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EXAMINING A CHURCH CULTURE OF MULTIPLICATION:  
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Kevin Jamie Peck  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EXAMINING A CHURCH CULTURE OF MULTIPLICATION:  
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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I dedicate this project to my Lord, my family and my church.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|     |                                     |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| AEI | Assumptions External Interaction    |
| AIC | Assumptions of Internal Cooperation |
| CA  | Cardinal Assumptions                |
| MLC | Multiplying Local Church            |

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## PREFACE

I love the local church. My hope and desire for all of this study is that it will help stir conversations about the local church. There is no better endeavor to pursue than the multiplication of the church of Jesus across the globe. While the Word of God is all that we need for life and godliness, I hope that this project will provide insight into the common grace given to man that might be helpful for those giving their lives to the Great Commission.

Kevin Peck

Austin, Texas

May 2014

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the frameworks of tacit assumptions that exist in specific church cultures that enable the multiplication of believers, leaders, and congregations. The goal of this project was to discover and analyze key elements of church culture present in well-established multiplying churches.

#### **Definitions**

The following definitions are necessary for understanding this project. These definitions have had a variety of definitions both in popular and academic works. Each definition is based on previous literature, but the researcher adapted the definitions according to personal research and observation.

*Artifacts.* Artifacts are the behaviors, systems, structures, policies, tangible items, and any other observable manifestations of the organizations culture.<sup>1</sup>

*Church culture.* This project defines church culture by adapting Schein's definition of organizational culture:

A set of tacit assumptions (both biblical and unbiblical) shared by a local congregation as it attempts to flourish according to God's will, addressing both external interaction and internal cooperation, that is considered to be true, and therefore is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to God's design and purpose for the individual, the local church, and the world.

This church culture, or congregational culture, is a subset of organizational culture. Rather than utilizing previous definition cited in Christian scholarly work, of

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 24.

which there have been multitudes, this research builds from Schein’s definition. This definition articulates *church culture* as comprised of three layers, which build from underlying assumptions, to articulate beliefs, and, finally, to outward behavior.<sup>2</sup>

*Espoused beliefs and values.* Espoused beliefs and values are those ideals, goals, and values that are aspired to by the organization. These may, or may not, reflect the true deep beliefs of the organization or be congruent with its artifacts.<sup>3</sup>

*Multiplying local church.* A multiplying local church is a local church in which reproduction happens at every level of the organization. These churches have a distinct self-propagation that multiplies disciples, leaders, churches, and even networks of churches. Implicit in this understanding of multiplication is a multi-level conception of reproduction; disciples, leaders, and churches reproduce in the present, *and* future generations will do the same.<sup>4</sup> Multiplication is not achieved unless the “offspring” of the parents are able to reproduce offspring of their own, who can produce reproducing offspring of their own, who can do the same, and so on, and so forth. A *multiplying local church* (hereafter referred to as “MLC”) “values and measures how many are actually becoming disciples who can make disciples.”<sup>5</sup>

*Organizational culture.* Edgar Schein defines organizational culture as  
a pattern of shared tacit assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its  
problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well

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<sup>2</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Look Before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 20.

<sup>3</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 24.

<sup>4</sup>Craig Ott, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 352.

<sup>5</sup>Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples, Exponential Series* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 31.

enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.<sup>6</sup>

*Tacit assumptions.* A tacit assumption is defined as “unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Assumptions**

Some assumptions are pertinent and necessary for this research.

1. This project assumed that there is a critical link between church culture and the capacity for a church to succeed in mission and ministry. There is significant research that validates the crucial link between elements of organizational culture and organizational performance.<sup>8</sup> However, for the purpose of keeping the scope of this project small, the assumption was made without discussion.<sup>9</sup>
2. This project assumed that there are three layers of church culture, and that each layer builds upon the former. This assumption can be visualized as seen in Figure 1
3. This project assumed that the common elements of church culture that exist in the selected churches are transferable and helpful to other American churches.
4. This project assumed that the interviewed leaders accurately answered the provided survey and that their perceptions are true.
5. This project assumed that there is sufficient consistency between the espoused values and beliefs articulated by the leaders of the selected churches and the tacit assumptions underlying them.

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<sup>6</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>8</sup>Jesper Sørensen, “Note on Organizational Culture: Case: OB-69,” Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2009, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://public2-prod-acquia.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/case-studies/note-organizational-culture>.

<sup>9</sup>Karl D. Speak, “Strong Cultures Create Strong Brands,” *Brand Toolbox Blog*, June 11, 2009, accessed July 6, 2013, <http://www.brandtoolbox.com/blog/strong-cultures-create-strong-brands>.

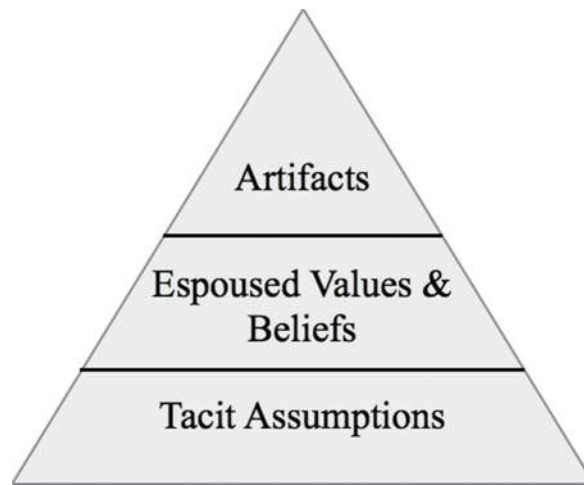


Figure 1. Layers of culture

### **Rationale**

Local churches today need to develop a culture of multiplication. While this is an easily accepted statement, establishing a culture of multiplication has proven a difficult task for the American church. However, there are many gospel movements across the globe that demonstrate a culture consistent with multiplying believers, disciples, and churches. So, what does the American church do with this reality? As Ed Stetzer puts it,

The question is simple: “Why don’t we see church planting movements in the Western world like we see in the Global South?” The answers are not quite as simple, and are seemingly endless. For some, the answer is the simplicity of the house church. For others, the answer is more vocational church planting teams. For yet others, it is the formation of networks for the purpose of church planting. At the heart of this question are probably cultural issues rooted in our Western context.<sup>10</sup>

Put simply, there is a culture that dominates the American perspective and permeates the American church, and something within that culture is inconsistent with multiplication. Still there is good news for the American church. The work of God can change a person, and if a person unites with other people who are similarly changed, then a new

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<sup>10</sup>Ed Stetzer and Dave Travis, “Church Planting Overview: State of Church Planting USA,” *Leadership Network*, October 26, 2007, 6, accessed December 16, 2013, [http://leadnet.org/church\\_planting\\_overview\\_state\\_of\\_church\\_planting\\_usa/](http://leadnet.org/church_planting_overview_state_of_church_planting_usa/).

community and a new culture can be formed. This new culture, established by the Spirit of God changing people with the power of the gospel message, can invade, transform, and breathe new life into the American church to make it into the multiplying community the Creator designed it to be.

Many approaches have been taken to understand and improve the local church. Pastors, scholars, and researchers have offered much to the conversation concerning the missionary call and the need for multiplication in the American church.<sup>11</sup> The body of Christ has churned out material, tools, and strategies for establishing a multiplying movement in United States through the local church. Yet one critical question still remains a mystery: How can the culture of a local church enable a culture of multiplication? The next several chapters attempt to help answer this question. By looking at the church through the lens of organizational culture, this project sought to bring new clarity to how the local church in America can be a part of God’s plan for redemption through multiplying believers, leaders, and churches.

### **Why Does Organizational Culture Matter?**

Why does organizational culture matter? This thought raises the question, “How important is organizational culture and is it worth the effort of investigation?”

According to corporate leadership expert, Karl Speak, it is vital:

Most management gurus agree on one thing—the companies that have achieved the most sustainable growth have a strong, focused corporate culture. Peter Drucker, Peter Senge, and Jim Collins all point to the importance of corporate culture as a key contributor to long-term success. In fact Collins, in his new book *How the Mighty Fail*, suggests that weak or underdeveloped corporate cultures is one of the main causes of failure in many companies. Conversely, he shares that a strong culture often prevents great companies from suffering through extended downturns.<sup>12</sup>

Popular opinion among the experts, along with the echoing affirmations of marketplace

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<sup>11</sup>David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Monument, CO: Wigtake, 2003).

<sup>12</sup>Speak, “Strong Cultures Create Strong Brands.”

leaders, demonstrates the power of culture in organizations. The force of culture, it seems, can enable organizations to make headway even against the strongest headwinds of the environment around them.<sup>13</sup> As the “market forces” of American society pose obstacles to the movement of the gospel, the importance of seeking and developing a church culture that will create a multiplying church cannot be overstated.

Culture is indeed a critical component in the success of any human institution, including the church. Though the church of Jesus is led by God, it is comprised of humans and, therefore, subject to the strengths and weaknesses of those who are made in the image of God and yet fallen. Thus any local church’s culture has the power significantly to impact its capacity and effectiveness to obey the Great Commission. Woodward and Hirsch capture this sentiment well: “As coworkers with God, we create culture and culture reshapes us. Understanding the transformative power of culture is vital if we want to have mature communities of faith.”<sup>14</sup> Organizational culture, and more importantly church culture, is intensely potent. To begin to use its full potential, the church must come to understand this power—hence the urgency of this project. By examining multiplying churches that have multiplied effectively, one can learn the makeup of an effective church culture and reproduce that culture in more churches.

### **Research Problem and Question**

Working toward a church culture that enables multiplication of believers, leaders, and congregations can be seen as a vague task. The exercise is often an effort in

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<sup>13</sup>Cameron concurs, saying of the most successful firms he has observed, “The key ingredient in each case is something less tangible, less blatant, but more powerful than the market factors listed earlier. The major distinguishing feature in these companies—the most powerful factor they all highlight as a key ingredient to their success—is their organizational culture.” Kim S. Cameron and Robert E Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 5.

<sup>14</sup>J. R. Woodward and Alan Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 30-31.



pursuing anecdotal values and imitating successful structures. However, to utilize the power of church culture for multiplication in the best possible way, the church must identify the core elements of church culture that are present in contemporary American multiplying churches. Once identified, these core cultural elements can be pursued in a local church to enable multiplication. Thus the research questions that drive this project can be stated as

1. What espoused values of church culture enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?
2. What cultural artifacts enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?

### **The Hypotheses of the Project**

This project's hypotheses were based on initial doctoral research and seminars, personal observation, and the belief that some churches leverage church culture for multiplication. Three research hypotheses were assessed qualitatively:

1. There are key cultural elements derived from cardinal assumptions common to multiplying churches.
2. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning internal cooperation common to multiplying churches.
3. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning external interaction common to multiplying churches.

### **Project Methodology**

Though the field of organizational culture is continuing to progress, the nature of the discipline lends itself toward qualitative analysis. The understanding of organizational culture, and more specifically church culture, is distinctly an attempt to understand the macro-level narratives of a people. Thus, the qualitative research seems most appropriate for capturing the fundamental principles that tie together the story of the multiplying church. John Creswell states, "We conduct qualitative research when we want to write in a literary, flexible style that conveys stories, or theater, or poems, without the restrictions

of formal academic structures of writing.”<sup>15</sup>

Even more specifically, the qualitative research method that was selected for this project was the multiple case study method. Understanding culture is difficult because people are complicated—groups of people even more so. Therefore, “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena.”<sup>16</sup> In order to drive toward an understanding of key elements of church culture, a cross-case synthesis was employed.

The units of analysis were three multiplying churches. The project conducted and analyzed case studies at each of the following three churches: (1) The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, (2) The Village Church in Highland Village, Texas, and (3) The Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Chapter 3 examines in further detail how these churches can be considered multiplying churches. Suffice to say that each of these three churches was selected based upon demonstrated success in multiplying believers, leaders, and congregations. Furthermore, chapter 3 provides a contextual overview of each of the case churches.

The research instrumentation of this project consisted of on-site observation, verbal and written interviews with five leaders from each church, and a review of written documentation from the church. The interviews consisted of asking a set of thirteen pre-determined primary questions. Further questioning, as discerned by the researcher, was conducted through the use of prepared and ad hoc probing questions. The primary and probing questions were developed from the theological and structural framework that was established in chapter 2. Each interview was recorded, summarized and analyzed for primary and secondary themes. Furthermore, I took interview notes containing details of

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<sup>15</sup>John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013), 48.

<sup>16</sup>Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Applied Social Research Methods, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 4.

manner, tone, environment, or other observable data during on-site visits. Lastly, I reviewed and analyzed all pertinent documentation produced by each selected church for themes associated with the research questions. The inquiry was designed to uncover the espoused values, beliefs, and the accompanying artifacts associated with the framework of tacit assumptions of church culture. This approach was built up from the foundational layer of church culture and attempted to discover those beliefs, values, and artifacts expressed out of it. The multiple-case study gathered and analyzed data considered in conjunction with the three hypotheses of this project.

The analysis is presented in a comparative structure. Yin describes this method best: “A comparative structure repeats the same case study two or more times, comparing alternative descriptions or explanations of the same case.”<sup>17</sup> In this project each primary question was addressed to each church. The analysis demonstrates the consistency of themes, values, beliefs, and artifacts across all church cultures involved in the study. I provide commentary and summary of the most prominent details threaded through the cases. These thematic blocks are presented in chapter 4 as solutions to the research questions posed in the project, according to the three hypotheses. These themes are logically linked as derived from one of three categories of cultural assumptions: (1) cardinal assumptions (henceforth referred to as “CA”), (2) assumptions of internal cooperation (henceforth referred to as “AIC”), or (3) assumptions external interaction (henceforth referred to as “AEI”).

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 188.

CHAPTER 2  
STRUCTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

**Structural Framework**

The following chapter begins to build the structural and theological framework for a multiplying local church (MLC) culture. Before the content of the assumptions of MLC culture can be discussed, one must first establish a structural framework, which categorizes the “buckets” of assumptions that make up a church culture. Building this structure helps to demystify the composition of church culture. This specific set of tacit assumptions serves as the building blocks for a structural framework. In the following section, the specific content of each of these assumptions is outlined in order to build a theological framework for a MLC culture. This content is directly or indirectly connected to the assumptions necessary for a church culture to be specifically conducive to multiplication.

The set of tacit assumptions that comprise church culture is

Epistemology assumptions

Temporal assumptions

Anthropological assumptions

Assumptions about the identity of the members

Assumptions built on key metaphors

Assumptions concerning shared words and concepts

Church membership assumptions

Assumptions about treatment between members

Assumptions about authority

Assumptions concerning rewards and discipline for members

Assumptions about church purpose

Assumptions about church mission

Assumptions about measuring success and accomplishment

In order to add further clarity to this structural framework, this set of tacit assumptions is categorized into three subsets: cardinal assumptions, internal cooperation assumptions, and external interaction assumptions. These categories are largely derived from the layers of the working definition of church culture. The only subset not explicitly mentioned in the definition on culture is the cardinal assumptions subset, which serves as an even deeper level of assumptions than the other two levels.

The cardinal assumptions serve as the platform for holding the other assumptions. This set of beliefs relates to the nature of truth, time and space, and humanity. Since culture is necessarily human, these beliefs capture the most fundamental paradigms of human existence, namely, what can be known, how humans function in the creation, and the nature of humanity. This project groups these assumptions into a subset referred to as “cardinal assumptions.” This terminology is unique to this project and is incorporated because the word “cardinal,” according to *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, originates from the Latin “cardo” for “hinge” and usually refers to things “of greatest importance; fundamental.”<sup>1</sup>

The cardinal assumptions include

Epistemological assumptions

Temporal assumptions

Anthropological assumptions

The second “bucket” of assumptions is the “internal cooperation” subset. This subset of assumptions gives order and pattern to interactions and relationships within the

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<sup>1</sup>Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), epub.

local church, a topic on which Scripture has much to say. This subset of assumptions includes

Assumptions about the identity of members

Assumptions built on key metaphors

Assumptions concerning shared words and concepts

Church membership assumptions

Assumptions about treatment between members

Assumptions about authority

Assumptions concerning rewards and discipline for members

Finally, the third “bucket” of assumptions is the “external interaction” subset, which creates the paradigm for the people of God in their interaction with the remainder of God’s creation. This set of assumptions consists of the beliefs within an organization about its own teleology and ontology—its being and its purposes. This subset of assumptions drives the church’s view about the outside world as well as the values and artifacts of the church concerning those outside the church. This subset of assumptions includes

Assumptions about church purpose

Assumptions about church mission

Assumptions about measuring success and accomplishment

The structural framework offers a grid to capture and present the specific content of the beliefs that form church cultures. How the church answers these specific assumptions is the foundation for its culture. A helpful way to view this framework can be seen in figure 2.

