5-2021

# Equipping God's People at the Campbell Street Church of Christ

Danny Sorrell

sorrell.jd@gmail.com

### Recommended Citation

ABSTRACT

This project was designed to meet a need to equip God's people at the Campbell Street Church of Christ for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. The intervention involved the formation of a team of people to design a strategic plan to address this need. The design team met for a series of one-hour sessions in the spring of 2020. Each session brought together different sources of theological reflection, such as *lectio divina*, prayer, theology of equipping from Ephesians 4, and theology of the body of Christ from 1 Corinthians 12. In addition, design team members were introduced to and asked to reflect on Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory as it relates to congregations, their own contextual engagement with the congregation, and their experience of leadership.

The intervention produced a seven-point plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street. First, continue to develop and expand the ministry and mission teams and better equip the leaders of those teams to equip the team members. Second, continue to incorporate "next step" language into the church culture. Third, reevaluate the purpose and potential of small groups. Fourth, develop and launch discipleship groups. Fifth, develop a set of core values that will serve as a filter by which the leadership team will evaluate everything they do. Sixth, strategically schedule times to preach and teach on the theological constructs of this project and the implications and applications of the plan itself. Seventh, reconvene the design team every six months to evaluate the strategic plan and make adjustments as necessary.

Equipping God's People at the Campbell Street Church of Christ

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

By

Danny Sorrell

May 2021

This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Danny Sorrell, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

_Donnie C. Smith_

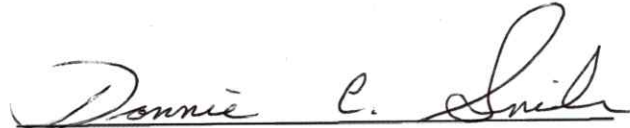Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

Date

_4 - 7 - 2021_

Thesis Committee

_James Thompson_

Dr. James W. Thompson, Chair

_Carson Reed_

Dr. Carson E. Reed

_Wes Crawford_
Wes Crawford (Jan 25, 2021 10:13 CST)

Dr. Wes Crawford

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project thesis details a ministry intervention aimed at developing a strategic plan for equipping God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ at the Campbell Street Church of Christ in Jackson, Tennessee.[1] A design team was assembled to evaluate and map out a strategy for equipping the members of Campbell Street to do the work they have been called and gifted to do. Chapter 1 provides a description of the ministry context at Campbell Street along with the project's problem and purpose. Chapter 1 also includes assumptions, definitions, limitations, and delimitations for the project. Chapter 2 introduces the theological foundations for the intervention. Chapter 3 describes the intervention, including a description of how the data were analyzed. Chapter 4 interprets the qualitative data collected from the field notes. Chapter 5 concludes with a consideration of the project's significance, implications for the author's own ministry setting, next steps for Campbell Street, and possible use in other contexts.

**Title of Project**

The title of the project is "Equipping God's People at the Campbell Street Church of Christ." The title describes both the objective and the location of the project. The

---

1. Hereby referred to simply as "Campbell Street" or the "Campbell Street Church."

objective is to take the important first steps toward creating a strategic plan for equipping members of the Campbell Street Church. The location of the project is the Campbell Street Church, and as the title implies, the members at Campbell Street will benefit from the project.

## Ministry Context

### History of the Campbell Street Church

To conduct the initial assessment, I researched the history and demographics of Campbell Street from available artifacts such as old bulletins, church directories, and interviews with former and current members, ministers, staff, and elders. Campbell Street was formed in 1984 by the merger of the East Chester Church of Christ and the Central Church of Christ. Prior to 1984, the East Chester congregation had been exploring the possibility of selling their property and moving to a more desirable location in another part of town. In January 1984, knowing East Chester's desire to relocate, the Central elders contacted the elders from East Chester about the possibility of merging congregations. The East Chester elders were open to the idea, and the two elderships met several times over the following weeks and months. In March, the elderships of both congregations unanimously agreed to the merger. The newly formed congregation would meet at Central's building located on Campbell Street, and the congregation would be known as the Campbell Street Church of Christ. The first meeting of the newly formed congregation took place on July 1, 1984. In 1986, Campbell Street built a larger auditorium on the same property and turned the existing auditorium into classroom space.

All of the elders from the two original congregations agreed to continue to serve as elders for one year, and then new elders were selected by the new congregation. At the

time of the merger, each congregation had a preaching minister, and it was decided that the two ministers would share preaching responsibilities. The spirit of cooperation that brought about the merger of these two congregations would continue to define the Campbell Street congregation for many years.

The merger of two congregations had its share of challenges. Many of the original elders I interviewed talked about the challenge of trying to oversee a congregation whose attendance doubled from one week to the next. Other elders talked about how difficult it was for the new eldership to think and operate like a 500-member church instead of a 200-member church. Some of the members of one of the original congregations talked about the initial awkwardness of not knowing half of the people they attended church with. Some of them also spoke about how it took some time to think of themselves as Campbell Street members and not former members of Central or East Chester. In spite of the obvious challenges presented by the merger, the transition itself was "surprisingly smooth," according to many of the people I interviewed.

Throughout its history, Campbell Street has been an advocate for Christian education. Several members of the Central and East Chester congregations were instrumental in the establishment of Jackson Christian School in 1976. The school began with 56 students in grades 1–8 and met in Central's building on Campbell Street. In 1979, the elementary, middle, and high school moved to its present location on Country Club Lane, but the Jackson Christian Pre-school continued to meet at the Central Church building, which would become the Campbell Street building in 1984, and continues to meet there to this day. Currently Jackson Christian School has approximately 850 students and 100 faculty and staff members. Campbell Street and Jackson Christian

continue to maintain a close relationship. Many of the church's members either work at Jackson Christian, have children who are enrolled in school there, or graduated from there. Campbell Street also has a strong connection to Freed-Hardeman University located in nearby Henderson, TN. Many members are Freed-Hardeman graduates, current students, or employees.

I came to Campbell Street in 1997 to serve as the church's first youth minister and remained in that role until 2016. During my time as youth minister, Campbell Street experienced a few additions to their ministry staff. After one of the original preaching ministers resigned in 2005, a new preaching minister was hired in 2006. Campbell Street hired one of its former summer youth interns as a second full-time youth minister in 2006. Five years later, that youth minister accepted a ministry position at another congregation. In 2013, Campbell Street once again hired a second full-time youth minister. A part-time children's minister was also hired in 2013, and in 2014, Campbell Street hired a college minister. After nine years of service, the preaching minister resigned in June 2015. The college minister resigned in October 2015, and the second youth minister accepted another ministry position in another congregation in November of that same year. After twenty years as youth minister, I transitioned into my current role as lead and preaching minister in January 2016, and in 2017 a new youth minister was hired. Campbell Street's ministry staff currently consists of a children's minister, a youth minister, a husband-and-wife missions ministry team, and a worship minister.

Unrealized Potential

I consider my twenty-four years of full-time ministry at Campbell Street as one of the greatest blessings of my life. Two words I often use to describe Campbell Street are

"family" and "potential." Family is how I describe the way members love and care for each other. Potential is how I describe the gifts, talents, and resources of the members and the possibilities and opportunities before us as God's people. For more than thirty-six years, Campbell Street has been a light in the community and around the world. God has blessed Campbell Street and the church has in turn been a blessing to others. It is easy to see the good that God has done through this congregation, but it is also easy to see that there is so much more that could be done. Even after twenty-four years, I still get excited thinking about the yet to be realized potential of the Campbell Street Church.

Every church wants to be a healthy and growing congregation where people are being transformed by the power of the gospel. In our tradition, the primary ways we measure transformation are baptisms, participation in ministry, and attendance. Despite the growth of Jackson and Madison County over the years, the number of baptisms, the number of people serving in ministry, and the number of people attending Campbell Street has remained relatively unchanged for the last thirty-five years. Jackson is the county seat of Madison County. The population of Madison County at the time of the merger was estimated to be 76,226. By July 2018, the population of Madison County had grown to an estimated 97,605.[2] At the first meeting of Campbell Street on July 1, 1984, there were 447 people in attendance. On June 30, 2019, thirty-five years after the merger, there were 459 in attendance. Campbell Street is a strong and stable congregation full of talented and hardworking people who love each other, located in a growing city, with many resources and strong connections in the community. Campbell Street is a church

---

2. Census data secured from the United States Census Bureau website: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/madisoncountytennessee.

with so much potential, but to this point in time, Campbell Street has yet to reach its full

potential.

Appreciative Inquiry Focus Groups

Campbell Street only added an average of twelve new members each year from

2005 to 2016. But in 2017 Campbell Street added forty-nine new members. In January of

2018, I conducted two focus groups consisting of new members from 2017. The purpose

of the focus groups was to identify the factors that contributed to these new members

deciding to attend Campbell Street so that the church could build on these strengths.

Both focus groups were conducted using Appreciative Inquiry.[3] AI is an approach

to organizational change that differs from traditional deficit-based approaches. AI

assumes that all organizations have significant life forces available to them in the stories

and imaginations of their members and that discovering what is working or has worked in

the past gives life to an organization. A key component of this strategy is asking

questions that prompt people to share their life-giving stories and experiences.

The foundational assumption of AI research is "an organization, such as a church

can be recreated by its conversations."[4] Appreciative Inquiry questions are designed to

help organizations build on their strengths by choosing questions that focus on the

positive. As themes emerge from congregational memories, a re-visioning of what could

and should be comes to light. AI assumes that the "real interpretive work—the discovery

---

3. Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), Kindle edition, ch. 2, "Design and Theory: Framework for Appreciative Inquiry."

4. Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, ch. 2, "Design and Theory: Framework for Appreciative Inquiry."

of meanings and the forming of local meanings—is the work of the congregation."[5] David Cooperrider, one of the innovators of AI research describes it as "the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them."[6]

Each focus group met for approximately one hour during the Sunday morning Bible classes and was asked the same eight questions.[7] Each group was a representative sample of gender, age, marital status, and socioeconomic status. It was encouraging to hear new members articulate what attracted them to Campbell Street. A few common themes, such as the importance of children's and youth ministries as well as the value of small group participation, emerged in those discussions. As it turns out, many of the new members joined a small group before they actually joined the church. One of the new members said, "I immediately felt at-home when I was invited to attend a life group." Another member stated, "I felt a sense of belonging before I even became a member." Several shared how much they value the "Bible teaching and fellowship" at Campbell Street. When asked what Campbell Street does best, several people mentioned "making people feel welcome" and a "sense of caring." Another common theme was that Campbell Street is "a place where you can be who you are."

Despite adding forty-nine new members in 2017, the average Sunday morning attendance only increased from 491 in 2016 to 497 in 2017. The dramatic increase of new

---

5. Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, ch. 2, "Design and Theory: Framework for Appreciative Inquiry."

6. David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), Kindle edition, ch.2, "What is Appreciative Inquiry?"

7. See Appendix C.

members in 2017 helped people to feel better about the future of the congregation, but it also highlighted a need to help these new members get connected and get involved. Of the forty-nine new members who placed membership in 2017, 34 percent were no longer attending Campbell Street in March 2018. Approximately 14 percent ended up moving out of the area, but 20 percent of those new members are unaccounted for. Almost half of those who are unaccounted for stopped attending within the first six months of placing membership.

Originally, I was planning a project that would design a plan or process for assimilating new members into the mission of the church at Campbell Street. However, I later observed that many long-time members had not fully assimilated into the congregation. I observed members who have attended the Sunday morning worship service for years but have never attended a Bible class, participated in a small group, volunteered to serve in a ministry, or gone on a mission trip. That is when I realized that even long-time members need to be assimilated into and equipped for the mission and ministry of the church. So, in 2019, I once again conducted a series of focus groups using AI. Each of the three focus groups consisted of between eight and twelve members representing a diversity of ages, races, and genders. Each group met for approximately one hour during the Sunday morning Bible class and was asked the same four questions.[8] These questions were designed to encourage members to reflect back on their most significant positive experiences at Campbell Street and share moments when they felt excited about their time at Campbell Street. Members were also asked to share the most valuable ways they contribute to the mission of Campbell Street and to describe a time

8. See Appendix D.

when Campbell Street equipped or prepared them well in expressing their gifts and talents.

Several themes emerged during the focus groups through the stories that were shared. In every focus group, the most frequently used word to describe Campbell Street was "family." When asked about their most significant positive experiences at Campbell Street, several responded with stories of how people at church had helped and served them during a difficult time in their life. One young man shared how the church loved and supported his family when his mom was diagnosed with cancer. Someone else shared how the members of his small group took care of him and his family financially and emotionally after he lost his job. An older man spoke about how a couple of men from church have helped him since his wife passed away. A single woman talked about how "everyone included her which was different than what I grew up with."

Another common theme that emerged from the focus groups was involvement. When asked about a time when they felt most excited about their time at Campbell Street, participation in service and outreach events was mentioned often, as was involvement in small groups and mission trips. Several spoke about their involvement in the children and youth ministries. Others shared memories of their involvement in programs such as World Bible School. One long-time member mentioned her involvement in the Tuesday morning Ladies Class as a way she was able to get to know women of different ages.

When asked to describe some of the ways they contribute to the mission of Campbell Street, many people spoke about leading small groups in the children and youth ministries. One participant talked about driving the church van, and another spoke about leading a group of teens in a work project in Mexico every summer. Someone else shared

that she bakes chocolate chip cookies and takes them to people who may need some encouragement. One young man mentioned his participation in Recovery Through Christ, a church-sponsored twelve-step recovery program. One young woman talked about how much she enjoys sending cards to people as a member of the encouragement team. Someone else mentioned leading a Financial Peace University class. One observation I made about the responses to this question is that in every group there were multiple individuals who had answered the previous questions but did not give an answer to this one.

When asked to describe a time when Campbell Street equipped them well in expressing their gifts, participants shared stories of individuals who encouraged them to do something that was out of their comfort zone. Many of the "equipping stories" were about opportunities and experiences the church provided them to use their gifts and talents. One man spoke about how the small group program had helped him have the confidence to initiate spiritual conversations. Someone else mentioned the Jackson Area Community Prayer Meetings. Others shared how their experience in one or more of the Bible classes encouraged and equipped them to initiate spiritual conversations at work. One young adult mentioned how valuable the Mexico mission experience was in preparing him not just for that trip but for everyday opportunities to serve others. Someone else spoke about their experience serving in the youth group and how that taught them to look for opportunities to serve and not wait to be asked. One member said, "the love and grace you receive helps you be equipped to give love and grace." Another member spoke about the church's transition to small groups as providing an opportunity for them to lead a group.

After this second round of focus groups, I was convinced that Campbell Street does not have a "people problem" but a "systems problem." In other words, Campbell Street is blessed with gifted people who love God and want to serve and grow in their faith. The problem is there is not a system in place that makes it easy for them to connect and serve. Most of the people in the focus group wanted to get more involved but they simply did not know how. Other people were reluctant to volunteer because most volunteer opportunities are not clearly articulated. Without a plan for how to get people plugged into small groups, for example, people are basically on their own to find a group. As a result, less than thirty percent of our members are in a small group.

## Problem Statement

The problem this project seeks to address is that Campbell Street lacks a strategy to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. Without a plan or process for equipping its members, the work of preparing God's people happens rather haphazardly. While it is obvious that good things are happening at Campbell Street, I can only imagine the impact Campbell Street could have if more of its members were equipped, encouraged, and empowered to use their gifts to serve and build up the church, the body of Christ.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to design a strategy that would equip God's people at Campbell Street for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. The intervention was the formation of a design team to develop a strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street. The design team consisted of key stakeholders who will eventually be tasked with implementing the strategic plan and creating an equipping

environment within the congregation. Sensing describes a stakeholder as "a person who has a vested interest in the project or ministry context."[9]

## Basic Assumptions

This project assumes that every member of the body of Christ is gifted and called to serve based on those gifts, that the leaders of the church are responsible for equipping the members of the body for the work of serving, and that the design of an intentional and strategic process that equips believers will encourage and empower them for the work they are called to do.

## Delimitations and Limitations

This project is delimited to the Campbell Street Church of Christ. The strategic plan developed by the design team is only intended for the Campbell Street Church. Although this project intervention was designed for the Campbell Street Church, it is possible that this project could help other churches design their own process for equipping believers in their context. One possible limitation is the Hawthorne Effect, "a theory that questions research dependability due to cases when subjects know they are being studied."[10] Because all participants were church members aware of my educational pursuits, they may have been tempted to be overly positive or agreeable in discussions.

## Conclusion

This chapter introduced this project thesis by providing an overview of my ministry context at the Campbell Street Church. In order for the members of Campbell Street to attain spiritual maturity, become more like Christ, and experience the unity of

---

9. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 1.

10. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 82.

the faith (Eph 4:13), members must be equipped for works of service, so that the body of

Christ may be built up (Eph 4:12). Chapter 2 will examine the theological and theoretical

foundations for the project and intervention.

CHAPTER II

THELOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Having described an area of growth for Campbell Street, this chapter addresses

the theological and theoretical foundations for the intervention. This project is built on

two important theological foundations. The first is the belief that the church is the body

of Christ and every member of the body has been gifted and called to the work of serving

and building up the body. The second theological foundation is the belief that Christ has

gifted the church with ministers and leaders who are responsible for preparing and

equipping the members of the body for the work of serving and building up the body of

Christ.

