

Liberty University School of Divinity

**A STRATEGY TO PLANT MISSIONAL CHURCHES THAT MULTIPLY IN  
SMALL URBAN COMMUNITIES**

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

By

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Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## **Abstract**

### **A STRATEGY TO PLANT MISSIONAL CHURCH THAT MULTIPLY IN SMALL URBAN COMMUNITIES**

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This thesis will use Hopewell, VA, as a microcosm of small urban towns across America that are in need of spiritual and economic revitalization. The purpose of this thesis will be to develop a strategy for planting churches in Hopewell, VA, that is not only able to reach its community but serve as a model to reach other similar urban communities. The rationale for this topic is to shine the light on the need for revival in spiritually and economically depressed towns. Demographic and ethnographic research will be done, as well as interviews with a minimum of ten local leaders. This research will be able to help other potential church planters have a strategy that will help reach not only Hopewell, VA, but other smaller urban communities as well.

Abstract length: 126 words

## **Dedication**

To Kim, Katie, Rachel, and Alex.

For your sacrifice, love and support that has shown no limits.

For the sake of the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This paper is dedicated to you.

To my mom who got promoted to glory during this writing.

Thank you for always believing in me.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

God pierces hearts in different ways and different seasons in life. Having started in a megachurch, the author was accustomed to traveling to a larger urban area feeding the homeless, and feeling good about the work that was done. There was never a thought or light shone on the need to do more than just feed a physical meal to the homeless. The church made a trip 20 miles north to feed some people sandwiches and headed back to our comfortable homes. That journey started to take this author to see a much greater need that was overlooked.

Taking trips to larger communities such as Boston and Detroit, the need became too overwhelming to ignore anymore or be a part of only four times a year. In Detroit, the highway system is so convenient that it is easy to drive out to watch a sporting event and drive back without ever coming across the poverty that is rampant throughout the city. Spending time with churches and future planters in this area, gave this author the eye-opening need for the gospel to the least of these. Homeless shelters overflowing, streets being used as landfills even as people lived in the homes on the street, more vacant buildings than occupied are everywhere one turns.

One pastor in Detroit said there are so many physical needs here that we do not have time to get to their spiritual needs. Therein lies the overwhelming problem: we must meet the physical needs of those around us, but not at the expense of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There must be a way to do both, help the needy, and share the gospel for the glory of God. It was evident from those trips that simply being beside neglected towns and occasionally serving them would no longer be acceptable. One cannot properly serve a town unless they are invested in that town.

Four miles down the road from the church this author was serving in, was a small urban town that was being physically fed, but spiritually malnourished. There are plenty of programs in

this town that feed the homeless daily, clothe those in need, and even find temporary housing, but that is where it stopped. Even with the heart behind these programs being the gospel, the work and practices were not allowing them to know the gospel. No church plants were coming in, barely any spiritual revival was evident from the direct observation, but poverty was all around. The need for church plants willing to get out of their comfort zone and make much of Jesus while ministering to the needs of the community was placed on this writer's heart.

The monies available from the writer's denomination do not flow into these areas for church planting purposes. There are simply too few resources available. Furthermore, the larger populated areas often get the few resources available, leaving small towns neglected. There has not been a church plant in the city of Hopewell, Virginia, in at least the past ten years. The question that needs to be addressed is how can a called person to a small urban community, plant a church with little financial resources in a town with overwhelming needs, with few believers willing to get out of their comfort zone for the sake of the gospel? This writing will prayerfully answer those questions and enable others in similar towns like Hopewell to make much of Jesus by having a missional multiplying church. This writing is not only about Hopewell, but it is also about every small urban city that needs the gospel; and may this give hope and a guide to those who are called to shine the light of Christ into those cities.

### Statement of the Problem

The author is grateful for the work of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in placing a renewed emphasis on church planting. While small cities are not their focus, their heart to reach everyone for the gospel is inspiring. The author was not even aware of the need for church plants until attending a focus group of church planters in Boston with NAMB. The purpose of this thesis is to determine a strategy for planting churches in smaller urban

communities like Hopewell, VA. Furthermore, the thesis will look into how not only to plant these churches but plant those that multiply and are effective in reaching its community with the gospel.

The light of the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to shine into these dark and overlooked places. While NAMB has its primary focus on larger urban cities, the smaller urban cities are left with no focus on church planting. This is more for lack of resources than a lack of desire to reach people for Christ. Smaller urban cities, like Hopewell, VA, are often harder to reach due to the depressed nature of some of these cities. While several elements of church planting are the same as in larger urban communities, issues in smaller urban cities are often more concentrated and harder to overlook. Issues like homelessness, poverty, dropout rates, and drug abuse are not just numbers in reports, but they are physically evident as one walks through these cities. There is a strong need to plant churches in smaller urban cities to foster revitalization and grow the kingdom.

The thesis will do demographic and ethnographic research to assess the primary challenges that the residents of Hopewell face. This will enable the planter to identify the areas of Hopewell that are in most need of help. The thesis will also look at different strategies of how to grow disciples of Christ in the community. The thesis project will pair those two together to develop a plan that will have a spiritual and physical impact on the community.

As *Sensing* noted, there must also be a plan to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and change produced by the plan.<sup>1</sup> The spiritual effectiveness of the plan will be measured not only by the number of people who have come to Christ over 12 months but also those plugged into the church's discipleship. This will be compared to those coming to Christ in five established

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 10.

churches in Hopewell. The demographic assessment will be measured by the make-up of the church's membership in comparison to the demographic make-up of the community.

### Technical Terminology Defined

The focus of this thesis project is to plant a missional, multiplying church in small urban cities like Hopewell, VA. The meaning of missional and multiplying needs to be defined. Missional is described by Ed Stetzer and affirmed by the author to apply to someone with the mindset of a missionary in their city, joining in the mission of Christ, and learning to reach people while staying faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> The author will define multiplying as those who have come to Christ and are leading others to Christ and teaching them about Christ.

### Statement of Limitations

The author intends to establish an effective strategy for planting churches in smaller urban communities using Hopewell, VA, as an example. While the church plant may reach others for Christ outside the city limits of Hopewell, the study will narrow its focus to those they are able to reach within the city limits of Hopewell. Furthermore, the ethnographic research to assess the primary needs of the city will be limited to the city limits of Hopewell and not those needs that fall outside of the city.

In addition, there are limits to the number of strategies that can be researched. Five models will be analyzed due to the time constraints of the research, and they are limited to those currently being used by other churches in the city. The limits of this study will also be narrowed to 12 months to assess the success of the church planting models. Lastly, the research will

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<sup>2</sup> Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 21.

endeavor to show that those who have come to Christ will come from the areas of the three greatest needs in the city during the 12-month period.

This study is delimited by the access to community leaders and their ability to share the major needs of the city openly. Research results from these leaders may be impacted by their jobs, biases, and or limited knowledge of the scope of the cities issues. In addition, the delimitations are the openness of other churches within the city to give accurate data on their models and results over the same period.

### Theoretical Basis

J.D. Payne points out that there is no command in the Bible to plant churches.<sup>3</sup> However, there is a command in the Bible to make disciples.<sup>4</sup> When the body of Christ is obedient to the command of Christ, there should be a need to plant churches where disciples are being made. The books of Acts shows the overflow of believers being together and taking the Word and the ministry of Christ seriously. More people come to Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, there is a biblical basis for diverse churches. Acts 13 shows the diversity of the church in Antioch.<sup>6</sup> Many were from different cultures but serving the same church on mission for the same Jesus. They worshipped together and sent out others on a mission to tell others about Jesus, which would result in church plants.<sup>7</sup> The scene in Acts 13 is a microcosm of Revelation 7:9 when all nations, tribes, and people and languages come before the throne and

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<sup>3</sup> J.D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Matt 28:18-20 CSB.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 13:1.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 13:3-4.

worship Him.<sup>8</sup> May the worship in our churches today look like our worship of Him for all eternity!

There is a renewed push towards church planting that looks like the city in which it is planted. Tim Keller exhorts the church to look at ways they can engage their culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> He states four areas to focus on to help reach the culture. Those are to be evangelistic, incarnational, contextual, and reciprocal and communal with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> This has become a more intentional practice of new church plants and ones that help reach the city for Christ.

### Statement of Methodology

The project's goal is to discern an effective strategy to plant missional churches that are diverse and multiply in small urban towns. The steps taken in the development of this will be detailed with a description and explanation of the project's five chapters. With the description of the chapters, the reader will be able better follow in the researcher's footsteps that should provide usable results.

Chapter 1 serves as an overview of the problem that needs to be addressed and how it came to light. Most of the elements from the thesis proposal will be included in this chapter. In addition, a discussion and interaction with helpful works that will help in addressing the issues in the literature review. This will set the framework that will help transition into a more focused research area.

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<sup>8</sup> Rev 7:9.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Keller, *Center Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 255.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 256-257.

Chapter 2 will introduce Hopewell, VA, as the focal city of the intended research. It will show the history of Hopewell and the current economic outlook. It will also show the demographics of the city and the factors that led to it being chosen for this specific research project. It will show in detail the need for spiritual and economic revitalization in the town through current economic and church data. The academic and applied research will uncover potential strategies to not only reach people for Christ but bring change to some of the cities' most pressing needs. This research of strategy considerations will be able to be used to help other small urban church planters to reach their community for Christ.

Chapter 2 will also focus on the applied research that will be undertaken to assess the primary needs' of the community. The focal group of the study will be limited to those who either work, worship, or reside in Hopewell. This group will better be able to ascertain the greatest needs in the city. Also, those who worship or pastor in Hopewell will be given more detailed research questions to assess the spiritual needs of the community and the effectiveness of current discipleship methods.

Chapter 3 will look at the results of the applied research in the city. This will include how the needs of the community are currently being met and who is meeting them. In addition, this chapter will see how churches, if any, are using this opportunity to help people to their greatest need: the gospel. This chapter will not only look into how well this is being done but also what resources are available from the denominational level to help in smaller urban settings. The chapter will also dive into how churches are discipling their members. The methods used for evangelism and discipleship in the city will be gleaned from the survey results. Also, how successful are the discipleship methods in developing other disciples and living on mission in the

city? The discipleship methods and community needs will be investigated together to see if there is a connection between the two.

Chapter 4 will summarize the findings of the research and provide a detailed strategy that will help a new church plant in Hopewell, Virginia, become a missional, multiplying church. This summary will include the findings for the specific city of Hopewell while encouraging other readers to apply similar research in their specific smaller urban cities and adapt as necessary to reach people for the kingdom.

Chapter 5 will dive into what can be done from the research? What are focus areas for other planters encountering a similar small urban community that will be addressed? Also, areas of further study will be encouraged to help continue to develop this research beyond the scope of this thesis work.

## Review of Literature

### Books

*Center Church* by Tim Keller provides valuable insight in planting churches in the city.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Keller's work on gospel renewal is vital to help reach those who have been put off by religion by turning them to the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> Many in small urban towns have been put off by religion, and these concepts will help the team get a better understanding of the people they are trying to reach in Hopewell. This text also provides the research with thoughts on the specific groups of people that are able to be reached in the city. This ranges from the younger generation to what is considered accessible "unreached" people groups in the city.

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<sup>11</sup> Keller, *Center Church*.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 63.

Dr. Keller considers unreached people groups to be newcomers in the city.<sup>13</sup> For small urban towns, this may not only be newcomers, but the neglected in the community.

Craig Ott and Gene Wilson give some structure to the church planting process in their book: *Global Church Planting*.<sup>14</sup> This structure will help with the thesis in many areas, including the multiplication of the church plant. Ott and Wilson give biblical examples and steps to not only raise leaders but empower them as they grow in the Lord.<sup>15</sup> They also provide some church health indicators from different experts in the field.<sup>16</sup> This will allow the researcher to look at areas that need to be looked at as the church multiplies.

Ed Stetzer provides excellent insight into what it means to missional in *Planting Missional Churches*.<sup>17</sup> This work adds value to the thesis by showing that a planter is adopting a missionary mentality without leaving the city.<sup>18</sup> Being missional in Hopewell will require joining Jesus on mission in the city by learning the culture of the city, making changes as necessary while staying faithful to the gospel.<sup>19</sup>

*Church Planting Movements* by David Garrison shows how God is moving in church plants across the world.<sup>20</sup> While the areas discussed may be diverse and different, the reader can take away some key similarities in most of the movements. Some of these key ingredients are having the right vision, appropriate training, passion, co-laborers, and accountability to

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<sup>13</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 161.

<sup>14</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 268-273.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>17</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Bangalore, India: WIGtake Resources, 2004).

succeed.<sup>21</sup> This will be helpful in the thesis as the desire is to discover a model that cannot only reach Hopewell but other small urban towns as well.

Tim Sensing work, *Qualitative Research*, is an essential tool to help get any Doctor of Ministry students to get started on their thesis work. It exhorts the student to remember their audience as they work on their thesis: the Doctor of Ministry Committee.<sup>22</sup> It also encourages the student to look at the project as a whole before the endeavor is started.<sup>23</sup> This work will be invaluable in helping navigate the many unknowns that come with taking on a project as broad in scope as a Doctor of Ministry paper.

*Life on Mission* by Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe helps the average church member understand what it means to live consistently on mission for Jesus.<sup>24</sup> For a church plant that lives on mission and multiplies, the church members must know their role. This helps in the thesis by looking into having a Kingdom mindset when planting churches. This exhorts the reader to embrace God's mission, which is often at times at odds with our own personal mission.<sup>25</sup>

Ed Stetzer talks about flipping the church mindset upside down in *Subversive Kingdom*.<sup>26</sup> Planting missional churches that multiply is biblical but unconventional. It means having a Kingdom mindset and following the Lord in whatever He needs for His glory. He challenges the people of God to share and show the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> This will be used in looking at

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<sup>21</sup> Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 292.

<sup>22</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God* (Chicago: Moody, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>26</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom: Living as Agents of Gospel Transformation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 21.

the models currently being used in churches in the city and whether they line up with the kingdom focus.

*On the Verge* addresses critical questions that must be answered for any church planter. Part of the challenge is to investigate the area that one is planting a church. What are the knowns and unknowns of the area?<sup>28</sup> In the context of where one is planting, what are the needs? What does it look like to be the light of Christ in this area?<sup>29</sup> These are all questions that are vital for any church planter in any area they plant.

Jeff Christopherson has written a brilliant book entitled *Kingdom First*.<sup>30</sup> This text covers a lot of the areas that will be focused on in the thesis. Some of the key components that will be used in the thesis from this book is how it looks specifically at current models that have the potential to be evangelistically powerful.<sup>31</sup> Another component that will be useful in the thesis is a process for multiplying disciples. This section contains needed tools in building a church that multiplies.

Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger look into groups that multiply in *Transformational Groups*.<sup>32</sup> This text will help with the thesis in looking at the importance of community groups and having the right leader.<sup>33</sup> Without proper leadership in place, groups are set up to fail. This text also

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<sup>28</sup> Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 239.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Jeff Christopherson, *Kingdom First: Starting Churches that Shape Movements* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>32</sup> Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 120.

looks at the importance of groups in the multiplication process.<sup>34</sup> This will be used in how best to multiply within the church plant setting in the thesis.

*Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever gives a detailed look at nine areas that he considers essential to focus on for a church to be healthy. For purposes of this writing, a primary “mark” that will be addressed is in the area of evangelism. The task of evangelism is for every member of the body of believers, not just a segment of the church.<sup>35</sup> For a church to be missional minded, the task of evangelism must be the focus of as many members as possible. In addition, they put together a discipleship plan that encourages accountability, spiritual growth, and Kingdom growth within their group meetings.<sup>36</sup>

Discipleship and Evangelism brought together is the focus of the writing by Steve Smith and Ying Kai. In *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*, the reader is encouraged to look at what they hope to accomplish at the end of their church planting season. The thought behind this is that by having a vision of what they hope to accomplish, it will drive them to walk by faith to see things accomplished that they would have never thought of or attempted.<sup>37</sup> This will be a key component of measuring how discipleship will be done in the church plant versus other discipleship methods in area churches.

J.D. Payne gives a detailed look into church planting in *Discovering Church Planting*.<sup>38</sup> One of the key areas that this text will help within the thesis is in the area of urban church planting. The author spends a whole chapter on this topic, including the challenges that come

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<sup>34</sup> Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 156-157.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 137.

<sup>36</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 143.

<sup>37</sup> Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*. (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011), 20.

<sup>38</sup> Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*.

with planting in an urban area.<sup>39</sup> One of the key focal points of the thesis is how to plant in urban areas, so this information will be vital in developing a model that will succeed.

*Foundations of Spiritual Formations* edited by Paul Pettit drives home the point of what it means to love one's neighbor. The exhortation is never to take the act of loving one's neighbor and boil it down to a set of practices.<sup>40</sup> A person has to be genuinely interested in getting to know their neighbor and how they best can minister to their soul. This is an essential text for learning how to do missional work in any community.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King in *Experiencing God* challenges the reader to adapt to God's plan, and not try to have God adapt to one's plan. One of the simplest, yet most profound truths in this text is to look around at God's activity that is already happening and then chose to join in His work.<sup>41</sup> For a missional church, that is important because the church simply needs to come along the work God is already doing. This takes much observation and letting the Spirit guide the next steps.

*The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman is a timeless book on evangelism. The author challenges the reader to make sure that what they are doing for Christ is the most effective means of reaching people for Christ.<sup>42</sup> This is important in ascertaining the difference between mission work and missional work. The church can serve Christ in many ways, but what

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<sup>39</sup> Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 348-349.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Pettit, Editor. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 167.

<sup>41</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* Revised & expanded. (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 101.

<sup>42</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 13.

is being effective for reaching and discipling people for Christ? This question must always be asked when looking at the missional activity of the church.<sup>43</sup>

Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold have written an excellent book on casting vision for the church called *Re:Vision*.<sup>44</sup> One of the crucial areas of this text is teaching how to create a culture for change.<sup>45</sup> When coming to the Hopewell, there is a feeling of defeat and hopelessness in the city. Changing the culture of the community will be a fundamental aspect of what the plant is trying to achieve. For the church plant to be successful, the people in the community will need to be part of the culture change that will need to take place, and this text will be helpful in the teaching process.

*Becoming a Healthy Church* by Stephen A. Macchia provides ten traits that are pivotal for the health of the church.<sup>46</sup> One of the key traits that will be helpful in the thesis is learning how to grow in a community. Becoming a diverse church in a mostly segregated area will come with a learning curve. It has not been customary in the past, and it will be necessary to take the time to grow together in Christ while appreciating the differences in culture. The text gives a great reminder from the “one anothers” in Scripture on what it will take for this to be successful.<sup>47</sup>

*Multiply* by Frances Chan is a book that teaches what Christians are called to do: make disciples.<sup>48</sup> When studying other current church models of disciple making, it can become easy

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<sup>43</sup> Coleman, *Master Plan*.

<sup>44</sup> Aubrey Malphurs & Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>48</sup> Frances Chan, *Multiply* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012).

to stray from the basics. Frances Chan's text allows the reader to compare what they are doing to what the early church did. This includes emphasizing the local church.<sup>49</sup> This text will be used in the thesis to apply valuable truths from what worked in biblical days and what is possible in today's church.

*Follow Me* by David Platt is a challenging book to follow the call of Christ.<sup>50</sup> One of the key insights from this text that will be helpful in the thesis is looking into what David Platt calls "unconverted believers."<sup>51</sup> People in towns like Hopewell have mostly heard about Jesus Christ. They may have even said a prayer and been baptized, but have not truly followed Christ. This will help grow the researcher's understanding of the people that are likely to be encountered and share the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne emphasized people and not the buildings in the church.<sup>52</sup> This text will be used to help understand how to grow people up in the ministry. It details the stages of growth of a person coming to Christ through their training to be leaders in Christ.<sup>53</sup> In church planting, this is a process that should occur more often and more frequently than in an established church setting.

*The Church of Irresistible Influence* by Robert Lewis seeks to bridge the gap that has been created between the culture and church.<sup>54</sup> This is a much-needed text for the thesis project as the focus is on learning the culture and reaching it for Christ. There is a gap that is currently in place in the city of Hopewell, and looking at multiple ways to bridge the gap is necessary to find

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<sup>49</sup> Chan, *Multiply*, 289.

<sup>50</sup> David Platt, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Sydney: Matthiasmedia, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

the effective ones. This text challenges the church to rediscover its part in bridging the great divide.<sup>55</sup>

*City Shaped Churches* by Linda Bergquist & Michael Crane help bring biblical church planting into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> This work is valuable in breaking down the barriers of what is considered urban. The primary emphasis of this thesis is planting a church in a small urban town. This work shows that a small town can practically be considered urban and vital to the growth of the kingdom.

*Launch* by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas gives an overview of what it takes to launch a new church.<sup>57</sup> The resource gives much thought to what it means to enter into church planting. It helps the reader think through many of the obstacles that might come along in starting a church from scratch. It also dives into the formation of the church and implementing the plan that the planter has in place. The resource can be used in the thesis in the beginning stages of thinking through what it takes to start a church and also the tools necessary to reach people in the community one is planting.

*Revolution in World Missions* by K.P. Yohannan takes a deep dive into the world of missions. This text is vital in helping understand the importance of taking care of physical needs and spiritual needs at the same time.<sup>58</sup> In missional work, people need to see that one cares before they care about what one has to say. No one cares for the soul of the person and neglects the needs of the person. They can go together, and this text challenges the readers to do both.

