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EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH OF
RURAL NEWTON COUNTY, MISSOURI, FOR OUTREACH

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH OF
RURAL NEWTON COUNTY, MISSOURI, FOR OUTREACH

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I dedicate this project to the members of New Salem Baptist Church, who will receive the benefit of all the hard work for the glory of God and the benefit of our community.

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PREFACE

I want to thank the Lord for calling, equipping, and guiding me throughout my life. I would not have pursued a doctorate or pastored a church if it were not for him. The Lord has incredibly blessed me and has put me to work doing what I love; it is indeed a wonderful calling.

Second, I must thank my beautiful bride, Rebecca Martin. You are patient, kind, and supportive. You supported me as I was simultaneously a full-time employee, bi-vocational pastor, student, husband, and father. You are the mother of our children, the proofreader of my papers, and the love of my life.

I need to thank New Salem Baptist Church, who saw the potential in me as God has guided us toward the proclamation of his kingdom. I also want to thank my faculty supervisor, John M. Klassen. If it were not for your help, I do not know how I could have finished this work. Your insights into what was needed to help clarify my arguments were immensely helpful. Thank you for everything you did in and out of the classroom.

It is my intention that this project not only create a missional living environment in New Salem Baptist Church that could help revitalize the church but show other rural churches how to see their potential to become revitalized as well. I grew up in rural churches, and I know their potential. I am ever thankful for the rural church.

Philip Andrew Martin

Neosho, Missouri

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A primary purpose of the church is to evangelize the nations by sending believers into all areas of the world to make disciples. There are times when a local church may have to focus in on internal matters, for example dealing with a pastor who is preaching contrary to the gospel or significant issues within the leadership structure. A temporary inward-looking focus is sometimes necessary to correct error and maintain gospel fidelity; however, a church should only be inwardly focused if it is necessary for correction. When the time has come to focus outward, that focus should follow an Acts 1:8 paradigm starting in the immediate community, then increasing in scope until the whole world hears the gospel message.

Context

The context of this project took place within the ministry of New Salem Baptist Church (NSBC) located in rural Newton County, Missouri, between the cities of Neosho and Seneca. There are five factors in the life of the church that made this project necessary. The first factor is the age of the congregation. Most members are between the ages of sixty and eighty. There have been several health scares as well as a consistent number of funerals. The community surrounding NSBC is younger, 83-percent are under the age of 59 in the community. The church has a need to evangelize the community and see her neighbors come to Christ.

The second factor is the children's ministry at NSBC. A few children who first came to Vacation Bible School several years ago began attending other monthly events and then transitioned into attending Sunday school and worship services regularly. These children, most coming out of a Roman Catholic background, are eager to share the gospel

but have not had any training on how to do it effectively. The children's zeal to evangelize and the fact that they could move from the area and change schools was a motivating sub-factor for the project. Westview Elementary School is a country school district that educates children from kindergarten to eighth grade, and then families choose either the Neosho or Seneca school districts for high school. The children choosing a new school district can be beneficial to the church with new peers for the children to evangelize. Likewise, the children choosing a new school district can be harmful if the children choose to attend elsewhere because of their new friends.

The location of New Salem is the third factor for the project. The church building is located approximately equal distance from both Neosho (8.7 miles) and Seneca (8.4 miles) on Norway Road. The church building sits at the corner of Norway and Falcon Roads, approximately two miles from U.S. Highway 60. The location is important in that the community is growing. While most places are witnessing a migration from rural to urban, the community around New Salem is seeing the opposite occur. Many of these new community members are non-churched or are current believers who may be looking to attend a church closer to their house.

New Salem has a rich history in the community, located at or near the corner of Norway and Falcon since 1868. The members started the nearby cemetery that bears its name. The church building was originally located near the cemetery, which is half a mile from the current building. New Salem is in a strategic location where the building and grounds are visible to the community.

The setting is strategic for branching out to other counties and states that are within a twenty minute to one-hour drive away. The community itself is changing from mostly Caucasian to a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural demographic. Some prejudice has arisen within the community and the church. Additionally, the community is becoming younger and the church is not. The church needs to change with the community—it currently looks like the community of twenty to thirty years ago.

A fourth factor is discipleship in the church. The discipline of personal devotional time is key. Some members take it for granted and others are serious about time with the Lord. It is evident in the life of these members that personal devotion time is not a priority. A minority of members, the ones whose family members are missionaries, actively evangelize. Most members, who have had training on how to evangelize, do not because it is a secondary issue to them. A survey was conducted as part of this project to determine whether it was because they feel the church is fine the way it is, they do not sense the need, lack of personal discipleship, lack of training, fear, or for other reasons.

A fifth factor is the missionary thrust of New Salem. The church supports missions financially, but rarely physically. A few members have gone on short-term mission trips, and most of those have been international trips. New Salem has lost its focus on missions and the church's role. It is just something it does because they have done it for nearly two decades, but no one has gone on a trip in several years.

New Salem senses the need to go to every nation, but it is failing. The church shifted with the pastor directly before me from an outward focus to an inward one. The members did this to rebuke incorrect teaching and to survive. During the previous pastor's short tenure, the number of church members dwindled down to a core group. This core group of members neglected the outward reach of the church, and now they are ready for outreach.

New Salem is in a rural, central location near the highway, two miles from four other churches and one school. This setting is both a strength and a weakness. The church has a positive outlook toward missions, but the focus is off because of a necessary inward turn but is now poised to reach the community at large and breakdown the barrier of prejudice. The main concern of New Salem is to refocus on what it means biblically to be on mission as a church and to mobilize the members for kingdom advancement.

Rationale

The local church must model missional living in its local community before it can adequately reach the rest of the world.¹ It is here where New Salem is failing. While the community is growing around the church, the church is plateaued because of a lack of outreach. The church needs equipping for this kind of sending, as it is necessary to start locally and expand out in increments to the entire world.

The project addressed the equipping of the church for outreach in its immediate community. It was taught that age is not a factor in outreach. Anyone from children in grade school to retirees can evangelize. As part of this teaching, there was a confrontation of the sin of prejudice and a work toward racial reconciliation no matter the background of the individual member.

New Salem is located in a rural community between the two most populous cities of Newton County, MO. Rural churches have historically been evangelistic and at the forefront of advancing the gospel in America. The rural areas in America are vanishing, but churches in rural America can have an impact on missions through giving as discussed in chapter 3. It was important to remind members of New Salem of the rich history of outreach in rural areas and what is currently happening in churches of a similar size.

The location of New Salem is important to remember as Newton County is seeing a reverse trend of people leaving the urban areas to a rural setting. Newton County is seeing an influx of international immigrants. New Salem is in prime position to take advantage of the migration of people of all nationalities into the area. New Salem understands international missions but needs guidance on seeing the nations that have

¹Missional living references the work the church does to reach the lost for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries and a lifestyle that emphasizes that work. For more on this definition, see Alan Carter and Katherine Carter, "The Gospel and Lifestyle," in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Ashford (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle.

come to the area. This project served to equip the church for outreach and developed a ministry plan to launch the church and send the members into the community.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the members at New Salem Baptist Church of rural Newton County, Missouri, for outreach.

Goals

The following four goals were developed to help the members of New Salem live a missional lifestyle. These goals began with an assessment, moved to teaching, and then finished with implementation of the lessons learned. These goals equipped the members for outreach via evangelism and events to make disciples for Christ.

1. The first goal was to assess members of New Salem regarding their knowledge of a missional lifestyle.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-week sermon series and Sunday school curriculum on missional living
3. The third goal was to increase knowledge of missional living among members at New Salem.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan for outreach to the community and congregational health.

As each goal was met, the members of NSBC began to see the vision of the church as a platform for the proclamation of the gospel to the lost. These goals were to develop the members spiritually to live life with missions as a priority. The following section defines the methodology used along with the measurement of progress and benchmark of success for each of the stated goals.²

²All the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess members of New Salem regarding their knowledge of a missional lifestyle. This goal was measured by administering a Missional Living Practices Inventory (MLPI) to all active members.³ The members were surveyed regarding their understanding of a missional lifestyle and current practices of such a lifestyle. This goal was considered successfully met when all active members completed the survey and the survey had been analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of current understanding of a missional lifestyle among NSBC families.

The second goal was to develop an eight-week sermon series and Sunday school curriculum on missional living. Four pastors measured the goal by utilizing a rubric⁴ to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, teaching methodology, scope, applicability, and relevance of the curriculum and sermon series. The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceeded the sufficiency level. The series was amended until it met or exceeded the standards set forth.

The third goal was to increase knowledge of missional living among members at New Salem. This goal was measured by administering the MLPI after the series to measure the change in missional lifestyle knowledge. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan for outreach to the community and congregational health. This goal was measured by a committee of three members who utilized a rubric⁵ to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes,

³See appendix 1

⁴See appendix 2

⁵See appendix 3

training elements, provision of resources, and the action steps needed. This goal was met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Mission. Simply stated, *mission* is the church crossing cultural barriers to proclaim the gospel. *Mission* can be defined in several ways. In one sense *mission* “refers to the *missio dei*, the mission of God.”⁶ However, *mission* is a combination of the two. A more robust definition is as follows:

Mission is the people of God intentionally crossing barriers from church to nonchurch, faith to nonfaith, to proclaim by word and deed the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.⁷

Missions. A succinct definition of *missions* is the work the church does in evangelizing and taking the gospel to everyone. Another thought on *missions* is that it is the mission of humans, as contrasted from the mission of God. Charles Van Engen in his definition of *missions* states that it “is achieved by means of the church’s participation in God’s mission of reconciling people to God, to themselves, to each other and to the world . . . through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁸ Van Engen defines *mission* and *missions* as one term, *mission*, when they need to be separate terms. *Mission* is the church crossing cultural borders while *missions* is the work that the church does when it crosses those borders.

⁶Justice Anderson, “An Overview of Missiology,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1989), 3.

⁷ Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 26-27.

⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

Missional living. *Missional living* is a lifestyle marked with intentionality toward being on mission.⁹ It is difficult to come up with one single definition of *missional living* as different authors use it varyingly. It is important to note that missional is neither emergent, nor evangelistic or seeker-sensitive, nor is it church growth. *Missional living* is “the whole life of every believer. Every disciple is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture.”¹⁰ A problem could arise when some want to limit missional to the church alone and not to a lifestyle; this is not a problem as a missional church is where Christians living a missional lifestyle gather to regroup and go out as God sent his son, so the Son sends the church and every Christian.¹¹

Missio Dei. A literal translation would be the “mission of God.” There are several nuances to this term. The goal of the *missio dei* is the kingdom of God. The *missio dei* is a “testimony to His deity. God would not be the God of mankind if He were not near the world and active in a way relevant to it.”¹² *Missio Dei* focuses mission, missions, and the church solely in the context of God’s ownership of creation, the church, and the mission. If *mission* and *missions* is the church crossing cultures to proclaim and the act of proclaiming the gospel, then God sends the church out. He “becomes not only

⁹This simple definition is a combination of the above mentioned understanding of missional living by Alan Carter and Katherine Carter along with The Commitment that was formed in the International Consultation on Simple Lifestyle, *Lifestyle in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982).

¹⁰Alan Hirsch, “Defining Missional,” *Leadership Journal* (Fall 2008), accessed July 14, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?paging=off>.

¹¹The thought of a missional church composed of missional Christians came from Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

¹²George F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 10.

the sender but simultaneously the One who is sent.”¹³

Evangelism. In a simple sentence, *evangelism* is telling nonbelievers about Jesus. Alvin Reid, in his book *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional*, gave such a succinct definition. *Evangelism* requires communication; the term comes from two Greek words meaning good news (*euangelizo*) and to proclaim (*kerusso*), thus, “evangelism involves bringing good news.”¹⁴ William Fay in his book *Share Jesus without Fear*, as well as Bill Hybels in *Just Walk Across the Room*, did not have strict definitions of evangelism but would talk about sharing one’s faith as a person lives, as if it is a lifestyle. Reid later expanded his definition to be “Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by word and life in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that unbelievers become followers of Jesus Christ in His church and in the culture.”¹⁵

One limitation was placed on the project — the participation in the lessons. It was understood that some people may not make it to Sunday school and service every Sunday. Irregular attendance could cause issues with the surveys used to define the success of the lessons. To alleviate the problem, the sermon notes and the Sunday school curriculum were made available to them.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed missional living and taught a missional lifestyle; to that end, the lessons and training were limited to adults. Secondly, the project was limited to a twelve-week timeframe. Twelve weeks gave enough time to survey participants, tabulate the results, create and teach the lessons/sermons, conduct post-surveys, and develop the ministry plan.

¹³Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 7.

¹⁴Will McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 1.

¹⁵Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 21.

Missional living is essential for all believers. Churches that emphasize a missional lifestyle see more non-believers come to Christ, more baptisms, and more growth than those that do nothing. There was no better time in the life of NSBC than the time of the project to emphasize a missional lifestyle. The community continued to grow, and NSBC was ready to be the light into a dark community.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR OUTREACH

Outreach is one of the ways a local church does missions. Mission, missions, evangelism, and outreach all have a basis in the Bible. If one were to read the Bible, he or she would see the overarching story of God’s redemptive plan. The mission of the church was spelled out by Jesus in the Great Commission, “Go and make disciples,” and the breadth of it in Acts 1:8, “in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world.” The rest of the book of Acts and the New Testament is how the church fulfilled the mandates of Jesus.