The theoretical foundation of this project is the application of Bowen's Family

Systems Theory to the interconnectedness and interdependence of congregations as an

emotional system. Church leaders are increasingly using Family Systems Theory as a

way to understand normal relationship processes in their churches and to learn how to

function within them. This theory helps church leaders see more clearly how they are

emotionally interconnected with one another and the ways this can contribute to the

health or the dysfunction of the congregation.[1] Systems theory expounds on the principle

that our joint effort is more powerful than the sum of our individual efforts. The human

body is an obvious example of a system. Members of the human body and members of

---

1. Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review & Expositor: An International Baptist Journal* (2005): 379–402.

the body of Christ exist in specific relationship with the other members so that each is

dependent on the other, and the health of one member is dependent on the health of

another.[2]

## Theological Foundations

The first theological foundation of this project is the belief that the church is the

body of Christ and every member of the body has been gifted and called to the work of

serving and building up the body. "Body of Christ" is one of the primary metaphors for

the church in the New Testament.[3] For the purposes of this project the primary passages

under consideration are Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, and Eph 4. The image of the church as the

body of Christ is a prominent theme in each of these passages. The context of the

discussion in these passages is spiritual gifts and sacrificial service. The goal of all

spiritual gifts is to empower members of the body to serve and build up the body and

participate in the ministry and mission of God in the world. In Ephesians, Christ is

identified as the "head" of the body (1:22; 4:15; 5:23). To enable the church to function

correctly, Christ has given the church "gifts" or "ministers" who lead through teaching,

edifying, and equipping (4:7–16).

### The Body of Christ

Rom 12:1–2 is one of the better-known passages in the NT. These verses play a

pivotal role in Romans. On the one hand, they look back on the argument of chapters 1–

11. On the other hand, everything that follows could be viewed as an extended

---

2. R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), xvii–xviii.

3. Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12–31; Eph 1:20–23; 3:6; 4:16; Col 1:18; 2:18–19; 3:14–16.

application of these two verses.[4] In chapters 1–11, Paul[5] moves from a theological exposition centered around the problem of how sinful humanity can be put into a right relationship with God to the difference this relationship makes in our relationships with other people. Having addressed a number of foundational doctrinal teachings, Paul proceeds to that which is more practical, yet no less theological.

"Therefore" (12:1) establishes the connection between the thoughts and ideas of the previous chapters with the exhortations that follow. Paul wants to show that the exhortations of 12:1–15:13 are built firmly on the theology of chapters 1–11.[6] Paul commonly uses the indicative mode of speech to make statements about what God has done for us before using the imperative mode to outline our proper response. The order of the presentation is doctrine first and then duty.[7] The reference to the "mercies of God" in 12:1 demonstrates that the section is closely related to Rom 9–11, where divine mercy is a major theme.[8] It was God's mercy that moved him to deliver sinners from their state of sin and misery through the saving activity of Christ. God's mercy then serves as the leverage for the appeal that follows.

---

4. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans: The New International Commentary on the New Testament,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), Kindle edition, ch. 5, "The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct."

5. The letter itself claims Pauline authorship (1:1) and with almost no exception, Romans has been credited to Paul. See Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, revised ed., vol. 11: "Romans and Galatians." (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), Kindle edition, ch. 7, "Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness."

6. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans,* ch. 5, "The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct."

7. Edwin A. Blum, *HCSB Study Bible*: Romans (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), 1946.

8. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), Kindle edition, ch. 6, "God's Righteousness in Everyday Life."

A life dedicated to God is a transformed life. Complementary to the refusal to be conformed to the pattern of this world is the command to be "transformed" (v. 2). Spirit-filled followers of Jesus experience a progressive transformation of life by the "renewing of their mind" (v. 2). To this point, Harrison and Hagner write, "The two processes of renunciation and renewal are on-going and never ending. The believer's dedication to renunciation and renewal leads to discernment and delight in the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God" (v. 2).[9] The renewed mind will not think more highly of itself than it ought, but will think with sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith (v. 3). No one member of the body is better or more important than another. Humility is essential for the individual members of the body to appreciate and understand their place in the body of Christ and how they are to relate to the other members of the body (vv. 4–5).[10]

### Many Gifts, One Body

Believers are defined not just by what they believe and their own personal faith but also by their inclusion in local communities of faith that are expressions of the body of Christ. The will of God (v. 2) is the same for all believers with respect to holiness of life and completeness of dedication. But what that will involves for each person with respect to special service in the church may be considerably diverse. Those who measure themselves in accordance with the faith God has given them (v. 3) are able to discern the one body. That is, they recognize that they do not exist for themselves and that their

---

9. Harrison and Hagner, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*, ch. 7, "Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness."

10. Harrison and Hagner, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary,* ch. 7, "Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness."

fellow believers are equally important and members of the same body.[11] By addressing "every one of you" (v. 3), Paul affirms that every believer has some spiritual gift. In the one body of Christ, there are many members with different gifts and functions (vv. 4–6). The gifts God has distributed are to be humbly exercised for the good of the body and the glory of God.

Three truths are set forth in this passage: (1) the unity of the body, (2) the diversity of its members with corresponding diversity in function, and (3) the mutuality of the various members. The mutuality of its members calls attention to the need of the various parts of the body for each other. None can work independently because each member belongs to all the others. Each member profits from what the other members contribute to the whole. Reflecting on these truths reduces preoccupation with one's own gift and makes room for appreciation of other people and their gifts.[12]

In verses 6–8, Paul mentions, by way of example, seven spiritual gifts that function in the body. The variety of gifts should be understood from the standpoint of the needs of the Christian community, which are many, as well as from the desirability of giving every believer a share in the ministry. Although Paul has spoken of different gifts, he does not proceed to give an exhaustive list. Rather, he emphasizes the need for exercising the gifts and for exercising them in the right way. For the body to function properly, the members of the body who possess these gifts must be faithful in exercising them. No one member possesses all the gifts; therefore, the individual members depend

---

11. Susann Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ in Mission: Paul's Ecclesiology and the Role of the Church in Mission," *Missiology: An International Review* (2013), 402–15.

12. Harrison and Hagner, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary,* ch. 7, "Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness."

on each other. If the members of a local church do not recognize the concept of the body and faithfully function as humble members of the body, that church will be dysfunctional.[13]

### *Unity and Diversity in the Body*

Paul's use of the body analogy in 1 Cor 12 appears to be in response to some Christians in Corinth creating divisions over spiritual gifts.[14] The Spirit, according to the will of God, distributes a diversity of gifts to the body for its common benefit. The same triune God brings about a variety of gifts and manifests diverse ministries within the corporate body. By describing the church as a body, Paul acknowledges the need for a diversity of gifts among the members of the church within the unity of the one Spirit.[15]

The foundation of this unity in 1 Cor 12 is the role of the Spirit in the confession of Jesus as Lord (v. 3). In the body of Christ, there are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of serving, and different kinds of working, but all come from the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God (vv. 4–6). Ciampa and Rosner note that in contexts where the terms "service" and "Lord" are used in close relationship with each other, it is normally understood to be a reference to a service or ministry to which one has been appointed by the Lord (e.g., Acts 20:24; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 1:12). One implication, then, is that every member of the community is to be valued as someone who has been given a

---

13. Harrison and Hagner, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*, ch. 7, "Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness."

14. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), Kindle edition, ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

15. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

particular assignment in the service of the Lord. Another implication is that in exercising one's gift one is performing a "royal and holy service" for the Lord.[16]

Paul affirms that all gifts come from the same divine source. The different gifts, ministries, and activities within the unified church reflect the essential unity and unified work of the persons of the Godhead (vv. 6, 11, 24, 27–28). All three persons of the Trinity are involved in the administration of these gifts. There is one Lord and one Spirit but many gifts of the Spirit given to individual members for the building up of the body of Christ.

Each demonstration of the Spirit in a believer is given by God for the mutual benefit of the whole body of believers. The demonstration of the Spirit is the gifts, ministries, and activities made possible by the Spirit's enabling power. The Spirit's supernatural working through a diversity of gifted people produces one cohesive relationship. Diversity of gifts within the unity of the body has its roots in the triune God, and he in turn by his Spirit has given a diversity of gifts to different people for the common good of the community (v. 7).[17] The word translated "common good" (συμφέρον) is the same word used in 6:12 and 10:23 for "is beneficial" in the repeated phrase "not everything is beneficial." What is beneficial then in this context is the use of these God-given gifts to benefit the community of which you are a part.[18]

---

16. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), Kindle edition, ch. 4, "Flee Idolatry and Glory God in Your Worship."

17. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

18. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 4, "Flee Idolatry and Glory God in Your Worship."

The unity of God does not imply uniformity in gifts; rather, the one and only God is responsible for the variety. The purpose of the manifestation of the Spirit is to benefit the whole church family, not just a particular individual. Spiritual gifts are not to be used for selfish advantage, as some in the Corinthian community were apparently doing. Although not all Christians have the same gift, all gifts come from the same Spirit; consequently there is no room for rivalry or feelings of superiority.[19]

According to Paul, every member of the body of Christ has been given some spiritual gift and the presence of that gift is evidence of the Spirit's working in their lives. Paul goes on to list several manifestations of the Spirit's gifts. Not everyone has the same gift or all of the gifts, but the list indicates that the same Spirit manifests its presence with great variety. In verses 8–9, Paul mentions the Spirit four times to remind the Corinthians that all of these gifts come from one divine source: the Holy Spirit. The Spirit sovereignly determines which gift or gifts each believer should have. Each member of the church has received different gifts, not because of differences in qualifications or circumstances, but according to only one standard: just as the Spirit determines (vv. 8–11). All spiritual gifts are legitimate and important to the church because they come from the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that distributes these gifts; therefore, no one should despise another person's gift. Having based his appeal for diversity in the Triune God, Paul proceeds to articulate how that diversity is worked out in the life of the church.[20]

---

19. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

20. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

### *One Body, Many Parts*

In verse 12, Paul uses the imagery of the church as the body of Christ to illustrate the diversity and unity of the spiritual gifts. He introduces the metaphor in v. 12 and provides the theological foundation for it in v. 13. Finally, he reiterates the original point in v. 14. He emphasizes the priority and unity of the one body and the need and value of a diversity of individual members. Although the body is made up of many members, the members still form one body. Paul reinforces the unity of the one body and the one Spirit by focusing on the believers' common experience of the one Spirit in conversion, which results in a new identity as people of the one Spirit: "We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink" (v. 13). For Paul's original readers, participation in this one baptism transcended their "pre-Christian status as Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free people."[21] The Spirit is one and unites people across lines of ethnicity and social class that might otherwise divide them. Therefore, the unity of the body is established by the power of the one Spirit and not by human effort.

In verses 14–20 Paul emphasizes the necessity of having diversity in a body for it to operate as one. In v. 14 Paul reiterates the point he made in v. 12 and justified in v. 13: "Now the body is not made up of one part but many." One of the greatest challenges to the unity of the body is the potential for factions within the body, but the diversity of members does not necessarily prevent unity. To this point Thiselton writes:

> The respective function of hands, feet, (v. 15), ears, and eyes (v.16) coordinate the organism as one. If each does not play his or her assigned role, the one body would collapse into a chaotic non-entity. Hence, v. 15 not only reassures those who feel inferior that they do belong to the body, but also asserts the necessity for

---

21. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 997.

the coherent unity of the body both for those who feel inferior and to those who devalue others.… [U]nless the many perform their assigned functions, however diverse, the one body would not exist as a single entity but as a chaotic array of conflicting forces, without focus or coherence.[22]

Paul's use of personified body parts as speakers demonstrates the absurdity of envy and self-deprecation among members of the human body (vv. 15–16). The individual parts of the body belong to the body even if they feel like they do not. The subjective feeling of "I do not belong" has no validity alongside the objective fact that each part does belong. Every member of the body both needs and is needed by the other members of the body. Paul insists that each is indeed a part of the body, regardless of what they might say (vv. 15–16). Each body part or organ plays an important role, and it is essential for each one to play the particular role for which it was created. If any part were not to fulfill its proper role, the whole body would suffer from its absence.[23]

Unity of the body is only possible when every member of the body has an appreciation for the necessity of the other members of the body. Paul emphasizes how much we need each other by considering the absurdity of the whole body reduced to the function of just one member (v. 15–16).[24] In verse 17, Paul asks two rhetorical questions, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?" The ridiculous images evoked by these

---

22. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1002.

23. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 4, "Flee Idolatry and Glory God in Your Worship."

24. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1002.

rhetorical questions illustrate how every part of the body is needed. A body reduced to just one member would be grotesque and useless.[25]

The mutual interdependence of the one body of Christ is in sharp contrast to the postmodern view of individualism and isolation. Paul makes it clear that every member of the body belongs in the body regardless of its particular giftedness or function. The diverse functions of the various parts are necessary to the body's proper interdependent functioning. Another problem Paul seeks to address throughout is the elevation of one gift (probably speaking in tongues) above all others. Some Corinthians apparently fell into grading the gifts, attaching importance to public, showy gifts, and relative unimportance to less observable gifts. But the gifts are not in competition with each other; they are given for the common good of the whole church. In the body of Christ, no one member is more or less important than another. Each part of the body takes its meaning from being a functional body member.

The dispersion and diversification of gifts is no accident. God himself has given them just as he wanted. According to Paul, "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (v. 18). This divine coordination of diverse parts is so essential to the function of a body that Paul asks a final question in verse 19: "If they were all one part, where would the body be?" Clearly, there would be no body. To drive home this point, Paul repeats the theme of this section in v. 20: human beings have one body, but that body needs its many parts. Counter to Corinthians' misperceptions, the weaker body parts are necessary. In verses 21–24, Paul presents different scenarios in which some parts of the body question the value of other parts. Paul

---

25. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 4, "Flee Idolatry and Glory God in Your Worship."

goes on to explain that if all were the same, other functions would be lacking. He insists it would be inconceivable for an eye to tell a hand, "I don't need you!" It would be equally inconceivable for the head to speak that way to the feet. Common sense demands that the opposite is true. The eyes need the hands, and the head needs the feet. In a body, no part is autonomous.

Every part of the body is important in its own right. To try and rank some gifts as "more essential" than others is to challenge God's divine placement.[26] Ironically, it is those parts of the body that people consider less honorable that are actually treated with special honor. It is in fact the unpresentable parts that are the most necessary for the body to live, and they receive special treatment. The parts of the body that appear to be weaker are actually indispensable. Fee notes that "such apparent weakness has no relationship to their real value and necessity to the body."[27]

God put the various parts of the body together in an intentional way. He gives gifts that the body needs to people who might otherwise be thought of as unimportant or dispensable. Sometimes he gives such people especially desirable spiritual gifts. That is, he gives "greater honor to the parts that lacked it" (v. 24). He did this so that there would be no division in the body and all the parts should have equal concern for each other (v. 25). To fail to give honor to those in need of it would not honor God but bring shame to his name.[28] If one member of the body is in pain, then the entire body experiences the pain. Members of Christ's body share the same "spiritual nervous system." If one part is

---

26. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1004.

27. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* ch. 3, "In Response to the Corinthian Letter."

28. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 4, "Flee Idolatry and Glory God in Your Worship."

honored, then the entire body rejoices (v. 26). This recognition should lead to a sense of deep care for one another.

Verses 27–31 bring to a conclusion the argument that began back in v. 4, by tying together its two parts (vv. 4–11 and 12–26) and thus returning to the emphasis with which it all began. The paragraph begins (v. 27) with an application of the preceding imagery of the body (vv. 12–26) specifically to the church in Corinth, again with the emphasis on the many who make it up. Together, the Corinthians are the body of Christ, and each one of them is a particular member. They are therefore interconnected and should function with that interconnectedness in the way Paul has been describing. Paul concludes this section with the declaration, "Now you are the body of Christ" (v. 27). This is the same declaration he made at the beginning of this section in verse 12. These verses frame the entire discussion of the church as the body of Christ.

Paul's list of spiritual gifts in v. 28 is not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Rather, such lists need to be understood as representative samples of the gifts that are operative within the body. These gifts further illustrate the need for diversity, not uniformity, in gifts and ministries. Paul concludes his analogy in vv. 29–30 with a series of rhetorical questions: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" The answer to all the questions here is obviously no. Not all believers function in each of the ways listed. God selects individuals and gives them their specific gifts (v. 28).

Having mentioned tongues and their interpretation, Paul urges Christians to "eagerly desire the greater gifts" (v. 31). It is clear from Paul's way of addressing the

issue that some Corinthians were seeking or eagerly desiring what they considered to be the greater gifts (especially tongues) and that had created problems in the Christian community. The possession of specific gifts, says Paul, is not as important as the way in which the gifts are exercised. Regarding the "greater gifts," Thiselton writes, "The greatest are not those that minister to status or to self, but those which serve the good of others and build the community."[29] The greatest gift is the way of love, and Paul will develop this idea further in the chapter that follows. Without love, spiritual gifts are nothing (12:31–13:3).

The unity of the church in Corinth appears to be one of Paul's greatest concerns in 1 Cor, as he encourages the Corinthians to "agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose" (1:10). Paul's description of the church as the body seeks to correct the spirit of individualism that was undermining the unity of the church in Corinth.[30] The individual members of the body are not made to function independently of each other. Rather, they are mutually supportive. Since every member of the body is important and necessary, competition among the different members of the body is absurd. The whole body needs every limb.

In the body of Christ, the well-being of the individual members of the body is enhanced by their connection to and their relationship to the other members of the body. Unless the members of the body are connected and working together, the body will not be fully functioning. Diversity is necessary for a body to function, and all the members of

---

29. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1024.

30. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 131–32.

the body must appreciate just how "interrelated and interdependent" they are.[31] Paul argues that, without the other members of the body, the individual members are not very useful and the body as a whole is limited in what it can do. In the same way, a church consisting of a ministry staff and only a few dedicated members will not be able to function at the level it was designed to function. The image of the church as a body highlights the importance of all the different members of the body working in conjunction with one another.

Unity of the body is only possible when every member of the body values and accepts some responsibility to care for the other members. Every member is responsible for and accountable to the other members of the body. The metaphor of the church as a body emphasizes the interconnectedness between members of the body and the dependence of every believer on every other believer. Each member must act in a way that recognizes the importance of and interdependence of each part in order for the church to grow and mature as it should. The work of serving and building up the body is the responsibility of all the members of the body, not just for the sake of the body, but also for those outside the church. If the church is the body of Christ, then the mission of the church is the shared mission of the individual members of the body of Christ.

### The Role of the Spirit

The presence and power of the Spirit is a consistent theme in Paul's letters. Paul's preaching was empowered by the Spirit (1 Thess 1:5; cf. 1 Cor 1:18; 2:1–4). Believers receive the Spirit at conversion (cf. 1 Cor 12:12–13; 2 Cor 3:1–3; Gal 3:1–6; Rom 5:5)

---

31. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), Kindle edition, ch. 9, "The Use of Spiritual Gifts in Worship."

and are to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16–18; cf. Rom 8:4), which empowers them to live

a righteous life (cf. Rom 8:1–11; Gal 5:22–29).[32] Another consistent theme in Paul's

letters is that the church lives in the power of the Spirit. In his first letter to the church in

Corinth, Peter calls attention to the fact that they were baptized into one Spirit by one

body (12:13) and that the church is the dwelling place of God's Spirit (3:16; cf. 6:19).

Transformation is a gift of the Spirit.[33] Paul frequently mentions that it is the Spirit that

enables communal transformation. To this point, Thompson writes:

> Paul envisions a community that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. He does
> not envision a church that facilitates the maturation of the individual, but
> envisions a community that grows into the image of Christ.… Spiritual formation
> is corporate formation. The church is not a collection of individuals who devoted
> themselves to spiritual formation but a community that shares the destiny of
> Christ together.[34]

<div align="center">The Work of Equipping</div>

The second theological foundation on which this project is built is the belief that

Christ has gifted the church with ministers and leaders who are responsible for preparing

and equipping the members of the body for the work of serving and building up the body

of Christ. Paul's letter to the Ephesians[35] describes the church as a unified body. Christ

---

32. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul*, 25.

33. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul*, 124.

34. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul*, 125.

35. The authorship of Ephesians has been the topic of much discussion in scholarship. However, this important historical debate does not impact the purposes of this project. I will claim Pauline authorship while recognizing the issues with such a claim in the context of contemporary scholarship. In support of the traditional view of Pauline authorship, Harold W. Hoehner, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2–14, notes that Ephesians has the earliest attestation of any NT book, which is something he considers "highly significant." To which Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4, adds that not only was Pauline authorship accepted in the early church, it was not challenged until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Hoehner's commentary he lists scholars both for and against Pauline authorship. In addition to Hoehner and O'Brien, other scholars who support Pauline authorship include Walter L. Liefeld (1997), Gordon Fee (1994), D. A. Carson (1992), John Muddiman (2001), Donald Guthrie (1961), and Everett F. Harrison (1964).

blesses each part of the body with gifts meant to support the whole body. The Spirit leads

the church and maintains the unity necessary for the church to be the body of Christ.

Congregational leadership,[36] as a result, is to live into that unity and equip the entire body

for ministry. When a congregation is involved in this process of equipping, then it is

maturing into a healthy, functioning body.

The introduction to Ephesians offers Paul's standard greeting, beginning with the

author and information about him. It also mentions his audience: "the saints in Ephesus,

the faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1). This is followed by a greeting: "Grace to you and peace

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 2). The phrase "in Christ Jesus" (v. 1)

is one of the most important parts of Paul's theology. The thirteen Pauline letters use "in

Christ," "in the Lord," "in him," or some similar expression 164 times to express a

variety of ideas. "In Christ" is usually used in about the context of salvation and its

benefits, whereas "in the Lord" is usually used to refer to Christian behavior and life. The

fact that a Christian is a person who is "in Christ" expresses the oneness and the identity

that a believer shares with Christ. Paul uses this expression 36 times in Ephesians, more

than in any other letter.[37]

---

36. Paul does not use the term "leadership" in Ephesians and does not promote a hierarchical church structure. In my congregational context, as this project demonstrates, the members given the task of equipping the body are the church leaders, elders, ministers, ministry leaders, and congregational support staff. In this paper I will utilize "leadership" as a descriptive term. In the same way that Paul encourages gifted individuals not to do the ministry themselves but to equip the body, this project invites Campbell Street's leadership to prepare our congregational body for ministry.

37. Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 37–38.

### *Blessings in Christ*

The opening section of the letter (1:3–14) affirms the readers' identity by rehearsing the blessings of election (1:4), adoption (1:5), redemption (1:7), selection (1:11), inclusion (1:13), and being sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit (1:13), given to believers in Christ as an inheritance (1:14). Paul regards the Holy Spirit as the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. By giving us the Spirit, God is not simply guaranteeing our future inheritance but actually providing us with a foretaste of it, even if it "is only a small fraction of the future endowment."[38] Throughout this section (vv.3–14), Paul repeatedly reminds his readers of the new life they share as believers in Christ and members of Christ's body, the church. They now possess an identity connected to Christ and marked by their position "in Christ." The repeated identification that the church is "in him" anticipates the "later claim that the church is the body of Christ."[39]

In the first half of the letter, Paul repeatedly reminds the readers of the new life they share as believers in Christ and members of the church, Christ's body. The Christian "blessing" in verses 3–14 intervenes between the opening salutation and the thanksgiving that normally follows it in Paul's letters. Although Paul uses the customary formula of gratitude in verse 16, this section becomes a prayer of intercession from verse 17 onward. His words extend into praise of God for his great might (1:19) and a description of the resurrection (1:20), Christ's exalted status (1:21), Christ's authority (1:22), and the significance of the church (1:22–23). Chapter 1 establishes Paul's view on the value of our salvation in Christ and the blessings we obtain from it. He does this in the form of

---

38. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 121.

39. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul*, 207.

praise, directed at God and describing in detail what it means to have an inheritance in heaven. Later chapters will build on these ideas as Paul connects who we are in Christ to how we should live as Christians.

### By Grace Through Faith

Eph 2 emphasizes the theme of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. First, Paul describes the process of salvation as the result of God's grace through faith (2:1–10). Chapter 2 elaborates the theme of redemption (started in 1:7) in terms of God's raising of humanity from the death of sin to the new life in Christ. Paul then transitions to a focus on unity in Christ (2:11–22). This includes tearing down the previous divide between Jews and Gentiles, who are now one spiritual family. This section of Paul's letter touches on three states of being for the recipients: (1) their former corporate condition apart from Christ (vv. 11–13), (2) their corporate reconciliation in Christ (vv. 14–18), and (3) their new standing as members of God's new humanity (vv. 19–22). The theme of this entire section is reconciliation, which involves bringing fallen humanity out of alienation into a state of peace and harmony with God.

### The Mystery of Christ

In chapter 3 Paul continues the prayer that he began in the opening chapter. He mentions himself by name as a prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles (v. 1). He assumes his readers know of his calling to serve them (v. 2). The gospel was revealed to him as he previously mentioned (v. 3). This was information not known in the past (vv. 4-5). The mystery he spoke of was that Gentiles are now fellow members of the church in Jesus through the gospel (v. 6). Paul was a minister of this gospel according to God's grace (v. 7). Though he was the least likely to be in this role, God gave him this calling to share

Christ with the Gentiles (v. 8). He sought to bring light, to everyone, regarding the plan

and grace of God (v. 9). This was part of the eternal plan of God (v. 11). Paul said "we"

have boldness and access to God, with confidence through our faith in Jesus (v. 12). Paul

also asks that his readers not be discouraged by his imprisonment (v. 13).

The second part of chapter 3 emphasizes Paul's prayer for spiritual strength

(3:14–21). He bows on his knees (v. 14), asking God to give the Ephesians strength

through his Spirit (v. 16). He desires for Christ to dwell in the hearts of the church of

Ephesus by faith (v. 17). His desire is for them to know the depth of Christ's love that

surpasses all knowledge (vv. 18–19). Paul concludes the chapter with a doxology to the

Lord (vv. 20–21). Paul describes God as one able to do far more than we can ask or think

(v. 20). God deserves all glory for all things at all times (v. 21). This doxology also

concludes the first half of Paul's letter, with the remaining chapters transitioning to new

themes and more practical matters within the church.

Throughout the first three chapters Paul encourages his readers to consider their

position in God's world and act accordingly. Paul invites his audience to identify

themselves as God's chosen and loved through Christ. Ephesians establishes an important

position for God's people in the world.[40] In this letter Paul connects God's people to

God's work in the world. He believes the church has received the necessary resources to

pursue completeness in Christ, so he reminds the Ephesians that embracing God's call is

a realistic ambition.[41]

---

40. Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 76.

41. Lincoln and Wedderburn, *The Theology of Later Pauline Letters*, 269.

### God's Cosmic Mission

The first half of Ephesians unfolds the grand narrative of God's salvation and reconciliation of the whole cosmos. Even before the "foundation of the world," God graciously chose us in Christ for relationship with him and to live out his purpose in the world (1:4–6). God intended that we should know his saving purposes, so he "made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ" (1:9–10). Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the cosmos and the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe. God's cosmic plan is to unite all alienated things into one harmonious whole through the one cosmic event of the reconciling work of Christ. (1:10).[42] Both Ephesians and its companion letter to the Colossians imply that the unity and harmony of the cosmos have suffered considerable damage and displacement necessitating restoration to harmony. Eph 2:1–3 in particular draws attention to the desperate situation of men and women outside of Christ, and their situation is described in terms of death, condemnation, and objects of wrath. Apart from God's gracious intervention to save, there could be no hope for disobedient sinners with such a profound need (2:4–7).[43]

### The Exalted Christ

Paul portrays Christ in Ephesians in the most exalted of terms. This has led many interpreters to speak of the "cosmic Christology" of the letter; that is, Christ is depicted far above and superior to every power in heaven and upon earth.[44] He is "seated on the

---

42. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 58–60.

43. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 61.

44. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*: *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 695.

right hand of God "in the heavenly realms" (1:20) far above every principality and power (1:21–22). The Father has exalted Christ as "head over everything" (1:22) and subjected everything to him. The exalted status of Christ also comes to expression through explicit indications of his preexistence. Paul declares that the preexistent Christ himself was involved with the Father in designing his salvation plan for the ages (1:9). It was also through Christ that God predestined those who would belong to him (1:5). Paul portrays God as uniquely the Father of Christ (1:3) and Jesus as the eternal Son of God (4:13). His intimacy with the Father is expressed through his title "the beloved" (1:6).[45]

### *The Empowering Spirit*

Ephesians has much to say about the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, but one of the most important features of the Spirit's work is that it represents the empowering presence of God in the lives of believers. This is a major emphasis in the two intercessory prayers of the letter. In the first prayer, Paul asks for the Spirit to reveal to them the incredible vastness of God's power that is available to them (1:16–19). In the second prayer, he appeals to the Father that the Ephesian believers "be strengthened with power through the Spirit" (3:16). The Spirit is the source of the spiritual blessings received from God (1:3). As the divine presence in the lives of believers, the Spirit not only mediates God's power but also encourages, directs, and energizes the prayers of God's people (6:18).[46]

---

45. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 696-97.

46. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 699–701.

*The Universal Church*

One of the distinctive emphases of Ephesians is Paul's use of "church" (ἐκκλησία) to refer to the totality of local communities of believers (1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32).[47] All nine references in the letter point to the universal church, with the possible exception of 3:10, which refers to both the universal and the local church.[48] Believers are to maintain the spirit of unity in the local house church and with the other house churches in the region. Paul is reminding his readers that they also participate in a universal church composed of countless other house churches.[49] As the community of all believers, the universal church features prominently in God's plan for putting the world back together in Christ. The church as the fellowship of believers is the sphere in which Christ's reconciling work has been experienced and through which it will be extended.[50]

*Equipping God's People*

The opening of chapter 4 marks the principal transition of the entire letter. As in his other writings, Paul turns from doctrinal concerns to practical concerns. That is not to say that the break is complete. Theology continues to be interwoven with the moral exhortations that make up the majority of chapters 4–6. In chapters 1–3, Paul outlines the blessings associated with being a child of God. In chapters 4–6, he outlines the responsibilities associated with that status. Thematically, Eph 4 moves from one's calling

---

47. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 714.

48. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 111.

49. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul,* 212–13.

50. Bruce Corley, "The Theology of Ephesians," *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, vol. 22, Fall 1979.

to unity to one's calling to ministry. Christ has given many gifts of grace for ministry, which come together in one common goal of maturity in Christ.

In the exhortation that begins in 4:1, Paul elaborates on the image of the body of Christ language also found in 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12:3, which describe the relationship between the body and each member.[51] The exhortation to "walk worthy of the calling you have received" (v. 1) serves as a major transition in the letter, as it moves from the church's belief statement to the church's mission statement. In chapter 4, Paul begins to apply the doctrine he has expounded. The first part of the chapter (vv. 1–6) begins a new section in which Paul urges his readers to lead the sort of life that matches their Christian vocation. This includes humility, gentleness, patience, and love (v. 2). These are all qualities necessary for good relations with others in the Christian community and beyond. The absence of these qualities may jeopardize Christian unity (v. 3). This is why Paul presses his readers to do everything within their power to maintain the oneness in Christ that binds all believers to each other because they are bound by him and to him. Believers have the responsibility to keep the unity in the body of Christ.

The seven "ones" enumerated in verses 3–6 constitute the foundation on which the Trinitarian God creates a oneness in the church. Paul's plan can be seen from the vantage point of the work of the one Spirit creating one body, the one Lord Jesus creating one hope, faith, and baptism, and the one God the Father bringing about one people of God. "One body" (v. 4) depicts the church as a single visible community. It is not simply a mystical concept; unity is recognizable in that Jews and Gentiles are now reconciled in Christ (2:14–18). Christians are all members of the same body.

---

51. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul,* 210.

"One Spirit" indwells this body of Christ. By him the body lives and moves (1 Cor 12:13). The Spirit is its soul; apart from the Spirit, the body cannot exist. The same Spirit fell on the Jews at Pentecost and on the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. This Spirit who has already spanned this widest of all gulfs will bring together all other diverse groups within the church. The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance (1:14) and the guarantor of the "one hope" to which we are called (1:18; 2:12). This is not the hope that stems from the calling but the hope that belongs to the call (v. 1). It is the hope of experiencing Christ's glory at the end of the age (1 Jn 3:2), a hope shared by both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The Spirit being mentioned before the Father and the Son (cf. 1 Cor 12:4–6) can be explained by the immediate context. Paul had just admonished his readers to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (v. 3). The theological foundation for this admonition comes from the reconciliation of both Jewish and Gentile believers "in one body" (2:16) and have been granted access to the Father "in one Spirit (2:18).[52]

The "one Lord" (v. 5) is the one to whom all Christians owe their allegiance. "One faith" in the one Lord unites all true believers. Faith here is personal commitment to Christ. It involves a recognition of who he is as Son of God and Savior of humankind. "One baptism" is the external seal of incorporation into the body of Christ. Baptism is the sacrament of unity. There is "one baptism," symbolizing identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, sealed with the Spirit, and incorporated into the body of Christ, so that all Christians become one in Christ Jesus. Finally, there is "one God" (v. 6). He

---

52. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 281.

stands alone. Unlike the many gods in pagan cultures, there is only one God (1 Cor 8:5–6). God's oneness defines the oneness of the church.

The opening words of verse 7, "But to each one of us," begin a new paragraph on the overall theme of unity and introduce the idea of diversity in Christ's distribution of grace to each individual believer. O'Brien sees verses 7–16 as a distinct unit within the section as a whole (vv. 1–16), and this is highlighted by the presence of "each one" in both verse 7 and verse 16, which form an envelope within the passage. The passage moves from the stress on unity (vv. 4–6) to diversity (vv. 7–10), and back again to unity (vv. 11–16).[53] At first sight it might seem that this diversity is at odds with the overarching unity of which the apostle has just spoken. But the diversity contributes to the unity of the body, since Christ's giving different gifts to each is for the purpose of benefiting the whole, so that all are prepared for the full maturing in Christ (v. 13).

Within the flow of verses 7–10, the key theme is that of Christ's giving (v. 7); "he gave gifts" (v. 8); and "it was he who gave" (v. 11). In Christ's sovereignty, he distributes gifts to all the members of his body. The recipients are not limited to some special group, such as the leaders of verse 11. "Each one of us" (v. 7) is to be understood comprehensively since it includes Paul and all his readers. Within the unity of the body each member has a distinct service to render for the effective functioning of the whole.[54]

This bestowal of gifts by the ascended Christ is now confirmed by the application of an important Old Testament text. Paul refers to Ps 68 as a basis for Christ's provision

---

53. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 286.

54. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 287.

of gifts to the church.[55] The psalm is a call to God to rescue his people. According to the psalmist, God should receive praise for acts of deliverance and provision (vv. 4–6). God's victory after the exodus causes Sinai to shake (v. 8) and kings to scatter (vv. 11–14) and establishes his reign high on Sinai (v. 17).[56] Paul quotes verse 18, in which the psalmist declares God has "ascended on high" and "received many gifts." However, Paul's wording differs from the psalm when he claims that God "gave gifts to his people." Many attempts have been made to determine Paul's usage of the psalm,[57] but it is clear that in the same way God ascended as a victor in Ps 68, Christ has also ascended in victory. Thus, Paul summarizes important aspects of the exaltation of Christ and his role in providing gifts to the church in terms of Ps 68.[58]

### Leaders and the Body of Christ

The Ephesian letter demonstrates a high view of leaders as essential to the body of Christ. The attaining of the body to the full measure of Christ depends upon the ministry of its leaders, specifically those whose ministry provides teaching of the truth of Christ. Verse 11 begins an important discussion of church leaders. The apostle now resumes the train of thought he began in verse 7. Paul does not list the gifts, only those who receive them. After "each one of us" in verse 7, we might have expected him to include all the

---

55. Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 280. Witherington concludes that Paul's understanding of unity is inherent in the church's existence and intrinsic to the church's nature.

56. James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 225–28. Mays provides a helpful discussion of the psalm.

57. William Bales, "The Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:9," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72 (2010): 84–100. This article provides a summary of the views concerning Paul's usage of Ps 68.

58. William N. Wilder, "The Use (or Abuse) of Power in High Places: Gifts Given and Received in Isaiah, Psalm 68, and Ephesians 4:8," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20 (2010): 198–99.

members of Christ's body (as in 1 Cor 12:4–11). Instead, we read only of those who are appointed to leadership, whose ministry is exercised for the sake of the whole community (vv.12–13).

Christ now sets out to accomplish the goal of filling all things by supplying his people with everything to advance the growth and maturity of the body (v. 13).[59] The resurrected Christ has bestowed his grace on every member of his body, but he has especially gifted certain individuals within the community to establish churches, minister the Word of God, and equip others for service in the church. Christ gives these gifted leaders to the church not to do the ministry for the various members of the body while they passively receive, but to help prepare each one of them to actively serve in the ways he has gifted them.[60] The titles listed here did not necessarily function in the first century as they do today. In fact, although all the titles refer to roles that proclaim the faith, the actual definition of each title is difficult. Moreover, the categories are not mutually exclusive.[61]

These leaders have one main purpose: to equip believers for the work of ministry (v. 12). The purpose of the gifted people is to equip others to minister. To equip is to prepare. Such preparation is needed to inspire God's people to do the work of service. Service is what unites all the members of Christ's body. The goal of this "equipping ministry" as described in Eph 4 is to move believers toward accomplishing three goals: the unity of faith, the knowledge of God's Son, and the maturity of the fullness of

59. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 297.

60. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 353-4.

61. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 203.

Christ.[62] Maturity and unity are measured in terms of the relationship of the body to Christ, the head of the body. The spiritual maturity of the body of Christ is evident in the doctrinal stability that comes with spiritual discernment (v. 14).

The purpose of these gifted ministers is to equip others to minister. The real measure of the effectiveness of leaders should not be how many people are showing up to their gatherings but how many people they are equipping and empowering to do ministry. To be a disciple is to make other disciples, and disciples must be equipped for and actively engaged in the work on ministry. To this end, Scott Cormode writes that "ministers must equip the people of God to engage in the mission of God outside the church by using the time that we have with those people when they are at church or are engaged in churchly activities."[63] The leaders of the church have a responsibility to give people the tools they need to learn, grow, mature, and lead and then equip others to do the same.

Leaders are called to equip as well as to serve out of their giftedness. Some believers are particularly gifted to serve in leadership roles in the church. Paul mentions five unique giftings here that highlight specific ministry functions within the church. Some of these giftings (such as pastors and teachers) would be essential for those serving in local church offices (such as elders/overseers) that he describes elsewhere. Each of these leaders is to perform certain ministry functions (in line with their gifting), but just as important, each one is commissioned by the resurrected Lord to equip and prepare

---

62. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 305.

63. Scott Cormode, *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), Kindle edition, ch. 4, "Cultivating Missional Leaders: Mental Models and the Ecology of Vocation."

42

other believers to minister to one another in the body of Christ. Paul does not specify how this equipping should take place, only that it should be done and that it is the responsibility of these gifted leaders.[64] Paul explains the need for equipping to continue until all believers mature to the measure of the fulness of Christ (v. 13). In verse 15, he again mentions the importance of individual members of the body growing and maturing so that the entire body becomes more and more like Christ, the head of the body. Paul ends this discussion by reminding believers that everything he has stated so far must be done in love. This is significant in light of the fact that he was addressing both Jews and Gentile Christians. Historically, animosity existed between these two groups, but now in Christ they have been redeemed and reconciled with each other (2:11–18).[65]

### *The Maturation of the Body of Christ*

The gifting of church leaders constitutes a practice of leadership that provides a foundation on which each member participates in the maturation of the body of Christ. As leaders equip God's people and as works of service characterize the whole body, the church will grow up into Christ in all aspects, with each part fitting together and supporting the others. Believers are spiritually matured when they discover their God-given ability and, through its utilization, contribute to the life of the local congregation. Each member of the body must function properly if the body is to grow (v. 16). Christ is the One into whom all Christians grow and out of whom the church unites itself in love. This process depends on the interrelationships of the various parts of the body. The whole is continually being integrated and kept secure by each separate ligament. It is only when

---

64. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 381.

65. Hoehner, *Ephesians,* 579.

each part is working properly that the body receives the support it needs and will be able to grow as God intended it.

The purposes of the gifts outlined in Eph 4:11–16 indicate that these gifts cover several of the elements needed for the care, growth, and strengthening of a congregation. As the text indicates, Paul's concern for unity, knowledge, and fullness (4:13) is necessary for doctrinal maturity (4:14). "Speaking the truth in love" is necessary for the community of faith to continue their development in Christ (4:15). The church is solidified by "what every joint supplies," and growth is achieved as every part does its share (4:16). Special gifts are given to leaders, who clearly provide leadership and provide direction in the church (4:11).

The emphasis of 1 Cor 12 is the diversity of gifts given to individual members of the body. In Eph 4, the gifts Christ gives to the church are the leaders who in turn equip the individual members of the body to use the gifts they have been given. Every member of the body of Christ is gifted and called into ministry. The effectiveness of a church's mission largely depends on the ability of its leadership to mobilize its people in doing God's work in the world. For ministry to be transformational, ministry leaders must equip, encourage, empower, and mobilize the members of the body to do the work of ministry. Those leaders mentioned in verse 11 are not to do all the work for the people but are to train the people to do the work themselves. As O'Brien writes:

> If it is only the leaders of verse 11 who perfect the saints, do the work of ministry, and edify the body of Christ, then this is a departure from Paul's usual insistence that every member is equipped for ministry. It is better, therefore, to regard those enumerated in verse 11 as helping and directing other members of the church so that all may carry out their several ministries for the good of the whole.[66]

_____

66. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 303.

This project is built on the theological conviction that every member of the body is gifted by God and empowered by his Spirit to serve the church and to engage the world by participating in the creative and redemptive mission of God. One of the roles of leadership then is to help members see themselves as endowed by God with certain gifts, identify those gifts, realize those gifts are given to them to be shared with the larger body of Christ, and believe that they are empowered by the Spirit to use them. Elton adds, "laypeople need to be better equipped theologically for mission; they need to be given practices and a framework within which to make decisions in a world that may not share their values and priorities; and they need to be able to discern how best to serve as intentional, conscious instruments of God in the various places to which they are sent."[67]

## Theoretical Foundation

The theology of the interconnectedness of church as one body with many members has theoretical support in Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory, which has opened up a whole new way of thinking about the relationship health of families.[68] Bowen Family Systems Theory has similarities to biblical anthropology. In both cases, the individual self is always a part of several larger wholes. The self does not exist alone. In the biblical world, individual identity is nearly always derived in part from the group an individual belongs to, whether that group is based on occupation, place, family, or

---

67. Terri Martinson Elton, *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), Kindle edition, ch. 7, "Characteristics of Congregations That Empower Missional Leadership: A Lutheran Voice."

68. Bowen's approach to Family Systems Theory is described in two primary sources: Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978) and Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation: The Role of Family as an Emotional Unit That Governs Individual Behavior and Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).

tribe. The larger context helps define the individual. The individual is often a particular

expression of the larger corporate group. This is the same idea that Paul is describing

when he talks about how we are a part of the body of Christ.[69]

<div align="center">Family Systems Theory</div>

Family Systems Theory describes how individuals tend to develop various

emotionally reactive patterns that contribute to systems of dysfunction in the family. It

also describes how individuals pass these patterns down through generations as well as

carry them on to other emotional systems in which they are involved. Bowen also

suggests that individuals cannot be understood independently, but rather as a part of the

emotional unit or family. In Bowen's systems model, "there is recognition of the

connections between people. No one lives or acts in isolation, and we are all affected by

each other's behavior."[70]

In his book, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and

Synagogue*,[71] Edwin Friedman demonstrates how Family Systems Theory applies to

congregations, providing congregational leaders a framework for understanding

behaviors they are experiencing in their own lives and families as well as the

congregations that they serve. While society is organized into many different systems, it

is Bowen's concept of the emotional system that connects the idea of family with the idea

of a church community as a family. Identifying the characteristics of healthy families and

---

69. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," 379–402.

70. Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), Kindle edition, ch. 2, "The Congregation: More than Meets the Eye."

71. Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford, 1985).

applying them to church systems provides a helpful framework for congregational health. In a church family, much like a biological family, members play different roles, responding to each other in certain ways according to their roles.[72]

Bowen Family Systems Theory proposes that the counterbalancing life forces between individuality and togetherness exist within a system. Individuality is a force for one to "follow its own directives, to be an independent and distinct entity," while togetherness is a force for one to "follow the directives of others, to be a dependent, connected, and indistinct entity." It is, however, a mistake to think that individuality represents only independence and separation. Individuality in Bowen Family Systems Theory means "the capacity to be an individual while part of a group."[73]

According to Bowen's theory, the family functions as a single emotional unit. It is not uncommon for a congregation to be described as a church family. And just like a biological family, the church family can be viewed as a collection of interdependent members who each affect the functioning of others. Systems theory is a way of considering the interrelatedness of the parts of an organization by looking at the whole rather than isolated, unrelated parts. Understanding the basics of Family Systems Theory helps church leaders see the congregation as a system of interdependent and interrelated parts. This interdependence leads either to balance or dysfunction. Attributes of healthy families include trust, communication, shared values, and conflict resolution, all of which are characteristics that can also serve as markers of a healthy church community. In order

---

72. R. Robert Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life: A Map for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), Kindle edition, ch. 1, "Always Take a Map: The Value of Bowen Family Systems Theory."

73. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 63–65.

for a church to think systemically, the parts of the whole must take into consideration the

needs of the other parts and the needs of the system as a whole.[74]

A favorite axiom of system advocates is "the whole is greater than the sum of its

parts."[75] Our bodies, for instance, are systems composed of many organs. Together or as

a whole, the body is greater than any separate organ. Likewise, a group of people is

different from the individual actions of all the people combined. The whole is a force in

itself. It exerts a force greater than any of its composing pieces. System thinking instructs

us to look at how the whole is connected.[76] Because leadership is intensely relational,

congregational leaders are vulnerable to the relational system in which they function.

Friedman writes:

> All clergymen and clergywomen, irrespective of faith, are simultaneously
> involved in three distinct families, whose emotional forces interlock: the families
> within the congregation, our congregations, and our own. Because the emotional
> process in these systems is identical, unresolved issues in any one of them can
> produce symptoms in the others, and an increased understanding of any one
> creates more effective functioning in all three.[77]

In much the same way that the church is the body of Christ, the church is also a

system whose individual parts relate to one another to create a dynamic whole. In the

church, each member functions in relation to every other member in the system. They

exist in a system much bigger and more powerful than the individual members. Each

---

74. George Parsons and Speed B. Leas, *Understanding Your Congregation as a System: The Manual* (Herdon, VA: Alban Institute, 1993), Kindle edition, ch. 2, "Congregations as Systems."

75. Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works*: *Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), Kindle edition, ch. 1, "The Concept of a System."

76. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works*, ch. 1, "The Concept of a System."

77. Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 1.

person both influences and is influenced by everyone else.[78] As we have already seen, the New Testament speaks of the church as a living system, akin to the human body. Christ is identified as the head of the body. The apostle Paul wanted to make clear that the body of Christ is a whole composed of many parts, yet it functions as one. The various members of a congregation are to work in conjunction with each other, much as do the organs of the human body. The interconnectedness of the church body makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.[79]

## Systems Theory and Trinitarian Doctrine

Christian theology and discipleship begin and end with God, or more specifically the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinitarian doctrine, therefore, presents a dynamic understanding of the one God that includes real diversity and community within the Godhead.[80] Recent theological proposals about the nature of God as Trinity can provide a fascinating foundation for considering the ultimate ground of a systems approach.[81] Paul Fiddes points out that the purpose of trinitarian language is not to provide us with an example to copy at the human level, "but to draw us into

---

78. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, ch. 2, "The Congregation: More than Meets the Eye."

79. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), Kindle edition, ch. 4, "The Big Picture: Understanding the Context of the Missional Congregation."

80. Mark E. Powell, John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision of the Future* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2020), 25–27.

81. See Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2005); Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977); and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).

participation in God, out of which human life can be transformed."[82] Human existence and Christian salvation are deeply relational, and this relationality comes from the nature of the Triune God. Trinitarian doctrine highlights the communal and relational nature of human existence.[83]

Trinitarian doctrine upholds the unity, diversity, and full divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[84] The persons of the Trinity constitute a single system. The oneness of God must be comprehended as a community of the three divine persons. Each of the persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is self-differentiated from the others. LaCugna writes, "The doctrine of the Trinity, which is the specifically Christian way of speaking about God, summarizes what it means to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The mystery of God is revealed in Christ and the Spirit as the mystery of love, the mystery of persons in communion who embrace death, sin, and all forms of alienation for the sake of life."[85] Kathleen Cahalan reasons:

> If humanity is created *imago Dei* and God as Trinity is persons-in-communion, it follows that persons are created as relational and communal *beings* that exist in relationship to all creation, humanity, and the divine Trinity. Persons are not separate, disconnected, autonomous selves, something that is largely assumed in modern cultures. Rather, a "relational ontology" points to the claim that human persons are relational beings.[86]

---

82. Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 62–66.

83. Powell, *Discipleship in Community*, 42.

84. Powell, *Discipleship in Community*, 26.

85. LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, *God for Us*, 1.

86. Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), Kindle edition, ch. 7, "The Practice of the Trinity."

To understand God as Trinity is to conceive a God who brings into existence a unified creation consisting of a complex network of relationships. Elizabeth Johnson describes three aspects of the triune God: mutuality, equality, and diversity. The three persons exist in mutual self-giving and receiving. It is only by their reciprocal and mutually exclusive relationships that the divine persons are really distinct from each other at all. Their uniqueness arises only from their being toward the others in relation.[87] Cahalan sees this relationality as being radically equal. In other words, the three persons do not "lose their distinctiveness" by being in relationship, and so there are no subordinate relations with the Trinity but rather a fellowship of "mutual, equal relations of friendship."[88] The correspondence between contemporary reflection on the nature of the Triune God and the world of relationships in family systems theory is compelling.

<center>System Equippers</center>

In their book, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leader,* Paul Stevens and Phil Collins make the observation that equipping is a systemic problem that requires a systemic solution. To blame church leaders for the inactivity of the members sitting in the pew is far too simple and ultimately not helpful. The average churchgoer is not going to be equipped and empowered through instructions to church leadership to do less so others can do more. Nor will equipping happen by guilting churchgoers into ministry leadership positions. Equipping is a systemic problem that requires changing the system.[89]

---

87. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 216.

88. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, ch. 7, "The Practice of the Trinity."

89. Stevens and Collins, *The Equipping Pastor*, 127.

Stevens and Collins offer several helpful principles for leaders who desire to become system equippers. One principle is to work with the whole. Leaders cannot influence the whole until they have joined the system. This is a paradoxical approach to equipping that believes the best way to equip the individual is not to focus on the individual but to equip the church as a whole, and then the church and its systemic life will equip the members. Another helpful principle is to make changes slowly and indirectly. In light of the natural tendency to resist change and maintain the status quo (homeostasis), it is best for change to be incremental so that others do not become overly anxious.[90]

Another helpful systems leadership principle from Stevens and Collins's book is to avoid becoming triangled. By valuing and standing with the relationship, the equipping leader refuses to take a side when two people try to triangle him or her into their problem. Leaders must be able to discern unhealthy and dysfunctional relationships. When individuals or groups attempt to draw leaders into counterproductive alliances, the leader must help people take responsibility for their own contribution to the congregation. Triangles are one of the most inhibitive factors in the systemic life of the congregation, and they prevent people from taking ownership of their own ministry and mission.[91]

Another helpful principle for equipping leaders is to cultivate interdependence among members. Equipping is more relational than programmatic. Leaders have the challenge of building unity among people without encouraging complete compliance or complete autonomy. Equipping leaders encourage people to remain connected to each

---

90. Stevens and Collins, *The Equipping Pastor*, 128–30.

91. Stevens and Collins, *The Equipping Pastor*, 130–31.

other and the body while at the same time being able to define themselves and their own ministries rather than merely assisting the leaders in their ministry. Healthy members are able to define themselves and still remain connected. There are synergistic benefits of such interdependence, and healthy interdependence begins with the leadership.[92]

**Conclusion**

The effectiveness of a church's mission largely depends on its ability to mobilize its people in doing God's work in the world. The largest force the church has to accomplish its mission is the people of God engaged in the life of the world every day in the course of their daily work. Ministry is most often limited to what pastors do, and it rarely reaches beyond to what happens in and through a congregation. Pastors end up taking on all kind of roles and tasks, even if they are ill equipped to perform them, simply because they accept the understanding that "it's what they pay me for!"[93]

However, in a healthy church family, church leaders need to consider how members' gifts are identified, nurtured, and recognized, and all members should be supported in identifying and using their gifts. Church leaders who believe and affirm that all members of the body of Christ have gifts to be shared will be compelled to equip their members for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. In the process, as part of the congregational system, those same leaders will themselves be formed and transformed.

