

## **ABSTRACT**

### **LEADING BY EXAMPLE: THE IMPACT OF A SPIRITUAL GROWTH EXPERIENCE ON A CHURCH STAFF**

Stephen Malone Dodson

The postmodern context challenges institutional church methods. The purposes of the church and the roles of the pastor and staff require examination and adjustment to meet the spiritual needs of a rapidly changing culture.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of a forty-day spiritual growth experience (The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren) on the church staff's awareness of the biblical purposes of the Church. The review of selected literature focuses on the nature of leadership in the contemporary church and the role of the church staff in creating an environment that fosters personal, spiritual transformation. The study introduces the principles of The Purpose Driven Life to a local church and staff. The context for this study is Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church in Augusta, Georgia.

This is an evaluative study in the quasi-experimental mode using a researcher-designed instrument to assist in measuring the impact of The Purpose Driven Life on a church staff. The conclusions of these findings further develop the spiritual formation strategies for the local church.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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LEADING BY EXAMPLE: THE IMPACT OF A SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Ministry

by

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Jesus has done it all, inspired me throughout and placed a passion within me that will not die. His resurrected power and his Spirit’s presence overwhelm me. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of serving your people.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### *OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY*

#### **Understanding the Problem**

Personal spiritual transformation is central to the Christian faith. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2). A church staff’s conception of the nature and purpose of the

church directly influences, guides, limits, or transforms a local congregation's understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. "The tone of the church...will be a reflection of its leaders" (Sanders 112). Unfortunately, some staff members lack a biblically grounded view of the nature and purpose of the church. In addition, some staff members may lack any type of a spiritually transforming experience that might directly impact a view of the nature and purpose of the church. A guided group study could provide staff members with a spiritually transforming experience. Once they are spiritually transformed, staff members will be better positioned to facilitate spiritual transformation in the members of the congregation and to broaden the congregation's understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. A spiritually transformed staff embodies the purpose of the church:

Nearly every church has a mission statement.... [S]imply having this vision statement is not enough. The key ingredient is a leadership team that lives the vision, breathes it, models it, tells its story any chance it gets, sleeps and eats it, and otherwise calls people together around it. (Cladis

56)

Indeed, Trinity Church had an existing mission statement when I arrived to serve as senior pastor in July 2001: *To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known*. The challenge was to determine if and how that mission statement was being fulfilled through the activities, ministries, and programs of Trinity Church. Though the mission statement was biblical, its potential for implementation appeared vague. Several community events hosted on the church campus had little or nothing to do with knowing Christ and making Christ known. Still, these events continued from year to year because the congregation

believed they somehow contributed to the status and positive image of Trinity Church in the greater Augusta community.

As pleasing as Trinity Church's mission statement may have sounded, it was not impressed in the minds and hearts of the congregation. Many continued to attend church and Sunday school with an eye toward keeping Trinity Church's image untarnished in the community. The silent expectation placed upon the staff was that they would provide good programs to draw the interest of both church members and prospective members.

A separate, but equally pressing, challenge was the lack of consensus and clarity in the minds of the staff members about their role in the church. They each knew the mission statement but had difficulty implementing it as a guideline or parameter for potential programs and ministries. Rather than using the biblical purposes of the church as a standard, the church staff often employed gimmicks and trendy programs to hold the interest of church members. Additionally, the staff had not been afforded an opportunity to develop a sense of Christian community among themselves. They seemed to be overburdened with the details of administering the local church and lacked an opportunity or the ability to *be* the Church. As William J. Carter aptly notes, "We cannot substitute managing the body for being the Body" (111). The staff appeared to need a shared understanding of purpose rooted in Scripture. The Apostle Paul is instructive at this point:

It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

The various gifts given to believers by Christ are intended to prepare God's people for works of service, to build up the body, and to foster spiritual maturity. In the context of a larger church, the church staff should fulfill this biblical directive.

The postmodern context radically challenges the traditional, institutionalized method of the church delivering spiritual goods and services to its members. Postmodern believers seek meaningful relationships and life transformation (Sweet, SoulTsunami 186). The church is uniquely positioned to meet these deep spiritual needs. Congregations look to pastors and church staffs to set the example of spiritual formation and to foster spiritual growth and development in their congregations; however, some individuals on church staffs have been trained in the modern world to administer programs and coordinate volunteers. They have difficulty facilitating spiritual growth in others when they themselves lack spiritual depth and vitality. The purposes of the church require examination along with the manner in which they enable the pastor and staff to facilitate the spiritual growth of the congregation in the context of a rapidly changing culture.

### ***Staff Is Foundational in Large Churches***

A foundational fact about the staff in a large church is that the congregation will emulate what it sees lived out among the staff. “[W]hat God’s people see modeled in staff relationships will affect the way ministry is fulfilled throughout the church” (Ogden 184). The staff needs to embody the life-transforming grace of the gospel in order to have the integrity and ability to lead the congregation to fulfill its God-given mission. “Building a collaborative team is first the responsibility of the principal leadership team. Team progress in this effort becomes a model and symbol to the other ministry groups in the church” (Cladis 89). If the staff does not serve as a role model in the pursuit of spiritual growth and development, the members of the congregation may not value it themselves (Carter 111).

The goal of this study developed as a result of a growing awareness that the staff members of Trinity Church were not able to lead the congregation to a place that they had

not been. Staff members are not capable of facilitating an understanding of the purposes of the church if they are unclear about those purposes. Staff members will struggle to nurture spiritual growth within the congregation if they are not growing spiritually. Similarly, congregational participation in small group studies is likely to improve if the staff models small group participation. As Dale E. Galloway and Kathi Mills note, leadership by example is the foundation of a strong, effective, small group ministry (71). The staff cannot measure the effectiveness of the church's mission and ministry by way of the church's mission statement if the staff is not clear about ways to implement that mission statement.

A helpful method for addressing the lack of clarity in the minds of church staff members is to expose them to the principles of being purpose driven. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California, articulates this philosophy of ministry. The Purpose Driven Church has become a landmark in clear, concise, strategic thinking and planning for effective ministry in all types of churches. The Purpose Driven Church presents a simple, biblical grid for understanding the role and purpose of the church. Recently, Warren published The Purpose Driven Life. This work is designed as a forty-day study to apply Warren's principles to one's personal life. Leading the staff through a forty-day spiritual growth experience based upon biblical principles could improve and strengthen the life, mission, ministry, and effectiveness of the Trinity Church.

### **Theological Framework**

The life of Jesus Christ, and his relationships with his disciples and followers, forms the model for faithful Christian living. Jesus intentionally mentored his twelve disciples. He taught them, both publicly and privately. He nurtured a sense of community

among them and encouraged them to go out and serve in ministry to others. After his death, he charged them to fulfill the task of reaching the world with the gospel.

In a similar way, the relationships between pastor and staff in a large church form the template for congregational life. As pastor and staff nurture a sense of community with each other, they model community building for the wider congregation. When pastor and staff share transforming experiences of faith in Christ, they are empowered to move into the wider congregation and create other groups where Christian community can be shared among participants.

Christians in the first century shared an awareness of Jesus' continuing presence with them. That shared awareness motivated the first Christians to continue telling the stories of Jesus. In the contemporary setting of the twenty-first century church, a pastor and staff lead the congregation in much the same way as Jesus mentored his disciples and the disciples later influenced the early congregations. By participating in a guided, small group, spiritual growth experience, the Trinity Church staff increased their own awareness of the biblical purposes of the church and modeled Christian community for the wider congregation.

### Contextual Setting

Trinity Church is nestled among the tree-lined streets and majestic, antebellum mansions in the Summerville section of Augusta, Georgia. Formed seventy-five years ago as an alternative to the city's downtown churches, Trinity Church has developed an "upper crust" reputation. This reputation is primarily due to the fact that the "Hill" area was settled in the early 1900s as a retreat haven for Augusta's wealthy business and professional people (Byrde).

Augusta is located in eastern Georgia along the banks of the Savannah River, just

opposite South Carolina. Augusta is the second oldest city in the state of Georgia (founded in 1736) and the second largest metropolitan area in the state. Referred to as “The Garden City,” Augusta boasts many parks and recreational facilities—among them the largest manmade lake east of the Mississippi River, Clark’s Hill Lake. Augusta is also home of the Augusta National Golf Club, host of the Masters’ Invitational Golf Tournament each April (Augusta, Georgia). Augusta is the home of many notable people and institutions: the oldest newspaper in the South—The Augusta Chronicle (founded in 1785); the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence—George Walton; Springfield Baptist Church—the oldest, independently-formed black congregation in the United States with an unbroken record of existence; and, the last-standing permanent structure built by the Confederacy—the Confederate Powderworks Factory Chimney. Augusta is also the headquarters of E-Z-GO Textron and Club Car, the top two manufacturers of golf carts and utility vehicles in the world (Army Community Service). During the Cotton Boom years, Augusta was the second largest inland cotton market in the world. Due to its location along the river, Augusta has long been known as a hot, humid city. During the years of the “Cotton Boom,” the hustle and bustle of activity along the waterfront (coupled with the accompanying mosquitoes) caused business owners to seek refuge from the heat, humidity, and flying insects. Those who were wealthy enough built homes on “the Hill”—just a few miles from the activity along the riverfront—in order to enjoy a cooler temperature and a pleasant breeze. Trinity Church was formed among these retreats.

Currently, Trinity Church has a membership of more than 2,800 with an average worship attendance of almost one thousand in two morning worship services. The beautiful and well-maintained facilities serve the church and community well. The staff of Trinity Church is comprised of more than twenty individuals of varying backgrounds, training, and specialties. In addition to the senior pastor, the staff consists of five ordained pastors, five lay directors of various ministry areas, and numerous administrative and support staff persons. Trinity Church enjoys a wonderful worship life, a strong and long-established Sunday school, a vibrant and growing small group Bible study ministry, a preschool and Mothers Day Out, a large and vital youth ministry of more than 250 students, effective evangelism, and wide-ranging outreach ministries.

I was appointed to serve as the senior pastor at Trinity Church in late June 2001. The church had just occupied a new administration/classroom/music building as well as a newly refurbished educational wing. Servicing the \$2.5 million building debt was an



adjustment to the budget of the church. During the three years prior to 2001, Trinity Church's solidarity endured a time of testing centered on the dismissal of a staff member. Many who were emotionally attached to the former staff member did not understand the rationale for the church's administrative action. Disgruntled parishioners voiced disagreement with the pastor, absented themselves from worship, and withheld monetary support in hopes of forcing a change in the senior pastor position. The church weathered this storm at significant cost—the budget suffered, the morale of the congregation was deflated, longtime friendships were strained, and the church grieved over this internal strife.

One positive outcome of these events was renewed devotion to prayer among many congregants. Numerous groups formed to pray for the pastor, for the search process to replace the dismissed staff person, and for the spiritual health of the church. Renewed emphasis was placed on Bible study and spiritual growth. In time, a new staff member was named to replace the former employee. Two new pastoral staff members were appointed in 2001.

During the tumultuous period, the renewed emphasis on Bible study led some to recognize that Trinity Church had become a Sunday “show.” In other words, people came to Trinity Church to see and be seen. The 11:00 a.m. worship service is televised across the region by a national network affiliate and rebroadcast over a wide-reaching cable network. The reclaimed emphasis on Bible study helped many members uncover newfound joy and strength in their personal relationships with Christ. They discovered the joy of giving and serving. They began to proclaim the transforming power of God through a wide variety of groups. In 2000, an additional staff member was hired to guide spiritual formation and discipleship through small group ministry. Excited congregants

have embraced this new energy, are challenging those who have yet to discover the riches of discipleship, and are encouraging others to join in the journey. Nevertheless, the staff has exhausted the energy infusion of new programs and studies. Trinity Church requires an empowered staff to empower the members of the congregation to fulfill the mission of the church.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a forty-day spiritual growth experience (based on Warren's Purpose Driven Life) on the church staff's awareness of the biblical purposes of the church. The goal of the study was to provide insights and strategies for the enhancement of the spiritual life of the church staff so that they could, in turn, enhance and enrich the spiritual development of the members of the local congregation.

This project was an evaluative study in the quasi-experimental mode that employed a pretest and posttest design with no comparison group. A researcher-designed questionnaire aided in assessment of the staff's self-understanding and their awareness of the five biblical purposes of the church before and after the study.

## Research Questions

Three questions guided the study.

### Research Question 1

Do the Trinity Church staff members have a clear awareness of the biblical purposes of the church?

### *Research Question 2*

How does participation in The Purpose Driven Life study affect the Trinity Church staff's awareness of the purposes of the church?

### ***Research Question 3***

How does participation in The Purpose Driven Life study affect the Trinity Church staff's understanding of its role in the church?

### **Definitions**

Two terms are used throughout this study to describe specific groups and conditions.

Those persons who serve the Trinity Church in full-time and part-time pastoral and lay employee status comprise the **Trinity Church Staff**.

For this study, the **purposes of the church** refer to those biblical purposes detailed in the Purpose Driven books and seminars (Warren). Specifically, those purposes are worship, ministry/service,<sup>1</sup> evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship.

### **Variables**

Independent variables were the five purposes of the church (worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry/service) outlined in The Purpose Driven Church and the accompanying The Purpose Driven Life (Warren). The effectiveness of the study was dependent upon the willingness of staff members to participate fully and honestly, the integrity of the participants, and the uniformity and consistency of participants' self-evaluation prior to and following the study.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

This study was limited to the staff members of Trinity Church. The guiding

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<sup>1</sup> Warren's uses the word "ministry" for this purpose; however, "ministry" is often construed to refer exclusively to the work of ordained clergy. Warren's reference is to a person's service rendered to others within the church. Therefore, I employ the terminology of ministry/service throughout this paper as a manner of distinguishing between the work of professional clergy and the service of every Christian believer.

philosophy and definitions have been limited to the principles articulated in Rick

Warren's The Purpose Driven Church (PDC) and The Purpose Driven Life (PDL).

The findings of the study have direct implications for the ministry and strategic planning of Trinity Church. Results of the study might be generalized and helpful to individuals working in other churches with similar staff configurations. Broader generalizations may be made for those seeking to clarify the role of church professionals, to focus the energies of church professionals on fulfilling the purposes of the Church, and to enhance the functioning and effectiveness of local church ministries.