God’s redemptive plan was always built on outreach – to all people. God narrowed his outreach focus to Abraham and his family, the nation of Israel, in Genesis 12. God used Israel to reach the rest of the nations. After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the focal point shifted from Israel, the physical children of Abraham, to the church, the spiritual children of Abraham.¹

God’s grace, mercy, and salvation have always been for all people. Evangelism and missions are the tools used to proclaim the gospel to the nations. Scripture affirms the vital place of outreach for the church and provides a blueprint for missional engagement.

Outreach in the Old Testament

When discussing mission and outreach, one must start in Genesis. The first

¹Paul speaks about the promise originally given to Abraham being given to Gentiles in Gal 3 and Rom 4. The book of Acts shows an expanding gospel witness across the Mediterranean, but it also shows the gospel moving from Jews to Samaritans to Gentiles. The Great Commission alludes to taking the gospel to all people.

three chapters of Genesis shows the primeval history of the world and the account of creation. Within Genesis 1-3 are two important points in the discussion of mission in the Old Testament, namely the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and the *protevangelium* of Genesis 3:15.² While the cultural mandate and *protevangelium* are important to the discussion of mission, the most important aspect of these chapters is God's creating act.

Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien state in their book *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Missions* that a discussion of "mission in the Old Testament must begin with God's creation and his purposes for humanity."³ Creation is dependent upon God, yet distinct from him. The first two verses of Genesis set the stage by describing the origin of the universe and how God deals with humanity. Gerhard von Rad says the creation narrative had one purpose – not to tell about creation but to point people toward faith in salvation and election. The creation account in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 reinforces the "testimony that this Yahweh, who made a covenant with Abraham and at Sinai, is also the creator of the world."⁴

Genesis is paralleled with Revelation as the story of God's redemptive plan. It is bookended with an account of creation in Genesis and of a new creation in Revelation. The ultimate act of creation is God's creation of man. Revelation speaks of God's new creation and "his concerns for a people of 'every nation, tribe, language and people' (Rev. 14:6)."⁵ Humans are created in the likeness and image of God, giving them a closer relationship to God than any other created being. To see the closeness of humanity to

²*Protevangelium* is the pre-gospel seen in Gen 3:15. The pre-gospel is good news because redemption will come from God through humanity.

³Andreas Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25.

⁴Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 46.

⁵Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 26.

God, think of the incarnation of Christ. It would have been “inconceivable for him to appear as an animal but perfectly appropriate for him to appear in human form.”⁶

In Genesis 2, there is a second, more detailed account of the creation of man that showcases the uniqueness and the closeness of God to humanity. Man is created out of the ground, and God breathes life into him. Man is dependent upon God, and God is sovereign over humanity and all of creation. Humans are created “to be in a unique relationship with their creator. Thus, humans are to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength (Deut 6:5; 11:1, 22; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:29; John 10:30).”⁷

Humanity’s uniqueness in creation is seen in relationships. The rest of Scripture shows that humanity desires interpersonal harmony. Humanity fellowships with God, unlike the rest of creation that is dependent upon him for existence. Genesis 1:28 shows the blessing God gives man at creation, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Gerhard von Rad believes verse 28 is the consequence of being in the image of God. He writes, “Man is capable because of it. . . . He is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth.”⁸ James McKeown in his Genesis commentary stated the pronouncement of blessing on humanity “should be understood as indicating a supremacy that is harmonious and mutually beneficial.”⁹ The blessing of Genesis 1:28 involves the *missio Dei*. God desires to work

⁶James McKeown, *Genesis*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 27.

⁷Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The story of God’s Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 35.

⁸Von Rad, *Genesis*, 60.

⁹McKeown, *Genesis*, 27.

in partnership with humanity that results in “a harmonious relationship with nature and the environment. The most significant contribution to mission by Genesis is the focus on God’s plan to share his mission with human beings.”¹⁰

A problem arose with humanity. Sin entered the world because of Adam’s disobedience. The serpent tempted Eve, and she faltered when she took a bite of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After taking the bite, she gave it to Adam, who also took a bite. The failure of Adam to properly instruct Eve, to stop her from talking to the serpent and from eating the fruit, caused the creative order that God had just stated was very good to become tainted. God changes role from creator to judge. He curses the serpent and the ground because of Adam, and he increases the pain of childbirth because of Eve. Genesis 3:15 is the one verse within the text of the divine courtroom that provides hope.

Genesis 3:15 contains the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the snake. There are many who see this verse as a promised savior to come, the seed representing one man. However, not all scholars see Genesis 3:15 as stating that. Von Rad states the messianic interpretation “does not agree with the sense of the passage, quite apart from the fact that the word ‘seed’ may not be construed personally but only quite generally with the meaning ‘posterity.’”¹¹

The snake is an evil being that “has singled out man, lies in wait for him, and everywhere fights a battle with him for life and death.”¹² The passage is a picture of hopelessness. The struggle between man and evil would continue its destructive path forever. The verse speaks of a cycle that will not end, and no act of heroism on

¹⁰Ibid., 325.

¹¹von Rad, *Genesis*, 93.

¹²Ibid., *Genesis*, 92.

humanity's part can bring victory or reverse the curse. Yet, it is through humanity that victory is won when Jesus, being fully-God and fully-human, crushes the head of the serpent. Victory is won because of a direct intervention by God.

McKeown states the original readers of Genesis “would expect the book of Genesis to explicate this promise of ‘seed.’” The seed of Eve is then interpreted as “the line of chosen people whom God will bless.”¹³ The line from the seed of Eve is from Adam to Seth onward to Noah, from Noah through Shem to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob down to David, and ultimately in Jesus. The genealogies found in Matthew and Luke both affirm the descent of the seed of Eve from Adam to Jesus, thus showing the promise of Genesis 3:15 for the snake to be crushed is found in Christ.

McKeown argues that when approaching Genesis 3:15, considering the whole canon, it can be viewed as a *protevangelium*, or the pre-gospel. There are many who view it as such. Doug Coleman states that this first gospel makes humanity “both *object* and *agent* of mission.”¹⁴ Humanity is set apart again from the rest of creation as it is through humanity that redemption will come. The good news of this verse is “the evil spirit that controlled the serpent will not have the last word in human history.”¹⁵

The *protevangelium* is there to show there is good news. God does not leave his people without hope. The account of God speaking to Adam, Eve, and the serpent in Genesis 3 seems hopeless except for verse 15 when hope is introduced, and the plan of redemption is first brought up. As one reads further in Genesis, he or she can see the righteous preaching to the unrighteous. It is said that Enoch preached righteousness to his

¹³McKeown, *Genesis*, 39.

¹⁴Doug Coleman, “The Agents of Mission: Humanity,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nation*, ed. Bruce Ashford (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), ch. 3, Kindle.

¹⁵Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 42.

generation. Noah, Enoch's great-grandson, preached righteousness while building the ark. Enoch and Noah stand out as they were chosen by God – Enoch to go straight into the presence of God and Noah to build the ark.

Genesis 3-11 is a story of failure. After the fall, Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel. Cain murdered Abel. The lineage of Adam was then split between his first son, Cain, and his third son, Seth. Noah is of the lineage of Seth, who stayed faithful to God. The wickedness of humanity climaxed, and a flood was sent, but not before Enoch and Noah preached righteousness and warnings to those around them. After the flood, Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth multiplied, and their descendants came together at Babel to create a central civilization and make a name for themselves.

There God confused the languages and dispersed the people. Once again, hopelessness was the outlook for humanity. However, Genesis and the Bible do not end with the story of Babel. It continues into Genesis 12 where hope is once again restored. It is no surprise that after the failure of Babel, God speaks what is in "effect a new creative work."¹⁶ This is not a new creation but a narrowing of redemptive focus. von Rad states it is a "new point of departure in the divine revelation of salvation: an address to a man amidst the multitude of existing nations, a constraining of this one man for God and his plan of history by virtue of a free act of choice."¹⁷

There are parallels of the preceding eight chapters and that of the call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. There were five curses in Genesis 3-11 (3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) and five blessings in Genesis 12:1-3. The significance of the five blessings "is that God now counters the power of cursing with blessing." There are five curses due to the disobedience of humanity, and attention "focuses on Abram to show that blessing and the

¹⁶Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 28.

¹⁷von Rad, *Genesis*, 159.

success it brings are possible through obedience and faith.”¹⁸

Furthermore, there is a specificity of contrasts between the builders of Babel and Abram. The tower builders wanted cohesion and security. Cohesion and security was promised to Abram as his descendants would be a great nation. The tower builders sought a central civilization built upon themselves, yet the blessing of Abram was centered upon God. The aim of the builders was to make their name great, but God was going to make Abram’s name great: “Babel represents human beings making their own plans, while the Abram narrative features a person who discovers that God has a plan for the world into which his personal life would fit.”¹⁹

The idea of a promised seed is shown again. Genesis 3:15 promised one from the woman’s seed would crush the snake. Abram is told if he obeys God then all nations will be blessed. Woman’s seed has the promise of crushing the snake, and Abram’s seed has the promise of blessing the scattered nations. Both promises are dependent upon a sovereign and special act of God. Von Rad argues the blessing in Gen 12:3 is significant beyond Abraham. He views the call of Abraham as an apt conclusion to the primeval history of chapters 1-11 because it is within the narrowing of focus to Abraham that “the particularism of election begins.”²⁰ God intervenes into history to set up the coming of Jesus as savior. It is through Christ and his death on the cross that the church can claim to be spiritual heirs of Abraham (Acts 3:25; Rom 4:13; Gal 3:8,16).

The focus of redemption has always been for all nations. The *missio Dei* centers itself upon Abraham and his descendants. God reiterates his call to Abram in Genesis 17 and 18, changing his name from Abram to Abraham, or from ‘the father is

¹⁸McKeown, *Genesis*, 74.

¹⁹Ibid., 74.

²⁰von Rad, *Genesis*, 154.

exalted' to 'father of a multitude.' The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shows God working through them to bless the nations. The book of Genesis ends with the nation of Israel in Egypt where Joseph, Jacob's son, is in charge. The nation of Egypt is being blessed with Israel's presence. The book ends with hope in sight.

The hope follows into hopelessness in Exodus where one reads of the people being enslaved. God chose Moses to bring the people out of Egypt. Then at Sinai, God speaks to Israel through Moses.

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exod 19:4-6a)

Exodus 19:4 is the "preamble and prologue components of the Sinai covenant. It identifies the parties to the covenant ("I" and "you") as Yahweh and Israel and briefly reminds the recipients of how they came to be united with their God."²¹ Verses 5 and 6 contain the promise of a special relationship between God and Israel if the people obeys. "Three terms spell out Israel's uniqueness: a special possession in distinction from all peoples, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."²²

These verses do more than set up the covenant God is going to make with Israel. He calls them to obedience not only to the Sinai Covenant but to the Abrahamic covenant as well. God desires Israel to accept all the promises made between God and the patriarchs. Israel is being asked to enter into a covenant of grace based on all of God's earlier promises, so that Israel would become "a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people."²³

²¹Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 422.

²²Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 367.

²³John I. Durham, *Exodus*, World Bible Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books,

Humans were created in the image and likeness of God to be the agents of mission. Abraham was chosen out of all the people on earth through whom God would bless all people. Israel was chosen out of all the families of the world to be God's special possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Israel was to be the light of the nations and the mediator of God's blessing. Israel's failure to obey God opened the door for both Jews and Gentiles to become spiritual heirs of Abraham in the church.

The church was not an afterthought. The plan was always moving toward the church. The church has the unique job of evangelistic outreach. Israel did not have that role. Exodus 19:5 states that Israel, in obedience, would be a treasured possession of God. The image in the verse "is that of the unique and exclusive possession, and that image is expanded by what appears to be an addition ("for to me belongs the whole earth") to suggest the "crown jewel" of a large collection, the masterwork, the one-of-a-kind piece."²⁴

God's choosing of Israel as a treasured possession is "the beginning of the outworking of his intention to bring close to himself a people that will join him for all eternity as adopted members of his family."²⁵ Israel was not tasked with cross-cultural evangelism but served as a model for a future where God's chosen would witness cross-culturally. Israel related to the nations "*historically*, through incorporation, and then *eschatologically* through ingathering."²⁶ The role of Israel to gather others together for the glory of God is seen in her role as a kingdom of priests.

Israel's call to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation are similar. As a

Publisher, 1987), 263.

²⁴Durham, *Exodus*, 262.

²⁵Stuart, *Exodus*, 422.

²⁶Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

kingdom of priests “Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s presence.”²⁷ A holy nation refers to Israel’s status of being set apart from the rest of the world. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation meant Israel was to “serve the world by being separate, as a priest served his society by being distinct from it.”²⁸

Israel and the covenant agreement she was entering into “encompasses her whole life, defining her relation to God and to her neighbors, and the quality of her existence.”²⁹ It could be argued that the covenant agreement with Israel was not outreach as it did not mandate cross-cultural evangelism or the sharing of good news. This is true; however, there is an implied outreach in calling the nation to be a kingdom of priests. As stated earlier, Israel’s role toward the nations was seen in incorporation and ingathering. Incorporating people into the nation is seen as early as the account of exodus when the mixed crowd chose to leave with the Israelites (Exod 12:38).