Table 1. Structural framework

| Tacit Assumption Subset          | Tacit Assumptions                    | Descriptions   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Cardinal Assumptions             | Epistemological                      | Assumptions about the source of knowledge  |
|                                  | Temporal                             | Assumptions about church's viewpoint of time and space   |
|                                  | Anthropological                      | Assumptions about the nature of man  |
| Internal Cooperation Assumptions | Identity                             | Assumptions about the core identities that define the church and its members                             |
|                                  | Key Metaphors                        | Key metaphors that create shared understanding about the nature, relationship and standing of the church |
|                                  | Shared Words and Concepts            | Words and concepts that have common meaning between members, creating lines of communication             |
|                                  | Membership                           | Shared understandings about who is in and who is out of the church                                       |
|                                  | Treatment of other members           | Shared understanding about the general rules of interaction and treatment among members                  |
|                                  | Authority                            | A common understanding of leadership and the power of leadership within the church                       |
|                                  | Rewards and Discipline               | A shared sense of appropriate rewards and disciplines for reinforcing common belief and behavior         |
| External Interaction Assumptions | Church Purpose                       | A shared sense of ontology. This answers the question, "Why does this church exist?"                     |
|                                  | Church Mission                       | The common answer to what the church is to do in its interaction with the rest of the world.             |
|                                  | Measuring Success and Accomplishment | Shared understanding concerning measuring success in the church's mission.                               |

## **Theological Framework**

With the structural framework established, it is necessary to turn to the biblical content that constitutes the beliefs in a MLC's culture. This theological investigation considers the biblical content associated with each of the assumptions listed in the structural framework. An annotated commentary on corresponding artifacts is provided with each belief discussed. While not attempting to offer a complete analysis, this chapter comments on the following artifact categories: (1) preaching and teaching, (2) personnel, (3) structure and programs, and (4) resource management. This commentary is largely hypothetical conclusions drawn from my own experience in working with MLCs. Therefore, citations are only utilized for concepts drawn from the relevant literature. Commentary is offered for each of the three primary categories of assumptions: cardinal, internal cooperation, and external interaction. To start, this theological framework begins with the cardinal assumptions of the MLC culture.

### **Cardinal Assumptions**

Cardinal assumptions are paramount to the paradigm of any organization, not to mention fundamental to a biblical worldview. The categories explored in this subset are (1) epistemological, (2) temporal, and (3) anthropological.

**Cardinal assumptions: Epistemological.** The first investigation into the cardinal assumptions of the MLC concerns the epistemology that underlies the church culture. From the start, the people of God are a people who believe that God has revealed himself to mankind and that mankind has the capacity to understand God's revelation. These straightforward truths are central to the church's understanding about reality and truth. Put simply, the saints of God have an epistemology of revelation. God reveals what can be known as true. As an ultimate example, it is belief and trust in the person and work of Christ on the saint's behalf that makes a Christian. Christians hold and trust these truths because their assumption is that God reveals truth and this revelation is found



within Scripture.<sup>2</sup> Calvin states,

Thus, while the church receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scriptures, it does not thereby render authentic what is otherwise doubtful or controversial. But because the church recognizes Scripture to be the truth of its own God, as a pious duty it unhesitatingly venerates Scripture. As to their question—How can we be assured that this has sprung from God unless we have recourse to the decree of the church?—it is as if someone asked: Whence will we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Indeed, Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.<sup>3</sup>

The church is not judging whether the Scripture is truth, but is rather judging the truth of everything else on the basis of Scripture's truth. The epistemic belief for a MLC culture finds the source of truth in God's revelation rather than in a human capacity to discover truth through reason, the senses, or any other natural ability.

**Cardinal assumptions: Temporal.** Belief concerning time and space are two paradigms that have massive implications on the view of reality for the MLC. Churches will make decisions about what to prioritize, how fast to move, how much to save, and many more critical decisions as a result of their beliefs about time and space. MLC culture is supported through four lenses: the shortness of this life, the length of the next life, the waypoint in time, and the view of physical space.

The Bible's perspective is that the span of mortal human life is very fast—like “a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (Jas 4:14). The Bible teaches that humans have a fragile and short life on this earth, which stands in contrast to the eternity of God.<sup>4</sup> Scripture says the following concerning God's relation to time: “Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 44.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.7.2, 76.

<sup>4</sup>Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 5: 295.

everlasting to everlasting, you are God” (Ps 90:2). In light of God’s eternity and the eternal life or punishment that comes to every person at death, this mortal life is very short by comparison. The comparative brevity of this life brings a sense of speed to the present, physical life of the church. David expressed this perspective: “Lord, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah” (Ps 39:4-5).

The second lens for the MLC temporal paradigm is that time on the other side of this mortal life is long, slow, and everlasting. As John Newton wrote in his song *Amazing Grace*, “When we’ve been here ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun. We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, then when we’ve first begun.”<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting here that this dualistic perspective of time is consistent with the dualistic composition of humanity; humanity is both spirit and flesh. Scripture teaches that the spiritual part of humanity is able to live beyond the death of the body. Though redeemed humanity will ultimately be given a restored and renewed flesh, there exists a break in the timeline of a person’s life: one while in the body and another after death. In this sense, the Christian paradigm of time is split. For the church of God it is critical to recognize time as quite brief in this life and incomprehensibly long in the next. This view of time shapes the culture of the MLC.

The third lens concerns itself with the MLC’s waypoint in time. For some cultures, time is always seen relative to the past. For others, the present is in focus. For the MLC, all perspectives of time have significant meaning. The Christian church considers the past, often looking back at the history of God’s acts in creation and redemption. God’s creation, blessings and curses of Israel, and most certainly the cross—all past events—are often called to the forefront of the church’s thoughts. Most certainly,

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<sup>5</sup>J. R. Watson, ed., *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 216.

the local church will devote considerable attention to the present, for this present moment marks a chance to glorify God or to resist Jesus. For the MLC, however, the primary waypoint for viewing time is the future. The Bible regularly urges believers to view time relative to the *eschaton*.<sup>6</sup> John Piper points out that viewing the past urges believers to look forward and that the present is empowered by the promises of the future:

The biblical role of past grace—especially the cross—is to guarantee the certainty of future grace: “He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all (past grace), how shall he not with him freely give us all things (future grace)?” (Romans 8:32). But trusting in future grace is the motive and strength of our obedience.<sup>7</sup>

The final recorded words from the mouth of Jesus were an allusion to the end of the age, driving his hearers’ attention to the future judgment. He began to reshape an orientation on the past with a challenge: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . and, lo, I will be with you to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20). Paul too pressed the church to look forward by urging them to live according to their future.<sup>8</sup> Paul says of this life, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). In order for a church to have a multiplying culture, its orientation to time must be distinctively futuristic, with belief that this mortal life is quick and the life after death is infinitely long. Multiplication will always require resources and risk, which happen to be the two primary considerations (and limitations) for people looking to engage in any kind of investment. Investment is a risk and a resource—expenditure now for a potential future benefit. The MLC must consistently engage in investment in the future, incurring

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 254.

<sup>7</sup>John Piper, “Future Grace,” *Desiring God*, March 30, 1994, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/future-grace>.

<sup>8</sup>For Paul, this world is to be experienced with one eye always fixed on the world to come. The realities of contemporary lives must be lived with perspective firmly fixed on the things that matter in the end.

both risk and expenses in the present.

The final temporal lens for the MLC culture concerns space. Every organizational culture has a perspective on distances and spaces, both actual and relative.<sup>9</sup> Churches are no different. Much can be learned about church culture from the physical worship space, but the broader question concerns the local church's view concerning the "sacredness" of space in general. At the advent of the first Christian church, believers are seen not confining their worship to the Temple in Jerusalem:

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46–47)

It is clear from this text that the temple was not rejected; yet neither did it serve as a constraint. The believers, recently indwelt by the Spirit of God, gained an expanded paradigm of worship and kingdom with regard to space. Worship and kingdom activity was happening in every location the believers went. Jesus prophesied about this new paradigm of space in John 4:21. As one New Testament scholar comments, "Jesus champions neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim, 'for the hour is coming'—the eschatological hour, initiating the new age of the kingdom of God—when worship of the Father will be tied to no place."<sup>10</sup> More than that, Jesus reoriented the church's perspective on space when he reversed the picture of the kingdom from moving toward Jerusalem to moving out from Jerusalem to every people, tongue, and nation. In other words, "The Son of man has a heart which beats for all mankind, even if his own nation lies nearest to it—even if

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<sup>9</sup>According to Edgar Schein, "The most common manifestation of this belief system seen in the world of organizational culture is in the office." Concerning the office, Schein notices, "One of the most obvious ways that rank and status are symbolized in organizations is by the location and size of offices." The local church manifests its perspective on space most obviously in the locations of worship, and to a lesser degree the church office. Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 135.

<sup>10</sup>George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 61.

salvation is to proceed from the Jews, and the word of the Lord is to go forth from Jerusalem (John 4:22; Isa 2:3).”<sup>11</sup>

**Cardinal assumptions: Anthropological.** Scripture demands several relevant beliefs associated with humanity, and they can be classified by (1) humanity’s unique nature, (2) humanity’s composition, and (3) humanity’s state and standing.

First, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals that humanity has a unique place in all of creation. No other creation, according to Scripture, is declared to be “made in the image of God” and according to His “likeness of God.” Peter Gentry explains Genesis 1:26 and captures the meaning of the phrases well:

First, it defines human ontology in terms of a covenant relationship between God and man on the one hand and second, it defines a covenant relationship between man and the earth on the other. The relationship between humans and God is best captured by the term sonship. The relationship between humans and the creation may be expressed by the terms kingship and servanthood, or better, servant kingship.<sup>12</sup>

This definition provides the first clues of God’s plan and destiny for mankind. Man is to be more than another created thing, but the masterpiece of all things create. Though the implications of the image of God are far reaching, the resulting realities are fairly clear. Since the image and likeness of God are communicated before the fall, all humans have the image of God and have it in the same proportion. This reality brings humans into a common accountability toward one another as God’s image bearers. Even in humanity’s fallen state, an attack on any person is an attack on the image of God.<sup>13</sup> In a very real sense, whatever comes against God’s likeness is an affront to the kingdom. Not only this,

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<sup>11</sup>John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Acts* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>Peter J. Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 32.

<sup>13</sup>After the fall, God delivers this command to Noah, saying, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man” (Gen 9:6).

but an attack on one who is made according to likeness challenges the very family member of the God-King. Though the stain of sin remains for all God-like humanity, the beauty of the gospel is that the redemption secured by Jesus offers sinful man not only forgiveness but also restoration of his image and likeness in a fuller sense. Those who are in Christ are a part of a better covenant as it is built on better promises (Heb 8:6). In this new covenant, there is not only the ontological reality of sonship, but also the sanctification of those who will persevere as loving sons and daughters by the help of the divine deposit, the Holy Spirit. Culver has made the same connection regarding progressive sanctification into Christ's image: "Hence it is correct to speak of the restoration of the image of God in redeemed humanity by the Last Adam."<sup>14</sup> This ongoing work of the Spirit in sanctification is his will to renew redeemed man "to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). More than our being progressively transformed, upon the return of Christ there will be a final consummation of God's plan to perfect redeemed man in his image. The redeemed of the Lord will be clothed with everlasting clothes of righteousness and will be made fully human. That is, the redeemed will be perfected in the image and likeness of God. The redeemed will become like their great Elder Brother, as Grudem explains, "In Jesus we see human likeness to God as it was intended to be, and it should cause us to rejoice that God has predestined us 'to be conformed to the image of his son' (Rom. 8:29; cf. 1 Cor. 15:49): 'When he appears we shall be like him' (1 John 3:2)."<sup>15</sup>

The second anthropological belief broadly concerns humanity's composition. As eluded to previously, Scripture clearly communicates that man is made of at least two

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<sup>14</sup>Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 256.

<sup>15</sup>Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 2004), 445.

aspects, material and immaterial.<sup>16</sup> Given this reality, the local church must always act as a people who see beyond the realities presented by the material world. Consequently, the MLC ought to have in focus not more (but not less) than immediate physical needs, flesh-driven desires, and temporal circumstances. As Scripture confers information on dealing with humans, the MLC must consider both the physical and the spiritual aspects of humanity.

The final anthropological assumption concerns the state and standing of humanity before God. There are three states to consider from the perspective of the MLC: (1) pre-fall humanity (2) fallen humanity man and (3) regenerate humanity man. Much of literature, film, and other cultural expressions have attempted to address this very issue, perhaps because of its clear significance and bearing on how people live, think, and act. Is man inherently good or evil? Can a man truly be well intentioned? Are humans definitively corruptible? For the MLC, Scripture testifies to the state of humans before the fall. In the beginning, God made mankind “in a state of relative perfection, a state of righteousness and holiness.”<sup>17</sup> However, when the serpent tempted the first people away from obedience and trust in the Creator, mankind fell from the glory of God and lost “something that belonged to the very nature of man in its ideal state.”<sup>18</sup> Since this moment (called “the fall”), all the descendants of Adam have carried that loss of humanity, the loss of holiness and righteousness. Every man and woman since was born and exists in a state of rebellion and depravity. Geisler connects this depravity to universal death:

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<sup>16</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Sin, Salvation* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2004), 78.

<sup>17</sup>L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1938), 209.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Not only was the effect of Adam’s sin (fallenness or depravity) imputed to his descendants *directly* and *immediately*, but it was also transmitted to us *indirectly* and *mediately*. Everyone who is naturally generated from Adam—every human—inherits a sinful nature from him. This is sometimes called the doctrine of “original sin” (or “inherited sin” [see Ps. 51:5]). Again, Paul confirms, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins. . . . All of us also lived among [the unsaved] at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, *we were by nature objects of wrath*” (Eph. 2:1, 3).<sup>19</sup>

The passage from Ephesians demonstrates not only the deceased state of humanity after the fall but also highlights the governing disposition of every human born after the fall. New Testament scholar Douglas Moo expounds,

For the problem with people is not just that they commit sins; their problem is that they are enslaved to sin. From the moment of birth, every human except Jesus and Adam, has been born with sinful nature, spiritually dead and sinfully predisposed. As such, every human from birth until regeneration is not only totally depraved and fallen in every faculty, but they are also slaves of Satan and enemies of God himself, and as enemies are subject to his coming wrath. What is needed for every living soul, therefore, is a new power to break in and set people free from sin—a power found in, and only in, the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

God saves man in Christ, giving him new life through regeneration. This new nature not only finds sin to be sinful, but also sincerely desires the righteous life that God commands. In Christ, believers are gloriously changed and given a new nature, which aims to bring honor to God. (2 Pet 1:4) After regeneration, the internal motivations—and in a sense the very nature—of the born-again human is fundamentally changed and reoriented toward the glory of God.

Still, even this post-regenerate (called “redeemed man”) state of humanity is not immune from the traps of sin and evil even after conversion. Moo explains: “Thus, even the child of God, as long as he is in the earthly body, will struggle with sin and fail to do God’s will.”<sup>21</sup> Yet, there remains bright hope for the struggling saint. The Holy Spirit both unshackles the redeemed from sin, Satan, and death at the point of salvation

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<sup>19</sup>Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Sin, Salvation*, 125, emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 201.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 444.



and also graciously abides with the saint to battle sin until he is called home or Jesus returns. The believer has the promise of a faithful God, who will work powerfully on their behalf in the struggle against sin and Satan, but the warning of the sleepless enemy of sin still remains.

**Artifact Commentary:  
Cardinal Assumptions**

**Artifact commentary: preaching and teaching.** These cardinal assumptions are expressed in utilizing biblical exposition in preaching and teaching within the MLC. The emphasis of communication prescribes obedience and trust in God's Word, rather than human wisdom.<sup>22</sup> This anthropological understanding forms the starting place for all teaching and preaching in the MLC. The nature of man thrusts the gospel to the center of all that is spoken by the MLC leadership. Humanity's need for the salvation of God through Christ alone by faith alone is reverberated in every teaching in the MLC. The preaching and teaching of the MLC demands an urgent responsiveness from its congregants because the shortness of this mortal life demands nothing less than immediate obedience.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, concerning the space of God's work, the MLC regularly teaches and preaches that God's kingdom expands outward to the ends of the earth.

**Artifact commentary: Personnel.** Men and women are selected for varying levels of leadership and membership in the MLC according to qualifications determined in Scripture, even at the expense of pragmatism or current cultural trends.<sup>24</sup> In view of the wickedness of humanity and the need for accountability, the MLC practices the

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<sup>22</sup>Martin Luther, *The Catholic Epistles, Luther's Works*, vol. 30, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 105.

<sup>23</sup>Willem A. VanGemenen, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 596.

<sup>24</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 916.

biblically-prescribed model of leadership by plurality. Furthermore, language and narratives promote leaders as co-sinners in need of salvation through Christ, just as the rest.