## Data Collection

A pretest questionnaire was administered prior to the start of the forty-day period outlined in PDL. The survey instrument asked staff members to respond to a variety of statements related to the biblical purposes of the church, working environment, and interpersonal relationships (see Appendix B). For the duration of the experience, the existing Tuesday morning staff devotional time was used for discussion and reflection among staff members related to the readings in PDL from the previous week. Observations of these weekly gatherings were also recorded and analyzed (see Appendix F). Upon completion of the forty-day experience, a posttest questionnaire was administered to those who participated in the study (see Appendix D). This project was designed to evaluate any changes in the staff's understanding and awareness of the biblical purposes of the church.

## Description of the Study

PDL is a personal devotional guide that leads individuals through a forty-day spiritual growth experience. The study applies the biblical principles of PDC to the life of the individual. The staff at Trinity Church proceeded through PDL together over a forty-

day period during October and November 2004.<sup>2</sup> Each Tuesday, the regularly scheduled staff devotional time engaged in guided discussion questions included in PDL to share insights from the readings of the previous week. A video presentation by Rick Warren was also viewed each week to summarize and apply the material addressed in PDL. The aim of this study was to increase the clarity of purpose in the minds of individual staff members and the larger purpose of the staff in the wider congregation (Warren).

The subjects participating in the study were the staff members of the Trinity Church. The group was intact prior to the study with an established pattern of meeting and association minimizing the time requirements for introductions, scheduling and group-building exercises. The Trinity staff consists of twenty-two persons. Twelve are full-time employees while nine work part-time. Twenty-one receive remuneration for their work. One person is an unpaid volunteer. Eighteen staff members are United Methodists. The remaining four non-United Methodist staff members represent Southern Baptist, Missionary Baptist, Nazarene, and non-denominational churches.

Five staff members are clergy; seventeen are laypersons. The five clergy include senior pastor (an ordained United Methodist elder), associate pastor for evangelism and mission (an ordained United Methodist elder), associate pastor for congregational care (an ordained United Methodist elder), minister of worship and music (an ordained United Methodist deacon), minister of discipleship (an ordained United Methodist deacon), and minister to youth (an ordained Southern Baptist).

The existing, scheduled Tuesday morning meeting was selected because it was a natural meeting time for the Trinity Church staff. The normal routine for Trinity Church's

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<sup>2</sup> The entire congregation of Trinity Church was engaged in the accompanying congregational study by Warren, 40 Days of Purpose, during the same period of time. PDL is the basic text for 40 Days of Purpose. Participants in the study are encouraged to share in a small, reflection group that meets weekly to discuss the shared reading assignments in PDL. The Trinity Church staff acted as one such small group.

staff meetings is for a staff member to lead the devotional time each Tuesday. The devotional leadership rotates from week to week ensuring equal opportunity for leadership to all staff members. Weekly assignments are determined by a voluntary sign-up sheet so that each week's leader has adequate time to prepare. This format was both familiar and expected as a part of the staff's routine weekly gathering. Making use of an established pattern and time of meeting prevented the need for later analysis of the impact of change to routine for participants. Avoiding a change to participants' existing routine allowed for observation and measurement of the impact of PDL in a setting as close to normal as possible. The exception to normalcy was the non-participation of the senior pastor who was serving as researcher-observer.

Because I am both researcher and senior pastor of Trinity Church and the administrative supervisor of every participant in the study, care was taken to maintain researcher objectivity. I did not participate in the small group discussions with the staff nor in the rotational leadership of the sessions. I remained a passive observer during the PDL small group sessions. This separation worked to minimize manipulation or biased interpretation of the data, as well as helping to minimize my influence as pastor and supervisor in the assimilation of the material in PDL by the participants.

Trinity Church's staff meeting schedule allows for ninety minutes of interaction among staff members each Tuesday morning. The existing format was used for the study to prevent complex scheduling issues among the twenty-two participants. One month prior to the study, staff members were invited by letter (see Appendix E) to participate in the study. Participant information forms (see Appendix A) and the pretest questionnaire (see Appendix B) were administered one week prior to the forty days of PDL.

Instructions for the pretest questionnaire were read prior to participants' completing the

form (see Appendix G).

During the study, the staff meeting devotional time was engaged in small group discussion based upon participants' reading of and reflection upon PDL, as well as viewing a brief application video (Warren).<sup>3</sup> Full-time ministers and directors were randomly assigned as facilitators of the six weekly study and discussion sessions. Full-time ministers and directors were chosen for leadership of the weekly sessions because of their experience, ease, and comfort in small group leadership. The full-time ministers and directors agreed to serve as facilitators in order to prevent anxiety among participants who were not comfortable leading small group discussion or speaking publicly to groups.

I observed group interaction during the six weekly sessions and recorded my observations (see Appendix F). One week following the conclusion of the PDL sessions, participants completed the posttest questionnaire (see Appendix D). Instructions for completing the posttest questionnaire were read prior to participants' completing the form to ensure consistency and uniformity (see Appendix H).

## Outline of the Study

Chapter 2 reviews the pertinent literature in the areas of church leadership, staff relationships, and responsibilities/roles of the staff in helping to discern vision and mission within the larger context of the congregation. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the process of implementing the forty-day experience of The Purpose Driven Life as well as the instrumentation to be used in comparing and contrasting the changes in the staff's self-perception (Warren). Chapter 4 reports the findings of the

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<sup>3</sup> The video was provided as part of the resource material for the accompanying congregation-wide 40 Days of Purpose (Warren). The video was the same for all groups within the church who chose to be a part of the small group study of PDL. In this manner, the format of the small group experience for the staff was the same as the format of all the groups participating in the 40 Days of Purpose. This uniformity underscored the staff's leadership by example.

study. Chapter 5 reflects upon the findings, draws conclusions, and presents recommendations for further study.

## *CHAPTER 2*

### *REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*

#### **Biblical Foundations**

An underlying assumption of this study is that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ leads to the transformation of an individual's life. Jesus called and formed his disciples into a community of friends (John 15:14-15). His appeal was so compelling that they immediately left whatever they were doing to follow (Mark 1:14-20). On numerous occasions, Jesus established, or reestablished, a personal, social relationship with those who had been estranged from a caring community of faith. Jesus welcomed and received the sinful woman who anointed his feet with oil (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus rescued and forgave a woman caught in adultery (John 8:4-11). Jesus spontaneously shared a meal with a tax collector named Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). That encounter caused Zacchaeus to reprioritize his life, his relationships, and his finances. As he traveled among a crowd, Jesus stopped to beckon a ritually unclean woman from the crowd after she was healed.



His words to her reestablished her position within the family of God (Mark 5:22-43). When a blind beggar received his sight from Jesus along the road to Jericho, he left his position of begging in order to follow Jesus, praising God (Luke 18:35-43). These are only a few of the many instances of personal transformation due to an encounter with the healing, restorative power of God in Jesus Christ.

This type of transformation continued through the ministry of the early Church empowered by the Holy Spirit. Saul was blinded by the light of Christ on the road to Damascus and radically changed his purpose and direction in life (Acts 9). Cornelius, a centurion of Rome, was impacted by the gospel message and baptized along with his entire household (Acts 10). Lydia, a prominent businesswoman, was changed by the power of the message about the risen Jesus. She and her extended family were also baptized (Acts 16:13-15). The Philippian jailer was overcome with fear and faith at the presence of God in Paul and Silas' miraculous escape from prison and was "filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family" (Acts 16:34). The overwhelming presence of God's power in the person of Jesus Christ changes lives.

### **Cultural Issues**

The Church today lives in a rapidly changing cultural context:

There is widespread recognition that Western culture is in deep transition.... The ideals that moved previous generations no longer move us. Whereas not long ago only a few visionaries and seers questioned that

Western culture of recent centuries represents a major advance in comparison with all else that has transpired and is transpiring on the globe, now many are profoundly skeptical of its claims to superiority. The rhetoric of "science," "medicine," "education," "democracy," and "human

rights” rings hollow in our ears, even when we have nothing better with which to replace it. (Cobb 149)

Theologians and philosophers, along with many other academicians and social thinkers, have noted the emergence of the postmodern age. “We are all poised at the beginning of something very new—a start-up culture ... being referred to as ‘postmodern’” (Sweet, Postmodern Pilgrims xv). Some theologians and social scientists make use of the term “post-Christendom” to refer to the cultural context that has “been in formation since the 18th Century and will be the normal situation of the church in the third millennium” (Hall).

The lines of demarcation between modern and postmodern eras are unclear and undefined. The modern era seems to be collapsing, disintegrating (Sweet, “Straddling Modernism” 164) or at least passing (Cobb 150). Most writers concur with the idea that “modern” refers to a period beginning in the seventeenth century. The term “postmodern” functions as an umbrella covering a variety of new ventures in thought and institutional practice:

What is rejected of modernity are its individualism, its materialistic atomism, its anthropocentrism, its idealism, its fragmentation of knowledge into academic disciplines, its nationalism, its Eurocentrism, its androcentrism, its tendency toward nihilism. What is retained are its self-criticism, its concern for the personal, and its commitment to human freedom generally, and freedom of inquiry in particular. In the new vision, many inherited dualisms are overcome, not only those of matter and mind and of body and spirit, but also those of nature and history, science and

religion, individual and society. (152)

The spiritual and religious appetite of human beings in the dawning years of the twenty-first century has remained unfulfilled by the conventions of modernity. A need exists for “truly new ways of viewing the world and for new policies and actions shaped by those ways” (158).

A pressing matter facing the Church is the challenge of creating communities of faith where the presence of Jesus Christ brings about personal transformation. Individuals have all types of opportunities for association—civic clubs, neighborhood groups, sports teams, and special interest groups, but the nature of the church is unlike any other human institution or organization:

In short, the great problem ... for the church is how we are to survive as disciplined communities in democratic societies. For the fundamental presumption behind democratic societies is that the consciousness of something called the *common citizen* [original emphasis] is privileged no matter what kind of formation it may or may not have had.... [W]e have underwritten a voluntaristic conception of the Christian faith, which presupposes that one can become a Christian without training.... To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices. (Hauerwas)

The Church, as the body of Christ, has the wonderful responsibility of reminding persons that they belong to God and to the corporate people of God. The Church too

often assumes that individuals ascribe to a compartmentalized worldview in which religious activity is limited to the premises of the church property. Nurture of spiritual lives outside of sanctioned religious services extends hospitality to, and invites acceptance of, those who are not yet members of the congregation. Openness to spiritual seekers erodes the modern dichotomy between private and public life (Guder et al. 149):

[Here, moreover, is] a far more welcoming framework for evangelism.

Evangelism would move from an act of recruiting or co-opting those outside the church to an invitation of companionship. The church would witness that its members, like others, hunger for the hope that there is a God who reigns in love and intends the good of the whole earth. The community of the church would testify that they have heard the announcement that such a reign is coming, and indeed is already breaking into the world. They would confirm that they have heard the open welcome and received it daily, and they would invite others to join them as those who also have been extended God's welcome. To those invited, the church would offer itself to assist their entrance into the reign of God and to travel with them as so-called pilgrims. Here lies a path for the renewal of the heart of the church and its evangelism. (97)

One of the societal challenges of postmodern Christianity is the development of genuine, biblical community among people who are intensely individualistic. In their radical individualism, postmoderns also seem to be longing for significant relationship in community. Leonard Sweet notes, "In the modern world, people sought meaningful relationships. In the postmodern world, meaning IS [original emphasis] relationships"

(AQUAChurch 195). The Church is the community of people who share a relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the postmodern cultural context, personal encounters with the risen Lord prior to church participation are the exception rather than the norm. Most people come to the church seeking assistance to position themselves for such a life-changing meeting. Calling together only those who have had an encounter creates an elitist society. In fact, many critics of the Church argue that it is full of hypocrites who only want people like themselves. George G. Hunter, III reviews the great ministry of Patrick in Ireland and notes that the Celtic method of invitation, participation, and conversation leading to conversion may be a more faithful model of developing Christian community and enabling conversion to Christ for the twenty-first century. In the Celtic model for reaching people, (1) community is established among individuals by bringing them into the fellowship of the community of faith; (2) within fellowship, they are engaged in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship; and, (3) in time, as they discover that they now believe, an invitation is extended for commitment (Celtic Way 53). This threefold process mirrors the life and ministry of Jesus with his disciples.

As Jesus developed a sense of belonging among his disciples, he imparted values which pointed toward a present reign of God. Particularly through the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and his numerous parables, Jesus illustrated and inculcated God's eternal values into his followers. The Christian community of the twenty-first century must continually seek to clarify, appropriate, and encode the values of Jesus for believers: "healthy relationships, personal growth, multigenerational sensitivity, generosity toward strangers, care for creation, positive change, eagerness to learn" (Easum and Bandy 119). Jesus spent much time teaching his disciples about those values he deemed worthy of

holding. Faithful communities of disciples will continue to reflect upon those values espoused by Jesus and develop effective systems of imparting those values to postmodern followers of Jesus.

### Analysis of Issues

**Often, in the midst of difficult circumstances, people remark, “Oh, well. I guess we are just experiencing growing pains.” To some extent that comment may be true. Church growth brings with it a unique set of challenges: too little room for all the people, not enough funding for all ministries, lack of biblically literate teachers, and too few spiritually mature leaders. The pain caused by growth is a challenge to the status quo. The pain is felt because of a resistance to change. Growth hurts because former, outmoded, ineffective, non-biblical ways of acting must change in order to maintain life, health, and vitality in the church.**

**Scripture refers to the Church as the body of Christ (Rom.12: 4-6; 1 Cor. 12:27). Physical sciences instruct that pain is the internal, physical disease of the body in response to external stimuli. When physical bodies feel pain, humans instinctively act to change the situation and cease the condition causing pain (e.g., when a hot stove is touched, the hand immediately recoils to stop the pain of the burning sensation). This truth of God’s created world offers instruction for the spiritual world of the Church.**

**When churches experience pain, the body of Christ should act to change the situation in order to protect itself from deep harm or destruction, yet the Church seems to do exactly the opposite. It tends to reassert its present position rather than change. Instead of acting to preserve life and protect the body, the church seems to have a “death wish.” Rather than creating a learning environment where mistakes**

lead to new choices, the church attempts the same things over and over again expecting different results. As a popular saying states, “This is the definition of insanity.”

At Trinity Church, congregants seem to be insecure about the Christian faith. That insecurity is not a question of whether Christianity is true or noble or right. It is more a question of whether Christianity is relevant, meaningful, and effective. The value of a person’s existence appears to be measured more by secular, social standards than by fidelity and obedience to biblical principles. From observations of behavior and conversation, it seems that many individuals think the Church exists to meet personal needs and further personal agendas. The goal is “serve us” (as individual consumers) rather than service to others. Such an egocentric outlook regarding the purpose of the Church runs counter to biblical theology and the teachings of Jesus.

