particularly the larger Baptist and Methodist congregations, provide many more services (counseling ministries, youth ministries, senior ministries, etc.) that are expected in our consumer driven society, it becomes increasingly more difficult to compete with the larger congregations. This Baptist orientation is also a challenge in experiencing growth and health for those congregations such as POP that are committed to liturgical practice.

In terms of church health, whether Lutheran or otherwise, between six and ten thousand churches are dying every year with one to two hundred churches closing each week.[7] Thom Rainer wrote that there is no quick and easy solution to stop the decline. The choice is simple: change or die. Dying churches do have a real possibility of turning things around.[8] Indeed, there is hope for small, declining congregations. A small, declining Lutheran congregation in northern Alabama such as POP congregation may be able to utilize modern technologies for a televised worship service/message via the internet, finding hope for continued viability and sustainability.

Ministry Context

Present Ministry Context for Prince of Peace

Prince of Peace congregation is presently served by a retired pastor living in Chattanooga with a Sunday morning only worship service and message, since the congregation cannot afford a full-time pastor. POP was founded twenty-six years ago by a small group of Lutheran

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[6] US Census Bureau, accessed September 19, 2019, http://www.uscensus.com, Alabama, 2015.

[7] Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville: LifeWay Publishing, 2014), 5.

[8] Ibid., 10.

Christians living in and around Ft. Payne. The congregation met at First Presbyterian Church for about a year. In June 2002 property and a building were purchased at the northern outskirts of the city limits of Ft. Payne. The building was renovated for church use. The congregation was served by a visiting pastor from the Lutheran church in Gadsden, AL until one of the members of the congregation felt called by the Lord to prepare for pastoral ministry. He studied at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis under a specific ministries program for older men with spiritual experience. His studies were mainly conducted online under the supervision of the pastor from Gadsden so that he could continue to serve POP part-time while working full-time as garden warden for the Alabama State Resources and Wildlife Commission. He completed his studies for the pastoral ministry in 2002. He was ordained and called by the congregation to serve as a worker-priest in June 2002. This pastor served the congregation until May 2016. The congregation did show some growth from eighteen members to twenty- four members during his ministry. Recently, several families moved out of state due to work-related transfers and thus membership is presently at eighteen members. Fourteen to eighteen people worship at POP each Sunday.

The building is well-maintained, the sanctuary seats about sixty people, and includes two classrooms, two restrooms, a pastor's office, and a small kitchen/fellowship area. The property is at the northern boundary of the city limits of Ft. Payne and has frontage on Interstate 59 South. The area around this property is mainly rural with single family dwellings. Congregational offerings have continued for the past two years at $18, 750 per year. One additional member has been added in the last two years with one family transferring out from the congregation. Thus, there has been a net loss of one member.

The congregation is facing the following options regarding the continued sustainability and viability of her ministry:

- Continue to maintain the status quo which is possible provided no families leave nor are they any deaths of members (two members are over 85 years of age and are presently experiencing some major medical problems);

- Merge with another like-minded congregation that shares its distinctive Lutheran teachings (finding another "like-minded" congregation in the area probably is not feasible);

- Sell the property and meet in member's homes (it would be possible for a group of 10-15 members to meet in several of the members' homes who have larger homes, however finding a buyer for the property will be difficult since it is located mainly in a rural area at the northern boundary of the Ft. Payne city limits. Even though the property is located on Interstate 59 South frontage, the growth of the city and county are stagnant;

- Close and cease existence- the members have a lot invested in "their church" and "their building" so this would only be considered under the direst of circumstances;

- Continue their ministry by transitioning to televised worship services and messages via Internet.

The last option is the purpose of the thesis research project to investigate whether POP congregation after intensive preparation for six weeks will be able to make a positive transition to a televised worship service/message via the internet. The congregation has approved exploring the last option with a unanimous vote of approval. The congregation also unanimously approved working with the district adjudicatory, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod-Southern District, in their program called the Small Church Initiative. The District has provided funding to purchase a large screen television, a computer capable of handling streaming Internet programs while the

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congregation has had Internet service installed with a modem that can communicate with the computer.

The ages of the congregational members are as follows:

1 female, 1 male age 16 and 13;

1 female age 20;

2 females/ 3 males between 40-49;

 3 females/ 1 male between 50-59;

1 female/ 1 male between 60-9;

1 male between 70-79;

1 male/ 1 female at 80 +.

Figure 1:1 Congregation Demographics
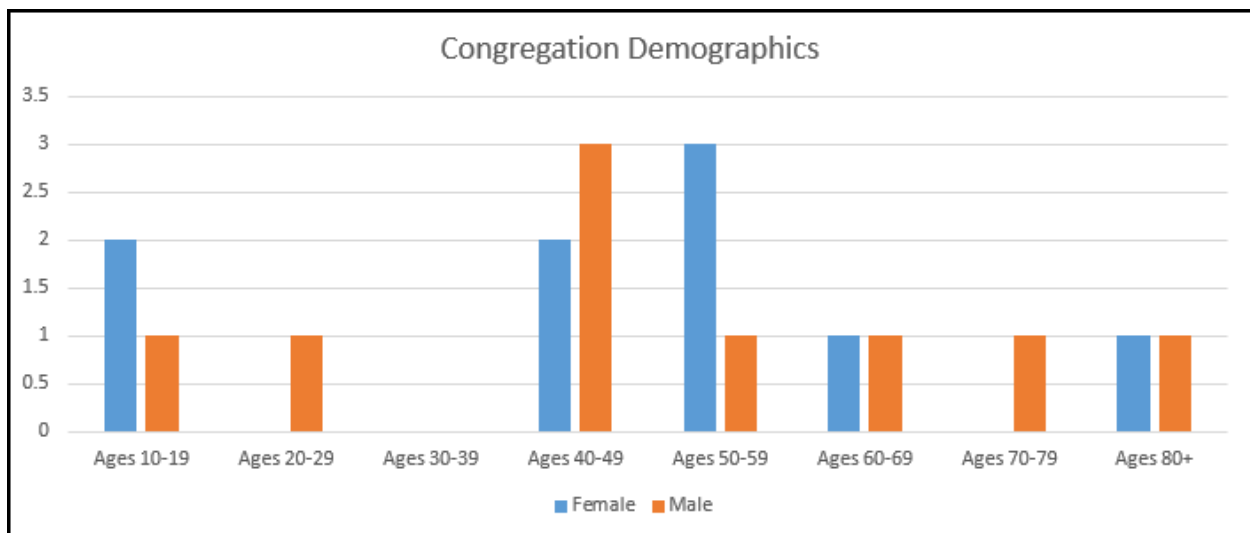
Figure 1:2 Average Length of Membership

Most POP members have been associated and active with the congregation for ten to twenty years. Three have been active a year or less while two are part of the founding charter members of the congregation.

Average Length of Mermbership
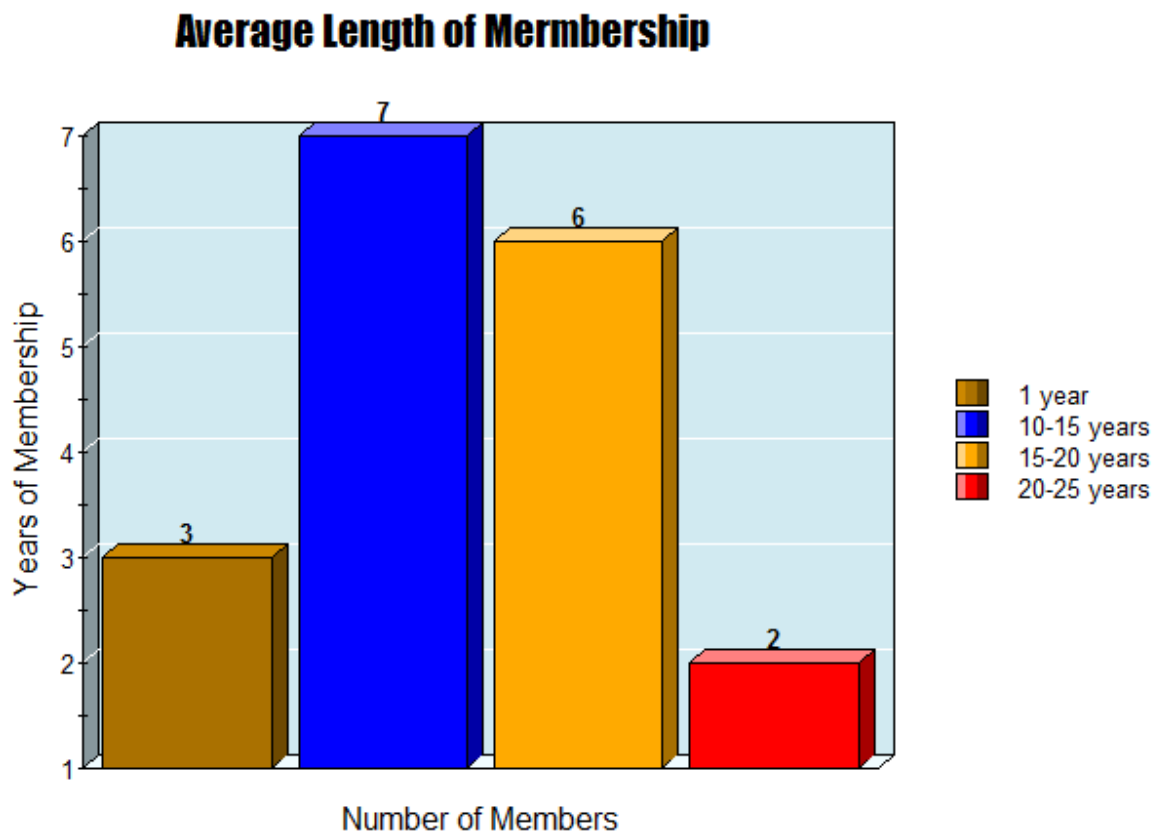
To objectively measure the congregation's spiritual health, an inventory from Gene Getz was used with the congregation in September 2018.[9] Four congregational leaders and the interim pastor completed the inventory. The inventories were tabulated with the following results:

Figure 1:3 Congregational Health, Strengths

CONGREGATIONAL STRENGTHS

CARE FOR, LOVE, AND PRAY F0R EACH OTHER—85%

GROUNDED IN BIBLICAL DOCTRINE— 75%

REFLECT FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT— 70%

FUNCTION WELL AS A GROUP—65%

LIVING SACRIFICE FOR JESUS—45%

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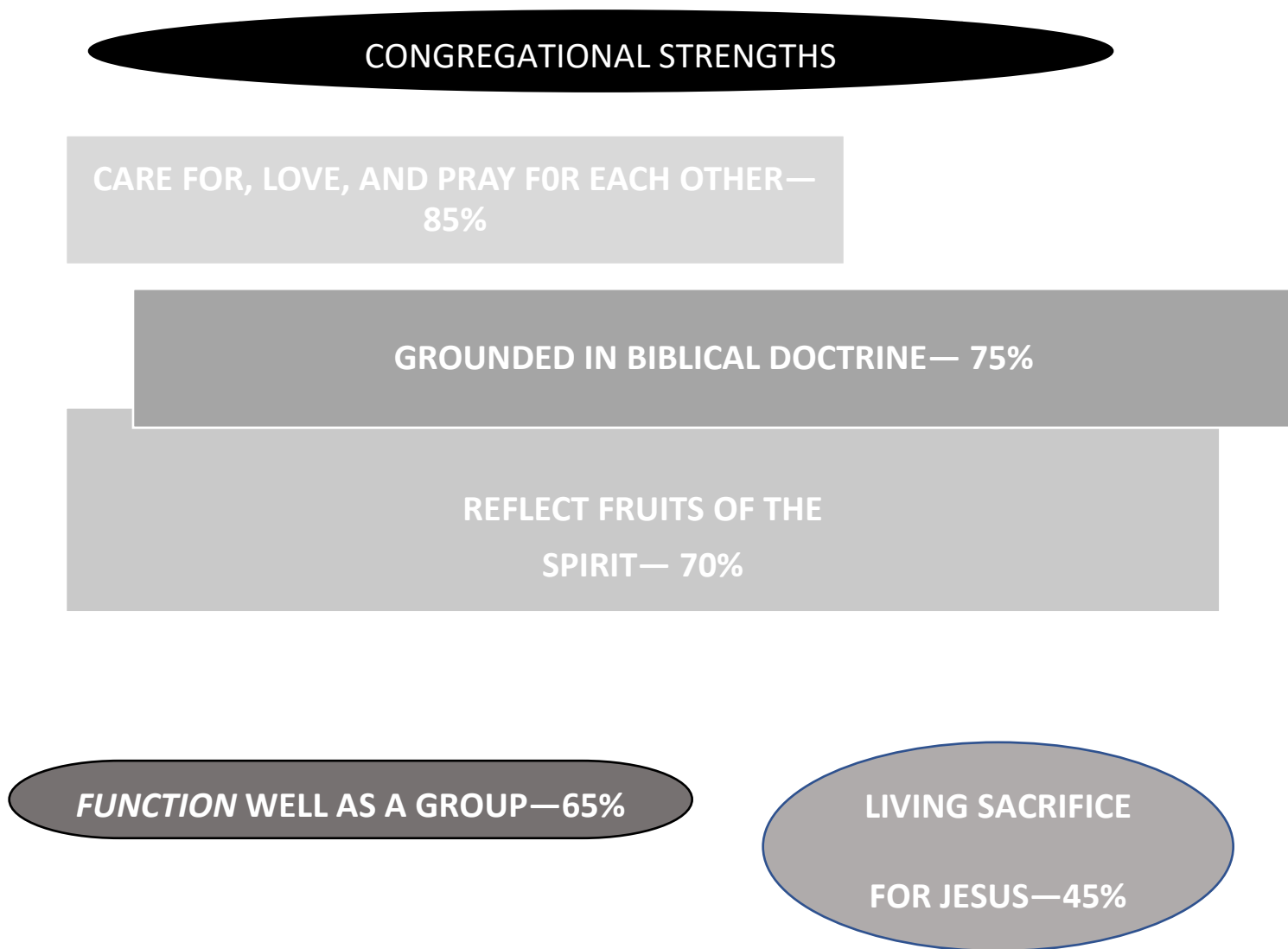
[9] Gene Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (Chicago, Moody Press, 2007), 15.

Figure 1:4 Congregational Health, Weaknesses

CONGREGATIONAL WEAKNESSES

NEED HELP IN WITNESSING—85%

COMMITTED TO A LIFESTYLE OF STRIVING FOR HOLINESS—35%

AFFIRMING CREATIVENESS, ESPECIALLY WITH LEADERSHIP—15%

EXPRESSING CARE FOR EACH OTHER—65%

LEADER QUALIFICATIONS NEED

TO BE ENCOURAGED—25%
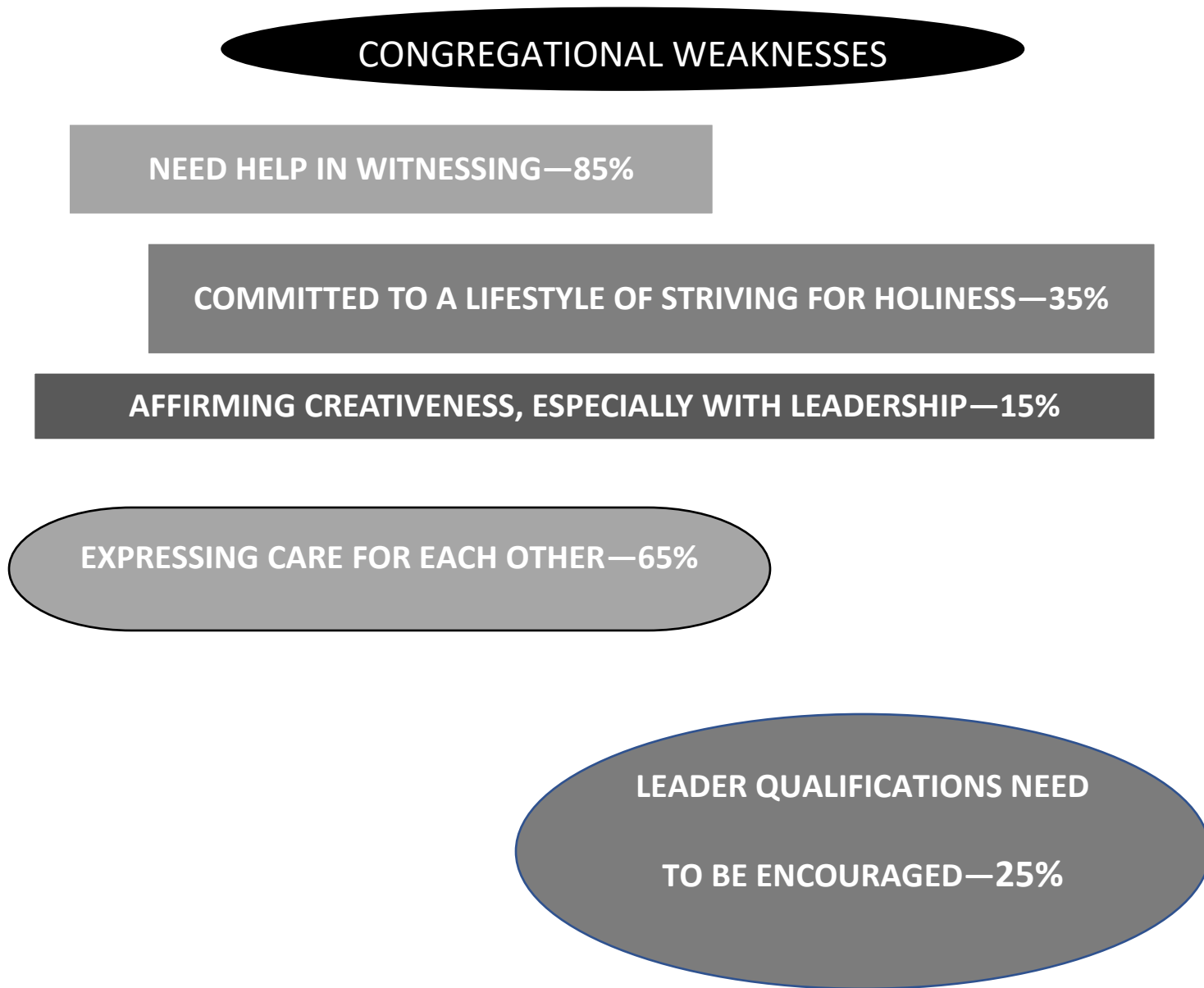
From the healthy church survey, the following interpretation of the results was made:

Figure 1:5 Congregational Health, Opportunities and Threats for POP:

CONGREGATIONAL OPPORTUITIES AND THREATS

OPPORTUNITIES:

TO BE STRONGER IN EVANGELISM

TO GROW IN SHARING ONE'S FAITH

TO BE MORE AWARE OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

THREATS:

LACK OF NUMERICAL GROWTH

IGNORANCE OF WHO LUTHERAN CHRISTIANS ARE

NO PASTOR IN THE COMMUNITY TO HELP SHARE A LUTHERAN PRESENCE

Due to the generosity of one member, the congregation's mortgage has been paid and now the congregation is debt free. The leadership team is excited about the possibility of additional funding now being available in the budget to fund community outreach projects, such as an Easter egg hunt in the city's main downtown park. The purpose of these outreach projects is to increase the community's awareness of POP congregation and what a Lutheran congregation believes and teaches. One family may have a job promotion out of state and their leaving could place more financial pressures on the congregation. Overall, Prince of Peace is a healthy congregation. Several of the above opportunities are being addressed, especially to be bolder in witnessing and sharing their faith in making more and better disciples for Jesus. Below is a chart of the congregation's yearly budget:

Figure 1:6 POP's Yearly Budget
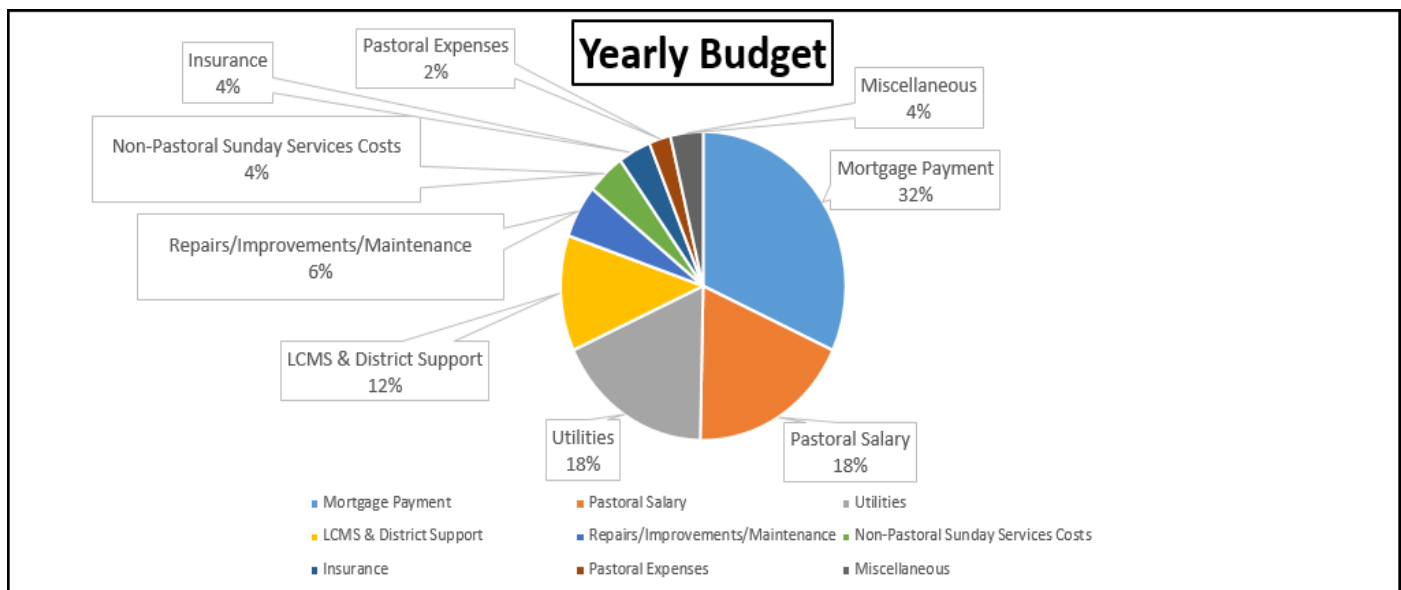
Ministry Context—Geographical

To better understand the culture, values, and attitudes of this area the geographical

context of this area will be presented. Geographically, this area is hilly with several peaks

between 1,000 feet to 1,800 feet above sea level. The Lookout Mountain range extends through

this area on the eastern side. On the western side is Sand Mountain.[10] The area includes the

Little River National Preserve Monument, which is a beautiful recreational area along the river

and the gorge.[11] Large forests of Southern pine constitute the largest proportion of the state's

forest growth while agricultural production in northern Alabama centers around raising cattle and

poultry.[12]

Ministry Context— Historical

This area of northern Alabama was originally inhabited by members of the Cherokee

tribe of Native Americans. The lush forests, the many streams and rivers, and the mild climate

provided fishing, hunting, and the raising of several crops for the Cherokee.[13]

The westward push brought settlers into the area. For whatever reasons, the white settlers

and the Cherokee were unable to maintain peaceful relations. Conflict and abuse developed

between the Cherokee and white settlers. Ultimately, the federal government acted in the early

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[10] World Atlas, "DeKalb County, Alabama," https://world atlas. com, 2016, Accessed December 13, 2019.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Charles Mitchell, Encyclopedia of Alabama, "Agriculture in Alabama," accessed December 12, 2019, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1396, November 15, 2016.

[13] "Cherokees in Alabama," Encyclopedia of Alabama, accessed December 12, 2019, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1087, update January 17, 2017.

1830's to round up all the Cherokee, forcing them to walk to new lands in Oklahoma. This forced walk brought death and untold misery to the Cherokee and is today called the "Trail of Tears."[14]

In 1878 Fort Payne became the county seat of DeKalb County, and in 1889 it was incorporated as a town.[15] With the completion of rail lines between Birmingham and Chattanooga, Fort Payne began to grow in population because it was on this rail line.[16] In 1907, the W.B. Davis Hosiery Mill began operations. This was the beginning of decades of hosiery manufacture in the area. By the beginning of the 21st century, the hosiery industry in Fort Payne employed over 7,000 people in more than 100 mills. It produced more than half of the socks made in the United States and was designated the Sock Capital of the World.[17] Beginning in the 1990s, cheaper Chinese imports began to undermine the hosiery industry. By 2005, hosiery mill employment in Fort Payne had declined to around 5,500 with several mills closing. Presently, the hosiery industry continues to have a foothold in the community, diversifying from athletic socks to boutique designs like Zkano, and other specialty and medical socks.[18] Several members of POP work in these hosiery mills.

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[14] "Cherokees in Alabama."

[15] "History of DeKalb County, Alabama," accessed December 12, 2019, https://www.dekalbcountyhistory.org/.

[16] Alabama Department of Archives, "Alabama Counties, DeKalb County," accessed September 19, 2019, https://archives.alabama.gov/.

[17] Ibid.

[18] "History of DeKalb County."

In the 1990's several new commercial and industrial projects were developed. The largest was the 2006 construction of a distribution center for The Children's Place stores, a facility that employs 600 people. Other large corporations with locations in Fort Payne include Heil Environmental Industries (a division of Dover Industries, manufacturing sanitation trucks for public works departments of towns and cities and over the road tanker trucks to haul various liquids); Vulcraft (a division of Nucor Corporation, manufacturing steel roofing systems); and Game Time (a division of Playcore, manufacturing commercial playground equipment).[19] Several members of POP work in several of the industries listed above.

There are thirty-eight churches in the city of Ft. Payne, including POP. There are at least twenty-five Baptist churches, mainly members of the Southern Baptist convention. Other denominations include United Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, Church of God, Roman Catholic, and Pentecostal congregations. Most of the congregations are plateaued or declining in membership. First Baptist, First Presbyterian and First Methodist are showing minimal gains in membership. The Church of God and Pentecostal congregations are showing moderate growth. Several small Baptist congregations have closed in the past several years.[20] Historically, there is a high value placed upon respect, including the respect of traditions, law and police, elders and teachers; respect for the Christian faith; and respect for traditional moral values while a high value is placed on helping one's neighbor. Crime is

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[19] *"New Retail Distribution Center in DeKalb Will Employ up to 600 Workers,"* accessed September 19, 2019, The Gadsden Times, September 27, 2006, p. A1.

[20] Ft. Payne Chamber of Commerce, 2017, accessed September 19, 2019, http://www.fortpaynechamber.com.

minimal, and many in the rural areas leave their homes unlocked. Racism is hidden beneath the surface and causes injustice for many.

Ministry Context— United States Census Data for DeKalb County, AL and the City of Ft. Payne, AL.

Figure 1:7 United States Census Bureau Data	DeKalb County, AL	City of Ft. Payne, AL
Population: (7/ 01/2017)	71, 617	14.017
Percent change from 2010	+.7%	+.3%
Ethnic/Racial Mix: white	80%	85%
African American	2%	4.1%
Native American	2%	1.9%
Asian	*.4%*	1.4%
Hispanic	14%	20%
Foreign born	6%	7%
Housing Units	31,057	6,316
Median Value	$99,600	$126,100
Households	24,81	6,316

	DeKalb County	City of Ft. Payne
Building Permits	22	
Persons per household	2.8	3
Language other than English	11%	15%
Median Age	37	37.5
Persons without health insurance	16%	20%
Persons in Poverty	20%	21.7%
Total Employer Establishments	1,091	542
Total Employment	17,745	8,724
High School Graduates	72%	71.3%
Bachelor's Degree or above	11% [15]	14.6% [16]

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[15] United States Census Bureau, DeKalb County, AL, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.uscensus.gov.

[16] United States Census Bureau, Ft. Payne, AL, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.uscensus.gov.

Ministry Context—Use of Internet Technology by POP Congregation

Presently, POP congregation has had an Internet connection installed and is paying the monthly fee for Internet service. A wireless router capable of handling streaming video was also installed. A computer with a large RAM capability to service streaming video was purchased along with a 65-inch large screen smart television and a rolling stand to support the television so it can be easily moved into the front of the sanctuary for the worship service and message. The computer internet connection is being used each Sunday to provide a video Sunday School lesson for the two youths attending POP congregation. These two high school youths have been trained to set up the computer, find websites, and connect with the large screen television.

Ministry Context— Lutheran Beliefs, Practices, Values and Traditions

To better comprehend the beliefs, practices, values, and traditions of the members of POP, these topics will now be discussed. Members of POP have shared that their friends have asked them if the Lutheran Church is a cult. This perception is prevalent especially in the more rural areas of the county. Lutheran Christians trace their history from the Apostolic Church through the ages to the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, a university professor as well as a parish pastor in Wittenberg, Germany posted Ninety-Five Theses on the castle church door in October 31, 1517. These were intended for debate, especially in the area of indulgences and penance. Due to the invention of moveable type in a printing press by Johannes Gutenberg several years earlier, Luther's Ninety-Five Theses were quickly published and distributed through much of Germany. As Luther continued his studies in Scripture, he became convinced

that his church needed reformation. And thus, began the advent and spread of the Evangelical Protestant Church and the Protestant Reformation.

Lutheran Christians believe, teach, and confess that Scripture is the only source and norm of all faith, life, and teaching. [17] God's Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is "able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-16)."[18] The Lutheran Confessions (the Book of Concord) share the importance of justification by grace through faith. Martin Luther stated that the "Church stands or falls on the article of justification." [19] If this central teaching of the Bible is understood correctly, then all the other doctrines fall into place. R. C. Sproul shared that this article of doctrine is so critical that if this teaching is lost or corrupted, the Gospel is lost. If the Gospel is lost, then there is no reason for the continued existence of the church of Jesus Christ.[20]

Justification is a forensic term in which a judge declares a person righteous and innocent. The word picture here is that of an ancient scale whereby a known weight is placed on one side and an equal amount is placed on the other side so that the scale balances. Regarding justification before the Righteous and Holy Judge, the Lord God Almighty, because of human sinful nature, the attempt is made to balance the scales of sins on one side with good works on the other.

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[17] Paul McCain, ed, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006) Augsburg Confession, Article Four, Justification, 240.

[18] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Holy Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1987).

[19] Ibid., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions.*

[20] R. C. Sproul, *Luther: The Life and Legacy of the German Reformer* (IMdb Video, 2017).

When a person begins to understand the magnitude of one's sin, immediately it becomes evident that the scales cannot be balanced by anything that man should or could do. It is only the saving work of Jesus that brings salvation in balancing the scales, as our heavenly Father declares all who believe in the shed blood of Jesus righteous and just.

Lutheran Christians confess all the major doctrines of the Christian Church, such as the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the virgin birth of Jesus, His work on the cross for salvation, the power and working of the Holy Spirit. The three major ecumenical creeds, namely the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed are accepted by Lutheran Christians. The power and efficacy of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion is a major teaching. The Scriptures teach that Holy Baptism is God's action towards His people in welcoming all into the body of Christ and God's family, creating a faith relationship and empowering each person with the Holy Spirit. As such, infants are baptized so that as they grow in that faith relationship created by the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism, their family heritage as children of God is continually celebrated. Lutheran Christians believe that the Scriptures teach that Holy Communion is a mystery in that God chooses to come into the hearts and lives of believers through the true body and blood of Jesus. Thus, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be celebrated frequently and often for the strengthening of faith and the assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

Lutheran Christians follow a traditional liturgical service whereby believers offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God since this is their spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1). Worship is the offering of body, mind, and spirit to our Gracious Father God as He comes to us to offer His grace, mercy, and peace through Jesus our Lord and Savior in and through the working and power of the Holy Spirit. In the Divine Service liturgy, God meets His

people to receive them, once again fellowship with them and celebrate His gifts as His people respond and grow in this special faith relationship. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod website shares the following outline of liturgical worship used by Lutheran Christians:

- On Holy Ground (Introduction)
- The Invocation: Beginning in God's Name
- Receiving God's Forgiveness: Confession and Absolution
- "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?" (Entrance Hymn and Introit)
- "Lord, Have Mercy" (Kyrie)
- The Church Year
- The Collect: Uniting Our Hearts in Prayer
- "This Is the Word of the Lord" (Readings)
- "Sing and Make Music to the Lord" (Hymnody)
- "Preach the Word" (Sermon)
- "And Every Tongue Confess" (Creed)
- Boldly Approaching the Throne of Grace (Prayers and Lord's Prayer)
- On the Night in Which He Was Betrayed (Lord's Supper)
- Songs of Our Emmanuel (Agnus Dei and Nunc Dimittis)
- Benediction: The Good Word. [21]

The Lutheran worship service consists of two parts. One part basically remains the same for each Sunday. This is the skeleton that provides continuity and strength in the flow of worship from confession and absolution to hymns of praise (canticles) to Prayers of the Church to Holy Communion and the Final Blessing. The other part of the service is called the Propers. These are the parts that change with the emphasis of each Sunday including the Introit or

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[21] "Oh, Come Let Us Worship Him," The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod, accessed December 12, 2019, https://www.lcms.org/worship/bible-studies/oh-come-let-us-worship-him, 2019.

Entrance Psalm, the Prayer of the Day, Old Testament, New Testament, and Holy Gospel readings, the message, and hymn selection. The traditional Church Year whereby the life of Jesus is celebrated yearly in the first six months of the year (the birth of Jesus through His Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost) is followed in the Lutheran community. In the second half of the Church Year, the focus is on the growing disciple. In addition, the use of colors and art are encouraged. Particular colors (blue, white, green, purple, gold, and red) are associated with each season to help worshippers focus on the particular theme for each Sunday.

Regarding church government, Lutheran Christians believe that the local congregation represents the highest authority and is responsible for her mission and ministry in that particular locality. Prince of Peace congregation and this author are members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). The Synod is an advisory body and provides services as delegated by synodical members in convention. These services include the training and supervision of pastors, Christian day schoolteachers, and other professional church workers; training and sending missionaries both nationally and internationally; providing various stewardship and evangelism materials; and operating a Christian publishing house. There are approximately 6,500 congregations across the United States that comprise the LC-MS.[22]

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[22] The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, accessed December 12, 2019, https://www.lcms/locators.

Ministry Context— Peculiar Characteristics of POP Congregation

In concluding this section on ministry context, some of the particular characteristics of the congregation and observations will be shared. Of the eighteen members on the membership rooster, fourteen attend worship services every Sunday. Two of the three not attending regularly are college students and are away from home. These fourteen members are only absent if there is sickness or if they are out of town visiting relatives. The members of POP highly value corporate worship. Members of the congregation are not related to each other yet while scattered geographically, they drive up to twenty miles one way for worship. Yet there is a strong bond of fellowship within the congregation. Members check on each other during the week, seek prayer concerns, and lift each other up in prayer continually. In many ways, POP functions more as a house church than as a larger congregation since the congregation maintains a high degree of intimacy, trust and caring for each other. At the end of the worship service, there is a fellowship time where various concerns are openly shared. There is little to no conflict within the congregation. Concerns are resolved in a positive, Christian way. The interim pastor has experienced much help and support from the members, especially during these last months after his wife died of metastatic bone cancer.