**Artifact commentary: Structure and Programs.** The governance of the church are done according to the prescribed methodology found in God’s revelation in Scripture.<sup>25</sup> Of course, this structure includes bias toward particular interpretations, but is done with sincere belief that the structure is consistent with Scripture. The governing leadership must view itself and express itself as subordinate to the leadership of Jesus and the revealed will of God. The governance of the church is done in plurality with accountability. While the particulars may differ, the MLC structures itself with the depravity of humanity—including its leaders—as a defining truth in establishing power structures.<sup>26</sup> Also, the MLC expresses and mandates a nimble structure and organization. Agility and speed are a desired and prioritized organizational characteristic of the MLC.<sup>27</sup> Space is also utilized functionally as the “sacredness” of space is defined by the intent of the gathering rather than the architecture of the building.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the MLC has programs and efforts that empower the laity to do ministry outside the physical properties owned by the church.

**Artifact commentary: Resource management.** This MLC’s fixation on the future is seen in how the people of God manage earthly resources. Said bluntly, the MLC gives generously and stores sparingly. Jesus orients His follower to use resources with a

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 933.

<sup>27</sup>Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Sin Salvation*, 397.

<sup>28</sup>Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), chap. 9, epub.

view toward the *eschaton*.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it would seem that this view of space drives the MLC toward spending less on permanent buildings in order to increase resources allocated to multiplying efforts.

### **Internal Cooperation Assumptions**

The second subset of the structural framework to investigate biblically is the beliefs associated with internal cooperation within the MLC. The theological framework concerning the internal cooperation of the MLC culture concerns (1) core identities, (2) key metaphors for the church, (3) shared words and concepts, (4) understanding of membership, (5) how members relate to each other, (6) ideas of authority, and (7) issues of discipline and rewards.

**Internal cooperation: Identities.** To begin the investigation into biblical paradigms that form the basis of internal cooperation within the MLC, one does not need to look any further than the explicit identities Scripture affirms for the local church and the believers that make it up.

First, the believer in Christ is now adopted into the family of God as a son or daughter. This is no metaphor: “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”” (Rom 8:14-15). Beyond the intimacy captured in these verses, there is yet another implication of this identity. Believers, and therefore the members of the MLC, are legal members in the family of God, and as legal sons and daughters are considered co-heirs with Christ. This reality entitles all sons and daughters to all the duties, rights, and privileges

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<sup>29</sup>As Matt 6:19-21 says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

associated with being a child in God’s kingdom.<sup>30</sup> It is this connectivity between sonship and inheritance to which Dunn speaks: “They are heirs of God by virtue of being fellow heirs with Christ—just as by implication in vv 15-16 they are sons of God by virtue of being given to share in Christ’s ‘Abba’ relationship to God.”<sup>31</sup>

Another explicit and important identity displayed throughout the Scripture that informs MLC culture is that of ambassador. An ambassador is a citizen of one country representing that country in a foreign land, and Scripture is clear about this identity for those who are in Christ. In fact, this identity, like sonship, is articulated as another ontological change following conversion. Paul used this particular identity to encourage the Corinthian church:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. . . . Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:17–20)

Paul leaves no room to doubt that the experience of being united with and regenerated by Christ leads to a new ontology, or an entirely new and different being. According to Lange, “In other words, the man is altogether a different person from what he was before, and we need have no reference to what he was before he became a Christian (subjectively or objectively).”<sup>32</sup> Paul’s argument is clear that the two realities—new creature and ambassador—are inextricably linked. Although Jesus uses different language, he makes the same assumption. The local church is made up of regenerate believers who, by extension of their oneness with Christ, work together as ambassadors for Christ.

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<sup>30</sup>According to Rom 8:16-17, “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

<sup>31</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 1998), 463.

<sup>32</sup>John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 2 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 97-98.

**Internal cooperation: Key metaphors.** In every organizational culture there are a number of shared metaphors that help build the basis for the internal cooperation of members within the organization. The local church is no different. These metaphors are meant to be working models for each MLC throughout the world and throughout time.

The first metaphor to be analyzed is the Scripture's reference to the church as Christ's body. There are three key understandings for the MLC found in this metaphor: (1) unity and diversity, (2) curse/blessing transference, and (3) harmony and growth of the body. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." This metaphor demonstrates that there is a profound unity in the MLC, yet it is done with a distinct diversity. Fee captures this unity and diversity well:

The body is one, yet the body has many members. In saying that it is one, his concern is for its essential unity. But that does not mean uniformity. That was the Corinthian error, to think that uniformity was a value, or that it represented true spirituality. Paul's concern is for their unity; but there is no such thing as true unity without diversity.<sup>33</sup>

This metaphor also leads the believer to understand that this unity in Christ and with each other is unbreakable.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, this union carries with it all the blessings from one member to the other, as well as the curses. The most fundamental transference is demonstrated on the cross. United with Christ, the church shares in the great exchange; the curse of sin is transferred to Christ while his blessing of righteousness flowed to his people (see 2 Cor 5:21). Similarly, within the body one member can bless the body by bearing the burden of another, and yet so also can one member's sin plague the whole body by uniting it to that rebellion (see 1 Cor 5:6-8). Finally, the metaphor of the body informs the church of the need for each part to cooperate to maintain the health and

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<sup>33</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 602.

<sup>34</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 450.

growth of the body.<sup>35</sup> God gives unity in harmony, making proper function possible only when each part bears its proper role, which is a gift for the good of the whole body (see Eph 4:11-13).

The second significant metaphor used in Scripture to describe the church is “the bride of Christ.” This metaphor is actually carried forward from the Old Testament people of God and applied as fulfilled by the New Testament church. Elwell and Beitzel summarize its Old Testament usage: “God’s covenant with Israel was commonly pictured as a marriage troth, with Israel as God’s bride. Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord said to Israel: ‘I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride’ (Jer. 2:2).”<sup>36</sup> When the Bible speaks of a human husband and wife, the context of the relationship is fertile ground to depict oneness, as displayed through devotion, purity, and sacrificial love. Ephesians 5:24-27 depicts this metaphor most clearly.<sup>37</sup> Commenting on this verse, Fee writes,

Just as a husband is joined to his wife, with a mutual interdependence so intimate that they become one, so Christ and his church become one body (vv28–33). As the man’s love for his wife intends her wholeness, so Christ’s love of the church intends her completeness (vv.25–27).<sup>38</sup>

Christ’s devotion, purity, and sacrificial love toward the MLC are meant to stand as the complete fulfillment of the biblical standards of marriage. Whatever God’s Word

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<sup>35</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 353.

<sup>36</sup>Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 381.

<sup>37</sup>As Eph 5:24-27 says, “But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

<sup>38</sup>Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 381-82.

commands of man toward his wife, Jesus did in an ultimate way with the church. If man is one with His wife, then Jesus is, if possible, more so unified with his bride, the church. If a human husband can be devoted to his wife, then Christ has ultimate devotion. If a husband is self-sacrificing in many things, then Jesus gave everything for MLC.

The final metaphor to be examined brings into focus the oneness of the local church with the image of the “temple of God.” The use of this metaphor has its obvious roots in the Old Testament image of God’s Temple:

Under the old covenant the temple of God was that sanctuary of Yahweh, the God of Israel, who by his very name and commandment forbade the making and worshiping of idols. Under the new covenant, however, the temple of God is the congregation of holy ones, those set apart to God in Jesus Christ and made so by God’s indwelling presence, the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16–17; cf. John 2:19–21).<sup>39</sup>

The local church is expressed as the place where the manifest presence of God now dwells. The unity of the MLC with the Lord and with one another is an expression and testimony of the presence of God. Since this is the case, the holiness of God, the separateness of God, must also be observed in this new temple of God.<sup>40</sup> In short, God’s holiness, or his distinguishable righteousness, is observable in the MLC.

**Internal cooperation: Shared words and concepts.** Another key category of content in understanding the internal cooperation within the MLC culture is the defining of key shared terms, words, and concepts. As with any worldwide culture, the unity of the movement is partially preserved and propagated by shared vocabulary and sets of ideas. In order to make short work of this section, a definition is drawn from secondary sources that are, at minimum, acceptable by the author, if not preferred. MLC culture can be

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<sup>39</sup>Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 349.

<sup>40</sup>According to 2 Cor 6:16-17, “Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.’”

destroyed or deterred by even the most basic misunderstanding among members concerning commonly used words and concepts, such as “Scripture/Bible,” “salvation/saved,” “mission,” “gospel,” “church,” “Great Commission,” and “Great Commandment.”

First, the words “Scripture/Bible” mean “writing” in the original languages of the biblical text. It refers to the canonical books of the Old and New Testament.<sup>41</sup> The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are divine in origin.<sup>42</sup>

“Salvation” is a word picture of wide application that expresses the idea of rescue from jeopardy and misery into a state of safety. The gospel proclaims that the God who saved Israel from Egypt, Jonah from the fish’s belly, the psalmist from death, and the soldiers from drowning (Exod 15:2; Jonah 2:9; Ps 116:6; Acts 27:31), saves all who trust Christ from sin and sin’s consequences.<sup>43</sup>

According to missiologist Avery Willis, mission is “the total redemptive purpose of God to establish his kingdom.” He contrasts this with missions as “the activity of God’s people, the church, to proclaim and to demonstrate the kingdom of God to the world.”<sup>44</sup>

The English word “gospel” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon “godspell,” which meant “good tidings” and, later, the “story concerning God.” As now used, gospel describes the message of Christianity and the books in which the record of Christ’s life

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<sup>41</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 178.

<sup>42</sup>J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993), epub.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Avery Willis, “Biblical Basis for Mission,” *International Mission Board*, 1979, repr., 1992, accessed December 27, 2013, <http://www.imb.org/core/biblicalbasis/introduction.htm>.



and teaching is found.<sup>45</sup> In the biblical sense, there is a particular set of truths that, at minimum constitute this gospel of Jesus Christ. Gilbert describes, “First the bad news: God is your Judge, and you have sinned against him. And then the gospel: but Jesus has died so that sinners may be forgiven of their sins if they will repent and believe in him.”<sup>46</sup>

The church is most simply the congregation of those who are true believers in Christ, which implies in that they are in covenant with God and each other. The term is used in the New Testament both in a universal sense (all such believers) and in a restricted sense (a particular group of believers gathered in one place).<sup>47</sup>

The Great Commission is Christ’s command to his disciples to go make other disciples of all nations, teach them to obey all that He command, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19-20).<sup>48</sup>

The Great Commandment is Jesus’ summary of the moral law in the two great commandments, love your God and love your neighbor (Matt 22:37-40), on which, he says, all the Old Testament moral instructions “hang” (depend).<sup>49</sup>

**Internal cooperation: Membership.** The primary language used throughout the New Testament concerning those who are among the members of the MLC is consistently articulated as those “in Christ.” Scripture is clear that the defining validation of those truly in Christ is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. It is, therefore, this commonality of being inhabited by God’s Spirit that forms the unity and membership of

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<sup>45</sup>J. D. Douglas and Merrill Chapin Tenney, *New International Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 396-97.

<sup>46</sup>Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 36.

<sup>47</sup>Erickson, *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 35.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>49</sup>Packer, *Concise Theology*.

the local church itself.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the possession of the Spirit will, according to Scripture, be observable by and through the community of faith. Paul himself spent considerable energy contrasting life in the Spirit to the life without the Spirit.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God is mode of inclusion in the MLC. Not only this, but the Spirit also uses the members of the MLC to identify and discern the evidence of his presence and inclusion in the MLC.

**Internal cooperation: Treatment of other members.** This section discusses how MLC members should treat one another. The culture of the MLC is shaped, as is the case with all cultures, by the common understanding concerning how members treat one another. Throughout the New Testament, the local church is told to act and believe in a number of ways toward one another. This set of texts is commonly referred to as the “one another” verses. Rather than spend a considerable length of time and space walking through each one, one can argue that one of these “one another” commands is actually a summary of all the others. The command to “love one another” appears eight times in the New Testament alone and is reiterated using different language. In the midst of a long list of prescriptive interactions among believers, Paul writes to the Colossians, “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col 3:14). He is not saying that love is to be put on instead of all the other ways to interact properly with the people of God, but rather that love ought to be pursued as an ultimate expression of all those things. Smalley argues that “the assertion ‘God is love’ means not simply that love is one of his activities, but that all his activity is loving.”<sup>52</sup> If all of God’s activity is love, and the household of God is to be a reflection of that divine image and activity, then so also

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<sup>50</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 603.

<sup>51</sup>Everett F. Harrison, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 89.

<sup>52</sup>Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 51 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 239.

must all of redeemed mankind's activity be characterized by love.

**Internal cooperation: Authority.** In every culture and every group, the paradigm of internal cooperation includes an assumption about how leadership works, how power is distributed, how decisions are made, and how new rules are created. The three primary principles that capture the biblical perspective on authority in the MLC are (1) Lordship of Jesus, (2) an understanding of “undershepherds,” and (3) the priesthood of all believers.

The primary understanding of authority in the MLC is rooted in the Lordship of Jesus. The church is fundamentally a theocracy, ruled and led by Jesus Christ himself. Paul highlights the reality of Christ's restoration to the throne over mankind, especially over His church.<sup>53</sup> Thus all power, in all creation and in the church, is under the active authority of Jesus. Geisler expounds on the extent of Jesus' authority: “Christ is not only the invisible Head of the invisible universal church (see Eph. 1:22–23), He is also the invisible Head of the visible local church(es). This is made clear in Revelation, where He stands in their midst as Lord over them.”<sup>54</sup> The MLC must, therefore, believe and live in the truth that Jesus himself is Lord and has absolute authority over the church.

A second concept that shapes MLC culture concerning authority is that of the undershepherd. The term itself captures the subordinated and delegated nature of the authority of those God entrusts to lead the church. Undershepherd is most appropriately applied to those called “elder” or “pastor” in the MLC. Speaking to elders, the apostle Peter says,

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<sup>53</sup>Paul writes in Eph 1:20-23, “Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

<sup>54</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Church, Last Things* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2005), 67.

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet 5:1-4)

Peter's words capture the basic nature of the authority given to the undershepherds of God. The elder has no authority apart from leadership that advances the church in the will of God, and God's will is clearly and authoritatively recorded in the Scriptures. Therefore, the authority of the elder is confined by and inseparable from the authority of the revealed words of God in the Bible.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the members of the MLC can honor the leadership of their undershepherds as an expression of their trust in the Word of God. It is also worth emphasizing that the undershepherd is chiefly a steward and not an owner. Scripture is clear that elders should constantly bear in mind that "the flock does not belong to them and that they are therefore undershepherds entrusted with another's possessions."<sup>56</sup> The flock entrusted to the elder is now, and forever will be, the flock of God.

The final concept concerning authority forming the MLC culture is the priesthood of all believers. On this matter Geisler aptly points out that all believers, all priests, gain their priestly order from their union with Christ:

The church as royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) emphasizes the regal nature of our relation to Christ, the King with whom we'll reign. John declared: "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). He is King of kings and Priest of priests; we will reign and minister under Him, drawing from Him both example and power.<sup>57</sup>

The priestly dominion of the church is exercised to increase the glory of God by administering the grace of God. As such, through the work of Christ, every member of

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>56</sup>Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 181.

<sup>57</sup>Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Church, Last Things*, 49.

the MLC is included in the ministry of God.<sup>58</sup> More than that, with every act done in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit, the delegated authority of God is exercised over creation. Thus, the ministry of the saints is the power of God undoing the effects of sin in the world.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, as the MLC utilizes its authority in Jesus, every member is an agent of the kingdom. Members use this authority to reestablish the rule and reign of the One who entrusted them with authority.

**Internal cooperation: Discipline and reward.** In every human culture, including the MLC, there are communal understandings of methods to reinforce good behavior and punish bad behavior. This kind of language can be problematic to many evangelicals because it seems contrary to a contemporary understanding of grace. However, while Jesus has indeed become the believer's propitiating sacrifice there still remains consequence for the believer for sinful behavior and reward for good behavior. The MLC is accountable to Christ in affirming those who walk according to the Spirit and admonishing those who walk in the flesh. The means of disciplining a member of the MLC is a loving rebuke and a helpful correction, meaning the biblical standard for discipline always aims to improve and not merely to punish. Peter Williams observes, "It is not enough that we should be rebuked by the Word of God when we go astray and fall into sin; we also need to be corrected as to how we should live in order to please God. And this, too, the Bible is able to do."<sup>60</sup> The expected response in the MLC begins with repentance. While repentance is not always immediate, it is always required. However, on the occasion that appropriate discipline does not lead to repentance public rebuke may be in

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<sup>58</sup>Edwin A. Blum, *1 Peter*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 230.

<sup>59</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 61.

<sup>60</sup>Peter Williams, *Opening Up 2 Timothy*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One, 2007), 86.

order.<sup>61</sup> Sadly, if repentance is not produced by faithful, repeated attempts to rebuke and correct, the member must be excommunicated. This removal from the community remains an act of discipline and not judgment, for it still has the hope for redemption at its heart.<sup>62</sup>

With regard to the rewards in the MLC, the prize is Jesus. As he himself is the way into the community, he also is the reward of the community. He is not a merely a path into the divine community, he himself is the treasure within. This being the case, members of the local church are rewarded not only by Christ but also with Christ! Those who walk according to the Spirit of God are rewarded both in the present and in the *eschaton* with more of God. Thus for the Christian, reward is both a present and a future reality. This is great hope for the household of God, for “not only do we have the promise of God, but also we have the very presence of Christ.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Artifact Commentary: Assumptions of Internal Cooperation**

**Preaching and teaching.** The assumptions of internal cooperation within the MLC are expressed in a number of artifacts in the area of preaching and teaching. The most obvious is the inclusion of the content that makes up these assumptions. The language of the content described in this section on internal cooperation can be regularly heard from the pulpit, in classes, and in groups. In fact, a significant amount of the teaching represents the application of the values and beliefs described in the previously described theological framework. The content is often displayed in signs, publications and designs utilized to communicate to the church.