This project is built on two important theological foundations. The first is the understanding of the church as the body of Christ. The church body is made up of many

---

92. Stevens and Collins, *The Equipping Pastor*, 128–29.

93. Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), Kindle edition, ch. 3, "Making Systemic Changes Can Be Shocking."

members, but every member is part of the one body. The diversity and unity of the church is God's design. God has given members of the body different gifts to be used for the building up of the whole body. The second theological foundation on which this project rests is the understanding that God has given people positions of leadership in the church for the purpose of equipping the individual members of the church to do the work that they have been gifted to do. The theoretical foundation that informs this project is Family Systems Theory as it is applied to congregations. Churches, like families, are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to design a strategic plan for equipping God's

people at Campbell Street for works of serving and building up the body of Christ.

Chapter 1 identified the need for Campbell Street members to be equipped. Chapter 2

outlined the theological and theoretical rationale for the project. In this chapter I will

detail the methodology for the project; explain the intervention strategy and format;

review the evaluation methodology, data collection, and data analysis; describe the

participants; and provide a detailed account of the individual sessions that resulted in the

creation of a strategic plan for equipping at Campbell Street.

**Qualitative Research**

The purpose of this project was to design a strategic plan for equipping God's

people in the congregation. Projects conducted in the congregational setting are generally

considered qualitative research. Qualitative research is defined as research focused on the

world of human experience. It "seeks to make sense of lived experience."[1] Sharan

Merriam outlines five basic characteristics that define qualitative research and are

descriptive of this project: (1) the goal of eliciting understanding or meaning, (2) the

---

1. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 57.

researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, (3) the use of fieldwork, (4) an inductive orientation to analysis, and (5) richly descriptive findings.[2]

## Participatory Action Research

This project was a type of participatory action research that "introduces an intervention to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of an organization."[3] Michael Patton emphasizes that, in participatory action research, participants own the inquiry; they are authentically involved. That was true in this project, as participants from Campbell Street were involved in deliberation and the design of a strategic plan for equipping. The participants in this study are all leaders in the congregation with vested interest in the outcome of the process. The participants worked together as a group and the facilitator supported group cohesion and collective inquiry. As the researcher I was a facilitator, collaborator, and learning resource, while at the same time working together with the group as a coequal member. For this to be a truly collaborative inquiry, I had to make sure the participants were coequal, that they owned the inquiry and were involved in making decisions and drawing applying conclusions.[4]

## Overview of the Project Intervention

The intervention for the project was the formation of a team of people to design a strategy that would equip God's people at the Campbell Street Church for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. The design team was composed of the nine members of the Campbell Street office and ministry staff. Since I was leading the

---

2. Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998), 11.

3. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58.

4. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58.

meetings, I enlisted the help of my wife, who is a trained note-taker with experience

leading and observing focus groups. She followed a specific note-taking protocol.[5] The

note-taker was a non-participant observer who only recorded and compiled what was

discussed and decided and her observations of the sessions.

## The Design Team

The design team consisted of the nine members of the ministry and office staff:

the lead minister, children's minister, youth minister, the husband-and-wife team who

serve as missions ministers, the worship minister, the communications director, the office

manager, and the youth and children's ministry assistant. The design team consisted of

five women and four men. Members of the team ranged in age from twenty-two to sixty-

seven.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 in the United States in March of 2020 led to the

governor of Tennessee issuing a "shelter at home" order April 2, eliminating the

possibility of face-to-face meetings for an indefinite period of time. The decision was

made to continue with the project thesis intervention using Zoom technology to meet

together online. Originally, I had planned on the design team meeting eight times, but

since the problem of the project thesis was something the ministry staff was quite familiar

with, I came to the conclusion that six sessions would be sufficient. The design team met

from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for six consecutive Tuesdays, beginning April 14, 2020.

---

5. See Appendix E.

The Sessions

***Session 1***

I began Session 1 with prayer. Following the prayer, I shared some thoughts

regarding leadership discernment from Ruth Haley Barton's book, *Pursuing God's Will*

*Together*, including this quote:

> It is our commitment to discerning and doing the will of God through the help of the
> Holy Spirit that distinguishes spiritual leadership from other kinds of leadership.
> Corporate or leadership discernment, then, is the capacity to recognize and respond to
> the presence and activity of God as a leadership group relative to the issues we are
> facing, and to make decisions in response to that Presence.[6]

I then asked the group to commit to discerning together God's desire for us as we move

forward. We talked about ways we can be attentive and alert to God's activity in and among

us so we can respond faithfully. We also committed ourselves to the practice of discernment

in community, seeking God's direction and guidance together.[7]

The primary objective for Session 1 was to orient and educate the members of the

design team on the problem and purpose of the project. I reviewed the congregational context

analysis and the theological foundation of the project (as described in Chapters 1 and 2

above). I stopped periodically to allow for questions and comments. The group generally

agreed with the congregational assessment as described in Chapter 1. Some of the design

team provided additional information regarding the history of the congregation. There were

also a few clarifying questions asked regarding collection and analysis of the historical data.

The group affirmed the need for a strategic plan for Campbell Street members to be equipped

for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ.

---

6. Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 11.

7. Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, 98.

The group also responded well to the theological foundations of the project. The design team affirmed the need for the unity of the body. The team acknowledged how difficult it is to have unity and diversity. There was a lengthy discussion on how difficult unity is between the "older and younger" generations and how the different life experiences and worldviews of each generation make it difficult for one generation to connect with another. Despite the difficulty, the group affirmed that the diversity of gifts within those generations is one of the reasons we need each other. It is difficult to appreciate the gifts of others and the interconnectedness of the body without an understanding of the importance of the unity of the body. If the younger generation, for instance, does not value the gifts of the older generation, they may believe they do not need the older generation. Or if the older generation thinks their gifts are not needed or that they no longer have anything to offer, then they may stop functioning as members of the body. To this point, the team talked at length about Paul's statement in 1 Cor 12, "And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body" (v. 16). One member of the body should not conclude that they are no longer a part of the body simply because they do not have the same gift or cannot use their gifts in the same way as another part of the body.

The design team acknowledged that people need help identifying and developing their gifts. They affirmed the role of church leaders to equip the individual members of the body. The group agreed that Campbell Street needs to do a better job of helping members identify their gifts as well as providing opportunities and experiences for them to exercise their gifts. The team also spoke to the church's need to utilize all the gifts of our church body and not just the gifts of a few. Several members affirmed that the church

has historically elevated the gifts of preaching and teaching to the neglect of other gifts, leaving many people to doubt their giftedness and question their usefulness.

The design team was also able to connect the theological foundation of the church as a body with the theology of equipping God's people for the work of serving and building up. One of the issues discussed relating to equipping was the concern that we as church leaders may have unintentionally created an environment in which the members of the church are overly dependent on the ministry staff. One team member talked about the view that many in the church appear to have that the ministers are the ones responsible for doing the work of ministry. One of the comments that was made was the expectation some members have for the ministers to do "everything" because "that is what we pay you for." Other team members talked about the pressure they feel to justify their salary by doing the work themselves rather than taking the time to equip other people to do the ministry. Another team member talked about the tension he has experienced throughout his career in ministry because of the feeling that he is "financially benefitting from a people's lack of spiritual maturity." He went on to say that in "our failure to equip people, we have made ourselves indispensable," and, as a result, we continue "self-perpetuating the church engine and if people are not equipped for ministry they will never be deployed for ministry." He went on to describe the church as "a baby we push down just so they need us to pick them back up rather than letting them walk."

The design team affirmed that, in the context of Eph 4, the goal for each member of the church is to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (v. 1). The end result of living out that calling and equipping people for serving is spiritual growth and

maturity "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" (v. 13). This led to a discussion about the process of spiritual maturity and the need for people to move from infancy to maturity and to "become more and more like Jesus every day."

The team talked at length about the importance of spiritual maturity. If spiritual maturity is the goal of equipping, then we as ministers need to change how we think about recruiting and training volunteers. Encouraging people to volunteer in a ministry is not just about "getting stuff done" but helping people discover and develop their God-given gifts and passions. And, if we can help people discover their gifts and passions, then volunteer retention is no longer an issue because people are no longer serving in a ministry "because we asked them to, but because God called them to."

By acknowledging spiritual growth as a process, the team recognized that people are at different places in their spiritual journey and that there will always be those who "need to be fed." But the goal is not to leave them in "perpetual infancy" but to help them move to maturity where they are able to "feed themselves." I shared with the team my conviction that healthy living things grow. We watch as babies learn to crawl, walk, and talk. As children and young adults, we grow from total dependence on our parents to eventually being parents ourselves. The maturing process is a journey to independence. As church leaders, our goal should be to equip people to be able to do the work God has called them to do and not depend on the ministry staff to do the work for them.

The coronavirus pandemic has been a reminder to all of us in leadership of just how important it is to equip the members of the body. As mentioned earlier, this intervention took place during a global pandemic that prevented Campbell Street from

physically meeting together as a church body. The church staff had been working overtime to produce digital content and provide daily devotionals, mediations, and prayers for our members during this time of "self-quarantine" and "social distancing." Although the content provided by the ministry staff had been well received, the ministry staff were able to articulate that one of the reasons they felt it was so important to get this devotional content to our members was an underlying belief that "if we do not do it for them, they will not know how to do it for themselves." Even in this pandemic, when we were all working from home, we were still doing for people what they should be able to do for themselves.

The ministry staff acknowledged how often they feel the need to explain to people how they can serve and how they can help, rather than trusting that members will take the initiative. One of the team members expressed his belief that the reason we have to do so much for our members is that "we have not yet equipped our members to see for themselves how God has gifted them, to see the unique opportunities God has given them to serve, and to discern what God is doing in the world, and what he might be calling them to do."

The design team also talked about the challenge of moving people out of their comfort zones and into the ministry and mission of the church. It was understood that in asking people to take their next step of faith, leaders are asking people to be challenged and to be put in uncomfortable positions that require faith. Most people are resistant to change; they would rather the church continue to cater to their needs and their personal preferences. Several members of the design team commented on the need to develop an "equipping culture."

As part of this discussion, one of the team members asked, "are we really trying to equip people or are we just trying to make people happy and keep them from complaining?" Another member made the comment that churches who "cater to the personal preferences of insiders create a church of consumers, and consumers rarely contribute." The team affirmed that one of the goals of equipping is to move people from being spectators to participants, from consumers to contributors. The team also affirmed that one of the reasons many members are not contributing is that they feel inadequate and unprepared. The team affirmed that a strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street should help remedy that problem.

One team member said that we who are paid ministers need to give each other permission to change our focus from "doing ministry to equipping others to do ministry." She compared equipping to how her mother taught her to make biscuits. It would have been easier and quicker for her mother to do it herself, but then the daughter might not have learned how to do it. One of the final comments was that in order for us as ministry leaders to really equip our members, "we need to die to our need to be needed and our need to receive affirmation for something we have done." I concluded this session with prayer, a restatement of the theological foundations, a summary of what we had discussed, and a preview of the next session.

### Session 2

After beginning in prayer, I restated the problem and purpose of this project as well as the theological constructs covered in session 1. Before moving on to the theoretical constructs of the project, I decided to revisit the discussion that took place in the previous session regarding equipping and the role of the leader in the equipping process. The design team affirmed that in order from Campbell Street to become an

equipping church, we, the leaders of the church, have to experience a fundamental shift in our thinking, from seeing our role as informing people to equipping them. One of the design team members suggested we add equipping to all of our job titles. We all acknowledged that giving people information has been the primary method church leaders have used to equip members. But, as one member stated, "information does not equal transformation."

I shared with the group my belief that leading in the church is a lot more like being a really good coach than a star athlete. A leader's job is to guide and equip God's people so that the entire church becomes a mature community of faith. Leading involves unleashing the ministry and gifts of all believers and not just a select few. Leadership is about creating a place where everyone learns to serve and minister by growing, serving, and equipping others to do the same. Church leaders need to be more than just doers; they need to be equippers. The team acknowledged that making the transition from a doer of ministry to an equipper of ministers is going to be difficult for us and for the church members who have come to expect the ministers to do the ministry for them.

I spent the remainder of session 2 considering the theoretical constructs of this project, stopping periodically to allow for questions and comments. I gave a brief overview of Family Systems Theory and how it relates to the theological foundation of the church as the body of Christ. Family Systems Theory is a way of considering the interrelatedness of the parts of a family or organization. Instead of seeing the members of a group as isolated, unrelated parts, systems theory considers how the individual members of the group influence the whole.

The design team responded well to the idea of viewing a congregation through the lens of Family Systems Theory as another way to understand the interdependence and interconnectedness of our members. Members of the body of Christ, much like a biological family, are intricately interconnected. Learning to think of the church as a system, then, is an important step in understanding the congregation, which helps one become a better leader and minister. The more aware we are of the interconnectedness of our members, the more aware we become of how we lead and respond to crisis and conflict.

In a church family, much like a biological family, members play different roles, responding to each other in certain ways according to their roles. In much the same way that the church is the body of Christ, the church is also a system whose individual parts relate to one another to create a dynamic whole. In the church, each member functions in relation to each other in the system, which is bigger and more powerful than the individual members. Each person both influences and is influenced by everyone else.[8] The group affirmed that as a whole, the body is greater than any separate organ. Likewise, a congregation is more than the individual members. In a human system, we are constantly influencing the behaviors of others and likewise being influenced by them. Each church member affects every other church member in some way whether there is direct contact between them or not. I pointed out that one of the implications of systems theory is that change in one member of a congregation can affect the whole congregation. Most often the change in one member has been preceded by changes in others.

---

8. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, Kindle edition, ch. 2, "The Congregation: More than Meets the Eye."

One of the questions I asked in this session was, "If the church is as an emotional unit like a family, then what happens in the life of the church when someone leaves?" Participants acknowledged "the ripple effect" that can negatively impact a church family when someone leaves. We talked at length about how conflict among staff members can impact the emotional health of the members. We talked about how systems theory does not assume a direct cause-and-effect relationship. For example, the member upset with the worship leader over the choice of a song may actually be upset about something unrelated.

The group talked at length about how to handle criticism and conflict. I talked about the importance of leaders being a "non-anxious presence" when dealing with conflict. Congregations often experience anxiety, especially related to change. We talked about how congregational leaders do not need to be the source of anxiety because anxiety can be infectious. Understanding the anxiety that congregations experience, the group affirmed the need to not take criticism personally. We also talked about how "avoiding conflict" does not need to be the driving force for decision-making in a congregation. I concluded this session by summarizing what we had talked about and previewing the objectives of the next session. We concluded in prayer.

### Session 3

After opening the group in prayer, I presented an overview of some of what has been written about the best practices of equipping churches.[9] I then led the team in a brainstorming session of possible equipping strategies for Campbell Street. Some of those strategies included incorporating life change stories in our services and in our

---

9. See Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* and Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church*.

communications, incorporating more team-based ministry, establishing goals and milestones, and adding "equipping God's people" to the job description of every staff member. From the beginning, I reminded the team that equipping will always be an ongoing process. There will always be people who will need to be equipped.

The group responded well to the need for an equipping plan. One team member talked about how the idea of a church equipping its members to do the work of serving is very different from many people's experience of just "attending" church. Another member reaffirmed what he had said in the previous session: that we live in a "culture of consumers." The group reaffirmed that in order for Campbell Street to become an equipping church, members must begin to see themselves as contributors rather than consumers. One of the ministers compared the difference between consuming and contributing to the difference between renting and owning a house. As she explained, what the church really needs are ministry leaders who "own" their ministry and not just volunteers who are temporary residents without a vested long-term interest.

One member of the design team spoke to the need for equipping to not be limited to a classroom setting. The team affirmed that for the equipping strategy to work, it must happen in multiple environments and at multiple times. For years, the church has limited equipping to the classroom. The classroom is a model, but it cannot be the only model. In the typical classroom, the training or equipping is usually limited to the transfer of information, which is important but does not on its own guarantee transformation.

Another member of the team suggested the equipping strategy be described using the phrase "next step" and that everyone be encouraged to "take their next step of faith." That next step of faith might be baptism, the practice of spiritual disciplines, participation

in a small group, or involvement in a ministry or mission team. The consensus of the group was that "everyone has a next step of faith" and that the leaders of the church need to clearly and consistently communicate that message to the membership.

The group also reaffirmed their belief that some people at Campbell Street are not currently participating in the work of serving because they do not feel equipped to serve or they have never been asked to serve. It was also pointed out by one of the team members that some members may actually be very involved in the work of serving, just not in ways we are aware of. I found this comment particularly helpful because I tend to be discouraged when it appears to me that someone is not involved when, in fact, they may be doing their part, just not in ways I have noticed.