The malfunction and dysfunction experienced in the Church is a result of insufficiently developed and practiced faith in Jesus Christ. People desire the benefits of redemption and eternal life without the investment of themselves. The Church fails to embody a core biblical attribute of being a community of those who have been redeemed by faithfulness to God in Jesus Christ. This unapparent redemption is due to the lack of profound, personal experience of the risen Christ and the accompanying transformation in lifestyle and worldview. Church members look to church leaders and staff for guidance and examples of genuine Christian community:

People care about how the leaders get along and function together. Their own families and work environments are full of dysfunctional

relationships and conflict. People want to know if the church leaders can learn to work together, and if they can, their model will have a powerful influence throughout the church and even the town or city at large. It is that powerful and influential. (Cladis 135)

**The inner life of the staff determines the inner life of the congregation. If the staff is passionately committed to Jesus Christ and reaching lost souls for his glory, the congregation will follow suit. If the staff displays joint ownership of the mission, vision, and values of the church, broad acceptance within the congregation will follow. When staff persons acknowledge the gifts/talents/contributions of fellow staff, the stage is set for other church members to follow suit. As staff members exhibit genuine Christlike character and integrity, other members of the church will seek to emulate their example. When staff members model respect and compassion, others will begin to emulate the same traits in their own lives. When staff members embrace diversity and foster unity in Christ, those characteristics become hallmarks of the church within the community. As staff members recognize the presence of Christ in each other, they begin to sense his presence in the congregation, in the community, and in the world. This study explored the power of personal transformation in relationships among staff persons and the resulting impact that transformation promises for the life of the congregation.**

#### Theological Reflection

**Both pastor and staff members in faithful congregations must be growing, maturing Christians who live with personal integrity, embody the virtue of community- building, and exemplify Christlike conflict resolution. At first glance,**



**these behaviors may seem to be given; however, many churches find themselves being guided by persons who do not appear to embody the kind of life the gospel describes. Of all groups within the church, the pastor and staff must exemplify Christlike living.**

Plenty of “religious people” in the Church have little or no faith in Christ (Sweet, SoulTsunami 50). The “churched” culture of the 1940s and 1950s created a breed of church leader that, either knowingly or unwittingly, substituted denominational allegiance and professionalism for spiritual fidelity to Christ; however, strict adherence to rules and codes of conduct failed to produce righteousness in individuals’ lives. “That is why Torah observance does not work; it may make people ‘religious,’ but it fails to make them truly ‘righteous,’ in the sense of reproducing the righteousness of God in their lives” (Fee 105). This current state of affairs is certainly not what God intends. The New Testament describes a distinctly Christian way of living that “is not primarily an individualistic, one-on-one-with-God brand of personal holiness; rather it has to do with living the life of the Spirit in Christian community and in the world” (99). The pastor and staff have the responsibility of exemplifying personal lives marked by biblical righteousness. They also bear the burden of living and working “in community” with each other in a manner that reflects corporate holiness.

The church is much more than merely another social group or human institution:

While it has organizational and institutional dimensions, it is more than just the sum of these. The church is the creation of the Spirit. God’s divine power and presence indwell the people of God. This makes the church a spiritual community as well as a human community. The church is both a spiritual reality and a sociological entity. (Van Gelder 116-17)

Christ-centered life among a community of believers is an indication the church is fulfilling its divinely appointed function. “The active practice of disciplined Christian life is a sign of the true church” (Oden 301). Twenty-first century congregations look to pastor and staff to set an example of disciplined Christian life in the context of community. A challenge of the contemporary church is to determine how to survive as

disciplined communities (Hauerwas). One well-known and respected theologian from an earlier generation remarks on the nature of the Christian faith reflecting unique traits:

Christianity is what it is through the affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth, who has been called “the Christ,” is actually the Christ, namely, he who brings the new state of things, the New Being. Whenever the assertion that Jesus is the Christ is maintained, there is the Christian message; wherever this assertion is denied, the Christian message is not affirmed. Christianity was born, not with the birth of the man who is called Jesus, but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, “Thou art the Christ.” And Christianity will live as long as there are people who repeat this assertion. (Tillich 97)

The gathered people who make this assertion of faith are called the Church. In larger churches, those who lead are the staff.

### **The Community-Building Nature of the Church**

Eugene H. Peterson has poignantly said that “God means to do something with us and means to do it in community” (7). The early Christian communities exemplified a new depth of commitment as they shared resources and cared for others across all types of socioreligious and economic barriers (Acts 2:42-47; 4:42-47; 11:19-30; 13:1-3). “This communal reality of holy living, mutual support, and sacrificial service the New Testament calls *koinonia*” (Guder et al. 145). From the very beginning of the Christian movement, those who have confessed Jesus as the Christ were baptized and devoted themselves “to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42). The Church has always been communal in nature.

Where contemporary churches are able to foster a similar sense of community among parishioners, significant impact is seen and felt both within the individuals as well as in the larger congregation and community. As L. Gregory Jones and Susan Pendleton note, such congregations “touch people’s lives, address profound questions with insight and wisdom, and offer places where the ingredients of a flourishing life can be discovered and nurtured in relationship to the God of Jesus Christ.” Indeed, biblical salvation history points to God’s formation of a distinct community. One

contemporary systematic theologian remarks on the importance of an obvious presence of common life in Christian congregations:

It is consistent with the plan of salvation that a visible community should arise as a result of God's saving work, a community of persons who acknowledge Christ as Lord and Head, who are united by their union with Christ through the Spirit. Where word, sacrament and discipline are found, the true church is certainly present. (Oden 301)

In studies of effective outreach, Hunter notes that the biblical ideals of “community” and “belonging” have been verified among those congregations who “reach the unchurched,” both in the early work of Patrick among the Celts and Picts (Celtic Way 53) and in the lives of faithful churches in contemporary North America:

In Wesley's words, “Christianity is not a solitary religion,” but a social religion; it is not an individual game like golf or weight lifting, but a team game like football or basketball.... Becoming a Christian necessarily involves joining this People, for Jesus promised to be present where “two or three are gathered” in his name. (Church for the Unchurched 48)

Providing activities that address pressing societal factors does not guarantee that the church will create a sense of community. “[C]ontemporary categories, presuppositions, and experiences have largely blinded us to the radical nature of the biblical sense of community that the Spirit brings” (Guder et al. 145). Having fallen prey to the ways of the world, the Church is reaping what it has sown with regard to leadership, community, and transformed lives:

We get the kind of leaders we deserve. It often seems that the world's view of greatness is the standard we use when we select our leaders.... Using the world's view of power, we want leaders to exercise influence, work their way into positions of power, and throw their weight around. We therefore get what we ourselves honor—Christian leaders who act like potentates rather than self-sacrificing servants of Jesus Christ. Our actions show that we do not believe that real power is expressed through servanthood that leads to a cross. (Ogden 172)

**The interrelatedness of the leadership team can model Christlike character and genuine Christian community for the congregation. When a church's size is small, the pastor must engage in intentional group building with others in the church to embody the New Testament model of community:**

Biblically, ministry is predicated on plural, not solo, leadership. One-person ministry violates the body concept because it views the pastor as the solitary leader.... I define a leadership team as a group of people working cooperatively to accomplish a mission through the exercise of their gifts and call in the context of a mutual accountability. (Ogden 178)

**For the purposes of this study, the term “staff” refers to Trinity Church’s leadership team, both paid and unpaid positions.**

#### Leading by Example: Biblical Foundations

**The modeling of Christlike living begins in the personal lives of the pastor and staff members. Pastors and leaders must be exemplary in their lifestyles. “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. “In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech” (Tit. 2: 7-8). Scripture calls for the example of holy living in church leaders (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:15). The New Testament lists traits and qualifications for faithful Christian leaders (see Table 2.1).**

Table 2.1. Traits for Faithful Christian Leaders (from NIV Study Bible)

Traits	Scripture
Self-controlled	1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8
Hospitable	1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8
Able to teach	1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit.1:9
Not violent but gentle	1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7
Not quarrelsome	1 Tim. 3:3
Not a lover of money	1 Tim. 3:3
Not a recent convert	1 Tim. 3:6
Good reputation with outsiders	1 Tim. 3:7

Not overbearing	Tit. 1:7
Not quick tempered	Tit. 1:7
Loves what is good	Tit. 1:8
Upright, holy	Tit. 1:8
Disciplined	Tit. 1:8
Above reproach, blameless	1 Tim. 3:2,9; Tit. 3:9
Temperate	1 Tim. 3:2,8; Tit. 1:7
Respectable	1 Tim. 3:2,8
Sincere	1 Tim. 3:8
Tested	1 Tim. 3:10

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From biblical contexts, three other things can be learned about biblical leadership: (1) how leaders are to be treated, (2) what leaders are to do, and (3) how leaders are to behave (Ogden 150). Leaders are to receive “respect” (1 Thess. 5:12); to be esteemed “very highly in love” (1 Thess. 5:13); considered worthy of “double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17); remembered (Heb. 13:7); obeyed and imitated (Heb. 13:17). Leaders serve “over” others (1 Thess. 5:12); “admonish” (1 Thess. 5:12); “teach and preach the word” (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7), and “keep watch over souls” (Heb. 13:17). The leader’s manner must be exercised as “those who labor among you” (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17); as “those who ... must give account ... joyfully not sadly” (Heb. 13:17); as those who can be imitated (Heb. 13:7), and as those who exercise leadership in diligence (Rom. 12:8).

The evidence of holy, righteous living results from the presence of the risen Christ living in believers (Col. 2:6-7). Christians are earthly representatives of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Followers of Jesus Christ embody biblical righteousness and holiness (Rom. 6:19). Such traits are the result of the Holy Spirit working in the life of the faithful Christian leader (Tit. 3:5-6; Rom. 8:9, 11). Faithful disciples seek to “let their light so shine before others that others would see their good deeds and praise their Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Spiritual change within the individual

**must translate into righteous relationships with others:**

[T]here is no such thing as salvation in Christ that does not also include righteousness on the part of God's people. They are not saved by doing righteousness—that is unthinkable, since righteousness as behavior is the *product* [original emphasis] of the Spirit's empowering, not a requirement of obedience in order to get in ... Spirit people not only *want* [original emphasis] to please God but are *empowered* [original emphasis] to do so.

(Fee 105)

Pastor and staff persons must live with integrity. What they say must match what they do.

Church leaders and staff members must display genuine character and trustworthiness:

Those in leadership have a particular responsibility here. They must teach that nothing less than Christlikeness will satisfy the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They must model Christlikeness, showing in their own lives something of what it might look like. That will mean passing their habits and attitudes under the spotlight of His scrutiny. They must encourage this Christlikeness in the congregation, with quiet but steady insistence on prayer and Bible study, fellowship and Communion.

Ignorance of Jesus and disobedience to Jesus are two of the great enemies of Christlikeness. (Green 108)

**Faithful Christian leaders must practice what they preach:**

Postmodern people are looking for something meaningful around which to order their lives. They are hungry for truth and seeking that which is

ultimately important and worthy of their energy. The church is in a wonderful position to feed the hungry with the truth of God, and visionary teams must lead the charge. (Cladis 57)

People today are hungry for authentic relationships and environments that foster the building of trust, integrity, and honesty (Cladis 115). The Church seems to be ideally positioned to meet the deep relational needs of people, but the idea of community is not an easy one for the present-day North American to learn. The self-actualizing, ego-centered world of postmodern society—where success is defined by titles, power, subordinates, and codependency—works against building Christian community. “One does not become a leader by developing a larger number of dependent persons. One leads by developing a larger number of leaders” (Callahan 167). Greg Odgen builds upon the same theme by indicating what leadership is NOT:

- Leadership is not measured by how many people serve you.
- Leadership is not exercising control over a chain of command.
- Leadership is not using coercion to get what you want.
- Leadership is not receiving deference or being treated in a separate category of specialness.
- Leadership is not receiving honorary, positional titles. (172)

Authentic Christian leadership grows out of the personal relationship of the individual leader with Jesus Christ. It is given further expression through the relationships that individual leaders, the pastors, have with their staff leadership team. The traits espoused by the New Testament writers must be exemplified within the staff relationships in order for the staff to serve as role models of the redeemed life for the congregation and the world. “What God’s people see modeled in staff relationships will affect the way ministry is fulfilled throughout the church” (Ogden 184).

**The believers in the early community of Antioch exhibited the enthusiastic energy of a community of faith:**

They had no money, no plans. They simply loved Jesus very much and wanted to share Him with others. So they did. It was all very spontaneous.

Antioch became a most exciting church.... It was centered on Jesus. “Christians” ... was a nickname. They got it because they clearly loved Jesus. They talked about Jesus. They reminded people of Jesus. They became progressively more like Jesus. There was a transformation going on inside them. And it showed. (Green 83)

The temptation for present-day Christian leaders is to live out commitment to Christ far from the public eye. In the past, leaders have lived dual lives—one, in private, as contemplative, prayerful disciples, the other, in public, as model citizens and professional administrators:

It is far easier to be a Christian in isolation than it is to live out one’s faith in the context of all those other imperfect people who make up God’s church. It is too easy precisely because it turns Christian ethics into easily performed codes of conduct having to do not with caring for one another but with penny-ante stuff like food and drink. At the same time it is too hard, because it thinks of ethics in terms of law and finds forgiving wrongdoing and loving the unlovely impossible; such ethics totally miss the glorious freedom of the children of God to live the life of the future together, empowered by the Spirit. (Fee 99)



Faithful Christian leadership in twenty-first century congregations begins with the pastor and staff embodying biblical traits of righteousness and holiness in the context of communal life and service.

### **Embracing Conflict**

The contemporary church will not tolerate a dualistic lifestyle in its leaders, professing belief in Jesus Christ without practicing the behaviors espoused by Jesus. “The community forming activity of the Holy Spirit challenges us to move beyond the contemporary assumption that the Spirit’s actions center exclusively, or even primarily, on the individual soul” (Guder et al. 142-43). One of the difficulties in exemplifying personal transformation and authentic Christian character in community is that other people have to be involved and with those other people come their issues and agendas. Often, interpersonal interaction leads to conflict among the staff that can seep into the congregation. Open conflict can be viewed as dissension (Gal. 5:20), which seems to run counter to the scriptural witness of unity in the Body (Rom. 15:5; Eph. 4:3,13; Col. 3:14).

An important function of congregational leadership is to faithfully work to reduce unproductive conflict. “Friction among a team should be minimized. When problems are neglected, morale drops and performance decreases” (Sanders 112).