Incorporation is possible, but it meant the Gentile had to become an Israelite. The Israelites were not actively looking to make proselytes. They did not intend, to quote the apostle Paul, to “become all things to all men” (1 Cor 9:22). As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, they were set apart from the other nations to draw people to them, so they could participate in God’s blessings. They had a view to the end of time that saw all nations gather together under Israel to be a part of God’s grace.³⁰

The ingathering of the nations is seen in the Psalms. Psalm 72 and 102 centers on the salvation of the nations during the end times. “Salvation for them (the nations)

²⁷Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

²⁸Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 34.

²⁹Childs, *Exodus*, 367.

³⁰Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 36.

must involve their coming out of the world to Zion in order to worship the Lord.”³¹ Psalm 47 reminds the reader the promises to Abraham were for the whole earth, not just Israel.

Psalms 78 and 132 connects the Mosaic Covenant with the choice of David as king. Some of the Psalms refer to the coming reign of Yahweh in Zion (e.g., Pss 2 and 89). Psalm 67 combines Old Testament priestly material, namely the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-26, along with the Yahweh kingship psalms (Pss 47; 93; 96-99). As an echo of the Aaronic Blessing, verse 1 changes it slightly with the preposition: “the Aaronic benediction has God’s face shining ‘toward’ or ‘upon’ you, but Psalm 67 has it shining, ‘with us’ (lit.)”³²

The importance of the preposition change shows that Israel, who is blessed by God, will attract the nations to her. Verse 2 is a dependent purpose clause stating that Israel will become an attraction “that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.” This is not outreach as one might know it today, yet seeking God’s blessing within this psalm is a way of outreach. The goal in seeking God’s blessing is to spread his grace and his way of salvation. Verse 7 parallels verse 2 with the worshipper asking God’s blessing to “let all the ends of the earth fear him.” Seeing God’s favor reveals God’s salvation for the nations.

Verses 3-5 point toward the future rule of Yahweh as king. He will rule, and he will judge justly. The future hope of God’s manifest judgment is a cause of joy as it ensures justice and fairness. Considering this, the psalmist says seek the blessing of God to draw the nations into belief. The manifest blessing of God’s people draws the nations to Israel to learn more. Psalm 67 is about election and the means of sharing his grace.

Election has to do not with God’s *goal* for humanity, that his blessing is restricted to

³¹Ibid., 51.

³²Craig Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 279.

some and denied to others. It has to do with his *means* of extending that blessing to all. The quest for God's blessing has obvious benefits for the seeker, but its ultimate aim is to publicize God's saving way for others.³³

Outreach in the Old Testament was not going out, but an ongoing revelation of God's way of salvation seen from Adam to Noah to Abraham to the nation of Israel. The importance of these passages was to see the intention has always been for people from all over the world to come to God. It is through Israel that the blessings of God were to be showcased, and it is through Israel, the seed of Abraham, that the promise given to Eve was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is through the church that God's ways of salvation are taken to the nations.³⁴

Outreach in the New Testament

It is true that the New Testament is more mission minded than the Old Testament; however, as has been shown, there is a mission mandate throughout the old. Paul says in Galatians 3:8, "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.'" Paul saw the call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 as the gospel in advance of the coming of Jesus. Furthermore, the concluding book of the Bible shows the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham "as people from every nation, tribe, language, and people are gathered among the redeemed in the new creation (Rev. 7:9)."³⁵

God, who is the creator and sustainer of all things has a purpose and goal for humanity. His redemptive act starts in Genesis by creating humanity in his image and likeness, unique from the rest of creation. The promise to Eve is the promise to Abraham

³³Ibid., 280.

³⁴Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 269. See also, Coleman, "The Agents of Mission: Humanity," in *Theology and Practice of Mission*.

³⁵Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 328.

that the snake would be crushed and the nations blessed. The *missio Dei* is universal in goal and scope.

Considering the goal and scope of the mission, Israel was chosen as the mediator of God's blessing. The ultimate goal of choosing Abraham and Israel was to prepare the way for the Son of God to come. The incarnation was a promise to have God with us from Isaiah 7:14. Jesus was the Messiah who would come to redeem the nations; his death, burial, and resurrection was the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. Jesus was the seed of woman who crushed the head of the snake while having his heel bruised.

During his life, Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of heaven and the mission of God. He kept his activity mainly confined to the Jews; however, "he allowed Gentiles to approach him at their own initiative."³⁶ His ministry was for all people; however, he went to the Jews first, as they were God's chosen people to be the mediator of his blessings.

During his ministry, Jesus sends the twelve disciples out on missionary journeys, first by themselves and then in a group of 70. Jesus sends them out to the lost sheep of Israel in Matthew 10, and then in Matthew 28 he commissions them to go to all people. These two passages are not exclusive of each other; they are in fact in line with the expanding story of redemption. Matthew starts his gospel with presenting "him both as vicarious representative of Israel's destiny and as a light unto the Gentiles who will save 'his' people from their sins (1:21; cf. 26:28: 'for many')."³⁷ Reading further in Matthew 10, one finds verse 18 anticipates a ministry to Gentiles.

The passages in Matthew 10 and in Luke 10 have significance today to teach the church to pray for harvest workers. In Matthew 10 and Luke 10, Jesus stated there

³⁶Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 69.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 90.

was a plentiful harvest but not enough workers. He alludes to those in need of salvation as the harvest and the followers of Christ as the harvest workers. The church also learns the content of the gospel message.

It is most likely the message they preached as they went out was what they heard from John the Baptist in Matthew 3:2 and from Jesus in 4:17, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The disciples were commanded to preach. Earlier in the chapter they were given “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (v. 1). The charge of the disciples was not to preach repentance alone. Matthew focuses in on the mighty deeds of the disciples and shows evangelism should take a holistic approach.³⁸

The idea was to reach the person both body and soul at the same time. There is not to be an emphasis on only evangelism or healings or social justice. Christians are to meet both spiritual and physical needs of non-believers. Putting one over the other does damage to the gospel. Jesus was concerned with the whole person not just the soul.³⁹

The disciples were given authority by Jesus “to heal and drive out . . . spirits in rebellion against God, hostile to man, and capable of inflicting mental, moral, and physical harm, directly or indirectly.”⁴⁰ Authority can be rendered as power, which signifies “permission (license, privilege), then authority (dominion, rule, etc.), and this sometimes suggests ability and power.”⁴¹ In Matthew 10, Jesus gave the disciples ability

³⁸Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 167, Kindle.

³⁹The idea of balance in evangelism and social justice comes from Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). There has been too much emphasis on evangelism, and social justice has been forgotten and vice versa. Keller argued for a balance within this area of ministry, as well as with all areas of church life.

⁴⁰D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1984), 236.

⁴¹John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, An American Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 196.

and power in a limited form as they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. They went out from town to town with the authority given by Jesus to preach and heal.

The church can also learn from the sending of the 12 and 72, to live a simple lifestyle. The parallel account in Mark 6 states Jesus told them to take a staff and sandals. They are not to take anything else. They are “learning to rely on God’s providence” through those they met and ministered to.⁴² The mission is urgent and being unencumbered by extra items means they could get out quicker. The simple lifestyle for the church and for Christians is envisioned here. With fewer items, the church and Christians can get into the mission fields quicker, and rely on God’s providence, allowing them to minister to more people.

The charge to the twelve disciples in Matthew 10 was to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews as they went from town to town. When one approaches the end of Matthew and reads the Great Commission passage, Matthew 28:18-20, and then the book of Acts, none of what is said should be surprising. The disciples knew how to preach, because Jesus had given them hands-on practice. They knew to preach the kingdom of heaven and repentance. They already understood the idea of having authority, if in a smaller amount. They also understood what it meant to go town to town, unencumbered, to proclaim the gospel message.

Matthew 28:18-20 is not a mission for the disciples only, but it is the mission of the church. The Great Commission teaches how to do outreach. In the four gospels there is an aspect of the commission of Christ to the disciples. For this project, however, only the version in Matthew 28 will be examined in depth.⁴³ As said previously, the Great Commission is the mission for the church.

⁴²Carson, *Matthew*, 245.

⁴³The four-fold Great Commission can be found in Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21.

The church has a mission because Jesus gave her a mission and the power to accomplish the mission. Jesus states in verse 18 that he has all authority. It is easy to see the correlation between the sending out of the twelve in Matthew 10 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28. In both instances, he talks about authority. In chapter 10, he gives partial authority to the disciples, and in chapter 28 he claims all authority.

“Jesus is passing the torch to his disciples, even as he promises to be with them forever—spiritually, not physically—to empower them for future mission.”⁴⁴ The commission envisions the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Jesus has the power to send the church out on mission, and he has the power to sustain the mission by sending the spirit to aid the church. Matthew does not mention the coming of the Holy Spirit, but he presupposes it “for it is impossible that any evangelist could have been ignorant of that transforming event.”⁴⁵ He chooses instead to mention the Great Commission, “which ties together some of his own thematic interests.”⁴⁶

The authority Jesus claims is not different from the authority he claimed earlier in the gospel. His authority does not become absolute but rather is expanded to include the entire universe. His authority was already absolute. The expanded authority of Jesus means “Messiah’s ‘kingdom’ (i.e., his ‘king-dominion,’ the exercise of his divine and saving authority . . .) has dawned in new power”⁴⁷ The authority of Jesus implies that “he can guarantee that God’s will will be done on earth as in heaven; that is, he will bring the future and unite the earthly world of humanity with the heavenly world of God and the angels”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 430.

⁴⁵ Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 594.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 595.

⁴⁸ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel*

The authority of Jesus was enough for him to give his mission to the church. When Abraham was called in Genesis 12, he is promised that through his family all the nations would be blessed, and this promise “comes to fulfilment in the mission of the church.”⁴⁹ Psalm 67 looked forward to the kingly rule of Yahweh, and now Jesus, the Son of God, has triumphed over the grave and is the everlasting king. He tells the church, not just the disciples, to “Go, make disciples.”

The main command is to make disciples. Go, baptizing, and teaching are all participles. “Only the verb ‘make disciples’ is imperative.”⁵⁰ The problem one runs into is the use of the word go: because go is a participle in the Greek, does it mean as one is going or simply where one is at? At times Matthew uses go “as an introductory circumstantial participle that is rightly translated as coordinate to the main verb—here ‘Go and make’ (cf. 2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 28:7).”⁵¹ It is hard to argue Jesus meant to evangelize where one is located, not as one is going. The immediate context of a person is important for evangelism, but so is every location where a person goes.

Go is as forceful as make disciples because making disciples requires going (Rom 10:14-15). One cannot make disciples if one does not go. As seen in the Old Testament, Judaism “was not a missionary religion. It was willing for Gentiles to come, as the prophets had predicted they would, but it had no thoughts of going.”⁵² In comparison, the church has a mandate to go. Christianity “must be spread, by a law of its

According to Saint Matthew, vol. 3, *Commentary on Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 683.

⁴⁹Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 683.

⁵⁰Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁵¹Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁵²Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 592-93.

nature; it must be active at the extremities, or it becomes chilled at the heart; must be enlarging its circumference, or its very center tends to be defaced.”⁵³

Make disciples is the command. It is “a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith.”⁵⁴ It is an evangelism that sees more than acceptance of Jesus into the heart. To make someone a disciple “is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, ‘taking his yoke’ of authoritative instruction (11:29), accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them.”⁵⁵

The way to make disciples is to first preach the gospel, and after the profession of faith, baptize and teach the commands of Jesus. Baptism and instruction are not the means of disciple making but are the response to disciple making. Baptism and instruction characterize disciple making as they flow from that command. The New Testament does not and cannot envision a disciple who is not baptized and taught. The command is to make disciples and follow it up with baptism and instruction.⁵⁶

Baptism is “a once for all, decisive initiation into Christian community.”⁵⁷ Baptism is more than initiation into the community of Christians. Baptism represents purification with the use of water. It symbolizes burial and resurrection, both that of Christ and of the believer. Finally, baptism in the name of the trinity is an “oath of allegiance or pledge of devotion to him as our Savior, and our God.”⁵⁸

⁵³Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 593.

⁵⁴Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁵⁵Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 593.

⁵⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 597.

⁵⁷Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁵⁸Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 596.

The path of evangelism is to proclaim the gospel message. Proclamation leads a person from a profession of faith into the community of believers through baptism. The final step in evangelism, leads the new believer in their Christian life by teaching them the commands of Jesus. Jesus tells his disciples they are to teach all his commands. It is the completed commandments of Jesus they are to teach “without omission or alteration, they must teach those whom they disciple to observe.”⁵⁹

The commission of the eleven and the church is one that stands until the return of Jesus. He states that he will be with all believers always, or literally all the days. His promised presence is for “days of strength and of weakness, days of success and of failure, of joy and of sorrow, of youth and of age, days of life and day of death—all the days.”⁶⁰ The vision is toward the end of the age, when the consummation of time will appear, and the world will end. The promise of Jesus is that he will be with all believers throughout all time until the very end.

Jesus was introduced in the first chapter of Matthew as Immanuel or “God with us,” and he “is still God with us, ‘to the very end of the age.’”⁶¹ As the disciples went out and as the church goes out still, Jesus goes along. The result of this promise is the intimacy believers share with Jesus, “the ever-living Son of God. . . . The Jesus who commands difficult obedience is at the same time the ever-graceful divine presence.”⁶²

The scope of evangelism is for believers to make disciples of Jesus where they are and as they go, baptizing and teaching all that Jesus commanded. The continued mission is powered by the authoritative king whose presence guides all believers. The

⁵⁹Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 596.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 597.