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<sup>61</sup>Philip Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 7075, Kindle.

<sup>62</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 213.

<sup>63</sup>Philip H. Hacking, *Opening Up Hebrews*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One, 2006), 40.

**Personnel.** Members and leaders are evaluated based on the biblically-prescribed character of a representative of Christ. Policy in MLC exists for maintaining sound character for both leaders and members.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, members and leaders alike are commissioned based on a discernment of both the calling of God and gifting by God. The hiring processes and affirmation of ministry procedures addresses these areas. There are many expected behaviors of members and leaders in the MLC, but they can be summarized as loving one another.<sup>65</sup> While the particular behaviors and interactions between believers cannot be exhaustively discussed, this generalization is important to note for the sake of summary.

**Structure and programs.** The governance of the MLC reflects a plurality of biblically-qualified leaders, subordinated to Christ and accountable for and to covenant members. This structure is often articulated in the organizing legal documentation of the MLC. Furthermore, other artifacts such as the titles “member” and “elder” designate this structure and authority. The MLC articulates a highly accountable view of regenerate church membership.<sup>66</sup> This is often expressed as “covenant.” Artifacts such as signed covenant papers, membership processes, and other such behaviors are present. The MLC has programming designed to create a sense of family among members and mission toward outsiders. Furthermore, programs for matriculating, assessing, and disciplining members are articulated and repeated often. These MLCs have articulated policies concerning internal cooperation, and these policies prescribe membership requirements, membership disqualifications, and membership removals.

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<sup>64</sup>David Campbell, *Opening Up Titus*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One, 2007), 26.

<sup>65</sup>Polycarp, *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, 10, in vol. 1 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 35.

<sup>66</sup>Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 953.

**Resource management.** The MLC utilizes resources on members, as they would do for family. The behavior of generosity permeates the MLC in such a way that it beckons the lost to belong to the family of God. The MLC allocates generous funds to benevolence, training, and appreciation for members. Moreover, there is a care and thoughtfulness that is manifest in the compensation and benefits packages of the employees of the church.

### **External Interaction**

**External interaction: The purpose.** The MLC culture is shaped significantly by assumptions about its purpose. It is this God-given purpose of the MLC that governs its interaction with those outside the church. Beginning with Genesis, God's design for creation is to share in and manifest his glory, for he made humanity in his image and his likeness to be the crowning jewel of this creation. As Culver puts it, "God created all things according to His pleasure and for His own glory. 'All things' includes all mankind, whether they are now good or evil. 'The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.'"<sup>67</sup> The MLC, made up of redeemed mankind, headed by Christ, united by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, now has the purpose of inaugurating the restoring of God's glorying throughout all creation. The church can afford no confusion on this point. If she is to become all that she was made to be, she must hold in highest regard her calling to do all for the glory of God. The MLC sees

the Church as God's instrument for demonstrating to the powers his purpose of unifying the cosmos. The writer senses that if the Church is going to become in history an effective preview of God's purposes for the end of history, then God is going to have to help it in a big way.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, the MLC relies on the power of God to enable her to become the glorious reflection of his glory that he intended. And only through his power can she do so. The apostle

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 1014.

<sup>68</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 218.



Paul, reflecting on his own participation in multiplying disciples, leaders, and congregations among those outside the church, makes God's purpose for the church clear. He says that everything the church does is "so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:10–11).

**External interaction: The mission.** God has created humanity, particularly the church, to reflect his own glory through his image and as his representative. In these last days, he has determined to do this primarily through the church engaging in the great commission. In fact, the primary means by which the MLC participates in filling the earth with the glory of God is through obedience to the mission of God in the Great Commission.<sup>69</sup> Hints of God's global mandate can be seen in the garden, with Abraham, through Joshua, and through the Prophets. These servants of God and others throughout the Scripture engage in the effort of God to redeem people from all the earth. As Paul writes in Galatians, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you'" (Gal 3:8). This global mandate is the summation of God's eternal plan to gather to himself a people from every tongue and every tribe and every nation, and the mandate is given to the MLC. The mission is simple:

Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

The mission's reassurance is Christ's authority over all creation. The mission's content is to make disciples of Jesus. The mission's scope is to make disciples of every nation. The

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<sup>69</sup>Clinton William Lowin, "An Assessment of the Missional Model of Graduate Theological Education: A Case Study" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 25.

mission ends with the second coming of Christ. Finally, the mission's guarantee is the promise that King Jesus will join his disciples in accomplishing this mission. The mission of the local church is not up for debate. The mission of the church is the mission of the One who is the Head of the church. Namely, his particular mission is "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The church joins in that mission or she is no body of Christ.

**External interaction: Accomplishment.** How will the MLC know when it has accomplished what it has been designed to be and to do? What ought to be the assumed thing to measure along the way to ensure progress is being made? These questions and others must be answered to have a MLC culture. Many organizations, including churches, begin to fail as a unified group precisely because the assumptions concerning accomplishment and measurement change or become muddled. This has been particularly true in the American church. The American local church regularly communicates particular measurements, such as budgets and buildings that frame the perspective of new members concerning the mission. Christ, however, has clearly identified for the church the end of the mission, the point of the mission, and the accomplishment of the mission: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). In others words, the church of God is called to preach the gospel of the kingdom until the return of Jesus.<sup>70</sup> When that end comes, the mission will be complete. The accomplishment that has been sought from the beginning will have arrived: "That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You" (Ps 67:2-3).

Therefore, the local MLC must make assumptions about measuring progress in

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<sup>70</sup>Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1998), 695-96.

the mission of God. First, the MLC must send members into mission. If God is a missionary God, and the church is a missional body, then each member must do his or her part to “fill up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col 1:24). That is, each and every member must commit to declaring and demonstrating the gospel of Jesus. Second, the MLC must be comprised of and train new, multiplying disciples. If disciples are not being made, there is cause for investigation and repentance. Of course, this should be examined over time, for not even the apostle Paul, nor Jesus, had success in every city. Third, the MLC must remain a healthy household. Not only is proclamation necessary to tell the world of the glories of God, but as a household of image-bearers, indwelt by Christ’s Spirit, the church must also demonstrate the glory of God to each other by their thoughts, affections, words, and actions. God has not only given the MLC the mission, but he has also been clear concerning the manner in which his witnesses will conduct their service. For the MLC, the mission of Christ must be pursued in the Spirit, or there is no hope for accomplishment. The Spirit not only motivates the church to engage the right ends but also empowers the church to do it according to the appropriate means. This means is pursuing mission in holiness and humility. God made a promise long ago: “For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another” (Isa 48:11). In the end of all things, at the close of the mission of the church, God will be vindicated, exalted, and praised. This must be the assumption of the end and the accomplishment of the local MLC. In fact, the church can look through the lens of prophecy and gaze on the wonders of this future victory. In that day all of God’s glorious church will be gathered and praising in one voice:

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. (Rev 5:9-10)

### **Artifact Commentary**

**Preaching and teaching.** These artifacts are obvious. The topics of God’s

glory and God's mission will soak those who listen to the teachers in the MLC. The glory of God is discussed in the MLC as the goal of all ministry. Ministry is preached as God-centered, rather than man-centered. Not only this, but in the preaching and teaching of hero narratives the MLC highlights those who were obedient to make disciples and engage in the mission of God.

**Personnel.** Men and women are dedicated to accomplishing the mission of God, not just in caring for current members of the church. Members participate as ministers within missional efforts.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, there is dedicated personnel training for future ministry, both for replacement and replication.

**Structure and programs.** The structure of the church includes a platform for training the saints for ministry and mission. More than that, the MLC designates structures and strategies to facilitate launching new gospel initiatives including churches, ministries, and parachurch organizations. Articulated strategies are in place for the multiplication of the gospel ministry of Jesus.<sup>72</sup>

**Resource management.** There are significant funds designated to the multiplication of disciples in the local area and across the globe. These funds are allocated according to the global mandate of the mission of God. Funds are used to support local mission efforts, the training of future leaders, starting new churches, engaging unreached people groups, and other ministries designed to accomplish the Great Commission. Furthermore, MLC has additional giving opportunities for members to participate in funding Great Commission efforts.

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<sup>71</sup>Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*.

<sup>72</sup>Bob Roberts, Jr., *The Multiplying Church: The New Math for Starting New Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

## CHAPTER 3

### PROJECT METHODOLOGY

A cursory review of contemporary church publications demonstrates a fascination with the idea of organizational or church culture. Furthermore, data is regularly released indicating the need for church multiplication to increase across the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> With the goal of building a church culture that will increase multiplication, this project sought to identify the cultural elements consistent in multiplying churches. Chapter 2 laid out a structural framework that adapted previous definitions of organizational culture to the context of a local church. Furthermore, it proposed a theological framework both as a hypothesis pertaining to the underlying beliefs of multiplying churches and as a guide to establishing multiplying churches through the pursuit of the biblical prescription for God’s church on mission. Finally, chapter 2 offered a brief commentary on the cultural artifacts that may accompany the tacit assumptions of the MLC. The present chapter outlines the methodology incorporated in this project, namely, the use of multiple case studies. The study analyzed and evaluated the culture of the multiplying local church utilizing an interview process and a document review. The data was then analyzed and summarized for consistency within each of the three MLCs to the theological framework proposed in chapter 2. Subsequently, the cases were analyzed for frequently occurring themes and artifacts. The interviews and document review addressed two primary research questions:

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<sup>1</sup>For example, according to Lifeway, fewer than 28 percent of Protestant churches have participated in a local church plant and fewer than 20 percent have sent long-term missionaries in the past twelve months. Lifeway Research, “During the Past 12 Months, How Has your Church Participated in Missions/Church Planting,” accessed December 27, 2013, <http://www.lifeway.com/images/e7f82674-ecd6-4931-9e52-901a076cb7be.JPG>.

1. What espoused values of church culture enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?
2. What cultural artifacts enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?

In response to these questions, this project proposed three preliminary hypotheses:

1. There are key cultural elements derived from cardinal assumptions common to multiplying churches.
2. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning internal cooperation common to multiplying churches.
3. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning external interaction common to multiplying churches.

As indicated in chapter 1, this project incorporated a qualitative research approach, for such an approach best suited the research questions that drove the project.<sup>2</sup> Much of what needs to be understood in the culture of the MLC is contained within the narratives of each organization. Therefore, to leverage data collection through story, a multiple-case study was performed on: (1) The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, (2) The Village Church in Highland Village, Texas, and 3) The Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> This approach allowed themes that were embedded in speech, documentation, and cultural artifacts to be gathered. This multi-case study was employed to approach the research questions by attempting to demonstrate patterns that existed between MLC cultures. The strategy for analyzing the hypotheses was to examine the churches in an attempt to expose the cardinal assumptions, assumptions of internal cooperation, and assumptions of external interaction, which was articulated in the

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<sup>2</sup>I suggest the following works related to the qualitative research method. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, epub (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013); Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007). Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 1990). Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Applied Social Research Methods, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., epub (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014)

<sup>3</sup>Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium, and David Silverman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 429-30.

structural framework laid out in chapter 2. It was expected that these beliefs and values would be consistent with themes proposed in the theological framework. Furthermore, I collected data to substantiate the values and beliefs articulated by the subject churches.

Interviews were conducted with five strategic-level leaders from each church. The interviewees were selected through what is known as “purposeful sampling.”<sup>4</sup> The strategic-level leaders were selected based upon their ability to communicate the high-level narratives, strategies, and beliefs associated with their churches. The interviews were conducted using fourteen open-ended questions, each of which had a number of clarifying questions attached to it. Furthermore, these questions were developed to investigate one or more of the thirteen tacit assumptions articulated in the structural framework developed in chapter 2. This semi-structured interview approach allowed the observation of information relayed in answer to the questions, as well as any recurring language, themes, or artifacts inadvertently mentioned in the responses. Finally, in light of the brevity of time allocated to some of the interviews, each interviewee was given a copy of the interview questions at the close of the interview and was allowed to submit any amendments, corrections, or alterations to the answers given during the interview. Furthermore, the interviewees and other leaders in the subject churches were contacted for clarification and the gathering of additional artifact data.

After concluding the interviews, the data was compiled and analyzed in conjunction with any written responses submitted by interviewees. The data analysis was informed by a document review of pertinent collateral obtained from each subject church. Documents reviewed included theological documentation, sermons, webpages, printed marketing material, training syllabi, organizational documents, blogs, and any other available materials. The interview, along with the document review, was used to discover converging and diverging themes between the case studies. Material was organized

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<sup>4</sup>Charles Teddlie and Fen Yu, “Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology with Examples,” *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 1 (2007): 77.

utilizing DeDoose software. The software was useful in coding the research into thematic groups, creating logical links between data groups, and connecting thematic data between cases.

Finally, analyzed data was synthesized to provide insights and commentary on the major themes discovered during the multiple case studies in order to shed light on the common elements of culture that enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations. The analysis is presented in light of the following three hypotheses stated in chapter 1:

1. There are key cultural elements derived from cardinal assumptions common to multiplying churches.
2. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning internal cooperation common to multiplying churches.
3. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning external interaction common to multiplying churches.

### **Population**

The research population consisted of senior-level leaders in North American evangelical churches that are replicating believers, leaders, and congregations. Within this population, a purposeful sampling method was employed.

### **Sample**

The research sample within the population was strategic-level leaders in North American churches multiplying believers, leaders, and congregations. The selected cases were (1) The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, (2) The Village Church in Highland Village, Texas, and 3) The Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. These churches were selected based on previous knowledge of these churches, initial conversations with leaders expressing a desire to be a multiplying church, and the availability to access strategic-level personnel within the churches. In order for this multi-case study to produce *naturalistic generalizations* for the North American local church,



each sample needed to have demonstrated results in the area of multiplication.<sup>5</sup> Each of the three cases selected produced such results. These three churches were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. A conviction for multiplying believers, leaders, and new congregations.
2. A pattern of planting more than ten new congregations in the last ten years.
3. A demonstrated desire to develop and train leaders for ministry.
4. An observable commitment to reaching the lost in their geographical area.

Though similar in the conviction to multiply, each of the subject churches brings a distinct culture to the research. In light of this, the research sought to find what was common among the elements of these distinct cultures in order to produce a commentary on multiplying church culture in North America.

### **The Austin Stone Community Church**

The Austin Stone Community Church was started in December 2002 with a dozen people in the founding pastor's (Matt Carter) apartment. From 2002 to 2013, the church experienced incredible numerical growth, growing to near 8,000 in Sunday attendance in the last ten years. Not only that, the Austin Stone has developed a robust leadership training pipeline that includes more than 350 students per year in a one-year intensive program. This program includes strenuous training in character, theology, and missiological skill. Students are assessed verbally, in writing, and through observation by a coach. Additionally, the church trains over 70 interns every year through a concentrated intern training program. The Austin Stone has also participated directly in 28 new congregations in the last 10 years. This church has commissioned more than 100 full-time missionaries, each committing to more than two years of service. All of these missionaries have been sent to unreached people groups across the globe in the last 4 years. Lastly, the church equips and cares for over 4,000 people directly involved in

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<sup>5</sup>Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*.

mission throughout the city of Austin. The vision of the Austin Stone Community Church is “to build a great city, renewed and redeemed by a gospel movement, by being a church for the city of Austin that labors to advance the gospel throughout the nations.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Village Church**

The Village Church was founded in August 1977 as Highland Village First Baptist Church and started as a mission of Lakeland Baptist Church (Lewisville, Texas). The church had ups and downs until it was replanted in 2002. In 2002, upon the hiring of the new lead Pastor, Matt Chandler, the church made dramatic changes. It was renamed, reconstituted, and changed its polity to elder-led. Over the last 10 years, The Village has grown from 168 people in Sunday attendance to over 10,000. Furthermore, The Village has demonstrated its commitment to multiplying churches by becoming the headquarters for international church planting network, Acts 29. More than that, The Village has been directly involved in 30 new congregations over ten years. The Village demonstrates its commitment to multiply disciples across the globe through its Sending Program, where it assesses, affirms, and sends missionaries all over the world. The vision of The Village Church expresses its commitment to multiplication: “The Village Church exists to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.”<sup>7</sup>

### **The Summit Church**

The Summit Church was founded in the 1960s as Homestead Heights Baptist Church. In 1998, the church made a significant shift after calling Keith Eitel as interim pastor. Eitel was serving as the Missions Department Head at Southeastern Baptist

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<sup>6</sup>The Austin Stone Community Church, “Identity and Beliefs,” accessed December 30, 2013, <http://austinstone.org/about/identity-beliefs>.