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<sup>55</sup> Lewis, *Irresistible Influence*., 28.

<sup>56</sup> Linda Bergquist and Michael D. Crane, *City Shaped Churches: Planting Churches in the Global Era* (Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2018).

<sup>57</sup> Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Launch: starting a new church from scratch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017).

<sup>58</sup> K.P. Yohannan, *Revolution in World Missions* (Wills Point, TX: GFA Books, 2004), 113.

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat wrote *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, a helpful guide on how to do qualitative research.<sup>59</sup> This resource will be invaluable in learning how to help understand the culture of the city of Hopewell. They both help the reader understand ethnographic research's value in helping grasp the core beliefs that may not be seen strictly from an outsider's view. This will help put together not only apparent opportunities in the community of Hopewell but also ones that would only be known after being with those in the city.

Jonathan Brooks has written a helpful book about taking the church to places where no one else goes in *Church Forsaken*.<sup>60</sup> This is important for the research in helping see how the church can meet the needs of the community and, at the same time, pointing them to the gospel. It shares about how the tough places are where the light of Christ can often shine the brightest, and people will come to know Him and communities will be changed.

*When God Builds a Church* by Bob Russell may be a book written about a megachurch, but the book is focused on letting God build what He said He would build.<sup>61</sup> This text goes over ten principles of ministry and how the author's church, Southeast Christian church, relied on God every step of the way and the resulting impact 23 years down the line. This is important for the foundation of church planting of putting God first in everything. It is critical for the foundation of church planting to put God first in everything.

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<sup>59</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2016).

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Brooks, *Church Forsaken* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> Bob Russell, *When God Builds a Church*. (New York: Howard Books, 2000).

## Articles

“Minimizing Crosscultural Evangelism Noise” by Tom Steffen helps the reader understand the nuances of presenting the gospel in different cultures.<sup>62</sup> The community of Hopewell has many different cultures in a small area. It is essential to understand what can be confusing to different cultures and how to make it easier to understand the gospel without compromising the messages. This article gives the results of research among cultures and crucial areas to focus on to reduce the noise and distractions that keep people from hearing the gospel.

“Reclaiming Evangelism” by Philip Woods takes a look into the challenges of winning people to Christ in a changing culture.<sup>63</sup> The need to show lost people that genuinely care about their souls is as critical as it ever has been. The article shows the gaps in effective witnessing, what those gaps are, and how to bridge them to be an effective witness.<sup>64</sup> It is instructive in the multiplication section of the thesis when considering what works and does not, as well as the reasons, respectively.

Darrel Guder wrote an article entitled: *John Mackay’s Missional Vision* that went into detail about his mission work in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. He showed how being missional has changed in its dynamic from a world that was considered Christian to a now post-Christian culture.<sup>65</sup> This article will be beneficial for understanding the ways that people can be reached for Christ in a mostly unreached city. Normative ways are shown to be less effective as they once were, and new ways of reaching people must be embraced.

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<sup>62</sup> Tom Steffen, 2015, “Minimizing Crosscultural Evangelism Noise.” *Missiology: An International Review*, 43 (4): 413-28.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Woods, 2016, “Reclaiming Evangelism,” *International Review of Mission*, 105 (1): 43-51.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> Darrel L. Guder, 2014. “John Mackay’s Missional Vision,” *Theology Today*, 71 (3) 292-299.

“*Transformative Spirituality and Missional Leadership*” by Petrus Neimandt and Cornelius Johannes dives into the importance of leaders being Spirit-led in all that they do as they seek to have lives changed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>66</sup> This is an essential article for this research as it helps the reader rethink how church missions are being done. It is not only about doing missions work but being missional while missions are being done. That is an important distinction that the church needs to embrace to reach people for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Caste-Sensitive Church Planting: Revisiting the Homogeneous Unit Principle” by Mark Pickett uses the Hindu caste system to highlight the difficulties of breaking into some cultures.<sup>67</sup> The article uses ethnographic research to help answer questions that must be addressed before successfully sharing the gospel within a specific culture.<sup>68</sup> Some of the questions and thoughts addressed in this article are helpful to analyze and see the type of ethnographic research that is needed in Hopewell.

### Biblical Passages

Church planting and planting diverse churches are biblical. Acts 13 shows diversity in the church at Antioch.<sup>69</sup> They blended different cultures as they served on mission for Jesus Christ.

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<sup>66</sup> Petrus Niemandt, Cornelius Johannes. 2016. “Transformative Spirituality and Missional Leadership.” *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*, 33 (1): 85, accessed February 17, 2020, doi:10.1163/15733831-12341435.

<sup>67</sup> Pickett, Mark. 2015. “Caste-sensitive church planting: Revisiting the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 32 (3): 177-87.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> Acts 13:1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

They were missional and multiplying, which resulted in future church plants.<sup>70</sup> The diversity in the church at Antioch gives a small glimpse of what is to come, as noted in Revelation 7:9.<sup>71</sup>

The importance of community in the church is shown in Acts 2:42-47.<sup>72</sup> It details some of the elements of what community is to entail. They are to be devoted to the teaching of the apostles and fellowship.<sup>73</sup> Besides, praying together is to be a focal aspect of the church community.<sup>74</sup> They were consistently meeting together and sharing meals in their homes.<sup>75</sup> Their life in Christ together impacted the community, and the result was daily salvations in the community.<sup>76</sup>

There are often difficulties that come with people coming to Christ. Acts 9 shows how Saul had a difficult time being accepted in the fellowship of believers.<sup>77</sup> This can be an issue when people come to Christ in small urban towns where people do not believe the change is real. Identifying Barnabas' to come beside those new Christians is indispensable to bridge the gap.<sup>78</sup> Being a Barnabas to a Paul allows them to use their new life in Christ for God's glory.<sup>79</sup>

Jesus gives us an example in Matthew 6:13-21 of taking care of both the physical needs and the spiritual needs of people at the same time. His focus was not solely on meeting the temporal need of hungry people. He knew that they would be hungry again the next day. He used

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<sup>70</sup> Acts 13:3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Rev 7:9.

<sup>72</sup> Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>73</sup> Acts 2:42.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Acts 2:46.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 2:47.

<sup>77</sup> Acts 9:26.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 9:27.

<sup>79</sup> Acts 9:28.

the provisions that God provided to point people to Himself, and many believed and were spiritually fed as well physically fed.

In Matthew 25:41-46, Jesus shares how serving the least of these should be a natural part of a Christian's life. This passage shows the reader that this should be a part of the transformed heart of a believer. They should want to do the things that Christ did and take care of the people that Christ cared about, which is everybody. This passage will help in understanding how to connect missional outreach with the everyday life of a Christian.

The church planter does not and should not carry all the burdens that come with bringing a new church to a community. Ephesians 4:12 talks about the importance of investing in people to help with the work of the ministry. To build a successful missional church, one must invest in others and allow them to do the same. This is called discipleship that results in multiplication and advancement of the kingdom.

There are several passages from Paul's missionary journey that show that preaching the gospel in new towns come with difficulty. Paul was stoned in Lystra in Acts 14:19. However, he did not let the trials he faced keep him from his mission to spread the gospel. He returned and strengthened the souls of those who came to Christ in the town in Acts 14:22. He then appointed structure to the church and commissioned them to the Word that they had been set apart to do in Christ in Acts 14:23. In urban church planting, there are likely to be many obstacles. The Apostle Paul shows the road map to faithfulness in completing the assignment.

## Chapter 2

### Hopewell, VA: A Small Urban City

One barrier that needs to be overcome before diving into the specific town of Hopewell is the term: small urban city. Can this term be confusing to some or even considered an oxymoron? Aren't urban cities by nature large in population? Aren't small cities really towns? Without addressing this term, other small urban cities, like Hopewell, may be overlooked in church planting. Tim Keller warns the reader not to put their own understanding nor cultural norms onto the biblical meaning of the word city.<sup>80</sup> In ancient times a city was categorized by a fortified wall with a population being between 1,000 to 3,000 people packed into the perimeter. A small urban area, therefore, biblically is more about a density of people living close to one another.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, there is a mental barrier that needs to be knocked down to embrace the concept of small urban city church planting. The thought process of what constitutes an urban area and what is a small town must be overcome. One of which is having small town thoughts while ignoring the urban people that are part of the city.<sup>82</sup> Small town thoughts can lead to missing people who are willing to embrace the gospel right away. There must be a restraint in imposing models that are typical of small towns that really are urban in nature.<sup>83</sup> The reality is that over half of all population growth is now considered to be urban.<sup>84</sup> Small urban church planting should be embraced as an opportunity to reach people for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>80</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 135.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Berghuist and Crane, *City Shaped Churches*, 50.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 47.

Glorifying God is the goal of everything a Christian does; church planting included. The small urban city church planter must embrace where God has planted them, learn how to grow His kingdom, build a healthy church while reaching new people for Christ for His glory.<sup>85</sup> In the context of small urban church planting, that means to understand one's setting and what worked in one area may not work in the area one has been planted and vice versa. The planter must learn to make necessary adaptations to the culture of the city they are planted.<sup>86</sup> This can be described as contextualization.<sup>87</sup>

To contextualize the gospel to a specific community, one must know as much about the community as possible. Paul gives an example of this in Acts 17:23, where he had observed their objects of worship before he spoke to the men of Athens.<sup>88</sup> It is evident that Paul had an understanding of what was important to those he was trying to reach with the gospel. A church planter needs to remember that bringing the gospel into the city is not simply sharing the gospel, but it also comes with a need to consider the structure of the societal norms there.<sup>89</sup>

The church planter must know as much as possible about their city they are called to reach. It involves knowing the city's general data along with walking beside those there to get a complete picture of their city.<sup>90</sup> Data is vital to the church planter. Accurate data is imperative. What people see may not always be accurate. What one believes is needed in a city and what is actually needed can conflict based on one's preconceived ideas. A group of church planters in

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<sup>85</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 6.

<sup>86</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 89.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Acts 17:23.

<sup>89</sup> Pickett, *Caste-sensitive church planting*, 31.

<sup>90</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 120.

New York found this truth out by interviewing long term residents of Manhattan.<sup>91</sup> They were seeking information on the demographics of the area from these residents. What they found is the answers they were given were almost always different than the factual demographic data of where they lived.<sup>92</sup> Both are important in understanding cities. One shows the barriers that need to be overcome, while the other will show more facts of the city.

This chapter will be about learning as much about Hopewell, Virginia, as possible. How did the city start, where has it been, and where does it think it is going? Secondly, what are the demographics of the city? This is to help understand as much as possible about the current residents of the city as possible. The known services to those in need will be shown to help get a fuller picture of the city. These findings will then be summarized to help prepare a strategy to reach the city with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Hopewell, Virginia History

Hopewell is a historic town with its roots dating back to 1613 when Sir Thomas Dale founded the City Point section of Hopewell.<sup>93</sup> The City Point section, which would later be part of Hopewell, was officially incorporated in 1615.<sup>94</sup> Hopewell has the distinction of being the second “continually occupied settlement in the United States.”<sup>95</sup> By the year 1840, the population stood at 300. Its frontage on both the James and Appomattox was a large part of its beginning and its current appeal. Hopewell is also known for being one of the earliest rail lines in

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<sup>91</sup> Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 78.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-79.

<sup>93</sup> Hopewell, City of. “City History.” *City of Hopewell*, accessed October 31, 2019, <http://hopewellva.gov/-city-history>.

<sup>94</sup> Hopewell, City of. “Our City.” *City of Hopewell*, accessed October 31, 2019, <http://hopewellva.gov/our-city>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

the United States that stretched from the city point area to Petersburg.<sup>96</sup> Both the river frontage and rail line would shape a large part of the foundation of Hopewell from then until now.

In 1912, E.L. DuPont changed the landscape of the town buying 800 acres to build a dynamite plant, primarily due to the city's deep port and rail lines.<sup>97</sup> Mr. Dupont purchased an additional 1600 acres in 1914 and built the largest guncotton plant in the world at that time, which was an economic and population boom to the city.<sup>98</sup> This small town that stood at 300 in 1840 was now employing 40,000 people in 1915.<sup>99</sup>

Mr. Dupont would unknowingly shape a large part of Hopewell's history by starting to build houses for its employees. It was the thought process in those times that providing houses would bring stability in the workforce.<sup>100</sup> These houses were smaller in square footage, with most being under 1,100 square feet and as small as 600 square feet. These homes occupied a large portion of the land in North Hopewell. A majority of these homes still exist today. Dupont would leave Hopewell when World War I ended in 1918 but not without leaving its mark on the city. Other factories have replaced Dupont since then, solidifying Hopewell as a factory town.<sup>101</sup>

The southern end of the city was shaped by a military installation, initially known as Camp Lee.<sup>102</sup> Camp Lee opened in 1917 shortly after the beginning of World War I as a recruit training center.<sup>103</sup> It would shut down after the war, but opened back up in the 1940s to serve as a

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<sup>96</sup> Hopewell, City Of, "Our City."

<sup>97</sup> Hopewell, City Of, "City History."

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Sears Homes. "The Boom Towns of Dupont." *Sears Homes*, accessed October 31, 2019, <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2012/01/10/the-boom-towns-of-dupont/>

<sup>101</sup> Hopewell, City Of, "City History."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Wineman, Bradford A. "Fort Lee." *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Virginia Humanities, 23 Nov. 2010. Web. 2 Oct. 2019, accessed October 31, 2019. [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Fort\\_Lee\\_](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Fort_Lee_)

quartermaster training center to prepare soldiers. This camp, now known as Fort Lee, trains approximately 25,000 quartermasters annually.<sup>104</sup> This military installation provides a large number of jobs and economic stability to the city of Hopewell.

Hopewell has been called “The Wonder City.”<sup>105</sup> It received its name for its persistence and ability to keep bouncing back from hardships. The population boom that Dupont brought mainly evaporated after the war when the factories shut down. It bounced back then and now by bringing in new factories. A fire destroyed 300 buildings, which was a majority of the city, in 1915.<sup>106</sup> The city quickly bounced back, incorporating as the City of Hopewell in 1916.<sup>107</sup> The Beacon Theatre, a centerpiece of the city, was built in 1928 only to be abandoned in 1981.<sup>108</sup> The Theatre was restored and reopened in 2015.<sup>109</sup>

Hopewell has had its share of hardships, but it is currently experiencing another period of bouncing back.<sup>110</sup> The Beacon Theatre is now bringing in visitors from outside the city for shows ranging from Vanilla Ice to Oak Ridge Boys. Main Street that sat mostly vacant in 2015 is now home to several new restaurants and coffee shops. The city has renovated parks and created a boardwalk along the riverfront. VHDA has recently finished one mixed-use apartment complex

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<sup>104</sup> Wineman, *Fort Lee*.

<sup>105</sup> Hopewell, City Of, “Our City.”

<sup>106</sup> Hopewell, City Of, “City History.”

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> The Beacon Theatre. “About.” *The Beacon Theatre*, accessed October 31, 2019.  
<http://thebeacontheatreva.com/about/>.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Hopewell, City Of, “Our City.”

while another mixed-use apartment complex is planned along the river beside the Beacon Theatre.<sup>111</sup>

### Hopewell City Demographics

Demographic data is vital in understanding the current make-up of the city of Hopewell. This section will show the population trends, racial make-up, and education levels. In addition, homeownership and the rental percentage will be shown as well as poverty levels compared to the state and national averages.

#### Population

The population of Hopewell has been mainly stable over the past 27 years. The current population is estimated to be 22,596 for the 2018 year.<sup>112</sup> This shows a negligible amount of growth or decline since the 2010 census showed a population of 22,591.<sup>113</sup> Going back as far as 1990 shows a population of 23,101.<sup>114</sup> While this data shows stability as far as population, the city of Hopewell is becoming smaller in comparison to other cities in the United States. Hopewell had dropped from the 1,201<sup>st</sup> largest city in 1990 to the 1,650<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States in 2017.

The North American Mission Board focuses its resources on the 33 cities in North America.<sup>115</sup> The closest focus city of NAMB to Hopewell is Washington, D.C. The NAMB

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<sup>111</sup> Hopewell Downtown Partnership. "Notable Projects." *Hopewell Downtown Partnership*, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://hopewelldowntown.com/about/projects/hffimm/>.

<sup>112</sup> United States Census Bureau. "Quick Facts." *United States Census Bureau*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hopewellcityvirginiacounty/PST045218>.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Biggestuscities.com. "Hopewell Population History." *Biggestuscities.com*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/hopewell-virginia>.

<sup>115</sup> North American Mission Board, SBC. "Focus Areas." *North American Mission Board, SBC*. accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.namb.net/focus-areas/>.

website states that the population area is 6,264,098.<sup>116</sup> Cities like Hopewell will likely never be a focus area due to their size and limited resources available. With every soul mattering to God, this shows a need for a strategy for those who are called to areas that are not in NAMB’s focus areas.

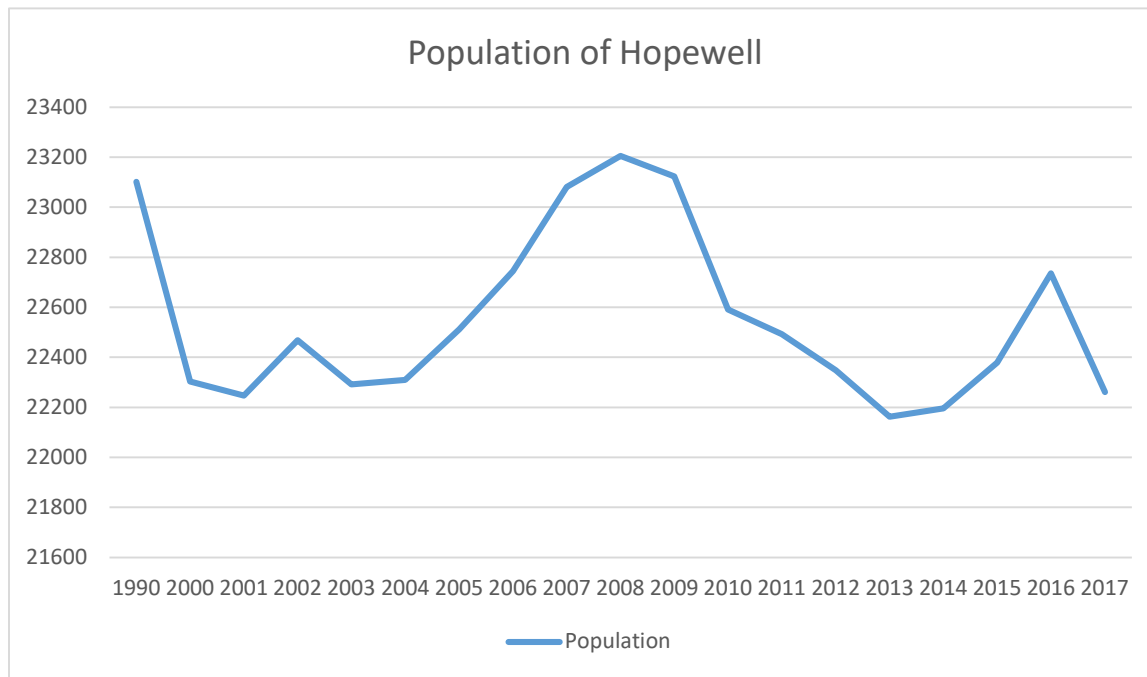


Figure 1. Hopewell Population<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> North American Mission Board, SBC. “Send Washington D.C.” *North American Mission Board*, accessed November 1, 2019, [https://www.namb.net/send\\_city/washington-dc/](https://www.namb.net/send_city/washington-dc/).

<sup>117</sup> Biggestuscities.com, “Hopewell.”

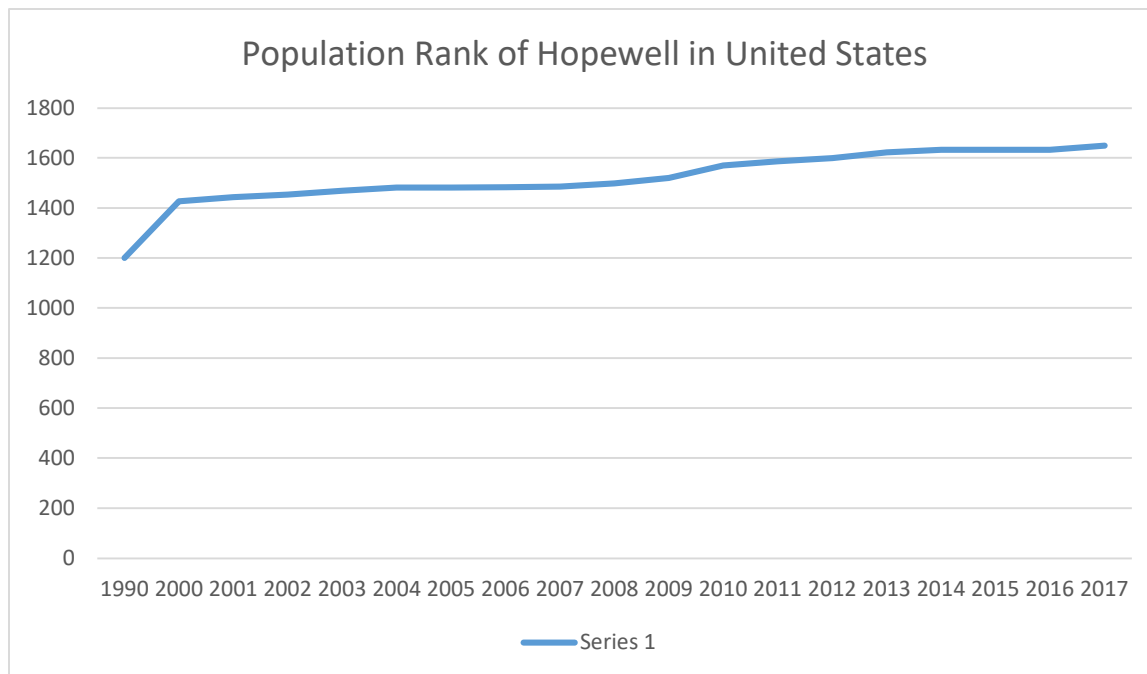


Figure 2. Hopewell Population Ranking. <sup>118</sup>

### Racial Make-Up

The racial make-up of Hopewell primarily consists of two ethnicities: white and black or African American. The census projects show whites make-up approximately 51.5% of the population. Black or African American race make up approximately 42.6% of the population. The remaining percentages are made up of primarily Hispanic and Asian races.<sup>119</sup> There is less than 0.5% of the population that is Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

### Age and Sex

The age demographics of Hopewell show the community to have a majority of residents being between the ages of 18 and 65. Based on the 2018 population estimates, approximately 26% of the people in Hopewell are 18 or under.<sup>120</sup> An additional 15.7% percent of the population

<sup>118</sup> Biggestuscities.com, “Hopewell.”