⁶¹Carson, *Matthew*, 599.

⁶²Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 688-89.

end of Matthew's gospel is not a closed ending; it is an invitation to join with Jesus in his mission. The breadth of the mission is to the nations.

In the Great Commission, Jesus tells his followers to make disciples of all peoples. D. A. Carson in his commentary on Matthew says some other commentators view the Greek, *panta ta ethne*, as either: all nations except Israel or all nations including Israel.⁶³ Craig Blomberg in his commentary on Matthew states the perspective of *ethne* being non-Jews only is unlikely because God did not turn “his back on the Jewish people here.”⁶⁴ The command of Jesus to take the gospel to all peoples is a continuation of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. The part that changed is salvation is now through Jesus alone, not in trusting and obeying the Mosaic Covenant. Carson goes on to say one should read *ethne* “in its basic sense of ‘tribes,’ ‘nations,’ or ‘peoples’ and means ‘all peoples (without distinction).’”⁶⁵ It is important for the disciples to make believers of humanity, regardless of background, location, or ethnicity.

Luke records in his gospel the disciples were to stay in Jerusalem and then go out from there. The blueprint of evangelism is found in Matthew reaching to all people, but the map of where to go is found in Acts 1:8. In Acts 1:8 Jesus is giving final commands to the disciples just before he ascends into heaven. The command in this verse is similar to the Great Commission.

In the Great Commission, Jesus states he had all “authority” to give out the marching orders. In Acts 1:8, he states the disciples will have power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. The promise of the coming Holy Spirit “is the power to fulfill their mission, that is, to speak, to bear oral testimony, and to perform miracles and in general

⁶³Carson, *Matthew*, 596.

⁶⁴Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁶⁵Carson, *Matthew*, 596.

act with authority.”⁶⁶ The Great Commission promised the presence of Jesus to guide and support the disciples and Acts 1:8 promises the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples.

The Holy Spirit empowering the disciples causes them to be witnesses of Christ, “specifically witnesses to the fact of the resurrection, that is, to the divine vindication of Jesus, the proof that he was what he claimed to be, what the apostles now claimed that he was.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Isaiah calls Israel to be witnesses in the world for God. As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Israel is to be a light to the Gentiles. In Isaiah the nation is called to bear “God’s salvation ‘to the end of the earth’; here ‘the end of the earth’ and nothing short of that is to be the limit of the apostolic witness.”⁶⁸

As seen earlier in the discussion of the Old Testament, Israel did not go out to the nations but would incorporate any of the nations to come into them. Acts 1:8 shows the church is not to be the same way. The road map of areas where the disciples are to witness is the outline of the book of Acts; “‘in Jerusalem’ covers the first seven chapters, ‘in all Judea and Samaria’ covers 8:1 to 11:18, and the remainder of the book traces to progress of the gospel outside the frontiers of the Holy Land until at last it reaches Rome.”⁶⁹ Rome is not the end of the world but is “representative of the whole world” for “if the Gospel can be preached and the church established in Rome there is no limit to their possible extension.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 79.

⁶⁷Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 79.

⁶⁸F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 36.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁷⁰Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 80.

Some argue for an interpretation of ethnic and theological proportions. It is Jerusalem “where Jesus finished his work and where Israel was to be restored in the remnant of Jews who believed in him as Messiah.”⁷¹ Judea and Samaria represent the kingdoms of Judah and Israel that were promised to be restored as one under one king. The ends of the earth represent God’s intention that his salvation reach all peoples.⁷²

For the church, the verse is a road map of target evangelism. Jerusalem could mean the immediate context of the local church. The disciples went to Jerusalem first as it was the base of the disciples and was their immediate context. Judea and Samaria broaden the outreach to a larger area that encompasses the nation; for churches in the United States, it may be best to think of Judea and Samaria separately rather than as a whole, namely state then nation. Judea and Samaria would be one unit for the Romans, instead of two separate entities. Finally, the church is to expand outreach to the ends of the earth, until all people hear the witnesses.

Matthew 28:18-20 promises the presence of Christ until the end of the age, and Acts 1:8 says there will be witnesses until the end of the world. The correlation of these two verses implies “the end of the world (age) will not come till the end of the earth has been reached.”⁷³ Like Matthew 28:18-20, the ending of Acts is open, allowing the reader to see the mission of the church has not ended.

Conclusion

The Old Testament provides a picture of God’s plan of redemption. The focus has been and always will be on the nations. The first notion of this plan to redeem the nations is in Genesis 3:15 as the *protevangelium*. The focal point of delivering God’s

⁷¹Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 130.

⁷²Ibid., 130-31.

⁷³Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 81.

blessings was narrowed to Abraham and Israel. The nation of Israel was entrusted to bring the blessings of God to the nations; however, they did not reach out and did a poor job of incorporating outsiders into their worship.

The New Testament changed everything with the incarnation. Jesus sent out the 12 disciples in Matthew 10 and the 72 in Luke 10, giving them instructions to evangelize the towns and use the authority he gave them to heal. Jesus set the paradigm of evangelism and missions as being more than telling the gospel, but rather helping meet needs while sharing the gospel. The Great Commission gave the command to go to all the nations preaching the gospel and baptizing. Acts 1:8 gives the road map for the church – local community, state, nation, and the world.

With a survey of the Old and New Testament, it is quite clear the Bible presents a blueprint for missional outreach. It is the goal of the church to continue God's plan of redemption and outreach. The church has a biblical basis for missions and historically it has done outreach.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF RURAL CHURCHES IN GIVING

The future of rural churches may seem bleak as more people have moved from rural to urban areas; however, the future does not have to be. Looking at the history of the rural segment of the population and rural churches, one can learn about what makes those areas thrive and what it will take to spread the gospel among the rural inhabitants. While the rural church has been instrumental in the spreading of Christianity around the world, this chapter will look at the history of the United States and how, as the population moved westward, the rural church advanced the gospel with the nation's expansion. The chapter will also look at the changing rural landscape and demographics, while exploring how churches support missions.

While rural churches have played a significant role in the history of the United States, it is difficult to verify that they have played a pivotal role. Most information available comes from either larger churches or urban churches. The larger and/or urban church has more resources available to it, and for this reason, researchers prefer the larger, urban churches, but this does not mean the smaller, rural church is insignificant. Rural churches have been, are, and will continue to be the seedbed for missional outreach.

The Rural-Urban Continuum

The United States of America, and a majority of the world, has held the rural and urban areas in balance. In the past, the scale has tipped more toward the rural areas.

However, within the past one hundred years a significant shift has begun to take place with the world becoming more urbanized. The Country Life Movement¹ started at the beginning of the twentieth century and was designed to make rural life more urban. Leaders of the movement saw “the city as a permanent feature of the American Society” and “hoped to reconstruct rural America so it would provide the same social amenities as cities.”²

The goal of the Country Life Movement was to improve the social conditions in the rural areas of America. Studies that came out of the Country Life Movement, and national commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, attempted to understand why there was a migration from rural to urban. One study suggested the decline of quality rural pastors caused the rural community to suffer, thus causing people to migrate to the urban areas. Denominations responded and acted to improve the rural church community, but just as quickly drew back from the movement because members “stressed building better denominations instead of better rural communities.”³ In the 1920s, the country life movement started to falter. A hundred years after President Roosevelt appointed a commission on country life, the goal of the movement is closer to reality. Thanks in part to the rise of cable television and the internet, the rural world has become more urban than ever.⁴

¹L. H. Bailey, *The Country Life Movement in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911) said the movement was to even up society, because country life was not as developed as city life. He argues a society cannot advance if those in the country are not as civilized as those in the city.

²Merwin Swanson, “Country Life Movement and the American churches,” *Church History* 46, no. 3 (1977): 360.

³*Ibid.*, 370.

⁴Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) has been instrumental in providing insight that even though the area is rural does not mean it has not been urbanized. He stated the reason for rural urbanization is because of television and the internet.

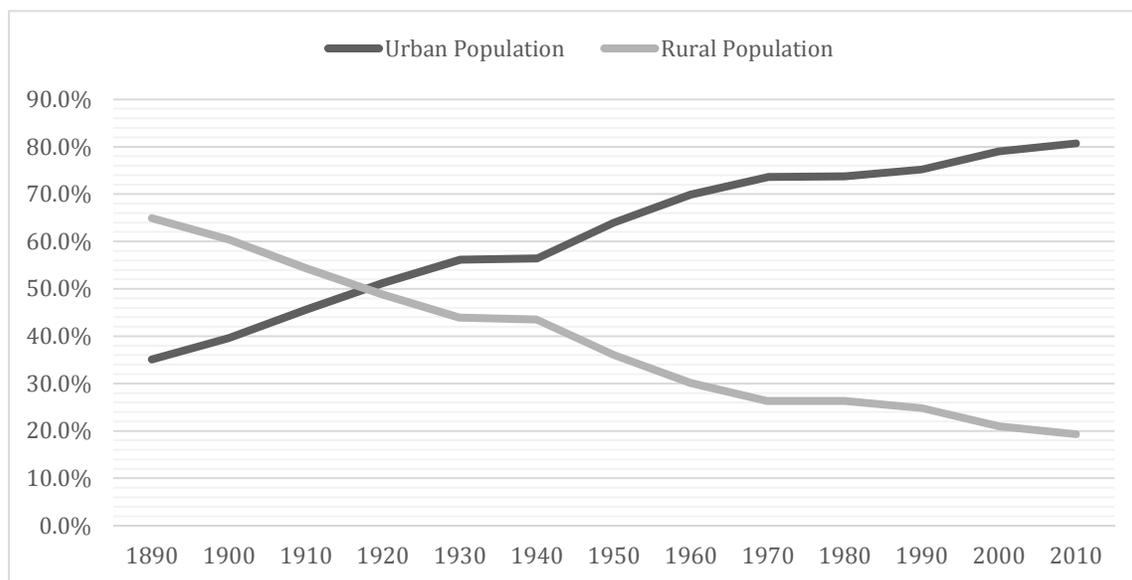


Figure 1. Rural and urban population changes 1890-2010

There has been a major impact on the rural church as well. It can be seen in the shift of focus within denominations. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention has a focus on sending church planters, but the focus is now on the larger, denser urban areas.⁵ For the state of Missouri that would be Kansas City and Saint Louis, the two most populous cities within the state. While possible, it is unlikely a focus will move to rural areas. A focus on rural communities should be important to NAMB because of the impact on urban areas due to populations migration from rural to urban.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total population in 1790 was 3,929,214 with 201,655 living in urban areas while 3,727,559 lived in rural areas. Ninety-five percent of the total population of the United States in 1790 lived in rural areas. One

⁵Focusing on cities is by design as NAMB has stated: “Cities are the epicenters of influence for culture and society. As the city goes, so goes the region. Gospel influence will radiate from the cities we reach, thus impacting the rest of the region.” North American Mission Board, Send Network, accessed May 29, 2016, <http://www.namb.net/send-network>.

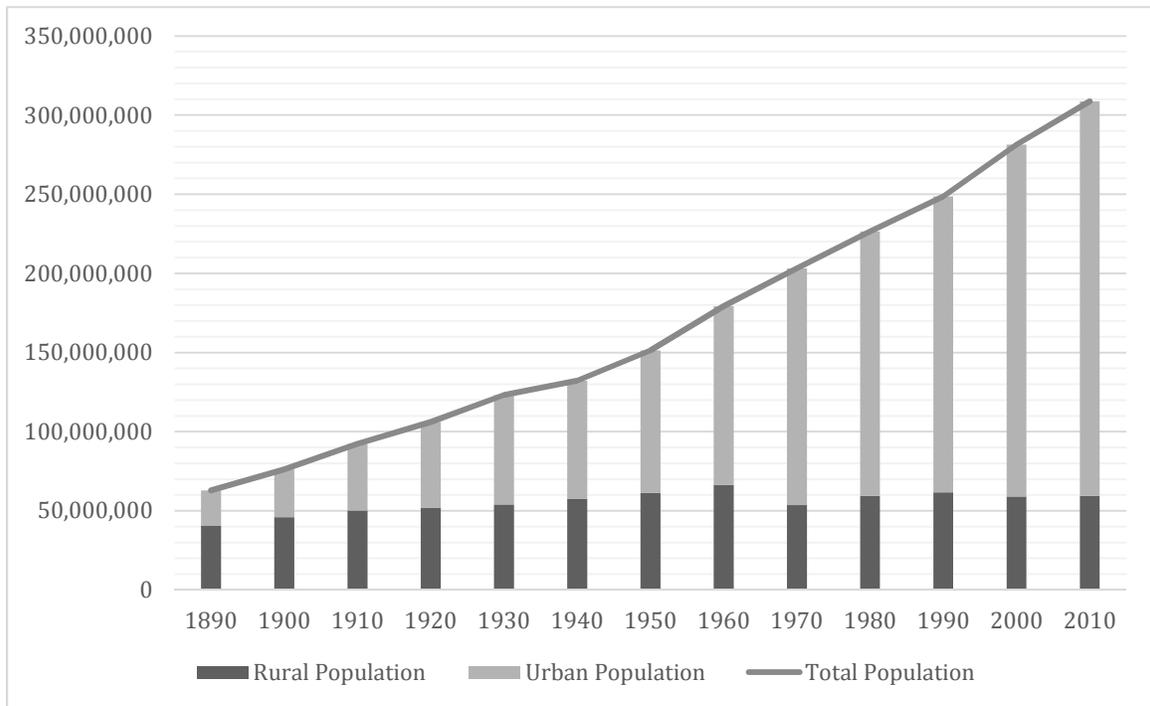


Figure 2. Rural and urban population totals 1890-2010

hundred years later, the rural population accounted for 65 percent of the total U.S. population. Within 120 years, from 1890 to 2010, the population has shifted from primarily rural to primarily urban with the latest census numbers showing a 19 percent rural population. The 2010 U.S. population was 308,745,538, of whom 59,492,267 live in rural areas. Figure 1 shows the shift in the population percentages over the last 120 years, while figure 2 demonstrates the change in population totals for the same time frame.⁶