The congregation does have a covered dish luncheon once a quarter. There is plenty of good food and once again positive sharing and good fellowship. The most important symbol for POP members is the cross of Jesus our Lord and Savior. There is a large cross above the altar and many members focus upon this cross during the worship service. The cross is a powerful symbol of what Jesus has accomplished in His life, death, and mighty resurrection. The interim pastor has enjoyed a positive relationship with POP congregation. As the trust level has grown with one another, the congregational members have opened up to honestly sharing

what is helpful in the worship service, what was not understood in the message, and the positive

things that will be taken home to use in one's daily walk as growing disciples of Jesus.   POP

congregation supports a local food bank that helps especially seniors in need. In addition, the

congregation gathers a loose change offering on the fifth Sunday of each quarter. In many ways

these offerings are similar to the widow's mite, who gave freely of her meager resources to the

Lord. Congregational members continue to grow in being bold in witnessing their faith

throughout the week through opportunities the Spirit provides. Some powerful stories have been

shared of how the Spirit has been working to help the people on their witnessing list to know and

trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Problem Presented

Prince of Peace (POP) congregation, Ft. Payne, Alabama has less than twenty members

and is struggling to survive. POP needs another option for her continued existence and

sustainability as a small, declining congregation. If one or more members were to die, POP

congregation would experience severe financial difficulties. If one or more members of the

congregation were to move out of town due to transfers, it also would cause financial pressures

and create a leadership vacuum that in all probability could not be replaced. The congregation at

present is in a precarious situation wherein potential difficulties could call forth the demise of the

congregation. Lutheran Christians are very tenacious regarding worship and their building. If

POP congregation were to face the decision to close and disband as a congregation, it would

certainly be a traumatic experience for all members. However, POP congregational members

have a tenacity wherein they could continue as a house church serving the Lord and meeting

their needs. One option was for the congregation to embrace the opportunity to experience

worship services and messages through television via the Internet. This would provide the congregation the option to continue for many years even though small and limited in membership and finances. At present, POP is paying for an honorarium and travel expenses for the interim pastor. Congregational members also are able to maintain their building and grounds along with paying for monthly internet services and keeping a monthly mission commitment to the Southern District (LC-MS). By embracing the technology of televised worship services/messages via the Internet, POP has the hope of continuing her ministry.

Purpose Statement

The problem that the research project addressed was to provide hope, sustainability, and viability for the continued existence of a small, plateaued congregation in northeast, rural Alabama. Utilizing Internet technologies, it was possible for this small congregation to receive a worship service and message on a large screen television and thus meet the needs of members to continue as a house church in serving the Lord Jesus. The congregation was prepared in an intensive six-week time period through messages and take-home Bible studies that focused on change, anxiety, anger, grief, hope, and peace/acceptance. A four-week trial period was started whereby congregational members shared their joys and concerns about the use of televised worship services/messages.

Basic Assumptions

As Lutheran Christians, the importance of corporate worship is treasured by the members of POP congregation. The author to the Hebrews shared:

> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit
> of doing but let us encourage one another — and all the more
> as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25).

The centrality of both personal and corporate worship is a basic assumption.

Another assumption is the power and working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised in

John 14:26-27:

> The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will
> send in my name, He will teach you all things and will
> remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave
> with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the
> world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not
> be afraid.

Another assumption is the importance of building and maintaining relationships. Paul

shared the importance of the Body of Christ functioning in a positive way to build up and edify

each other and the body (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). A final assumption is the

importance of modeling positive, honest communication by the interim pastor and seeing

congregational members respond in a similar way. Because of these positive relationships, it is

assumed that congregational members will be honest and direct in sharing their concerns, their

growth, and their joys throughout the research process.

Definitions

There are no definitions to be presented at this point.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

One limitation of this research project is that some members of POP congregation may choose not to participate in the research. Fifteen members of the congregation made a unanimous decision to participate in this project. However, some of the members may decide not to participate in this project. In a climate of acceptance and honesty, a decision not to participate will be accepted and affirmed. Another limitation is that while members will be encouraged to utilize the take home Bible studies, there is no control over the degree to which these home Bible studies will be utilized or discussed within the family. While strong encouragement will be made to members to discuss and share these Bible studies within the family, there is no way to predict the amount of growth that will occur from the Bible studies. A final limitation is that all fifteen members may not be present when the pre- or post- transition inventories will be given. Every effort will be made to seek feedback from all fifteen members.

Delimitations

A delimitation is that results from only fifteen members will be sought. Two additional members are college students and their attendance is sporadic. Their participation while welcomed, will not be pursued. Another delimitation is that feedback will only be conducted on Sunday mornings after the worship service. Due to distances involved, the interim pastor can only be available on Sunday mornings after the worship service. Honest sharing and feedback have been encouraged yet some members may not feel that they can share their concerns and feelings openly and honestly. The trust level between interim pastor and members continues to grow.

Thesis Statement

The research project will provide another option for the sustainability and viability of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in utilizing televised worships services and messages via the Internet. If this congregation can embrace the Internet technology of providing Internet worship services and messages, then this congregation has the option of continuing her existence. By providing six weeks of preparation through sermons and take-home Bible studies, this congregation will be able to make the transition to utilizing worship services and messages via the Internet. Thus, POP congregation will find hope for the future through sustainability and viability of her continued existence as a house church in meeting the needs of corporate worship, fellowship, witness, and disciples making disciples for Jesus.

<center>**Chapter Two— Conceptual Framework**</center>

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

<center>A Historical Look</center>

This review will follow a topical approach beginning with the technologies used to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Christine Borman stated that informational technology makes it possible for all kinds of new activities along with new ways of doing old activities. Yet people do not discard all their old habits and practices with the coming of each new technology.[23] Some parts of new technologies will be readily embraced, while others may be readily discarded.[24] She also shared that books provide an early example of man's constant continuing search to utilize new advances and discoveries. [25] Many far-sighted Christian leaders have utilized technological advances to reach a greater number of people in many and varied cultures to make more and better disciples for Jesus as Savior of the world.

The Invention of the Moveable Type Printing Press

Borgman stated that manuscripts, which mean literally hand-written, were the first written records. It was laborious and costly to reproduce manuscripts. When Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press with moveable type around 1425, he opened the door to being able to produce multiple copies of anything that could be printed. [26] More presses meant

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[23] Christine Borgman, *From Gutenberg to the Global Information Infrastructure: Access to Information in the Networked World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 3.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 65.

[26] Ibid.

more and cheaper books, allowing literacy to flourish. Helmut Lehman-Haupt expressed the unique elements of his invention as a metal alloy type that could melt readily and cool rapidly and oil-based ink that was thick enough to adhere to the type while also transfer to vellum or paper. [27] Between 1450-1455, Gutenberg printed 180 copies of the Bible containing 1,300 pages. Consisting of three volumes of text in Latin, Gutenberg's Bibles had forty-two lines of type per page with color illustrations.[28]

Diana Childress expressed that Gutenberg's contributions to printing also included the invention of a process for mass-producing movable type; the use of an oil-based ink for printing books; mechanical movable type; and the use of a wooden printing press similar to the agricultural screw presses of the period. His truly epochal invention was the combination of these elements into a practical system that allowed the mass production of printed books.[29] She also affirmed that in Renaissance Europe, the arrival of mechanical movable type printing introduced the era of mass communication which permanently altered the structure of society. The relatively unrestricted circulation of information captured the masses during the Reformation and threatened the power of political and religious authorities.[30]

Gutenberg's technology also opened the door for the Protestant Evangelical Reformation. In 1527 Martin Luther made a visit to many of the congregations around Saxony. He was horrified to see the ignorance not only of the common people but also how inept the pastors were

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[27] Helmut Lehmann-Haupt*, "Johannes Gutenberg, German Printer,"* accessed December 12, 2019, https://britannica.com/biography/Johannes-GutenbergPrinter, *2017.*

[28] "History of the Gutenberg Bible," accessed December 12, 2019, http://www.gutenberg-bible.com/history.html.

[29] Diana *Childress, Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008), 122.*

[30] Ibid., 123.

in teaching their people. He found that the common people had no knowledge of Christian teachings and could not even recite the Lord's Prayer nor the Apostle's Creed. It was the recognition of this widespread ignorance among the common people that led Luther to begin work on his Small and Large Catechisms.[31]

In *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions*, information about the publishing of Luther's *Large* and *Small Catechisms* is presented. In March,1529 Luther finished his *Large Catechism* and by mid-April the first copies were in print. He finished his *Small Catechism* in May,1529. It was an instant best-seller, printed and re-printed many times and distributed throughout Germany. Also, in 1529 Luther had large posters printed containing the Six Chief Parts (Ten Commandments, Apostle's Creed, Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confession and Absolution) of his *Small Catechism*. These posters were hung up on the walls in churches, schools, and homes for people to recite together.[32]

On October 31, 1517 Luther posted his *Ninety-five Theses* for disputation and these also were quickly printed and distributed. This is the official date of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Heather Whipps in an article entitled "How Gutenberg Changed the World" stated that due to the invention of Gutenberg's moveable type printing press the inexpensive publication of these materials facilitated the spread of evangelical teaching. Many of the dukes, electors and mayors of the larger cities also embraced the Evangelical Movement. It is estimated that by the 1500's, at least half a million books had been published and were in circulation.[33]

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[31] Gerhardt Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 145.

[32] Paul McCain, editor, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* , 310.

[33] Heather Whipps, accessed September 19, 2019, Live Science.com "How Gutenberg Changed the World."

She also declared that in the 19th century, the hand-operated Gutenberg-style press was replaced by steam-powered rotary presses which allowed printing on an industrial scale.[34] With improved technologies in printing, a number of groups and societies developed for the printing and distribution of the Bible in many different languages. The American Bible Society (ABS) was established in 1816 and produces Bibles in many different translations. In 1995, with improved printing technologies, the ABS set the following goals:

1. Within the next ten years, to see 100 million people engaged with God's Word in the U.S.

2. Within the next 10 years, to translate 100 percent of languages for Bible engagement.[35]

Seventy million Bibles have been distributed since its founding in 1816. Over one million copies were distributed after the 911 tragedy. According to the ABS 2015 report, of the world's 6,901 tongues actively used as first languages, less than half have even a portion of the Bible available to them.[36]

In 1899, Gideons International was established to place the Bible in hotel rooms and schools. Since their founding, this organization has placed over two billion Bibles in two hundred countries and translated the Bible into over ninety-five languages.[37]

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[34] Whipps, "How Gutenberg Changed the World."

[35] American Bible Society, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.AmericanBible Society.org.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Gideons International, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www. Gideons. org.

Radio

Prebir Bondyopadhyay in a conference paper stated that in the mid 1890's, Guglielmo Marconi developed the first apparatus for long distance radio communication.[38] Marconi took out a patent for the first wireless telegraphy in England in 1896. However, Nicholas Tesla's patent was the first one accepted by the United States Patent Office in November 1900. [34] Reginald Fessenden expressed that Marconi was the first person to send audio (wireless telephony) by means of electromagnetic waves, successfully transmitting over a distance of about 1.6 kilometers in December 1906. Fessenden also shared that by 1910 these various wireless systems had come to be referred to by the common name "radio".[39]

Many visionary Christian leaders realized the importance of radio in communicating the Gospel. As one example, on October 2, 1930 Dr. Walter A. Maier began broadcasting the Lutheran Hour sponsored by the Lutheran Laymen's League. Randall Balmer affirmed that the Lutheran Hour was the largest radio broadcast whether secular or religious in the history of radio, both in number of stations carried and having the longest history (The Lutheran Hour radio program is still broadcasting today with over 1,300 stations weekly).[40] Many evangelicals utilized radio as a tool for sharing the Gospel radio both on Sunday and during the week. Hagen

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[38] Prebir Bondyopadhyay, "*Guglielmo Marconi - The father of long distance radio communication - An engineer's tribute,"* 25th European Microwave Conference: Volume 2, 1995, 879 – 885.

[34] PBS Report, "Tesla, Life and Legacy," December 12, 2020, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.pbs.org.

[39] Reginald Fessenden, *"First Radio Broadcast,"* Engineering and Technology History*, 1906.

[40] Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Baylor, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 422.

also stated that radio now made it possible to attend worship services via radio right at home. It

caused a shift in thinking of what the church was and where worship could take place.[41]

Radio technology advanced and in 1954 a transistor radio was produced. Transistors

allowed radios to be reduced in size since bulky vacuum tubes were no longer necessary.

Transistor radios became the most popular electronic communication device in history, with

billions manufactured during the 1960s and 1970s.[42] The smaller, pocket size of a radio produced

a change in popular music listening habits, allowing people to listen to music just about

anywhere they went. Radio stations multiplied across the United States.[43] Presently, there are

over 11,000 radio stations in the United States alone, with about 2,300 broadcasting with a

Christian format.[44] Many Christian radio broadcasts continue to reach a large population of

people within the United States through contemporary Christian music, talk shows, and other

programming covering economic, political, community, or spiritual topics and concerns.[45]

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[41] Ibid, 4.

[42] Quentin Skrabec, *The 100 Most Significant Events in American Business: An Encyclopedia* (New York: ABC-Clio, 2012), 197

[43] Skrabic, 197.

[44] Steve Warren, *Radio, The Book* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Press, 2005), 3.

[45] Mark Geil, "What's Up with Radio?" *Christianity Today*, July 27, 2017, 185.

Television

The technology for television began in the early 1900's.[46] The world's first electronic television was invented in 1927 by a twenty-one year who had the dream of a system that would capture moving images, transform them into some kind of code, and then move those images along radio waves to another destination.[47] Many inventors and companies contributed to the development of television technology. Today high resolution, high definition and digital color television is taken for granted.

Just as visionary Christian leaders utilized radio for the spread of the gospel, so also Christian leaders began to see the possibilities for the use of television in sharing the gospel. Many evangelists began using television as their medium to communicate the gospel of Jesus and raise funding for their ministries. While seeking to reach unbelievers and the unchurched, these televangelists were able to reach huge numbers of people and were extremely persuasive in getting people to contribute to their ministries. The Pew Research Center in its 2019 study entitled "Religion and Public Life in America" stated that about twenty-five percent of Americans are evangelical Christians. It is this group that mainly supports the televangelists and their ministries.[48] There are many prominent evangelists who have used or are using television technology to proclaim the Good News of Jesus as Savior and Lord. Billy Graham began his Crusades for Christ in 1949 and reached millions of people not only in a live setting at a stadium

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[46] "History of Television." accessed September 19, 2019, https:// www. Wikipedia.com.

[47] Johnson Hur, https://.www.BeBuisnessed.com, 2019. Accessed September 20, 2019.

[48] Pew Research Center, "Religion and Public Life in America," accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.pewrearch.org., 45.

but also through broadcasting these services around the world. Billy Graham died in February 2018 but he has established a strong organization called The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association that continued his heritage of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus.

Unfortunately, some of these televangelists succumbed to the temptations of the abuse of power and money along with sexual immorality, such as Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker. Nevertheless, there are many valid Christian ministries that utilize the technologies that television affords. Jay Cormier reported that the Church is, in a very basic sense, a gathering of real people, united by a common faith, supporting one another in their daily journey of faith. He stated that this kind of community cannot be created or shared via the one-way medium of television—especially through the polished, suave, and persuasive televangelist productions broadcast on Sunday morning.[49]

Cormier also shared a quotation from Martin Marty, a Lutheran theologian, wherein Marty expressed that the programming of the television evangelists is a major distortion of the Gospel. The name of Jesus is mentioned yet there is little emphasis upon Jesus' suffering, death, and mighty Resurrection, which is the heart of the Gospel. Marty continued in stating that tele-evangelists emphasize a personal decision for Jesus which neglects the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Some tele-evangelists will utilize miraculous healings to attract attention and sensationalize the Gospel, creating the impression that if one only has enough faith, he/she can be healed. Often, there is an emphasis upon material success by trusting in such promises as John

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[49] Jay Cormier, "Cues from the Television Evangelists: The Challenge to the Non-Electronic Church," *America*, March 26, 1988, 325-328.

14:14, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." A major part of their programming is to seek donations and support for their particular ministry. In conclusion, Marty expressed that these tele-evangelists do not convert the unsaved, but only confirm those who already are believers.[50]

In another journal article, Marty expressed that the tele-evangelists do occasionally preach hell fire and damnation (turn or burn emotional approach). Yet, in attracting and holding their audiences they emphasize more so the immediate benefits of the moment. These benefits include membership in the company of the saved, material prosperity, and healing of body and soul. The God they communicate is a God of Law. Thus, Christianity is distorted into a code of legalism.[51]

Peter Horsfield asserted that one Christian world movement utilizing mass media and particularly television in a most successful way is global Pentecostalism. Global Pentecostalism openly proclaims the importance of trusting the promises of the Bible that one will be blessed with health and wealth in this life (ask and you will receive). Global Pentecostalism has utilized many forms of media to communicate an emotionally based Gospel. This denomination has had a major impact upon Christianity in that worship services are an immediate experience of sight, sound, music, and preaching. This type of worship is very appealing to the senses and is highly emotional and inspiring for the moment.[52]

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[50] Cormier, 326.

[51] Martin Marty, "Writing Martin Luther," *Cresset*, Lent 2004, Vol LXVII, No. 3, 5-10.

[52] Peter Horsfield, From *Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015), 219.

Martha Tatarnic reported that mass media and especially television along with the

internet often portray the Christian Church as being desperate for new members (since so many

churches are declining) and irrelevant for the present day.[53] She stated that often news coverage

of religion presents religious commitment in its extreme positions. News media outlets mostly

report on outrageous and immoral behavior, especially of clergy. The recent sexual abuse

scandals in the Roman Catholic Church has been highly publicized, leading one to draw

unwarranted conclusions that all priests are pedophiles. This type of coverage adds further

credence to the notion that the Christian faith is hypocritical and even destructive.[54] She

continued in stating that the medium of television is a radical departure from previous mediums.

Many people spend more time watching television every day than any other medium. It is easy

for people to get comfortable in their living room, den, or bedroom and turn on the television.

Many channels are now available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. While television

viewing does provide much information both locally, nationally, and internationally, by and

large, it does not add to one's educational level.[55]

Regarding the format, goals and values of television, Neil Postman asserted that

television producers recognize a very short attention span for most of the population. Therefore,

everything is to be brief, concise and to the point. The goal of most television programming is to

provide on-going titillation of the senses through comedy, drama, adventure, and news

broadcasting. Basically, most people seek entertainment and comfort over anything that is

complex or difficult to understand. In most television programs everything is resolved in either a

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[53] Martha Tatarnic, "The Mass Media and Faith: The Potentialities and Problems for the Church and Television Culture," *The Anglican Review* 87, no. 3 (Summer, 2005): 447-467.