<sup>7</sup>The Village Church, “What We Believe,” accessed December 31, 2013, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/flower-mound/about-us/who-we-are/what-we-believe/>.

Theological Seminary. With Eitel in leadership, the church began the turn toward engaging the world through missions. In 2001, the church called Pastor J. D. Greear. The church went through a significant period of change immediately following the appointment of the new pastor. The church appointed elders as the new leadership model, rebranded the church with the name The Summit Church, and launched new ministry initiatives into the city. The church grew from 300 in attendance to over 6,800 in 2013. The Summit Church has become a regional church with campuses all over the Raleigh-Durham area. The church has multiplied into 7 campus locations, including 1 hosted in Spanish. Not only has The Summit continued to grow and attract new people, but it has also invested in future leaders. In the last 5 years, the leadership at The Summit has installed 24 elders and numerous deacons and lay leaders. Furthermore, The Summit has sent over 240 international missionaries and has had significant involvement in 19 North American church plants. The Summit Church has set a significant multiplication goal. The leadership states this goal:

In 2008-2009, we set a five-year goal of 20 North American churches. By god's grace, we'll surpass that goal this year in an effort to begin to see exponential growth in our vision to plant 1,000 churches in a generation, including a church in each of the 16 cities in North Carolina with a college.<sup>8</sup>

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The aforementioned research was designed to bring clarity to the common elements of church culture among multiplying local churches. Four distinct phases of research were pursued to gain clarity.

The initial phase of this project was conducted through a survey of precedent literature on the subject of organizational culture. While the study of organizational culture falls outside ecclesiological matters, the study provides a framework for understanding the subset discipline of organizational culture known as church culture.

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<sup>8</sup>The Summit Church, "Annual Report 2013," accessed December 31, 2013, <http://www.summitrdu.com/annualreport>.

Furthermore, previous works written on the topic of church culture were reviewed for help in applying the broader definition to the setting of the local church. During this phase of the project, several definitions and conceptual frameworks for understanding organizational culture were considered in light of presuppositions of the Bible. These presuppositions that were brought to bear on the secular definitions were

1. There is absolute truth and definitive morality. Culture can be, and should be, viewed through the lens of the authority of God. In other words, any definition of organizational culture that includes a notion of created morality must be rejected and reworked for use regarding church culture.
2. Church culture is built upon the design of regenerate believers to conform to God's patterns for belief, internal cooperation, and external integration rather than merely to placate the instinct for species survival.
3. Organizational culture, though containing elements of both behavior and believing, is rooted in the beliefs and assumptions of the organization. This assumption reflects the biblical understanding that our behavior reflects our belief.<sup>9</sup>

The second phase of this research was accomplished by revising previous definitions of organizational culture, informed by previous definitions of church culture, in formulating a working definition for use in this project. The definition, as listed in chapter 1, is a set of tacit assumptions (both biblical and unbiblical) shared by a local congregation as it attempts to flourish according to God's will, addressing both external interaction and internal cooperation, that is considered to be true, and therefore is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to God's design and purpose for the individual, the local church, and the world.

The third phase of this project was to utilize the working definition and knowledge gained during the literature review to create a structural and theological framework based upon the assumption categories present in organizational cultures. These categories were adapted and filtered to fit with the working definition of church

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<sup>9</sup>In commenting on 2 Pet 2:2, Richard Bauckham writes, "By contrast with the false message of the opponents which results in immoral living, the true Christian way is a true message which results in an ethical way of life." Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 242.

culture presented by this project. This structural and theological framework is present in chapter 2.

The fourth phase of the project was to conduct face-to-face interviews with five senior-level pastors at each of the three subject churches. The interview questions utilized in the face-to-face interviews were developed utilizing the assumption categories developed in the fourth phase. These questions aimed at understanding beliefs, values, and artifacts articulated while discussing the tacit assumptions. In obtaining these interviews, I was able to draw conclusion as to common themes of belief, as well as common artifacts within these multiplying church cultures. Not only that, but the responses to the questions allowed for analysis against the theological framework detailed in chapter 2.

The interviews were held on-site in order to observe the environment and setting of the subject church. The interviews were recorded by the application QuickVoice, and were transcribed for analysis and uploaded to DeDoose software. The interviews were held in an informal setting but were semi-structured around the fourteen interview questions (see Appendix 1). The environment was helpful in drawing out candid and unfiltered responses. This kind of information was quite helpful since the intent of the study was to discern the tacit assumptions, simple espoused beliefs, and values of the church. These questions were then supplemented with various pre-written probing questions to draw out more information from the interviewee. The probing questions were used to clarify primary questions and to investigate derivative beliefs, values, and artifacts. The same wording was utilized for each question, but at times the questions were restated at the request of the interviewee. In these situations, a similar question was communicated without leading or altering the content of the original question.

Since full access to the churches investigated was available, leaders within the organizations were often consulted to gain further clarifying information. This access was

extremely helpful, since as the case study progressed, there was often a need to press further into areas of belief and deeply held values. More than that, the interviews proved to be insufficient in gathering information on cultural artifacts. Follow-up questions and the document review were more helpful tactics for gathering such data.

The final stage of the research was accomplished by reviewing various statements of belief, documents, manuals, website material, sermon content, and training syllabi for each of the subject churches. This document review was utilized to supplement the knowledge gained during the interviews. The reviewed documentation represented and exposed many of the artifacts that existed within the church cultures.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Nearly twenty hours of interviews were conducted, transcribed, and imported into software for analysis. Based upon the theological framework developed in chapter 2, codes were developed corresponding to the expected themes for each assumption in the theological framework. These themes were then coded into the DeDoose software and mapped to stories, statements, and ideas within each interview. While the statements were not always exactly the same, the researcher was able to discern the thematic similarity within the data. Furthermore, as the interviews were analyzed, other unanticipated themes surfaced. These themes were added to the list of codes and assigned to the appropriate texts.

Once all the interviews were coded and reviewed, the researcher “winnowed” the themes by concentrating on expected themes and other predominant themes. Themes were also combined with similar themes and restructured into “families” of themes.<sup>10</sup> These families of themes represent collections of themes that can be represented together for better understanding and application to other environments. The data from each

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<sup>10</sup>Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*.

subject church was then analyzed for consistency with the themes proposed in the theological framework.

A *cross-case synthesis* was used as the predominant analytical technique.<sup>11</sup> In this phase of analysis, the individual cases were compared with one another and observations and analysis were made concerning the consistency of all the cases as a whole against the expected findings detailed in the theological framework. In addition, nuances to vocabulary, narrative, and artifacts surfaced. These nuances provided texture to the diversity within the MLC, yet were still consistent with the themes of the theological framework. Lastly, time was spent analyzing expected themes that were absent from the case study. While no data was observed that proved contrary to the expected themes, there were instances of absent themes or weakly supported themes. This review and assessment highlighted the need for future inquiry into the research questions proposed at the onset of this study. This approach leveraged the positive results of each of the subject churches to make generalizations for church multiplication in other cases. Preliminary conclusions were formed concerning major and minor theme families during the data collection phase, and many of these patterns were reviewed and corroborated by using a code-frequency analysis.

In order to gain a better perspective on the subject churches, a document review was also utilized. During the document review, artifacts associated with the themes and theme families were verified. These documents were helpful in understanding structures, processes, policies, and programs expressing the values and beliefs of the individual church cultures. Moreover, the facilities and programs were accessed in order to observe the behaviors, signage, and marketing materials utilized within the church buildings and programs. Once the artifacts were catalogued, they were analyzed across the cases for similarity and patterns. These patterns proved particularly helpful. However,

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<sup>11</sup>Yin, *Case Study Research*.

this research earlier suggested that the artifacts appearing without evidence of the underlying belief reveal a discontinuity between espoused belief and the tacit assumptions of the church. Much more can be said of the discontinuity between espoused beliefs and the tacit assumptions of a culture. In order to brief, this research attempts to validate the espoused beliefs and values as indeed tacit assumptions of the organization by observing both espoused statements and the presence of artifacts.

### **Limits of Generalization**

The generalizations in this study can only be applied to the three subject churches with a great deal of confidence. However, the themes and conclusions may be transferable to other churches in similar contexts. Although many of the themes and generalizations have been drawn directly from Scripture, other themes incorporate metaphors and structures that may not function in other cultures and contexts. Furthermore, this research may not be transferable to other local church leadership structures. Each of the subject churches had governance through appointed paid and lay elders, with accountability to a committed membership. A separation between paid and unpaid leadership may be too differentiated to credibly apply the generalizations. In addition, in each case the population surrounding the subject churches had a high degree of mobility due to the proximity to university settings. This distinction should be carefully noted in interpreting the generalizations.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the frameworks of tacit assumptions that exist in specific church cultures that enable the multiplication of believers, leaders, and congregations. The goal of this project was to discover and analyze key elements of church culture present in well-established multiplying churches. In order to accomplish this, a multiple case study was performed on three such MLCs. The study deeply examined (1) The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, 2) The Village Church in Highland Village, Texas, and 3) The Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

This project hypothesized that key elements of church culture could be derived from each of the three subsets of assumptions. These hypotheses were examined by conducting interviews focused on a theological framework (see chapter 2). The theological framework represents a concise biblical theology informing each of the thirteen categories in the structural framework.

While it would be impossible to list every artifact in each culture pertaining to multiplication, it is nonetheless important to highlight artifacts of significant importance in addressing the research questions. This chapter focuses on the results of the case studies in each individual church in order to answer the primary research questions and support the research hypotheses. The individual case results only contain a brief amount of analysis. Following the report of the individual MLCs, the following chapter analyzes the research findings through cross-case analysis. The analysis underscores patterns, themes, and families of themes that thread between the cases. Before advancing to the individual case studies, it is prudent to review the anticipated interview responses carefully according to the theological framework (see Table 1).

Table 2. Theological framework: Expected results

| <i>Structural Framework</i> | <i>Description</i>   | <i>Theological Framework – Expected themes</i>  |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Epistemological             | Assumptions about the source of knowledge  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealed vs. discovered</li> </ul>   |
| Temporal                    | Assumptions about church's viewpoint of time and space   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time is short &amp; life is fast.</li> <li>• All space is useful.</li> </ul>   |
| Anthropological             | Assumptions about the nature of man  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depravity</li> <li>• Image of God, intrinsic dignity</li> </ul>  |
| Identities                  | Assumptions about the core identities that define the church and its members                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Son/Daughter of God</li> <li>• Ambassador/Missionary</li> </ul>  |
| Metaphors                   | Key metaphors that create shared understanding about the nature, relationship and standing of the church | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body of Christ</li> <li>• Bride of Christ</li> <li>• Temple of God</li> </ul>  |
| Shared Words/Phrases        | Words and concepts that have common meaning between members, creating lines of communication             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripture/ Bible</li> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• Gospel</li> <li>• Great Commission /Mission</li> <li>• Great Commandment</li> <li>• Church</li> </ul> |
| Membership                  | Shared understanding about who is in and who is out of the church  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Christ, evidence of being a believer</li> </ul>   |
| Treatment of each other     | Shared understanding about the general rules of interaction and treatment among members                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love</li> <li>• “one anothers” of Scripture</li> </ul>   |
| Authority                   | A common understanding of leadership and the power of leadership within the church                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus as head</li> <li>• “undershepherds”</li> <li>• Priesthood of all believers</li> </ul>  |
| Discipline & Reward         | A shared sense of appropriate rewards and disciplines for reinforcing common belief and behavior         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church discipline for unrepentant sin</li> <li>• Reward is Jesus and life in His community</li> </ul>  |
| Purpose                     | A shared sense of ontology. This answers the question, “Why does this church exist?”                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glory of God</li> </ul>  |
| Mission                     | The common answer to what the church is to do in its interaction with the rest of the world.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Commission</li> </ul>  |
| Accomplishment              | Shared understanding concerning measuring success in the church's mission.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members playing a role in Great Commission</li> <li>• Training new multiplying disciples</li> <li>• Maintaining health in the body</li> </ul>        |

## **The Austin Stone Community Church**

The Austin Stone Community Church was planted in 2002 with the desire “to be a New Testament Church existing for the Supremacy of the Name and Purpose of Jesus Christ.” The next section of this research examines and analyzes the findings of the investigation through the lens of each assumption category subset.

### **Framework Analysis: Cardinal Assumptions**

**Epistemological.** From the outset, the interviews confirmed the predicted epistemology of the MLC by the theological framework. The culture of The Austin Stone Community Church expresses a distinct and firm belief in the epistemology of revelation. The strength of the evidence for this belief was significant. The theological position was not only articulated, but I also noted an observable tenacity in discussing this position.

Tyler David, a campus pastor and member of the preaching team noted,

The only way I can know God is if he reveals himself to me. I’m incapable because of my sin and because of my rebellion. I can’t see God even if I wanted to, I couldn’t see him. So the truth is I don’t want to either. So the way our church articulates [sic.] the way you know God is he has to reveal himself to you, there is no other way for that to happen.

In the age of information, the common epistemology is one of discovery rather than of revelation. The question was intentionally asked from the perspective of man to test such a response. In asking the question, “How does man obtain . . .” the question itself directs the respondent to answer with “man” as the active participant. Yet, every respondent emphasized man’s passive participation in the reception of the knowledge of God.

The most significant artifact of this culture concerned the methodology and philosophy of preaching. This understanding of revelation drives the church to position the Word of God as central to ministry. Dave Barrett, Executive Pastor of Operations, represented the group by stating, “We value the expositing of Scripture over topical aligning . . . precisely, because we believe that the way God has ordained for man to know about Himself is through His Scripture. So, Sunday preaching is primarily for us

through books of the Bible.”

**Temporal.** The theological framework predicated that MLC cultures would have a short or fast view of time in this life. Each participant at The Austin Stone Community Church expressed the same belief. Preaching Pastor and founder, Matt Carter, stated, “There seems to be a direct connection between the understanding of how short your life really is and the urgency with which you’ll live it.” A narrative that seems to have solidified this biblical understanding in this culture was Carter’s cancer diagnosis in the early years of the church. Furthermore, a member of the church’s pastoral team working overseas was recently murdered. Reminders of the fragility and brevity of life fuel the passion and urgency at The Austin Stone. Noted artifacts directly connected by interviewees included robust leadership development strategies and practices and the opportunity for action at the end of every sermon. Sixty percent of the interviewees cited the theme of leadership development as a result of an urgent lifestyle.

**Anthropological.** The theological framework predicted that two primary themes would arise from a look into the MLCs view of the nature of man. The first theme would be an expression of the depravity of man. The second theme would be espoused as the creation of humanity in the image of God. Both themes were strongly articulated by the interviewees. The tension between these themes, as stated by Tyler David, exists in that man is “totally depraved . . . that they are, like those in Psalm 51, conceived in sin, they’ve known sin from the beginning. But also there is also the dynamic they still have the image of God on them.” This tension is resolved through regeneration and the saving of the fallen man through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The salvation offered through Christ is thus highlighted in the MLC as restoring man to his original purpose, “To glorify God,” as stated by Travis Wussow in answer to question 6.

While an extensive list was expressed concerning the artifacts that manifest from this view of man’s nature, a few were prevalent. Often referenced by the

interviewees was a strong need for leaders, structures, and strategies for engaging the physical needs of the community. In response to the belief that man is made in the image of God and imbued with dignity, the church has networked over 100 non-profits to engage the physical, economic, and relational needs of the city. This venture is symbolized in a 40,000 square foot building, owned by the church, that houses partner non-profit ventures, located in one of the most economically challenged locations in the city.<sup>1</sup> Another artifact captured in behaviors is the significant structures of accountability and transparency among members and leaders. The practice of confession and repentance is often taught from the pulpit and in every training event I observed. Similarly, the leadership structure is articulated as a “group of groups.” Leadership is expected to be accomplished in teams with accountable peers.

**Framework Analysis:  
Internal Cooperation**

**Identities, metaphors, and shared words.** It is appropriate to group identities, common metaphors, and shared words together. These categories represent how the members of a church culture view themselves, what they value most about themselves, and what ideas give them meaning. To make short work of clarifying the results, the most important themes are presented in a cloud format.<sup>2</sup> The size of the concept reflects the frequency in which it was referenced in the interviews. Take notice of the larger themes, as many of these are addressed more fully in the cross-case analysis.

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on the For the City Network, visit <http://www.forthecity.org>.

<sup>2</sup>Wordle was utilized to create the thematic clouds in this chap., accessed January 2, 2014, <http://www.wordle.net/>.