G. Douglass Lewis’ study of congregational conflict resolution has some very helpful insights. As pastor and staff seek to live genuine, Christlike lives and engage in biblical *koinonia*, conflict will inevitably occur. Lewis challenges the notion “that to love others means having no conflict with them. In fact, loving, caring for others, investing deeply with them, and risking part of ourselves makes our conflicts more intense. The deeper the relationship, the more significant the conflict” (31).

Jesus admitted that conflict would exist between people of faith. He never denied nor condemned its presence; instead, he offered words of resolution (Matt. 5:23-26; 18:15-20). The life and ministry of Jesus challenged the assumptions of his audience related to interpersonal relationships:

Jesus' ministry continually created conflict for individuals, his disciples, himself, the people to whom he ministered, and finally the institutions of the day. In each case, the conflict was the setting in which revelation occurred, new alternatives were opened, new choices demanded, and new occasions for growth toward wholeness revealed. (Lewis 38)

As pastor and staff develop Christlike lives and engage in deeply significant community building, conflict may be seen as an indication of their faithfulness:

Our goals get clarified, acted out, evaluated, and reshaped in relationship to and in encounter with God and other persons. Conflict, then, is essential to the development of humanness. Loving God and others not only takes place in the midst of conflict, it affirms that conflict itself. Stated even more radically, loving God and others is to be in conflict with them. It means to be open and willing to risk making known to them our intentions and at the same time to know, to take seriously, and respond to their hopes. Loving affirms our differences, but it also searches for creative alternatives that are fulfilling and lead to wholeness for all. (Lewis 36-37)

The presence of the divine in human affairs would arguably create conflict (of the perfect, eternal God with the imperfect, finite human). The Incarnation created the greatest conflict of human history. Yet, the opposing extremes of the divine-human interaction become the stage upon which God reveals divine intent for humankind (Lewis 38).

The authentic Christian pastor and staff will not shun intimate community for fear of conflict. Instead, they will seek to embody Christlike lives and engage in deep, mutual relationships with a view to discerning God's will within those relationships:

In an organic team ministry, accountability is mutual.... [M]utual

accountability impinges on two areas: 1) Ministry—to be mutually accountable means to have a stake in the success of fellow partners in ministry.... [I]t is not only encouragement, but also correction. This involves speaking hard words to each other.... We must allow teammates to offer a word of rebuke and to tell us where they see our giftedness. 2) Personal growth—in shared ministry, program development is not kept separate from personal growth. Public ministry cannot be separated from the model of Christ's life in us. To foster personal integrity in Christ, accountability means to open our lives to our teammates.... [T]ime to build relationships is important. (Ogden 182-83)

This type of community, which embraces healthy conflict, will require a new way of thinking about the biblical directives of love and peace. A supportive community will not be absent of conflict between individuals; neither should loving community be expected to blindly accept behavior contrary to the teachings of Jesus:

A supportive, all embracing love does not eliminate conflict with our neighbors whom we love ... neither we nor our neighbor should expect to be patted on the head by God and others and told, "That's okay. Do anything you want to do." God's love and will both affirm us and stand over against us. (Lewis 33)

As the Holy Spirit renews minds (Rom. 12:1-2), persons begin to recognize distinctions between genuine Christian community and self-serving individualism. Inevitable conflicts within staff relationships (and within the church at large) can be seen as

possibilities for new revelations of God's purposes:

The testimony of the Christian community throughout its history has been that conversion, that perceiving in a new way, comes as a gift of God's grace and not merely as an act of will .... [T]he central realities of the Christian faith—the cross and the resurrection—are a testimony to the fact that in the final analysis the power of God's love can overcome even the greatest sense of despair, hopelessness, and alienation. It creates a new reality and enables us to see all things new. This new reality does not eliminate conflict. Conflict is a fact of existence. It does, however, offer a new perspective on which differences are seen not as destructive but as creative possibilities.... [I]t promises that all things are possible through God's grace. (Lewis 45)

As a pastor and staff form deep, intimate relationships with one another, as they invest themselves in the mission and ministry of each other, as they embrace the conflict that this sense of community brings, they begin to model for the congregation biblical, Christlike, Spirit-empowered living. Only through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit can this occur. "Living in covenantal relationship with God and one another requires more than a personal choice to be a committed member. It requires the transforming power of God working through the agency of the Spirit" (Van Gelder 118). The mere presence of conflict has the tendency to tear people apart rather than bring them together. As pastor and staff recognize the transforming work of the Holy Spirit through healthy conflict, they can embrace the presence of God and seek to grow forward *through* the conflict rather than in spite of it. This new realization ultimately places the growth and functioning of the pastor and staff in the hands of God.

### **Shared Leadership**

**In order for much-needed communities to be formed, the pastor and staff will have to set the stage, provide the example, and lead the way. Once they learn to embrace conflict in healthy ways, then pastor and staff can begin to move toward truly shared leadership. Leadership is shared when group members "weep when**

others weep and rejoice when others rejoice” (Rom. 12:15). Shared leadership recognizes each person’s gifts and abilities while holding individuals accountable for the ways the gifts and abilities are employed in the life of the body. Shared leadership is a willingness to be last of all and a servant of all (Mark 9:35). Clergy and staff must share a sense of common purpose, mission, and direction. Unity must develop amid diversity.

By examining the early Christian community in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3), an example of shared leadership can be seen. The Christians in Antioch were from various backgrounds and cultures, but they did not allow their differences to divide them. They did not agree on every minor thing. Their different perspectives allowed them to view broader opportunities for growth, mission, ministry, and service. Trust and love were central to genuine Christian community of Antioch. Similar love and trust must characterize contemporary Christian congregations. “Love lets go and permits the other to stretch his or her wings. Trust operates on mutual respect. Grace abounds in [contemporary, biblically faithful] churches” (Easum 51). The relationships between pastor and staff have the potential to be role models for relationships among members of the congregation.

The way the pastor and staff respond to pressing issues can “make or break” their witness to the truth of the resurrected life of Jesus Christ and the transforming presence of his Holy Spirit. If congregational members see the pastor and staff crumble under the weight of responsibility, they will grow disheartened. If those outside the church see the pastor and staff breaking under the burden of having to do everything for everyone, they will turn away from the church to seek more comfortable places of involvement. Without careful discernment, pastor and staff

face the threat of making poor decisions and exercising bad judgment. If the staff cannot “live in peace with one another” (1 Thess. 5:13), those outside the church will have difficulty locating role models from whom to learn how to live in peace. When leaders are not willing to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21), few, if any, in the congregation will submit to their leadership. Hurting, needy people of the community will likely not believe that God, in Christ, is accepting if they detect that the church staff cannot “accept one another” (Rom. 15:7). If pastors and staffs struggle to embrace shared leadership in the context of transformed personal lives (Rom. 12:2), parishioners will not believe the message of transformation is possible in their own lives.

### **The Purposes of the Church**

According to Rick Warren, purpose takes precedence over all else:

The starting point for every church should be the question, “Why do we exist?...” If you are helping a new church get started, your first task is to define your purpose.... [I]f you serve a church that has plateaued, is declining, or is simply discouraged, your most important task is to redefine your purpose. (Purpose Driven Church 81)

During a Purpose-Driven Church Conference, Warren further commented that church leaders and pastors must constantly ask themselves two questions: (1) What is their business? and (2) How’s business? (“What Are We Doing?”). Managing the body cannot substitute for being the body (Carter 111). The pastor and staff will lead the congregation

effectively only when they share clarity about the transformational nature of the church:

We must have a firm and accurate understanding of our business....  
[M]any churches have lost people and missed opportunities because they have misunderstood the business they are in. Ours is not the business of organized religion, corporate worship, or Bible teaching. If we dedicate ourselves to such a business we will be left by the wayside as the culture moves forward. Those are fragments of a larger purpose to which we have been called by God. We are in the business of life transformation. (Barna

96)

Life transformation is God's work through a relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ, empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit. The initiative of forming Christian community rests with God. Persons are invited and allowed to participate, but must never lose sight of their dependence upon the power, grace, mercy and love of God. God is the source of Christian spirituality and God's righteousness is the goal of Christian community:

The contemplative life, is not about us. It is about God ... The more there is of us, the less there is of God. Christian spirituality is not a life-project for becoming a better person. It is not about developing a so-called deeper life. We are in on it, to be sure, but we are not the subject. Nor are we the action. We get included by means of a few prepositions: God with us (Matt. 1:23), Christ in me (Gal. 2:20), God for us (Rom. 8:31). With, in, for: They are powerful, connecting, relation-forming words, but none of them makes us either the subject or the predicate. We are the tag-end of a

prepositional phrase. Sooner or later in this life we get invited or commanded to do something. But in that doing, we never become the subject of the Christian life nor do we perform the action of the Christian life. We are invited or commanded into what I call prepositional participation. The prepositions that join us to God and God's action in us within the world—the *with*, the *in*, the *for*—[emphasis original] are very important but they are essentially a matter of the ways and means of being in on and participating in what God is doing. (Peterson 6)

Present day writers are reclaiming an early church model of personal and communal transformation. Some are advocating a renewed understanding of biblically faithful discipleship as apprenticeship to Jesus (Willard 2; Hauerwas 4). Classical Protestant teaching commonly cites three attributes or outward signs by which one may discern whether a community of faith is truly a church: Word, sacrament and discipline (Oden 299). Many references are made to New Testament writings as definitive for delineating the central functions of the Church. Van Gelder distills the core biblical ministry functions of Romans 12 to worship, discipling, fellowshiping, serving, witnessing, visioning, and stewarding (149-54). Another theologian has summarized those functions as being a faith community entirely devoted to God:

The purpose of the church is to gather out of the world a people of God whose lives are hid in Christ, who “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:14). The missional implication is that the church is intended to be consecrated wholly to God on behalf of the world. (Oden 317)



Jesus has chosen to use the Church as the instrument of this transformation process. “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16). Jesus offered his synopsis of the purposes of discipleship in two significant moments. When approached by an expert in the Law asking about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied with a clear and compelling summation of the mission of his followers:

Love the Lord your God with all heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:37-40)

After his resurrection, when the risen Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples, he charged them, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Warren’s PDC applies these words of Christ to identify the five purposes of the Church: (1) “Love God with all your heart” [worship], (2) “Love your neighbor as yourself” [ministry]<sup>4</sup>, (3) “Go ... make disciples” [evangelism], (4) “Baptizing them” [fellowship], and (5) “Teaching them to do” [discipleship] (107). The life and ministry of Jesus modeled these five purposes (John 17:1-26); the early Church fulfilled them (Acts 2:41-47); and the Apostle Paul explained them (Eph. 4:11-16). The Purpose-Driven

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<sup>4</sup> Warren uses the word “ministry” for this purpose; however, “ministry” is often construed to refer exclusively to the work of ordained clergy. Warren’s reference is to a person’s service rendered to others within the church. Therefore, I employ the terminology of ministry/service throughout this paper as a manner of distinguishing between the work of professional clergy and the service of every Christian believer.

philosophy rests upon and results from these five biblical purposes. This project assesses the application of these five biblical purposes through a forty day spiritual growth experience based on Warren's PDL.

One challenge to enacting the five biblical purposes at Trinity Church requires the movement of individuals from worship and fellowship into discipleship and service. Some parishioners perpetually attend Bible studies, prayer groups, seminars, and worship services without ever leaving the facilities of Trinity Church. These persons misunderstand faithful Christian discipleship as merely participating in church services. Congregants need to be reminded that faithful followers of Jesus spend time in settings of both inward learning for personal growth (John 1:39, 43) and outward service for the benefit of others (Luke 9:1; Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19). The purpose of developing and fostering a Christian community is never intended to be solely self-serving:

The experience of Christian togetherness is not simply for the benefit of those who choose to participate in Christian community. A community of love rooted in the redemptive reign of God can never be an in-house enterprise, for such love is contagious and overflowing. It seeks to embrace all humanity. (Guder et al. 148-49)

Another challenge at Trinity Church is to motivate individuals to move from outward service for the benefit of others to inward learning for personal growth. This condition is not unique to Trinity Church. “[P]ostmodern Christianity is chock-full of ‘religious’ men and women with little faith in Christ—‘Christian agnostics,’ if you will” (Sweet, SoulTsunami 50). Well-intentioned souls sometimes get stuck in administrative purgatory—serving on numerous committees, boards, and task forces. Often, these people are unconsciously measuring their worth in the kingdom by the amount of work they undertake at the church. Instinctively, these committed workers sense they need to move to other areas of service or begin to feel they have “served their time” and want

someone else to come behind them and carry on the church activity of which they have been a part. These individuals have seriously misunderstood the purposes of the church. Trinity Church needs to find a way to encourage those who busy themselves with church-related activities to become engaged in growing into mature disciples.

#### Starting with the Staff

A foundational fact about the role of staff in a large church is that the church will grow to model what it sees lived out among the staff. “[W]hat God’s people see modeled in staff relationships will affect the way ministry is fulfilled throughout the church” (Ogden 184). If the pastor and the staff hope to equip the congregation for relationships and transformation within small groups, then they should lead by example—modeling life as a small group. Leadership by example is the foundation of strong, effective small group ministry (Galloway and Mills 71). The staff needs to embody the life-transforming grace of the gospel in order to have integrity and the ability to lead the congregation to fulfill its God-given mission. “Building a collaborative team is first the responsibility of the principal leadership team. Team progress in this effort becomes a model and symbol to the other ministry groups in the church” (Cladis 89). If the staff does not serve as role model in the pursuit of spiritual growth and development, the members of the congregation may not value it themselves (Carter 111).