At this point, the terms *rural* and *urban* should be defined. The U.S. Census Bureau, per the 2010 census, defines an urban area as “a densely settled core of census tracts and/or census blocks that meet minimum population density requirements, along with adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses as well as territory with

⁶Population information obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, accessed May 28, 2016 <http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/urban-rural.html> and <http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>. According to the census bureau the definition of urban area changed with the 1950 Census. The 1950 and 1960 census data figures 1 and 2 use the changed definition.

low population density included to link outlying densely settled territory, with the densely settled core.”⁷ An urbanized area must have at least fifty thousand or more people, while an urban cluster has at least two thousand five hundred and less than fifty thousand inhabitants.⁸ A rural area “encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area.”⁹

Other governmental organizations have different definitions of rural and urban areas. The Office of Management and Budget, OMB, designates areas of the country as Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Micropolitan Statistical Areas. The metropolitan areas have an urbanized area of fifty thousand or more inhabitants plus adjacent territory that is highly integrated socially and economically with the core. The micropolitan areas are similar with the difference being the urban cluster population is between ten thousand and fifty thousand inhabitants. The definition by OMB does not equate to urban and rural classifications because the counties surrounding the urban area could be rural but classified as a metropolitan/micropolitan area.¹⁰ To find the difference in the OMB definitions, one would have to discuss metro/micro areas and non-metro/micro areas.

The United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, realizes “rural and urban are multidimensional concepts.”¹¹ The USDA states there are areas in the nation with no clear marker of what is rural or urban. For many counties, there is a gradient of rural to

⁷U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id-5000&faqId=5955>.

⁸U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id-5000&faqId=5955>.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *2010 Standards for Delineating Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas; Notice*, Federal Register 75, no. 123 (June 8, 2010).

¹¹United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, accessed December 28, 2017, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx>.

urban. For this chapter, the definition of rural and urban will lean more toward the definition of the census bureau – any densely populated area with a population of two thousand five hundred or more will be considered urban.¹² Interestingly, what many would consider a small rural town could be defined as an urban cluster under the census bureau definition.

To see the impact of rural and urban definitions based on geography and population size, one can look at McDonald County and Newton County in Southwest Missouri. All population estimates are taken from the United States Census Bureau American FactFinder¹³ website. McDonald County has an estimated population of 22,620 per the U.S. Census Bureau. The county is a rural area yet is part of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO Metropolitan Statistical Area. The largest town in the county is Anderson with a population of 1,979 and would not be considered an urban cluster, per census bureau definition. The county to the north of McDonald County is Newton County and is part of the Joplin, Missouri Metropolitan Statistical Area. The county seat is Neosho and has a population of 12,181, and by the census bureau's definition is an urban cluster and per the OMB is a micropolitan area. Yet, the towns in the rest of the county do not meet the definition of an urban area – even though they reside in a metropolitan statistical area. The town closest to being considered an urban area in Newton County after Neosho is Seneca with a population of 2,407.

Looking at McDonald and Newton Counties shows how one defines urban and rural can be important. McDonald County is a rural county. Per the U. S. Census Bureau definition of urban no town in the county is urban, yet the county is in a metropolitan

¹²U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://ask.census.gov/faq.h?id-5000&faqId=5955>.

¹³United States Census Bureau American FactFinder, accessed December 28, 2017, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml#>.

statistical area. Furthermore, those who live in and around Anderson would not classify the town as rural. The same can be said for Seneca in Newton County. The USDA is correct in saying the rural to urban continuum is multifaceted with no clear lines of what is and is not urban. For many, rural and urban is a mindset.¹⁴

As urban areas grow bigger, and in some areas spread out, it becomes more difficult to have a defined line of what is and is not rural, especially as the rural population shifts toward an urban area. As can be seen from the figure 1, the cross from majority rural to majority urban occurred between 1910 and 1920. Historically, the time-period between 1910 and 1920 saw the First World War. If one were to look at the data back to 1860, there has been a spike in the shift from rural to urban after major wars. The 1870, 1920, and 1950 censuses saw a rise in urban populations. Prior to 1910, the Industrial Revolution had been ongoing, and the rural population no longer had to stay in the rural context for work; the population could go to a city and find jobs in factories.¹⁵ The rise of readily available work in cities caused urban areas to thrive.

One other circumstance leading to an increased urbanization was immigration. Many migrants dreamed of moving to America as it “offered the dream of becoming an independent farmer or trader in new lands of opportunity.”¹⁶ Approximately thirty million immigrants entered the country between the years 1861 and 1920. In the 1920 census, the first census to have a majority urban population, it listed “13.9 million foreign-born people in the USA, making up 13.2 percent of the population.”¹⁷

¹⁴Walter Zenner, “Beyond Urban and Rural: Communities in the 21st Century” in *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2002), 56-57.

¹⁵Shannon Jung et al., *Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) 69-72.

¹⁶Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press), 57.

¹⁷Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 57.

As immigrants moved into America, they tended to reside in six states – California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey. In the 1990s, immigrants in the United States migrated from “the six gateway states to rural America.”¹⁸ The move of immigrants to rural areas was unable to turn the tide of population loss in rural America. Vast areas of the country are growing; however, the plains have lost population. The plains include all of Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota and parts of Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming.

The Census Bureau reports, “Three-quarters of plains counties—322 of 443—have lost population since 1930. According to the 2000 Census, 272 of 443 of the Plains counties have experienced population declines since 1990.”¹⁹ It is estimated that by year 2020, one-third of the population in the Dakotas, a majority rural state, could be lost to other more urbanized states. The projection is dire for rural communities; the population is leaving for urban areas, and the rural areas could be gone by the end of the century.

From 1790 to 2010, the average loss, percentage wise, of the rural population is 2.9 percent. Using this information and projecting from the 2010 numbers, the rural population percentage will mirror the 1790 urban population percentage by 2060. The census bureau is projecting the U.S. population to be four hundred sixteen million seven hundred ninety-five thousand in 2060;²⁰ of that projection, the rural population could be 20,006,160. The population shift from rural to urban is a cause for concern for any rural church, school, or other institutions.

A focus on rural areas in America by any denomination and mission agency is

¹⁸Ibid., 89.

¹⁹Glen Martin, “Where the Buffalo Roam, Again,” in *Changing U.S. Demographics*, The Reference Shelf, vol. 47, no. 1, ed. Norris Smith (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 2002), 99.

²⁰U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, “Table 1. Projections of the Population and Components of Change for the United States: 2015 to 2060 (NP2014-T1),” December 2014, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj/tables/2014/2014-summary-tables/>.

important. Rural areas have an impact on urban areas, either real or potential, due to the migration of rural residents to urban areas. The number of people who are moving from rural to urban areas is an opportunity for denominations and mission agencies to impact urban areas with the gospel. Historically speaking, the gospel spread across America because of the rural church, and the rural church can help spread the gospel in the urban areas. A gospel impact in the rural area can have a direct impact on urban areas.

The History of the Rural Church in America

Before discussing the impact of the rural church, it would be prudent to unpack the history of the rural church in America. The first colonialists in America were deeply religious, and Christianity was recognized as the religion of the colonies. Church attendance in the 1770s was approximately 50 percent of the population. By the 1790s, 10 percent of the population attended church.²¹ At the time of the American Revolution, the Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians dominated the religious landscape; however, by 1850, the dominant denominations were the Methodists and Baptists who were able to rapidly expand to the rural areas and the western frontier.²²

The rural church and denominations grew in the post-Revolutionary War era because of the newly found religious free market economy. The churches and denominations that were accustomed to being funded by tax payers and controlled colonial religious life struggled to adapt. The Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians stayed mainly on the Atlantic coast line and in more urban areas where they had a structure like the Church of England. The parish style church was easier to adapt to urban areas. In rural areas, there “was no structural attempt to adjust traditional patterns

²¹Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 163.

²²Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America: 1776-1850," *Journal for the Scientific Study Of Religion* 28, no. 1 (1989): 27-29.

to meet the distinctive demands of colonial British North America.”²³

Rural areas needed a different style of church and church government. As the nation grew and expanded to the west, those churches that promoted self-identity and made religion a part of the whole person expanded with the nation. The rural church also grew through immigration within the early years of the United States. The various immigrants each brought their own denomination with them to set up new communities.

Communal living helped advance some denominations within the United States. Communal living, and the churches that became the center of each community, were found throughout America. The leaders of some experimental communities “sought to attain the realization of the church as fellowship.”²⁴ The communities sought to limit contact with the outside world, while expanding the church into the world. These communities were mostly located in rural areas.

As immigrants moved into the expanding west, they set up small communities based around their denomination. The parish church model was no longer a viable source of church life and expansion. At the end of the eighteenth century, and beginning of the nineteenth century, one event helped shape the church in America – The Second Great Awakening.

In post-Revolution America, less than “10 percent of the population belonged formally to local congregations, and many areas on the frontier were entirely devoid of Christian influence”²⁵ Sporadic revivals occurred before the Second Great Awakening in all colonies; "the 'Revolutionary Revival' in backcountry New England and New York

²³Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 38.

²⁴ Thomas A. Askew and Richard V. Pierard, *The American Church Experience* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 104.

²⁵Noll, *History of Christianity*, 166

prepared the way for a spiritual harvest" among the rural population.²⁶

As the frontier opened, Christianity moved with it thanks in part to Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist denominations that had an emphasis on lay ministers along with a decentralized church governance. Camp meetings took place because there were more people coming to meetings "than the small churches could hold, necessitating outdoor meetings."²⁷ After the Cane Ridge camp meeting, "Methodist circuit riders and Baptist farmer-preachers fanned out through the South and the opening West in unprecedented numbers."²⁸ The rural church flourished as revival spread, causing a shift in denominational majority in the USA.

The Second Great Awakening caused a significant growth among Baptists. In 1812, there were approximately two hundred thousand Baptists in the United States, but by 1850, the total was more than one million. Most Baptists were active in national evangelism undertakings. Local associations began forming missionary societies to evangelize the frontier. By 1802, "the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society was sending missionaries to plant churches on the frontier of the upper Midwest."²⁹ The different labors of missions were coordinated under the American Baptist Home Mission Society, which was formed in 1832. Baptists adjusted to the rural western frontier and used revivals as a strategy to plant more churches. Evangelistic zeal and "congregational polity meant that new believers could form new churches without asking permission of any other ecclesiastical tribunal."³⁰

²⁶Ibid., 167.

²⁷Askew and Pierard, *The American Church Experience*, 79.

²⁸Noll, *History of Christianity*, 167.

²⁹Ibid., 179.

³⁰Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 19.

Evangelicals were mobilized for missions in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. The missionary vision of “Asbury, Finney, Baptist farmer-preachers, and likeminded individuals inspired North Americans to take the gospel abroad.”³¹ Yet, many who were mobilized for missions did not leave the United States to evangelize. As the urban centers grew and the nation expanded westward, social conditions in the United States deteriorated. One consequence of the Second Great Awakening “was the enormous increase in humanitarian and reform efforts.”³² Many national religious leaders wanted to provide the gospel to rural areas “and with it the education and civilization which they felt were its natural results.”³³

As the nineteenth century moved past the Civil War and into the twentieth century, the population of the United States tripled, and the number of business increased at a faster pace – they increased eightfold between 1860 and 1920. To accommodate the growth, the nation moved to the city. Cities “were places for immigrants from Europe as well as vast numbers of people leaving farms and rural villages.”³⁴ In the early years of the twentieth century, as the nation became more urban, the political and religious leaders focused on the rural context in what was the Country Life Movement.

The Country Life Movement within churches “was a rural version of the Social Gospel.”³⁵ The Social Gospel focused on applying the teachings of Jesus and the gospel message of salvation to society, the economy, and social institutions as well as individuals.³⁶ Proponents of the Social Gospel “blurred the traditional line between

³¹Noll, *History of Christianity*, 185

³²Askew, *The American Church Experience*, 84.

³³Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 42.

³⁴Noll, *History of Christianity*, 304.

³⁵Swanson, “Country Life Movement,” 358.

³⁶Charles H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915*

church and society and asked that Christians concern themselves less with the former and more with the latter.”³⁷ The Social Gospel in the country, as in the city, emphasized improving society over the gospel message but would say improvement of the society was because of the gospel. The Country Life Movement wanted to emphasize the church as the central institution in rural society, with plenty of social activities. Social Gospel proponents, as well as country lifers, believed the rural church and community could not “thrive if religion meant only preaching against sin.”³⁸

The movement to enhance country life wanted the churches to be an epicenter of social reform, yet many saw the rural landscape as having too many churches. The remedy of too many rural churches was to consolidate denominational churches within counties and create union churches, or the “bringing together several churches of varying denominations into one church.”³⁹ The belief was consolidating churches would give vitality and free up resources for community revitalization.