<sup>119</sup> United States Census Bureau, “Hopewell.”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

is 65 years of age or older.<sup>121</sup> This leaves the 58.3% of the population being between the ages of 19 and 64. Also, there are approximately 53.4% of the population that is female, with 46.6% being male.<sup>122</sup>

## **Education**

Hopewell sits below the national averages in the percentages of people who have graduated high school and below average in the percentage of people who have at least a bachelor's degree. Approximately 81.1% of the population has a high school diploma.<sup>123</sup> The national average is 88.4% putting the city approximately 8% behind it.<sup>124</sup> Approximately 15.1% of the population has at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>125</sup> The national average is 32.5% having at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>126</sup> Those having at least a bachelor's degree in the city is more than 50% behind the national averages.

## **Housing**

Hopewell sits below the national average for owner-occupied housing and also in the median value of owner-occupied housing. Only 51% of the houses in Hopewell are owner-occupied compared to the national average of 63.8%.<sup>127</sup> The median value of homes in Hopewell is \$122,400 compared to the national average of \$193,500.<sup>128</sup> With lower homeownership rates,

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<sup>121</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Camille L. Ryan and Kurt Bauman. Educational Attainments in the United States, 2015." *United States Census Bureau*. Accessed November 1, 2019.  
"https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf."

<sup>125</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>126</sup> Ryan and Bauman, *Educational Attainments*.

<sup>127</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

the rental rates would be a significant factor in the city. Currently, the median rental rate is \$831, which is below the national average of \$982.<sup>129</sup>

## **Poverty**

The poverty figures are an important factor in knowing the city one is planting. A higher poverty rate often leads to more material needs of those in the city. Hopewell is significantly above the national average in poverty. Currently, 19.9% of the residents of Hopewell are in poverty. This is compared to the national average of 11.8%<sup>130</sup>

## **Drugs**

Drug usage is a statistic that is hard to quantify in an overall percentage. However, there is significant data available to suggest that there is a drug problem in the city of Hopewell. A recent article shows Hopewell to have 20 deaths per 100,000 due to drug overdose.<sup>131</sup> Also, the city of Hopewell has recently filed a lawsuit against drug companies seeking to help offset the costs of fighting the opioid battle they are facing.<sup>132</sup>

## **Unemployment**

The national average for unemployment is currently at or near historic lows. The unemployment rate in Virginia as of August 2019 stood at 2.8%, below the national average of

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<sup>129</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Eric Everington. "New Data Indicates Record Drug Overdose deaths projected in Virginia." *Capital News Service*, accessed November 1, 2019, [https://rvahub.com/2019/10/29/new-data-indicates-record-drug-overdose-deaths-projected-in-virginia/?fbclid=IwAR0WMYRzZoUMDt4IDRyuHC98VUicnd7hMomZinSEfMBRLJ\\_mLtUI4GZFa0Q](https://rvahub.com/2019/10/29/new-data-indicates-record-drug-overdose-deaths-projected-in-virginia/?fbclid=IwAR0WMYRzZoUMDt4IDRyuHC98VUicnd7hMomZinSEfMBRLJ_mLtUI4GZFa0Q).

<sup>132</sup> Vernon Freeman, Jr. "City of Hopewell Sues Drug Companies Over Opioid Epidemic." *WTVR*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://wtvr.com/2019/06/13/city-of-hopewell-sues-drug-companies-over-opioid-epidemic/>.

3.7%.<sup>133</sup> The rate in Hopewell was 4.3%.<sup>134</sup> This is significantly higher than the state average and the national average.

## Crime

The crime rate for the city of Hopewell is higher than the state and national average. Violent crimes are at a rate of 3.49 per 1,000 and property crimes at 26.35 per 1000.<sup>135</sup> In Virginia, the chance of being involved in a crime is 1 in 480, while Hopewell is 1 in 286.<sup>136</sup> This is consistent across many reporting sites of crime, with Hopewell being considered safer than 17% of cities in the United States of America.<sup>137</sup> Below are charts of various reported crimes in the city of Hopewell for the year 2018.

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<sup>133</sup> Homefacts. "Virginia Unemployment Rate Report." *Homefacts.com*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.homefacts.com/unemployment/Virginia.html>.

<sup>134</sup> Homefacts. "Hopewell VA Unemployment Rate Report." *Homefacts*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.homefacts.com/unemployment/Virginia/Hopewell-City-County/Hopewell.html>.

<sup>135</sup> Location, Inc. "Hopewell VA Crime Rate." *Location, Inc*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/va/hopewell/crime>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

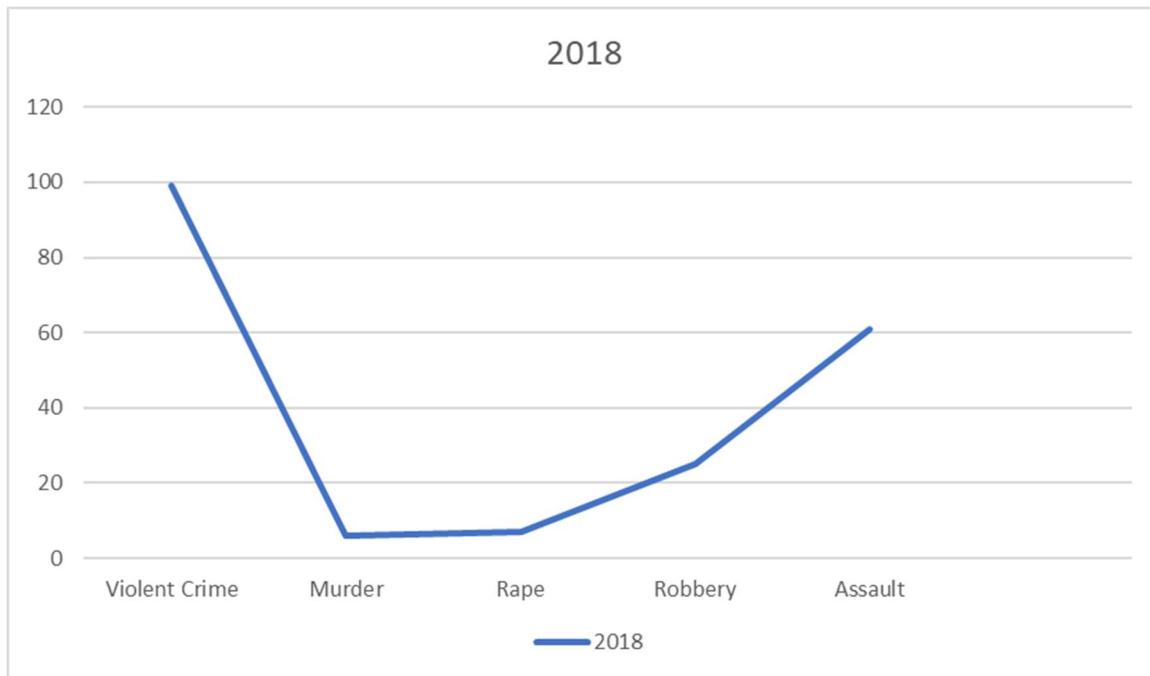


Figure 3. Hopewell Various Crime (Part I) in 2018 <sup>138</sup>

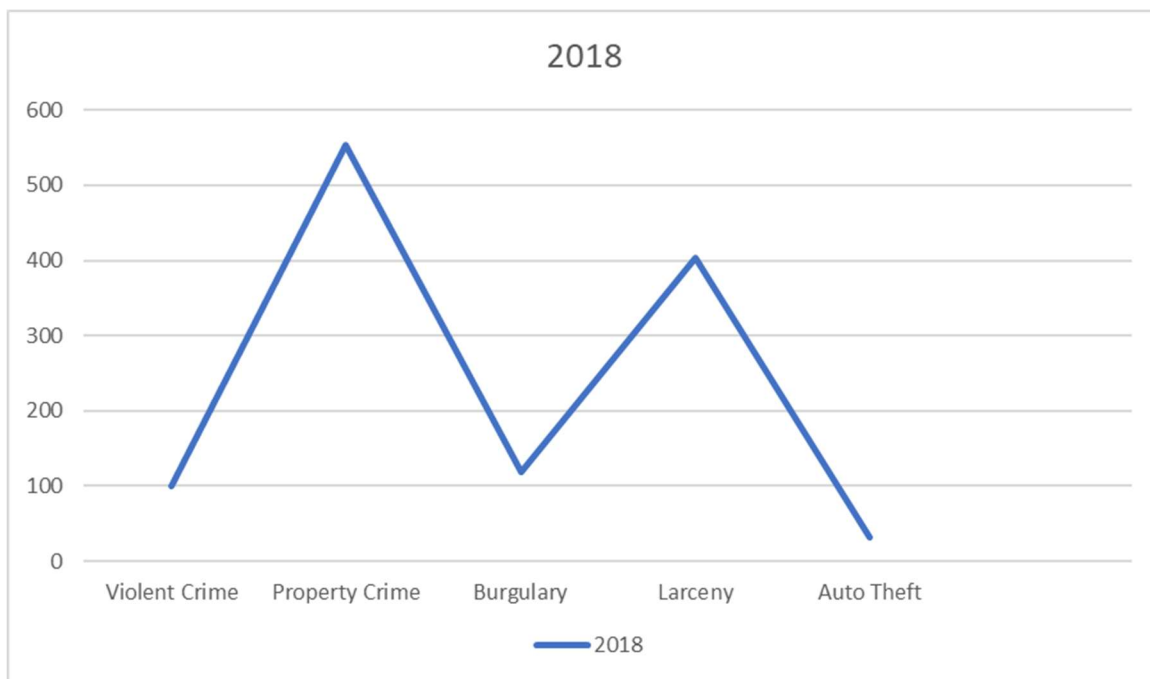


Figure 4. Hopewell Various Crime (Part II) in 2018

<sup>138</sup> FBI.Gov. “2018 Crime in the United States.” *FBI.Gov*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/tables/table-8/table-8-state-cuts/virginia.xls>.

## Ethnographic Research

Demographic research is pivotal to getting an overview of a city from a statistical perspective. However, to understand the core values of a city and opportunities for ministry, a deeper dive must be undertaken. This is where ethnographic research becomes a very helpful tool. Ethnographic research can only be done from within to help get a deeper understanding of the city.<sup>139</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat challenge the research to be both from an outsider's and an insider's point of view at the same time.<sup>140</sup> This method gives the reader the best way to understand those they are trying to reach in the city.<sup>141</sup>

### Churches

Hopewell is not without its share of churches. A drive-through of the city will show many churches that will not show up in a mainstream denomination website. These are often smaller churches in nature. These churches are harder to quantify but appear to be located mostly in the Northeast section of the city. There are, however, many denominational churches in the city. A total number of 16 churches were found through a web search of the city.

There are currently six Southern Baptist Churches in the city of Hopewell.<sup>142</sup> Two of those Southern Baptist Churches are dually aligned with the Baptist General Association of Virginia.<sup>143</sup> There are two Methodist churches in the city and four Presbyterian churches. There are also two churches of Christ and one Catholic church. There is one Nazarene church in the

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<sup>139</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Theology and Qualitative*, 157.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Southern Baptist Convention. "Church Search." *Southern Baptist Convention*, accessed November 1, 2019, <http://www.sbc.net/churchsearch/churches-near-me.asp>.

<sup>143</sup> Baptist General Association of Virginia. "Church Search A-Z." *Baptist General Association of Virginia*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://bgav.org/bgav/churches/?cn-s=HOPEWELL&cn-cat=>.

city that has recently suffered a fire and is meeting inside of the First Baptist Church of Hopewell.<sup>144</sup>

Hopewell is a community of fewer than 23,000 residents.<sup>145</sup> Only counting the denominational churches would put the number of churches at one per every 1,438 people in the city of Hopewell. To have a similar comparison as the NAMB would use, that makes one Southern Baptist Church per 3,833 residents in the city. This is compared to the closest SEND city, Washington, D.C., that has one Southern Baptist Church per 8,786 people.<sup>146</sup> It is easy to see why resources are often spent in bigger cities, but there is still a significant need for churches in smaller cities like Hopewell.

An interview with area pastors shows the average attendance in these churches is typically less than 100. This shows an overwhelming need for more churches in the city that are reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, does the city feel the same way? A random survey of 41 people showed that a majority feel that there are enough churches in the city of Hopewell. Surprisingly, nearly a third of those who answered felt that there were too few churches in the city. A small number of those in the survey felt there were too many churches.

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<sup>144</sup> Gabriel Harmon. "Hopewell Church Fire Ruled Arson; Blaze Started in Sanctuary, Pastor Says." *WTV*, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://wtvr.com/2019/04/07/how-to-help-hopewell-first-church-of-the-nazarene-fire/>.

<sup>145</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>146</sup> North American Mission Board, "Washington D.C.."

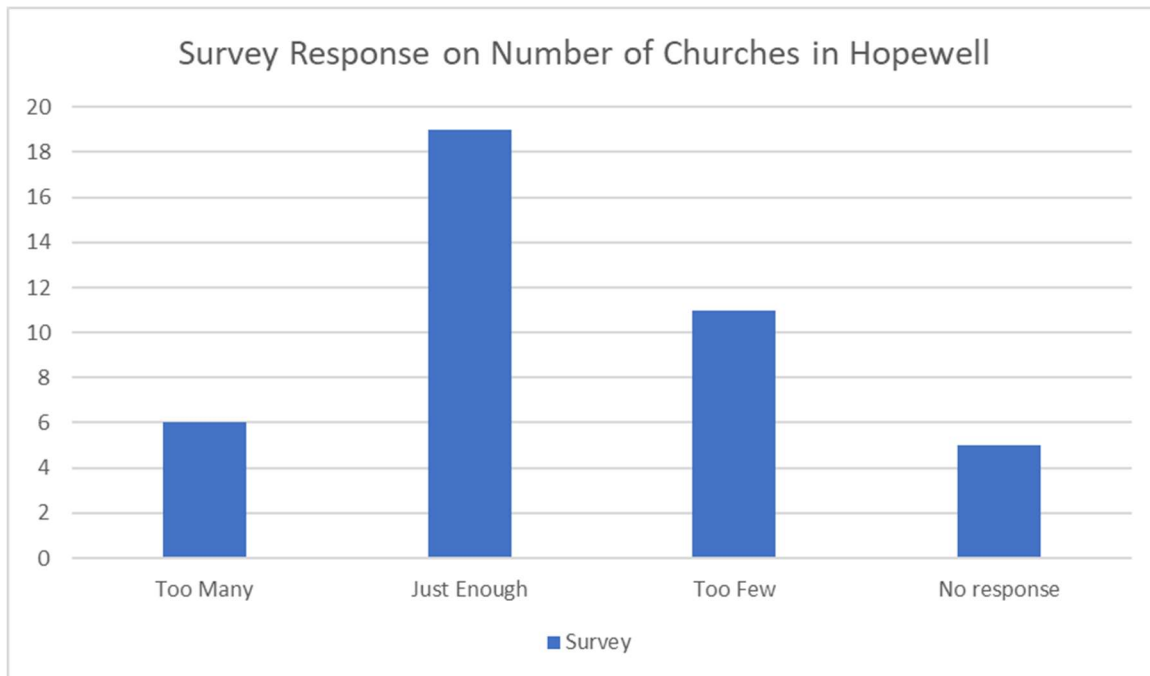


Figure 5. Hopewell Survey Response on the Number of Churches

### Areas of Need

The demographic data on the city of Hopewell shows several areas of concern. The city sits below the national averages in many categories, including homeownership, high school, and college graduates, and would appear to have a drug problem in the city. The poverty level is above the national average. With so many areas of concern, what does the city feel about addressing the most significant issues?

The survey asked the responders to note the top three challenges in Hopewell. They were given a choice of nine options plus an option to list something that was not addressed in the survey. The options included poverty, homeless, drugs, graduation rate, crime, employment opportunities, pollution, gangs, and literacy. The majority of the options were derived from data gleaned from the demographics of the city. The pollution response was added due to a large number of factories that date back to its founding.

The survey results showed four main areas of concern in the city. Drugs were mentioned as the number one challenge in the city, as noted on 68.3% of the survey responders. The second challenge facing the city is poverty being mentioned on 53.7% of the survey responders. Homelessness and Crime were equal concerns mentioned on 43.9% of the surveys.

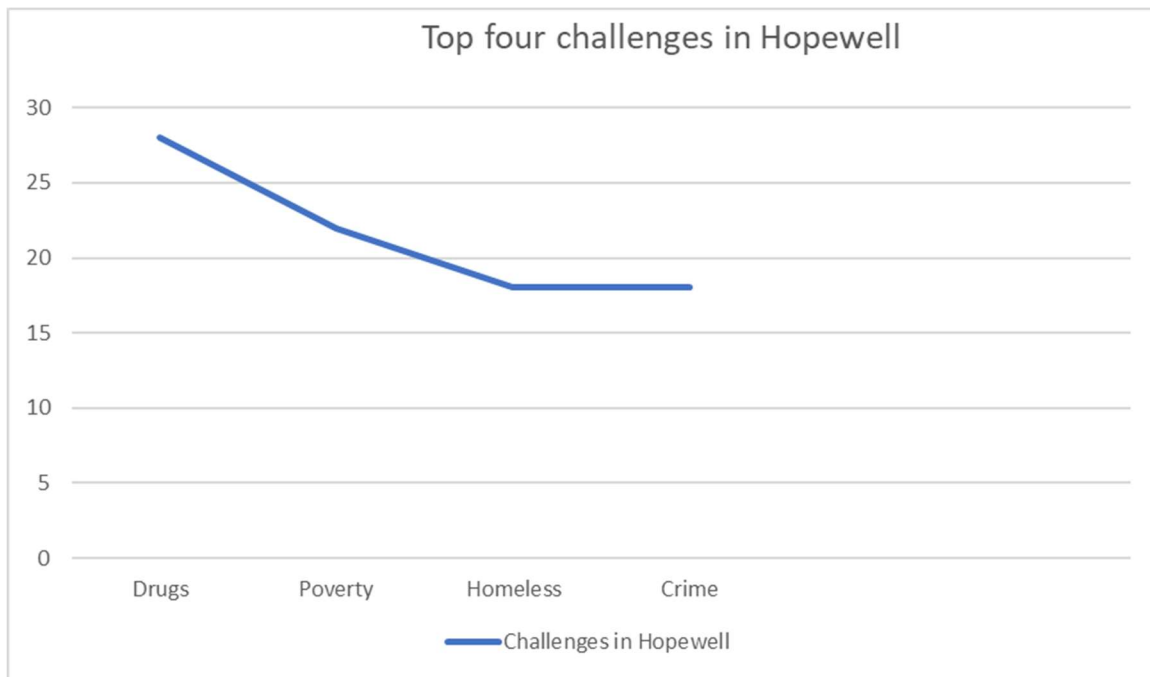


Figure 6. Hopewell – Top Four Challenges

In Figure 7, the bottom five concerns all fell below 10% in responses in the survey. Employment opportunities were mentioned as a concern on 9.8% of the surveys with pollution and gangs mentioned at 7.3%. Literacy was only noted in one survey, with transportation in another. The graduation rate was not a concern in any of the surveys.