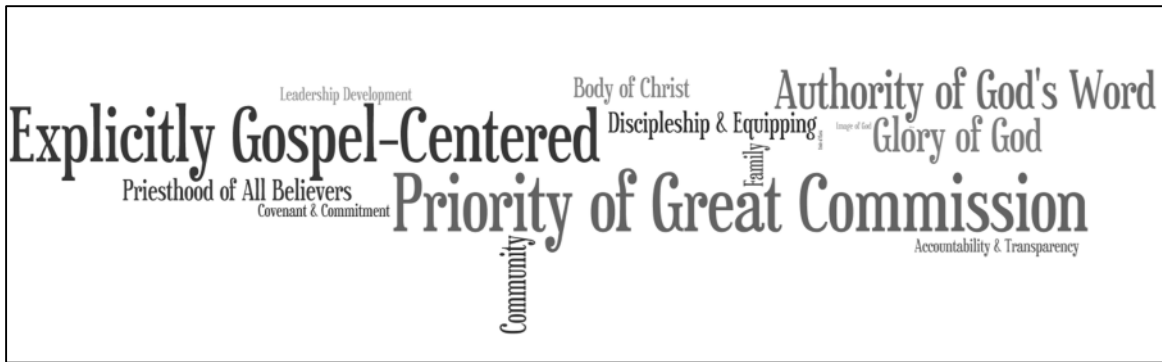


Figure 2. Thematic cloud: The Austin Stone Community Church

All of the expected themes from the theological framework concerning Artifacts of Internal Cooperation (AIC) were communicated during the interviews. These terms were utilized by interviewees with differing frequency, but remained the most significant themes of the case. The one exception to this generalization was the use of “temple of God” as a metaphor within the language of the culture. While the metaphor was used in sermons, there was little other reference to the concept elsewhere. As seen in figure 3, the most significant terminology can be summarized in three terms: “mission,” “glory of God,” and “gospel.” It is prudent to highlight one significant artifact here. The term “missional community” is used rather than “small group” or “home group.” This naming convention is intended to impact the culture by communicating that the existence of community is connected with mission. To belong to the church is to be a missionary.

**Membership and treatment of one another.** The expected results were articulated clearly for both membership and how members ought to treat one another. As predicted, each interviewee articulated membership as a group with requirements, expectations, and accountability. Membership was seen as a covenant commitment between born-again Christians to hold one another accountable to the Word of God. Furthermore, the membership was expected to help one another, serve one another, bear one another’s burdens, and by way of summary, love one another. The most significant artifact was the rigorous membership process. There is an articulated list of commitments

each member is required to sign. Not only this, the commitment is renewed annually, completed by a discussion for accountability to the commitments. For other key Artifacts of Internal Cooperation (AIC), see table 2.

Table 3. Highlighted artifacts of internal cooperation

| Concept  | Highlighted Artifacts   |
|--|---|
| Identity as Son of God/Family and Ambassador for Christ/Missionary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The identity of sonship is communicated distinctly in leadership training on discipleship. Every ministry utilizes this language in discipling members.</li> <li>• Small groups called “missional communities” to reflect the identity of the community of believers as both family and ambassadors.</li> <li>• One of three primary practices utilized by missional communities is a monthly meal called “family table” as an expression of this identity.</li> </ul> |
| Membership as a community of regenerate believers                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The membership processes reflect feedback loops for leaders to see demonstrated evidence of regeneration in the lives of members. Annual renewal process in place.</li> <li>• Church discipline. There are paper trails, teacher notes, and processes in place for removing members who refuse to repent of grievous sin.</li> </ul>   |
| Love toward one another  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an observable treatment of love and respect among leadership. This artifact is supported by a 0% attrition rate in the 8 senior leaders over the life of the church.</li> </ul>   |
| Authority of God’s Word over the life and practice of the church   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership candidate assessment, training and ongoing feedback. There are robust syllabi for training and assessing leaders according to biblical qualifications. These differ by biblical office.</li> </ul>  |

**Authority, discipline, and reward.** The theological framework accurately predicted the prominent concepts in the responses. A review of the church organizing documentation revealed an authority structure consistent with the assumed authority levels articulated in the framework. Moreover, the care for screening, training, and evaluating leaders according to the specific leadership qualifications listed in the Pastoral Epistles revealed a commitment to careful adherence to the Word of God. These processes

included background checks, invasive character assessments, peer assessments, spouse essays, financial/debt assessment, oral theology examination, written theology examination, and more. This care is shown for all appointed leaders, both paid and volunteer. Documents also reveal a deep commitment to holiness and accountability within the membership. In the area of discipline, there are copious records of numerous cases involving unrepentant members being corrected or removed.

### **Framework Analysis: External Interaction**

**Purpose.** As stated by Matt Carter, “The purpose of the church is to glorify and exalt Christ.” This response was echoed throughout the interviews. A noticeable pattern was not only referencing the glory of God, but, more specifically, the glory of God in Jesus. Tyler David said it in the language of the culture, “Everything for us is that Jesus will be remembered, He will be worshipped, He will be admired and He will be loved. . . . So for us the expressed purpose of this church is to make much of Jesus.”

When investigating artifacts that were considered directly linked to this understanding, respondents connected the belief conceptually to missional activity. Dave Barrett remarked, “We’re going to worship Jesus for all of eternity. We have some jobs to do while we are on the Earth and before Jesus returns to take His Church back home. That has to do, simply, with gathering more worshippers.”

**Mission.** “I think a church that’s on a mission for God . . . it’s fulfilling the great commission, it’s equipping believers to do it,” said Matt Carter. This sentiment was passionately articulated in discussions with church leaders and imprinted on countless pieces of media. A significant theme closely linked to this topic was articulated as “finishing the task.”<sup>3</sup> Leaders often recounted the need for the local church to do mission

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<sup>3</sup>For more on the topic of mission, see John Piper and David Mathis, eds., *Finishing the Mission: Bringing the Gospel to the Unreached and Unengaged* (Wheaton,



among “unreached people groups.” Most notable among the artifacts is the church’s *accomplished* goal of sending 100 full-time missionaries to unreached people groups in the last 3 years.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, leaders indicated that more than 170 more people were already in training to join their fellow members among the unreached. Locally, the church has “missional communities” rather than small groups. This is not in name only. This missional ontology is taught in missional community training and reinforced through oversight, coaching, and narratives of successful missional engagement.

**Accomplishment.** The most significant and relevant theme reported during the research was the measurement of individuals sent into missionary activity. The church measured both the results and the process of developing future leaders and participants in the mission of God. Other measurements listed were number of missional community groups, and number of people engaged in service initiatives through the For the City Network.

### **The Village Church**

The Village Church was replanted in 2002 with the desire “to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.” The next section of this research reports and analyzes the findings of the investigation through the lens of each assumption category subset. Again, table 1 reviews the theological framework along with the expected responses.

#### **Framework Analysis: Cardinal Assumptions**

**Epistemological.** The interviewees at The Village Church expressed a deep

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IL: Crossway, 2012).

<sup>4</sup>Branded as the “100 People Network.” For more information visit <http://www.100peoplenetwork.org>.

conviction in the epistemology of revelation rather than discovery. Josh Patterson, Lead Pastor of Ministry Leadership, captured the group sentiment well by articulating a passion for members “to understand that God is not far from us, but that we need Him, we need Him to reveal Himself to us, we need Him to open our eyes.” This conviction was primarily expressed, according to respondents, in the centrality of Scripture in all teaching, programming, and published writings. The leaders at The Village Church expressed a deep concern for the level of care taken when interpreting and teaching the Words of Scripture. Moreover, there was a significant amount of suspicion articulated concerning the mistake of following the ideas of mortal men.

**Temporal.** In response to the question, “How does the length of human life impact the church?” every respondent quickly articulated the brevity of mortal life and a sense of urgency. Several respondents referenced the diagnosis of brain cancer in Lead Pastor of Teaching, Matt Chandler. The diagnosis “informed us that life is short and so I think there’s a steady kind of urgency in the proclamation of the Word and in the ministries of the Village Church to make sure we faithfully steward our days here,” said Chandler. Brian Miller, Lead Pastor of Ministry Services, noted that this view of time was directly connected to the passion and processes committed to sending missionaries and planting churches. This urgency complements the stated view of space. While the church maintains nice facilities, they have intentional efficiency and minimal physical footprints in order to, as Josh Patterson put it, “Push ministry out into the neighborhoods and out into the homes.”

**Anthropological.** The leaders of The Village Church expressed great clarity in the organizational view of the nature of man. In a word, man was described as depraved. Trevor Joy, Spiritual Formation Pastor, indicated that the gospel is explicitly communicated at every opportunity in view of the “lostness” of man. However, as stated by Josh Patterson, “Man has both inherent worth and dignity by being an image bearer,

although that worth and dignity is somewhat marred by the fall, but it's there. So people matter." Patterson continued, noting that this view has led to a number of significant cultural artifacts:

We [The Village Church] will set aside a weekend to point to the importance of the sanctity of human life, and we'll talk about sex trafficking, we'll talk about abortion, we'll talk about all of these things where there is a devaluation of human life, And we'll hold up high that humanity matters because God has said that humanity matters.

### **Framework Analysis: Internal Cooperation**

**Identities, metaphors, and shared words.** As indicated in the previous study, it is appropriate to group identities, common metaphors, and shared words together. A clever way to view the most important words and ideas to the identity of the church is to view a thematic cloud created by utilizing the coded excerpts from the interviews and input into a cloud creator.



Figure 3. Thematic cloud: The Village Church

As can be seen in the cloud, the culture is strongly influenced conceptually by the theme of “gospel-centrality.” While undoubtedly, many churches would theoretically ascribe to the importance of this theme, at The Village Church the word bleeds out of their speech. From the Covenant Membership Class to the Home Group Leader Training, to The Village Kids curriculum, each piece of training material is soaked with language of the gospel. It is not just a concept; it is a conviction of ministry philosophy at The Village Church.

**Membership and treatment of one another.** The church has embraced the view that the local church members are in biblical covenant with one another, and there are a number of artifacts which evidence this value. Current members interview every potential member and must affirm evidence and profession of conversion. After the individual affirmation, each potential member is placed on a list, which is distributed to the entire membership. At this point, a challenge may be raised concerning a potential member having been truly converted. Finally, once a year, each member is asked to reaffirm membership commitments. Accordingly, members found to be in open, unrepentant, and serious sin are removed publicly from the membership of the church. Behaviors and attitudes between members are thoroughly taught at The Village Church. In the Home Groups Leader Training a significant portion of the training gives distinct theological foundation and practical guidance to love one another well. There is a considerable amount of training in the Home Group Leader Training dedicated to teaching expressly the way in which members are commanded to love one another in Scripture. The leadership does not take for granted prior knowledge among members concerning the behaviors associated with loving each other well.

**Authority, discipline, and reward.** The framework predicted that the MLC would have a strong view of the Authority of God, biblically-qualified leaders, and a conviction concerning the priesthood of all believers. The researcher witnessed all of these themes in significant frequency. The Village Church adheres to a polity of a local plurality of biblically-qualified elders, under the Lordship of Jesus, leading a covenant community. Patterson captures this thought well, saying, “Ultimate authority resides in the Chief Shepherd of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we (the elders) see ourselves as under-shepherds.” This thread of commitment within the body extends in the manner of practicing formal church discipline. Discipline (mentioned above) is accomplished according to a formal escalation pathway that is included in the training manual of every Home Group Leader.

## **Framework Analysis: External Interaction**

**Purpose.** “The purpose of the church is the glory of God by making disciples,” remarked Josh Patterson. There was no ambiguity among the leaders at The Village Church when asked concerning the purpose of the church. Interestingly, if not expectedly, there was no mention that the church was “for” man. Rather, the church’s leaders uniformly stated that the church is “for” God. According to the Covenant Membership Book from The Village Church,

Every thought, word, desire and deed involves the ascribing of worth and value—glory. Each attitude, affection and activity is an expression of our allegiance, whether to our Creator or His creation. God is alone worthy of our worship. Worship is related to every area of our Creator or His creation. God is alone worthy of our worship. Worship is related to every area of our lives. We are called to eat, drink,<sup>5</sup> speak, think and work to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Worship is our lives.<sup>5</sup>

**Mission.** The leaders articulated the mission of the church exactly as predicted in the theological framework. The commitment to engage in the Great Commission was prevalent in the interviews and throughout the documentation review. Significant artifacts emerging from this deeply held conviction are listed in the selection criteria for this study. These include quantifiable statistics on leaders, church planting, church growth, and overseas engagement. This commitment to multiplication through mission is observable by the multiplication of believers, leaders, and congregations by this MLC. One specific artifact to highlight is the Sending Program.<sup>6</sup> This program aims at training future overseas church planters and North American church planters.

**Accomplishment.** The Village Church’s leadership uses a number of metrics to measure their accomplishment of the church’s mission. Respondents often mentioned

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<sup>5</sup>The Village Church, “Covenant Membership Book” (Flower Mound, TX: The Village Church, 2014), 9.

<sup>6</sup>For more information, see The Village Church, “Sending Program,” accessed December 15, 2013, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/flower-mound/outreach/sending-program/>.

or discussed the role of narrative. As Matt Chandler stated, “At this point, the church measures through story, through narrative . . . right now success is judged by what we are seeing and hearing, the stories of lives changed and growing in maturation, the development of leaders.” Other significant measurements listed were professions of faith, baptisms, and membership numbers.<sup>7</sup> These stories, as well as the quantifiable measurements, are displayed on the walls of the church and its offices. Each of these artifacts directly correlate the “gospel-centered” aspect of the church’s mission “to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.” Uniquely, the church leaders connect Internet presence to the concept of mission. Displayed in the office hallway, the researcher observed a poster demonstrating the way online technology was aiding in the task to make disciples. The goal of making disciples is, thus, woven even into the operations of the church.

### **The Summit Church**

The Summit Church has the stated vision to “Love God, Love Each Other, and Love our World.” Since 2001, this vision has been made a reality through the Spirit of God. The next section of this research reports and analyzes the findings of the investigation through the lens of each assumption category subset. Again, table 1 reviews the theological framework along with the expected responses.

#### **Framework Analysis: Cardinal Assumptions**

**Epistemological.** “By special gift of revelation. Revealed, not discovered,” was Pastor J. D. Greear’s quick response when asked how man obtains the knowledge of God. Consistent with the prediction of the theological framework, the leadership of The

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<sup>7</sup>For more information on financials, visit The Village Church, “Finances,” accessed December 15, 2013, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/flower-mound/about-us/who-we-are/finances/>.

Summit Church holds fast to a strong sense of man's need for God's divine revelation. Discussing how the epistemology impacts their behaviors, Greear stated an explicit result of this belief:

[It] leads to a very aggressively evangelistic church; because at no point can we assume that the world is asking the right questions that will lead them to here. It means that our people have to be 'going' . . . it means we're heavy on prayer . . . we can't talk to man about God until we talk to God about the men in our city.

Rick Langston, Lead Pastor for Strategic Development, emphasized that this belief manifested itself through the priority of teaching the Scriptures throughout the programs of the church, communicating a dependency on God's Word.

**Temporal.** There is no ambiguity in the view of the leadership of The Summit Church concerning the view of time. Each interviewee responded passionately that time on earth is short and fragile. This belief led to an articulated and demonstrated humility and urgency. As Greear stated, "I say what we're supposed to do . . . we want to plant a thousand churches, we're supposed to multiply as fast as we can and then we're going to walk off the scene." Will Toburen, Executive Pastor of Discipleship Ministries, remarked, "From birth to death, we want people living on mission now." Following this statement, he described that the church had varying strategies for moving each "lifestage" into engagement of the Great Commission. Describing the impact on their view of space, David Thompson, Lead Pastor of Executive Leadership, stated, "We're not trying to pour a ton of money into our bricks and mortars, but into people, and creating a movement of people . . . we want resourceful excellence."

**Anthropological.** Asked about the nature of man, Will Toburen described the predicted tension inherent in a biblical view of man. He stated, "Man is corrupt and sinful from birth . . . we're dead in our sins and trespasses . . . sons of wrath, children of disobedience . . . we have nothing in and of ourselves to offer to God that would make us right with God, and we're wholly sinful." Yet, Toburen continued, "We're created, ultimately, in His [God] image. We're created to bring glory and honor to Him. We're

created to know Him and be intimate with Him.” Said again, by Greear, “Man is a paradox in that he’s created in the image of God. Yet he is totally depraved and I think our view of that sometimes tries to merge into a lukewarm middle when instead we’re supposed to maintain the paradox.” Toburen stated that this paradox motivates the leadership at The Summit Church to

show man that he is far more sinful than he ever dared to imagine. But at the same time, to elevate the beauty and majesty of the Gospel by declaring that we are far more accepted through the finished work of Jesus Christ and through faith and that than we ever dared to hope.

The behaviors associated with this, according to Greear, are threefold: (1) evangelism, or “preach against the pride of man,” (2) “to be an empowering church rather than a paternalistic church,” and (3) to bless those with gifts “to go do ministry.” More will be said later about The Summit Church’s philosophy to empower the ministry of lay members.