Denominations created departments solely focused on working with rural churches. This cooperation among denominations and interest in the rural church lasted until the late 1920s, and in this time period church-sponsored events such as “baseball, singing groups, or simple social clubs” were formed and helped “make a church the central institution in a rural community.”⁴⁰ The decline of interest in rural churches began in 1924 when the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) renounced a policy of cooperation that hindered the merging of churches and advancement of rural communities. Other denominations followed suit, and the Country Life Movement faltered. The 1940s saw a

(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 3.

³⁷Swanson, “Country Life Movement,” 359.

³⁸ Swanson, “Country Life Movement,” 362.

³⁹Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 43.

⁴⁰Swanson, “Country Life Movement,” 362.

renewed interest in rural and small-town churches without the aspirations of the Country Life Movement in community development and cooperation among denominations.⁴¹

One of the problems of the Country Life Movement was the movement began outside of the rural areas. While the concern for rural churches and communities was sincere, the work was more of a missional tone. The movement “failed to consider carefully the concerns, values, and beliefs of rural church members.”⁴² Rural people are the ones to decide how their church and community should look.

Those who are familiar with rural life are the ones who did and were able to evangelize the rural areas, as the Baptists and Methodists did in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. Historically, the rural church has had an impact on evangelism in America because of denominations that were not centralized to one location. The rural church still has an impact today, through its giving.

The Impact of Rural Churches

The continuing importance of the rural church is shown in this final section of the chapter. The main emphasis of this section comes from the reporting of churches within the Southern Baptist Convention based on the 2015 Annual Church Profile (ACP).⁴³ The section looks at the numerically small church, or churches with an attendance of 1-99, based on Sunday morning worship attendance, along with their giving to the Cooperative Program, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Great Commission Giving, and total mission expenditures. The normative-size churches are compared to churches with one hundred or more in attendance. It is

⁴¹Ibid., 373.

⁴²Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 47.

⁴³The year 2015 was used because that was the year this project was started; the project reflects the data that was available at the time.

understood that not all small churches are rural churches and not all large churches are urban churches.⁴⁴ The ACP does not ask whether the church is rural or urban, so the limitation of the data requires a look at size instead of locations.

Collection of the data was completed by having access through the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC).⁴⁵ Access through the MBC allows a search to be completed either for a specific church, association, or state convention. It was determined early on the best course of action was to gather the data from each association in each state convention, and then compile the numbers in each state convention to see the national level. One other metric looked at was how much was given per capita, or per person. The per capita giving amount was determined by dividing the amount given in each church by the reported number of worship attenders.

Worship attendance was used over membership numbers because worship attendance would give a more accurate number of who was at the church and who gave each week. Membership numbers include people who are on the membership roll; however, not all members actively attend worship service. Some churches did not report worship attendance or stated their weekly attendance average was zero. Some churches reported no giving for the 2015 ACP. Data was still collected from these churches to give as close to accurate as possible a reflection of the number of churches, the number of worship attenders, and the amount of missional giving – where applicable.

One final point of clarification, Great Commission Giving is different than total mission expenditures because Great Commission Giving is the amount given by the local church to all SBC entities (the mission boards, seminaries, state conventions, local

⁴⁴Historically, the rural church has been smaller in number—fewer than one hundred on Sunday mornings. There may be some smaller urban churches and some larger rural churches; however, one is limited by the data available.

⁴⁵I am a pastor in the Missouri Baptist Convention; thus, I was able to gain access to the ACP.

associations) and endeavors (Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, state and local mission offerings). Great Commission Giving is different than giving to the Cooperative Program. Cooperative Program is an amount given by the church that is then divided between the state and national conventions that covers all SBC entities. Great Commission Giving considers individual churches that give directly to the entities apart from the Cooperative Program. Neither giving amount is inherently missional; yet through giving there is a denominational missional thrust. The data for the Cooperative Program and Great Commission Giving was collected as it helps show the importance of giving by churches to advance the gospel through other denominational sources.

Total worship attendance for the convention in 2015 was 5,147,167, while the number of churches was 36,802. Churches with ninety-nine or fewer in worship attendance made up 59.45 percent of all churches in the Southern Baptist Convention or 21,879. Churches with more than one hundred in worship attendance accounted for 30.18 percent or 11,106 churches. Those churches that did not report worship attendance amounted to 10.37 percent of all churches or 3,817 churches.

Because churches with ninety-nine or fewer make up a majority of churches within the SBC, they will be referred to as normative-size churches instead of small churches. Attendance of the normative-size churches accounted for 20 percent of the total worship attendance of the SBC. Churches with fewer than ninety-nine in worship had 1,025,952 in total attendance, and those with more than one hundred attenders had 4,121,215 in total attendance.

While collecting the data, I formed a working hypothesis that churches with fewer than ninety-nine people in attendance gave more per capita, counted as per worship attender, than the larger churches. Within this hypothesis is an assumption that larger attendance churches gave more toward missions. The assumption that larger churches gave more toward missions held to be true, while the hypothesis that normative-size

churches gave more per capita was false. Churches with attendance of more than one hundred accounted for 82.51 percent of all missions giving, those with fewer than one hundred gave 15.74 percent, and those who did not report attendance accounted for 1.75 percent.

Giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering totaled \$79,804,368.05. Churches with fewer than ninety-nine in attendance gave \$38,036,018.67 or 47.66 percent. Churches with more than one hundred in attendance gave \$40,351,749.51 or 50.56 percent. Churches that did not report attendance gave \$1,416,599.87 or 1.78 percent. Per capita the giving to Annie Armstrong was \$766.39 per person in normative-size churches and \$360.88 in the larger churches. Total the difference is approximately two million dollars between the two church size groups; however, per capita it is a difference of four hundred dollars per person.

The giving to Annie Armstrong is an anomaly because it is the closest giving that was measured. There is no explanation of why normative-size churches gave more per capita than they did with any other giving. It is possible the reason Annie Armstrong had a high per capita giving was because the results of the giving were more tangible. Giving to Annie Armstrong supports the work of NAMB, and normative-size churches can travel to and partner with those who benefit from the offering. Lottie Moon goes to the International Mission Board (IMB), and it is likely the normative-size church is unable to see the direct benefit of the offering because international travel is more expensive. Without a national survey of normative-size churches and their pastors, the question of why will remain unanswered.

No other giving matrix is as close as the giving to the Annie Armstrong offering. Per capita, the giving to the Cooperative Program was \$3,160.65 for larger churches and \$2,957.23 for normative-size churches. Giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is \$827.58 per capita for the larger churches and \$649.29 per capita for the normative-size churches. Great Commission Giving was \$3,848 for the larger

churches and \$4,314.77 per capita for the normative-size churches. Total mission expenditures for the churches with more than one hundred in attendance was \$6209.20 per capita and the churches with fewer than ninety-nine in attendance was \$5,254.71 per capita.

Nationally the churches with more than one hundred in attendance gave more per capita in all instances except toward the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and Great Commission Giving. On average, total per capita giving was \$2,881.26 for the larger churches and \$2,788.48 for churches with fewer than ninety-nine persons in attendance. The hypothesis that normative-size churches gave more per capita to missions is incorrect on a national level.

The data shows the importance of the normative-size churches in advancing missions in North America. Without the normative-size churches, missionary endeavors within North America would be hampered because the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering would effectively be cut in half. Churches with less than ninety-nine in attendance are significant in advancing the gospel because of their impact in giving. The normative-size churches show missionary giving does not have to be done by one church, but by all churches working together. Most of the churches in the SBC have fewer than ninety-nine in worship attendance and accounted for approximately \$347,000,000 in giving out of \$2 billion in total giving.

Conclusion

The rural population is vanishing slowly in America. The importance of rural America in growing the country and advancing the gospel cannot be forgotten. The small, rural church is just as important in advancing the gospel as the large, urban church. This chapter has shown the changing landscape of rural America along with the historical importance of the rural church. It has also shown normative-size churches, which could be urban and rural, have an impact on missionary giving. It is important to understand

where the rural church came from to move it forward by equipping members for outreach.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This project was developed to equip the members of New Salem Baptist Church for outreach. The task involved identifying the level of knowledge the church had about evangelism, mission, and outreach, and how those areas played into their everyday lives and interactions with other people. It was important to understand how the church felt about ministry and life working together to help create a change in conduct of the members. Looking at what the members knew about evangelism, sinfulness, and comfortability of sharing the gospel showed what was lacking and needed to be addressed in the lessons and sermons. Through all of this, the hope was to develop a church membership that focused every area of life on advancing the gospel.

The project was initially intended to be 18 weeks in length; however, in implementation, the project was shortened to 10 weeks. The decision to shorten the project was not because of time constraints; however, it was shortened because the eighteen-week time-frame seemed too long – especially between surveys. The initial plan was to survey the active members, then spend eight weeks developing lessons and sermons to be preached over the eight weeks after the lessons were written and edited, survey the members a second time, and write a ministry plan in the final week. What occurred was the survey of the active members, review of the survey findings, then the writing, editing, and deliver of the lessons/sermons over the next eight weeks, with the final survey occurring the week after the final lesson/sermon.

The project ran from August 6, 2017, through October 22, 2017. During the first week of the project, adult active members and attenders of the church were asked to complete a pre-series survey on missional living practices (appendix 1). Weeks 2 through

9 involved writing, editing, and delivering an eight-week combined Sunday school lesson and sermon series entitled Missional Living. During week 11 of the project, the initial survey was given again to the members and attenders to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson and sermon series.

Prior to the start of the project, five pastors were contacted to help evaluate the Sunday school lessons and sermon series. The week before the project was to begin, one of the pastors had to withdraw his participation due to personal and family issues, and a suitable replacement could not be found in time for the project to commence. The faculty supervisor was consulted about what could be done, and he determined that four pastors would be suitable for the project to continue if a replacement could not be located before the start of the sermon series. The elements of this project were designed to accomplish the goals stated in chapter 1. The survey was designed to gauge the project's success or failure related to attaining those goals.

Week 1 of the Project

The project began on Sunday, August 6, 2017, with the distribution of the survey. The purpose of this survey was to provide a baseline for comparison with the second survey, which was conducted after the eight-week Sunday school lessons and sermon series on Missional Living. Comparing the results of the two made it possible to determine if the sermon series had produced a change in thinking related to evangelism.

I made a brief visit to the one adult Sunday school class to distribute copies of the survey and to explain its purpose. The Sunday school teacher gave the class fifteen minutes to complete the survey at the end of the class hour. Since at least 21 percent of the congregation does not attend Sunday school, the survey was handed out to those who came to worship service before the start of the service, and time was given after the sermon to complete the survey. A few members took the survey home to complete and return.

Out of a total of 14 surveys distributed to adult members and regular attenders, 10 were completed and returned. Some identifying categories were included in the survey – questions 1 and 4 asked if the participant pronounced faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and if he or she had partaken in believer’s baptism. All participants said they had pronounced faith Jesus Christ and were baptized. Question number 8 asked how often the participant shared his or her faith with options of daily, weekly, monthly, semi-monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Three said they share their faith daily, 3 said they did it weekly, 2 said monthly, 1 person answered daily and weekly, while 1 did not answer.

Included in the short answer portion of the survey was a question about whether the sinner’s prayer saved. The question was a yes or no question. Seven people said no, while 3 said yes. One person who said yes added a short explanation saying, “if the person praying it is sincere.” Two of the 7 who responded no then stated salvation is through Christ and prayer is a way to communicate with God.

The survey was 40 questions long and consisted of 8 short answer and 33 multiple choice, using a six-point Likert scale. Results of the 30 multiple choice questions of the survey are summarized in Table 1, with the six-point Likert scale and following discussion.

Table 1. Results of Likert-criteria responses to selected questions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Q 9	--	--	--	1	6	2	--
Q 10	--	--	--	2	3	5	--
Q 11	--	--	--	--	5	5	--
Q 12	--	1	1	3	3	2	--
Q 13	--	--	1	3	3	3	--

Table 1. continued

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Q 14	--	--	--	--	4	6	--
Q 15	--	--	--	1	8	1	--
Q 16	--	1	1	1	7	--	--
Q 17	--	--	--	--	3	7	--
Q 18	--	--	--	--	1	9	--
Q 19	--	2	1	1	5	1	--
Q 20	--	--	--	--	3	7	--
Q 21	--	--	--	--	4	4	2
Q 22	--	3	--	5	1	--	1
Q 23	--	3	--	3	2	2	--
Q 24	4	3	2	--	1	--	--
Q 25	--	--	--	2	5	2	1
Q 26	--	2	--	--	--	8	--
Q 27	1	2	1	2	3	1	--
Q 28	2	7	1	--	--	--	--
Q 29	1	2	--	--	--	--	--
Q 30	--	--	1	3	5	--	--
Q 31	4	3	--	1	1	--	1
Q 32	3	2	3	1	--	--	1
Q 33	4	3	1	1	--	--	1
Q 34	--	1	1	1	5	--	2
Q 35	--	--	--	--	3	6	1
Q 36	4	4	--	--	--	1	1

Table 1. continued

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Q 37	4	4	--	--	1	1	--
Q 38	5	2	1	--	1	--	1
Q 39	4	5	--	--	--	--	1
Q 40	4	3	1	--	1	1	--
Q 41	5	2	1	1	1	--	--

Question 9: I have a firm understanding of the mission of God

The average answer to this question was agreement with the question. One person said they agreed somewhat, 6 stated they agreed, 2 strongly agreed, and 1 did not answer.