The team also spent time discussing the importance of relationships to equipping. The group acknowledged the need for people to connect relationally as they serve. We talked at length about the role of small groups in not just equipping but also in discipleship. We also talked about the importance of inter-generational ministry. The group affirmed that people need to not only be equipped but also empowered. One of the members of the office staff commented on how often people "see something that needs to be done, something they could do themselves, but instead they call the office to find someone else to meet that need." This comment led to other comments, including an observation about how reluctant some members seem to be about doing ministry because they feel like they have to get permission first.

At the close of the session, I shared the idea of "creating an atmosphere or culture of expectation, equipping, and empowering." The team affirmed that for far too long, the only expectation the leaders of the church have had for the members is to "just show up."

I then asked, "would increasing the expectations help get people out of the pews?" This question led to the discussion of why people are so reluctant to volunteer or assume responsibility for any area of ministry. I shared my belief that the leaders of the church need to create a culture where members "buy into" the expectation of serving and leaders focus on equipping, encouraging, and empower the members to live out the mission of the church as a disciple of Jesus.

***Session 4***

Session 4 was dedicated to designing the strategic plan for equipping. After opening in prayer, I reminded the group of the problem and purpose of our group and the importance of the plan for our congregation. I reminded them of the theological constructs that should inform our strategic plan. We talked at length about the idea that leaders of the churches are the ones called to equip the members of the church. We agreed that entrusting the work of ministry to a broader group of leaders will help the church mature and grow. I reminded the group of the foundational idea we had agreed on earlier: the effectiveness of a church's mission largely depends on its ability to equip and mobilize its people in the ministry of the church and the mission of God in the world.

I asked the design team members to begin identifying key elements necessary in the process of equipping. From the beginning of our discussion, the group wanted to craft a strategy that was "people-centered" and not "task-oriented." The group agreed that we should focus on the spiritual growth of our members more than our organizational goals. We also agreed that equipping needs to be more than training. The group felt strongly that in order for this plan to be successful, there must be a relational component because we believe equipping is connecting. One of our goals is to connect people relationally

while also helping them connect to ministry and mission opportunities where they can discover and develop their gifts.

The design team came to the conclusion that equipping and developing are both important. In other words, it is not enough to just equip someone; we as leaders must also help members exercise, develop, and grow their gifts. We defined equipping as the process of training a person for a specific ministry task and defined developing as the process of investing in a person for their personal growth. We agreed that the equipping and development of members is what empowers them to lead and serve. I introduced the Home Depot tagline, "You can do it, we can help" as a motto for equipping and empowering our members.

The design team decided that we need to begin by evaluating what we were already doing. The last thing we wanted to do was add to our members' already overloaded calendars. We talked at length about the purpose and potential of the recently formed ministry and mission teams. We spent some time evaluating the value of members serving on a team with "shared responsibility" rather that working "solo." The design team discussed the idea of organizing teams of people to lead various ministries. We also spent time considering the implications of this strategic plan for the children and youth ministries.

Another idea we discussed at length was the need to develop a set of core values to help shape and inform Campbell Street's plans and decisions. The group also affirmed the need to develop and expand discipleship groups as part of the strategic plan and the need to reevaluate the purpose and potential of the small group ministry. I ended this

session by recapping the ideas that we presented and reminding the team that the objective of the next session was to articulate those ideas in a strategic plan.

***Session 5***

The objective of session 5 was to formalize the strategic plan. We began in prayer, and then I reminded the group that we wanted the plan to be as actionable, yet comprehensive, as possible. I presented the notes I had gathered from previous sessions and asked the group to help synthesize the ideas that were generated into an actionable plan. The goal was to formulate a strategy that aligned with our theological and theoretical constructs and addressed the needs we uncovered in previous sessions.

After much discussion, the design team came up with a seven-point plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street: (1) the development and expansion of our ministry and mission teams, (2) the incorporation and expansion of "next step" language into our church culture, (3) the reevaluation of the purpose and potential of small groups, (4) discipleship groups, (5) the development of a set of core values, (6) regular teaching and preaching of the theological constructs and the strategic plan of this project and (7) the commitment to reevaluate the strategic plan every six months. After identifying the components of the strategic plan, the design team helped me write a brief description for each point of the plan.

The design team affirmed their belief in the Holy Spirit's direction in the development of the strategic plan. The team also expressed their desire to continue discerning and pursuing God's will together. The team decided to create space for God's Spirit by restructuring staff meetings and introducing a time of silence to be more attentive and alert to God's activity among us. To become a community of discernment,

each staff member also committed themselves to attend to their own individual spiritual formation through the spiritually transformative practices of solitude and silence, engaging Scripture, prayer, and self-examination.

I closed the session with a discussion on the importance of implementing the plan. The design team affirmed that they did not want this plan to be another one of those plans that never gets implemented. It was agreed that the members of the team need to hold each other accountable to making sure the plan is put into practice. One of the members made the suggestion that we put equipping on the agenda of our staff meetings. At every staff meeting, team members would be asked to share a time when they invited someone to do ministry with them instead of doing it themselves. The design team agreed that this would be a simple and easy way to make equipping a priority and encourage us to stop doing everything on our own and start bringing others along for the ride.

### *Session 6*

Session 6 consisted of an evaluation of the strategic plan we developed. The design team was asked to evaluate the strategic plan by completing an exit questionnaire. The participants were asked three questions. Do you believe the strategic plan we created will equip God's people at Campbell Street? If this strategic plan had been in place when you first came to Campbell Street, what are some ways it might have helped? Is there anything you feel should have been added to or omitted from the strategic plan we developed? Both the notes from the planning sessions and results of the questionnaire were included as part of the evaluation process.

**Evaluation**

Procedures for Data Collection

The data collected for this project are in the form of field notes and

questionnaires. The field notes were created by an independent note-taker, an individual

who was not part of the design team. I collected the field notes after each session and

added my own observations within the first twenty-four hours. In Session 6, I distributed

a questionnaire to the design team soliciting their feedback on the process and the

strategic plan we developed. Since we were not meeting in person, I emailed the

questionnaire to the design team and asked them to put the completed questionnaires on

my desk before the end of the week.

Procedures for Data Analysis

I utilized two methods for analyzing the collected data: data triangulation and

coding. Comparing and contrasting data from multiple data sources enhances the validity

and reliability of the project.[10] To begin I triangulated the data to develop a thicker

description of the results. Data triangulation takes data sets from three distinct points of

view, creating a fuller understanding of the problem being measured. Sensing

recommends three sources of data triangulation: insider, outsider, and researcher.[11] Each

of the angles adds a different perspective on the subject matter and, taken together, the

three angles yield a more complete understanding of the results.

---

10. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 73.

11. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 75.

### *Insider Angle*

The insider angle is provided by the eight members of the design team. The field notes recorded the deliberations of the team and provided direct insight into the process and development of the project. At the final planning session, an exit questionnaire was emailed to the design team participants to evaluate the process and the final strategies that we developed.[12] As participants and stakeholders in the project, the design team was a valuable source of evaluation for the project.

The insider angle provided helpful insight as members of the design team shared their experiences at Campbell Street. Every member of the design team shared their thoughts and ideas and asked good clarifying questions. Since every member of the team was already well acquainted with every other member of the team, discussions were straightforward and challenging. Not everyone could identify with the experiences of the other members, but everyone was respectful and affirming of those experiences.

The members of the design team represented three different generations, which was helpful because we all desire to be an intergenerational church where every generation is valued. Members appeared to be comfortable sharing their frustrations and challenges. It was helpful that four members of the design team had significant ministry experience at one or more churches other than Campbell Street. On the other hand, it was also helpful to have three members of the team who had been members at Campbell Street for more than twenty years.

Meeting virtually proved to be challenging, but overall, I was pleased with the discussions and the desire of the team to address some real problems and obstacles. Not

---

12. See Appendix F.

every decision reached was a unanimous decision, but everyone was able to share their unique insight. One decision that we could all agree on was the need to change the view some people have of the church as being "a dispenser of religious goods and services."[13] Something else we could all agree on was the need to decentralize the ministry of the church. At some point in our history, the church office became the dispatch center for everything related to ministry. Members will often call the office for the office or ministry staff to do something that they could do themselves. On some level, we agreed that we either had created or contributed to that problem. Either way, we all agreed it had to change.

The project intervention was scheduled to begin the week our governor issued a "stay-at-home order" because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, all of the meetings were conducted virtually using Zoom technology. After the stay-at-home order was lifted, most of us started going back to and working at the office. We continued to meet virtually because not all of our members were comfortable with meeting in person, but several of us would see each other in the office in-between sessions. As a result, many of the conversations that happened in the sessions continued throughout the week. Looking back, it might have been better for those conversations not to have happened since not everyone was present. On the other hand, many of those discussions made our time together more productive and our conclusions more nuanced.

---

13. See Tevin Wax's article on the Gospel Coalition blog, "Your Church is Not a Restaurant" at https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/church-not-restaurant/

***Outsider Angle***

The wisdom of the larger community of men who are currently serving as the elders of the Campbell Street Church served to provide the outsider perspective.[14] Following the completion of the planning sessions, the design team made an oral presentation of the strategic plan to the Campbell Street eldership for their feedback and assessment. As with the individual sessions, we were not able to meet in person, so the presentation was done through Zoom technology. The note-taker was also present at this meeting to observe and record the comments, questions, suggestions, and feedback provided by the elders.

The feedback from the elders meeting was helpful. The elders know people that the members of the design team do not know. The members of the ministry staff tend to be overly optimistic about our ideas and plans, and we tend to underestimate how difficult the task at hand is. We also struggle at times to anticipate the resistance of the congregation to certain ideas and what we believe to be small changes.

The elders asked some clarifying questions regarding how we would go about determining the core values. Originally, the plan was for the ministry team and a subgroup of elders to meet and discern what those core values should be. I would prefer an in-person meeting, but the ongoing pandemic is going to make that difficult. I am also not sure how many of the elders will have the time to meet as often as we may need to

---

14. In Campbell Street's current leadership structure, the elders "pray for and care for" the members of the church and provide "oversight and encouragement" for the ministry staff. In turn, the lead minister, office staff, and ministry staff are responsible for the "day to day operation" of the church as well as "leading and equipping" the members of the church for the work of serving.

meet to make these important decisions. The implementation of the plan is not without its challenges.

The elders also offered a helpful critique of the ministry and mission teams and questioned the role of deacons in the overall ministry plan. In the strategic plan the ministry and mission teams are doing work once reserved for deacons. The role of deacons is something Campbell Street has yet to figure out. There is more work to be done in that regard. The elders were very complimentary of the overall strategic plan especially as it related to reimagining the small group ministry. The elders were also very appreciative of the time and effort of the design team and expressed their support of the strategic plan.

### *Researcher Angle*

As the researcher for the project, my contributions make up the data set for the researcher perspective. The note-taker provided field notes after each session, and I collected the notes and added my own personal observations, expanding those notes into a narrative account. My role as both minister and researcher, as well as my active participation and recorded observations, will be the filter for all the data.

I utilized coding as the second method to analyze the data. I coded the field notes, my comments, the feedback from the oral presentation to the elders, and the questionnaires completed by the design team, utilizing themes that initially emerged from the design group's work in session 2. Qualitative coding is one way to catalogue or classify data in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it.[15] Charmaz

---

15. Graham R. Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), Kindle edition, ch. 4, "Thematic Coding and Categorizing."

describes coding as the critical link between the collection of data and the explanation of those data's meaning.[16]

Several themes emerged from the theoretical and theological constructs of the project. Some of the theological themes included the unity of the body, the interdependence of the members of the body, the diversity of gifts, the responsibility of leaders, the importance of equipping and empowering, and the goal of spiritual maturity. Some of the theoretical themes that emerged include the church as an emotional system, the importance of connections between people, and the interconnectedness of individuals in a system. The process itself was made easier by the familiarity of the participants with the congregation and the problem. The biggest challenge was the fact that we could not meet in person because of the shelter-at-home order that was in place at the time. Zoom technology is great, but as the facilitator, I had to work extra hard to get every member of the team to share their ideas and thoughts. Participants who are by nature quiet are less likely to speak up because they do not want to interrupt.

## Conclusion

Chapter 1 presented a contextual analysis of Campbell Street, and Chapter 2 examined the theological and theoretical foundations for the project. In this chapter, I have presented the project intervention along with the evaluation methodology I used to gather and process the data. The next chapter will present my findings.

---

16. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), Kindle edition, ch. 5, "The Logic of Grounded Theory Coding Practices and Initial Coding."

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In Chapter 1, I demonstrated that, based on a thorough congregational analysis, Campbell Street would benefit from a strategic plan for equipping its members. Scripture provides a wealth of support for the importance of equipping God's people for works of service and building up the body of Christ. In Chapter 2, I presented the theological and theoretical support for the project. In Chapter 3, I described my process for gathering a team of ministry leaders from Campbell Street to design a plan for equipping its members. This chapter describes the results of the intervention. The data presented come from evaluating the field notes and my written observations of the design team's sessions.

My findings will be presented in the context of the final strategic plan created by the team. The design team deliberated over many necessary equipping components before consolidating them into a seven-point plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street. The plan includes: (1) the development and expansion of ministry and mission teams, (2) the incorporation of "next step" language into the culture of the congregation, (3) a re-evaluation of the purpose and potential of small groups, (4) the creation and launch of discipleship groups, (5) the development of a set of core values, (6) regular teaching and preaching of the theological constructs and the strategic plan of this project, and (7) a commitment to reevaluate this plan every six months.

**Ministry and Mission Teams**

The first point of the design team's strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is developing and expanding ministry and mission teams. Before this intervention, Campbell Street went through a restructuring of its leadership model. Previously, the Campbell Street elders were the overseers of every ministry area and appointed individual deacons to lead those ministries under their direct oversight. As the church grew, this model proved to be ineffective and unproductive. The elders did not have the time to be the congregation's spiritual leaders and ministry leaders. The elders felt called to shepherd and care for the congregation's spiritual health, but in the leadership model they inherited, that seemed impossible. In the new model, the elders serve primarily as the spiritual shepherds of the congregation, praying for and attending to the congregation's spiritual needs. In order to have the time and energy to shepherd, the elders decided to delegate the responsibility of the day-to-day operation of the church to the ministry and office staff. Within this framework of the new leadership model, the ministry and office staff had decided to move toward a "team approach" to ministry, in which teams of men and women, rather than individual deacons, lead ministries.

The design team affirmed that developing and expanding the team ministry model for all ministries was a vital part of Campbell Street's strategic equipping plan. The design team affirmed a desire to increase the percentage of church attenders serving on a ministry or mission team, but they also identified several challenges to overcome to make that a reality. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of an articulated purpose of the church's ministry. Without clarity around the "why" behind what we do, people are reluctant to volunteer. Clarity keeps people motivated and in step with each other. Clarity

creates a vision for the outcome that is evident to all. Moreover, clarity helps the ministry and mission teams stay on track with the mission.

The design team affirmed the value of all members working together on a team and expressed their belief that team ministry will make it easier to recruit and retain volunteers. The design team also acknowledged the importance of equipping ministry and mission team leaders to equip, empower, and encourage the members of their respective teams to serve. The overall advantages of the team approach to ministry were affirmed and articulated by the design team and included: (1) creative collaboration, (2) shared responsibility, (3) mutual accountability, (4) relational connection, and (5) leadership development.

<center>Creative Collaboration</center>

The design team affirmed that one of the advantages of team ministry is creative collaboration. Collaboration is consistent with the theology of the body of Christ in which individual members of the body are not isolated from each other but are working together instead. Team ministry collaboration brings people together, which helps to strengthen and unify the church. Collaboration provides space for the diversity of gifts within the unified church and opens up new channels for communication. Collaboration helps people learn from each other and fosters creativity and problem-solving as members share ideas and opportunities. The design team affirmed their belief that, as the world becomes increasingly complex, the church's challenges and problems will require creative collaboration to find innovative solutions and achieve real, lasting transformation.

## Shared Responsibility

The design team affirmed that one of the advantages of team ministry is shared responsibility. The team acknowledged that it is easy for volunteers to become discouraged in ministry if they are the only ones carrying the burden of leading a ministry. Many ministries are too large for volunteers to organize and lead on their own. The design team affirmed that volunteer ministry leaders could be energized and encouraged by sharing ministry responsibilities with other team members. Shared responsibility is also consistent with the theology of the body of Christ because the individual members of the body depend on each other for the whole body to function. Serving on a ministry team is a picture of the interdependence of the body of Christ.

## Mutual Accountability

The design team also affirmed mutual accountability as an advantage of team ministry. Mutual accountability is consistent with the theology of the body of Christ because the individual members of the body are to care for each other. The design team affirmed their belief that members of healthy teams feel a sense of responsibility and accountability to the other team members and that people are often more motivated to do their best when they are accountable to others. Mutual accountability acknowledges that God's wisdom and power do not reside in just a few individuals within a church but among the body of Christ communally. As members of the one body of Christ with equal access to the Spirit of God, the individual members of the body are equally responsible for and accountable to each other for the whole body's well-being.

## Relational Connections

The design team also affirmed that serving on a team provides more significant opportunities for members of the church body to connect relationally with other members. The team affirmed their belief that relationships are the soil in which spiritual growth is accelerated and that building community and relational connections within the individual teams must be a top priority. The design team affirmed that one of the primary reasons people volunteer is to meet new people and experience stronger relational connections within the body of Christ. Therefore, the goal of team ministry is to connect people to ministry opportunities and connect them relationally with the other members of the team on which they serve.