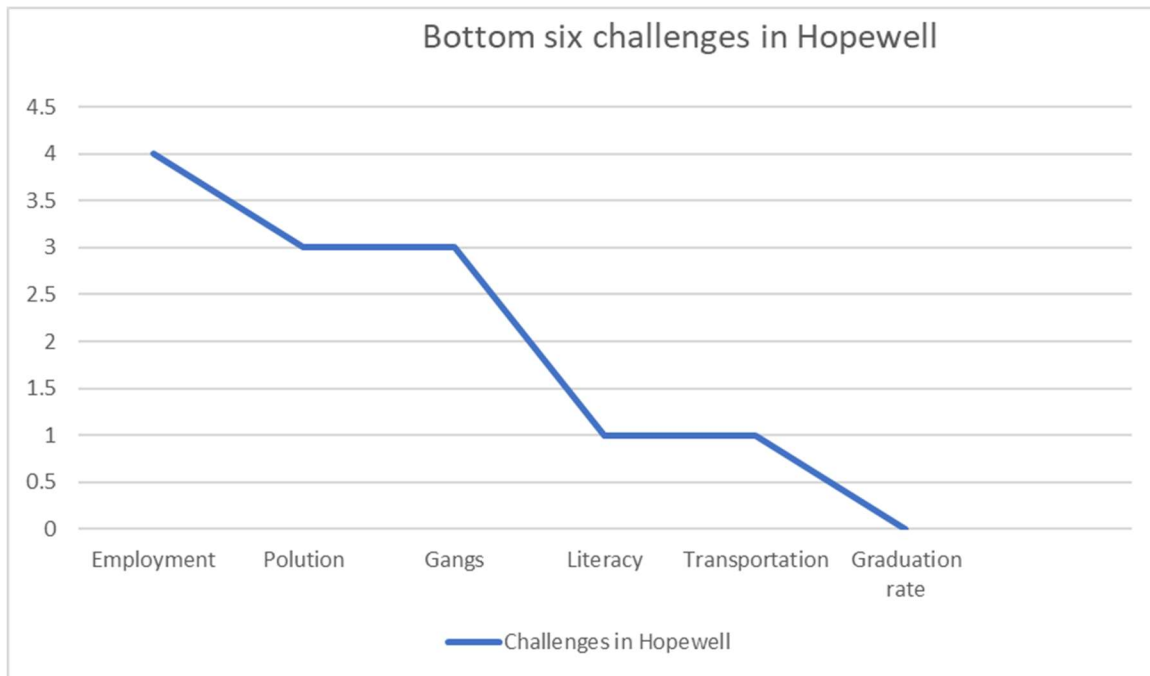


Figure 7. Hopewell – Bottom Six Challenges

The demographic data on the city and the perceived challenges in the city appear to be in agreement with one another. In addition, an inside/outside look of the city concurs with these findings. Drugs appear to be a widespread issue in all parts of the city and not just a segment in the city. Homelessness appears to be isolated to primarily the northern end of the city, with a few homeless people located at the southern end of the city.

Crime and poverty are also evident from being inside the city. The dinners for the needy often average over 30 a night, with many people not having jobs or transportation. Crime is spread throughout the city and is also a need. With the focus on drugs, crime, poverty, and homeless, it would appear that the other challenges that the city faces have been clouded from view.

## View of the Future

With as much concern about the challenges facing the city, it would be normal to believe that the residents have a negative outlook on the future of Hopewell. The survey found this to be far from the truth. 62.5% of those responded have a positive outlook on the future of the city. Only 10% of those who responded to this question had an unfavorable view. 27.5% were indifferent in their view of the city. The outside view is one of hopelessness, but the inside view is one of hope for the city.

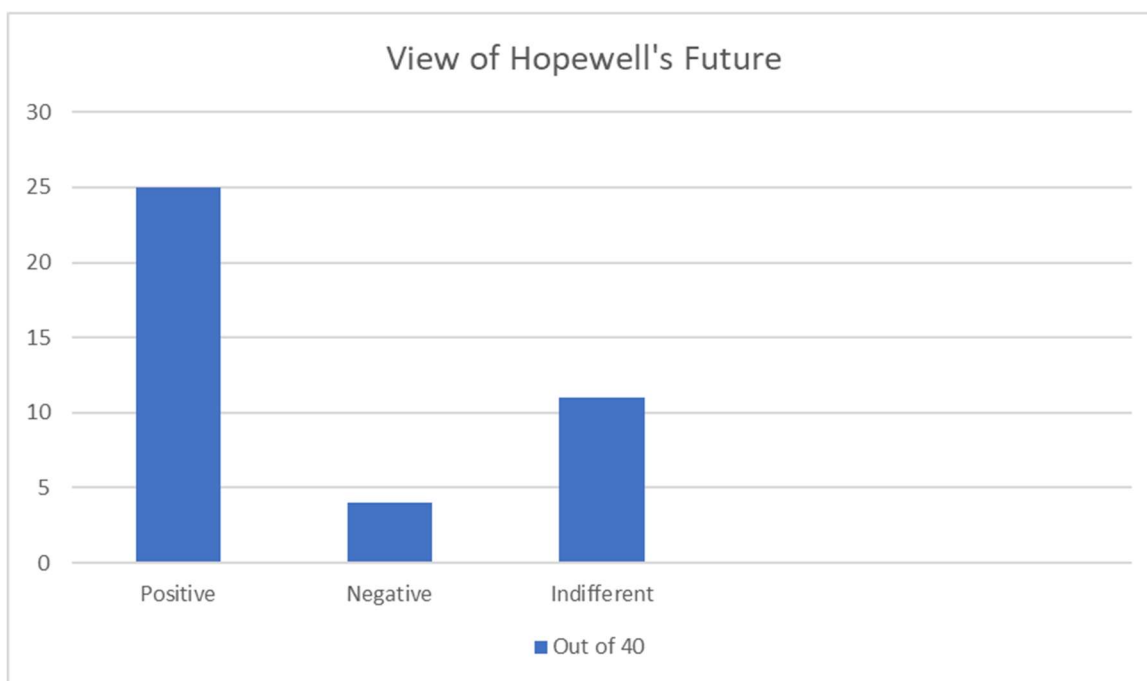


Figure 8. Hopewell –Future View

## Options for those in Need

Social Service provides assistance to those in need from a government level. However, there are opportunities to meet the daily provisions of those in need. The options available appear to be limited to the northeast section of the city. This is also where the larger portion of the homeless population and poverty appear to be most apparent and in plain sight. The southern end of the city appears to have almost zero options for those in need.

## Homeless

The homeless population in the city of Hopewell is mostly within a mile radius of downtown Hopewell. The homeless can typically be found at the library during the day as it is a public place that they feel provides a safe, temperature-controlled environment. The other place that appears to be a destination for the homeless in the city is Hardee's. It is the lone fast food restaurant in the north end of the city.

The city has recently allocated funds for a homeless shelter to be operated from November 15, 2019, until March 15, 2020.<sup>147</sup> This is the first year that the city has contracted to keep a shelter home. In previous years, there has been a city rented shelter, which was volunteer-run. The hours of this shelter are currently unknown, but in the past, it has been open from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m.

## Poverty

There are options for those in need to have clothing and food made available to them. The Shepherd's Place is a non-profit thrift store that provides free clothing to people who have been referred to them by either social services or local pastors.<sup>148</sup> Shepherd's place is located in the downtown district of Hopewell, making it easily accessible to where many homeless and others in need are located.

Also, there are meals that are coordinated by a local volunteer, every night for anyone in need of a meal. The current schedule has six nights a week, where churches and civic organizations prepare a meal at dinner time. They are served at a different location every night

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<sup>147</sup> Brandon Carwile. "Hopewell council gives nod to shelter funding." *Progress-Index*. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.progress-index.com/news/20191010/hopewell-council-gives-nod-to-shelter-funding>

<sup>148</sup> Hopewell Downtown Partnership, "Notable Projects."

within walking in downtown Hopewell. This community outreach ensures that no one goes hungry within the city.

### Overview

Hopewell is a small city, but urban in nature. It has a significant problem with crime, homeless, poverty, and drugs. It can be easy to become like the churches in Detroit that serve so many in need that the gospel takes a back seat. There is an opportunity, however, to do both; meet the needs of the people while pointing them to Jesus.

It is important to note, however, that this is not about Hopewell. This is about every smaller city that often does not receive the church planting resources that would attract planters or funds for planters from State and National organizations. As noted earlier, the closest SEND city is Washington, D.C. that currently has one Southern Baptist Church for every 8,786 residents.<sup>149</sup> Hopewell has a total of 22,596 residents and only one Southern Baptist Church for every 1,438 people.<sup>150</sup> Other cities within proximity are facing similar issues and need planters to take the gospel message to their communities.

Petersburg is one of the closest cities to Hopewell and has 32,420 residents.<sup>151</sup> It has only four Southern Baptist Churches within the city limits.<sup>152</sup> Many of the opportunities that exist in Hopewell also exist in this city as well. The graduation rate of its residents stands at 80.6%. The percentage of residents with at least a Bachelor's degree is at 17.5%<sup>153</sup> This city, like Hopewell, is below the national average in both categories. The poverty level in the city of Petersburg is

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<sup>149</sup> North American Mission Board, "Washington, D.C.."

<sup>150</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, "Church Search."

<sup>153</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

21.8%, which is higher than the 17.9% in Hopewell.<sup>154</sup> This is a city that has also not seen church planting in an extended time.

To the north of Hopewell, there is a small urban community known as Highland Springs. It is not an independent city like Hopewell or Petersburg but is a small urban area in part of a larger county. The population of Highland Springs is 15,711.<sup>155</sup> The stats of Highland Springs are similar to that of both Petersburg and Hopewell. The high school graduation rate is 85.6%, with 18.1% having received at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>156</sup> The poverty level stands at 17.9%<sup>157</sup> This community has no Southern Baptist churches within its zip code.<sup>158</sup> It would be redundant but worth noting that there have been zero Southern Baptist church plants as well.

Petersburg and Highland Springs give a snapshot of communities close to Hopewell that are in need of church planters and the gospel being brought into their communities. This same data snapshot can be used in similar cities, communities around the United States. Church planting is needed in all places, not just in some places. While it would be tough ever to say there are too many churches, a church planter must also dive into how the current churches in their prospective community are meeting the needs of its city while pointing them to Jesus.

The next chapter will assess strategies of how well the churches in the city of Hopewell are meeting the needs of its community at the same time evangelizing the lost and discipling the saved. What is being done to address these glaring problems in the city and how can the gospel

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<sup>154</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hopewell."

<sup>155</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Highland Springs."

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, "Church Search."

shine its light amid such hopelessness are questions that require answers. Are churches inside the walls or being the church outside the four walls of a building?

## Chapter 3

### Missional Observations in Hopewell

Missions, discipleship, and evangelism: these three words are common or should be common to any church. The Great Commission calls us to go and make disciples and to teach them what Christ has commanded us in His Word.<sup>159</sup> Jonathan Brooks believes that the church should step up for the fringes of society while at the same time cultivating spiritual health.<sup>160</sup> Several passages in Scripture support this belief. Christ exhorts the church to take care of the least of these and says, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”<sup>161</sup> James 1:7 says religion that is pure and undefiled will focus on the orphans, widows, and those in need.<sup>162</sup>

Are all three of these possible at the same time? Jesus says, “yes!” All three are possible and possible at the same time. He shows the way in John 6. There was a need where people were without provisions.<sup>163</sup> God provided the resources for that need. Jesus took this opportunity to disciple the followers that were with Him.<sup>164</sup> God provided the resources to not only strengthen the faith of the believers and meet all the needs that were present at the time.<sup>165</sup> The resulting impact was that the people believed in Jesus.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Matt. 28:18-20.

<sup>160</sup> Brooks, *Church Forsaken*, 80.

<sup>161</sup> Matt. 25:40.

<sup>162</sup> James 1:7.

<sup>163</sup> John 6:1-5.

<sup>164</sup> John 6:6-11.

<sup>165</sup> John 6:12.

<sup>166</sup> John 6:14.

Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe rightly say that the call to mission and ministry is not for the select few, but all Christians.<sup>167</sup> Ephesians 4 challenges the leaders to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.<sup>168</sup> They challenge believers to live out their calling as everyday missionaries wherever God has placed them for His glory.<sup>169</sup> This comes with developing the attitude of all members that is their responsibility to be a part of God's work and not simply the paid staff.<sup>170</sup>

This is not as overwhelming as it might appear at first. In *Experiencing God*, Richard Blackaby challenges believers to simply go where God is moving and join in His work.<sup>171</sup> Willis and Coe add, "It shouldn't take a program to live on mission for God, it should be a lifestyle."<sup>172</sup> When this is occurring, others are being discipled, and they will join in His work as well. Why would this occur? Because people would rather see a sermon than hear a sermon. The church must be the church where they are instead of asking people to go from where they are to a building.<sup>173</sup>

For a church to become a multiplying, missional church in a community, it must be the church in all three phases, missions, discipleship, and evangelism. These should not be separated but grouped together. When the focus is on the mission, all three naturally occur through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ can do far more abundantly than we can ever do on our own.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 26.

<sup>168</sup> Eph. 4:12

<sup>169</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 26.

<sup>170</sup> Russell, *When God Builds a Church*, 175.

<sup>171</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King. *Experiencing God : Knowing and Doing the Will of God Revised & Expanded*, 101.

<sup>172</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 30.

<sup>173</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 7.

<sup>174</sup> Eph. 3:20.

Is this occurring in Hopewell? Are the churches in Hopewell living on mission or Christ? Do they have a purpose behind missions, evangelism, and discipleship? What churches are making not only temporal impacts in the community but eternal impacts as well? This is best looked at individually and then as a group to see if the mission is being accomplished.

### Mission(al) Work in the City

Everything a believer does for God's glory can be a part of His mission. God can and does use everyday aspects of a believer's life to point people to Him. However, time is finite with man, and resources are limited, especially in church plants. This is often tough for the church planters, who Jeff Christopherson rightly notes are often goal-driven people.<sup>175</sup> The church planter must learn to redefine success, and that is to have as their supreme goal the advancement of the kingdom of God.<sup>176</sup> To do this, a church planter should not see other churches as competition, but partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Part of having a kingdom mindset is trying to support other churches in ministries that they are doing well and growing ministries that meet the most pressing needs of the community. The survey that was taken shows, though small in sample size, what the community feels are the most pressing needs in the community. To recap those results from Chapter 2, these were: drugs, poverty, homeless, and crime. The gospel can not only help in these areas; it can make these no longer an issue.

The first step is to see if the city's community is currently addressing any of these needs. Secondly, what churches are involved in meeting these needs. Also, if churches are meeting these needs, how are they incorporating the gospel? This enables the church planter to see what

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<sup>175</sup> Christopherson, *Kingdom First*, 26.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 27.

areas they can support and what areas they can pray about to make a part of the missions focus of the church. Lastly, the small urban church planter needs to see what national resources are available to help meet the needs of the community.

### Needs Being Met by the Community

The main issue of drugs in the community does not appear to have any community involvement outside of local law enforcement. There are no known drug prevention or treatment facilities that are not church based in the city. There is a Facebook page that is set up to talk about issues and inform residents of things, including drug-related violence, but no intentional involvement by the community is discussed in the number one issue facing the city.

Poverty is the second main issue and can take many forms on how this is addressed. Currently, the main avenue for addressing poverty in the city is through clothes, school supplies, and food donations. There is a non-profit organization, Shepherds place, that offers clothes to people who receive vouchers from places, including churches. There are also nightly dinners by churches and civic organizations that provide a basic meal to those in need in the city. Currently, there are meals served six days a week, with no one serving on Tuesday.

Homelessness is a third issue in the city. The city has recently allocated a place for the homeless population from December 1 to early April. This is not a twenty-four-hour shelter. However, it provides shelter from 8 p.m. to 8.a.m. to ensure that this population is not out in the cold during the winter months. While the city operates the shelter, it has contracted with Catholic Charities to run the shelter. They are also asking for the community to supply much of the daily needs of the shelter.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Hopewell, City of. "City of Hopewell opens inclement weather shelter" *City of Hopewell*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://hopewellva.gov/news/city-of-hopewell-opens-inclement-weather-shelter-2/?fbclid=IwAR3ELufJm3kNqtBKlJE-wuvu3RHVXSmZH0Yduch3go8tBCpg-OeotMo8Afc>.

The last major concern of respondents was the crime in the city. There are few, if any, neighborhood watch programs in the city. There are also no known groups outside of the above - mentioned Facebook group to help raise awareness of criminal activity in the area. There is nothing visually noticeable being done in the city to combat crime from a resident's perspective.

It would appear that the community's involvement in meeting the core concerns of the city is focused primarily on meeting daily needs. This is done mainly through service organizations providing meals and clothing as necessary. The shelter is run by the city and meets the seasonal needs of the homeless. With so much opportunity, what areas are the churches involved in Hopewell?

#### Church Involvement

Eight different churches, across many denominations, responded in the survey. The wide array of responses gives a good snapshot of what the faith community is doing in meeting the needs of the community. Four pastors were also among those who responded. This gives further accuracy to what churches are doing in the area as sometimes lay members are not aware of all that a church is doing in the community. The church plant is one of the eight responders and not included in this section, as it will be further developed in chapter 4.

The survey revealed the only one church was involved in any type of drug prevention or rehabilitation efforts. Five of the seven churches were involved in helping with poverty by providing a food ministry. Some of these were a weekly ministry, and some provided food as needed to those who asked. One church provided a one-time feeding through an event that was held at the church. No churches were involved directly with homeless ministries or focused on helping reduce crime. Surprisingly, one church responded that they made no outreach efforts.

The survey allowed an open-ended response on what each church was doing for outreach efforts in the community. The top four areas were focused on for this research and encompassed most of the outreach efforts being done by churches in Hopewell. One church also focused on providing financial assistance as needed as well as supplies to students. Another church responded by stating that they had an annual school supply drive.

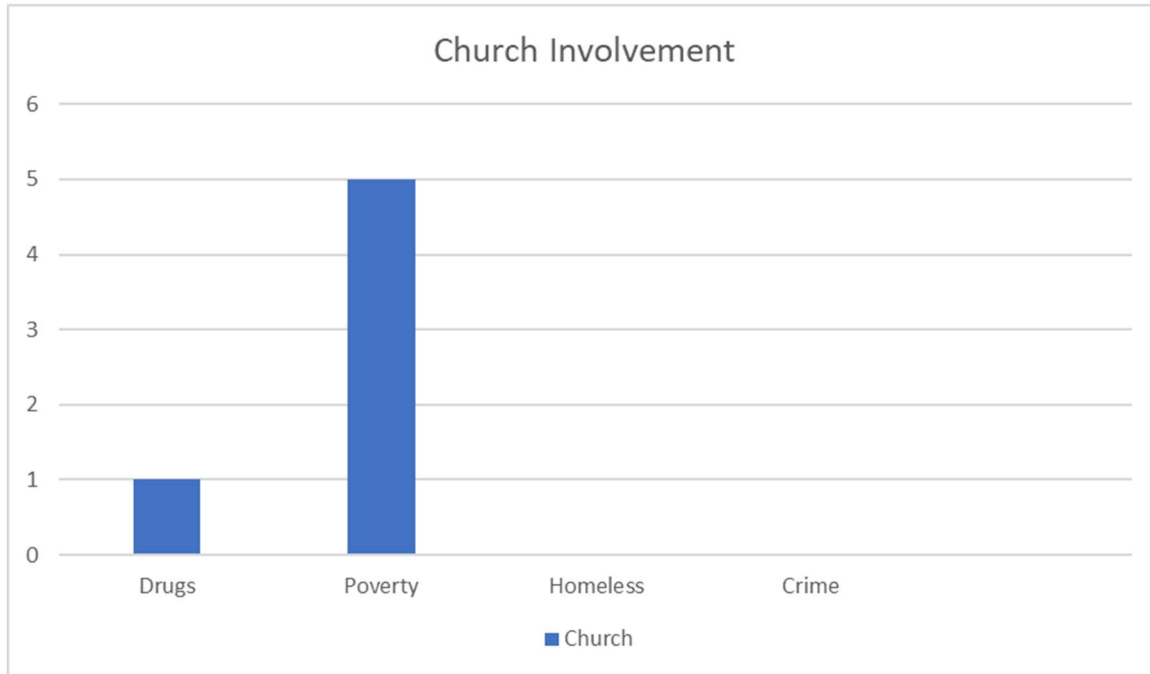


Figure 9 Church Involvement

### Missional Emphasis

The above shows that a large percentage of churches who were surveyed do some type of what they feel is missions work in the community. Ed Stetzer defines the word mission as something that “defines the intended goal or purpose.”<sup>178</sup> With that definition, serving meals to the homeless, providing school supplies, and financial assistance would be part of the mission of the church. They are achieving the goal defined goal or purpose of the outreach.

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<sup>178</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 21.

However, doing missions should not be confused with being missional. Ed Stetzer says that being missional is much more than putting a definition on or doing missions work.<sup>179</sup> Being missional requires the church planter to consider themselves as a missionary where they are and joining in God's work where they have been planted.<sup>180</sup> This means that everything that is done should be done with the bigger picture in mind of pointing people to Jesus.

Ed Stetzer gives examples of what this looks like including someone who starts a Bible study in their residence for the unchurched or someone who intentionally seeks ways to share Christ with those who come into their daily paths.<sup>181</sup> In the context of meeting the needs of the community, it would be serving others to meet needs while at the same time looking to reach those who would otherwise be considered unreached.<sup>182</sup>

With the framework of what it means to be missional and being intentional in missions requires the planter to look at what is currently being done from a missional view and not simply what missions work is currently being done. A planter can accomplish the mission of God both through serving and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, of the work currently being done in the city, which ones have missional intent?