#### Living as a Group

The impact of small groups within the local church and the larger community should not be underestimated. Robert Wuthnow observes that “the small-group movement has become a significant force in American religion” (346). The incorporation of small groups into the overall life and ministry of a congregation will increase the participation level and spiritual growth of those individuals involved. One of the main purposes of small group ministry is to create a heightened level of participation

(Galloway and Mills 70). Another benefit of small groups is the increased amount of information retained by participants:

Giving voice to one's religious views in a small group is certainly a more open, dynamic process than listening to a sermon on Sunday mornings. Talking is itself important. People remember more of what they say than of what they read or hear. (Wuthnow 357)

Increased participation and the transmission of information, however, are not the sole motivation of a small group ministry. Information must be coupled with spiritual formation in order to address the needs of the whole person:

Bible study groups do encourage studying the Bible. But the name is also somewhat misleading. What most of these groups also do—and what contributes most to member satisfaction and effectiveness—is eating together, singing together, working on projects, meditating, and even participating in sports and hobbies. They are essentially fellowship groups.... Bible studies are thus accommodating more traditional religious patterns to the needs and interest of contemporary society. They are a new format that allows people to gain some exposure to religion while pursuing their need for community. (Wuthnow 148)

As a church within the Wesleyan tradition, Trinity Church should embrace a combined approach—employing both large events and small groups. Each type of grouping has its own merit and produces a different outcome in the individuals engaged. John Wesley understood the significance of various groupings. In fact, Wesley innovated

the systemic intertwining of various groups:

The design of the Wesleyan program had the goal of holiness in constant focus: The societies proclaimed and explained the doctrine, the class meeting was designed to implement the behavioral quest for the holy lifestyle, and the bands facilitated the cultivation of inner purity and the purging of the attitudes. It was an interlocking system woven around a common theme. (Henderson 115)

The primary gathering of the Church (Sunday morning worship) cannot be abandoned. Corporate worship feeds, directs, and sustains all other functions of ministry in the church (Van Gelder 149). At the same time, the deep need of individuals for community, which cannot be fostered in the context of large group worship, must not be ignored. “Christian ethics is not primarily an individualistic, one-on-one-with God brand of personal holiness; rather it has to do with living the life of the Spirit in Christian community and in the world” (Fee 99). Trinity Church continues to offer vital, dynamic worship experiences that meet the needs of the community while it also offers a variety of small group experiences that allow for the individuals who are reached through worship to incorporate themselves into the community of faith and grow in their pursuit of holiness. In this way Trinity Church can fulfill its mission, “To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known.”

## CHAPTER 3

### *DESIGN OF THE STUDY*

#### Revisiting the Problem

The Christian faith is founded upon the power of God to transform believers by faith in Jesus Christ. A primary function of the church staff is to enable individuals to experience spiritual transformation through the ministries of the local church. To lead with integrity, the staff must embody the life-changing grace of the Gospel. The church staff will directly influence, guide, limit or transform a congregation's understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. Some staff members lack a biblically grounded view of the nature and purpose of the Church. Additionally, some have never experienced any type of spiritual transformation that could directly impact a view of the nature and purpose of the Church. A guided group experience for the staff of Trinity Church, based upon biblical principles of personal spiritual transformation, improved the awareness of individual purpose within the staff members.

#### *The Purpose Restated*

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a forty-day spiritual growth experience on the church staff's awareness of the biblical purposes of the church. The goal of this study was developed recognizing that the staff cannot effectively lead the congregation when the staff does not possess a clear understanding of its purpose or the purposes of the church. Likewise, the staff will have difficulty nurturing spiritual growth in the other members of the congregation if staff members are not growing spiritually.

Congregation members are reluctant to participate in small group studies and spiritual growth groups when staff members do not model that behavior. The staff is unable to measure the effectiveness of the church's mission by way of the church's mission statement when the staff is unclear about implementation of that mission statement. Understanding the biblical parameters for ministry empowers staff members to focus their energy on matters that extend the kingdom of God and develop faithful disciples.

The Purpose Driven Church and the Purpose Driven Life are resources written by Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Community Church in southern California. PDC was the original work that applied five biblical purposes to the structure and organization of the local church. More recently, PDL was written to apply those same purposes to the life and spiritual development of individuals. PDL is organized to address the five purposes of the Christian life:

1. Worship—Planned for God's pleasure,
2. Discipleship—Created to become like Christ,
3. Ministry/Service—Shaped for serving God,
4. Evangelism—Made for mission, and
5. Fellowship—Formed for God's family.

This study was designed around the implementation of PDL as a spiritual growth experience for the church staff at Trinity Church in Augusta, Georgia. The goal of the study was to measure the staff's understanding of the purposes of the church prior to the study, to experience the PDL study over the course of forty days, to measure the staff's perceptions and understandings after the study, and to analyze the information gathered from the study.

### *Guiding Research Questions*

Three questions framed the direction and reflection of this study.

#### Research Question 1

Do the Trinity Church staff members have a clear awareness of the biblical purposes of the church?

For any group to function effectively, the members of the group must have a clear sense of purpose and direction. Often, church staff members get bogged down in activity and neglect the broader purposes of the mission and ministry of God's Church. A group of ten questions are included on the pretest and posttest questionnaires that relate to the staff's understanding of the purposes of the church. The distribution of responses is included in Appendix C. The responses were tabulated and evaluated for reference.

#### *Research Question 2*

How does participation in Purpose Driven Life study affect the Trinity Church staff's awareness of the purposes of the church (Warren)?

If little awareness exists prior to the study, the hope is to increase awareness by participation in the study. If some awareness is evident prior to the study, the hope is to heighten awareness leading to more focused and directed planning and implementation of programs and ministries in the local congregation.

#### *Research Question 3*

How does participation in Purpose Driven Life study affect the Trinity Church staff's understanding of its role in the church?

The study demonstrated that this forty-day spiritual growth experience assisted the staff to see their role as enablers, equippers, and motivators of the other members of the body of Christ.



### *Methodology*

This project was an evaluative study in the quasi-experimental mode employing a pretest and posttest design with no comparison group. The PDL material was the treatment administered to the intact group. Over a forty-day period, the participants read a chapter each day in PDL. Once each week, the participants gathered for small group discussion of and reflection upon the material read the previous week. The weekly, small group discussions took place during the routinely scheduled Tuesday morning staff meetings at Trinity Church. One month prior to the forty-day period, the staff was invited to participate in the study by letter (see Appendix F). Care was given to assure that staff members clearly understood that participation was entirely voluntary and that no penalty, punishment, or negative repercussions would occur by choosing not to participate. This attention is of particular value because, in addition to being the researcher-participant, I am the senior pastor of the church and administrative head of the staff. Every effort was made to maintain confidentiality and eliminate researcher bias.

For forty days, during September and October 2004, the staff of Trinity Church read PDL daily and reflected in small groups weekly. I observed the weekly small group sessions on Tuesday morning and recorded my observations (see Appendix F). I did not participate in the small group discussions nor did I facilitate any of the six small group sessions. I was a passive observer.

### **Subjects**

The subjects were the staff members of the Trinity Church. The Trinity staff consists of twenty-two persons. Twelve are full-time employees, while nine work part-time. Twenty-one are paid employees. Eighteen staff members are United Methodists, with one Southern Baptist, one Missionary Baptist, one Nazarene, and one non-

denominational church member. Five staff members are ordained clergy; seventeen are laypersons. Six staff members are male, and sixteen are female. Twenty-one are Caucasian, while one is African-American.

### ***Instrumentation***

A researcher-designed questionnaire aided assessment of the staff's awareness of the purposes of the church (Warren) before and after the study (see Appendixes B and D). The instrument includes general information about the participants, a process for assigning a unique participant code to each staff member, and some open-ended questions for elaboration by the participants.

### **Validity**

The validity of the questionnaires was field tested on the staff of a nearby church. That church staff closely resembles the makeup of the Trinity Church staff. The demography of the congregations is also similar. This field testing allowed for adjustments to phrasing, order of responses, and clarity of the instructions of the instruments. A research reflection team also submitted input on the structure and style of the pre- and posttest questionnaires. Their suggested alterations are reflected in the tests administered.

### **Data Collection**

Participant information forms were completed (see Appendix A) and the pretest questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered one week prior to the start of the forty-day period outlined in PDL. Specific instructions were given to participants prior to completion of the questionnaire to ensure consistency (see Appendix G). During the course of the forty-day experience, I recorded observations of the small group discussions held during the existing Tuesday morning staff devotional times (see Appendix F). One

week following the completion of the forty-day PDL experience, the posttest questionnaire (see Appendix D) was administered to participants. Specific instructions were read to participants prior to the completion of the posttest questionnaire (see Appendix H).

### **Variables and Generalizability**

The independent variable of the study is the material included in PDL. The independent variable was introduced to all participants simultaneously as the staff began the forty-day experience together. Participants read and reflected independently and shared insights weekly in the Tuesday morning staff meetings. Dependent variables were changes in attitudes and understandings among the staff about the purposes of the church.

### **Data Analysis**

I gathered, scored and analyzed the pretest and posttest questionnaires with the assistance of a research reflection team. I tabulated and analyzed my observations along with the research reflection team. The summary of the findings are recorded and reported in subsequent chapters of this work.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The spiritual growth practices of a church staff set a powerful leadership example for the local congregation. By clearly expressing the five biblical purposes of the church, the staff may effectively direct the activity and ministry of the Church. Participating in a small group, spiritual growth experience demonstrates to the larger congregation the importance of sharing in a group for spiritual growth. Understanding the purposes of the church can allow the staff to decline engaging in activities and programs not in alignment with the purposes of the church. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the manner in which the forty-day PDL experience impacted the awareness of the five biblical purposes in the church staff of the Trinity Church as well as its self understanding of its role in the life of the congregation (Warren).

#### Profile of the Subjects

The subjects participating in this study were the staff members of the Trinity Church. The total population for this study was twenty-two. Nineteen subjects successfully completed both pre- and posttest questionnaires. Three participants completed either the pre- or posttest questionnaires without including the identifying code number on the forms. Those participants whose code numbers could not be properly matched on both pre- and posttest forms were excluded from the data analysis.

Of the nineteen who successfully completed both pre- and posttest forms, four were clergy and fifteen were laypersons; twelve were full-time employees of the church and seven were part-time employees. Respondents' length of service at Trinity Church ranged from 3 ½ months to eleven years. Over half of the subjects (10 of 19; 52.6 percent) had never served on a church staff prior to becoming a part of Trinity Church's staff. Nearly all of the respondents (16 of 19; 84.2 percent) indicated participating in

some type of ongoing spiritual growth group (Bible study, prayer group, accountability/discipleship group) outside of the Trinity Church staff. A large majority (16 of 19; 84.2 percent) had previously participated in a spiritual growth experience with a group; however, most (15 of 19; 78.9 percent) had not previously participated in a spiritual growth experience with another church staff.

Prior to the study, participants completed an informational form to assess the function of the staff's regularly scheduled devotional time on Tuesday mornings. Most of the individuals (78.9 percent) indicated that they consider Trinity Church staff's Tuesday morning devotional times to be a part of their spiritual growth discipline. Fifteen of nineteen positively noted that the Tuesday morning staff devotional times helped clarify their life's purpose.

This study was evaluative with the PDL (Warren) material as the treatment administered to the intact group. Every effort was made to maintain as many constants as possible during the implementation of the PDL (Warren). The regularly scheduled Tuesday meeting was selected as a natural meeting time for the Trinity Church staff. The normal routine for Trinity Church's staff meetings is for a staff member to lead the devotional time each Tuesday. The devotional leadership rotates from week to week, ensuring equal opportunity for leadership to all staff members. Weekly assignments are determined by a voluntary sign-up sheet so that each week's leader has adequate time to prepare. This format was both familiar and expected as a part of the staff's routine weekly gathering. During the forty days of PDL, the participants agreed that the full-time ministers and directors would be assigned as facilitators of the six weekly study and discussion sessions (Warren). The full-time ministers and directors all agreed to this arrangement.

Additionally, because I am both researcher and senior pastor of Trinity Church and the administrative supervisor of every participant in the study, care was taken to maintain researcher objectivity. I did not participate in the PDL small group discussions with the staff (Warren), neither did I participate in the rotational leadership of the staff devotional time. I maintained a silent presence as passive observer during the PDL small group sessions (Warren). Also, I did not attempt data calculation or analysis until the study was complete. This separation worked to minimize false manipulation or biased interpretation of the data.

### **Analysis of Data**

Normal distributions and variance assumptions could not be maintained for the subject group due to the small sample size (Kachigan 178); thus, the alternative was to employ a rank sum test, also known as the Wilcoxon or Mann-Whitney test (Dallal): a t-test for means and analysis of variance.

The pretest and posttest questionnaires (see Appendixes B and D) used for this study were researcher-designed instruments consisting of forty questions. The questions were worded to assess participant awareness of the five biblical purposes of the Church detailed in PDL (Warren). Other questions were included to assess understanding of purpose as an individual, purpose as a staff team and feelings regarding work (see Appendix C). The pretest questionnaire was administered prior to the start of the forty-day PDL experience (Warren). After the conclusion of the six session study, the posttest questionnaire was administered.

Respondents rated each questionnaire item on a five-point Likert scale. The statements on the questionnaires correlated to themes in PDL (Warren). The valuations of each question were then grouped for analysis according to the five biblical purposes of

the church (Warren, PDL). I included three additional groupings in the questionnaire: sense of purpose as an individual, sense of purpose as a staff and feelings regarding work. The primary statistical procedures employed in analyzing the data gathered in the pre- and posttest questionnaires were t-tests and analysis of variance.

**Table 4.1. T Test: Paired Two Sample for Means**

	WOR-SHIP	DIS-CIPLE-SHIP	EVAN-GELISM	SERVICE	FELLOW-SHIP	PUR-POSE-INDI-VIDUAL	PUR-POSE-STAFF	FEEL-INGS ON WORK
Pre- Test Mean	21.73	21.26	20.26	20.52	18.36	20.63	19.42	22.05
Posttest Mean	22.10	22	20.05	20.94	18.52	21.68	20	22.31
Pearson Correlation	0.048	-0.08	0.32	0.22	0.09	0.20	0.042	-0.14
t Stat	-0.57	-0.93	0.24	-0.82	-0.18	-1.66	-0.71	-0.38
p (T<=t) one tail	0.28	0.17	0.40	0.20	0.42	0.05	0.24	0.35
t Critical one-tail	1.73	1.73	1.73	1.73	1.73	1.73	1.73	1.73
p(t<=t) two tail	0.57	0.35	0.80	0.41	0.85	0.11*	0.48	0.70
t Critical two-tail	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10

\*  $p \leq .10$

The figure of significance for the p score (two tail) is 0.10. The results of this study are notable in regard to the questions focused on “Purpose as an Individual.” As noted in the accompanying chart, a p score of 0.11 reflects a nearly 90 percent likelihood that results of the study were a product of the PDL experience (Warren). Another manner of stating the significance of these findings is that a repeat of the study would create the same results in almost ninety of one hundred attempts.

#### **Analysis of Open-Ended Responses to Pre- and Posttest Prompts**

An additional source of data in this study was the qualitative statements elicited by open-ended statements on the pre- and posttest questionnaires. With the Likert scale responses, participants were asked to complete, in their own words, the following statements:

1. The mission of Trinity Church is \_\_\_\_\_,
2. The purpose(s) of the church is /are \_\_\_\_\_, and
3. My purpose is \_\_\_\_\_.