[54] Ibid., 449.

[55] Ibid., 457.

thirty-minute program or a sixty-minute program. There is little time to develop concepts or

explore life's more serious problems. Postman stated that "bite-sized is easiest to communicate,

complexity must be avoided so everything is black and white, nuances are dispensable, visual

stimulation becomes a substitute for thought."[56]

Tatarnic drew similar conclusions that television encourages instant gratification due to a

constant emphasis upon individual desires People expect that everything will be available to

them in fanciful and unrealistic ways.[57] She continued in stating that television creates the

impression of only what is seen or experienced is real, that seeing is believing. This makes

belief in an invisible God and the unseen workings of the Spirit in the world seem merely

fanciful or superstitious.[58] She reports that in many ways, television and its message of

entertainment and instant gratification becomes hostile to the historic rituals, traditions,

theologies, and transcendence of all historically based, and therefore complex, multidimensional

faith systems.[59] She continued in stating that the work of the Holy Spirit is a slowly evolving

process. The spiritual transformations most people experience in their faith journeys through life

seem merely frustrating and incomprehensible to television producers. At the same time, the rich

and subtle symbolism of our various traditions and the often quiet and invisible movement of

God's Spirit in the life of people of faith become impenetrable to television producers.[60]

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[56] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 92.

[57] Tatarnic, 457.

[58] Ibid., 458.

[59] Ibid., 460.

[60] Ibid., 459.

In the 1990's, many congregations were experiencing growth problems and turned to closed circuit television to broadcast their services in another part of their physical plant. The limitation for this technology was the inability to move to another location because of the need to be connected by a cable to carry the broadcast. Thus, it was possible to have closed-circuit television within a building or even a building within five hundred feet, but it could not be broadcast in any distance setting. Continuing with the technological progress of this age, newer and more advanced technologies continue to be developed including inexpensive personal computers, large screen televisions, improved projection systems, small cell phones with video recording capability, and of course the Internet.

The Internet

In 1961, Leonard Kleinrock pioneered the packet-switching concept in his Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) doctoral thesis about queueing theory entitled "Information Flow in Large Communication Nets."[61] In 1962, J.C.R. Licklider wrote memos about his Intergalactic Network concept of networked computers. Lawrence Roberts and Thomas Marill created the first wide-area network (WAN) connection via long distant dial-up between a TX-2 computer in Massachusetts and a Q-32 computer in California. By the mid 1980's, the Internet as known today, was developed for public use.[62] Enterprising entrepreneurs saw that financial gain could be achieved in commercializing the Internet. Thus, there are such websites as YouTube and Face

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[61] "Hall of Fame Timeline," Internet Society, accessed September 19, 2019 https://www.Internethalloffame.org..

[62] Ibid.

Book where anyone can post a message and/or a video on the website and it can be viewed by millions of people. There are numerous social medial sites where individuals can post the events, they consider significant and broadcast this information on the Internet for all to see and read.

Many large megachurches have utilized these new technologies to televise their worship services, Bible classes, and other events by streaming these events over the Internet. In addition, they have developed their own websites for communicating the Gospel across a wide range of groups, cultures, and geography. These new technologies offer opportunity and challenge as well as concerns for how the Gospel will be communicated and received. Eddie Gibbs mentioned that the present-day church is facing both challenges and opportunities in utilizing these new technologies. Christian leaders need to re-envision the meaning of worship and congregational ministry that has been built around the previous cultures and thinking of past generations. He shared that Western Churches need to embrace a change in emphasis from being inwardly directed to being committed to outreach. We are living in a diverse and multi-cultural environment where many have embraced a relativistic approach that often has little room for Christian faith and trust in the basic teachings of the Bible.[63] Gibbs continued in expressing that the exponential spread of the Internet and development of powerful search engines has ushered in an information age which seemed incomprehensible only several years ago. The availability of a vast amount of knowledge has undermined the power positions of elitist leaders who previously held a monopoly on information.[64]

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[63] Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchMorph: How Megatrends Are Reshaping Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 9.

[64] Ibid., 23.

Thus, how will these Internet technologies be used by the Church in overcoming misconceptions, perversions, and false information? Most large megachurches are utilizing Internet technologies to strengthen their ministries and to reach out to non-believers within their communities and indeed around the world in foreign mission work as well. All ten of the largest congregations in the United States have satellite congregations utilizing the Internet.[65] The presence and use of the Internet are accepted as part of our everyday life. Jacob Davidson in Money magazine reported that in 2015 there were 3.2 billion Internet users.[66] This is roughly half of the world's population. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), an agency associated with the United Nations, stated that for 2017 the number of Internet users increased to 3.854 billion Internet users.[67] The ITU stated that China and India account for 48% of Internet users.[68] The ITU reports that there are over seven billion cell phone subscribers as of 2015.[69] Low cost and availability of cell phones are reasons for such rapid growth.[70]

In 2015 the interim pastor now serving POP was visiting a small village in the remote area of southwest Uganda. There were no paved roads, no electricity, and huts with dirt floors. Suddenly a long pole with one small solar panel fastened to it came into view. Why would this person need a small solar panel in this primitive situation? Answer: to charge one's cell phone.

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[65] Turn Back to God, "10 largest churches," accessed September 19, 2019, http://www. turnbacktogod.com.

[66] Jacob Davidson, "Here's How Many Internet Users There Are," *Money* (May 26, 2015), 1.

[67] *Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals* (Geneva: International Telecommunications Union, 2016), 1.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 25.

[70] Ibid.

Even amid primitive conditions, one clever native found a way to keep his cell phone charged

and thus be in contact with the rest of the world. (In third-world countries, the technology cycle

is entered at the present technology level.) Mercy Nalungo wrote that Ugandan natives are not

interested in the Internet per se. Their major interest is where is the nearest cell phone tower.

Even in rural villages far away from a city, one can almost always get a cellphone signal in

Uganda.[71]

As Internet and wireless technology continue to advance, there is much conversation

about the use of electronic media for religious and spiritual purposes. Shane Hipps shared that

the use of electronic media has brought subtle and often unnoticed changes in our spiritual

attitudes in how we view God, the Church, the Bible, and each other. We live in a culture that

raises comfort, convenience, and instant gratification to a high level. The role and emphasis upon

the individual often suggest that community building is neglected. Spiritual discipline becomes

whatever makes me happy.[72]   Andrew Careaga spoke to the issue of using the capabilities of the

Internet to extend the church's ministry into the world. Forward thinkers are suggesting new

ways for the church to nurture professing Christians and reach out to non-Christians (see the

websites LiveChurch.tv and Second Life.com).[73] Aubrey and Michael Malphurs in *Church Next*

discussed the number of people between the ages of 11 to 30 that have used the Internet for most

of their life. This group has generally embraced the use of technology. Innovative ideas about

interacting with friends especially come from this age group. Even the concept of worship is

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[71] Mercy Nalungo, "Everyone Has A Cell Phone or Three in Uganda," *Durango Herald* (September 10, 2013).

[72] Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2006), 12.

[73] Andrew Careaga, *eMinistry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publications, 2001), 21.

being questioned and explored. By listening to the concerns of this audience the church will find

new and inspiring ways in using Internet technology to make more and better disciples for

Jesus.[74] Only four of the POP's members are under thirty and thus the older members will have

a greater degree of difficulty in adjusting to the new technologies.

Other authors in the conversation about the Christian use of the Internet include Schultze

and Woods in *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian*

Communication and *Exploring Religious Community Online* by Heidi Campbell. Campbell is

also the editor of *Digital Religion* that includes a chapter on "Ritual" written by Christopher

Helland. In that chapter, Helland asked some probing questions about televised worship services

such as:

- are online rituals real religious experiences?

- can a virtual pilgrimage be a real sacred journey?

- must one be bodily present to participate in a worship service?

- do online worship services have efficacy for the faithful or are they too superficial for real spiritual transformations?

- can anyone participate, create, or host an online ritual or do you have to be somehow religiously qualified?

- does online worship count as authentic worship within the tradition? If not, what if people still continue to use them?

- can online ritual engagement provide substantial and deep religious meaning or do people "point, click, and surf" their way through cyberspace like virtual tourists, observing but not engaging with the spiritual activity? [75]

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[74] Aubrey and Michael Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2007), 86.

[75] Christopher Helland, "Ritual," in *Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi Campbell (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 23.

Lorne Dawson and Douglas Cowan in *Religion on Line: Finding Faith on the Internet* encouraged more studies be done to see who is using the Internet for religious purposes and the intrinsic value afforded the users.

Some of the concerns about the use of online video worship services center around the lack of connection with a physical worshipping body. Bob Hyatt, pastor of The Evergreen Community in Portland, Oregon stated that having real community is impossible in a virtual church.[76] He continued in stating that not only does the virtual on-line church fail to form us in necessary ways, it has a malforming effect because it is just communal enough to provide some of the easiest and most instantly gratifying pieces of community without the harder, more demanding parts.[77]

Shane Hipps asserted that while online community has some benefits, it is not as good as the person to person live community of worship and support. Virtual community is mostly a disembodied experience that is largely a cognitive, rational bond that occurs on only one level of the human experience.[78] He continued in stating that the on-line worship experience cannot provide all that is involved in community worship, including the entire range of human experience—physical, non-verbal, intuitive sensing, subtle energies, visual cues and acoustic

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[76] Helland.

[77] Chad Hall, "Church ... Virtually: Why Internet Campuses Are Making Us Reconsider Our Assumptions about Ministry," *Leadership Journal* (Fall 2009): 46.

[78] Shane Hipps, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

tones. These are extremely powerful experiences of the mind, heart and soul that should not be quickly dismissed.[79]

J. Todd Mullins in his dissertation stated that people's opinions about the online church were not based on their actual experiences but from their current use of the Internet and social media. Those surveyed over the age of fifty discounted the ability of the online church to meet all the requirements of biblical church. They contended that authentic relationship building could not happen in a virtual environment. When pressed on this issue, most in this category were not connected to any environment of social media. Those over fifty that supported the online church experience were generally more technically connected through the Internet, had Facebook accounts, and had used online video and chat programs such as Skype. Additionally, those under thirty were almost always open to new possibilities and experiences. However, many of those with traditional church backgrounds questioned if all the functions of the church could be experienced online. The largest group supporting the validity of the online church were those under thirty from non-traditional church (or no church) backgrounds. These were the most experienced with online community and the least connected to the traditional church experience.[80]

On the other hand, those feeling comfortable with technology argue that a limited number of studies have shown that an online church can exist and have full social interactions on the Internet.[81] Aubrey and Michael Malphurs reported that as a consequence of our present

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[79] Ibid., 46.

[80] J. Todd Mullins, 2011, "Online Church: A Biblical Community." Doctor of Ministry dissertation, Liberty University, 139.

[81] Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online* (Bern, Switzerland, 2006), vii-ix.

culture, many in the mainline churches are experiencing a sense of lostness due to a lack of intimacy, as well as feelings of loneliness, isolation, and disconnectedness. Consequently, the church is hurting and is unable to meet the needs of these people who have transferred their loyalty to other sources.[82] Howard Butt reached the following conclusions concerning individuals in America. He wrote that our current condition in the church is that we are superficial, mediocre, unhealthy, and appallingly ineffective. Broken relationships characterize the church, just as they do in the world. Many have forgotten their first love for God, each other, and our healthy selves. Instead, people are strangers to one another.[83] Daniel Doodey concluded that teenagers are apt to follow a different path from their parents' religious commitment simply because they have been raised in a cyber world of games and entertainment and are bored with the linear, non-exciting sermons they experienced in their parent's worship. Many of these teenagers are not expected to be involved in the life of a traditional church.[84]

John Jewel reported that the Internet is well known as a rich and viable resource of religious and spiritual experiences. There has been a huge increase in Internet usage between 2000 and 2001: Two million additional people had accessed religious content or spiritual material online.[85] Doody sees the resources that the Internet provides as an unprecedented opportunity for the church to reach out in ministry and touch many more people. Many of the

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[82] Aubrey Malphurs and Michael Malphurs, *Church Next: Using the Internet to Maximize Your Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2003), 29-31.

[83] Howard E. Butt, Jr., *Renewing America's Soul* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996),32-47.

[84] Daniel Doody, "A Survey of the Best Practices for the Development of Online Religious Communities "Doctoral Thesis, Liberty University, 2010, 22.

[85] John Jewell, *New Tools for A New Century: First Steps in Equipping Your Church for the Digital Revolution* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2002), 75.

barriers of the current institutional malaise in church growth and evangelism can be overcome. This technology's impact on teaching, learning, and worshipping can be phenomenal.[86]

Judy Veernker also takes a positive view of using Internet technologies to reach both the churched and unchurched. She asserted that the Internet has offered people opportunities to develop more intimacy and experience an honest and open communication online that is often difficult to obtain in the traditional church. People have found real community by searching the Internet and have learned to build community in a deeper and more fulfilling way.[87] She continued that the use of the Internet offers a new means of communicating that brings purpose to their lives while developing ways to fill their loneliness and isolation. Furthermore, the Internet has connected people who need to feel that they are part of something more meaningful. People connect and form various groups via the Internet, which challenges the traditional ideas of community.[88] She stated that these emerging communities are indeed growing disciples of Jesus within His Kingdom. Thus, intimate community experiences are not simply achieved by employing the use of technology, just as carrying a Bible does not achieve evangelism.[89] Shara Karasic recommended the following guidelines to build a successful online community:

1. Deliver substantive and meaningful content appealing to various age groups and cultures.

2. Offer support tools and guidance in getting connected with various sites.

3. Develop a strong and positive online family atmosphere.

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[86] Doody, Doctrinal Thesis, 19.

[87] Judy Veernker, "Church of the Web," *Christianity Today*, (June 14, 1999), 99-110.

[88] Veernker, 100.

[89] Ibid.

4. Establish a reputable name that identifies the group.

5. Establish a free flow of information.[90]

In addition, researcher George Barna indicated that there will be numerous changes in people's faith experience that will emerge in the next few years. He predicts that by the end of the decade, there will be over ten percent of our population who will rely upon the Internet for their entire spiritual growth experiences. Some of these people will be individuals who have had no connection with a faith community of any kind.[91] Barna reported that almost every dimension and every level of the various faith communities will be influenced by online spiritual and religious developments. Within church communities, there will be theological chats, broadcasting to congregants who are immobile, live webcasting of mission trips via webcams, and 24/7 ministry training from the best trainers and educators in the world.[92]

A 2000 survey by Pew Research asked over 1,300 pastors, rabbis, and lay leaders about the use of the Internet. Results revealed that the Internet was being used being used by congregations to strengthen the faith and spiritual growth of their members, evangelize and perform missions in their communities and around the world and perform a wide variety of spiritual and practical activities for their congregations. Many believe the Internet has helped these faith communities become more effective in their ministries with eighty-three percent affirming a positive effect from Internet usage. The survey found that the web sites of

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[90] Shara Karasic, "Guide to Building Online Community," accessed September 19, 2019, http//: www.business.com/directory/Internet_and _online/community.

[91] George Barna, "More Americans are Seeking Net-Based Faith Experiences," accessed September 19, 2019, http://barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/48-more-Americans-are-seeking-Net-based-faith-experiences.

[92] Ibid.

respondents offered intimate faith and service activities online; opportunities to share prayer requests; helps with daily prayer and devotional work, including Bible study; chat rooms and blogs where dialogue did take place especially over issues of science and faith; links to crisis counseling services; a Frequently Asked Questions (and answers) site about the church or temple and the beliefs of members; and an Ask the Pastor site. In addition, respondents also shared that those shopping for a worship service often checked the church's website first especially to research the pastor's background and beliefs as well.[93]

Smaller, Declining Congregations and the Use of Internet Technology

Perhaps, live streaming worship services via the Internet could benefit smaller, declining congregations. Peter Horsfield indicated that large mega-churches account for less than one percent of weekly worshippers in the United States. Ninety-four percent of worshippers attend congregations of less than five hundred, while fifty-nine percent worship in congregations of less than 100 members.[94] Horsfield quoted a study from The United States Congregational Life survey finding that despite financial difficulties, smaller congregations scored higher in the survey than the larger churches in areas such as fostering spiritual growth, sharing their faith in loving and concerned ways, having empowering leaders, being places in the community where more worshippers are actively involved, and caring for children and youth.[95]

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[93] Elena Larson, *Wired Churches, Wired Temples* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2002) 4.

[94] Peter Horsfield, *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media* (San Francisco: Wiley and Sons, 2015), 279.

[95] Ibid., 279-80.

However, regarding the use of streaming a live television service from a larger congregation to a small, diminishing congregation there appears to be little conversation. There is much research about plateaued or dying congregations. Malphurs and others suggested that 80% of American congregations are either plateaued, declining, or near pulling the plug and going out of existence. [96] A number of books discussed how a plateaued congregation can be turned into a vibrant community of worshipping Christians reaching out to share the Gospel such as *Everychurch Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow*. C. Peter Wegner, Elmer Towns and Thom Raines offered advice on how to break the one hundred- member barrier while nothing is suggested for a small congregation of fifteen members. [97]

Reggie McNeal in *Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* pointedly shared that the church has mission amnesia. He stated that the church's transformative power is not in strategies nor programs. Rather the transformative power of the church is the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of people. He continued in emphasizing that if the present church is to survive then there must be major attitudinal changes in what our priorities are.[98]

Thom Raines described the downward spiral of a dying congregation:

1. A slow erosion of the membership base;

2. the past fondly remembered and idealized;

3. the Church refuses to reach out and embrace the surrounding community;

4. the overall budget becomes inwardly focused;

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[96] Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century,* (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2007), 15.

[97] C. Peter Wegner, Elmer Towns and Thom Raines, *Everychurch Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow,* (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 1998), Cover Page.

[98] Reggie McNeal, *Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2003), 121.