One church was involved in helping drug addicts, which is an obvious need in the city of Hopewell. They run an intensive recovery program with a mission of "bringing opportunity and hope to individuals and families."<sup>184</sup> This is a great mission but lacks an outward missional intent

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<sup>179</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 21.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> City of Refuge. "Who We Are." *City of Refuge*, accessed March 2, 2020.  
<https://www.cityofrefugehopewell.net/who-we-are/>.

to point people to Jesus. It may be an internal mission but is not part of the vision or mission statement of the organization.<sup>185</sup>

Five churches were involved in some sort of food ministry for those in need. One was limited to an annual outreach event at the church, but not missional in nature. The other four feed either weekly or as needed, but none have a missional intent behind their outreach efforts. There is a pamphlet made by area churches that point people to where they can get clothes, shelter, and food. However, this is only for temporary relief while leaving out the eternal solution. The other two areas of mission work that were reported of doing school supply drives were part of showing the love of Christ, but not focused on bringing people to Christ.

#### Denominational Resources

The last avenue to get help in achieving a missional focus in community aid is found at a denominational level, which for Southern Baptist would be the North American Mission Board (NAMB). NAMB has resources available through its Send Relief website dealing with two of the core issues in the city: poverty and drugs.<sup>186</sup> The help that is for those who are hungry is a guide that is available once a request is filled out at the site.<sup>187</sup> The other area that is addressed through Send Relief is opioid addiction. A starter guide is available without any additional information to those who are interested in helping this growing crisis.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> City of Refuge. "Who We Are."

<sup>186</sup> North American Mission Board. "Send Relief." *North American Mission Board*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.sendrelief.org/>.

<sup>187</sup> North American Mission Board. "Poverty and Hunger." *North American Mission Board*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.sendrelief.org/poverty/hunger/>.

<sup>188</sup> The Partnership Center. "The Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit." *The Partnership Center*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.sendrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/hhs-partnership-ctr-opioid-practical-toolkit-print-final.pdf>.

## Missional Overview

There is work being done to help in many of the areas of need in the city of Hopewell. However, none of these missions work appears to be done through a missional posture. In addition, while there are resources available on a national level, but they are limited in scope. This gives the planter an idea of what opportunities exist and how they should enter the community and the focus of which they should tackle the needs: pointing people to Christ.

This same overview can be done in other similar small urban communities. Find out what the needs are in the community, who is meeting the needs, and how they are pointing people to Christ. This will enable the planters to pray through the avenues their church is being led to change the city temporally and eternally. This can be done through both surveys and ethnographic research of the communities.

## Discipleship

Disciples have been commanded to make disciples.<sup>189</sup> A church will not be healthy unless it understands and grasps the mandate to make disciples is not just for the pastors of the church, but the priority of every disciple of Christ.<sup>190</sup> Mark Dever calls a healthy church one that is “seriously concerned for their spiritual growth.”<sup>191</sup> In short, people want to get better at following Jesus, whom they have placed their faith and trust in as Lord of their lives. Barna's research suggests that 82% of Americans desired to grow spiritually.<sup>192</sup>

With such a desire extant, the question must be asked, how well the church is doing at growing its members spiritually? Colin Marshall and Tony Payne call making and growing true

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<sup>189</sup> Matt. 28:18-20.

<sup>190</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 13.

<sup>191</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 210.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

disciples of Christ as the goal of the church!<sup>193</sup> With the focus of this research on how to grow a multiplying church that reaches and impacts its community, discipleship will be seen from the scope of making disciples that are serious about reaching its community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Marshall and Payne state, “this is tough work that requires us to depend on God more and get out of our comfort zones.”<sup>194</sup>

How are the churches in Hopewell accomplishing this task of discipleship and impacting its community at the same time? What methods are being used for discipleship? How effective are those methods being in producing disciples who make disciples? These are questions that will help the planters know what may be working in their new city and what may not be working.

The survey gave three options for a primary method of discipleship: Sunday school, community group, or other for members. The survey was left open-ended for pastors of those congregations by asking, “What is their primary method of discipleship?” The members that were surveyed either left the space blank or wrote Sunday school as the answer. The pastors who filled the survey wrote Sunday school and Sunday morning worship as their primary method of discipleship. One church stated that they request those who want to join the church to do a 13-week devotional, while another added Wednesday Bible study as a primary means of discipleship.

### Missional Discipleship

The data below shows that discipleship is being limited to a few hours a week in mostly a Bible study format or a weekly worship service. This type of primary discipleship tends to lend

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<sup>193</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 14.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 9.

towards a church being inward-focused and becomes more trellis and less vine.<sup>195</sup> Marshall and Payne describe this as the need for structure that sometimes overtakes the personal work of intentional disciple-making.<sup>196</sup>

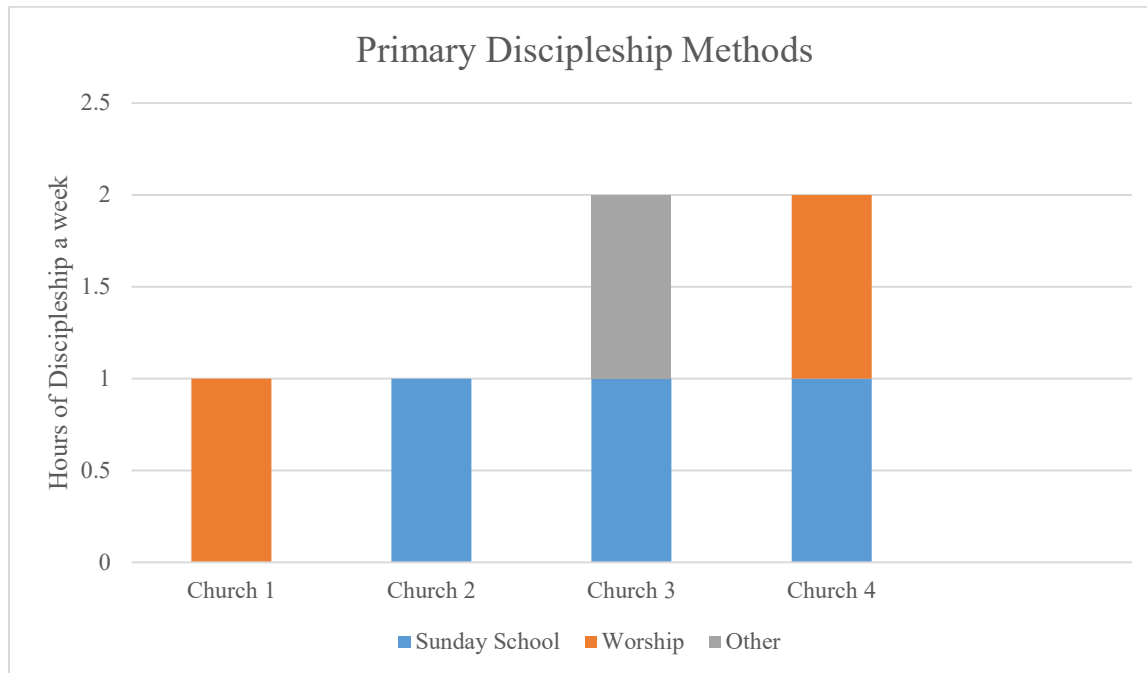


Figure 10 Primary Discipleship Methods

The problem that can come with limiting discipleship to a few hours a week is that it often stops at growing deeper before it helps grow the kingdom wider. Jesus certainly lived within the community with his disciples. This is something that Sunday school can offer. However, he also modeled what it meant to be a disciple and sent them out to make other disciples.<sup>197</sup> This is often the shortfall of having Sunday school as the primary method of discipleship. It can unknowingly promote a part-time devotion to a full-time God.

<sup>195</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 8.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 8-9

<sup>197</sup> Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 80.

This can happen in any discipleship method if “why” it is being done is not known nor kept intentionally foremost. Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger argue for the “why” to be theological and not pragmatic.<sup>198</sup> Pragmatic would be on focusing on growing attendance, whereas theological would be why is God calling one to make disciples? In developing a multiplying missional church, the “why” would be focused on growing disciples who are intentional about making new disciples of Christ. Stetzer and Geiger call the second step of a disciple-making strategy is to develop a plan to implement this strategy. This plan has to come from the leadership, and one study has shown that 21% of protestant pastors did not have a plan for spiritual growth in their church. Digging deeper will often show that if those that think they have a plan, really do not have a plan. The same study showed that those with an intentional plan of discipleship did not have a missional plan for discipleship. The majority, 56%, said the biblical knowledge was the primary focus of discipleship, followed by building relationships at 21%. Only 11% of those with a plan focused on equipping and putting the gospel into practice.<sup>199</sup>

To develop a multiplying missional church, the planter must not only have a plan, but also have a focus of that plan, and have a way of evaluating the results of that plan. Only 43% of pastors surveyed said that they have a method of evaluating discipleship progress on a consistent basis. Most pastors believe that progress is being made, but have no way of actually backing up their thoughts with results.<sup>200</sup> This was echoed in the survey where one pastor said that they “felt the church was catching on,” but could not say how many disciples were being made.

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<sup>198</sup> Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 70.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

## Denominational Resources

The data on discipleship in the community gives a snapshot of what is being done and successful. However, the church planter entering into a new community may have only prior experience of discipleship methods, which may not be effective in the city they are planting. A denominational church planter needs to look at what resources may be available from a state or national level to help in implanting a plan for discipleship. There are three main resources for a Southern Baptist: state, national and international levels.

On the state level, the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia offers a training curriculum for church planters called: *plant*.<sup>201</sup> The intention behind this resource is to equip the planters and their team. Ongoing discipleship resources are available through the convention by means of short conferences on various areas of discipleship. Two of these are the *Empowered Conference* and annual Sunday School training weekend.<sup>202</sup> They are available the Strengthening Churches division of the state convention.

The National level provides a resource that is focused on intentional discipleship called *The Multiplication pipeline*.<sup>203</sup> This resource is intended to help the planter identify and train potential missional leaders from within the congregation.<sup>204</sup> This resource can be used to help send out future church planters from within the congregation or also help carry out intentional discipleship within one's church plant. This helps develop what Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe

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<sup>201</sup> Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia. "Plant: Equipping Church Planting Teams." *Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia*, accessed March 2, 2020, [https://www.sbcv.org/plant\\_equipping\\_church\\_planting\\_teams/](https://www.sbcv.org/plant_equipping_church_planting_teams/).

<sup>202</sup> Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia. "Strengthening Churches." *Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.sbcv.org/strengthening-churches-2/>.

<sup>203</sup> North American Mission Board. "Multiplication Pipeline." *North American Mission Board*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.namb.net/pipeline/>.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

call “an everyday missionary.”<sup>205</sup> It can be a valuable resource for helping a church planter develop their missional discipleship plan.

The international level also provides resources for discipleship. This can often be overlooked as a potential help on the local level. In any case, where do international missionaries come from? They come from the local church. The International Mission Board has seen the importance of developing disciples at the local level that will feed into the international level. They have developed a six-month discipleship program called: Deepen Discipleship.<sup>206</sup> The course is designed to help the student develop and deepen habits that would help them be obedient in the Christian life.<sup>207</sup>

### Discipleship Overview

Discipleship and missional purpose go together. In Hopewell, there is a disconnect about missional discipleship. A disconnect between purposeful discipleship of reaching the community for Christ in an intentional way. The outreach efforts of the same churches who responded in the survey show a lack of intentionality that can flow right to their discipleship programs.

The information above can help other church planters keep from having this same disconnect that is present in many churches. How are churches training up their members to do the work of the ministry? Do they have an intentional plan for discipleship? Do the results show that the plan is providing fruits? The surveys done were not focused on whether the churches’ plans were producing their intended results. It could be that the plan is to grow knowledge in the Word, as a majority of pastors who have a discipleship plan would assert. What it does show,

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<sup>205</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 26.

<sup>206</sup> International Mission Board. “Deepen Discipleship.” International Mission Board, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://imb.pathwright.com/library/deepen-discipleship-055f43a0/about/>.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

however, is that there is no intentional plan to meet the needs of the city with the gospel. Even if there was a plan, the results are not being monitored by the church and changed as necessary.

### Evangelism

Evangelism can be a controversial topic. Controversial not just in secular environments, but within the church. As Phillip Woods writes, it is either a priority or almost taboo.<sup>208</sup> Mark Dever writes that the topic of evangelism can bring up feelings of guilt to confusion among believers.<sup>209</sup> It has created confusion and misunderstanding of what exactly evangelism means. Mark Dever rightly states that evangelism is not mere beliefs, opinions, or made up. It is simply God's truth, and evangelism is telling that truth.<sup>210</sup>

It is not up to the believer to convince anyone of God's truth. It is not something anyone can do in their own power. People who come to Christ through the sharing of God's love story comes from the fruit of God and not by any programs or smooth evangelistic talk.<sup>211</sup> God has chosen the church as the primary means to get out His good news to a lost and dying world.

Robert Coleman exhorts the church to ask the pointed question, "Is the church continually fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ?"<sup>212</sup> "Is the church seeing a growing number of people who are dedicated to reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ as the result of its ministry?"<sup>213</sup> A church can be busy with evangelistic programs, but they need to assess if their evangelism efforts are effective.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Woods, "Reclaiming Evangelism," 43.

<sup>209</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 127.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 13.

<sup>213</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 14.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

Are the churches in Hopewell seeing a growing number of people dedicated to reaching people with the gospel? What are the fruits from the evangelist efforts? How many in the church are actively engage with sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do the members understand their purpose? These are valuable questions that a church planter needs to ask and consider in developing their strategies.

The first question of the survey was, “How many people have come to Christ in the past 12 months in their church?” The second question was directed to the assimilation of those who have come to Christ into their primary discipleship program. The last question was geared towards disciples making disciples, “How many of those who have come to Christ in the past 12 months were now actively sharing their faith with others?”

Three churches responded to each of these questions. None of the churches knew the exact number of people who had come to Christ and estimated their figure. The highest number of people who have come to Christ in any church was 12, with the lowest being 0. Only one of the churches saw any assimilation into its discipleship program, with 8 of the 12 involved in their discipleship. None of the churches had those who had come to Christ in the past 12 months currently engaged in sharing their faith.



Figure 11. Number of Salvations in past 12 Months

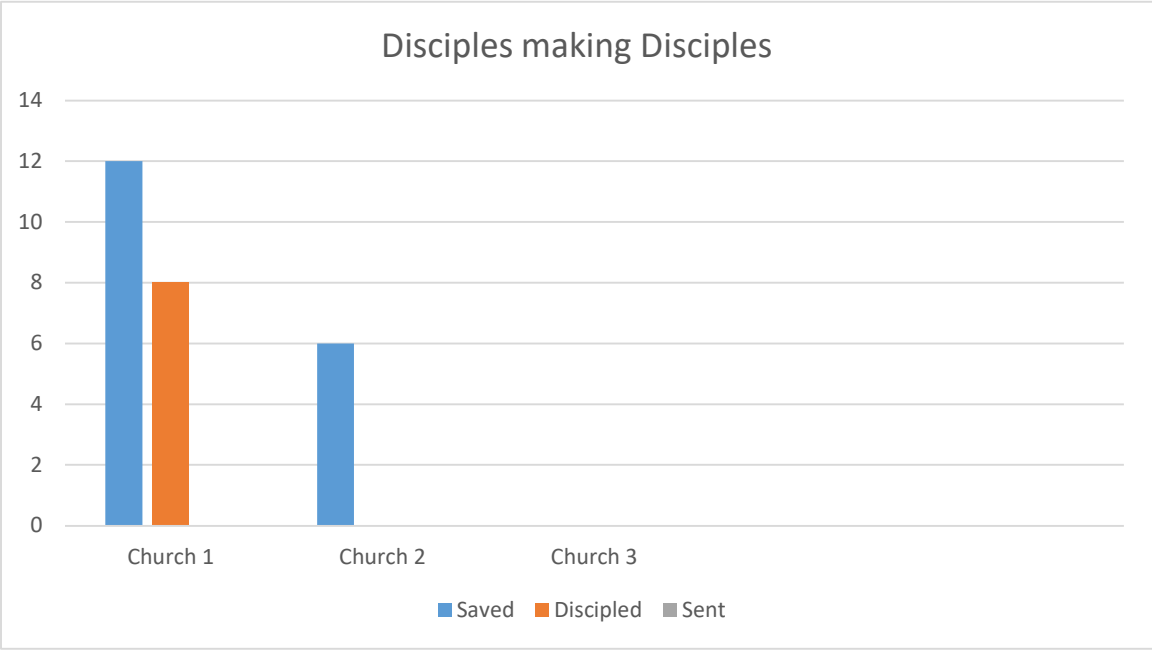


Figure 12. Disciples Making Disciples

## Denominational Resources

The stats above do not shed much light on what works and does not work in Hopewell concerning missional evangelism. However, there are denominational resources that may help the planter assess different ways to evangelize its community. At the state level, there is an initiative called *Bless Every Home*, which helps the residents of a city become more familiar with their neighbors and encourage prayer directly for them.<sup>215</sup> The other resources from the state level are tools for sharing their faith, including *3 Circles* and *The Story Method* of evangelism.<sup>216</sup>

At the national level, evangelism encouragement through programs such as, “*Who’s your one?*” is currently being promoted.<sup>217</sup> This program provides resources to pastors to implement a program to help its members become more intentional in evangelism. They encourage people to pray specifically for a person and exhort them to have a gospel conversation with them.<sup>218</sup> The *3 Circles* method is also encouraged from the national level as well as podcasts from Johnny Hunt on evangelism.<sup>219</sup>

The greatest variety of resources available to a church planter comes at the international level. The IMB web site has many tools and resources to encourage and help evangelistic efforts. They have different sections, including six resources on equipping and sending the members of

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<sup>215</sup> Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia. “Evangelism.” *Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia*. Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://www.sbcv.org/evangelism/>

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> North American Mission Board. “Evangelism.” *North American Mission Board*. Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://www.namb.net/evangelism>.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

the church to share the gospel.<sup>220</sup> There are also resources available to encourage IMB participation in the local church and to connect the local church to missionaries.<sup>221</sup>

### Missional Overview

The statistics reveal a bleak picture. Good things are being done in the community, but the results show that few are coming to Christ. It would appear that Hopewell has more than enough churches. Experts say to make a significant impact with the gospel “you need to have one church for every 1,000 people in urban areas.”<sup>222</sup> For Hopewell, that would mean 23 churches in total. However, the above results show a core truth, just because a church exists does not mean it is reaching people for the gospel of Jesus Christ. The reality is that around 4,000 evangelical churches will close their doors every year. Eighty percent of those who are open would say that they are stagnant as the above data shows.<sup>223</sup>

This is not meant as a discouragement, but a challenge that there is much work needed anywhere one plants. God is at work and looking for people to join in his work and become missionaries where they are planted.<sup>224</sup> For this to occur, mission(al) efforts, discipleship, and evangelism must not be a program or separate efforts, but a part of the mission of the church. A disciple is one who makes disciples.<sup>225</sup> This must be the mission of the church.

The above data on Hopewell is not easy to absorb or a reality that anyone wants to accept, but the statistics are the statistics. There is much work to be done in Hopewell for the

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<sup>220</sup> International Mission Board. “For Churches.” *International Mission Board*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.imb.org/for-churches>.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*. 20.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>225</sup> Chan, *Multiply*, 31.

sake of the advancement of the gospel. This overview can be used by other church planters to help see what is happening in the communities they are about to plant in or already planted. It will prayerfully allow them to become more focused on the mission of the church and helping the church embrace that vision. Church planters need to build a church that is about Jesus and their legacy. It is about making an impact that outlasts them.<sup>226</sup>

How is this done? What strategy works and will not work? The next chapter assesses a strategy to engage Hopewell with the gospel, and its results over the past 12 months. This will be an all-encompassing dive into what has already been discussed. Prayerfully, it will help all that are beginning to plant in their small urban communities.

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<sup>226</sup> Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision*, 47.

## Chapter 4

### A Missional Strategy that Results in Multiplication

Building a missional strategy to reach the needs of Hopewell while pointing them to Christ starts with having the proper focus. The focus is to do that, which brings glory to God. Ed Stetzer said that this focus should shape our schedules and priorities.<sup>227</sup> A large part of this strategy is always to have a kingdom mindset. The Word exhorts the hearers always to seek the kingdom first.<sup>228</sup> “As kingdom-minded people, we must share and show the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ in everything we do for His glory.”<sup>229</sup>

Having a kingdom mindset changes the way ministry is done. It is what makes up the difference between having a mission, doing missions, and being missional. Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im state that a mission defines the “intended goal or purpose,” while doing missions is more of having a Christian presence where there has not necessarily been one previously.<sup>230</sup> A church can do good things that glorify God and not be missional.<sup>231</sup> Being missional means joining in the mission of God, where He has placed one for His glory.<sup>232</sup> One can be a missionary without ever stepping out of cities where one is planted, like Hopewell.<sup>233</sup>

Adopting a missional strategy means looking at everything that a body of believers does in terms of having the kingdom mindset. Ed Stetzer helps put together a plan of action by exhorting the reader to understand their mission to share Jesus with a broken world, help address

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<sup>227</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 166.

<sup>228</sup> Matt. 6:33

<sup>229</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 21.

<sup>230</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 21.

<sup>231</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 21.