The mission statement of Trinity Church, as stated previously, was adapted by the church leadership approximately seven years prior to the time of this study. That mission statement is, “To Know Christ and To Make Christ Known.” The Trinity Church staff indicated a strong and shared awareness of that mission statement. Only one of the participants failed to explicitly state that mission statement on either the pre- or posttest prompts. All other staff members correctly identified the mission statement of the church on one or both of the forms.

The statement identifying the purposes of the church brought varied responses from participants on the pretest questionnaire. Three of the participants properly identified the five biblical purposes of the church on the pretest form. Half of the participants (10 of 20) mentioned one or more of the biblical purposes of the church on the pre-test form. The posttest assessments indicated improved awareness of the five biblical purposes of the church. The number of participants properly identifying all five of the biblical purposes doubled (from 3 to 6). Ten staff members mentioned one or more of the biblical purposes on the pretest. Though only twelve staff members named one or more of the biblical purposes on the posttest, notable is that half of the respondents (10 of 20) *increased* the number of the biblical purposes mentioned on the posttest from the



pretest forms. These responses indicate the PDL experience improved staff members' awareness of the five biblical purposes (Warren).

**Table 4.2. Number of Purposes Mentioned in Open-Ended Prompts**

Participant Number	Pretest Mission St.	Pretest Purposes/Church	Pretest Purpose/Indiv	Posttest Mission	Posttest Purposes/Church	Posttest Purpose/Indiv
541	X	2		X	5	5
812	X	1		X	2	
505	X	5		X	5	5
720	X	1		X	2	2
568	X	2		X	2	2
074	X	5	5	X	5	5
183	X	2	1	X	2	5
939	X			X		2
817	X				1	2
886		4			2	
196	X	4		X	5	
645					1	
139	X			X	4	
245						1
624	X	4	1	X	5	1
729	X		1	X	3	1
700	X	5		X	5	
592	X	2		X	4	
304	X			X	2	
082	X	2	1	X	2	1

### Summary of Significant Findings

Increased awareness of the five biblical purposes of the church was affected in the individual staff members participating in the forty-day PDL study. Though the researcher-designed questionnaires included items related to the purpose as a staff, the material in PDL is not written specifically to address staff relationships nor any group's relational growth (Warren); therefore, the resulting statistical valuations do not provide sufficient information for interpretation related to the effect of PDL on the staff's role perception.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The interaction between staff persons and the resulting impact on the spiritual growth within the congregation of Trinity Church contributed to the research design of this project. This study developed as a result of my awareness that “spiritual growth is a fundamental part of the life of the staff” (Carter 111). As exemplary leaders within the life of the congregation, the staff will influence the acceptance of spiritual development experiences within the church. Indeed, “the tone of the church ... will be a reflection of its leaders” (Sanders 112). Facilitating and modeling spirituality is the primary duty of those who serve on church staffs (Carter 108). If the congregation is to become engaged in small, collegial groups of spiritual growth and development, the staff must model this approach (Smith 346).

At the same time, small group involvement is not the primary goal of the Church nor of spiritual growth experiences. A common expectation of congregation members is that they will discover new faith resources and enrich their spiritual lives (Carter 106). The spiritual discipline of meeting together, studying the Bible, praying for one another and serving others in Christlike love marks a faithful Christian congregation. “Team building has to become a spiritual discipline for the principal leadership team” (Cladis 140). Thomas C. Oden notes that disciplined Christian living is a sign of the true Church:

The active practice of disciplined Christian life is a sign of the true church. Where no Christian behavior is beheld, there can be no *ekklesia*. Where no attention is being given to daily walking the way of holiness, we have no right to expect the true church. Where the church is, there it is being authorized to order the life of discipleship. (301)

When a pastor and staff share a foundational understanding of the purposes of the church, they are best positioned to enable the enrichment of the spiritual lives of individuals within the congregation. The goal of this project was to employ the 40-day experience of reading and reflecting upon the PDL to increase the awareness of the five biblical purposes (worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, and service/ministry) in the minds of the church staff members at Trinity Church (Warren). The church staff ought to be an example of the process of discovery of the biblical purposes of the church (Carter 108). The staff, as the primary leadership team of the congregation, should have a clearly defined sense of purpose that is God-given and God-directed (Cladis 97). When that sense of purpose arises from the Bible, God's inspired word, the staff faithfully leads the church. One theologian reflects that the visible presence of a disciplined, communal life indicate the presence of the true Church:

It is consistent with the plan of salvation that a visible community should arise as a result of God's saving work, a community of persons who acknowledge Christ as Lord and Head, who are united by their union with Christ through the Spirit. Where word, sacrament and discipline are found, the true church is certainly present. (Oden 301)

As the staff of Trinity Church participated in the PDL, they modeled for the congregation a collegial style of ministry and spiritual growth while enlarging their own awareness of the five biblical purposes of the church (Warren). Though the study was not formulated to measure the impact of the staff's actions upon the congregation, several congregants have positively remarked on the example set by the staff. The sense I have gained from these remarks is that the congregation carefully watches the staff for an indication of

importance of a particular resource. Because parishioners were aware of the staff's participation in PDL as a small group, parishioners appeared to be more apt to participate in a small group study of the material.

The staff's leadership by example encouraged many individuals within the congregation to become involved in a group or to serve as a host home or group facilitator (some of them for the first time). Many in the congregations who had never participated in a small group study did so for the first time during the course of PDL (Warren). Most with whom I have had casual conversations reported finding it meaningful and helpful in spiritual growth and discipleship. Many are continuing to meet with groups of varying types. In reflection upon the process, this increased activity by congregants in small group study is a healthy and welcomed by-product of the congregational study outlined in PDL.

### **Preexisting Conditions**

The composition of a group studied must be considered in the evaluation and interpretation of the statistical data of the study. A church staff is likely more comfortable with discussions of faith issues than the general population. The members of the Trinity Church staff were selected partly because of their self-professed Christian faith. Daily tasks often require staff members to engage in conversations addressing matters of faith; therefore, the starting point of awareness related to the biblical purposes of the Church is likely to be skewed higher than the general population, thus, the accompanying change, or variance, as a result of participating in PDL is likely to be less dramatic than for a corresponding person employed in secular work (Warren).

This study reinforced the appropriation of PDL to personal, spiritual growth of staff members. The test results affirm that PDL made a positive impact on the sense of

purpose in the lives of the individuals who participated in the study; however, the data collected does not allow for similar judgments to be made regarding the other groups of questions reflected in Appendix C (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, purpose as staff or feelings regarding work) (Warren).

A strong likelihood exists that an existing church staff (such as Trinity Church's) will contain persons with a substantial understanding of and investment in the biblical purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism (Warren). An existing staff may also have a high degree of job satisfaction and, thus, be less apt to indicate a substantial change in feelings regarding work after an experience such as PDL (Warren). When a high level of satisfaction is present prior to participation in a shared, spiritual growth experience, it follows that a correspondingly favorable score would result on a pretest self-evaluation. If a high level of awareness of the biblical purposes of the church is recorded on a pretest, then little significant positive change is likely to be recorded on a posttest evaluation.

Accurate assessment of this study cannot overlook the multiple roles I played: researcher, observer of the group process, senior pastor, administrative head of the staff, managerial supervisor of the staff. I cannot say that I moved from one role to another with ease. Refraining from participating in the small group discussions each Tuesday was both difficult and unnatural. Though the study does not have instrumentation to validate it, I believe the staff felt awkward about the sterile arrangements of my non-participatory presence. Future studies would be well served to consider the engagement of capable, disinterested observers having no previous contact with staff members to allow for a truer interaction among *all* staff members.

My role as both researcher and senior pastor of the staff may have influenced

participants in some way. Regardless of the precautions taken to prevent researcher bias and undue influence, achieving complete objectivity in the study of a group well-known to the researcher is impossible. Just as awareness of biblical purposes may be higher for a church staff than the general population, higher ratings may result on initial assessments when the researcher is known by participants. Statistical data in this study was not analyzed to determine whether participation in the study, or responses on the pre- and posttest, were influenced by my invitation and observation. The presence and influence of the senior pastor during a spiritual growth experience among a church staff merits further investigation.

Initially, I had hoped to study the effects of PDL on the staff's understanding of their role in the church. This study did not address the issues surrounding the role of the staff; however, the role of the staff in the larger congregation is a subject of great interest for future research.

A factor preventing the assimilation of PDL principles into the staff's organizational understanding is the design of the sessions and materials in PDL. PDL is designed to facilitate and enhance individual spiritual growth through personal reading and reflection coupled with weekly group interaction. While group dynamics may contribute to significant relational bonding among individuals in some groups, PDL is targeted for individual, as opposed to group, spiritual growth (Warren).

Prior to formulating the research questions, I did not have any difficulty making the mental move from the individualized approach of PDL to the group/organizational approach of PDC. I had read both books and was familiar with the application of Warren's five biblical purposes to both congregational and individual life. My underlying hope was that staff members would easily translate the personal principles of PDL into

organizational principles that would impact the programming and planning of the congregation; however, from the results of this study, the staff at Trinity Church did not make the transition from individual to organizational application (Warren).

Still, I believe the common reading and reflection moved the staff positively toward a shared understanding of the purpose and mission of Trinity Church. For example, I have noticed that staff members are more apt to ask direct questions regarding the motivations and reasons behind suggested actions or studies. Recently, the staff was presented with a request from a non-church, community group to rent the church facilities over an extended period of time during the summer. As the staff reviewed the request, one staff member asked, “How does this group help ‘to know Christ and make Christ known’?” Discussion ensued about the secular nature of the group requesting use of the facilities and the resulting inability of the congregation to use the buildings for worship, fellowship, or discipleship studies during that period of time. That observation alone leads me to believe the staff is beginning to form a shared understanding of the purposes of the church.

### **Lessons Learned**

PDL is not specifically targeted for addressing relationships among church staff members. The material is designed to enhance individual spiritual growth in small group settings. Though Trinity attempted to use PDL as the curriculum for adult Sunday school during the forty-day experience, PDL is not suitably well formatted for a traditional United Methodist adult Sunday school session (Warren). Little time for discussion of the material would remain after viewing the video component in the weekly gathering. The Trinity Church staff did not encounter similar time constraints because the typical staff meeting agenda allots ninety minutes. Sunday school sessions typically have fewer than

sixty minutes in which to transact class business, pray, engage in teaching and/or lecturing and discussion of the presented material. The Sunday school framework is not practical for effective use of PDL's format (Warren). Familiarity among staff members made conversations, discussions, and open sharing more likely than in groups where working relationships are not yet established.

During the accompanying congregational study (40 Days of Purpose), a few individuals in the congregation expressed concern about theological views expressed in PDL (Warren) not reflecting Methodist or Wesleyan tradition. One such person felt so strongly that he chose not to participate in his normal Sunday school class during the 40 Days of Purpose (Warren) because he believed it was a disservice to both the class and the material. Future users of PDL and 40 Days of Purpose (Warren) would benefit from careful consideration and discussion about differing theological perspectives of the subject congregation that may conflict with Warren's expressed views.

Prior to the study, I did not adequately evaluate the impact of theological differences between Warren's background (Calvinist, Baptist) and the setting of Trinity (Wesleyan, Methodist). In my estimation, the opportunity for dialogue among the small groups would help frame discussions within Trinity's theological perspective. Such framing did not happen in every small group. Some groups reported having participants who were experienced in theological reflection. Those individuals were helpful to their small groups when theological issues (such as predestination, determinism, testing faith through trials, free will, human responsibility) arose from the daily readings in PDL. Groups lacking individuals with such capabilities found their discussions causing more confusion than clarity. In hindsight, this confusion may have been averted by a custom-designed study guide, to accompany the PDL's main text, written from a Wesleyan



theological perspective.

Among the staff, theological differences were discussed with apparent ease. Such ease of theological reflection and conversation is due to the presence of staff members with graduate degrees from theological institutions. Not surprisingly, adult small groups and Sunday school classes struggled to resolve some issues resulting from PDL's theological frame of reference being different than Trinity's own frame of reference. A context specific study guide would have been a valuable aid in these difficult discussions.

My primary reason for using PDL was to introduce Warren's biblical grid of the purposes of the church as a helpful resource for individual spiritual growth. Upon reflection, I now recognize that everyone at Trinity did not share my familiarity with Warren's approach. This study would have been enhanced by the staff and lay leadership of Trinity studying Warren's PDC *prior* to the forty-day, congregation-wide PDL. A follow-up exploration of PDC could assist the staff in transitioning from personal application of the five biblical purposes to institutional application of those purposes.

### **Strategies and Suggestions**

This study offers guidance for the development of several strategies in the lives of local congregations. One such suggestion is to provide frequent occasions for small group discussion and interaction (not only in staff meetings but in all church-related gatherings). As a previous study found among effective congregations, the importance of some form of small group fellowship cannot be overemphasized (Smith 342).

Participation in this small group experience positively influenced "purpose as an individual." Participation in a group assists individual spiritual growth. This increased awareness and spiritual growth might form the basis for development of additional small group opportunities in the local church. Another helpful strategy for congregations is the

implementation of shared, common reading as a basis for small group discussion, reflection, and prayer. Many resources exist for such reflection and study, including lectionaries and thematic studies.

Future research might address the shared reading of and reflection upon Warren's PDC, in a format similar to PDL, to determine the effect of PDC on the organizational understanding of the staff. I read PDC prior to PDL and easily followed the transition of biblical principles from organizational application to individual application. I would be interested to learn whether a staff has more ease learning individual principles (as in PDL) before learning organizational principles (as in PDC). Further study could investigate the staff's role in leading congregations to develop in Christian maturity. Helpful information might be drawn from comparisons between congregations studying PDL (or other shared reading and reflection) in which one staff did participate (or lead by example) and another where the staff did not participate in the shared study. Additional research might explore any changes in the self-understanding of the staff as a result of participating in a shared group experience. Congregations would benefit from the findings from studies of the effects of a shared spiritual growth experience among staffs at different churches.

This study indicated an increased awareness of the five biblical purposes of the Church in the minds of staff members as a result of participation in the forty-day PDL (Warren). An expansion of this finding might indicate a study on the implications of the increased awareness of the five biblical purposes upon the program and administration of the local congregation. An improved understanding among the staff might streamline the decision-making process in evaluating potential study materials for the congregation. I would also like to know how the Trinity Church was impacted by the staff's example of

participation in the PDL. Though the anecdotal feedback received thus far has been positive, statistical verification would strengthen the premise of leading by example.