5. the Great Commission becomes the Great Omission;

6. the congregation becomes focused meeting members preferences and needs;

7. pastoral length of tenure decreases;

8. longer pastoral vacancies contribute to poor leadership;

9. congregational members rarely pray together;

10. the congregation's basic purpose is survival;

11. congregational members are in denial over the impending death of the congregation;

12. Members become obsessed over the facilities.[99]

These twelve attitudes are critically important in evaluating a congregation's health and where they might be in this downward spiral towards the death of the congregation. Edward Hammett was blunt in stating that the present-day church cannot continue in denial and grief in an effort to recover the good old days. He mentioned that God's Spirit keeps bringing hope for the future while we grasp tightly, holding on to the experiences of the past.[100]

Neil Cole made the following observation that the ingredient most necessary to start a spontaneous movement of the Spirit's work in making more and better disciples for Jesus is found in the heart of every follower of Christ. It is within the heart of all faithful believers in being open to the work and power of the Holy Spirit.[101] He calls this the potent seed within us and it is key attitude in evaluating if a congregation has the will to survive. [102]

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[99] Thom Raines, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive,*   (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2014), ix.

[100] Ibid., 7.

[101] Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco: Wiley, 2010), 67.

[102] Ibid.

Corporate worship is vital to the health and life of any congregation, regardless of size. Triune centered, Godly, Spirit filled worship is critical for the well-being, growth, and ongoing transformation of the disciples of Jesus. James Smith and Glen Stassen in *Desiring the Kingdom Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* stated that all liturgies, whether they be sacred or secular, shape and constitute one's basic identities. These daily liturgies form one's fundamental desires along with one's most basic attunement to the world. In short, liturgies form each person into the kind of person they are. What defines each person most is what they love. [103] The question, then, is not will we worship but rather what will we worship. G. K. Beale purposed that people become what they worship.[104]

The conversation about the use of televised worship services for small, diminishing congregations is limited. David Roosen in his study shared the following statistics from his survey:

1. Fifty-three percent of the mainline Protestant congregations in the United States have fewer than one hundred regularly participating adults;

2. Seventy-five percent of these congregations are located in small town and rural settings;

3. Twenty-five percent of small congregations have fewer than fifty regularly participating adults, compared to the seven percent of mainline Protestant congregations that have more than 351 members.

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[103] James Smith and Glen Stassen, *Desiring the Kingdom Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 72.

[104] G. K. Beale, We *Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 21.

4. Twenty-one percent of these congregations have no full-time staff at all.[105]

Many of these smaller, declining congregations are experiencing deep change. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook stated, "Deep change is different from incremental change in that it is discontinuous with the congregation's past history. It involves new and different ways of being, thinking, and action, along with taking risks. It requires a walk outside one's comfort level of traditionally prescribed roles."[106]

More research is needed on how well a small, declining, older congregation can adapt to a televised worship via the Internet, or as Roosen stated, "Walking naked into the land of uncertainty."[107] Can a small, declining rural congregation utilize these Internet technologies and openly embrace them to provide for the sustainability and viability of their ministry? The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that it is possible for a small congregation to transition to the use of televised worship services and messages via the Internet to continue their ministry in serving the Lord Jesus.

Theological Foundations

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[105] David Roozen, "Faith Communities Today," in American Congregations, Hartford Institute for Religious Research (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2007), 4-9.

[106] Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, Born *of Water, Born of Spirit: Supporting the Ministry of the Baptized in Small Congregations*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 11.

[107] Roosen.

One basic theological foundation of this paper is the importance of the local congregation in God's plan of salvation. The word "church" (Greek: *ecclesia*) is used to describe the called-out people of God (Greek *ek-* out and *kalein*-called). J. C. Lambert wrote that although the Greek word for church soon became a distinctively Christian word, it has its own pre-Christian history; and to those, whether Jews or Greeks, who first heard it applied to the Christian society it would come with suggestions of familiar things.[108] He continued in asserting that the term *ekklesia* for the Greek speaking people was the designation applied to the regular assembly of the whole body of citizens in a free city-state, as they were called out by the herald for the discussion and decision of public business.[109] For the Jewish person, the Greek word would connect with the Hebrew word qahal which denotes the congregation or community of Israel as the people of God. This Hebrew word was translated by the writers of the Septuagint as *ecclesia*.[110]

Thomas Lindsay wrote that to the Greek *ecclesia* would suggest a self-governing democratic society while to the Jew the word would suggest a theocratic society whose members were the subjects of the Heavenly King.[111] The Greek word *ecclesia* is used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 when He says to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My church." It is also used in Matthew 18:17 when Jesus says, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." In both instances these statements imply a gathered group of disciples or believers.

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[108] J. C. Lambert, "Church," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Seattle: Biblesoft, Inc. 2006) 1.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Thomas Lindsay, *The Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries* (New York: Cosimo Publishing, 2006), 4.

In the Book of Acts, ecclesia describes both the local church (the church at Antioch, the church at Jerusalem) and the sum total of all believers as in Acts 9:31— "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace."[112] Paul used both meanings in his letters. Each letter is addressed to the local and particular gathering of believers whether the church at Rome, the church at Corinth, etc. The only exception is the letter to Galatia which is addressed to a group of churches. At other times Paul used *ecclesia* as the universal church, all believers gathered together under the Lordship of Jesus through the power and working of the Holy Spirit.[113] In his later letters, Paul developed word pictures in describing the church as the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. Both word pictures emphasized the relational aspect of the church.

While certainly each person needs to have a personal faith relationship with our Gracious heavenly Father through the saving work of Jesus, neither can nor do disciples exist apart from the overall church. Paul used the terminology the body of Christ to describe the inter-relationship of each member within the body. Paul went to great lengths to avoid labels and distinctions that separate and divide. In Colossians 2:16 he wrote, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day." In Ephesians 2:11-16 he wrote:

> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and
> called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision'
> (that done in the body by the hands of men)— remember that at that time
> you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and
> foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God
> in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been
> brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who
> has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of

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[112] Lindsay, 3.

[113] Lambert, 4.

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hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace."

In Galatians 3:26-29, Paul wrote:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Kenneth Bailey wrote that in this Galatians verse and elsewhere Paul emphasized to his Greek readers that once we Jews called you by the pejorative term of Gentiles, and with that one judgmental word we excluded you. Paul confessed that even though Gentiles could become converts, they still remained as outsiders. Paul emphasized that we all are one family, and all are brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father. Each person will keep his or her ethnic skin and on that level of identity there will be differences. Yet, the Spirit created a new identity in Christ that unites everyone on a level that is deeper than our ethnicity. Together we share that new identity. Paul stated many times that we Jewish believers refuse to think of you with that pejorative label as Gentiles.[114]

Bailey continued in referring to the one body of Christ stating that the sin condemned here is not pride but self-sufficiency. The deepest problem is not the attitude that I am better than you but rather the attitude of I do not need you. Bailey shared the following quotation from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "A self-sufficient human being is subhuman. God has made us so that we will need each other."[115]

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[114] Kenneth Bailey, Paul *Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 333.

[115] Ibid., 344.

Regarding how the body of Christ functions, Mark Taylor commented that the implication is that a profound and deep solidarity exists between and within the members of the body.[116] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor stated that for Paul the term body of Christ referred to an organic unity wherein each part of the body needs the other parts to function properly and in a healthy way. He commented that the idea of an autonomous Christian is ultimately a contradiction in terms. Believers are what they are because they belong to someone greater than themselves. They are Christians because they trust Jesus and belong to His body. The vitality of this relationship constitutes their new mode of being, living and celebrating. Usually, individuals come together to create and form communities. For Paul it was precisely the reverse. The community is a radically new reality which is formative as the Spirit works to make the believer a new creation.[117]

Many of the Pauline congregations in their early stages functioned as a house church. The model of a house church is not new. Historically it is rooted in what the early Church under persecution by the Romans looked like and how they functioned. Ryan Bolger described a house church experience in Latin America. He shared that worship at the house church started at the table of hospitality with coffee and bread. After thirty to forty minutes, someone began to play a praise song and the singing started. While singing, anyone may pray, read the Scripture, or share a thought or homily. The Spirit guides the worship time.[118] Bolger continued stating that the

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[116] Mark Taylor, 1 *Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 273.

[117] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2009), 198.

[118] Ryan Bolger, ed., *The Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 42.

house church develops its ministries of justice, evangelism, and discipleship not as institutionalized programs, but as something that flows out of the daily lives of participants, according to the gifts of the Spirit. Evangelism happens when the members of the house church are invited to visit their family members' homes. The idea of the meeting is to allow nonbelievers to participate, experience the gospel, and to feel convicted of sins.[119] Bolger added that the church is always an event around the risen Jesus before it is an institution.[120] Perceived strengths for the house church model are a greater degree of intimacy with a small group, less institutional, less structure, more participatory worship, not tied into a huge debt load and disciples making disciples.[121]

Another theological foundation for this thesis paper is that of the critical importance of the power and working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples in John 14:26, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." Martin Luther in his Small Catechism, in his meaning for the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed wrote that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord or come to Him. Rather the creation of a faith relationship with our heavenly Father is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has called us through the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified and kept us in one the true faith.[122]

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[119] Bolger, 43.

[120] Ibid., 299.

[121] J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2007), 36.

[122] Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 123.

E. Y. Mullins wrote that one of Paul's favorite figures was of the church as the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is seen as animating this body, bringing it to life, and providing direction and guidance in all its affairs. As in the case of the individual believer, so also in the body of believers, the Spirit is the sovereign energy which directs and guides. He continued in stating that the entire life of the church falls under the work and power of the Holy Spirit.[123] Udo Schnelle shared that as individual human beings we cannot understand ourselves as ones who only receive. We need to see ourselves as blessed by our Father as He constantly and continually pours out His gifts upon all people.[124]

The most critical and graceful gift is that of the working and power of the Holy Spirit in creating and sustaining a faith relationship with God the Father. Schnelle continued in stating that men are fundamentally incapable of comprehending salvation and its meaning and thus being able to develop a plan for their salvation. This would be to take God's own place, a dangerous and hopeless delusion. As human beings understand and assess their own situation appropriately and realistically, they need to acknowledge and take seriously their creatureliness, which means knowing their limits and trusting the work and power of the Spirit.[125] Thus, the Holy Spirit is the creator and nourisher of our faith relationship with our gracious heavenly Father. He is our Divine Teacher of all that Jesus taught. He is our Counselor and Comforter. It is the Spirit who convicts of sin and brings about repentance in the believer's heart. For the unbeliever, the Spirit is constantly at work to bring about repentance and the opportunities to experience God's grace in a loving, gracious, and trusting relationship.

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[123] E. Y. Mullins, "Holy Spirit," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Seattle: Biblesoft, Inc., 2009).

[124] Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 256.

[125] Ibid.

Theoretical Foundation

There has been little research on the topic of utilizing televised worship

services/messages via the Internet to help sustain very small, declining congregations so that they

may continue their ministry in making more and better disciples for Jesus. There is some

conversation about whether a person can truly worship through a televised worship service. One

argument is that a televised worship service does not create the intimate community that the

Scriptures envision as the Body of Christ. On the other hand, studies have shown that age affects

one's perception of whether technology can be used to create community and grow faith. The

younger age groups, having grown up with technology such as personal computers, cell phones,

and the internet are much more open to embracing internet technologies including televised

worship services.[126]

For a smaller congregation with fewer than twenty members, the sense of community and

caring for one another is already established. Members can share stories of various milestones in

the congregation's history and most members can connect with those stories. Many of these

congregations, even if they are meeting in a church building, such as POP congregation actually

are functioning as a house church. Craig Keener stated that Paul's vision for house churches was

that they would function as many members of one body serving each other and that quality was

defined by relationships, not by costly buildings.[127] Functioning as a house church is not only a

theological orientation, it also encompasses the theoretical orientation of this paper. A house

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[126] Mullins, 139.

[127] Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). 106.

church may be limited in available resources and cannot offer programs that are attractive to particular age groups, such as youth groups or smaller group Bible studies. Yet, the major strength of house churches is their emphasis on building and strengthening strong, supportive relationships. Many small, declining congregations whether aware or not, have begun to function as house churches and this could be one strength that will contribute to their viability and sustainability.[128]

The major issue facing these smaller congregations of under twenty members is will members over fifty years of age be able to transition to a new technology of utilizing televised worship services/messages. This research will explore the possibility of a small congregation of under twenty members (with most members over fifty years of age) accepting televised worship as a positive way to worship through an intensive six-week preparation period.

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[128] Payne, *Missional House Churches*, 51.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Intervention Design

Many research projects follow an Intervention Design. The Intervention Design is essentially the blueprint of the research project. It provides a rationale or a reason as to why the research is being undertaken. It shares the setting under which the research will be conducted and then provides a detailed step- by-step description of how the research will be conducted. The Intervention Design for the research project presents the ethical issues that may be encountered. It also discusses the types of data to be collected and how that data will be recorded and protected. Finally, it shares the relationship between the researcher and the subjects involved in the research project.

Rationale for the Purpose of the Research

The concern for the well-being and continued existence of a small, declining congregation in north Alabama has led to the development of a project to provide hope for the continued viability and sustainability of Prince of Peace (POP) congregation. The members, while not related biologically, consider themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ and constantly share their concern for one another.

Presently, the congregation's overall health is good. There are no conflicts within the congregation. Congregational members openly share joys and concerns with each other and for each other. If a member is not in worship on a particular Sunday, several members will call the

missing brother or sister to see how they are doing. When there is a problem, it is resolved in a way where all concerns are presented, and a positive resolution is embraced by all members. The relationship between the interim pastor and congregational members has continued to grow into a positive and supportive relationship. Both pastor and members feel a strong bond has developed as personal concerns and prayers are shared, especially during the fellowship time after the worship service.

There are six members who serve on the Church Council and provide leadership for the congregation. Two of these members are relatively new to leadership positions yet they have stepped up to function well in fulfilling their responsibilities. During the pastor's absence, three of the leaders feel comfortable in leading the worship service and reading a sermon for the message. There are two members who serve as Elders and assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. Overall, those serving in leadership roles continue to serve in positive and effective ways. There are no conflicts within the leadership team.

Worship services and messages are readily available on such web sites as YouTube. With present technology, it was relatively easy to find an acceptable Lutheran worship service and a message from a pastor via the Internet. Thus, if POP members could transition from a live, person-led worship service/message to a televised service, there would be hope for the continued viability and sustainability of this small congregation. This project envisioned a slow, deliberate, intensive process of preparing for a transition to a televised worship service/message for POP members.

It is critically important for a small, declining congregation to maintain a sense of purpose, meaning, and most especially hope. Presently, POP congregation has continued to maintain a sense of purpose, meaning, and hope. None of the descriptors that Raines mentioned earlier are being expressed by members of POP. The research project seeks to strengthen the hope that is evident among the members for the continued viability and sustainability of POP congregation.

Setting for the Research Project

The setting for the research project has been Prince of Peace Lutheran congregation. All activities including questions, sharing of concerns, discussion of each week's topic, and the completion of inventories were conducted in the sanctuary after the worship service during the fellowship time each Sunday. Pencils were available for members to use for the completion of the inventories. Hymn books were used as backing when taking the inventories. Congregational members are accustomed to staying thirty to forty-five minutes after worship for sharing and fellowship. If members were asked to move into the dining area in the next room where there are tables to make it easier to write, some members might slip out and not participate in taking the inventories. Thus, all discussions and taking of the inventories were conducted in the sanctuary.

To help smaller, struggling congregations, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) Southern District developed a Small Church Initiative program. POP congregation was chosen as a pilot congregation to see if a televised worship service via the Internet could be accepted and utilized for the continued viability and sustainability of the congregation's continued existence. Congregational leaders along with the interim pastor were consulted to see if the congregation

was open to participating. This opportunity was presented and explained at a congregational meeting and the vote was unanimous to participate in the Small Church Initiative program.

In 2017, the interim pastor enrolled in the online Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty University. As he was taking a course on research in 2018, it became evident that POP congregation would need a time of spiritual and emotional preparation to successfully transition to a televised worship service/message. This opportunity for POP congregation to be a pilot congregation became the setting for the research project. Both the retired pastor and members of the Southern District Board for Missions suggested a slow, deliberate process of introducing the televised worship services.

These suggestions were developed into an overall plan of six weeks of intensive emotional and spiritual preparation with home Bible studies each week on the particular topic being covered in the messages. In addition, a four-week plan to introduce members to the televised worship services/message was developed. During this four-week plan, two messages being delivered by Lutheran pastors would be provided for the congregation to view and comment upon each of the four weeks, so that congregational members would have eight options of messages from which to choose. A decision would be made of a first choice and a second choice based upon the audio quality of the video, the content of the message, and the pastor's preaching style. There would be a trial period of two weeks using the chosen website with concerns, questions, and comments encouraged. After the two-week trial, the Post-Transition Inventory would be given to all members.

A Pre-Transition Inventory and a Post-Transition Inventory survey were used to gather research on the attitudes and perceptions of members. In the construction of the inventories, feedback was sought from four qualified counselors practicing in the Chattanooga area. The four counselors were determined by the researcher's past positive experiences with these particular counselors. In addition, four pastor/theologians, three from pastors serving local congregations in the Chattanooga area and one from Charlotte NC were asked to review the construct of the inventories and make comments. These pastor/theologians were chosen because of previous experience in recognizing their pastoral experience and their commitment to the Bible as God's Word. Since the number of participants is limited, no pilot study was utilized. The surveys and Bible studies with discussion questions are attached in the Appendix. Results of pre- and post-inventories were tabulated.

For each week there were specific verses discussed, followed by discussion questions to the group. The group conferred and discussed the questions. The interim pastor led these discussions. This data was recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed by the researcher immediately on a Sunday afternoon to preserve the accuracy of what was shared. These transcriptions along with all other comments and research data is being stored in the interim pastor's home office in Chattanooga in a locked file accessible only to him. The data was only used by the interim pastor and not seen nor shared with anyone else.

Purpose of Bible Studies

To make a positive transition to the televised worship services at POP congregation, a solid Biblical and emotional foundation was necessary. The transition was a major change for

the members of POP. Being aware of potential feelings that could be encountered during the transition process, POP members were better prepared to understand their own feelings. In addition to being better prepared emotionally, the members were able to reach out to help fellow members who had particular concerns. The spiritual content was to provide direction in handling the emotional factors. By providing spiritual direction, the members grew in their faith perspective. Feedback and questions were always welcome in creating a climate of openness, transparency, and hope. Sharing of concerns, prayer, and openness to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit was constantly encouraged and shared.