## Leadership Development

The design team affirmed their belief that the best way to develop leaders in the church is to give people opportunities to lead and succeed. The design team's plan is for each ministry and mission team to be led by as many as four leaders responsible for a team of up to twelve people. The design team believes that developing leaders is critically important for a church to grow and eventually plant new churches. The team affirmed that serving on a ministry or mission team can be an essential first step for someone gaining leadership experience. The design team also affirmed the value of the opportunities team ministry provides for more experienced leaders to mentor younger leaders.

The design team affirmed that team ministry can develop leaders and become a leadership pipeline for the congregation as a whole. The goal is to develop a system by which the church leaders and ministry leaders cultivate the God-given spiritual gifts and abilities of the members. The team acknowledged that this goal might require a redesign or reorganization of ministry roles, not only to accomplish ministry goals but also to develop ministry leaders. The design team affirmed the need for leadership development to be a significant component of every leader's job description. When ministry leaders do all the ministry themselves, they rob others of the opportunity to use and develop their

God-given gifts and talents. Churches where everything revolves around a handful of leaders will not grow. The design team affirms that a change in practice begins with a change of thinking. Intentional leadership development involves a shift in thinking from a "doing" mindset to a development mindset.

## Next Step Language

The second point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is to incorporate and expand "next step" language into our church culture and vocabulary. The design team affirmed that being a disciple of Jesus is a journey and not a destination and that the only way to make progress on a journey is by taking another step. The design team affirmed that everyone has a next step of faith and that the church leaders need to continually invite people to take their next step of faith.

The design team also affirmed the need for church leaders to offer people multiple opportunities to learn more about possible next steps and help identify their next step of faith. The design team affirmed their belief that many members do not realize how many next step opportunities there are at Campbell Street. Therefore, the design team affirmed the need to communicate possible next steps through printed material, email, social media communication and videos, and a variety of in-person events. The design team also affirmed the need for church leaders to offer tools, resources, and experiences to equip people in crucial spiritual formation practices such as worship, prayer, fasting, meditation, silence, *lectio divina,*[1] Bible study, and stewardship.

---

1. *Lectio divina* is Latin for "divine reading," "spiritual reading," or "holy reading" and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights. See https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-what-how-why-of-prayer/praying-with-scripture/.

The design team identified several possible next steps. Next steps related to public expressions of faith include baptism, officially placing membership, and sharing personal faith stories. Next steps related to spiritual formation include attending a class on spiritual disciplines, attending a spiritual gifts workshop, and connecting with a spiritual director. Next steps related to discipleship include attending or leading a Bible class, participating in or leading a small group, and joining or leading a discipleship group. Next steps related to ministry and mission include joining or leading a ministry or mission team, participating in or leading a short-term mission trip, and starting, hosting, or leading a house church. Everyone has a next step.

### Small Groups

The design team affirmed the need to reevaluate the purpose and potential of small groups (referred to as "life groups") as the third point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street. The design team affirmed the need to articulate a clear vision and purpose for life groups. Life groups have been a part of Campbell Street for more than fifteen years, but the church leadership has never clearly articulated an agreed upon purpose for life groups. Life groups range in size from fifteen to thirty people and typically meet in members' homes or at the building. Most life groups meet on Sunday afternoon or evening in members' homes. A few groups meet every week, but most of the groups meet only sporadically. Some groups have Bible studies, while other groups are primarily fellowship groups. Most life groups have been together for a year or two, while others have been together for much longer.

The design team also affirmed the need to get more people connected to a life group. Before the pandemic, fewer than forty percent of our weekly attendees were part

of a life group. Because of the pandemic, life groups stopped meeting in person. A few life groups were meeting virtually at the time of this intervention, but most were not meeting. The design team recommended that, as soon as it is safe again, the leaders of Campbell Street should rebrand and relaunch life groups and encourage people to join an existing life group or start a new group. The design team also acknowledged that church leaders need to do a better job of equipping life group leaders to lead and grow their groups.

The design team affirmed their belief that small groups are vital to the health of a church. Small groups are important because relationships are essential. It may be difficult to build a community through programming, but a small group program could create opportunities and experiences through which community happens. Small groups allow for personal discovery, deeper friendships, and maximum participation. Small groups can also help elders shepherd the flock if members of the group take care of each other.

Small groups offer believers the opportunity to practice biblical hospitality by hosting their group in their home. The design team affirms that small groups can be a catalyst for change in people's lives. They can help people live out their faith in Christian community and build relationships with other church members. Small groups can also serve as a safe place for individuals to share their struggles.

The design team affirmed that we need to know why people are not currently in a group before we relaunch small groups. When we are aware of the obstacles of small group participation, we will be able to address those obstacles better. One of the challenges the design team is aware of is that the design and purpose of small groups has not been communicated. As a result, not everyone in our church is even aware of our

small group program. If people do not know what is going on, we cannot expect them to participate. Moreover, since people are attending worship services less frequently, we realize that we will have to talk about small groups more than a couple of times a year.

Another obstacle to small group participation that the design team identified was that many people do not think small groups are essential. The team agreed that many people in our church do not see the value of small groups. Perhaps that is because we as a church have never cast a vision for the importance of every member of body being connected to the other members of body. The design team affirmed that the interconnected community illustrated by the body metaphor should be one of the church's core values and be embraced by the entire leadership staff and eldership.

The design affirmed their desire to build a church culture that values Christian community. The team expressed a desire to build a church culture that values biblical community and encourages church members to prioritize participating in small groups. The team identified several ways that the church can do that. One way is to prioritize small groups by simplifying our church's ministries. The team acknowledged that presently every program, ministry, and events of the church compete for the time and attention of our leaders and members.

To prioritize small groups, the team affirmed that the church needs to take an honest look at our church's calendar to see if we can eliminate any activity to create more margin in the life of our church to allow people more time to participate in small groups. Maybe the most significant challenge the design team identified related to small group participation is a lack of time. Families in our church and community are busy. Practically speaking, people in our church do not have much free time. In light of

challenging schedules and time limitations, the design team affirmed that the church

needs to evaluate every program, event, and ministry of the church to ensure that we are

not contributing to the problem. If our church members are busy with other programs and

ministries, they will not have the time to join a small group. The design team affirmed we

would rather do less and do a better job of what matters most than to try and do

everything and not do it well.

Another suggestion was to regularly preach and teach about the importance and

value of being an interconnected community where everyone belongs, is needed, and is

cared for. Teaching and preaching about this kind of biblical community and the value of

Christian relationships is consistent with the church's theological foundation as the body

of Christ. In the body of Christ, every member is needed for the body to be fully

functional. In the body of Christ, when one member is hurting, we all hurt and when one

member rejoices, we all rejoice. The team also affirmed that teaching and preaching

about the responsibilities of the individual members to the body of Christ would help

people understand the value of small group participation. It was also affirmed by the

design team that regular preaching and teaching need to be part of the strategic plan.

Finally, the design team affirmed that a small percentage of members avoid small

groups because they are afraid. Some adults who fear intimacy avoid close relationships

and avoid putting themselves in uncomfortable situations. The design team affirmed one

strategy for alleviating some of those fears is to make it easier for people to visit a group,

join a group, start a new group, or change groups. The group offered several ideas as to

how to do that, including small group events and short-term groups that have a beginning

and an ending date.

**Discipleship Groups**

The fourth point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is creating and launching discipleship groups. The design team affirmed the potential of discipleship groups to help in the equipping process. Before the project intervention, Campbell Street launched four discipleship groups, gender-specific closed groups of 3 to 5 believers (including the leader) who meet together weekly to make disciples who, in turn, make other disciples.

Two design team members were each a part of one of the original discipleship groups at Campbell Street. One of those members explained to the design team that the goal of discipleship groups is to make disciples who make disciples. He shared his vision of how equipping is part of the discipleship process and is vital to creating a discipleship culture. He also shared resources available online at renew.org and discipleship.org. Presently, discipleship groups at Campbell Street are using Bobby Harrington's book *Trust and Follow Jesus: The Leaders Guide*[2] as their primary resource.

The three critical components for this discipleship group study, as outlined in Harrington's book, are (1) life-on-life context, (2) small groups, preferably gender-based, that meet weekly and (3) an expectation that group members review the questions and/or read the chapter before each meeting.[3] "Life-on-life" is simply a way of saying that the goal is to cover the material in a life-on-life context, instead of an educational context. The idea of life-on-life is to follow and be like Jesus, who invited those he discipled into a relationship. The design team affirmed discipleship groups' value and the importance of

---

2. Bobby Harrington, *Trust and Follow Jesus: The Leader's Guide* (Nashville: Renew, 2020).

3.  Harrington, *Trust and Follow Jesus*, 2–3.

having every group follow the same approach. The team agreed that having everyone follow the same approach will help create theological alignment around these teachings, for the discipleship groups themselves and for the whole church.

The design team affirmed the importance of both life groups and discipleship groups and the need for church leaders to articulate the difference between the two types of groups. The design team affirmed the primary purpose of life groups as relational connection and discipleship groups' primary purpose as spiritual growth. More specifically, the design team defined the purpose of discipleship groups as "intentionally pursuing relationships with other believers to help each other follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and join in the mission of Jesus." In other words, the goal of discipleship groups is to make disciples. The design team affirmed the need for believers to become disciples and develop a more in-depth, healthier, and more robust and active faith, a process that rarely happens without the intentionality of something like discipleship groups. The design team affirmed that discipleship is much more relational than informational and that discipleship cannot be done without an open and honest sharing of life together.

The design team affirmed the need for discipleship groups to reproduce or multiply. The design team affirmed that, after a year together, discipleship group participants should be encouraged to start their own discipleship groups. The goal of discipleship groups is to make disciples who are equipped to make other disciples. The team affirmed that discipleship should also be one of the core values of the church. Discipleship groups are not some new church fad, but a return to the priority of God's people to be a disciple and to make disciples. Again, the design team affirmed that, for most people, small groups would be an excellent first step and that discipleship groups

would follow, but the team also acknowledges that spiritual growth is not linear, and not everyone is at the same place or on the same path. Therefore, the design team affirmed that every part of the strategic plan needs to be flexible and adaptable.

## Core Values

The fifth point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is to develop a set of core values that will serve as a filter by which we evaluate everything we do. Core values are principles that undergird, influence, and clarify what a church does and how it does it. They provide boundaries and parameters around the mission, leadership and ministry philosophy, priorities, and strategy. Core values answer the questions, "Who are we? What defines us? What is important to us? What are the non-negotiables?" In addition to developing a set of core values, the design team affirmed the need to create common language around how those values should be communicated. In other words, it is important for everyone to be on the same page, going in the same direction, and saying the same thing. Core values guide the identity (who we say we are), the theology (who we say God is), and the activity (how we do what we do) of the church.

The design team recognized that in the church, and even among the church's leadership, there are competing priorities and agendas. Everyone has an opinion, and everyone has an idea of what the church should and should not be doing. The design team affirmed that this lack of clarity and focus makes the church's ministry and work unnecessarily difficult. Without a set of core values, every idea and opportunity receive equal time and consideration. Without a set of core values, it is hard to reach a consensus among the leadership as to what our priorities should be. This lack of consensus is

especially challenging when it is time to prepare the annual church budget. Without a set of core values, there is not an agreed-upon filter by which the leaders of the church can evaluate every opportunity and budget request.

The design team affirmed that determining these core values needs to be a collaborative process. The team expressed their belief that every leader needs to be involved in determining core values so that they can own whatever is decided. Going through a process also ensures that different perspectives help shape the process and the result. If church leaders are involved in deciding what those core values are and how to communicate them best, they are much more likely to support the values themselves. People generally support what they help to create.

While not wanting to undermine the process of developing core values, several possible core values were unearthed in designing this strategic plan. The design team affirmed "Equipping for Service" as a possible core value. The design team affirmed the importance of prayer in everything we do and suggested "Prayerful Dependence" be one of our core values. The design team also affirmed the importance of relationships and suggested "Biblical Community" or "Relational Intentionality" as a possible core value. "Discipleship" was also affirmed as a possible core value. "Biblical Teaching" and "Team Ministry" were also suggested as possible core values. Interestingly, every one of the core values suggested by the design team correlates to one or more points of the strategic plan for equipping.

The design team believes that a shared set of core values will provide the clarity needed to discern where God is leading the church. The design team affirmed that having an agreed-upon set of core values will be critical to help the church move forward and not

default back into the old model of ministry where the majority of members are consumers rather than contributors. If equipping is not a core value, then the membership will likely continue to look to the ministers to do the ministry for them. With equipping as a core value, ministers are more likely to look for and see the numerous ways the members of the body of Christ have been gifted for ministry and service. And with equipping as a priority, the design team affirmed that members are more likely to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts.

## Preaching and Teaching

The sixth point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is to schedule times to teach and preach the theological constructs and the strategic plan of this project. The design team affirmed that as core values develop, they will also need to be communicated to the church in various methods, settings, and occasions, including teaching and preaching. The team acknowledged how valuable the weekly assembly and Bible classes are to communicate important messages to the greatest number of people. The team also affirmed that in order for the message to stick, the congregation needs to consistently hear the same message articulated from several different communicators and teachers. The team acknowledged that these messages will have to be repeated repeatedly to remind the church not only about what we are doing but also why we are doing what we are doing.

## Regular Evaluation

The seventh point of the strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street is an evaluation of the plan every six months by the design team. The design team is committed to seeing this plan implemented and making sure that it is evaluated and

revised as needed. As with any strategic plan, the design team acknowledged that changes would be necessary. Whenever plans are implemented, lessons will be learned, and adjustments will need to be made. Too often in the history of Campbell Street, plans have been implemented but never evaluated.

By revisiting the strategic plan every six months, the ministry and office staff will be able to tweak, update, revise, add to, or replace any or all of the strategic plan as needed. Six months before the design team began this process, we could have never anticipated what would happen with the COVID-19 pandemic. More than ever, the church, ministry, and office staff had to be prepared to adapt and pivot as needed.

The design team affirmed their belief that evaluation is essential to any endeavor. Evaluation keeps us from repeating the same mistakes year after year. Planning asks, "What will we do?" before the event, while evaluation asks, "How did we do?" after the event. Only through evaluation can we discover what we did right, what we did wrong, what we could have done better, and what we will do next time.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop a strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street. Data gathered from the insider, outsider, and researcher points of view affirm the seven-point plan the design team created. The next chapter will offer proposals to refine the design team's work as the ministry and office staff move forward with implementation. This final chapter will also offer some concluding reflections on lessons learned and future implications of this project. See Appendix G for a brief overview of the strategic plan.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

At the beginning of this project, I identified a need for the Campbell Street

Church to develop a plan to equip its members for works of service and building up the

body of Christ. As described in the data analysis, my conclusions and implications have

been filtered through the context of my theological foundations and theoretical

assumptions in conjunction with the practical needs of our congregation. To help

Campbell Street better equip its members, I formed a team of ministry leaders to design a

strategic plan for equipping. In this chapter I will present my interpretations of the

triangulated data presented in the previous chapter, along with the implications this

project has for the church and for me personally.

**Interpretations**

The goal of equipping God's people for the work of serving and building up the

body of Christ is spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13). While this work is ultimately

accomplished through the Holy Spirit, the leadership of the church has a responsibility to

equip the members of the church with resources, tools, experiences, and opportunities to

facilitate this process. The design team developed a seven-point plan for equipping God's

people at Campbell Street. Having developed a strategic plan, the next step will be to

implement the plan. Ultimately, the success of this project will depend on the

implementation, adaptability, and on-going evaluation of the strategic plan.

**Trustworthiness**

Applicability

This project was designed to address current needs for the development of a strategic plan for equipping God's people at the Campbell Street Church in Jackson, Tennessee. Congregational needs are never static and are influenced by many variables, making it difficult for solutions in one time and location to translate exactly to another time and location. However, I do believe that many congregations face the same challenge of equipping members for works of serving and building up the body of Christ. The first steps taken in the project toward a plan for equipping could inform other congregational leaders and provide inspiration for developing a program in their own context.

Throughout the process of planning, preparing, executing, and writing this intervention, I had many opportunities to discuss the project with other congregational leaders. Every leader I spoke with identified with our need for a plan to equip our members. These conversations lead me to believe that the work done in this project intervention may benefit other congregational leaders. Other congregations could utilize this project in one of two ways. They could adapt the principles presented for their own equipping plan, or they could simply recreate our discovery process within their own context.

Credibility

The nature of qualitative research does not lead to measurements or verifiable data in the same way as quantitative research. The subjective nature of spiritual formation and maturity makes any project on the subject challenging. However, as a qualitative

research project, there are methods that provide the rigorous accountability and credibility expected from a doctoral project. To ensure the credibility of the data, I utilized the method of triangulation as described in Chapter 4 and followed the procedure for qualitative research by collecting data from three points of view. The insider view came in the form of field notes and exit surveys of the design team members, while the researcher view came in the form of my own additions to the field notes. The outsider view was provided in the form of feedback from the Campbell Street elders, who were not directly involved in the project.

## Reflexivity

Aside from the fact that the project was initiated by me as an intervention, my personal influence on this project was significant. I led the team by determining the direction of each session and making sure that the conversation stayed on topic. What was deemed "on topic" was decided by me; therefore, my influence and biases certainly directed the project. I had vested interest in the outcome and had done a significant amount of research prior to the intervention. As a result, my opinions were generally weightier than the opinions of other design team members. However, throughout the sessions, I made a deliberate effort not to push my opinions but to allow conversations to play out, giving the space needed for team members to share their thoughts.