My multiple roles of researcher, senior pastor, administrative supervisor, and staff member must have had some impact on the study. A study similar to the reported study, in which the senior pastor was a highly involved participant in the small group discussions would provide helpful insights into the magnitude of the influence of the senior pastor. Assigning the senior pastor the task of leading one of the six study sessions could prove to have positive impact on the staff. I believe that this study would have had more results of statistical significance if I had carried the exclusive responsibility of facilitating the six group discussion sessions. Of course, the bias and preference of the senior pastor, or any other staff member given exclusive leadership of groups sessions, must be evaluated and analyzed for impact.

Since the completion of this study, new materials and formats based upon the PDL have been developed and are in use. Further studies will likely employ some of the newer materials and formats in a guided group experience, similar to PDL, to study the effects and impact on staff work and function within the life of the local church (Warren). Careful consideration and evaluation of the aforementioned issues in the development of future studies will be beneficial to researchers and congregations.

## APPENDIX A

## Participant Information

CODE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last four digits of SSN)

Are you (Circle one) CLERGY or LAYPERSON

(Circle one)      FULL-TIME                      or                      PART-TIME

1. How long have you been a part of Trinity Church's staff?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you ever served on a church staff prior to becoming a part of Trinity Church's staff?  

(Circle one)                      Yes                      No
3. Do you currently participate in any type of ongoing spiritual growth group outside of the Trinity Church staff (Bible study, prayer group, accountability group)?    Yes                      No
4. Do you consider Trinity Church staff's Tuesday morning devotional times a part of your spiritual growth discipline?                      Yes                      No
5. Do the Tuesday morning staff devotional times help you clarify your life's purpose?  

Yes                      No
6. Have you previously participated in a spiritual growth experience with a group?  

Yes                      No
7. Have you previously participated in a spiritual growth experience with another church staff team?                      Yes                      No
8. The MISSION of Trinity Church is \_\_\_\_\_

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9. The purpose(s) of the church is/are \_\_\_\_\_

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10. My purpose is \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Pretest Questionnaire

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have confidence in my role as a part of the church staff team.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. My work as part of the church staff team fulfills God's mission and purpose for my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. My work allows me to sense God's presence in my life                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am secure in my understanding of God's purpose(s) for my life.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Worship is a regular part of my life.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Staff devotions are very worshipful.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. God is honored and glorified by the work of this staff.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The church staff functions well as a team.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. As a team, the staff has a clear concept of our role in the life of the church.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. As a member of the staff team, I have a clear understanding of my role on the team.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. My work helps me develop Christlike character.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I love my work.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My work as a part of the church staff team enables me to grow spiritually.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I feel that I am making a significant contribution to the church's effectiveness.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Everyone on the staff appears to have a grasp on his/her purpose in life.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I have a grasp on my purpose in life.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. My purpose in life is enhanced by my position on the church staff.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Staff devotional times are usually meaningful to me.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Staff devotional times help equip me for my work.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Staff devotional times aid my spiritual growth and development.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I take great pride in my work.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I feel great pride when one of the other staff team members succeeds.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

23. I feel supported by my staff mates.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I can share my faith at work.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Because of my relationship to this staff, I can easily share my faith with others.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My work energizes me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I enjoy being around my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
28. We spend quality time with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have many meaningful friendships outside of work.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have many meaningful friendships outside church.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Most of my friends are on this staff.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Most of my friends are members of this church.	1	2	3	4	5
33. This staff has helped me become a stronger Christian.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Because of working here, I feel better equipped to share Christ with others.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Everyone knows where we are headed as a staff team.	1	2	3	4	5
36. We have a very clear game plan.	1	2	3	4	5
37. My work at the church assists others in growing their relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5
38. My work at the church assists me in growing my relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am honored to be a part of this staff team.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I always feel better about myself at the end of the day.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C  
Distribution of Items on Staff Questionnaire

**(based on Purposes of Church and Role on Staff)**

*Statements are listed under corresponding Purpose of the Church (response item number corresponding to questionnaire is listed in parenthesis).*

**WORSHIP**

- 3. My work allows me to sense God's presence in my life.
- 5. Worship is a regular part of my life.
- 6. Staff devotions are very worshipful.
- 8. God is honored and glorified by the work of this staff.
- 18. Staff devotional times are usually meaningful to me.

**DISCIPLESHIP**

- 11. My work helps me develop Christlike character.
- 13. My work as a part of the church staff team enables me to grow spiritually.
- 20. Staff devotional times aid my spiritual growth and development.
- 33. This staff has helped me become a stronger Christian.
- 38. My work at the church assists me in growing my relationship with God.

**EVANGELISM**

- 24. I can share my faith at work. (24)
- 25. Because of my relationship to this staff, I can easily share my faith with others.
- 29. I have many meaningful friendships outside of work.
- 30. I have many meaningful friendships outside church.
- 34. Because of working here, I feel better equipped to share Christ with others.

**SERVICE**

- 14. I feel that I am making a significant contribution to the church's effectiveness.
- 17. My purpose in life is enhanced by my position on the church staff. (17)

- 19. Staff devotional times help equip me for my work. (19)
- 22. I feel great pride when one of the other staff team members succeeds
- 37. My work at the church assists others in growing their relationship with God.

### **FELLOWSHIP**

- 23. I am supported by my staff mates.
- 27. I enjoy being around my coworkers.
- 28. We spend quality time with each other.
- 31. Most of my friends are on this staff.
- 32. Most of my friends are members of this church.

### **PURPOSE AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

- 1. I have confidence in my role as a part of the church staff team.
- 2. My work as part of the church staff team fulfills God's mission and purpose for my life.
- 4. I am secure in my understanding of God's purpose(s) for my life.
- 10. As a member of the staff team, I have a clear understanding of my role on the team.
- 16 I have a grasp on my purpose in life

### **PURPOSE AS A STAFF (TEAM WORK)**

- 8. The church staff functions well as a team.
- 9. As a team, the staff has a clear concept of our role in the life of the church.
- 15. Everyone on the staff appears to have a grasp on his/her purpose in life.
- 35. Everyone knows where we are headed as a staff team.
- 36. We have a very clear game plan.

### **FEELINGS REGARDING WORK**

- 12. I love my work.
- 21. I take great pride in my work.
- 26. My work energizes me.
- 39. I am honored to be a part of this staff team.
- 40. I always feel better about myself at the end of the day.



## APPENDIX D

## Posttest Questionnaire

1. I have confidence in my role as a part of the church staff team.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My work as part of the church staff team fulfills God's mission and purpose for my life.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My work allows me to sense God's presence in my life	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am secure in my understanding of God's purpose(s) for my life.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Worship is a regular part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Staff devotions are very worshipful.	1	2	3	4	5
7. God is honored and glorified by the work of this staff.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The church staff functions well as a team.	1	2	3	4	5
9. As a team, the staff has a clear concept of our role in the life of the church.	1	2	3	4	5
10. As a member of the staff team, I have a clear understanding of my role on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My work helps me develop Christlike character.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I love my work.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My work as a part of the church staff team enables me to grow spiritually.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that I am making a significant contribution to the church's effectiveness.	2	3	4	5	
15. Everyone on the staff appears to have a grasp on his/her purpose in life.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have a grasp on my purpose in life.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My purpose in life is enhanced by my position on the church staff.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Staff devotional times are usually meaningful to me.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Staff devotional times help equip me for my work.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Staff devotional times aid my spiritual growth and development.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I take great pride in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel great pride when one of the other staff team members succeeds.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel supported by my staff mates.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I can share my faith at work.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Because of my relationship to this staff, I can easily share my faith with others.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My work energizes me.	1	2	3	4	5

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. I enjoy being around my coworkers.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. We spend quality time with each other.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I have many meaningful friendships outside of work.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. I have many meaningful friendships outside church.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Most of my friends are on this staff.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Most of my friends are members of this church.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. This staff has helped me become a stronger Christian.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Because of working here, I feel better equipped to share Christ with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Everyone knows where we are headed as a staff team.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. We have a very clear game plan.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. My work at the church assists others in growing their relationship with God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. My work at the church assists me in growing my relationship with God.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. I am honored to be a part of this staff team.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. I always feel better about myself at the end of the day.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1. The MISSION of Trinity Church is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The purpose(s) of the church is/are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. My purpose is \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Consent Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

As you may know, I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary, and I am conducting a research project on the impact of a spiritual growth experience on a church staff. Naturally, my best setting for observing this research is right here at Trinity on the Hill. I would like to ask you to participate in this study.

The role of the church staff is significant in the life of a vital, growing, faithful congregation. Often, the members of the church look to the church staff for guidance, direction, and leadership by example. This is particularly true in the matter of spiritual growth and development of genuine Christian character.

I believe a staff becomes more effective in leading the church when the staff is clearly focused on the basic purposes of the church. This study will attempt to assess our clarity of purpose and the impact of the Purpose Driven Life on our understanding of our role in the life of the church.

The project will require your independent reading and reflection over a forty-day period. We will discuss our reading and learning during our staff devotional times each Tuesday during that time. I believe the findings of this study will have a tremendously positive effect on Trinity Church and might even be helpful to other churches with similar staff configurations.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There is no expectation nor requirement for you to be a part of the study. If you choose NOT to participate, I will honor that request. I do not want to jeopardize your relationships in the staff, so I will not ask for your name on the surveys. The data will be collected using a code number (your mother's maiden name initial and the first three numbers of your social security number). All the information will be collated to give a blended view rather than identify any one person.

Once the study is completed, I will destroy the individual surveys and keep the data electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

Please know that you can refuse to respond or participate. I realize your participation is entirely voluntary, and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or e-mail me with any questions.

Thank you for your help. If you are willing to assist in this study, please sign and date this letter below to indicate your voluntary participation.

Sincerely,

Steve Dodson

I volunteer to participate in the study described above and so indicate by my signature below:

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Please Print Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
APPENDIX F

### Small Group Observations

Staff Meeting  
Session 1-Purpose Driven Life  
Greg Hatfield, Facilitator  
28 September 2004

The room was set-up with 4 tables with 5-6 chairs each. This differs from the large rectangular box configuration usually associated with staff meeting. Participants were free to choose their seats as they arrived in the room.

Table 1—Jerome, Rob, Diane, Roy, Danny  
Table 2—Terri, Marsha, Cheryl, Lawanna, Karen  
Table 3—Cindy, Kathy, Carol Spires, Adam, Al  
Table 4—Kirk, Nancy, Loi, Kris

Laura Dickerson and Carol Stewart were not present. As facilitator, Greg did not participate in a group. I was seated in a corner, silently observing and recording observations.

Greg mentioned prior to the meeting that he liked the idea of one-on-one support during the PDL study and asked my preference as to the practicality of assigning “weekly check-up partners.” I did not state a preference.

The memory verse for the week was taped to the center of each table. Various objects were also displayed on each table (such as a cup, plate, note pad, computer peripheral equipment, guitar string dampener, guitar tuner, cookie cutter).

Greg opened with prayer at 9:02 AM. He asked each person to take a sheet of paper off of the pad on the table and write his/her name on it and pass it to the end of the table.

Greg guided participants to page 48 of the study manual (The Group Agreement). He referred to the objects on the table and asked the table members to determine the function or purpose of each object. This appeared to be a fun exercise for the group as some light laughter was heard. The discussion centered on the “unusual” or “not in daily use” objects first. Participants joked with one another about possible functions. Greg then asked about the more familiar objects—such as the communion chalice. The mood changed perceptibly when Greg lifted the communion chalice as he spoke. The mood became more serious.

The memory verse (Ephesians 2:10) was read aloud together.

The group then viewed the video segment featuring Rick Warren.

Greg mentioned that the video follows the study guide outline. Those who brought Bibles were encouraged to open to Ecclesiastes 1. Some participants did not bring Bibles. There was one at Table 1, 3 at Table 2, 3 at Table 3, and 4 at Table 4. Participants appeared to be following the video in their Study guides and completing the blanks provided.

Rick Warren called attention to Ephesians 3 and encouraged participation in the group discussions. He also encouraged praying aloud very simply and inviting a friend to join the group next week.

Greg called attention to page 8 in the study guide and all participants recited the responses mentioned in the video. Greg directed attention to page 7, question 2 in the study guide to be discussed around the tables. Conversations seemed to be slow in getting started, but picked up in intensity.

The groups were then encouraged to discuss question 2 on page 10 of the study guide. Conversation appeared to be well balanced. I didn’t observe or hear anyone “hogging” the conversations). Conversations were interspersed with a few quiet moments when no one was speaking.

Greg asked individuals at each table to locate eight specific verses to be read aloud when directed. These verses were read one at a time. They were all taken from the salutations of the Pauline epistles. Greg then urged each person to write a similar opening sentence to a large group of friends indicating the purpose of writing. All participants seemed intent on writing. When asked if anyone was willing to share aloud with the entire group what they had written, there was a long pause of silence. Greg broke the silence by reading his own statement. Someone in the room said, “Wow!” Marsha at Table 2 read her statement. Nancy at Table 4 read her statement. One more was encouraged by Greg, but no one else volunteered.

The group was given a three minute stretch break.

Greg directed attention to the back cover of the study guide for the reading plan. He encouraged people to share their progression throughout the week with a partner. There was a great deal of confusion expressed about the manner of selecting a partner and many options of resolution were offered unsuccessfully. Final resolution seemed to come when only half the room was allowed to choose names on slips of paper (indicating people on the other half of the room).

Greg led in singing one stanza of “Amazing Grace”.

He directed attention to page 12 of the study guide. Participants were guided to spend a few moments in prayer about what that page was asking them to do (invite others to church with them).

Attention was directed to page 14, question 3. Conversation was encouraged in response to the question: What was Paul’s conclusion about his life as he looked back and looked forward? Discussion around tables seemed balanced.

Groups were encouraged to spend time in prayer around their tables as small groups. Without prompting, participants gathered closer together. Tables 4 and 1 were finished first (at about the same time). Table 2 finished a few minutes later. Table 3 took much longer to conclude and had the remainder of the group waiting quietly on them to conclude.

The session ended at approximately 10:30 a.m. and the room was restored to its usual configuration.

#### Staff Meeting

#### Session 2-Purpose Driven Life

Marsha Jones, Facilitator

5 October 2004

Tables were arranged against each outside wall with pens, pencils, pictures, and icons of Jesus. As individuals arrived, Marsha encouraged participants not to sit in the same place as at the last session. Marsha announced that she would follow the study guide with only a slight adjustment at the end of the session. She opened the session with a prayer.