Members were encouraged to utilize the take-home Bible studies to further be aware and sensitive to their own feelings as well as to grow spiritually in their faith commitment. The promises of how the Spirit works through God's Word to guide and strengthen were emphasized. Isaiah 55:10-11 brings God's Promise that His Word will most certainly will accomplish its purpose: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." And again Jesus promises in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit will be our Teacher: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." Previous week's topics were always open for discussion, especially if a member had gained additional insights in their faith journey that could strengthen fellow members.

Ethical Issues Related to the Research

After careful thought in examining what might be considered as ethical issues, this researcher concluded that there are no ethical issues involved in this research project.

Types of Data Collected

Two types of data were collected:

1. Written data from the completed Pre-Transition Inventories and Post-Transition Inventories. The responses were compared to see if there were changes from the beginning of the transition process until its completion.

2. Oral data from the discussion groups held each Sunday after the worship service during the fellowship time.

The researcher led the discussion groups after each worship service during the Fellowship Time. The congregational secretary was responsible for recording the various comments and concerns on a digital audio player. The interim pastor ensured that there are sufficient new tapes for each recording. The recordings were given to the interim pastor for transcribing and protecting them in a locked file.

Recording Process of Data Collection

A digital audio recorder was purchased and used to audio record all discussion times. The audio tape was transcribed by the researcher on Sunday afternoon. These notes along with any other data from this research project were kept secure in the researcher's office in a locked file only available to the researcher himself.

Researcher's Relationship to the Participants

The relationship of the researcher to those participating in the research project is that of pastor to congregational members. The interim pastor has served at POP congregation two years and a strong bond of trust has developed between the interim pastor and congregational members. When the interim pastor's wife died in September 2018, every congregational member attended the funeral in Chattanooga. During her six-year battle with metastatic bone cancer, congregational members provided much emotional, spiritual and prayer support for both the retired pastor and his wife. Especially, after the funeral members continued to provide strong emotional and spiritual support for the retired pastor in his grieving process. Every Sunday, prior to departing, both pastor and members affirmed their love and concern for each other in sharing the Peace of the Lord and a shared love for each other. As the relationship has developed between pastor and members, the retired pastor has felt a deep concern for the viability and sustainability of the congregation's continued existence.

Regarding the biases of the researcher, due to the strong bond that has developed between pastor and members, there was a strong desire to see the congregation make a successful transition to the televised worship services. The researcher sought to be as objective as possible in his communication with congregational members. Research suggests that those over the age of thirty have difficulty embracing new technology.[129] Four of the eighteen members of POP congregation are under the age of thirty (four percent) leaving ninety-six percent of the congregation as being over thirty. An assumption was the critical need to move slowly and deliberately in preparing the congregational members for the transition. Positive, healthy communication was critical including being open to all concerns and encouraging those concerns

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[129] Mullins, dissertation, 35.

to be openly shared and discussed. The researcher was not aware of any other biases or assumptions that may affect the research.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The specific sequence for the data collection was to explain the research project clearly to congregational members, seeking their input and concerns after the worship service during the Fellowship Time. Because the interim pastor provides a Sunday morning only worship service/message, the time after the worship service was utilized for questions, concerns, and filling out inventories. Congregational members were comfortable in taking an additional thirty to forty-five minutes after the worship service. There is no rush for members to leave the building since this is a special time of fellowship and visiting with members to catch up on events and concerns from the past week. The approach was slow and deliberate. If there were concerns from a number of members, permission was sought to continue the discussions for another fifteen to twenty minutes during the Fellowship Time.

A Detailed Schedule for the Research Process

Following are the specific steps that were followed for the research project:

Step One- Approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University was secured for the research to be undertaken. The IRB Approval Letter dated

August 22, 2019 is in Appendix C.

Step Two- Once approval was received, the research process was explained to members of POP congregation on a Sunday morning after worship. The importance of receiving the signed consent forms to participate in the research was emphasized. Questions were encouraged. It was shared that everyone has the option to opt out of the research process. Signed consent forms from guardians for the two youth under eighteen years of age were secured. The names of those who are absent were recorded so at the earliest possible time, they were informed and provided a signed consent form.

Step Three- Once all consent forms were received from the previous weeks, members were asked to take the Pre-Transition Inventory after the worship service. All discussions were audio recorded and reviewed by the interim pastor. These recordings and notes were kept by the interim pastor in his office in a secured password computer and/or a locked file. Members were informed of the audio recordings and that all data will be destroyed after three years. A prayer in asking the Spirit to guide and empower members for this special journey of preparation for the transition process was offered. Questions and the sharing of concerns from members was encouraged. The congregational secretary recorded any comments, questions, or concerns. After all questions and concerns were shared and answered, the Pre-Transition Inventory was passed out along with pencils. Ample time for the inventories to be finished was provided for

congregational members in completing the inventory. When everyone had finished, they were collected. The names of those who were absent were recorded so those persons were given the opportunity to participate and take the inventory if they so desire. All fifteen members took the Pre-Transition Inventory (PrTI).

Step Four- The topic of each of the coming Sunday's theme was shared with the congregation as follows:

1st week- Bible study on change. The following Bible verses were discussed:

Genesis 35:2-5 "Get rid of the foreign gods and purify yourselves"- this represents a complete turnaround, a <u>change</u> of mind and heart. The major problem throughout the Old Testament is that the Israelites often caved into the surrounding cultures and embraced their idols. They often tried an approach in worshipping both idols and the true God.

Exodus 20:2-3/ Matthew 6:24 The First Commandment is first for a reason- no other gods before Me period! Either you trust one or the other, but not both.

2nd week- message on anxiety

Anxiety is defined as a feeling of worry, nervousness, apprehension, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. Anxiety is often seen as a vague, undefined uncertainty about the future Worry and anxiety basically project one into the future under the thinking that

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everything must be controlled being responsible to be in total

and complete control always. Bible verses that were shared include:

Psalm 94:19-19; Ecclesiastes 11:10-12:1; Ezekiel 4:16-17; Philippians 2:28;

1 Peter 5:6-7; Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 21:14-15.

3rd week- message on anger

Anger almost always is a secondary emotion- something one feels after an initial

feeling. Anger usually results from fear, hurt, embarrassment, threat, a sense of

loss or feeling an attack on one's ego. Bible passages that were shared include:

Exodus 2:11-13; Exodus 11:4-8; Exodus 32:19-20; 1 Samuel 20:30; 1 Samuel

Psalm 30:5; Psalm 77:9; Psalm 85:5-7; Proverbs 15:1; Psalm 4:4; Ephesians 4:26-

28; James 1:19-21; Matthew 5:21-24.

4th week- message on grief

Grief is experienced whenever there is a loss. Bible verses that were discussed

on grief include:

Matthew 17:22-23; John 11:33-36; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

5th week- message on acceptance/peace

The biblical concept of peace is not that of the lack of conflict but rather a

wholeness of body, mind, soul and a deeply rooted joy based upon being at peace with

the Father through the reconciling work of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Bible

verses that were explored under this topic include:

Psalm 16:22-24; John 16:22-24; Luke 7:50; John 14:27; John 20:19-21; Romans 5:1;

Galatians 1:3; Colossians 3:15.

6th week- message on hope

As Christians, our faith is based upon hope- hope that trusts God's Word and

His Promises. Being a positive, hopeful person decreases one's stress level and

helps others who might be struggling. Hope always has a backward component, a present

component, and a future component- where we have come from (what we have gone

through to get us here); where we are presently; and where we hope to be in the future

(what do we hope will happen to get us where we want to go). Bible verses that were

shared on hope include:

Job 17:1, 15-16; Psalm 25:3-5; Psalm 42:5-6; Psalm 119:81;

Isaiah 40:31-41:1; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 12:12-16; Romans 15:13;

1 Corinthians 15:19; 2 Corinthians 3:12-13; Hebrews 6:19; Hebrews 10:22-25;

1 Peter 3:15-17.

Step Five- Each message was shared during the worship service for six weeks. During

Fellowship Time after worship, a written Bible study on each week's theme was

distributed. Discussion and sharing of concerns during Fellowship Time was encouraged.

Informal interview questions were used at the end of the worship service in the

fellowship time. These questions were addressed to the entire congregation with members

having the freedom to not participate. The questions focused on feedback from

the home Bible studies and questions and concerns about the transition process. These

questions included:

- What one thing stood out for you in the home Bible studies?

- Did you have any new "head" (new learning) or "heart" (emotional/spiritual growth)

  experiences?

- How do you feel about the transition process?

- Do you have any questions or concerns?

The comments and concerns were recorded and transcribed on Sunday afternoon by the

researcher.

Step Six- At the conclusion of the six-week process of sharing messages and seeking

feedback each Sunday during the Fellowship Time, the congregational members were advised of

a four-week trial period with the televised worship services. The Internet connection was

available, and the computer functioned properly so that the televised worship service of a

particular Lutheran congregation was found and projected to the television. Two people were

trained on how to operate the equipment to ensure a seamless presentation of the televised

worship service/message.

The interim pastor previewed twenty-five websites of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

congregations that record and broadcast their worships services/messages over youtube.com.

Evaluation was made upon biblical content, audio and video quality of the recording, and the

pastor's preaching style whether formal or informal, with the informal style being preferred. The

interim pastor selected eight different congregations/pastors for presentation.

On each of the four weeks during the trial period, two of the pastor's sermons were

presented during the Fellowship Time. Comments were sought from the members based upon

biblical content, quality of the audio/video presentation and the pastor's style. A digital audio recording was made each week during the trial period of the comments made by members. Anyone absent was given the opportunity to preview the two pastors after the Worship Service during the Fellowship Time. Each week, members were asked to rank the pastors as to their preferences of number one and number two.

The eight websites that were selected for presentation are as follows:

- St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hillsdale, MI; The Rev. Dan Johnson, pastor

- Peace Lutheran Church, Hurst, TX; The Rev. James Mueller, pastor

- Zion Lutheran Church, Bensenville, IL; The Rev. Michael Herff, pastor

- St. John Lutheran Church, Hubbard, IA; The Rev. Matthew Rueger, pastor

- Our Savior Lutheran Church, Norfolk, NE; The Rev. Kenneth Weander, pastor

- Redeemer Lutheran Church, Jackson, WY; The Rev. David Bott, pastor

- St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Battle Creek, MI: The Rev. Larry Gorlitz, pastor

- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN; The Rev. Chris Sheets, pastor (This is a Saturday 6 PM service with the Rev. Ed Rosser leading the service and sharing the message.)

Step Seven- On the fifth week, each of the number one ranked selections from the previous four weeks were played again during the Fellowship Time. Members were asked to rank these selections from one to four. Member's comments were recorded and anyone absent given a chance to preview the four selections and offer their comments and preference. Informal

consensus was sought to select the number one presentation preferred to be used by members in the coming two weeks. In completing the selection process members chose Our Savior Lutheran Church, Norfolk NE. Contact was made with the pastor to share with him and his congregation that POP congregation is transitioning to an Internet televised worship service/message utilizing Our Savior's services and messages. A closer bond between these two congregations has developed and members of both congregations have been praying for each other's congregational ministry.

Step Eight- For the next two weeks, the entire service/message was played from the chosen website. The interim pastor was present to ensure that the process works well in viewing the services/messages. Upon the conclusion of the two-week period of actually experiencing the televised worship service/message in its entirety, members were asked to take the Post-Transition Inventory (PoTI). Any absent members were noted so that they were given an opportunity to complete the Inventory at a later date.

Step Nine- Data from the Pre-Transition Inventories and the Post-Transition Inventories was tabulated and compared.

Step Ten- A report was presented to congregational members and also sent to the LC—MS Southern District Small Churches Initiative.

A Pre-Transition Inventory and a Post-Transition Inventory survey were used to gather research on the attitudes and perceptions of members. In the construction of the inventories, feedback was sought from four qualified counselors practicing in the Chattanooga area. The four

were determined by the researcher's past positive experiences with these particular counselors. In addition, four pastor/theologians, three from pastors serving local congregations in the Chattanooga area and one from Charlotte NC were asked to review the construct of the inventories and make comments. These pastor/theologians were chosen because of previous experience in recognizing their pastoral experience and their commitment to the Bible as God's Word. Since the number of participants is limited, no pilot study was utilized. The surveys and Bible studies are attached in the Appendix. Results of pre- and post-inventories were tabulated.

For each week there were specific verses discussed, followed by at least five questions to the group. The group conferred and discussed the questions. The interim pastor led these discussions. This data was recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed by the researcher immediately on a Sunday afternoon to preserve the accuracy of what was shared. These transcriptions along with all other comments and research data is being stored in the researcher's home office in Chattanooga in a locked file accessible only to him. The data was only used by the interim pastor and not seen nor shared with anyone else.

After the conclusion of the six-week preparation process, the congregation was introduced to the large screen television. The following Sunday, there was a four-week trial period of various websites where Lutheran pastors were preaching a televised message. The interim pastor had previously previewed various Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod websites from step six to determine biblical content, quality of the audio and video presentations, and the pastor's preaching style. A consensus was sought on which website was to be utilized based upon the biblical content of the message, the overall style of the pastor, and the video and audio quality of the website. Once consensus had been achieved in the decision regarding which

website to use, the congregation was advised that the following Sunday will be the first Sunday where the televised worship service/message will use. The interim pastor was present to help with any problem areas with the technology or the overall experience. Two members were trained in how to connect with the Internet, set up the large screen television and use the computer.

After two Sundays of experiencing the televised worship services/message in its entirety, it will be observed if any members have been absent for more any of the Sundays. The congregational secretary noted the absences. The Post-Transition Inventory was then given to congregational members during the Fellowship Time. Those who were absent were noted so that they had the opportunity to complete the Post-Transition Inventory the following Sunday, or whenever they were present for worship.

The answers of the Pre-Transition Inventory were compared with the answers of the Post-Transition Inventory. Significant differences were recorded. Oral feedback recorded on a digital audio recorder from the beginning of the process to the conclusion of the process was analyzed. Discussion followed in how well the transition to the televised worship services/message had been accomplished. Discussion centered on what was liked, and what was disliked, and what changes could be made to improve the experience. In addition, discussions were shared about how Holy Communion is to be celebrated with the televised worship service. At present, there are several options that may be available:

1. Celebrate Holy Communion once a month when the retired pastor visits and conducts the worship service and brings the message;

2. Follow the pastor on the televised service and when he consecrates the elements, have

a POP elder also speak the words of consecration and then continue with distribution of

the elements as it is normally done at POP.Other options that may surface will also be

considered. (Holy Communion has been celebrated each Sunday that the retired pastor is present,

and the congregation has become accustomed to receiving the Sacrament each Sunday.)

A written report was shared with the LC—MS Southern District Mission Board regarding

the pilot study of the Small Church Initiative and how POP members made the transition from a

live person-led worship service/message to a televised service. The report included an offer for

the retired pastor and/or leadership team of POP to be available to other small, declining LC—

MS congregations as resource people in considering the televised worship services as an option

for their continued viability and sustainability.

Through slow, deliberate and thorough discussion, communication, and messages/take-

home Bible studies, POP congregation was able to make a positive transition to the use of

Internet technology and utilize televised worship services/messages to provide hope for the

continued viability and sustainability of their existence as a congregation of God's servants

called to make more and better disciples for Jesus.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

A Pre-Transition Inventory (PrTI) consisting of fifteen questions was given to fifteen members of Prince of Peace congregation (POP) on September 9, 2019 after the regular worship service. There are eighteen members of POP, one of which is inactive and two of whom are college students. The inactive member was invited to participate but declined. Due to the irregular attendance of the college students their input while welcome was not included in this study. The research project received unanimous approval of all fifteen members at a congregational meeting on March 3, 2019. The interim pastor received approval from Liberty University Institutional Review Board on August 22, 2019.

An intensive effort was made in preparing the congregation to transition from person-led worship services/messages to an Internet based worship service/message. This consisted of six weeks of sermons, take-home Bible studies, and open discussions after worship services during the Fellowship Time. The six messages focused on both biblical/spiritual foundations connected with an emotional component in how we process both our thinking and our feeling on the selected topic for the week. The topics for the six weeks were as follows:

1. Change- how people process change, especially technological change;

2. Anxiety- how anxiety is processed, especially concerns about the transition;

3. Anger- recognizing anger, seeing what is underneath as well as causing the anger;

4. Grief- a strong feeling experienced over loss, especially the loss of a person-led worship service/message;

5. Peace/Acceptance- the biblical concept of peace and moving to acceptance/embracing the transition;

6. Hope- our hope quotient, which is the degree of trust in God's Promises and being able to communicate a hopeful, positive attitude to others.

The approach was deliberate with questions and concerns being encouraged during each week of this journey. During weeks seven through ten the congregation viewed two websites each Sunday after the regular worship. The basis of evaluation for the websites was audio and video quality of the message, Biblical content, and style of the pastor, with a more informal style being preferred. Many of the websites had very poor audio quality making it difficult for those especially with hearing problems to adequately hear the message. One website was chosen each week during the four weeks. This, then, provided four choices for the congregation to decide upon one website for week eleven. A consensus was reached on the preferred website. For the next two Sundays, the entire service/message was provided for the congregation on a large screen 65-inch television. The interim pastor was present for both Sundays to ensure that there were no technological problems with the computer nor the website. Questions and concerns were encouraged. On the twelfth Sunday, the Post-Transition Inventory (PoTI) was given to the fifteen congregational members. The PoTI also consisted of fifteen questions.

Pre-Transition Inventory (PrTI)

Question One of the PrTI asked about the familiarity of the respondent with transition project. Six respondents said they were very familiar with the project. Seven said that they were somewhat familiar while two said that they were not familiar with the project. Question Two focused on how respondents feel about the transition project. Seven respondents said that they

were willing to embrace the transition. Six respondents said they had mixed feelings while two said that they were not happy about the transition.