I also influenced the team by synthesizing the data each week, occasionally redistributing data from previous sessions to guide the conversation for the next session. While I created those review sheets objectively, the fact that I was the person creating them allowed space for me to influence the process through wording and the occasional decision to include or omit material based on my perception of its relevance. I also need

to account for the influence of my role and personality in the group. Everyone on the team sees me as the lead minister. Not only am I in a position of leadership, I am also the person who has been on staff the longest. I am now in my twenty-fourth year of full-time ministry at Campbell Street, which predates every other member of the office and ministry staff by at least ten years.

## Significance and Implications

### Sustainability

The sustainability of this project is entirely dependent upon a commitment from the leadership team to develop, implement, and consistently evaluate the strategic plan and tweak as needed. There is still work left to be done. Some of the points of the plan need further development. The ministry and mission teams need to be expanded. The next step language needs to be refined. Small groups need reevaluating, new leaders need to be recruited and equipped, and new groups need to be formed. New discipleship group leaders need to be equipped and new groups need to be formed. The entire leadership team needs to meet to formulate the set of core values. Sermons need to be written, Bible class curriculum needs to be developed, and a date needs to be set for our first evaluation of the implementation of the plan.

### Personal Significance

This project had personal significance for me as the lead minister of the Campbell Street church. Working together on this project and sharing important congregational responsibilities had a unifying effect on the ministry and office staff. The conversations we shared before, during, and after each session enriched the results and strengthened the bonds of friendship and trust. Preparation for the sessions with the design team along

with the conversations and questions asked during each session forced me to clearly articulate my views on spiritual formation and the ministry and mission of the church.

Additionally, I learned a great deal from the process itself. The practice of clearly articulating a problem and developing an intervention utilizing qualitative methods gave me a better understanding of how to conduct practical theology in the congregation. The project intervention helped me see how important it is to have other voices speak into or reflect on a problem. The feedback I received from the design team members sharpened my thinking and gave me new perspectives. The collaborative process was energizing, and the ideas and plans produced by the group were better than any of the ideas offered by an individual. Triangulation of data was a critical lesson for me as I often make decisions in isolation out of expedience. Failure to provide at least three points of reference diminishes the integrity of any given decision. I have learned that change done well requires time, and I intend to take the processes I have learned during this intervention with me into the future.

The challenge of equipping God's people to do the work of serving and building up the body of Christ is something I have been wrestling with for years. This project gave me the opportunity to invite other ministry leaders to help me address this need. It was energizing to share this responsibility with others rather than continuing to try and solve this problem myself. It is easy for office staff members to become so preoccupied with their individual responsibilities that they lose sight of the bigger picture. Even as members of a church ministry staff, it is easy to operate in ministry silos and not fully appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependence of the church members and the

office and ministry staff. I also gained a better perspective on the thoughts and feelings of the other team members as I listened to them share their thoughts.

<center>Ecclesial Significance</center>

This project has great significance for the Campbell Street church. A renewed focus on equipping that leads to spiritual maturity was inspiring for the design team, which is significant because they are the ones responsible for implementing the plan. There is also enthusiasm amongst the Campbell Street elders about the potential for spiritual growth and maturity as a result of implementing the plan. I also anticipate that this plan will be well received by the Campbell Street members because currently no plan exists.

Without an equipping plan, even the ministry leaders are unclear about what we are trying to accomplish and what we are asking people to do. Members are reluctant to volunteer if they feel ill-equipped to serve. Without a plan for equipping its members, Campbell Street has had to rely on the ministry staff to do the majority of the work. By not having a system for equipping and empowering members for serving, Campbell Street has unintentionally created a consumer church culture in which members expect the ministers to do the work and let them know how they can help. Ideally, when members are equipped for works of service, they will be the ones doing the majority of the work and the ministry staff will be asking how they can help.

In the future most churches will not be able to just hire more staff when ministry opportunities present themselves. When you consider the financial challenges churches today are facing, the increasingly post-Christian culture in which we live, and the declining membership of churches, especially in North America, equipping every

member to do the work of serving and building up the body of Christ is becoming increasingly critical to the health and vitality of the church.

The largest force the church has to accomplish its mission is the people of God engaged in the life of the world every day in the course of their daily work. The church's mission includes bringing people to Christ, guiding their spiritual growth, and taking care of their needs. Yet the church's mission to those beyond its congregation is an even greater need. To reach people beyond our local congregation, the leaders must equip the members to be Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20) to their friends, co-workers, neighbors, family, and extended family.

The implementation of this strategic plan has the potential to benefit the church at Campbell Street in at least four specific ways: (1) clarity, (2) movement, (3) alignment, and (4) focus. Clarity is the ability to articulate the ministry and mission of the church in a way that is understood by everyone. Clarity involves certainty, and it eliminates confusion. Understanding always precedes commitment. People will not commit to what they do not understand. Movement is what causes a person to take their next step. As a church we always want to be moving people from one level of commitment to a greater level of commitment. Alignment is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple plan and process. Focus is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the mission of the church.

## Theological Significance

The theological significance of this project is found in what it desires to produce. The ultimate goal of this project is the spiritual growth, maturity, and unity of the body of Christ. The theology of the church as the body of Christ suggests that Christ, as the head

of the church, has gifted the church with leaders who are responsible for equipping the members of the church for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. This work is to continue until we all experience the unity of our faith, the knowledge of God's Son, and the maturity of becoming more and more like Christ. As each member does its own special work, it helps every other member grow, and the result is a healthy and loving church body (Eph 4:11–16). While this is the goal of every church, we have little specific direction as to how to accomplish this. This project is an attempt to provide that direction for the Campbell Street church by providing a strategic plan for equipping God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ, which ultimately leads to spiritual maturity and a growing and healthy church.

Questions Not Answered

One of the questions not addressed in this project that warrants further study is the role of deacons in equipping. In Campbell Street's current leadership structure, the role of deacon is undefined and underdeveloped. More work is needed to understand the roles and responsibilities of deacons and their place in the mission and ministry of the church. Scripture gives specific qualifications for deacons in 1 Tim 3:8–13 but there is no mention of what a deacon actually does except "serve" as a deacon (v. 10). In Acts 6, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the church began to grow so quickly that some believers, particularly widows, were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles wanting to give their attention "to prayer and the ministry of the word" chose seven men to take care of this responsibility. (v. 4). These men have been traditionally referred to as the first deacons,[1] despite the fact that Luke never calls them

---

1. The text does not expressly speak of these seven in terms of the ecclesiastical title "deacon." Yet the ministry to which the seven were appointed was functionally equivalent to what is spoken of as the

deacons. This project leaves several unanswered questions related to the work of deacons, the equipping of deacons, and the role of deacons in equipping. All of these questions warrant further study as it relates the ministry and mission of the church.

**Final Considerations**

While the framework of the strategic plan is in place, there is still more work to be done. There are more details that have to be decided. There are questions that need to be answered, especially regarding responsibility for the implementation of the various parts of the plan. There is more work to be done on the ministry and mission teams. The ministry staff and the elders need to meet and develop a set of core values, and those values have to be clearly communicated and integrated into the life and ministry of the church. The ministry staff also needs to reevaluate the purpose and potential of life groups and then determine what needs to happen in order for life groups to fulfill their purpose and potential. There are more discipleship groups that need to be formed and launched. The ministry staff also needs to finalize the wording of the next step language and clarify how to help members identify and take their next step of faith.

**Conclusion**

This project was designed to meet the need identified in Chapter 1 for the leaders of the Campbell Street church to equip its members for works of service and building up the body of Christ. The theological and theoretical foundations that informed this project were presented in Chapter 2. The methodology for the intervention was presented in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I described the findings and results of the intervention including

---

office of "deacon" in 1 Tim 3:8–13. See Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, revised ed., vol. 10: "Luke-Acts" (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), Kindle edition, ch. 3, "The Earliest Days of the Church at Jerusalem."

the six-point equipping plan the design team developed. In this chapter, I presented the

significance and implications of the intervention. The development, implementation, and

evaluation of the strategic plan will be an important step for Campbell Street, the spiritual

growth of its members, and the overall health of the church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians*: *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2010.

Bales, William. "The Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:9," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72 (2010).

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012.

Best, Ernest, *Ephesians*. New York: T&T Clark, 1997.

Blum, Edwin A. *HCSB Study Bible*: *Romans*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010.

Bowen, Murray. *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice.* New York: Jason Aronson, 1978.

Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011. Kindle edition.

Buxton, Graham. *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God*. Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2005.

Cahalan, Kathleen A. *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010. Kindle edition.

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014. Kindle edition.

Ciampa, Roy E., and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. Kindle edition.

Cooperrider, David L., and Diana Whitney. *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005. Kindle edition.

Corley, Bruce. "The Theology of Ephesians." *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Vol. 22 (Fall 1979): https://preachingsource.com/journal/the-theology-of-ephesians.

Cormode, Scott. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*. Edited by Craig Van Gelder. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Kindle edition.

Creech, R. Robert. *Family Systems and Congregational Life: A Map for Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. Kindle edition.

Elton, Terri Martinson. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*. Edited by Craig Van Gelder. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Kindle edition.

Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. Kindle edition.

Fiddes, Paul S. *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue.* New York: Guilford, 1985.

Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*: *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. Kindle edition.

Gibbs, Graham R. *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018. Kindle edition.

Harrington, Bobby. *Trust and Follow Jesus: The Leader's Guide*. Nashville: Renew, 2020.

Harrison, Everett F., and Donald A. Hagner. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary.* Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Revised ed. Vol. 11: "Romans and Galatians." Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Kindle edition.

Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2002.

Jenson, Robert. *The Triune Identity: God According to the* Gospel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Johnson, Elizabeth. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Kerr, Michael E., and Murray Bowen. *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.

———. *Family Evaluation: The Role of Family as an Emotional Unit That Governs*

*Individual Behavior and* Development. New York: W.W. Norton, 1988.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life*.
    New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Lincoln, Andrew T., and A. J. M. Wedderburn. *The Theology of Later Pauline Letters.*
    Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Liubinskas, Susann. "The Body of Christ in Mission: Paul's Ecclesiology and the Role of
    the Church in Mission." *Missiology: An International Review*, 2013.

Longenecker, Richard N., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Tremper
    Longman III and David E. Garland. Revised ed. Vol. 10: "Luke-Acts." Grand
    Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Kindle edition.

Mallory, Sue. *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives*. Grand
    Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. Kindle edition.

Mays, James L. *Psalms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.* 2nd
    ed. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit.* London: SCM Press, 1977.

Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter to the Romans: The New International Commentary on the
    New Testament.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. Kindle edition.

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Parsons, George, and Speed B. Leas. *Understanding Your Congregation as a System: The
    Manual*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1993. Kindle edition.

Powell, Mark E., John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community: A
    Theological Vision of the Future*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2020.

Richardson, Ronald W. "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life,"
    *Review & Expositor: An International Baptist Journal*, 2005.

———. *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and
    Congregational Life.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. Kindle edition.

Roxburgh, Alan, and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to
    Reach a Changing World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006. Kindle edition.

Schreiner, Thomas R. *Romans*: *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Kindle edition.

Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

Snodgrass, Klyne. *Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works*: *Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems.* Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006. Kindle edition.

Stevens, R. Paul, and Phil Collins. *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Thompson, James. *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Wilder, William N. "The Use (or Abuse) of Power in High Places: Gifts Given and Received in Isaiah, Psalm 68, and Ephesians 4:8." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, 2010.

Witherington, Ben. *The Letter to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

# APPENDIX A

## Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

December 2, 2019

James Daniel Sorrell
Department of Theology
Abilene Christian University

Dear Danny,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Equipping God's People at the Campbell Street Church of Christ",

(IRB# 19-131      )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects as:
☐ Non-research, and
Non-human research
Based on:
The activity does not involve a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge [45 CFR 46.102(d)].

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

*Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.*

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center; font-weight:bold;">

**Title of Study: Equipping God's People at the Campbell Street Church of Christ**

</div>

You may be eligible to take part in a study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you, the potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.

## PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this project is to design a strategy that would equip God's people at the Campbell Street Church of Christ for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ. The problem this project seeks to address is that the Campbell Street Church lacks a strategy to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend six planning sessions with the other members of the design team over the course of two months. Each meeting is expected to take ninety minutes. During the course of these meetings, you will be asked to participate in the discussion and eventual design of a strategic plan for equipping God's people at Campbell Street.

At the final planning session, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the design team process and the final strategies developed. After developing the strategic plan, you as a member of the design team may be asked to make an oral presentation of the plan to the Campbell Street eldership for their feedback.

## RISKS & BENEFITS:

The main risk of the study is breach of confidentiality, but we will do all in our power to minimize that risk by changing any names mentioned in notes associated with the study. Additionally, all data will be digitally stored on a hard drive that will housed under lock and key.

It is possible that you might feel distress during the sessions. If this happens, or you have any problems, you may contact the project leader. Contact information is provided below.

There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include a deeper understanding of the role of the church in equipping God's people for ministry. In addition, participation provides an opportunity for you to influence the future of the Campbell Street Church. The investigators cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study.

**PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY:**
Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected by changing any names mentioned in notes associated with the study. Additionally, all data will be digitally stored on a hard drive that will housed under lock and key.

**CONTACTS:**
If you have questions about the study, the Principal Investigator is Danny Sorrell and may be contacted at (731) 695-3048 or jds14@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the Principal Investigator or wish to speak to someone other than the Principal Investigator, you may contact Dr. James W. Thompson thompsonja@acu.edu

If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a study participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at

(325) 674-2885
megan.roth@acu.edu
320 Hardin Administration Bldg,
ACU Box 29103 Abilene, TX 79699

---

### Additional Information

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your participation may be terminated early by the investigators under certain conditions, such as if you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, the investigators believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the investigators, or the study is discontinued. You will be contacted by the investigators and given further instructions in the event that you are withdrawn by the investigators. Please let the investigators know if you are participating in any other studies at this time.

## Consent Signature Section

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

_____          _____          _____

Printed Name of Participant          Signature of Participant          Date

_____          _____          _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent          Signature of Person Obtaining Consent          Date

APPENDIX C

Appreciative Inquiry Exercise #1

1.  Tell about a time when you felt "at home" at Campbell Street.

2.  When did you know you wanted to place membership at Campbell Street?

3.  How did you decide that Campbell Street was the best place for you?

4.  What factors contributed the most to you deciding to become a member of Campbell Street?

5.  What do you value most when choosing a church to attend?

6.  In your opinion, what does Campbell Street do best?

7.  If you had three wishes for Campbell Street, what would they be?

8.  If you could wave a magic wand and make Campbell Street the way you would want it to be, what would it be like?

APPENDIX D

Appreciative Inquiry Exercise #2

1. What have been your most significant positive experiences at Campbell Street? How have they made a difference in your life?

2. Describe a time when you felt most excited about your time at Campbell Street.

3. What are the most valuable ways you contribute to the mission of Campbell Street?

4. Describe a time when Campbell Street equipped or prepared you well in expressing your gift

APPENDIX E

Note-Taking Protocol

1. Each week record the participants that show up for the session. In Session 1 be sure to note demographic observations such as age, sex, and race.
2. Notes will be recorded in a two-column format. The note-taker will record all observations on the left column. The primary investigator will record observations in the right column immediately following the session.
3. While the notes are not expected to be verbatim, record the name of the person speaking, the main idea of what they are saying, and any observations about tone, body language, or non-verbal communication that may be pertinent.
4. At the end of the session, the notes should be turned in to the primary investigator.

Sample Note Template:

| Field Notes | PI Observations |
|---|---|
|  |  |

APPENDIX F

Design Team Exit Questionnaire

Do you believe this strategic plan will equip God's people at Campbell Street? Why or why not?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

If this strategic plan had been in place when you first came to Campbell Street, what are some ways it might have helped?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Is there anything you feel should have been added to or omitted from the strategic plan the group developed?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

APPENDIX G

The Strategic Plan for Equipping God's People at Campbell Street

### *Ministry and Mission Teams*

The first point of the strategic plan is the development and expansion of ministry and mission teams.

### *Next Step Language*

The second point of the strategic plan is to incorporate and expand the "next step" language into our church culture and vocabulary.

### *Small Groups*

The third point of the strategic plan is to reevaluate the purpose and potential of small groups at Campbell Street. To equip members in small groups, a clear vision and purpose for small groups must be articulated.

### *Discipleship Groups*

The fourth point of the strategic plan is the expansion of discipleship groups. Discipleship groups are for the purpose of making disciples who make disciples.

### *Core Values*

The fifth point of the strategic plan is to develop a set of core values that will serve as a filter by which we evaluate everything we do.

### *Preaching and Teaching*

The sixth point of the strategic plan is to schedule times to teach and preach the theological constructs and the strategic plan of this project.

### *Regular Evaluation*

Once the plan has been implemented, regular evaluation will be necessary to allow for the plan to be revised or updated as needed.

BRIEF VITA

Danny Sorrell was born in Tallahassee, Florida on August 17, 1964. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible in 1986, received a Master of Education degree from the University of Memphis in 1989, and received a Master of Ministry degree from Freed-Hardeman University in 1993. Danny worked for Freed-Hardeman University for eleven years (1986–1997), serving first as an Admissions Counselor and then as the Dean of Student Activities. Danny and his wife Tamie met at Freed-Hardeman and were married in December of 1986. Danny and Tamie have two children, Morgan (1993) and Matthew (1996). Since 1997, Danny has worked at the Campbell Street Church of Christ in Jackson, Tennessee, serving first as youth minister (1997–2016) and currently as lead and preaching minister (2016–present). He enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Abilene Christian University in 2016.