<sup>232</sup> Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 21.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

imminent needs around oneself, and have a local and broader perspective while being missional.<sup>234</sup> To accomplish this task, the church cannot be spectators any longer on the sidelines; the church must be actively involved in God's redemptive plan.<sup>235</sup>

Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold call for church planters to be like architects.<sup>236</sup> Church planters have a blank canvas in front of them, and they can choose to create a new culture rather than adapting to a pre-existing culture.<sup>237</sup> Part of that new culture is setting the tone that one has never looked at someone who does not matter to God, and that includes looking in the mirror. Everyone matters to God. To discount people or treat them as a mission project, misses the point of being missional. This calls the church to get out of their comfort zone. It is often easier to serve others than to see them as potential members of the kingdom whom one will be walking beside or even leading them to reach others for Christ.

This chapter will focus on the missional application of meeting the needs of the community, evangelizing the lost, and discipling the saved to be sent back out on mission for Christ. This church planting strategy assessment revolves around seeing how one can meet the needs of the community while pointing people to Christ. How is this done? What is the resulting impact? Is it sustainable? These are all questions that will help plant in Hopewell and similar communities around the community and world. The plans must be in a way that is effective in ministering to all people in Christ for God's glory.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 57-59.

<sup>235</sup> Brooks, *Church Forsaken*, 9.

<sup>236</sup> Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision*, 169.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 168.

## Meeting Needs Missionally

Meeting needs missionally is all about meeting people where they are and pointing them to Jesus. The surveys that were analyzed above show a lack of that being accomplished in the city. There are a lot of good missions work being done in the city, but missing out on seeing these mission efforts as a way to reach people for Christ intentionally. This is where implementing a missional emphasis on everything that is done can be a helpful change.

How can a church meet the needs of the city while pointing them to Jesus and help other churches do the same to the glory of God? This must be a priority of the church. The church was created not for the church, but for the world.<sup>239</sup> Jesus sent the twelve out on a mission to preach the gospel while taking care of those in need.<sup>240</sup> One was not at the exclusion of the other. Both were done at the same time. This is being missional with the gospel.

The desire is to never compete with other churches but to work with them in accomplishing the goal that everyone has an opportunity to know Christ. That is why the surveys that were done and reported in Chapter 3 are so important. If the many needs in the city were being met missionally, duplication can be a time-waster and not a kingdom-maker. It is essential to do investigative work to see what is already being done and ask the question Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson ask proactively, “What does it look like to be good news in that setting?”<sup>241</sup>

## Missional Meals

Poverty and Homelessness are two of the most significant areas of concern in the city of Hopewell. Part of the area churches work in this area is to provide dinner to those in need. As

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<sup>239</sup> Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 57.

<sup>240</sup> Mark 6:7-13.

<sup>241</sup> Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 239.

noted earlier, there are currently meals being served six days a week. As an initial entry into serving this need, the church plant was able to secure one Saturday night every other month to serve meals to those in need. This enabled the team to investigate what was working and help design a plan to make this a more missional approach.<sup>242</sup>

In keeping with the desire to not compete with what other churches are already doing, while at the same time, shifting these focuses to a more missional approach, the church plant did not want to add another evening meal. Jesus met the needs of people while pointing them back to himself. With many not having food, He challenged His disciples to find food for those in need while teaching them to trust God for the provisions at the same time.<sup>243</sup> When Jesus gave God thanks for the miraculous provisions, the disciples' faith were deepened, and those in need were fed physically and spiritually even if they did not grasp it at the time.

Our meeting place at the Beacon Theatre hosted many national artists on weekends for concerts. Thinking outside the box, the manager of the venue noticed the many needy people visiting the church while at the same time, they often had leftover meals from the previous night's artist. These were boxed to serve those in need. However, no additional meals were added since the purpose behind the meals was the main objective. The desire is for people to be fed physically and spiritually. As a stipulation to get a meal after service, one must first attend the service. The gospel should be the primary focus, not an afterthought of caring for anyone, including those in need of meals.<sup>244</sup>

This was a change from what the prevailing culture had dictated. People were used to getting a meal without having to put in any effort. The requirement that one must be in service to

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<sup>242</sup> Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 239.

<sup>243</sup> Matt. 14:16

<sup>244</sup> Yohannan, *Revolution in World Missions*, 113.

get a meal was an intentional addition. It elicited some tough love on those who showed up after service expecting to get in line, but now it is a known expectation. What started as five meals after service on a Sunday, grew to a team of up to ten people preparing meals for at least thirty to forty people after service every week.

This is more missional in application than what had been done in the past, but what are the results? Over twelve-months, over 2,000 meals have been prepared and prayed over before being handed out. Twelve people have come to Christ through these meals with a purpose. In addition, 10-20% of those receiving meals now serve the church in some capacity, those receiving meals invite others to come to church and be fed physically and spiritually, and our members have embraced this as a part of their mission. Lastly, 15 of those receiving meals have entered into our main weekly discipleship group.

The chart below shows salvations by simply meeting the physical needs of those in need of a meal. The churches surveyed saw no one come to Christ through meals. The plant church only had one come to Christ when it served the meal without the gospel message. However, when the plant church became the only church in the city providing a meal after worship service on Sunday, the resulting data revealed a startling difference between only serving a meal and serving the meal with a gospel presentation. This is a missional activity that does not compete with any other churches in the area that served meals as a mission outreach. The attendance at all the meals is made up of mostly the same people who receive the meals daily. The difference is that there is an outward focus on reaching them for Christ.

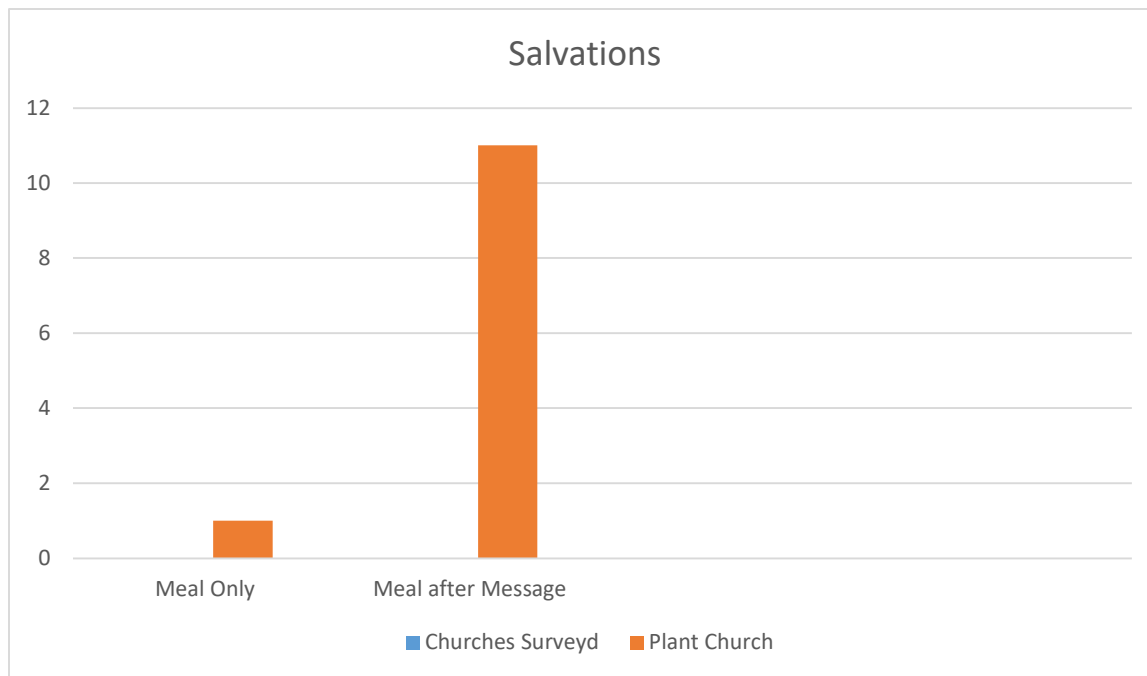


Figure 13. Number of Salvations

There are a couple of important notes to the data above (Figure. 13). First, they started coming to the service based on members investing in their lives not just during the bi-monthly meal but also seeing that they received meals in the community during the week. Many of the people who receive these meals live close by, and few have transportation. This relationship that started with the meals was the entry point into introducing them to Jesus and into a discipleship relationship, which will be addressed later. As Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe stated, “methods of developing relationships look different in each situation.”<sup>245</sup>

This leads to the second point, none of those saved at the missional meals were saved at the service. The meal was what got them in the door, investing in their lives and pointing them to Jesus led to their salvation. The resulting impact was not only their salvation, but those who responded to the gospel were subsequently inviting others to church, often just using the free meal as a way to get them into the church. This shows the importance of being a missional

<sup>245</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*. 130.

church in the community. People often do not want to know what someone knows until they see that someone caring for them.

### Missional with Homelessness

While homelessness was ranked third on the surveys done in the city, there were no churches with direct involvement with the homeless out of the survey respondents. There was one pastor who developed a plan called “The Hope House” that directed the homeless to resources that would assist them. The Hope House pamphlet and the seasonal shelter leased by the city and run by Catholic Charities were the hubs for homeless people outside of social services. The church plant saw the opportunity to be missional in ministering to and reaching the homeless community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>246</sup>

The church planters engaged the homeless community by meeting them where they are and pointing them to Jesus. Some, but not all, of those served during the nightly meals were part of the homeless community. Others choose to avoid community and find meals in other places. To reach this population of the city, they need to be able to hear the gospel, but it is better if they see the gospel in those that preach it first. The church planter needs to respect every person, regardless of who they are, and be sympathetic to what they were feeling or going through.<sup>247</sup>

The church planters began by walking up to every person on the streets and inviting them to church, whether we knew they were homeless or not as part of this process. This was followed up with sandwiches and handing out drinks on the street corner to build conversations. It was a slightly different form of investing than those at the meals, but it was for the same purpose:

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<sup>246</sup> Coe and Willis, *Life on Mission*, 115.

<sup>247</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 119.

kingdom Growth.<sup>248</sup> The church planters wanted to get the opportunity to know every person in downtown personally and what was happening in their lives; providing for a physical need was an entry path to being able to invite them to church.

One by one, the homeless community started coming to church and inviting other homeless to join them. This response was what the pastors in Detroit had mentioned during the prior mission trips to the city. The physical needs are so great that it is easy to focus solely on their immediate needs and worry about kingdom needs at a later point in time. Something that was both a mission and being missional at the same time had to be developed.

On praying how one can be a vessel for Christ to help get those off the streets while discipling them in Christ at the same time, the team developed a plan that can be broken into four steps: spiritual, mentorship, growth, and go. The first step is to assess their spiritual condition to see what measures are needed to help the homeless know Christ, and if they already have a relationship with Christ, help them grow in Christ.

All the homeless community who attended church also stayed after to receive a meal. This provided a conversation period while they waited for the meal to have one on one conversations about their personal relationship with Jesus. This gave the planting team an opportunity to know whom to focus on for more in-depth conversations when they were handing out meals on the streets or visiting the warming shelter. The missional portion of working with the homeless has seen approximately ten come to Christ in twelve months.

The missional aspect does not negate the mission aspect of working with the homeless community as the team sought a continuing mentorship relationship with everyone who would be open to receive help so that they may ultimately grow and go. The mentorship, growth, and go

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<sup>248</sup> Coe and Willis, *Life on Mission*, 124.

are designed to help see what is keeping them on the streets and how members of the team can walk beside them to get them off the streets. This ranged from something as simple as arranging to get a birth certificate for a job to providing assistance in filling out job applications and resumes. Each step takes intentionality and taking on the posture of an everyday missionary.<sup>249</sup> Through being both missional and on mission, the results have been positive for the kingdom.

The number of homeless changes rapidly in an urban town; therefore, numbers are always evolving. However, over twelve months, thirty of the roughly forty homeless in the city routinely attend church. Ten have come to Christ, and a majority of them are engaged in the weekly discipleship. In addition, thirteen homeless are now off the streets and into their own places or have been taken in by members of the church. Two additional homeless have been helped into rehabilitation programs.

This success level has come with each person understanding the kingdom's focus on their roles in this ministry. As Ed Stetzer said, they are living with the confidence that this is what Jesus wants them to do and are gratefully serving Him for His glory.<sup>250</sup> This has been embraced by one of the former homeless persons who continued to stay at the shelter occasionally, to foster relationships and point others there to Jesus as someone did for him.

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<sup>249</sup> Coe and Willis, *Life on Mission*, 29.

<sup>250</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 77.

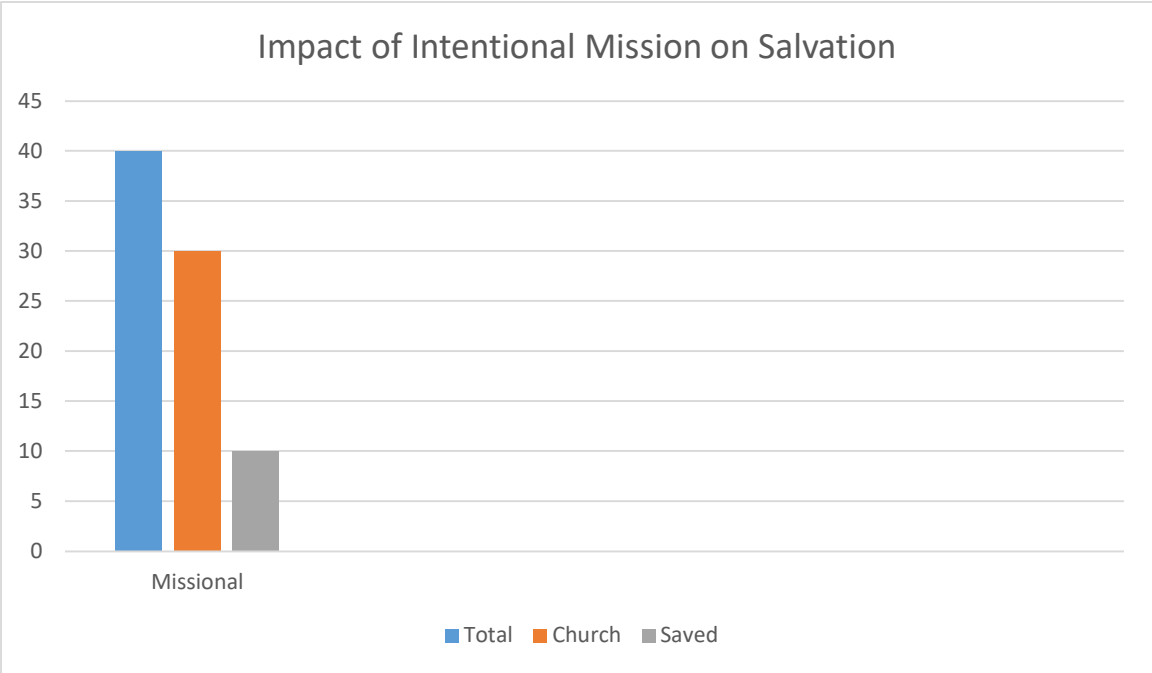


Figure 14 Impact of Intentional Mission on Salvation

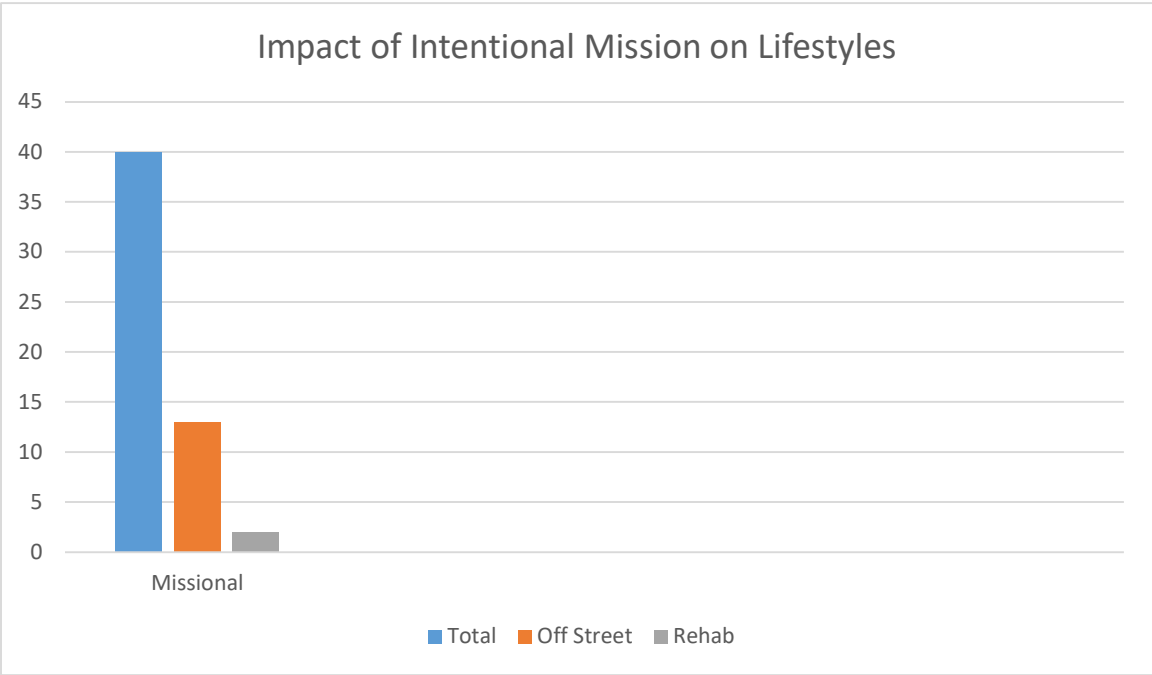


Figure 15 Impact of Intentional Mission on Lifestyles

The charts above (Figures 14 and 15) show the possibility of being both missional and on mission at the same time. The first chart shows the total number of homeless with the orange bar indicating how many of them came to church. The last bar is how many of those were saved. The second chart shows the missional impact of investing in their lives and seeing significant changes.

The challenge is that as many get homes, there are more that become homeless. Further research is needed to streamline the process to help get those who desire to be off the streets into homes. This is intensive and requires time and resources that church plants often do not have at the beginning. Ideally, a couple of people could be identified that have a passion for this ministry and brought on staff as the Lord allows.

### Missional with Drugs

The main issue in the city based on survey respondents were drugs. The team had to pray through how the church could best be used to impact the community in the area of its greatest need. There are a lot of meetings and desire for the drug issue to be overcome, but little intentional action to make that a reality. As Jonathan Brooks rightly advised, the team prayed for opportunities to engage with those lost in drug addiction.<sup>251</sup> This is the same mentality taken with the meals and homeless community. It was now proceeding into the drug issue in the city.

How can the church be an impact on those who are addicted to drugs? This is when the team laid a blank canvas down and prayed for a way to create a new culture in the city.<sup>252</sup> What is a missional way to reach those addicted to drugs and have them encounter Christ, be changed by Christ, and then sent out on mission for Christ to the glory of God? For change to happen in

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<sup>251</sup> Brooks, *Church Forsaken*, 84.

<sup>252</sup> Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision*, 169.

the city, addicts would not only be engaged with the gospel, but they would be the best to reach others for the gospel.

For change to occur outside of the church walls, there must be a radical change on the inside first. It was apparent that a culture needed to be created that would embrace addicts in the church and not just be a program of the church.<sup>253</sup> This was going to be the only way to reach addicts for Christ and send them back out on mission for Christ. Through prayer, the Lord led the team to a program called *Celebrate Recovery*.

*Celebrate Recovery* is a Christ-centered recovery program for anyone that has a hurt, habit, or hang-up in their lives.<sup>254</sup> It is designed as a place where people can find community with other people suffering from various issues in life. The difference between *Celebrate Recovery* and other programs in the community is this is Christ-centered, not only inwardly, but outwardly. People are taught to see how Christ can give them the breakthrough in their lives and freedom from the strongholds they are dealing with personally.<sup>255</sup>

One of the major benefits of this ministry to a church-plant is that the structure has already been established. Having curriculum and structure already provided and training available made it easy to implement into the community. There were five other *Celebrate Recovery* programs within a twenty-mile radius being used in churches across multiple-denominations. The *Celebrate Recovery* in Hopewell was the first one in a small-urban setting.

The structure of the program is consistent, regardless of which group one attends. There is such a strong community of people in this program that many seek other meetings in the area

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<sup>253</sup> Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision*, 169.

<sup>254</sup> Celebrate Recovery. "A Christ-Centered 12-Step Program." *Celebrate Recovery*. Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://www.celebraterecovery.com/>

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

to attend on nights their home church does not meet. There is a form of worship music, testimony, or teaching followed by open share groups separated by gender and, if possible, by issues. This not only provided structure but opportunities to disciple new people.

Wednesday nights were chosen to hold meetings, making Hopewell the only available *Celebrate Recovery* meeting on that night while also folding this into the other church activities, including community groups and student ministries happening at the same time. This went with the vision to make it a part of the church and not simply a church program. The timing also allowed other experienced *Celebrate Recovery* attendees to come to join the team as their churches did not have meetings that night. This provided some mentorship to those new in the program.

It was essential to train the team that it was not about the program, but about the mission to reach people for Christ, disciple them, and send them back out on mission for Christ. The community data in chapter three on drugs had programs, but not outwardly Christ-centered programs for people with addictions. Keeping the mission as the focus allowed the team to stay missional with this program. People are the mission, not the program.

The results over the twelve months were intriguing. The program created a culture in the community that the church was a place where people with addictions were welcome and accepted. The results isolating just the Wednesday night meetings would be rewarding by itself. Attendance for the meetings on Wednesday averaged twenty to thirty people. Through just the meeting on Wednesday nights, three people have come to know Christ as their Lord. The program spawned a step-study that is an avenue for personal growth for people in *Celebrate Recovery*. One men's and one women's step study was completed with leaders being developed out of those studies to launch a second women's step study on Sundays before the services. The

men had three in attendance for this six-month study, with the women having six for the initial one. The women's step-study developed two leaders to now teach five new ladies on Sunday mornings before our services.