Marsha then called attention to the pictures and icons placed on each table. She encouraged discussion in small groups about the image of God that individuals held during childhood.

Initially, Marsha sat alone in a chair and did not join the table conversations.

Marsha read aloud some “Children’s images of God” to the apparent delight of the group (there was laughter in response to some comments). Marsha directed attention to the “Check-Up” on page 56 of the study guide and suggested that participants be “brutally

honest” with their self-assessments. Following directions, all participants seemed to be intent on completion of the self-assessment. Marsha then encouraged participants to find their accountability partner and share the results. Marsha participated with her partner in this exercise. There appeared to be very good interaction between all the pairs. Some moved chairs closer together and most appeared to be in focused conversation.

The group then viewed the video segment.

Following the video, Marsha directed the group to page 18 in the study guide. She noted the question with an asterisk and asked the groups to begin discussion with the noted question. Once the group felt that the topic had been thoroughly discussed, they moved on to the next question. During these discussions, Marsha joined Table 3.

Following these discussions, Marsha directed the participants to page 19 in the study guide. She asked for someone to read aloud Matthew 22:37-39. Cindy W. read the passage. Marsha asked Cindy to read the passage aloud a second time. Then, Marsha asked “How does loving God help you love those around you?” OR “How does loving your neighbor help you live a life of worship?” These questions were discussed around the tables in small groups. As time was winding down, Marsha called for a 25 second wrap-up.

Marsha read Romans 12:2. She then guided the participants in a time of Breath Prayers. After several minutes, Marsha prayed a concluding prayer aloud and led the group in the recitation of the theme verse for the week.

#### Staff Meeting

Session 3-Purpose Driven Life

Roy McVeigh, Facilitator

12 October 2004

The tables in the room were arranged randomly with chairs grouped in threes around the ends of the tables. Roy began the meeting by showing the video segment.

Roy pointed attention to page 26 in the study guide and encouraged discussion of questions 2,3 and 4. Roy asked Jerome to move from Table 3 to Table 4 for balance. Participants at Table 3 moved together to become a group of five. Table 1 joined together to become a group of four. Table 5 remained a group of two.

Following a period of conversation, Roy asked the entire group to respond to his question, “What prevents fellowship?” Several participants interjected responses. Roy summarized their remarks and moved on with another question: “What provides unity?” After one response, there appeared to be a lull in responding, and Roy began to “fill the void” with his own “summary.”

Attempting to include others in the discussion, Roy then asked, “What is pride and where

does pride become dangerous?” Several participants offered insights and a large group conversation moved around the themes of pride, self righteousness, and humility.

Roy directed attention to the five elements for healthy fellowship mentioned in the video segment. He suggested that each table determine which of the five elements tops the list. After conversation around the tables, Roy asked for an individual from each group to summarize their table’s conversation. Tables 2, 3, 5 and 4 responded; however, Table 1 was overlooked.

Loi entered the room late in the session and was seated at Table 5. She participated in the sharing of concerns and prayer but did not participate in the discussions about the video segment or study guide questions.

Roy suggested sharing personal and congregational needs for prayer around the tables. Table prayer was encouraged and, sensing that the tables were nearing conclusion, Roy offered a concluding prayer for the session.

Staff Meeting  
Session 4-Purpose Driven Life  
Danny Key, Facilitator  
19 October 2004

The session began promptly at 9:00 a.m. Four long rectangular tables were arranged diagonally in the room. Danny began by asking participants to get with another person and share an “aha” moment from the reading and discussion over the past week.

Rob and Al were absent. Diane came in late and joined Adam and Kathy McVeigh. Kirk came in late and joined Adam, Kathy, and Diane.

Danny asked Lawanna (who was not normally his partner) to share one of her insights. She shared about her growing in the manner of finding a daily purpose of sharing her faith with some members of her extended family. I thought it was profound that Lawanna, a very new member of the staff, was so open and willing to share. Danny also offered his perspective on the perceptions of many about the matter of “human being versus human doing.”

The video was shown. During the video, as reference was made to a particular passage in the Bible, I noticed that *everyone* at table #4 brought a Bible (to the best of my recollection, this was the first time during the PDL that any table had 100 percent participation with their Bibles).

Danny mentioned that this week’s video had some “great stuff” for reflection and discussion and shared some moments from his own prayer life during the week. He then divided the group into groups of three (with two groups of two) and pointed them the page 31 in the study guide. Danny encouraged the groups to pay particular attention to items 1, 3, and 4. If they completed discussion of those items, they could then focus on



item 1.

Danny joined Kris and Kathy McVeigh. The smaller groupings seemed to facilitate more equalized verbal sharing. Jerome has shared openly in each session thus far, regardless of partners or placement in the room. Lawanna seemed to more intense this week. Roy talked a good bit in his group. The conversations were lively and went on for about 20 minutes.

Danny called for a wrap-up to the discussions. He asked for summary and input from each group. Danny called on "Laura's group" to respond to question 1. Laura responded. Danny asked for input from "Carol Spires' group. Diane urged Kirk to share his insight. Danny asked whether there was any further insight to be added. Roy made a humorous remark. Danny then asked "Greg's group" for input. Greg expressed some lack of resolution on one questions. Danny expressed "being bothered" by an analogy used by Rick Warren (with regard to circumstances, the Bible, and influence)

Danny then asked Adam about questions for further study. Danny directed the group's attentions to page 32 of the study guide. He asked the group to "share from their hearts" about opportunities for growth." Danny mentioned the way that his own accountability group often shares a situation of "discipleship denied." Laura shared an experience she had with a friend. After a longer than usual silence, Nancy offered some insight. Loi participated. Danny positively remarked on Loi's empathy for others.

Danny encouraged the group to be aware of opportunities to share the Gospel with others. He mentioned George Morris' perspectives of awareness.

Danny guided the groups to pray together and encouraged individuals to keep their personal journals up to date.

The meeting ended on time.

#### Staff Meeting

Session 5-Purpose Driven Life

Kirk Sims, Facilitator

26 October 2004

Four tables were arranged along the walls of the room in a rectangular shape. Kirk called for "check in time" with accountability partners for about six minutes. There was brisk conversation among partners with some laughter. With the absence of some partners, individuals lacking a partner took the initiative to locate those who were available.

For example: Greg and Kris (not initially partners) located each other and began sharing. Marsha (whose partner wasn't present) was included in this conversation after her late arrival.

For example: Adam joined others as his partner, Diane, was late. Then, when Diane arrived, Adam moved, joined Diane and those whom Adam left carried on with their conversation.

For example: Carol Spires had to wait outside the room at the receptionist's desk because the office volunteer was late arriving. Her partner, Roy, went to the reception area to join her and engage in the group exercise as instructed (rather than leaving her alone outside the room and joining with others in the room). When the volunteer receptionist arrived, Roy and Carol returned to the room to join another pairs of partners in conversation.

As time for the conversation came to a conclusion, Kirk then encouraged a transition to prayer time among partners. As the culmination to the prayer time, Kirk played a song on a CD player and asked participants to "think of a picture in Scripture as the song unfolds." The subject of the song was the basin and towel.

Kirk inquired of the group as to how many had ever been part of a footwashing. He asked, "Why do you think we do that (shy away from footwashing)" After a very lengthy silence, a few participants interjected their thoughts and opinions. The group then viewed the video.

Following the video, Kirk encouraged gathering in groups (much like when the participants first entered the room). He asked the groups to respond to the following questions: (1) Who are the characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan? and (2) Which of those characters have you related to in the last week?

The participants were divided into four groups around the rectangular tables aligned with the exterior room walls. Conversations around the tables were lively and input appeared to be balanced from all participants. Kirk also pointed attention to discussion questions 2 and 4 in the study guide. Then, Kirk encouraged the group participants to identify the gifts of those in their group stating, "We should know each other's gifts in this group."

The participants willingly engaged in sharing their perceptions of one another's gifts. One obvious exception was Lawanna, the newest member of the staff. Though she did participate in the conversation of her group, she did more listening than talking. In general, it appeared that the full time professional members of the staff were more animated and involved in discussion than some of the "support staff" members.

Kirk guided attention to question 1 under "Worship" in the study guide. He directed the participants to pray for themselves and for the other members of their group. Kirk led in a guided prayer. As he entered a period which called for "Confession," the room became very quiet. Rob and Roy prayed aloud in their respective groups to break the silence.

Throughout the session, Kirk participated in a small group conversation while facilitating the entire group's progress.

Body language, in addition to the amount of dialogue, indicated deep participation by nearly everyone. For instance, Loi shared something in her group (group 1) through tears. Jerome spoke at length in that same group. In group 4, Carol Stewart physically leaned into the table and quietly spoke to her group members. Greg shared a family concern with

his group. Kirk spoke in that group with an illustration. In Group 2, Danny physically turned his chair to face Lawanna as she spoke. Her vocal participation seemed to increase at this point. Al spoke to the group at length and Danny responded to Al at length. In group 3, Roy dominated the conversation with a “lecture and gesture” monologue. Marsha responded to Roy with some remarks about the idea of “community.”

Kirk encouraged the groups to transition to praying. Immediately, group 1 began praying, led by Cheryl. This group prayed the longest. In group 2, Adam offered to “take charge” and guide the prayer time. In group 4, Greg initiated the prayer time. In group 3, Roy finally initiated a focus on prayer. This group prayed the shortest amount of time.

Staff Meeting  
Session 6-Purpose Driven Life  
Kris Key, Facilitator  
2 November 2004

Kris was present in the room as people arrived and asked them to sit with people they had not sat with previously. The room was arranged to accommodate groups of three. Diane and Terri were absent. Marsha, Laura, and Al arrived later.

Adam opened the session with a prayer. Kris pointed attention to question 3 on page 41 of the study guide. She asked the groups of three to discuss these questions: (1) Which memory verse has meant the most to you and why? (2) Describe your life before Christ and the difference he has made in your life.

The groupings of three seems to foster more interchange among individuals than larger groupings. Most seemed to be sharing openly, several in very animated fashion. Kathy McVeigh appeared to speak and share more than in previous weeks (she was in one of groups that began with only two). Karen, Kathy’s partner, openly expressed some deep emotion (through crying) and Kathy took the initiative to listen, lightly touch Karen’s arm and to pray for Karen during their small group sharing time.

After several minutes of sharing, Kris called everyone to order and introduced the video segment for the week. After viewing the video, Kris guided large group discussion of some of the questions on page 43 of the study guide. Kris added the following guidelines to instructions for further small group discussion:

1. Write down on thing from the video presentation that penetrated your heart.
2. Add to question 2 the following: What has you paralyzed?
3. Add to question 3: Who do you need to be vulnerable with?

Al was a late arrival and dominated his group of three conversation after the video. He was not present for the discussion prior to viewing the video. All three pairs who began the session without the late participants warmly received the tardy participants and all of the groups seemed to engage in well-balanced conversation and sharing in this portion of the session. By the end of the session, all groupings had three participants.

After lengthy conversations, Kris redirected the discussions in the groups of three to page 44 of the study guide. Kris asked everyone to quietly write down the names of people to whom they needed to reach out. After some quiet individual reflection, Kris encouraged the groups of three to renew conversations around these directions:

1. Share one affirmation you have received during the last 6 weeks of study
2. Share one conviction about yourself revealed in the last 6 weeks of study.

The groups of three spent time responding to these prompts. Every group appeared to be diligent about allowing each participant to share responses. Kris concluded the sharing time by adding an assignment of each person touching base with his or her accountability partner in the coming week.

The session concluded with the groups of three spending time in prayer about the personal convictions raised in the six weeks of study.

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Instructions for Administering Pretest Questionnaire**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this spiritual growth experience as part of the staff of Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church. The information you provide will be a helpful tool in analyzing the results of this study.

All responses given will remain confidential.

For purposes of statistical analysis, an individual code number is being requested from all participants. I am suggesting the use of the last four digits of your Social Security Number. This information will not be shared or used in any other manner other than as stated.

At the top left corner of the Participant Information form (yellow), you will find a blank space in which to write your participant code. Please fill in that blank now.

Once that is done, please proceed with the completion of the remainder of the Participant Information form. When you are finished, please hold up your form and I will collect all the forms.

.....

#### **PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ALL INSTRUCTIONS**

When you receive the Pretest Questionnaire (green), you will find a blank space in the top left corner for your Participant Code Number. Please fill that in now. This is the same number you gave on the Participant Information form (yellow)—I suggested the last four digits of your Social Security Number. Please note that the same number should be written in on the second page of the pretest questionnaire (green) also.

Once that is done, begin responding to the statements on the Pretest Questionnaire (green).  
**Respond as a member of the staff of Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church.** Please respond honestly and candidly.

Complete the questionnaire by circling ONE RESPONSE for each statement using the following scale:

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral (neither Agree nor Disagree)
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

Please respond individually WITHOUT DISCUSSING your responses with others. When you have completed the questionnaire, please hold up your form and I will collect all the forms. Thank you, again, for your participation.

## APPENDIX H

### Instructions for Administering Posttest Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this spiritual growth experience as part of the staff of Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church. The information you provide will be a helpful tool in analyzing the results of this study. All responses given will remain confidential.

Please remember to include your individual code number. I suggested the use of the last four digits of your Social Security Number. This information will not be shared or used in any other manner other than for purposes of statistical analysis.

At the top left corner of the Participant Information form (yellow), you will find a blank space in which to write your participant code. Please fill in that blank now.

Once that is done, please proceed with the completion of the remainder of the Participant Information form. When you are finished, please hold up your form and I will collect all the forms.

.....

PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ALL INSTRUCTIONS

When you receive the Pretest Questionnaire (pink), you will find a blank space in the top left corner for your Participant Code Number. Please fill that in now. Please Note that the same number should be written in on the second page of the posttest questionnaire (pink) also.

Once that is done, begin responding to the statements on the Posttest Questionnaire (pink).  
**Respond as a member of the staff of Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church.** Please respond honestly and candidly.

Please respond to all questions with THE SAME UNDERSTANDING / INTERPRETATION with which you completed the Pretest questionnaire (for instance, “Outside church” and “many”).

Complete the questionnaire by circling ONE RESPONSE for each statement using the following scale:

- 6 Strongly Disagree
- 7 Disagree
- 8 Neutral (neither Agree nor Disagree)
- 9 Agree
- 10 Strongly Agree

Please respond individually WITHOUT DISCUSSING your responses with others. When you have completed the questionnaire, please hold up your form and I will collect all the forms. Thank you, again, for your participation.

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