Question 10: The local church is a sending agency

The average answer to this question was people agreed with the statement. Five people answered that they strongly agreed with the statement, 3 stated they agreed with the statement, and 2 stated they agreed somewhat with the statement.

Question 11: Evangelism is an important part of the life of a Christian

The average answer to this question was strong agreement. The surveys were split in half between agreement with the statement and strong agreement with the statement. One person answered agree and strongly agree; the higher answer was counted. Those who agreed with the statement stated they shared their faith (3 daily, 1 weekly, and 1 monthly) more often than those who strongly agreed (1 daily, 2 weekly, 1 monthly, and 1 no answer).

Question 12: I am equipped to tell people about the gospel message

The average answer to this question was somewhat agreement. Two strongly agreed that they were equipped for evangelism, while 3 agreed and 3 agreed somewhat. Surprisingly, 1 person disagreed somewhat, and 1 disagreed. The one who disagreed did not state how often he or she shared his or her faith, while the one who disagreed somewhat stated a daily sharing of his or her faith, although beside daily was written “lifestyle” and beneath the question, the respondent “I am sure I fail at this.”

Question 13: I feel equipped to tell anyone, anywhere about Jesus

The average answer for this question was agree. Interestingly, the person who disagreed with being equipped to tell people about the gospel message answered strongly agree to this statement. The lowest answer was disagreed somewhat and was the same participant who disagreed somewhat with the previous statement.

Question 14: Living my faith is evangelism

The average answer was strong agreement to the statement. Six stated strong agreement to the statement, while 4 agreed.

Question 15: People know that I am a Christian by observing my behaviors

The average answer was agreement with the statement. Only 2 out of the 10 participants answered something other than agreed. One of the 2 differing surveys strongly agreed, and the other agreed somewhat.

Question 16: Inviting people to services is just as important as telling them about my faith

The average answer to this statement was agreed somewhat. Only 1 survey agreed somewhat, 1 disagreed, 1 disagreed somewhat, and the other 7 surveys agreed.

Question 17: The church is multinational

The average answer was strong agreement. Every survey, except 3, stated strong agreement. The 3 that did not state strong agreement, answered with agree.

Question 18: I do not save anyone, but God does

Nine out of 10 surveys stated strongly agree. The 1 survey with a different response answered agree.

Question 19: I like to experience the differences between me and other ethnicities

Two surveys disagreed, and 1 disagreed somewhat with this statement. One survey agreed somewhat, and 1 strongly agreed. The other 6 surveys agreed with the statement. The average answer became agree.

Question 20: Prejudice is a sin

Most participants strongly agreed with the statement, which was the average answer. Seven strongly agreed, while 3 agreed with the statement.

Question 21: I recognize sin in my life and repent of it

The average answer to this statement was agree somewhat. The average to this statement was surprising, and it was a low average because 2 participants did not answer the question. Four participants strongly agreed, and 4 agreed with the statement.

Question 22: Communicating the gospel must be done with words

The average answer for this statement was disagree somewhat. The participant who stated he or she did lifestyle evangelism daily disagreed with this statement, as did 2 other participants. No one strongly agreed, 1 agreed, and 5 agreed somewhat.

Question 23: I can lead an evangelistic Bible study

The average answer to this question was agree somewhat. Two people chose strongly agree, and 3 people chose disagree. The other participants were split between agreeing somewhat and agreeing.

Question 24: There is no gift of evangelism

Only one participant agreed with this statement. Four strongly disagreed, 3 disagreed, and 2 disagreed somewhat. The average answer was disagree. It seems the answer shows the church members believed there was spiritual gift of evangelism. One participant who marked disagree initially marked agree somewhat and then marked it out.

Question 25: I am a missionary

The average answer was agree. Half of the surveys had an answer of agree, 2 strongly agreed, 2 agreed somewhat, and 1 had no answer.

Question 26: Anywhere, including my workplace, is a mission field

Eight participants strongly agreed with this answer. Two participants disagreed.

Question 27: My culture is based on my ethnicity

The average answer was agree somewhat. The answers from the participants had a wide range. One person strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, and 1 disagreed somewhat. On the affirmative side, 1 person strongly agreed, 3 agreed, and 2 agreed somewhat.

Question 28: The borders of a culture are contained within the borders of a specific nation

The average answer to this statement was disagree. No participants answered in the affirmative in any manner on this question.

Question 29: Language can be a hindrance to evangelism

The average answer to this statement was agree somewhat. Interestingly, 2 participants strongly disagreed, and 1 disagreed.

Question 30: Certain terms used in the church, i.e., the blood of the lamb, can be a hindrance to evangelism

The average answer to this question was agree. Those who disagreed with the previous statement agreed; 2 agreed somewhat. The difference in the answers to the 2 questions cannot be explained. It is possible the participants saw the terms in question 30 as something that can be avoided and not necessary.

Question 31: I do not trust people of other ethnicities

The average answer to this question was disagree. One participant did not answer questions 31 to 35. On this question, 1 person agreed, and 1 agreed somewhat. The other surveys split between disagree and strongly disagree.

Question 32: Other ethnic groups do not understand cleanliness

The average answer to this question was disagree. One participant agreed somewhat, while the others were in various stages of disagreement.

Question 33: Other ethnic groups are lazy

The average answer to this question was disagree. Four participants strongly disagreed, 3 disagreed, and 1 disagreed somewhat. One person agreed somewhat, while 1 gave no answer.

Question 34: I mainly associate with people of the same ethnicity and culture as me

The results of this question are similar to questions 31, 32, and 33. The average answer is disagree somewhat. Five respondents agreed to the question, 1 agreed

somewhat, 1 disagreed somewhat, and 1 disagreed. Two participants did not answer the question

Interestingly, the participant who agreed, or agreed somewhat, to each question about how ethnic groups are perceived strongly agreed that prejudice is a sin and that he or she recognizes sin and repents of it. One can infer from the answers to the questions about ethnic groups that there is indeed prejudice toward different ethnicities in the life of this individual.

Question 35: The church is to be multinational

The average answer was agree. Six participants strongly agreed, 3 agreed, and 1 did not answer. The participant who agreed to the questions about how ethnic groups are perceived, agreed that the church is to be multinational.

Question 36: I have to travel to do missions

The average answer to this was disagree. Four participants answered strongly disagree, 4 disagreed, 1 strongly agreed, and 1 did not respond.

Question 37: Missions is not done in the workplace

The average answer to this question is disagree. One of the participants who disagreed with statement 26, that the workplace can be a mission field, agreed with this statement.

Question 38: My faith is kept separate from my work life

The average answer is disagree. One participant strongly agreed with the statement while 1 agreed.

Question 39: Involvement in community events, outside of church, is not missions

The average answer is strongly disagree. There was no answer higher than disagree.

Question 40: Only those called can do missions

The average answer is disagree. One participant strongly agreed while another agreed.

Question 41: I am not a missionary

The average answer is disagree. One participant agreed somewhat, 1 agreed, 5 strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, and 1 disagreed somewhat.

In week 12, the results of this pre-project survey were compared to the results of the post-project survey received back during that week.

Week 2 of the Project

The second week of the project was spent reviewing the data from the surveys and planning out the following eight-week Sunday school lesson and sermon series. The series was entitled “Missional Living,” as it was the concept of living on mission that was to be taught to the congregation. The following guide was developed for what topics to cover each week:

1. Lesson: The Four Commands – Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 14:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; sermon: The Command – Matthew 28:18-20
2. Fear 1 – lesson: Prejudice (Good Samaritan); sermon: Overcoming Prejudice
3. Fear 2 – lesson: Rejection (Life of Paul); sermon: Overcoming Fear
4. Fear 3 – lesson: Unsure How (start learning techniques); sermon: Answering How
5. Lesson and sermon: Strategy – Luke 14:25-33 and Acts 1:8
6. Lesson and sermon: Missional Living (count all things as loss for the glory of God – Phil 2-3)
7. Lesson and sermon: Workplace/school evangelism

8. Lesson and sermon: Marketplace evangelism – Everyday evangelism, or as we are going

As the series went, adjustments were made to the schedule and topic of each sermon. The outline that was developed was used as a guideline to stay on topic for each week and to see how the series would advance and build on the previous lessons.

Week 3 of the Project

The Sunday school lesson and sermon series, Missional Living, was introduced to the congregation on Sunday morning, August 20, 2017. The first Sunday school lesson taught and the first sermon preached were on that date. The passages used in the first lesson, entitled “The Four Commands,” were the four-fold Great Commission passages: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21. The question that got the lesson started was “Why do we think it is OK to disobey the commands of Jesus either willfully or through neglect or culpable inefficiency?”

The lesson looked at the similarities of the four statements of Jesus. The main emphasis was Jesus has the authority to command his followers to evangelize the world, and we are to evangelize always. The sermon titled “The Command,” used Luke 24:46-49 as its passage, showed the commands of Jesus are clear and meant to be obeyed. The thesis of the sermon was, “The command of missional living comes that from Jesus effects our entire life and is meant to be obeyed.” The sermon followed the following simple outline:

1. The Gospel Message
 - a. Summarize the gospel message of forgiveness of sins
2. Implied Obedience
 - a. Only full obedience to the command to evangelize is acceptable
3. When to Evangelize
 - a. At all times

- b. As soon as possible – as early as five minutes after salvation

Week 4 of the Project

The second of eight lessons and sermons were taught on August 27, 2017. This lesson and sermon, along with the next two, dealt with fears/barriers to evangelism and how to overcome them. The first barrier to evangelism that needed to be overcome was prejudice. While the survey indicated most members were not prejudiced, there were a few participants who indicated prejudice, while simultaneously agreeing that such views are sinful.

The lesson, entitled “Fear 1: Prejudice,” introduced what the three fears/barriers for not evangelizing were. The lesson noted these fears/barriers were ones noticed by the pastor. The text for the lesson was Luke 10:25-37. The thesis for the lesson was, “To live on mission for God, one has to overcome fears, including prejudice.” The lesson taught the different ideas of neighborliness, and for one to be a neighbor, one must show mercy to everyone. The application of the lesson was to show mercy to everyone and repent when convicted of the sin of prejudice.

The lesson tied into the sermon, entitled “Overcoming Prejudice.” The text of the sermon was Acts 10:34-48. The thesis of the sermon was, “There is no partiality with God, and anyone can be saved.” The sermon followed the ensuing simple outline:

1. No Partiality
 - a. Summarize chapters one through nine to show the advance of the gospel from Jew to Samaritan to Gentile.
 - b. God’s grace tears down barriers
2. All are Welcome
 - a. Praise God that all can be saved
 - b. There is no barrier amongst people in the gospel

Week 5 of the Project

The third lesson and sermon were taught on September 3, 2017. The lesson and sermon covered the second fear of evangelizing. The Sunday school lesson used the Parable of the Sower passage, Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23. The lesson was entitled “Fear 2: Overcoming Rejection” and the thesis was, “The rejection of the gospel message is a rejection of the gospel, not the one presenting the gospel.”

The lesson centered on the idea that rejection of the gospel was a rejection of the message, Jesus, and God. It taught the importance of evangelism, as only one-fourth of hearers, per the passage, will profess and persevere in the faith. Missional living was highlighted to live unencumbered to spread the gospel message. The final challenge of the lesson was to pray for people who were not believers and then share a simple gospel message with them.

The sermon was entitled “Overcoming Fear.” The text for the sermon was Joshua 1:8. The thesis of the sermon was “What is fear but the absence of courage.” The following outline was used for the sermon:

1. Courageous Commands
 - a. Take courage for God is with us
 - b. Take courage for God’s promises are true
 - c. Take courage for God gives us strength
2. Facing Fears
 - a. God’s gift drives us away from fear
 - i. 2 Timothy 1:7
 - ii. Romans 8:15
 - iii. John 14:27
3. Walking with God
 - a. Courageously obey by choosing obedience
 - i. Numbers 31:11-12

- ii. Joshua 22:5, 24:31
- b. Choose God before everything else

Week 6 of the Project

The fourth lesson and sermon were taught on September 10, 2017. The final fear/barrier to overcome was not knowing how to evangelize. The lesson and sermon stated it was known this final barrier was not a fear but it was a known barrier. The surveys showed many did not feel equipped to share the gospel.

The text for the lesson entitled “Overcoming How” was Luke 10:1-6. The thesis of the lesson was “There is no set standard way of doing evangelism; just tell the gospel.” The point of the lesson was to show there are several different styles of sharing the gospel, but no one pre-determined method. Jesus simply stated believers are to share the gospel. The lesson highlighted the idea that a missional lifestyle is one that is simplistic, so there is no obstruction to the gospel being presented.

The lesson gave examples of different ways the gospel could be presented in different areas. It gave suggestions of how to give a testimony. In conjunction with the sermon, an evangelism report was created for the members.¹ The idea of the evangelism report was to help keep everyone accountable in his or her practice of evangelism.