As mentioned above, this program has created a culture in the community for the church plant. Approximately 90% of those who attend Wednesday night meetings were members and servants in the church, and the culture has brought in others who are not part of the *Celebrate Recovery* program to hear the gospel. While three came to Christ as a direct result of the program, twenty came indirectly as a result of the focus on helping those with addiction. Of those twenty, at least five have brought others to church to receive Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives. The following is a pie chart (Figure 16) that shows the proportion of people coming directly to Christ and those coming indirectly because of the focus on addictions in the *Celebrate Recovery* program.

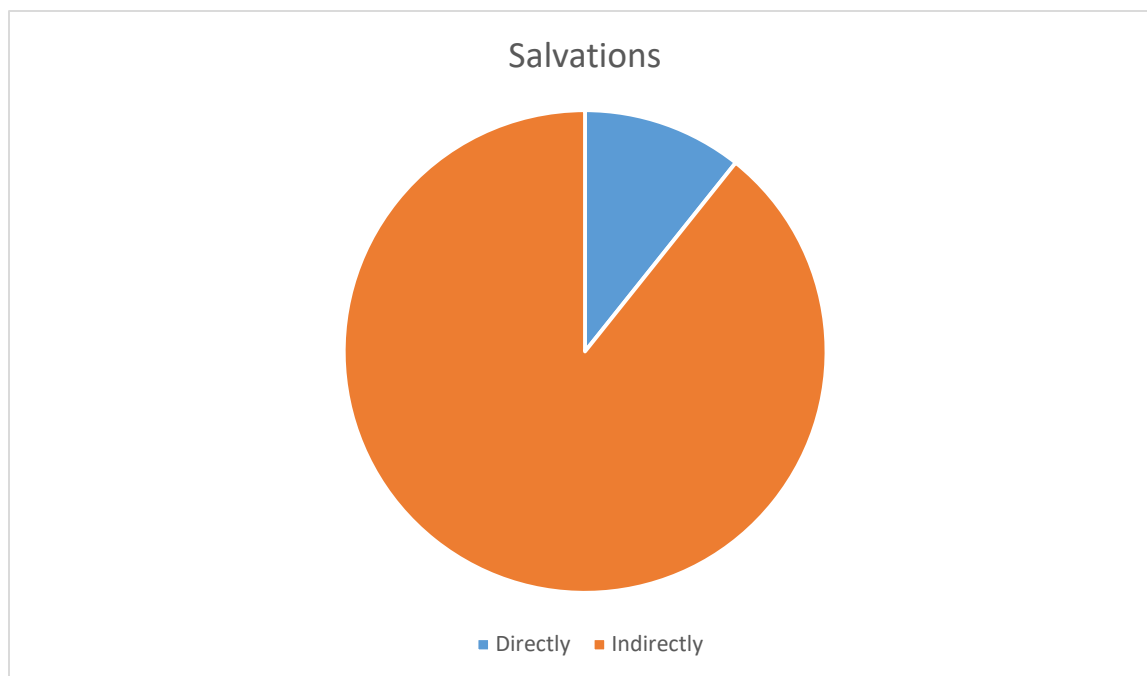


Figure 16 Direct and Indirect Salvations

The salvations shows the results of a missional focus on reaching those with addictions. However, Christ does not call us to make Christians only; He calls us to make disciples.<sup>256</sup> The discipleship component of this has seen a ministry start with two people, which has now grown to ten people leading this ministry on Wednesday nights. This growth in leaders came from spreading awareness of the program to others in the church. The initial leaders trained new leaders and have helped spread responsibilities while growing new leaders. Also, new Christians are bringing new people to come and see what Christ has done for them and are seeing those people come to Christ as well.

#### Missional Community Groups

The Great Commission commands the church to go and make disciples.<sup>257</sup> This command includes not only leading those to Christ, baptizing them in the name of Christ, but also teaching

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<sup>256</sup> Matt. 28:16-20.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

them everything about Christ.<sup>258</sup> This is where the disconnect in the church has happened. The church is usually geared towards leading people to Christ or teaching them about Christ, but not guiding them to be disciple-making disciples. This is primarily what the church has been taught. The result is that people do not know what it means to be a Christian or the responsibility that comes with being a disciple of Christ. It is not that people do not want to honor Christ; it is that they do not know what a disciple of Christ entails.<sup>259</sup>

Many books will point people to how to be a healthy church and grow as a Christian, but they do not teach how this all works together for God's glory. Stephen Macchia speaks of how Jesus poured Himself into his disciples in building community as an example of how to build a healthy church.<sup>260</sup> Another trait that was shared was that for a church to be healthy, they must also have an outward focus.<sup>261</sup> These are both vital traits in becoming a healthy church, but also show the disconnect in why churches are not healthy. Most are not taught to do this as one, but as separate parts of what it means to be a Christian. The command to make disciples that was given to the church was clearly for both not an either-or. The survey data of the churches in Chapter 3 (Figures 11 and 12) shows this disconnect happening in Hopewell, where some of the new believers were not discipled, and none were sent out to reach others for Christ.

In seeking a missional idea of discipleship that would both grow the church deeper and wider at the same time, a different approach would have to be undertaken. How can the community be built while growing the church deeper and teaching them to share the same

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<sup>258</sup> Matt. 28:18-20.

<sup>259</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 210.

<sup>260</sup> Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 80.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 135.

message with others who do not know Christ? At the same time, how can people who are new to Christ teach others about Christ? This is missional discipleship.

The traditional method of Sunday school as the primary discipleship method has shown not to be effective in helping people grow in Christ and be on mission for Christ. The data show few coming to Christ through the primary discipleship method of the church. Some churches have been effective in assimilating new believers into the church's primary discipleship method. However, none in the survey data has been effective in equipping and sending these back out to reach others for Christ.

David Platt and Francis Chan took a huge step in the right direction with their works entitled *Follow Me* and *Multiply*. In *Follow Me*, David Platt addresses the command to make disciples by encouraging the reader that God does not give the disciples an impossible command.<sup>262</sup> God gives the power through the Holy Spirit for ordinary Christians to teach others about Christ.<sup>263</sup> Platt goes on to exhort the reader by sharing that a disciple of Jesus is called to make other disciples for Jesus.<sup>264</sup> This work helps the reader make their own discipleship plan, but even David Platt recognizes that this is a small attempt at correcting a colossal problem in discipleship.<sup>265</sup>

*Multiply* by Francis Chan can be viewed as a complement to *Follow Me*. It was designed to help be a starter to teach people how to make disciples of Christ.<sup>266</sup> The goal is to help the reader grow deeper in the Word while giving them tools to help disciple others at the same

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<sup>262</sup> Platt, *Follow Me*, xiv.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>266</sup> Chan, *Multiply*, 8.

time.<sup>267</sup> The add on to this work versus *Follow Me* is that it encourages the disciple-maker to not only teach Scripture but teach as they share life with other people.<sup>268</sup> This incorporates the missional work of meeting the needs of the community while pointing people to Jesus.

Discipleship and living life together.

Both *Multiply* and *Follow Me* are great discipleship tools. They both exhort the reader to own their responsibility that they have been entrusted with to make other disciples. However, they both stop short of teaching a way to do both: lead people to Christ and teach them about Christ. Sunday school curriculum, books on discipleship are great tools, but the goal is transformed lives that are living on mission for Christ.<sup>269</sup> People will assimilate into any method that the leader gives them, but transformation comes when people understand the "why" of the method that is being used.<sup>270</sup>

People need to understand the "why." There can be no mistake about the "why" of the discipleship methods. Otherwise, one will build country club communities and not disciple-making bodies. The second step is to develop a strategy that will help incorporate as many aspects of the Great Commission with the early church as possible.<sup>271</sup> How can the church grow in community, live life together, and add to the kingdom all at one time?

#### *T4T: Training for Trainers Discipleship*

With the desire to be missional in everything that is done, *T4T* was chosen as the primary discipleship method. It is the backbone for teaching people how to teach others. It wants the

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>268</sup> Chan, *Multiply*, 10.

<sup>269</sup> Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 68.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>271</sup> Matt. 28:16-20, Acts 2:42-47.

disciple of Christ to partner with the Holy Spirit in creating movements for Christ that impact generations.<sup>272</sup> It challenges the reader to ask themselves what they would like to see at the end of their ministries and put a practical plan in place to accomplish that vision.<sup>273</sup> In addition, it is designed to simplify the gospel presentation and learning and to help anyone understand it and teach others.<sup>274</sup>

The plan is designed to teach people how to win people to Christ, teach them about Christ, and send them back out on mission for Christ. It is not a new idea, but something that is seen in the book of Acts. Paul reached people for Christ, trained them up even in the face of opposition, and sent them back out on mission.<sup>275</sup> This is a pivotal aspect of leading the church to be a multiplying missional church. It is not only necessary; it is biblical.<sup>276</sup>

While the whole process of *T4T* is designed to teach the believer how to meet someone, share the gospel, and then walk beside them into a discipleship relationship, this section will be focused on the community group portion of *T4T*. The essentials of the format are to have a time where the group looks back, looks up, and looks ahead.<sup>277</sup> All community groups in the startup church had this as the core discipleship program, with some added a form of dinner prior, in keeping with the early church.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 19.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Steffen, *Minimizing crosscultural evangelism noise*, 419.

<sup>275</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 32.

<sup>276</sup> Eph. 4:12.

<sup>277</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 143.

<sup>278</sup> Acts 2:42-47

Several elements can be incorporated into the first section of the community group. These can include a time of pastoral care, worship, accountability, and vision casting.<sup>279</sup> For the church plant groups, three questions were asked that incorporate the look back portion of the group. Those questions to the members were: “How has your week been?” (pastoral care), “How has your quiet time been?” (accountability), and “How can we pray for you this week to grow in Christ?” (vision casting).

The participants in the first section are often broken up by gender. This allows for deeper community and openness amongst members of the group. It also challenges each person to learn how to pray for one another in a smaller setting that will hopefully lead to them praying for others in larger settings. This allows the discipleship to be both growing deeper in Christ while teaching them to be missional for Christ. This discipleship time usually lasts approximately twenty minutes.

The second section is called “look up.” This is where the lesson is taught. What differs from this style of a lesson than a typical Sunday school lesson is that it is designed to be reproducible.<sup>280</sup> Anyone in the group should be able to take the lesson and share it with someone during the week. This could be a family member, someone at work, or someone the Lord brings into their lives between meetings. This type of format keeps a missional focus in view but still leaves it up to the individual on whether they follow through with sharing others.

The reproducible format adopted for the groups centered around six questions, “What does the passage say about God?” “What do we learn about people?” “Is there a sin to avoid?” “Is there an example to follow?” “Is there a promise to believe?” and “Is there a command to

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<sup>279</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 143.

<sup>280</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 143.

obey?”. This format allows anyone to be able to participate in a group from a new believer to a seasoned saint. It also puts the teacher in a trainer role that encourages others to grow. This fosters not only discipleship but future group leaders. The time allotted for this section is typically forty minutes.

The last section is called, “look ahead.”<sup>281</sup> This is when the lesson can be practiced with others and goals set for the next week, in addition to prayer time.<sup>282</sup> It challenges each member of the group to be missional during the week. What specifically would they like to see Christ do in their life this week? Then the meeting is closed in prayer for God to open doors that would allow those goals to be attained. The prayer is not only a time of being commissioned but also the framework for the opening of the next group meeting with accountability.

In theory, this format allows people to come to Christ, grow in Christ, and be sent out on mission for Christ. As groups grow past twelve to sixteen, there would be four people raised up to be the core of starting a new group. This keeps the groups focused on being missional and away from growing comfortable in their respective groups.

#### Community Group – Control Groups

The core group started with twenty-four people in the pastor’s house. This was a season of vision casting, training, and implementation of the *T4T* method of discipleship. It enabled the body to see a discipleship method that they may not have been accustomed to in the past. Also, it gave a chance to try out different elements of this process, such as worship, communion, and

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<sup>281</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 143.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

even baptism during the group meetings.<sup>283</sup> The format was adapted as necessary to come up with the elements that are mentioned in the previous section.

After training, two groups were launched in the city of Hopewell from the core group. One group met at a public library on Wednesday nights while the other group met at a local business on Friday nights. The core group continued to meet on Tuesday nights. For comparison purposes, the core group will be identified as CG1, with the library group identified as CG2. Finally, the business group will be labeled CG3. A twelve-month comparison will be made for each group. CG1 had twelve in average attendance after birthing the two new groups. CG2 started with six, while CG3 started with four.

After twelve months, CG1 was averaging eighteen in attendance. CG1 had two people come to Christ at the meeting themselves. It also launched another group on Thursday nights geared towards young adults, with three of the CG1 participants taking part in the launch. This group will be identified as CG4. In addition, four homeless people and two people from the meal ministry became part of CG1. CG1 also had two recovering addicts. Approximately 25% of CG1 were new believers, and nearly 50% of the group was directly related to the core ministries of the church.

CG2 had attendance average twelve over the first twelve months. It had assimilated four of the homeless community into the group. In addition, two people became regular attendees from having the group in a public building. One of those two attendees came to Christ, and they brought their daughter, who came to know Christ. CG2 did not launch another group during the twelve months. CG2 did, however, send out members to help with the Celebrate Recovery launch that was on the same night and still maintained its attendance average. Approximately

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<sup>283</sup> Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 225.

25% of CG2 were new believers, and 33% of the attendees were connected to the core ministries of the church.

CG3 was launched with a newer believer as its leader. It averaged twelve people during its tenure. Three of the twelve were military members who were trained and sent out with the *T4T* discipleship method to their new assignments. There were four from the homeless community in CG3 with two recovering addicts. CG3 had an outreach event that resulted in one new member to the group and the church. CG3 did not launch another group during the twelve months and folded up due to work constraints of the owner of the business, and when two other core members, who were in the military, transferred away at the same time. There were no known salvations in this group during its tenure. Approximately 25% of CG3 were new believers, and 50% of the attendees were connected to the core ministries of the church.

CG4 was launched with three young adults, with the leader being a newer believer. The group currently averages eight in attendance. The group started with once-a-month meetings and has grown to start having weekly meetings. The group meets in Hopewell at a local Starbucks. Approximately 25% of CG4 are new believers, with 12.5% of the attendees coming as a direct result of our core ministries.

### Community Group Impact

Over twelve months, each of the community groups had held to its core process while assimilating members of our missional emphasis into the groups. CG1 was able to continue growth and launch the fourth group. CG2 was not able to launch a group during the period; however, it sent out members to be a part of another core group: *Celebrate Recovery*. Additionally, they are about to launch CG5. CG3, while folded, has seen all of its members, but one, stay involved in the core ministries of the church.

## Missional Strategy Overview

Over twelve months, the average attendance of the groups grew from the initial group of twenty-four to an average total attendance of fifty across all groups. Furthermore, 25% of the groups were made up of people that came as a direct result of the missional efforts of meals, homeless, and working with addicts. Lastly, 50% of the groups are now being led by people who came to Christ since the groups formed. The group details are captured in Figure 17, and the missional assimilation aggregate is shown in Figure 18.

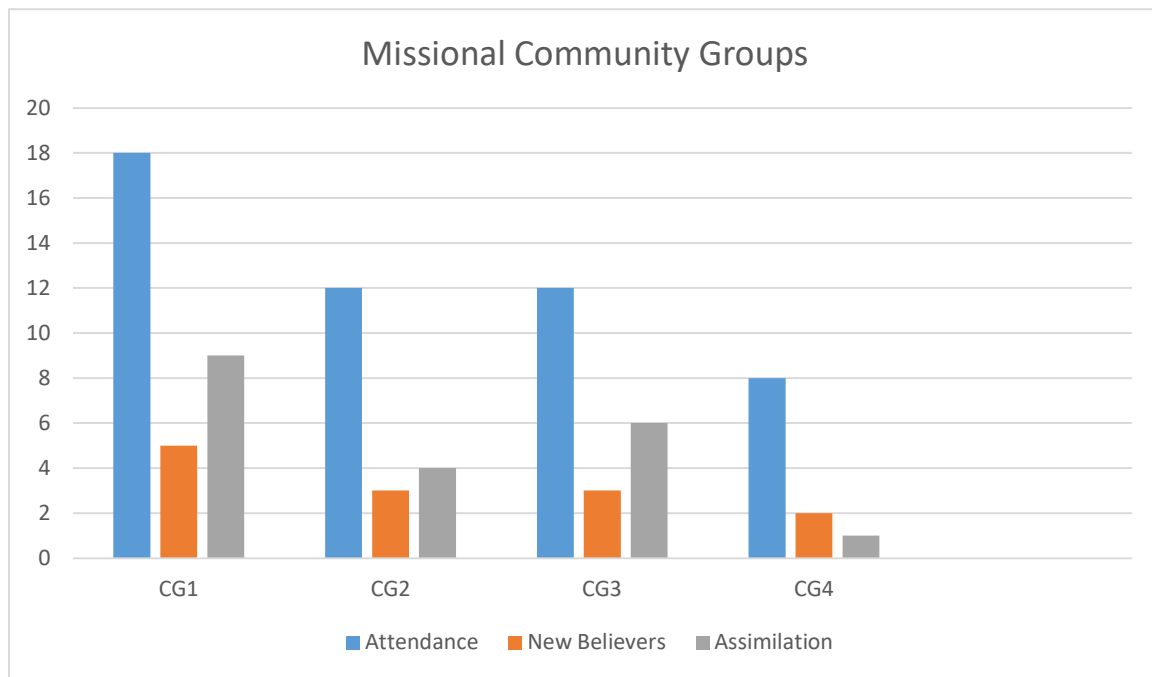


Figure 17 Missional Community Groups

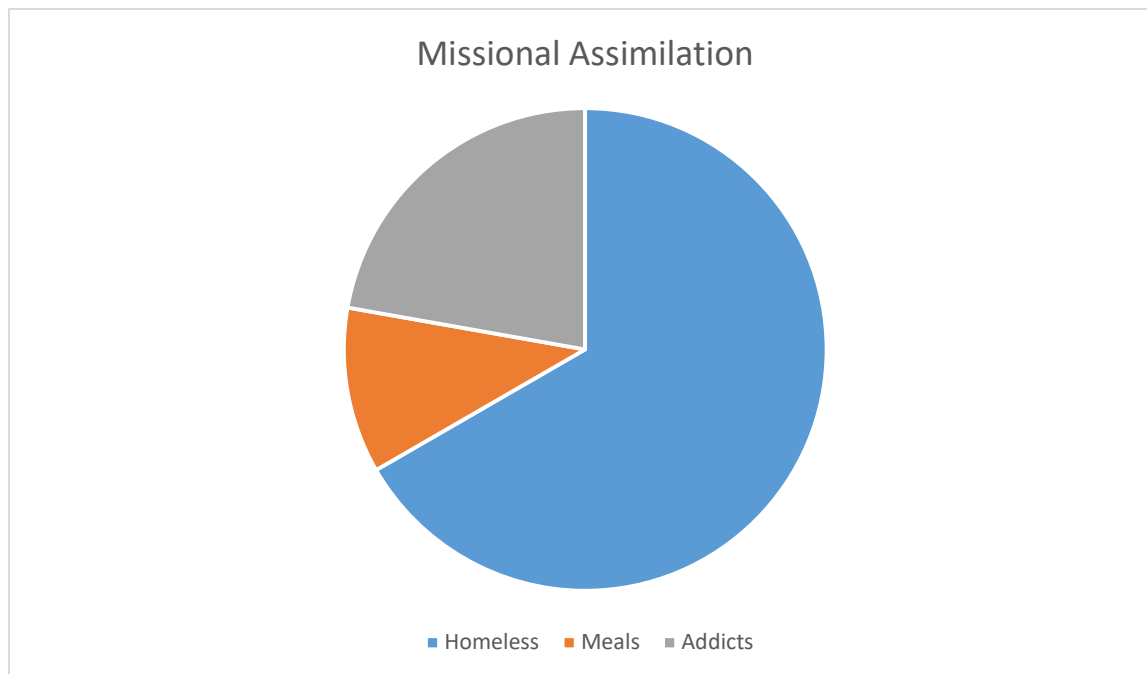


Figure 18 Missional Assimilation

Each of the groups was able to keep the core vision of the church, which is meeting people where they are and pointing them to Christ while implementing the discipleship plan of the church. People who were served in the community were now becoming members of the church community. In addition, while the core group was started outside of the plant city, each successive group was formed within the focal area of the city. Two of those groups were located within walking distance of where church services were held on Sunday. The other group, young adults, met on the other side of town, expanding the influence of the community groups through the city.

The challenges that came up from these groups were providing adequate training for the group leaders consistently. As the groups expanded, there was less availability for the pastor to be a part of each group. This is missional, multiplying discipleship. However, further study needs to be done on how to continue to mentor leaders while multiplying the groups

## Chapter 5

### Further Study

Sometimes the church can get so focused on doing good things that the main thing is forgotten. The main thing is that people would come to know Christ, grow in Christ, and be sent out on mission for Christ. Unfortunately, many times the church gets sidetracked doing the work of the Lord that the Lord of the work is left out. This is not intentional, just the by-product of not having a missional vision cast and espoused by the leadership.