### **Framework Analysis: Internal Cooperation**

**Identities, metaphors, and shared words.** The following categories in the framework build the perspective that members of a church have concerning themselves as a group. These identities, metaphors, and shared words/concepts drive to the heart of the ontology of the church at hand. For The Summit Church, these were articulated with a distinct passion and ownership by each interviewee. When asked about the “identities” of the members of the church, the interviewees responded, generally, with the theme of sonship. Specifically, respondents indicated that believers live in light of their adoption in Christ. In order to illustrate the strength of these concepts relative to one another, a weighted thematic cloud is listed below in figure 5.





Figure 4. Thematic cloud: The Summit Church

As can easily be observed from the cloud, the priority of the Great Commission is an overwhelming theme at The Summit Church. In particular, the sub-theme “send” was significant, demonstrating the emphasis the leaders at the church place on sending people, rather than simply participating locally in the mission of God. This theme was part of the theme family listed above as “Priority of the Great Commission.” When discussing this family of themes, The Summit Church leaders were three times more likely to utilize the word “send” as opposed to other sub-themes such as “making disciples” or “mission.”

Greear explained one metaphor unique to The Summit Church context:

We use the image of an aircraft carrier, because we say a lot of churches want to be a cruise ship, right? A lot of churches want to be a battleship, which sounds a lot better. But with a battleship, all the battle is taking place by the church. We say an aircraft carrier, the battle is sent out, that would be an updated version of just the fact that we are a missionary thing.

One fascinating manifestation of the culture takes place at the end of every Summit Church service. Upon concluding worship, Greear said, the congregation is told, “Summit church you are sent, instead of dismissed, sent.”

**Membership and treatment of one another.** This group of themes connects the identity of the group to its understanding of membership requirements and the expected behaviors toward one another. Rick Langston said it most clearly: “You become a Christian by making a commitment to follow Christ and you become a Church member by making commitment to other Christians . . . we are one body in Christ in that we can call on one another and hold one another accountable.” The Summit Church adheres to a

formal church covenant perspective, which includes regenerate, baptized membership. Each member is expected to sign a covenant expressing the exact commitments being made to the body of believers. Speaking about small groups as a place to express the expected behaviors toward each other, Will Toburen commented,

This is the place where they're going to be shepherded. This is the place where they're going to be poured into. This is the place where they're going to share their hopes and dreams and their failures. And they're going to confess. And that's going to be place where they live out the one anothers of Scripture. . . . Ideally, we'd love to see mission taking place through the small groups.

Not only that, The Summit demonstrates a clear understanding that “love” is the defining attribute and action of the household of God. The mission statement of the church describes the way that the Christian is to approach God, each other, and the world in a manner of love. At The Summit Church, members are to “Love God, Love Each Other, and Love Our World.”

**Authority, discipline, and reward.** The leadership at The Summit Church rallied around a succinct statement concerning authority. David Thompson said it most succinctly: “We’re Jesus-ruled, elder-led, and congregationally accountable.” The Summit Church is led by a group of 8 elders, 4 of which are on the church payroll. While these men are expressly empowered to make directional decisions for the church, a group of more than 150 other leaders are given charge to care for the members of the church. The lens of accountability, according to church leadership, is to be accountable to the body to empower the saints for mission. Meanwhile, the body is accountable to the elders to participate in that mission. When asked how this view expressed itself, Thompson replied, “We really do want every member to see themselves as a missionary.” The sentiment carried a strong implication that the leadership is directly responsible to train and release members into the mission of God, making the entire church accountable to the Lordship of Jesus to complete the Great Commission.

Furthermore, as expected by the theological framework, the concept of church discipline for the unrepentant member was clearly articulated. The Summit Church

leadership demonstrated a formal and articulated process for removing such members. Rewarding members is articulated by Will Toburen: “I think the reward, not to over-spiritualize it . . . but we want the reward to be Christ.” David Thompson integrated this thought by directing my attention to the joy to be found in participating in the mission of Jesus. The Summit Church rewards by “developing people in their gifts and allowing them to be used in ministry.”

### **Framework Analysis: External Interaction**

**Purpose.** In J. D. Greear’s own words,

The purpose of the church is to give glory to God and complete the mission. Love God, love each other, love the world is kind of the summation of the great commandment. And the great commission flows out of the great commandment. So if we’re loving God like we should and loving other people and loving our world then we’ll make disciples.

The nuance in this statement is worth noting. In the view of the leadership at The Summit Church, the Great Commission is the result of the Great Commandment. This creates a logical link between the two that solidifies the ontology of the organization, sourced in the image of God, with its teleology, advancing the mission of God. The most significant artifact of this belief is found in the vision statement of the church: “Love God, Love each other, Love our world.”

**Mission.** Representing the perspective of The Summit Church, Will Toburen articulated the mission of the church is to “make disciples who are being sent to further the Kingdom.” This concept was echoed distinctly throughout the interviews. The language used often included the terms “making disciples” and, even more often, “send.” These words carried meaning and significance for the church leaders’ sense of understanding and interacting with the world. Artifacts sourced in this belief were easily observable, and a sample of them is provided in the “Samples” section of this study. Notable among artifacts are the 31 short-term and mid-term mission trips listed on the website for recruiting missionaries. In addition, the church extends an on-going invitation

to members through its website to investigate going long-term to unreached people groups. The church has a stated goal to send 1,000 missionaries to unreached peoples by 2050.

**Accomplishment.** In response to the question concerning how the church measures the accomplishment of its mission, the leaders had clear and consistent answers. Respondents included baptisms and number of people in small groups as proxies that verify disciples are being made and multiplied. Furthermore, the church carefully measures the number of people sent on mission from each campus. Lastly, respondents indicated that the budget was used to review alignment of resources with the stated vision to make disciples. In demonstration of its commitment to send missionaries, The Summit Church allocates 10 percent of its budget annually to planting churches overseas.<sup>8</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This project hypothesized that key elements of church culture could be derived from each of the three subsets of assumptions. These hypotheses were examined by conducting interviews focused on a theological framework (chapter 2). The theological framework represents a concise biblical theology informing each of the thirteen categories in the Structural Framework. Each case study demonstrated a strong connection between the articulated beliefs and observable artifacts of each MLC and the anticipated results predicted by the theological framework. This connection not only demonstrates a consistent theological foundation between the MLCs examined, but provided the opportunity to observe dominant patterns and themes that emerged through the interview process. The theme families that emerged hold significant value to the researcher in the attempt to discover foundational convictions and beliefs shared across churches succeed in multiplying. These themes demonstrate the most discernable

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<sup>8</sup>For more artifacts and access to The Summit Church, see “Annual Report 2013,” accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.summitrdu.com/annualreport>.

emphases within the subjects when considering their elements of culture surrounding paradigms of internal cooperation, external interaction, and even the most cardinal assumptions.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the frameworks of tacit assumptions that exist in specific church cultures that enable the multiplication of believers, leaders, and congregations. The goal of this project was to discover and analyze key elements of church culture present in well-established multiplying churches.

#### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The research questions used to shape the inquiry for this project can be stated as

1. What espoused values of church culture enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?
2. What cultural artifacts enable the local church to multiply believers, leaders, and congregations?

Moreover, by testing these hypotheses against the theological framework included in chapter 2, particular patterns and themes emerged. These patterns and themes were then aggregated and included in the following cross-case Analysis. As a review, the hypotheses presented included

1. There are key cultural elements derived from cardinal assumptions common to multiplying churches.
2. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning internal cooperation common to multiplying churches.
3. There are key cultural elements derived from assumptions concerning external interaction common to multiplying churches.

#### **Cross-Case Analysis**

This section of chapter 5 addresses the underlying similarities between the cases. Answering the research questions and confirming the hypotheses, the following

theme “families” will demonstrate the key elements of church culture that enable multiplication in these churches.<sup>1</sup> These families represent the groups of themes that emerged as the most significant elements of multiplying church culture. Included in these theme families, as hypothesized, are elements derived from cardinal assumptions, assumptions of internal cooperation, and assumptions of external integration. Following the cross-case analysis, I highlight implications of these findings on the local church. Finally, the project concludes with any topics that are recommended for future inquiry.

The six primary theme families to be explored in this analysis are (1) Purposed for the Glory of God, (2) Priority of The Great Commission, (3) Explicitly Gospel-Centered, (4) Authority of the Word of God, (5) Priesthood of All Believers, and, finally, (6) Committed Community. Each of these theme families is discussed, followed by key common artifacts. At the conclusion of the cross-case analysis a brief discussion of specific smaller, yet pertinent, patterns is included.

### **Theme Family 1: Purposed for the Glory of God**

**Belief/value.** One of the most significant groups of themes to surface during the inquiry into the culture of MLCs was the reality that the purpose of the church is to glorify God. While this may come as no surprise to many readers, this theme is important to draw out. The rise of humanism around the globe has resulted in contemporary churches using anthropocentric language. In a noble, albeit unbiblical, attempt to reach more people, anthropocentric churches spend a considerable amount of energy to communicate that the church is primarily about and for the people. As an example, Willow Creek Community Church, a large multi-site church based in Barrington, Illinois, has stated its purpose:

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<sup>1</sup>“Families,” as noted by Creswell, is reducing a large set of codes into “a small, manageable set of themes to write into my final narrative.” John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013).

“Willow Creek exists to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> While representing a biblical desire to help people follow Jesus, this statement does not express the belief that the church belongs to and exists for God. This analysis is not meant to be nit-picky, but the statement itself suggests that the existence of the church is centered on changing irreligious people. In other words, the primary object of ministry is irreligious people. For the MLC, the primary object of ministry is God Himself. While Willow Creek’s statement and others like it likely reflect a genuine conviction stemming from love toward man, these MLCs have articulated something ontologically different. In the case of all three MLCs, each experiencing both incredible numeric growth and significant external sending, making more of God is the primary objective and making disciples is the primary means of achieving that objective.

A significant sub-theme that was consistently referenced in this theme family was the worship of God. Respondents described worship as the manner in which man glorifies God. Therefore, for each of the subject MLCs, worship is not a means of doing ministry in the church, it is an end for which the church exists. This text captures the concept well: “Other societies exist for the good of man as a moral, social, political being; she [the Church] exists for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners.”<sup>3</sup> Here, the word “for” modifies “the glory of God” while the word “in” describes the means by which it is accomplished. Josh Patterson of The Village Church summarized this conceptually in his interview, saying, “The purpose of the church is the glory of God by making disciples.”

**Key artifacts.** The most prolific artifact that threaded between the churches

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<sup>2</sup>Willow Creek Community Church, “What Willow Believes,” accessed January 9, 2014, <http://www.willowcreek.org/aboutwillow/what-willow-believes>.

<sup>3</sup>James Henley Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell: Theological and Ethical*, ed. John B. Adger (Richmond, VA: Davidson Bros. & Co., 1871), 2:45.



was the deliberate language of the surpassing and ultimate worthiness of God. More specifically, each church articulated and acted upon the reality that God's glory is valuable enough to risk life and comfort for its sake. All of the MLCs indicated that their commitment to giving resources and attention to multiplication efforts was sourced in a passion for God to receive fame, honor, praise, and glory. This is quite significant. These churches have significant resources that could be used to improve ministry at the local level but they choose to allocate them for efforts outside their control.

### **Theme Family 2: The Priority of the Great Commission**

**Belief/value.** Standing apart as the most frequently identified theme during the research, the priority of the Great Commission is the defining mark of the MLC. While the language used in referencing this ambition differed from church to church, it was conceptually equivalent across the board. This theme family bled through each set of questions, mentioned by at least one respondent in each question. There were, however, a couple interesting distinctions.

One distinction was the specific language used to describe the manner in which the Great Commission was communicated. At The Austin Stone Community Church, the most consistent phrase used to communicate the priority of the Great Commission was the word "missional." For The Village Church, it was the phrase "making disciples." Lastly, for The Summit Church, the word "sent" or "send" was primarily utilized to communicate the concept. This distinction, while not making a difference in the capacity to multiply, did seem to reflect the strategy for multiplication.

For example, engagement in the Great Commission at The Village Church was strategically connected to one-on-one discipleship. In a sense, engaging the Great Commission happens as members engage in the formal discipleship of others in the gospel. While there were many opportunities to engage in evangelistic endeavors, the strength of the language indicated an organic, inside-moving-outward sense of engagement.

The Summit Church, however, utilizing the word “send,” tended to create the link between the Great Commission and physically changing locations. In this sense, the Great Commission was most connected to the sense of leaving everything behind, leaving comfort and moving toward the lost with the gospel. To be sure, The Summit Church is doing a marvelous job reaching and baptizing people in their own neighborhoods and cities, but there remains a unique culture of “sending.”

Finally, The Austin Stone Community Church made most consistent use of the word “mission.” To the observer, the word “mission” and other language concerning the Great Commission had a sense of being a task to be accomplished. The impact of the word “mission” seems to create in the members of the church a sense of noble duty. Even in the discussion of their small groups (conveniently called “missional communities”), the articulated strategy is to have a missional community in every “pocket of people” in the city of Austin. This creates a sentiment of destination and mission completion at the end of the work. While themes like community appeared less often during interviews with The Austin Stone leadership, the theme of mission was not lacking.

Each of these words carries with it a different, but needed, aspect of engaging the Great Commission. While each church is actively multiplying, the shape that it is taking is connected to the language it is using.

**Key artifacts.** One of the most important artifacts consistent with this theme was the frequency of the call to engage the Great Commission. This vision was not simply cast on “Mission Sunday” or any one-time event, but it was described as an essential part of everyday Christianity. For each of these MLCs, to be a Christian is to be a missionary. Each church had commitments in their membership covenants that described this expectation. There is a repeated directive to the body that evangelism is expected of every member.

Another important artifact present in all of these MLCs with respect to priority of the Great Commission was the presence of a pipeline for training and mobilizing

missionaries and church planters. Each church had a defined, articulated, and marketed plan for assessing, coaching, training, and launching future missionaries and church planters. While each church had strong partnerships with external agencies and networks, none of the churches outsourced the basic functions of recruiting and training the next generation of those who would engage the Great Commission.

Finally, a significant artifact came in the form of measurements. Each church described a robust system for measuring not only the number of people engaged in great commission activity, but also the number of people being trained. These numbers are not only collected, but also shared and celebrated with the whole church body. These measurements create the understanding of expectation and set up the hero narratives for the church.

### **Theme Family 3: Explicitly Gospel-Centered**

**Belief/value.** One of the more fascinating theme families emerging from the research was the explicitly gospel-centered philosophy of each of the three MLCs. This theme family emerged in a number of ways. First, the word “gospel” and the phrase “gospel-centered” appeared in unambiguous frequency. The word or phrase appears prominently in the extended vision statement of each of the churches. A second cause for the emergence of theme was its distinct usage. Notably, the phrase indicated more than sharing the gospel story with the lost. As stated by Matt Carter of The Austin Stone Community Church, “Not only do we depend on the gospel for our salvation, but we also depend on it for our sanctification.” This sense was expressed by each of the leaders in the MLCs. For the MLC, gospel-centrality is the good news of Jesus Christ not only for acceptance into the family of God, but also the motivation for continued obedience to Father. Thirdly, the phrase emerged due to the frequent mentions of the concepts of depravity, confession, repentance, and atonement. While these words are not necessarily indicative of a gospel theme, the way in which they were used was directly correlated.

For the leaders in the MLCs, the gospel requirement of confession and repentance was connected not only to the application of atonement but also to the resulting behavior of one who has been atoned.

**Key artifacts.** In each church, a primary artifact of this theme family was the ongoing modeling, training, and emphasis on accountability, transparency, confession, and repentance among the members. For the MLC, the centrality of the gospel highlights not only the depravity of man but also points to forgiveness and restoration in Jesus Christ. The admission of depravity, notably in the leaders themselves, makes much of the gospel of Jesus and less of the men God has appointed to lead His churches. In rewriting the hero story of the local church from the man who never sins to the wicked man who constantly repents, the culture is impacted. The MLC culture rallies around the gospel of Jesus rather than around physical heroes and statesmen. More will be said about this in the discussion of committed community below.

#### **Theme Family 4: Authority of the Word of God**

**Belief/value.** Rob Bell, best-selling author and former church pastor, was asked, “So the Bible is the Word of God?” His response: “Yep. Lots of things are.” He continued that there was a danger in referring to the Bible as the Word of God “because often the perspective that starts with the Bible being the Word of God tends to skip over the fact that the Bible is first and foremost a human book, written by people for people.”<sup>4</sup> Bell goes on to argue that didactic referral to the Bible confuses people and causes mistrust. A recent study conducted by George Barna showed that 29 percent of all

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<sup>4</sup>Rob Bell, “What is the Bible? Part 22: The Word of God, Baby,” accessed January 7, 2014, <http://robbellcom.tumblr.com/post/69620018734/what-is-the-bible-part-22-the-word-of-god-baby>.

Americans disagree with the statement that the Bible is accurate.<sup>5</sup> Not only that, but from 1991-2011, “The largest change in beliefs was the ten-point decline in those who firmly believe that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches. Only 43% of self-identified Christians now have such a strong belief in the Bible.”<sup>6</sup> Throughout the interviews with the MLCs, the Bible was not only referred to as the Word of God, but was consistently referenced as the only authoritative recording of the will of God. Every interviewee quickly and passionately affirmed that the Bible alone was the source for all of the teaching and instruction within the church.