Questions Three through Ten asked respondents to share their feelings regarding the six topics presented in the sermon series. Question Three asked how the respondents handle change. Nine responded that they handle change fairly well. Five shared that they may not like change but can handle it while two shared that they do not handle change well. During the discussion time on change, one member mentioned that there is an age factor associated with handling change- the older one becomes the more difficult it is to process the change. Another member mentioned that rapid change, especially technological change is an accepted part of our culture. Another member commented that there is societal change and personal change. It was also mentioned that as committed Christian disciples of Jesus our doctrine which the Bible teaches cannot be changed. What God's Word teaches does not change (theology) but the application of that theology needs to be relevant and applied to today's problems. Question Four focused on frustration at what can be changed and what cannot. When frustration is not expressed in healthy ways it can lead to becoming negative, continuing to remain frustrated, getting mad and yelling and withdrawing.

Question Five asked what problems or challenges might be encountered in the transition to the use of an Internet website for a televised worship service/message. Comments included that the transition would require an adjustment on everyone's part; that the personal contact would be missed; that breaking a tradition (person-led worship services/messages) and utilizing the televised services/message would establish a new tradition; and a loss of members if there is only the televised service/message. A concern was expressed about having trained people to operate the television and the computer. The two youths in the congregation (aged 16 and 14)

have been trained to operate the television and computer and feel comfortable in handling this assignment.

Question Six focused on anxieties about the transition. Comments centered around two concerns- the loss of members if there is only the televised service/message and the lack of personal connection. There was discussion about establishing a more personal connection with the congregation and pastor whose website was chosen to use when the interim pastor is not available. There also was discussion about members leading the worship service and utilizing the website for the message only. The interim pastor will contact the pastor at the website and discuss ways that a more personal connection can develop between the two congregations. The interim pastor is also open to training members to lead the liturgy during his absence so that there is a mixture of person-led worship service while utilizing the televised message.

Question Seven's focus was upon handling anger. Seven respondents said they handle their anger in healthy ways while six respondents said they handle their anger fairly well. Two respondents admitted having a short fuse and being ready to explode. There was a lively discussion after the worship service regarding the importance of recognizing our anger and recognizing that our anger is usually caused by other feelings or experiences such as fear, guilt, hurt, embarrassment and a perceived threat to one's ego/identity. Several members shared that they found themselves unloading their anger on their families and there was good discussion about displaced anger. A new learning for some and reinforcement for others was the importance of recognizing that we are angry, that anger belongs to the individual (no one else can cause a person to be angry) and from where is the anger coming (what is causing the anger).

Grief was the concern for Question Eight. When asked what losses the respondents might experience during and after the transition to the Internet-based television

services/messages, seven responded that they would miss the personal contact with the interim pastor. One respondent asked, "Can we have the same level of spirituality and personal connection to God through TV?" One respondent expressed a concern that members would become so familiar with the television service/messages that the interim pastor may not feel needed or appreciated. In the discussion during the Fellowship Time, similar concerns about missing the personal interaction with the interim pastor were expressed. Several members asked if the interim pastor would continue to serve the congregation at least once a month. Several others asked if the interim pastor could come to POP twice a month. Financial issues were raised if the congregation could support the interim pastor, even on an every-other Sunday basis. The treasurer stated that as long as POP did not lose any members, the congregation was financially sound and could meet all commitments, including providing an honorarium and mileage cost for the interim pastor. The treasurer also mentioned that one member had generously paid off the remainder of the congregation's mortgage so that the congregation is now debt free.

Question Nine was an open-ended question about what helped move each member to a greater degree of acceptance and being at peace with the transition decision. Comments included trying to build a more personal relationship with the pastor and congregation of the website to be used; to be as calm as possible; continued honest communication between everyone involved in the transition process; seeking feedback from other congregations who have tried something similar; and continued prayer. During the discussion time after the worship service, three members shared that they were excited about listening to the different pastors during the selection process in deciding which website to use. Two other members affirmed that the approach was on the right track and that the messages and Bible studies were extremely helpful for their spiritual and emotional well-being.

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The focus for Question Ten was on one's hope quotient, which was defined as the strength of one's hope in God's Promises. Ten responded in stating that they were very hopeful while six responded that they were moving in a positive direction. During the discussion time, it was shared how important it is for members to be positive and communicate their hope to others. Several members shared examples of how they had been helped by someone sharing their positive, hopeful attitudes. Openness to the working of the Holy Spirit also was stressed since the Spirit creates and nourishes our faith relationship and gives us hope.

Expectations for POP's continued existence was the focus of Question Eleven. Thirteen respondents shared that they were very hopeful for POP's continued existence while two shared that they were somewhat hopeful. During the discussion time, two members raised a concern about the possibility of one or more families having to leave POP because of a transfer out of state to another position while others expressed their agreement. Another member mentioned that the congregation is debt free and should be able to continue for a number of years using an interim pastor and the televised worship services/messages.

Two responded to Question Twelve that asked if POP congregation could be a pioneer in using innovative techniques for continued sustainability and viability. The responses included having a team willing to visit other congregations and share POP's experience. This presentation would include initial reactions to considering the option for trying an internet televised worship service, the deliberate and intensive steps that helped make the transition much easier along with suggestions that were adopted during the transition process. Question Thirteen focused on how respondents felt about helping other small congregations. Thirteen shared that they felt very positive about this and two shared that they were somewhat positive about sharing POP's experiences.

Question Fourteen asked how the preparations for the transition could be improved. Four responded with answers such as keeping an open mind, continued communication, and positive support while one said, "don't do it." Question Fifteen asked if there were any other issues that need to be addressed. There were two responses to this question-one respondent asked about the celebration of Holy Communion without a pastor present while another shared a desire to learn some different worship settings such as Matins (an order for morning prayer) and also the singing of newer hymns.

Post-Transition Inventory (PoTI)

The Post-Transition Inventory (PoTI) was given after the worship service on November 10, 2019. Thirteen members completed the inventory while two members completed the inventory the following Sunday. The PoTI was comprised of thirteen questions. Question One asked how the members felt the transition to the televised services/messages had gone. Twelve respondents shared that the transition had gone very well. Three respondents shared that the transition was acceptable. There were no negative responses.

Question Two focused on rating the overall preparation process. Thirteen shared that the preparation process went very well while two shared that it was acceptable. Once again, there were no negative responses. The helpfulness of the sermons was the focus of Question Three. There were ten responses, all of which stated that the sermons were extremely helpful and provided new learning for several areas in one's emotional and/or spiritual growth.

Question Four asked about the helpfulness of the Bible studies and discussions after the worship service. Nine respondents shared that the discussions were very helpful, especially in clarifying some areas of concern from the messages delivered during the worship services.

Again, there were no negative comments that were shared. Question Five focused on the helpfulness of the take home Bible studies. Three respondents shared that the take home Bible studies stimulated good discussion within their families. Four respondents shared that the Bible studies were helpful in reinforcing the points shared in the weekly messages and provided spiritual and/or emotional growth.

Question Six asked the respondents how they see God at work in POP congregation. Six responded by sharing that they have grown in their faith relationship with God. Four others shared that they appreciate the personal approach of the interim pastor in sharing meaningful messages, conveying his commitment to the congregation, in seeing his dedication to the Lord, and his love for congregational members while encouraging the sharing of personal joys and concerns. One respondent shared how much he appreciated an openness in being able to share both positive and negative concerns throughout the transition process.

The continuation of POP's ministry through the use of the televised worship service/messages was the focus of Question Seven. Twelve responded in stating that the use of the televised worship services/messages will certainly provide a good foundation for POP's continued sustainability and viability. One respondent shared that the televised worship services/messages is an innovative option that could become a new tradition in how to do church.

Question Eight asked about present frustrations with the continued use of the televised service/message. Eight responded in sharing concerns about the loss of personal contact with a pastor. Three shared that they did not have any frustrations at present. Question Nine asked about how the televised worship services/messages are perceived. Eight respondents shared that

they are warming up to the use of the televised worship services/messages while seven shared that they are at peace and accepting of the use of this technology.

The focus of Question Ten was on how POP's experience with the use of this technology could help other congregations facing similar concerns about their continued sustainability and viability. Four responded in sharing they felt POP's experience could be a model for other small, declining congregations. Question Eleven asked what could have been done differently to make the transition easier. Eight responded in sharing that that they would not change anything and that a slow, deliberate process with the sharing of concerns along the way was most effective. There were no negative responses shared.

Question Twelve asked what could be done to build a bond between POP members and members of the congregation televising their worship services/messages. One respondent shared that it would be good to share with the pastor and the congregation that we are utilizing their worship services/messages. Another responded that it would be encouraging to have the pastor mention POP and pray for POP's ministry. Question Thirteen asked if there were any other concerns or comments. One member responded by sharing, "A job well done." There were no other responses to this question.

<center>**Summation of Results**</center>

The intervention plan did yield the expected results of providing direction, support, and acceptance of utilizing internet technologies for a televised worship service/message. POP members were pleased with the choice of the website of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Norfolk, NE. This congregation is the home congregation of one of the members, who suggested that her congregation be added to the list of choices. The audio and video quality of the website is excellent with members able to hear the worship service and message very well without an echo

<center>97</center>

in the background or loud noises of a potential bad connection. POP members have developed a strong approval for the pastor and his messages. Feedback was encouraged throughout the process and while several members shared concerns about the loss of personal contact with a pastor, yet members have embraced the internet technology. Attendance has not declined during the use of the televised worship services/messages.

A sense of optimism and hope for the continued sustainability and viability of POP congregation is evident in how the members continue to share their joys and concerns. As members listened to the entire worship service, a suggestion was made regarding members leading the worship service to provide a more personal emphasis while utilizing the internet technology of the televised service for the pastor's message. The congregation now sings their own hymns as they follow the worship service in The Lutheran Service Book and then they listen to the message on the television. The interim pastor trained four members in how to lead the worship service and this suggestion has worked well for the congregation. The question of having Holy Communion without a pastor present has not been resolved. Suggestions and opinions of what is proper and acceptable will be sought from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod leaders. A slow, deliberate process with much prayer and openness along the way has provided a successful transition to the use of the televised messages/worship services for the members of POP congregation.

Chapter 5- Conclusions

Introduction

Prince of Peace (POP) Lutheran Church is in Ft. Payne, Al. and affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS). POP congregation has a membership of seventeen people with average Sunday morning worship between twelve and fourteen people. Congregational membership has remained steady during the past two years with one family of two members moving due to job relocation and one new member being received. This amounted to a net loss of one member. Only four of the members of POP are under thirty. Thus, POP congregation could be described as a small, declining congregation with aging membership. The purpose of this research paper was to determine if a small, declining congregation could make a transition to the use of televised worship services through internet technology. If the congregation could make a positive transition to the use of the televised worship services, it would provide a sense of hope for the continued sustainability and viability of the congregation.

This research concluded that it is indeed possible for a small, declining congregation to make a positive transition to a televised worship service. Through a slow, deliberate process of prayer; open communication, six weeks of pertinent messages, take home Bible studies and lively discussions during the Fellowship Time after the worship services, the transition was completed. The congregation has accepted the use of the televised services/messages and there has been no decrease in attendance nor giving. In addition, to answer the concerns about the televised services being impersonal, congregational members asked if several members could be trained to conduct the worship service with POP selecting and singing their own hymns and

following the order of divine worship from the Lutheran Service Book. The pastor agreed and trained four members in leading the worship service. During the pastor's absence, congregational members lead the worship service and then they utilize the televised message at the time of the sermon. Also, there is a growing relationship with Our Savior Lutheran Church in Norfolk, NE. This congregation's website was chosen as the website to be used for the Sunday messages.

Many small, declining congregations are in denial about their impending death. They are in a survival mode of existence. [130]   In addition, many people over thirty years of age have trouble utilizing internet technologies [131] The familiar saying for older people is that if you need help with your smart phone, ask your grandchildren. Many senior centers are now offering guidance for those over fifty having problems with understanding and utilizing various websites and applications.

A major challenge facing POP congregation in making a successful transition was the large number of members over thirty years of age (80%) with only four members under the age of fifty. Mullins found in his research that people's opinions about the online church were not based on their actual experiences but from their current use of the Internet and social media. Those surveyed over the age of fifty discounted the ability of the online church to meet all the requirements of biblical church. They contended that authentic relationship building could not happen in a virtual environment. When pressed on this issue, most in this category were not connected to any environment of social media. Those over fifty that supported the online church experience were generally more technically connected through the Internet, had Facebook

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[130] Raines, ix.

[131] Mullins, Dissertation, 139.

accounts, and had used online video and chat programs such as Skype. Additionally, those under

thirty were almost always open to new possibilities and experiences. However, many of those

with traditional church backgrounds questioned if all the functions of the church could be

experienced online. The largest group supporting the validity of the online church were those

under thirty from non-traditional church (or no church) backgrounds. These were the most

experienced with online community and the least connected to the traditional church

experience.[132] Through the intensive preparation process, all members of POP congregation have

been able to embrace the use of the televised service. There is a sense of hope and thanksgiving

evident within the congregation that a new option that will enable them to continue their mission

and ministry for the Lord has been discovered and is being used.

Comparative Studies

The results of this research project suggest that a small, declining congregation of fifteen

members can find new hope and direction for their continued sustainability and viability as a

congregation in utilizing internet technologies through a televised worship service/message. As

shared in the literature review, not a lot of research could be found on helping very small,

declining congregations. While larger congregations are utilizing internet-based televised

services to begin new ministries in satellite campuses, no research could be found about very

small congregations using televised worship services/messages. It is relatively easy for church

leaders to forget the ministry contributions made by these smaller, declining congregations in

earlier years. Thom Raines reported that between six and ten thousand churches are dying every

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[132]Mullins, Dissertation, 139.

year with one to two hundred churches closing each week.[133] Aubrey and Michael Malphurs

shared that within the present church culture of the United States, many in the declining mainline

churches are experiencing a sense of lostness due to a lack of intimacy, as well as feelings of

loneliness, isolation, and disconnectedness. Consequently, the church is hurting and is unable to

meet the needs of these people who have transferred their loyalty to other sources.[134]

Recommendations for Future Research

Perhaps if a small, declining congregation could be challenged to utilize televised

worship services/messages via the internet, they could then change their perspective about being

in denial of their impending death as a congregation and/or continuing in a survival mode of

desperately trying to hang on to the good times of the past. More research needs to be conducted

into what are the most effective ways to change the attitudes of older members within small,

declining congregations, thus helping them with their sustainability and viability issues. In

addition, it would be helpful to explore the role of a loving, caring, firmly focused resource

pastor who could work with a particular small, declining congregation in helping them explore

internet technology options. Part of this research could include the support and resources from

adjudicatory staff of that denomination. Perhaps research could be done on what grants might be

available from individuals or foundations to challenge smaller, declining congregations to

change their ministry perspective from self-focused to outward, ministry-focused in reaching and

serving the communities where they are located.

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[133] Raines, 5.

[134] Aubrey Malphurs and Michael Malphurs, 29-31.

Perhaps, an area of research could focus on how larger congregations could take several very small, declining congregations in their ministry area under their wing to provide for continued ministry for these smaller congregations by utilizing the televised services of the megachurch. A study to see what ministry models (new plants versus helping declining congregations) are being utilized by the larger, mega-churches could be helpful.

Insights Gained by the Researcher

The first insight gained from this research project is the necessity of being open and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Prayer was a major part of this effort. Prayers were frequently sought for the guidance of the Spirit during each step of the research process. Members of POP felt it was important that to listen well to each other, support each other while working at not being defensive. This researcher was pleased with how one could sense the working and guidance of the Spirit. One member might ask a question which would evolve into a better direction and/or approach. Thanksgiving was also a major part of the prayers. Members became very comfortable with sharing joys, concerns, and offering prayers of thanksgiving for God's working in their lives.

A second insight was to see the trust relationship grow deeper as the congregation moved through the various steps of this research project. There is a lot of joking and laughter, especially during the Fellowship Time after the worship service. The congregation asked if they could call this researcher as their pastor and move out of the interim pastor category. On September 15, 2019, the congregation unanimously issued a call for this researcher to serve as their pastor.

The response of congregational members to pastoral direction that was guided by a firm resolve and yet a loving, caring attitude of the interim pastor was another insight for this researcher. While there were concerns, they were always answered in a direct and loving way. The transparency of this researcher's approach was greatly appreciated. The congregational members and the pastor continue to affirm each in many ways each Sunday as the trust relationship between pastor and members continues to grow.

A final insight was the sense of accomplishment in knowing that what has been done will provide hope for the continued sustainability and viability of Prince of Peace congregation. The congregation is now using the televised worship whenever their pastor is unavailable. Members feel comfortable with the website that was chosen and hopefully a stronger bond of fellowship will develop between members and pastor of Our Savior in Norfolk, NE, and POP in Ft. Payne AL. In addition, several members have expressed a willingness to serve on a visitation team to share POP's experiences with other very small, declining congregations.

Application of the Results to Other Settings

Hopefully, other very small, declining congregations can benefit from this research project. Perhaps, larger mega-churches may benefit from this research in seeing that an older, declining congregation can find hope and new life through utilizing internet technologies such as website-based televised worship services/messages. Being open to the guidance and working of the Holy Spirit may broaden the application to other settings in ways that cannot be defined in the present.

Further Study

It could be helpful for those congregations that have a liturgical background and a desire to have Holy Communion served as frequently as possible, that some guidelines could be developed regarding the appropriate celebration of Holy Communion via the televised worship services. Each denomination will need to determine what is acceptable from their doctrinal teachings regarding the celebration of Holy Communion. Some questions to be resolved:

- Is it necessary for a pastor personally to consecrate the elements of bread and wine within the congregation's worship service?

- Could one of the congregation's duly elected Elders speak the Words of Institution along with the pastor speaking the Words of Institution on the televised service?

- What makes the Sacrament a valid Sacrament?

- Paul states that as "often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). This suggests a frequent sharing of the Lord's Supper for the strengthening of the Body and one's faith relationship in celebrating our Lord's death (and His powerful Resurrection). How do we make the Sacrament available to congregations that desire frequent Communion, yet there is no ordained pastor available?