Every church should desire to be used by Christ for His glory. The body should be an irresistible influence in its community that sees what Christ promises, that He will draw people to Himself.<sup>284</sup> This involves the church being the church in the community for which it resides. It does not mean, as Robert Lewis found out, that the church needs to pour more money and time into events in the community.<sup>285</sup> He realized that the church needed to be disciplined to look more like Jesus and be sent out to be the hands and feet of Jesus.<sup>286</sup>

Cornelius Johannes and Petrus Niemandt support this view in their article on *Transformative Spirituality and Missional Leadership*. They argue that the church is to exist to be a transformative agent in the community that it serves.<sup>287</sup> The challenge is for the church to join with God in becoming agents of redemption in the community. When the church is focused on this, it enables them to organize the church around its mission.<sup>288</sup> It is pivotal for the church to keep the mission as its focus.

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<sup>284</sup> John 12:32.

<sup>285</sup> Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 47.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Petrus and Cornelius, "Transformative Spirituality," 89

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

As Robert Lewis points out that when this happens, the church can go from seeker-sensitive to community-admired.<sup>289</sup> They are seen to be a vital part of the community, not just another church doing missions work in the community. They argue that people will be drawn to church not for a weekly show, but to be with people that believe what they say and do what they believe.<sup>290</sup>

The results that have been shown from doing just that in this small urban town of Hopewell prove this to be true. While one is not to judge the eternal impact of any efforts of any church, one can see from the data that missional focus leads to lives being visibly changed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The chart below shows the known impact of the comparison churches with the missional emphasis church. This shows the four churches that were surveyed with their known impact from their outreach efforts versus the known salvations and impact from the missional emphasis.

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<sup>289</sup> Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 48.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

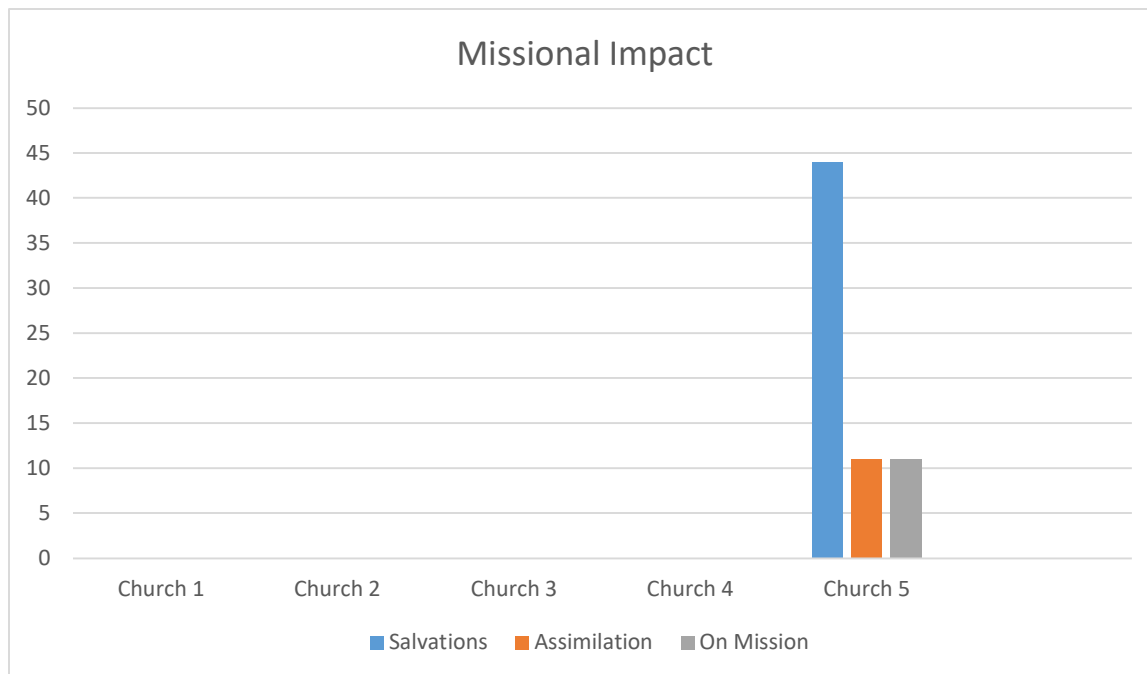


Figure 19 Missional Impact

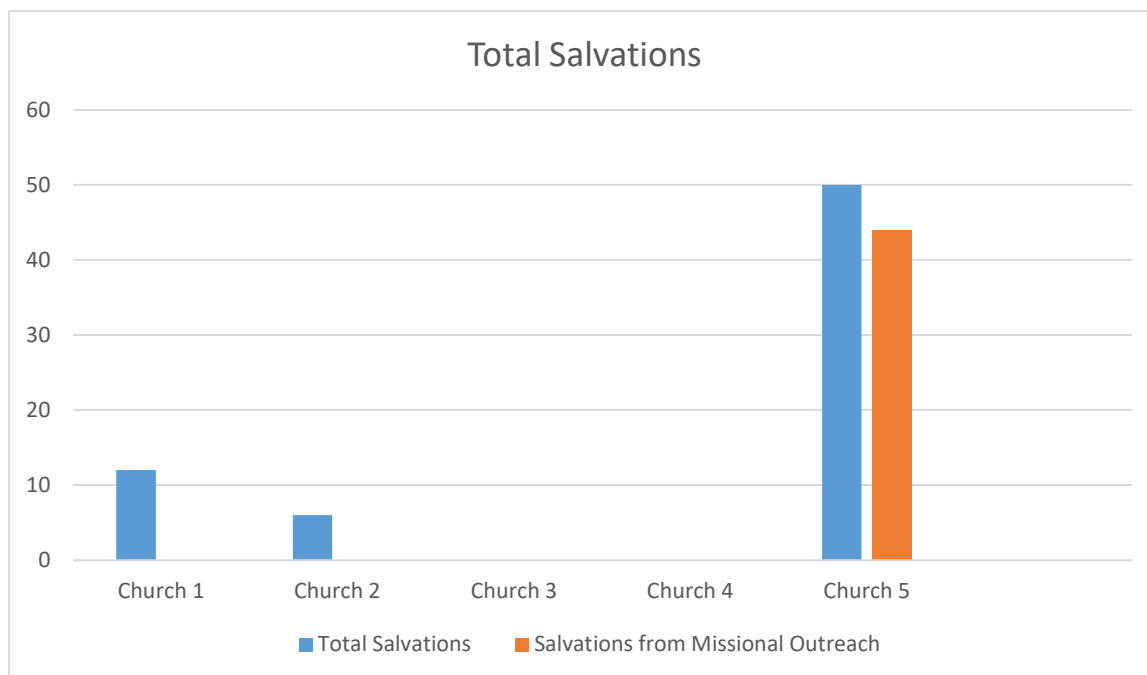


Figure 20 Total Salvations

There is one startling statistic that can easily be missed when comparing the differences between the four surveyed churches and the missional church in Figure. 19. Church five showed 50 salvations during the survey period. A majority of those salvations can be pointed back to the

missional intentionality focus of the church. Without the missional focus of church five, the salvations fall in line between church one and two in Figure. 20. There is a direct correlation between being missional and being a church that does mission work.

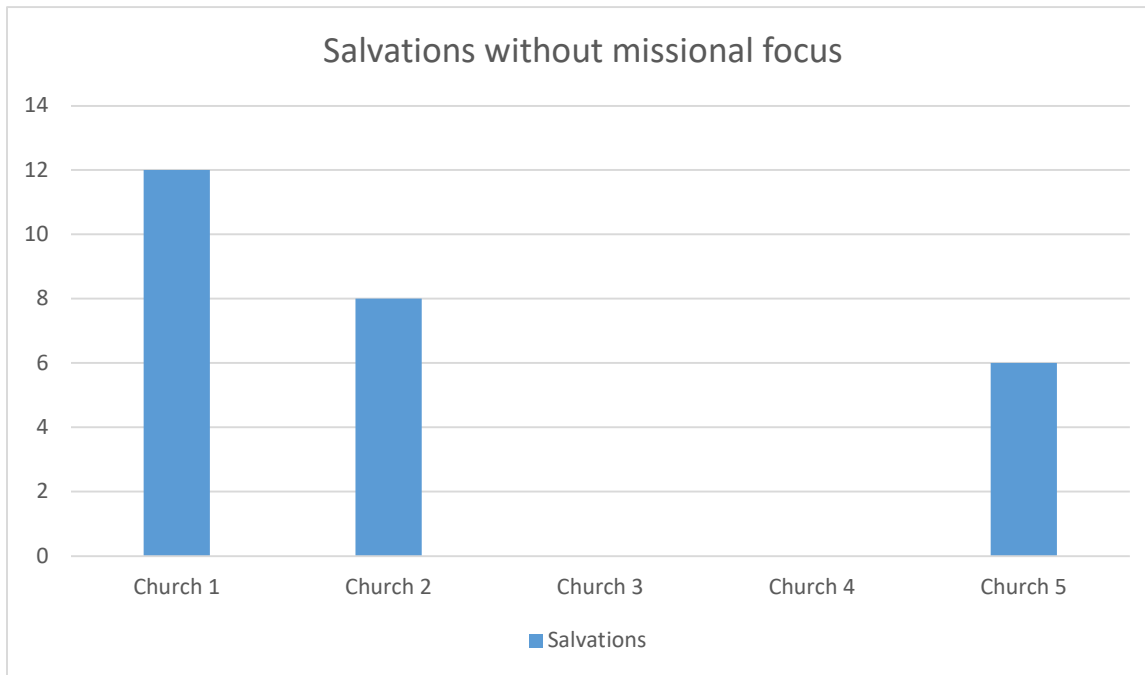


Figure 21 Salvations in Church 5 without Mission Focus

Without the focus on being missional, church five easily assimilates into a typical church in the city (See Figure. 21). The data has shown both eternal and temporal impact in the community. The missional meals emphasis has seen twelve salvations with 10-20% of those entering into our main discipleship. The homeless community has seen not only thirteen salvations, but 75% of those being homeless in the city coming to church weekly. Thirteen have found homes, and two have entered into a form of rehabilitation. Missional work with those with drug addictions has seen twenty-three people come to Christ, with some of them being former dealers of drugs. Many of those twenty-three have come as a result of other addicts inviting them to church.

In addition, having a missional focus has turned upside down the statistics of the age that people are most likely to come to Christ. Barna research has shown that only 23% of people come to know Christ as their Lord after the age of 18.<sup>291</sup> However, after twelve months of missional focus on homelessness, addiction, and the needy, over 80% of those becoming Christians were over 21. This has changed the mindset of low hanging fruit that is a target of most 20<sup>th</sup>-century church planters.<sup>292</sup> Bergquist and Cane argued that planters tried to harvest those who would come in the church walls without sowing the seeds outside the church walls.<sup>293</sup> Working missionally outside the walls of the church is often not seen as low-hanging fruit because it takes much work, and sometimes the results take longer to come to fruition.

By investing in the lives of people, the church has quickly become a pillar in the city and not just another building that houses church on Sunday. The church plant has built bridges with the community that welcomes the marginalized home rather than bunkers that keep them in the city at a distance. Churches have now embraced the new church rather than see it as competition. Five churches of different denominations are now partners in the mission to reach the least of these for Christ. The results are that lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and people now have hope.

### What Can be Done with the Results?

The encouraging results were only realized when the missional culture was set by the pastor and then embraced by the members of the church. The pastor has to have a passion for reaching all people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and not just a segment of the community.

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<sup>291</sup> Barna Group, “Evangelism is Most Effective Among Kids.” *Research Releases in Family and Kids*, October 11, 2004, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>.

<sup>292</sup> Berghuist and Cane, *City Shaped Churches*, 105.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas said that having a passion for reaching people developed a culture of God-filled enthusiasm.<sup>294</sup> Having a passion for reaching people is a must in being successful with the mission that God has given the church. When the pastor gets passionate about something, the church is soon to follow.<sup>295</sup> Without a passion for reaching people for the kingdom, the results above, and the next steps of the research will not matter.

The systems that were put in place to reach those in need, the homeless, and addicts are not programs. Loving thy neighbor as Christ has commanded cannot be reduced to something that is done mechanically.<sup>296</sup> It requires a lifestyle of consistently loving on and ministering to those that Christ has given to love well.<sup>297</sup> The mission must be embraced and become part of the fiber of the church.<sup>298</sup> The mission must shape the life and actions of the pastor and members of the Christian community.<sup>299</sup>

If a pastor desires a missional culture for the church, then much can be gleaned from the research results. This work has been dedicated to those starting something new in a small urban town. It is beyond the scope of this research project to help those in established churches, although the information can help those take a look at what is working and not working in their church. Established churches do not have a blank canvas to start drawing on; their situations are much more complicated.

For the church planter preparing to launch in a small urban town, take a detailed look at what the town is missing when it comes to reaching people for the gospel. The research above

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<sup>294</sup> Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 176.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Pettit, *Spiritual Formation*, 167.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Guder, "Mackay's Missional Vision," 296

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

can give a good indication of how to find out areas of the community that are in need of being transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To the church planter, “Prepare your heart, cast the vision, and train your church for what is to come.”

Do not take on more than one can handle. The survey showed that there are many needs in the city of Hopewell, but taking on too many at one time will quickly lead to burn-out or the church being ineffective in the mission. Any church can do good things, but it is called to do great things under the authority and power of the Holy Spirit. Do not be satisfied with doing a good job when God deserves our best. Bob Russell exhorts the church that the difference between good and excellence is that being excellent takes a lot more time.<sup>300</sup>

The church plant in this research focused on those in poverty, homelessness, and addiction. The Community Group format was used to assimilate each of those reached as a primary discipleship method. This alone was a God-sized task, but it helped the team to stay focused on the mission. For a new church planter, “Choose what helps you stay focused on reaching people for Christ and making an impact in your community.”

Each church is different. J. D. Greear’s church, Summit church, focused on five key areas: homeless, orphans, foster children, prisoners, and unwed mothers and widows and even high school drop-outs.<sup>301</sup> They looked at what was the key areas of need in their community and how the church could best meet those needs. The focus on key areas helped steer this research project’s church planters to focus on the few key areas of ministry that could be done effectively in their context. They embraced Psalm 68:5-6, which says God is the “father of the fatherless and a champion of widows.” and made it their mission to reach that segment of the city.<sup>302</sup> They

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<sup>300</sup> Russell, *When God Builds a Church*, 114.

<sup>301</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 151.

<sup>302</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 151.

wanted to focus on those and prayed that people would be lead out of prison to prosperity, and the homeless would find homes while at the same time pointing them to Jesus.<sup>303</sup>

The key is for the new church planter is to find out where their passion is. “What is God calling you to lead your church to be a change agent for the transformation of the community that He has planted you in for this season?” It is not about copying what someone else is doing but seeing what is not being done and joining in the mission in that community. It is never about one’s church, but always about the kingdom.

The new planters should consider these, “Once you have found out what you are passionate about seeing done in the community, pray about how you can do that while pointing people to Jesus. How can a food bank be turned into a missional food bank? How can a clothes-drive be turned into a missional clothes-drive? How can orphans go from being visited to being adopted into a family with the hope that one day they will come to Christ?” Change the glasses and see everything through the lens of Christ. The statistics are indisputable, and people still need the gospel; they just need the gospel taken to them in love. Take the gospel to the community with the desire to see it turned upside down with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>304</sup>

### Ideas for Further Study

The missional focus has been very effective in reaching people for Christ and bringing new people to hear the message of Christ. The opportunity areas are how to minister to the growing number of people from the core areas that included the homeless and those with addictions effectively. What can quickly happen and has happened throughout this research is that the pastor has begun to spread himself too thinly. A crisis unfolds as it did in Acts 6 when

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<sup>303</sup> Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*, 151.

<sup>304</sup> Acts 17:6.

the apostles needed to be freed up to minister the Word and pray.<sup>305</sup> Once the widows were taken care of, and the apostles were freed up to their primary task, the word spread, the disciples grew, and a great number were obedient to their calling.<sup>306</sup>

In this research, someone else was needed to take the lead in each additional focal area of the study. There needs to be someone trained to lead the community group expansion, the missionary meals, homelessness, and addicts. When a church plant sees people come to Christ, there is a need for more leaders to help disciple them in Christ to be future leaders. There is a need for ongoing training to help the lead pastor focus on prayer and ministry of the Word. When a church is planted, there are usually few that are able and equipped to lead the ministries where most are coming to Christ. In addition, to leaders of these ministries, training of new members getting involved in these areas while keeping the gospel-centered through it all is a must. Leadership development and training needs are critical areas for further research as every church plant's future is going to be dependant on the equipping of the saints.

This work is a start towards making a missional impact in the cities. This can only be sustained with long-term planning and training in missional approaches to working with the homeless, those with addiction issues, and those in need. Further study needs to be done on how to take the new believers to the next level of discipleship in as quick a manner as possible without setting them up for failure. Sometimes, as has been done in this study, God brings people to the ministries who are already equipped. Sometimes equipping needs to be done through the ministry.

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<sup>305</sup> Acts 6:1-6.

<sup>306</sup> Acts 6:7.

A study can also be done on how a pastor can become more vision casting and less hands-on with each of these areas. As often is the case, the church does not see it as important unless the pastor is intimately and actively involved in the ministry. How can the pastor focus mainly on discipling the leaders over the ministries regularly while still letting the church know that each ministry is vital to the pastor? These are leadership skills and challenges in taking the church to the next growth level, whether by addition or by sending out to start a new church.

Lastly, the baton needs to be passed. How does a new church grow into maturity while staying gospel-centered? In this study, the church grew from an initial twenty-four in attendance to one hundred forty within two years. There were growing pains associated with having a church with over 75% of the attendees that have come to Christ recently. Research needs to be done on how to prepare these new believers to not only be leaders of community groups but be part of the launch of a new church plant.

## Conclusion

Planting churches is not about adding to the growing list of churches in a community. It is about creating a movement that sweeps through a town and changes them forever with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>307</sup> This happens when the church is building kingdom-minded communities that live out what Jesus taught: to go and make disciples of all nations and teaching them what He has commanded.<sup>308</sup> Jesus Christ is the greatest example that believers have to live a missional life. This is the prayer for all missional church planters, “May you continue to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with

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<sup>307</sup> Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 21.

<sup>308</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 13; Matthew 28:16-20.

all your mind.”<sup>309</sup> Putting this into practice can make an eternal difference beyond what one could ever think or imagine.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Luke 10:27

<sup>310</sup> Ephesians 3:20

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## Appendix A

### Church and Community Needs Survey For Hopewell, VA

**Please answer the following about yourself**

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
2. Do you: \_\_\_\_\_ Live \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Worship in Hopewell (Check all that apply)
3. Race: \_\_\_\_\_ African American \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ Asian  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Check all that apply)
4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 0-17 \_\_\_\_\_ 18-30 \_\_\_\_\_ 31- 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 51+
5. Religion Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_ Protestant \_\_\_\_\_ Catholic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Othodox \_\_\_\_\_ Mormon \_\_\_\_\_ Jehovah Witness  
\_\_\_\_\_ Agnostic \_\_\_\_\_ Atheist \_\_\_\_\_ Other
6. How long have you
  - a. Lived in Hopewell? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Worked in Hopewell? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Worshipped In Hopewell? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following about Hopewell.**

7. What do you think are the three biggest challenges currently in Hopewell? (Select only three)

\_\_\_\_\_ Poverty \_\_\_\_\_ Homeless \_\_\_\_\_ Drugs  
\_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Rate \_\_\_\_\_ Crime \_\_\_\_\_ Employment  
Opportunities \_\_\_\_\_ Pollution \_\_\_\_\_ Gangs \_\_\_\_\_ Literacy \_\_\_\_\_ Other

(Please specify)

8. Do you have a \_\_\_\_\_ positive \_\_\_\_\_ indifferent \_\_\_\_\_ negative view of the future of Hopewell?

9. Do you feel there are \_\_\_\_\_ too many \_\_\_\_\_ too few \_\_\_\_\_ just enough churches in Hopewell?

10. Do you feel there is a real and/or perceived racial divide in Hopewell  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

**Please answer the following questions only if you worship in Hopewell.**

11. What church do you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is your role in the church? \_\_\_\_\_ member  
\_\_\_\_\_ Deacon/Deaconess \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor/Elder

13. What is your primary method of discipleship \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday  
School \_\_\_\_\_ Community Group \_\_\_\_\_ Other

14. How does your church currently minister in the city of Hopewell?

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15. Is your church primarily one race (over 80% one race) \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

16. Do you know the vision and mission of your church \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

**Please answer the following question only if you pastor a church in Hopewell**

17. What is your primary method of discipleship?

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18. What role does your church play in meeting the community needs in

Hopewell? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

19. How many people have come to Christ in the past 12 months in your

church? \_\_\_\_\_

20. How many of those who have come to Christ have joined into your primary method of

discipleship? \_\_\_\_\_

21. How many of those who have come to Christ are actively involved in sharing their faith in

Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you feel your members know and understand your vision for the church?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 28, 2019

Michael S. Moore

IRB Exemption 3707.032819: A Strategy to Plant Missional Churches that are Diverse and Multiply in Small Urban Communities

Dear Michael S. Moore,

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

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if...the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

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

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

Sincerely,



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

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UNIVERSITY.  
*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*