**Key artifacts.** The primary artifact among the churches was the philosophy of preaching. Each church indicated a passionate commitment to preach the Bible in an expository manner. Again and again, when asked why particular approaches were taken to ministry, polity, or current cultural ideology, the response indicated a commitment to submit to the authority of Scripture. Will Toburen of The Summit Church, expounding on implications of the epistemology of revelation: “That’s why we place such priority and prominence on the preaching of God’s Word when we gather together corporately. That’s why we’re not going to compromise that in the context of our small groups. We want the Word of God to be central.”

### **Theme Family 5: Priesthood of All Believers**

**Belief/Value.** A significant theme family clearly articulated in the interviews and demonstrated through artifacts was the notion of the priesthood of all believers. The clear indication by every MLC was that every single believer was to be a part of the

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<sup>5</sup>Barna Group, “How Post-Christian is America?” April 15, 2013, accessed January 5, 2014, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/608-hpca#.UsxO2GRDu6p>.

<sup>6</sup>Barna Group, “Barna Study of Religious Change Since 1991 Shows Significant Changes by Faith Group,” August 4, 2011, accessed January 4, 2014, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/514-barna-study-of-religious-change-since-1991-shows-significant-changes-by-faith-group#.UsxQGmRDvjA>.

ministry of God. In fact, in several instances the terminology was utilized that every believer should think of himself or herself as a missionary. This was explicit confirmation of the theological framework's prediction of a core identity being that of an ambassador of Christ. The primary metaphor articulated throughout the research was that of the "Body of Christ." In this way, the MLCs depicted the necessity of interdependent, collective engagement of the body in the work of Christ. This belief is a far cry from the perspective that members of a local church are passive spectators watching clergy do the ministry of God.

**Key artifacts.** The most significant artifact associated with this belief was the distinct commitment to training all members in the tools and knowledge necessary for ministry. Each church articulated a careful strategy for equipping the members of the church to perform their God-given calling to be ambassadors for Christ. In every small group training, the MLCs spent significant time investing in honing the skill of participants in performing ministry. This included training in systematic theology, gospel-centered counseling, conflict resolution, sharing the gospel, and discipling others. Each MLC demonstrated an expectation for even the newest members of a group to participate in the mission of God and ministry to members of God's community.

### **Theme Family 6: Committed Community**

**Belief/value.** Like many other cultures and organizations, the MLCs indicated a strong sense of community existed and was pursued within their churches. A significant belief informing this concept of community was a shared conviction for the community to be committed to one another through covenant. In each of the three MLCs, the community was believed to be founded not on mutual convenience, but on dedicated accountability to one another. One of the primary functions between members was described as accountability. This wording indicated a strong belief that believers would be expected to help one another obey the commands of Christ and finish life in faithfulness. The

committed community was articulated as one whose members had higher expectations of personal faithfulness to the group than of receiving benefits from the group. Significant to this concept was the thinking that this commitment to the group was in addition to their commitment to Christ, or at least an expression of it. Said another way, there are commitments that all believers have toward Christ, but another set of commitments that believers have toward a specific group of people. This belief does much to remove individualism from the common notion of a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ. While each member is, as an individual, a Christ-follower, he or she is also part of this Christ-following community.

**Key artifacts.** The most defining example artifacts shared by each of the MLCs were the processes and systems surrounding membership. The centerpiece of this commitment for each MLC is a list of commitments each member is required to sign upon admittance to membership. These commitments include, among other things, a commitment to submit to elder authority, practice spiritual disciplines, pursue unity in the church, engage in missional activity, and support the church financially. Additionally, before members are admitted, a training class is required for understanding these commitments. Solidifying this culture of commitment, each MLC had an annual process for every member to review and renew their membership in the church. While the processes of renewal varied, they were conceptually equivalent. Lastly, each MLC expressed a commitment to formal church discipline for members in active, unrepentant rebellion to the Word of God. While every one of the interviewees expressed a sincere desire for church discipline to result in repentance and reconciliation, each one affirmed the need to remove members publicly in the case where repentance did not occur.

### **Notable Specific Patterns**

There are a few notable patterns that immersed outside the theme families. The first pattern was a unanimous view on the perspective of time. When asked how the length

of human life impacted ministry, every interviewee answered the same. The constant refrain indicated that life is very short and, therefore, ministry must be done with urgency. In fact, several interviewees referenced Psalm 39:

Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah. Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them. (Ps 39:5-6)

This text has led these MLCs to live a sacrificial lifestyle with little desire to invest in things that will not last. Each pastor indicated a distinct awareness of the brevity of their mortal life and shared a conviction that the priority to pass on the reigns of leadership must be paramount. A significant thread in this pattern was the urgency to plant churches and make multiplying disciples. This sentiment was rooted in the fragility and brevity of human life and propelled by responsibility to entrust the gospel to faithful men who will be able to teach others to do the same (2 Tim 2:2).

The second pattern concerned the concept of legacy. While each church indicated a desire to impact the future, none expressed an interest in the long-term notoriety of their current church's reputation. To be sure, each was quite passionate about the reputation of the church and being faithful to the Word. However, each church expressed the sentiment that replication and multiplication was the goal rather than an enduring institution.

The final pattern—concerning common metaphors for the church—was absent in the research. The theological framework, built on biblical theology focused on particular elements of assumptions in a church culture, predicted that the three predominant New Testament metaphors for the church would be articulated by MLCs. These primary New Testament metaphors used for describing the church are “the bride of Christ,” “the body of Christ,” and the “temple of God.” Interestingly, while the metaphor “body of Christ” was mentioned a significant number of times and “bride of Christ” a handful of times, “temple of God” was not mentioned even once. No conclusion can be drawn concerning this absent theme, but complete silence concerning it must be noted. Could it



be that there is something in the contemporary MLC that is adverse to the New Testament church metaphors? Is there something lacking in the MLC in relation to this absent theme? These and other related questions may need to be explored in a future inquiry.

### **Research Implications**

The most important research implication of this study is the strong connectivity between the deep theological convictions that accompany the desired multiplicative results. While it is not possible completely to correlate the success of these MLCs to their theological convictions, it is also impossible to separate them. My desire is for evangelical pastors to concern themselves with the fundamental beliefs of their church family with more intensity than their concern for methodologies, practices, buildings, or programs. This study draws a distinct line from strong theological orthodoxy straight to the practice of accomplishing God's mission through the local church.

Also, it would be inappropriate not to mention the link established between multiplication and the priority of the Great Commission in the life of the local church. This study could help church leaders rethink the motivation for church growth. Pastors and churches must realize that multiplication is not an end in itself. Growing a church, constructing buildings, increasing podcast downloads, and gathering more Twitter followers are not the noble purposes for which Jesus bled to redeem His Church. Jesus has purchased for God His Bride, the Church, and every local church that is united to God in Christ has been given a mission. This mission is not simply to grow, or even worse, merely to survive until the world passes away. The mission of the church is to make and multiply disciples, leaders, and congregations until every person whom God has purchased has been saved. Then, and only then, will the Son of God return to take His Bride home to enjoy His glory forever.

A final implication of this study could be changing the way pastors and church leaders think about organizational culture, and more specifically, church culture. While the study of organizational culture is still relatively new, it has already offered some

profound insights into how culture can be leveraged for improved performance. Hopefully this study will add to the church's insight and precision in engineering and shaping local church culture for the glory of God.

### **Research Applications**

The applications for this research could contribute to churches desiring to break out of a simple growth strategy and begin to aim for multiplication. This research details not only the artifacts associated with MLCs, but more importantly the deep convictions they share. The implication of this research is for churches to reject the simple copy-and-paste approach encouraged by conferences and books based on best practices. Rather, as is suggested by the research, there are deep theological convictions that not only support cultures that multiply, but also serve as the source for programs, processes, and structures that catalyze multiplication.

Another application for this research could be to provide a framework for analyzing a church culture. For any church wanting to evaluate for possible divergence between deep assumptions and espoused beliefs, the structural framework can provide a guideline for analysis. In fact, the structural framework is flexible enough to be used by anyone to build his or her own theological framework. The categories of assumptions are consistent across church cultures and can be used as a basis for understanding the presuppositions of an organization. The theological framework summarized in table 1 would be particularly helpful in constructing a summary-level view for reviewing church culture.

Lastly, this study can be used for continued ecclesiological research into the modern church multiplication movement. The distinct success of the three subject churches can potentially offer significant understanding to improving missional efforts in North American churches. It is my hope that this study advances the discussion beyond mere pragmatic emulation into deeper discussion concerning the fundamental beliefs that motivate multiplying churches.

## **Further Research**

There is significant need for further research in the area of church culture, particularly for catalyzing multiplying churches. As North America inches closer and closer to the category of “post-Christian,” a need for a fresh movement of multiplication is urgently needed. The approach of the research for this study was qualitative, and as such was able to extract the narrative and commentary of those who are a part of these successful churches. However, a quantitative look at the correlated elements of church would be extremely helpful. A quantitative analysis would provide substantiating evidence for the connectivity between beliefs, artifacts, and multiplying results. Selecting a large random sample of evangelical churches, including both multiplying and non-multiplying churches, and testing them against the results of this study would be an insightful assessment of the predictability of the theological framework.

A second follow up study to this research could engage the question of the ability of the local church leadership to engineer or shape the church culture. This research was completed with the assumption that church culture can be analyzed and shaped. However, there does exist the need to affirm the degree to which the culture can be shaped and the most productive means for accomplishing it.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus is Lord of all creation. He has given to His church a mandate, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded. And, lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19–20). Every local church shares in this global mandate, to take the gospel to every nation. Churches will look different, but they have but one purpose—to glorify God by making disciples of all nations.

The hope and aim of this study is to help the local church fulfill this mandate by multiplying disciples, leaders, and congregations. The beauty of God’s design for multiplication is the capacity for the same gospel to penetrate, redeem, and use every

culture it encounters. Nowhere should this be more true than the local church. The assumptions that lie deep in the souls of local churches shape and frame the way the church participates in God's Great Commission. Many may find models, philosophies, and programs can make incremental impact on the capacity to gather people on a Sunday. However, among the many gifts and abilities God gave to man, the ability to cultivate is one of the most needed employments. Pastors and leaders in North America have at their disposal a significant—and mostly untapped—power in the culture of their churches. May God use this study to help them align these cultures with the principles that God has given in His Word, and confirmed in many churches, to unlock the power of multiplication.

APPENDIX 1  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

One primary tool was used to conduct this research, applied in two ways. A series of questions was used for gathering information. The questions were answered in one of two ways. First, the questions were posed during on-site, personal interviews with leaders from each church. Each interviewee was also provided the opportunity to answer questions in written format after the interview. The questions were directed toward the hypotheses of this research. Furthermore, the questions were aimed at discerning content from each of the categories described in the structural framework developed in Chapter 2.

**Cardinal Assumptions**

1. Primary Question 1: According to this church, how does man obtain the knowledge of God?
  - Probing Question 1: What kind of things can man understand apart from God?
  - Probing Question 2: What is the extent of man's capacity to know the things of God?
  - Probing Question 3: How is this belief communicated to members?
  - Probing Question 4: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?
2. Primary Question 2: How does the length of human life impact the ministry of the church?
  - Probing Question 1: How is this belief communicated to members?
3. Primary Question 3: How do facilities, environments, and spaces fit into the strategy and vision of the church?
  - Probing Question 1: Are there strengths and weaknesses of using physical spaces in the work of ministry?
  - Probing Question 2: How is this belief communicated to members?

4. Primary Question 4: In general, what is the nature of a human from birth?

Probing Question 1: What capacity for good and for evil does man contain within himself?

Probing Question 2: What value does man have?

Probing Question 3: Where does the value of man come from?

Probing Question 4: What is the purpose for mankind?

Probing Question 5: How is this belief communicated to members?

Probing Question 6: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

### **Assumptions of Internal Cooperation**

5. Primary Question 5: How should the member of the local church identify themselves? What is/are their primary identity(s)?

Probing Question 1: How is this belief communicated to members?

Probing Question 2: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

6. Primary Question 6: What key metaphors are commonly used for describing the local church?

Probing Question 1: How are these metaphors communicated to members?

Probing Question 2: What are the implications these metaphors on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

7. Primary Question 7: What are important words and concepts among the church members?

Probing Question 1: If I asked the membership about the three most important concepts or words for this church, what would they say?

Probing Question 2: Can you define each of these words in a few sentences?

Probing Question 3: How are these words and concepts communicated to members?

Probing Question 4: What are the implications of these words and concepts on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

8. Primary Question 8: What does it mean to be a member of this local church?

Probing Question 1: Who can be a member?

Probing Question 2: How does someone become a member?

Probing Question 3: Can someone be removed from membership, and if so, how?

Probing Question 4: How is this idea communicated to members?

Probing Question 5: What are the implications of this position on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

9. Primary Question 9: How do the members relate to each other?

Probing Question 1: What are some important functions members serve in each other's lives?

Probing Question 2: What are some key marks for identifying healthy relationships within the membership?

Probing Question 3: How is this belief communicated to members?

Probing Question 4: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

10. Primary Question 10: What is the authority structure of the church?

Probing Question 1: How are decisions made in the church?

Probing Question 2: What is the role of clergy in leading the church?

Probing Question 3: Who is empowered to do ministry?

Probing Question 4: How is this viewpoint communicated to members?

Probing Question 5: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

11. Primary Question 11: What is the church's method for rewarding and disciplining members?

Probing Question 1: How, and for what, are members disciplined?

Probing Question 2: How, and for what, are members rewarded?

Probing Question 3: How is this framework communicated to members?

Probing Question 4: What are the implications of this framework on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

### **Assumptions of External Interaction**

12. Primary Question 12: What is the purpose of the church?

Probing Question 1: Why does the church exist?

Probing Question 2: How is this belief communicated to members?

Probing Question 3: What are the implications of this belief on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

13. Primary Question 13: What is the mission of the church?

Probing Question 1: What is the church supposed to do in order to be successful?

Probing Question 2: How is this mission communicated to members?

Probing Question 3: What are the implications of this mission on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?

14. Primary Question 14: What does the church measure to determine its success in accomplishing the mission?

Probing Question 1: How does the church measure the things it wants to do?

Probing Question 2: What processes or instruments exist for making these measurements?

Probing Question 3: How are these measurements communicated to members?

Probing Question 4: What are the implications of these measurements on the structures, processes, and behaviors of the church?



## APPENDIX 2

### THEME AND PATTERN CODES

Table A1. Theme and pattern codes

| Code | Theme Family | Depth | Theme   |
|------|--------------|-------|---|
| 1    |              | 0     | Priesthood of All Believers                             |
| 2    |              | 0     | Glory of God  |
| 3    | 2            | 1     | Worship of God  |
| 4    |              | 0     | Priority of Great Commission                            |
| 5    | 4            | 1     | Send  |
| 6    | 4            | 1     | Evangelism  |
| 7    | 4            | 1     | Mission   |
| 8    | 4            | 1     | Multiplication  |
| 9    |              | 0     | Explicitly Gospel-Centered                              |
| 10   | 9            | 1     | Depravity   |
| 11   | 9            | 1     | Confession/Repentance                                   |
| 12   | 9            | 1     | Atonement or Redemption                                 |
| 13   |              | 0     | Authority of God's Word                                 |
| 14   |              | 0     | Leadership Development                                  |
| 15   |              | 0     | Family of God/Child of God                              |
| 16   |              | 0     | Body of Christ  |
| 17   |              | 0     | Holiness  |
| 18   |              | 0     | Accountability/Transparency                             |
| 19   |              | 0     | Covenant  |
| 20   | 19           | 1     | Commitment  |
| 21   |              | 0     | Community/Togetherness                                  |
| 22   |              | 0     | Bride of Christ   |
| 23   |              | 0     | Follower of Christ / Disciple of Christ                 |
| 24   | 23           | 1     | Discipleship/ Discipling members /<br>Equipping members |
| 25   |              | 0     | Image of God  |

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## ABSTRACT

### EXAMINING A CHURCH CULTURE OF MULTIPLICATION: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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This project explores the elements of organizational culture present in local multiplying churches. The project aim to highlight relevant assumptions and resulting paradigms common among these churches. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, definitions, assumptions, rationale, research problem, hypotheses and methodology of the project.

Chapter 2 proposes structural and theological frameworks for investigating a set of presuppositions that contribute to local church culture. The theological framework applies the theological content to the structural framework. This chapter provides a biblical model for cultural elements in the local multiplying church.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology utilized in this project. The chapter discusses the project population, the context of the sample churches, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and the limits of the generalizations gleaned from the case studies.

Chapter 4 discusses the results of the case studies. For each case, the chapter highlights the consistency between the research and the theological framework proposed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of a cross-case analysis. This chapter explores common and significant theme families that emerged during the research, as well as other notable themes. This chapter also denotes research implications, research applications, opportunities for further research, and a brief conclusion.

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