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Bible Studies/Weekly Devotionals

Purpose of Bible Studies:

To make a positive transition to the televised worship services at Prince of Peace congregation (POP), a solid foundation will be necessary. This is a major change for the members of POP. Being aware of feelings that will be encountered, the members will be better prepared to understand their own feelings. In addition to being better prepared emotionally, the members also can reach out to help fellow members who have particular concerns. The spiritual content is to provide direction in handling the emotional factors. By providing spiritual direction, the members can grow in their faith perspective. Feedback and questions are always welcome to create a climate of openness, transparency, and hope. Sharing of concerns, prayer, and openness to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit will be encouraged.

Bible Studies and Weekly Devotionals

Week One- After the worship service during the Fellowship Time, informed consent forms and permission forms to conduct the research will be passed out, explained, completed, and returned. There will be a discussion of how of congregational members are feeling at this point in the beginning of the transition program. Questions, comments, concerns will be encouraged. A brief calendar of what is coming will be shared: Pre-Transition Inventory; six weeks with a Bible study on each topic including change, anxiety, anger, grief, acceptance, hope; a four week period of reviewing various Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregations that broadcast their worship services and message on

youtube.com; a two-week trial period of experiencing the televised worship service and

message in its entirety; and a concluding Post-Transition Inventory. Along with each

topic a take home devotional will be passed out and members will be encouraged to

do some reading, study, thinking, sharing, and praying at home.

Week Two- During the Fellowship Time the Pre-Transition Inventory will be passed out with

members completing and returning the inventory. The names of those who are absent

will be recorded so that they can take the Pre-Transition Inventory and return it as soon as

possible.

Week Three- Bible study on change. The following Bible verses will be discussed:

Genesis 35:2-5

> So, Jacob said to his household and to all who were with
> him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and
> purify yourselves and **change your clothes**. Then come,
> let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God,
> who answered me in the day of my distress and who has
> been with me wherever I have gone." So, they gave Jacob
> all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and
> Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. Then they set
> out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them
> so that no one pursued them.[135]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- "Get rid of the foreign gods and purify yourselves"- this represents a complete

   turnaround, a **change** of mind and heart, repentance. Keep in mind that the major

   problem throughout the Old Testament is that the Israelites often caved into the

   surrounding cultures and embraced their idols. They often tried a both and approach-

   idols and the true God. The First Commandment is first for a reason- no other gods

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[135]Unless otherwise noted all quotations are from New International Version of the Bible.

before Me period! Either you trust one or the other, but not both. (Matthew 6:24-Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

- How is this change, this repentance demonstrated? The change is shown in purifying yourselves and changing your clothes. What does changing one's clothes signify? There is nothing like a nice, hot shower and putting on clean clothes. Changing your clothes is an outward act of an inner transformation or change.

- What does being clean mean for you? What does a fresh start mean for you? What does a renewed faith commitment (letting go of some of our idols and trusting the one, true God) mean for you?

- Sometimes the things we hold on to most intently are really our idols. What might be some of your idols?

Numbers 23:19-20 (1Samuel 15:29)
> God is not a man, that he should lie,
> nor a son of man, that he should **change his mind.** Does he speak and then not act?
> Does he promise and not fulfill? I have
> received a command to bless; he has blessed,
> and I cannot change it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- One of the characteristics of God is that He does not change. What does this mean in the ways in which He deals with us? How he disciplines us?

- Does God always love us the same every day, all the time? God's stated purpose is that He does not desire the death of one sinner- how do you feel about that?

(Romans 6:23-For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ

Jesus our Lord.

John 3:17-For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save

the world through him.)

2 Sam 14:20-21

> Your servant Joab did this to **change the present situation**.
> My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God — he knows
> everything that happens in the land." The king said to Joab,
> "Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom."

Context- story of David and his son Absalom. Absalom decided he wanted to be king and was

urged on by his advisors.

> Absalom was born at Hebron (2 Sam 3:3), and moved
> at an early age, with the transfer of the capital, to Jerusalem,
> where he spent most of his life. He was a great favorite of
> his father and of the people as well. His charming manners,
> his personal beauty, his insinuating ways, together with his
> love of pomp and royal pretensions, captivated the hearts of
> the people from the beginning. He lived in great style, drove
> in a magnificent chariot and had fifty men run before him.
> Such magnificence produced the desired effect upon the hearts
> of the young aristocrats of the royal city (2 Sam 15:1 ff).[136]

> When Amnon, his half-brother, ravished his sister Tamar,
> and David shut his eyes to the grave crime and neglected to
> administer proper punishment, Absalom became justly enraged,
> and quietly nourished his anger. After two years, Absalom
> arranged a great feast for the king's sons at Baalhazor, to which,
> among others, Amnon came, only to meet his death at the
> hands of Absalom's servants (13:1 ff). To avoid punishment
> he now fled to the court of his maternal grandfather in Geshur,
> where he remained three years until David had relented and
> condoned the murderous act of his impetuous, plotting son. At

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[136] William Davies, "Absalom," International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database (Seattle: 2003).

the end of three years (13:38) we find Absalom once more in Jerusalem. It was, however, two years later before he was admitted to the royal presence (14:28).[137]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ever experience family division and/or separation? How did you feel? What or who

  needs to change?

Jeremiah 13:22-23
> And if you ask yourself, "Why has this happened to me?" — it is because of your many sins that your skirts have been torn off and your body mistreated. Can the Ethiopian **change his skin or the leopard its spots?** Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can we change our sinful behavior? Not in and of ourselves- we continue to keep on

  doing that which hurts God and harms our emotional/spiritual well-being. We need the

  transforming change of the Holy Spirit- not once but every day.

Matt 18:3-4
> And Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, unless you **change and become like little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What traits does Jesus see in a child that opens a person to the Kingdom of God?

- What exactly is the Kingdom of God?

---

[137] Davies.

- We all have a parent/ adult/ child part of our emotional being. The parent represents that part, which is watchful, protective, can be controlling, condemning. The adult represents that part, which is logical, makes rational decisions. The child is the part that is playful, relaxed, enjoys life, not serious but can be the condemned child feeling put down, unappreciated. What part takes charge most often for you?

Jude

> For certain men, whose condemnation was written
> about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.
> They are godless men, who **change the grace** of our
> God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ
> our only Sovereign and Lord.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Many, even with good intentions change the grace of God either into license (I have been saved and now I can do anything I want) or legalism (you must do this for God to approve of you and to be saved).

- There are two kinds of religion (and only two)- do it yourself or done for you. Do it yourself is that approach whereby somehow and someway we must please God, climb to heaven, balance the scales of sin vs good works, or a good person- it rests entirely on our own efforts. On our own, we will never make it. Done for you is grace!

- Here is an acrostic for grace:

G= God's

R= Riches

A= at

C= Christ's

E= Expense

See Romans 8:1- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

<u>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</u>

- How do you normally handle change?

- What if the learning curve is very high?

- How do you handle your frustration level?

- What do you normally do when your frustration level is high?

- Do you agree: perception is 95% reality?

- What are your perceptions of the internet TV project?

Take notes and at home use some of the questions to Read, Study, Meditate, Pray, and Share with family or friends.

<u>Week 4</u>

Review and encourage feedback from home Bible study on change. All discussions will be recorded on a digital audio recorder.

Topic of the week: anxiety

Introduction

Worry and anxiety are frequent visitors for many of us. Worry and anxiety basically project us into the future under the thinking that we must control everything and all things; that we are responsible for being in total and complete control always. Actually, I think being in total and complete control is more in God's job description than mine!

Here is the dictionary definition of worry:

1. VERB
   worries (third person present) · **worried** (past tense) · **worried** (past participle) · **worrying** (present participle)give way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles:

synonyms: fret · be concerned · be anxious · agonize · overthink · brood · panic ·
NOUN
2. a state of anxiety and uncertainty over actual or potential problems:
synonyms: anxiety · perturbation · distress · concern · uneasiness · unease ·

Here is the dictionary definition of anxiety:
1. NOUN
anxieties (plural noun)
1. a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Study the Bible verses below and share with family members and friends where you are

  regarding worry and anxiety.

- How do you normally handle your anxiety?

- How do you "de-stress?"

- Discuss: from one to ten with one being very low and 10 being very high-

     what do you think is the level of your own anxiety

        over the change to the internet TV service at POP?

- On the same rating, what do you think is the congregation's overall level of anxiety over

  the change?

  Bible verses: Psalm 94:19-19 When anxiety was great within me,

  your consolation brought joy to my soul.

  Ecclesiastes 11:10-12:1- So then, banish anxiety from your heart

  and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

  Ezekiel 4:16-17 He then said to me: "Son of man, I will cut off the supply of food in

  Jerusalem. The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in

  despair, for food and water will be scarce. They will be appalled at the sight of each other

  and will waste away because of their sin.

Phil 2:28- Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety. (Reference to fellow worker Epaphroditus)

1 Peter 5:6-7- Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Matt 6:25-34

> Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Luke 21:14-15

But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

Week 5

Review and feedback from home Bible study on anxiety. Comments will be recorded.

Topic of the week: anger

Bible verses: Who had "anger management problems?"

Moses:

Exodus 2:11-13- One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand

Exodus 11:4-8-

> So, Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt — worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, 'Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave." Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

Exodus 32:19-20- When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

King Saul:

1 Samuel 20:30- Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?

1 Samuel 20:34-Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David. Does anger beget anger?

King David :

2 Samuel 12:5-David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!

Jesus:

Cleansing of temple in Matthew 21:12-13- Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

God's anger/ judgment:

Numbers 14:18-19- The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now (Moses' plea to God).

Numbers 32:13- The LORD's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

Ps 30:5- For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime;

weeping may remain for a night but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 77:9- Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

Psalm 85:5-7- Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

The handling of anger:

Proverbs 15:1-A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Psalm 4:4- In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

Ephesians 4:26-28-In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

James 1:19-21-My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Matt 5:21-24-Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Major point- get the anger resolved. The longer we stew about it, the greater our sense of entitlement.

Psychological perspective:

Anger is a secondary emotion. We feel something first and then express it through anger. What causes anger within us? Fear, embarrassment, guilt, feeling our self being assaulted or put down (shame), hurt.

<div align="center">DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</div>

- Can you name any other feelings we might feel first and then respond with anger?

- Word picture- oil light on a car. Warning that your oil is low- what does oil do in a car? Lubricates and drains away heat. Anger is our warning light. Something is happening within and we need to pay attention.

- Can someone else make me angry?

- Be angry but do not sin- what do you think this means?

- How important is it to start resolving angry situations before the "sun goes down on your anger?"

Week 6

Review and feedback from home Bible study on anger. Comments will be audio recorded.

Topic of the week: grief

Introduction:

Grief is that emotion we feel when we experience loss. We have many losses in life- some minor and some major, major.

Bible verses:

The disciple's grief- Matthew 17:22-23-When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Jesus' grief at the death of Lazarus-John 11:33-36- When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

Grieve not the Holy Spirit- Ephesians 4:30-And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Christians do grieve yet have a transcending hope-1 Thessalonians 4:13-15-Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

<div align="center">DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</div>

- A friend once told me, "Unresolved grief will come back and bit you in the butt." Would you agree?

- Could you share sometimes of loss in your life?

- Word picture- a scratch on a 33 1/3 vinyl record- every time the needle comes to the scratch it cannot get past that- repeats over and over. What must be done? Pick up the needle and move it past the scratch- we all have many wounds and much grief in our lives. Who picks up the needle and brings healing to us?

- What is the role of Faith, family, friends for you in coping with heavy concerns?

Week 7

Review and feedback from home Bible study on grief. Comments will be recorded.

Introduction:

The concept of acceptance does not appear per say in the Bible. However, similar concepts such as peace and rest are quite prevalent. When we think of peace we usually think of the lack of conflict- a peaceful world where there is no war. However, the biblical concept of peace is very different. Word picture: mama bird builds her nest on a branch sticking out over a roaring waterfall. Do the baby birds feel stress, anxiety, or worry over their condition of being in such a precarious situation?

We hear the Aaronic Benediction at the end of the worship service:

> Numbers 6:24-26 "The LORD bless you and keep you;
> the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious
> to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and **give you peace**."

Peace here means a sense of wholeness, being rightly connected with God, knowing that you are loved, treasured, in our Father's Will and Heart.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Sometimes we obsess over things, usually negative things. We sometimes go over and over them in our heart. Sometimes we play the should of, could of, would of game. This robs us of God's peace.

  The Psalmist (Psalm 62:5-8) could proclaim:

  > Find **rest**, O my soul, in God alone; my hope
  > comes from him. He alone is my rock and my
  > salvation; he is my fortress; **I will not be shaken.**
  > My salvation and my honor depend on God;
  > he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at
  > all times, O people; **pour out your hearts to him**,
  > for God is our refuge.

- Note the connection with rest, hope, trust, and peace.

- Here are some other verses that speak about peace:

Psalm 4:8- I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD,

make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 29:11- The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

Ps 85:10- Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Isaiah 26:3-You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast,

because he trusts in you.

because he trusts in you.

Jeremiah 29:11-14-For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD.

Matt 10:12-13-Jesus said, "As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you."

John 14:26-27- Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Romans 5:1-5- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 15:13- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:2-Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:22-25- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 3:16- Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24- Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

- What does it feel like to be at peace?

- Are you at peace with the idea of TV worship service for POP congregation?

Week 8

Review and feedback from home Bible study on peace, assurance, rest. Comments will be recorded.

Introduction:

This week we focus on hope. Hope always has a backward component, a present component, and a future component- where we have come from (what we have gone through to get us here); where we are presently; and where we hope to be in the future (what do we hope will happen to get us where we want to go).

Job suffered a lot. I cannot fathom the amount of suffering and grief Job experienced- his sons and daughters carried off by enemies, other sons and daughters killed, his crops ruined and cattle killed, his physical torments, his wife who says, "curse God and die," friends who mock him and

say that God is punishing him because of some great sin he committed. In Job 17:1, 15-16, he

cries out:

> My spirit is broken, my days are cut short,
> the grave awaits me. Where then is **my hope**?
> Who can see **any hope for me**? Will it go down
> to the gates of death? Will we descend together
> into the dust?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you sense the anguish of Job's hope crumbling and slipping away? What would it be

   like to have no hope?

- Read through these Bible verses and see what the Spirit might be saying to you on the

   topic of hope:

Psalm 25:3-5- No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame,

but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse. Show me your ways, O

LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psalm 42:5-6-Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior, and my God.

Ps 119:81-My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.

Isa 40:31-41:1- But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

Romans 5:1-5- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in

which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also

rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 12:12-16

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 12:12-16-Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 15:13- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:19-If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

2 Corinthians 3:12-13-Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

Hebrews 6:19- We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Hebrews 10:22-25-Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not

give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —

and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 3:15-17-But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an

answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with

gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against

your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander

- Hope has a past, present, future orientation.

- Regarding Prince of Peace congregation, where have we come from? What were some of

  the struggles the congregation has faced? Where are we presently- what are the

  significant issues facing the congregation presently?

  Where do we want to be in the future- what are some of the hopes for the   future of the

  congregation?

- Would it be possible for POP to be a model of how smaller congregations can continue

  their mission and ministry in worship, fellowship, and outreach? What does the word

  "pioneer" mean to you? Could POP be a pioneer congregation in using internet TV for

  worship services?

Appendix B Pre-Transition and Post-Transition Inventories

PRE-TRANSITION INVENTORY

Directions: Please read each question and answer accordingly. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How familiar are you with the transition project to the internet television worship service at Prince of Peace?

1	5	10
not very familiar	somewhat familiar	very familiar

1.   At this time, how do you feel about the project?

1	5	10
not the happiest	mixed feelings willing to embrace transition	

2.   How do you normally handle change?

1	5	10
not well	may not like it but can handle it	handle it fairly well

3.   Change can produce frustration. What happens if frustration is not resolved in a positive, God-pleasing way?

4.   Do you foresee any problems or challenges that we may face as a congregation in making the transition to internet TV service? If so, please share your concerns.

5.   We all have anxieties and worries. Do you have any particular anxieties about the transition?

6.   Sometimes in our frustrations we become angry. How well do you normally handle your anger?

1	5	10

I have a short fuse ready to explode   fairly calm   process my anger well

7. Grief is sadness over something we have lost. Do you see any particular personal losses or grief in going to the TV worship service?

8. What would help you move to being at peace with the transition?

9. How could you have accepted the transition in a more positive way?

10. How you would evaluate your "hope quotient" presently?

1	5	10
not very hopeful	moving in a positive direction	very hopeful

11. What expectations do you have about continuing as a congregation?

12. Do you feel that POP is a pioneer congregation in using this new technology?

13. How do you feel about knowing that our experiences may help other northern Alabama LC-MS small congregations embrace internet TV worship services?

Thank you for your answers and participating in the research project. Pastor Herd

POST-TRANSITION INVENTORY

1. How do you feel the transition to the TV service has gone?

   1   5   10
   not so good   acceptable   very well

2. How would you rate the overall preparation?

   1   5   10
   not so good   acceptable   very good

3. How did the sermons help you in the transition process?

4. How did the brief Bible studies after worship help you?

5. How did the home Bible studies help you?

6. How do you see God at work in POP congregation?

7. Will the use of the internet TV service help POP congregation continue their mission and ministry for the Lord?

8. What are your present frustrations with the internet TV service?

9. It has been said that "perception is 95% of reality." How would you describe your perception of internet TV worship services in general?

   1   5   10
   still don't like it   warming up to it   at peace & accepting

10. Do you feel positive that our experiences in the transition process could possibly help other congregations facing similar concerns? Comments:

11. What could have been done differently to make the transition easier?

12. Do you have any ideas for building fellowship with our host congregation, Trinity in Gadsden?

13. Any other comments, questions, concerns?

Thank you for your answers and participating in the research project. Pastor Herd

Appendix C- Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Clifford L Herd,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason:

> Your study involves surveying or interviewing minors, or it involves observing the public behavior of minors, and you will participate in the activities being observed.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent forms are also attached. These forms should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent documents should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office