The sermon was entitled “Answering How.” The text was Acts 8:26-40. The thesis of the sermon was, “No excuse is worth disobeying God’s command.” The following outline was used for the sermon:

1. Faithful Obedience
 - a. Any believer can share the gospel message
 - b. Faithful obedience is a blind step of faith
2. Divine Appointments

¹See appendix 4

- a. God uses divine appointments, so we can carry out his mission
 - b. Examples of how to start Gospel conversations
 - c. Talk about evangelism report
3. Rejoicing
- a. There is joy when someone comes to Christ
 - b. Join in the joy of Jesus by proclaiming the gospel message

Week 7 of the Project

The fifth week of Sunday school lessons and sermon series was on September 17, 2017. The lesson and sermon series were dedicated to the strategy of reaching the community. The text of the lesson was Luke 14:25-33 and entitled “Strategy.” The thesis of the lesson was, “Nothing should hold us back from doing as Jesus has commanded us.”

The lesson included a time for the participants to brainstorm how to reach the community. The question to kick off the brainstorming session was, “If nothing mattered but reaching the community for Christ and there was no hindrance, what would you do? What would it take?” Some of the ideas that were brought up were: neighborhood Bible studies, going door-to-door, doing more for the children/local school, a women’s Bible study, and prayer. The participants were asked to develop a plan to reach those who lived within a one-mile radius of their homes.

The sermon was titled, “Missional Living: Strategy.” The text of the sermon was Acts 1:7-8. The thesis of the sermon was, “It should come as no surprise that when it comes to missions, the church is given a plan to follow.” The outline for the sermon is as follows:

- 1. The Unknown Times
 - a. Do not worry about the time given to us but rather be about kingdom expansion

2. The Power Behind Expansion
 - a. The Holy Spirit is with us always, not for just moments
 - b. Evangelism is spiritual warfare
 - c. Plug into the power of the Holy Spirit
3. The Strategy of Expansion
 - a. Turn knowledge into action
 - b. No neglecting the home town to reach the nations
 - c. Strategy is a long-range plan

Week 8 of the Project

The sixth week of the eight-week lesson and sermon series was September 24, 2017. The text of the Sunday school lesson, entitled “Living on Mission,” was Philippians 3:7-9. The thesis of the lesson was, “For a Christian to be on mission for God, he must count all as loss for Christ.”

The lesson was written for the members of the church to understand boasting is of no use and knowing Christ is to be our all-consuming passion. One of the ideas brought out in the lesson was those who are enemies of the cross boast within themselves, but Christians boast in Christ. It is the duty of the believer to live on mission by taking the gospel to those who are enemies of the cross.

The text of the sermon was Philippians 2:5-15. The title of the sermon was “A Church on Mission.” The thesis of the sermon was “Christ Jesus came to the earth on mission for God, and as a church we must be in the world on mission for Christ.” The sermon used the following outline:

1. Be Like Christ
 - a. Christ first, others second, yourself last
 - b. Humble yourself to the glory of God
2. Work Out Salvation

- a. God works in your life, so you can work for him
 - b. Humbly submit your life for Jesus to exert his control over it
3. Lights in Darkness
- a. We must be on mission to be light in the darkness
 - b. The gospel message is a message of life over death
 - c. A church on mission pushes back darkness with light and life

Week 9 of the Project

The seventh of eight lessons and sermons was taught on October 1, 2017. The lesson and sermon both used verses from Colossians 3. The title for the lesson was “On Mission at Home and Work” and used Colossians 3:17 as the text. The thesis of the lesson was “Whether you are at work, at home, or at play, God wants us to be about Him and His business of kingdom expansion by doing all things for God and his glory.”

The lesson was about restructuring priorities. It taught to put God first, including his commands for evangelism, while at work or home. The lesson sought to convey the notion that evangelism in the workplace might be disparaged by employers, yet Christians should do it anyway.

The sermon had the same title as the lesson. The text for the sermon was Colossians 3:18-4:1. The thesis of the sermon was “At work or at home, we must be on mission for God by living for Him.” The sermon used the following outline:

- 1. Family Mission
 - a. Parallel of Ephesians 5:22-6:9
 - b. Different roles of family members:
 - i. Husbands lead your family toward Jesus
 - ii. Wives support your husband
 - iii. Children obey your parents
- 2. Work Mission

- a. Be obedient to your employer, or teachers for the children, always
- b. Give your best work as a way to point toward Christ

Week 10 of the Project

The final lesson and sermon were taught on October 8, 2017. The title of the lesson and sermon was “Live Sent.” The texts for the lesson were 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 and Romans 15:20. The thesis for the lesson was “Living sent is realizing God does not want us to be passive but active in the world, not political but theological.”

The lesson taught that believers live sent by taking the message of reconciliation to everyone. It emphasized the Christian’s role as ambassadors for the kingdom of heaven. As ambassadors of the kingdom of God, the church is sent by God and it sends others. Living sent is taking the gospel message to all people.

As stated previously, the sermon had a similar title as the lesson. The text of the sermon was Romans 10:13-15. The thesis of the sermon was, “Live a life sent by God as ambassadors of Christ sending messengers and going as messengers.” The sermon was preached using the following outline:

1. The Gospel Message
 - a. Summation of the gospel message
 - b. Radical obedience to the gospel will change the world
2. Sending
 - a. Salvation is through Christ alone
 - b. God sends all believers to share the gospel message
 - c. Some are senders who send out missionaries to other areas
3. Going
 - a. Make disciples as you are going

- b. Some stay to make disciples, and some go into other areas to make disciples
- c. Determine if you are a sender or a goer

Weeks 11 and 12 of the Project

Week eleven of the project was on October 15, 2017. On this date, the second survey was handed out. The first and second survey were the same survey. The survey was handed out during the adult Sunday school class. The teacher of the class gave some time for the surveys to be completed. Surveys were also handed out to those who came to worship service only. Time was given to complete the survey after the worship service. It was easier to complete this way as the church had a fellowship lunch on this date.

Out of 12 surveys handed out, 8 were returned. The participants were given one week to complete the surveys and turn them in, yet only 8 surveys were provided. Week 12 of the project was on October 22, 2017, when the final surveys were collected. The twelfth and final week of the project was spent reviewing the surveys and processing the results of the pre- and post-series surveys. The results of the second survey and how it compared to the first one will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In studying the first survey, the members showed a knowledge of evangelism. As the project advanced from first survey to final survey, it became apparent the congregation needed to be reminded of the importance of outreach. The project helped show the lack of outreach may have been one symptom of a bigger problem. A complete evaluation of the project will be offered in chapter 5. Lasting success of the project is dependent upon the members of New Salem to live missionally.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

The ministry project began on August 6, 2017, and concluded on October 22, 2017, for a total of twelve weeks. Primary activities for the twelve weeks included two church-wide surveys and an eight-week Sunday school lesson curriculum and sermon series. The project was intended to accomplish a specific purpose and four primary goals. The following is an evaluation of the project's effectiveness in accomplishing its purpose and meeting its goals, an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, a consideration of possible improvements, and reflections concerning the project and related matters.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project was to equip the members at New Salem Baptist Church of rural Newton County, Missouri, for outreach. It was recognized that church members needed to realize they needed to live missionally to achieve this purpose. The implementation of the project was the first step toward accomplishing the purpose of equipping members for outreach. With the conclusion of the project, the church now has knowledge of what missional living looks like and an eight-week curriculum to help in training and/or retraining.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals measured the success of the project. Each of the four goals had a measurement of success. The following is an evaluation of the four goals and how they were measured.

First Goal

The first goal, as stated in chapter 1, was to assess the knowledge of members of New Salem regarding their knowledge of a missional lifestyle. The instrument used to assess the members was the Missional Living Practices Inventory. New Salem has an average of 20 who attend Sunday morning worship. Out of the 20 who attend, 6 are teenagers or younger. There are 14 adults who regularly attend and were surveyed to assess their knowledge of a missional lifestyle. Ten out of 14 surveys were returned.

Chapter 1 stated the goal would be counted successful if all active members returned the survey. Although announcements and reminders were made to return the survey, still only 10 out of the 14 were returned. This goal could be stated to be unsuccessfully met because not all 14 surveys were returned. However, the number of surveys that were returned gave enough data on how the church understood missional living. I count the goal as being successfully met, even though the parameters for success were not met.

Chapter 4 included a discussion of questions 9 to 41, which were multiple choice questions using a six-point Likert scale. The previous chapter also briefly included a discussion of some of the short answer questions. It is now time to see how the short answer questions were answered and what information was gleaned from this first survey.

The first and fourth questions asked if the participant was a Christian and if they had partaken in believer's baptism. If the participant answered no, a follow-up question asked if they wanted more information about being a Christian and if they were interested in being baptized. One-hundred percent of the participants stated they had pronounced faith in Jesus Christ and they had participated in believer's baptism.

The second short answer question was, "How does one get saved and what is the role of church membership in salvation." The answers provided by participants stated a person is saved by accepting Jesus as savior or accepting his call of salvation,

confessing sins to Jesus, believing in his life, death, burial, and resurrection, as well as submitting complete life and all to Jesus. Other answers to the first part of the question included salvation is by God's grace through our faith when we ask forgiveness of sins. The second part of the question mostly went unanswered. Those who did answer stated church membership is not necessary for salvation but is important after salvation as the earthly homes for Christians to teach them Christ's commands and for believers to work together to proclaim the gospel message.

The third question asked, "Does the Sinner's Prayer save?" Seven of the 10 participants answered the question no. One of the participants who answered yes wrote a clarifying statement that the prayer saves "if the person praying it is sincere." There were 2 participants who added a comment onto the question. The additional comments had the same sentiment. Salvation is through Christ, and prayer is the means of communication to God.

The fifth question was "What is evangelism?" The overall answer to the question was sharing, or spreading, the gospel message to unbelievers at home or abroad. One participant stated, "Evangelism is the process of sharing the gospel and training those who accept Christ to become more Christlike." A good follow-up question that was not asked would have been asking the participants to define the gospel message.

Question number 6 was "What is the difference between mission and missions." The answers to this question varied. Two participants stated mission was telling others about Jesus, while 2 other participants stated missions was telling others about Jesus. Three participants stated mission is a goal or stated purpose, while missions is completing that goal/purpose. Four participants did not answer the question. One participant had an answer that encapsulates the answers of the others: "A mission is taking the gospel to a certain group. Missions is a lifestyle and a life's work of taking the gospel wherever God leads."

The seventh short answer question was “What is a missional lifestyle?” The answers to this question revolved around three ideas: taking or looking for opportunities, sharing the gospel message, and living the gospel message. Two participants did not answer the question. One participant had a succinct answer, “God 24-7.” Another participant linked a missional lifestyle to conversion by saying, “After receiving Jesus as my savior then share the good news with all those I come in contact.”

The final question was about how often the participant shared his or her faith. The conclusion of this answer was discussed in chapter 4. As is a review of the findings, 3 said they share their faith daily, 3 said they did it weekly, 2 said monthly, 1 person answered daily and weekly, while 1 did not answer. It is unclear why so many questions went unanswered.

Second Goal

The second goal as stated in chapter 1 was to develop an eight-week sermon series and Sunday school curriculum on missional living. Each sermon and Sunday school lesson were reviewed by four pastors and evaluated using a rubric. The goal was considered successfully met when all rubrics for all sermons and lessons rated 90 percent on the evaluations. The sermon and lessons were written and edited the same week they were preached. Each evaluator was given the sermon by Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday at the latest, and the evaluation was returned to me by Thursday or Friday. Each week the evaluations were at 90 percent. The evaluators made recommended revisions in some areas, and those revisions were completed by Friday night for delivery on Sunday.

Third Goal

The third goal as stated in chapter 1 was to increase knowledge of missional living among members at New Salem. At the end of the eight-week lesson and sermon series, the MLPI was given to the participants a second time to discover if there was an increase in knowledge. Per chapter 1, the goal is considered successfully met when the t-

test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The surveys were handed out to the members of New Salem after the end of the series. Out of the surveys given to participants, eight were handed back in. Assuming a level of significance of .05 there was a statistically significant difference $t_{(32)}=2.10$, $p=.0218$ in questions 9 through 41 asking about missional lifestyle practices and concepts. Based on the t-test for questions 9 through 41, goal number 3 was successfully met. However, one still needs to look at the other questions in the survey to see if there is a positive difference.

On the question of how often the participant shares his or her faith, the results stayed approximately the same. In the survey at the beginning of the project, 3 people said they shared the faith daily, 3 said weekly, 2 said monthly, 1 stated weekly and daily, and 1 did not answer. In the survey given at the end of the project, 2 said they shared the faith daily, 4 said weekly, 1 said quarterly, and 1 did not check an answer but wrote “when the opportunity presents itself.” The one who marked quarterly wrote beside the question, “not enough!”

On the question of whether the sinner’s prayer saves, 5 participants answered no, 1 did not answer, and 2 answered yes. One participant answered no and then wrote “only Jesus saves. We must accept him into our heart & life.” All eight participants still confirmed, they are Christians and have participated in believer’s baptism. When asked how a person is saved and what is the role of church membership, the participants had a definite answer to the role of church membership – church membership is not salvific; it is for fellowship, worship, discipleship, and sending out members to evangelize.

The answers to how one becomes saved are not different from the first survey. They still say salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus and one must accept or surrender his or her life to Jesus after belief in his death, burial, and resurrection. Two participants in the second survey gave a detailed list that began with hearing the gospel

and concluded with praying for forgiveness of sins and acceptance of Jesus as Lord.

On the question of what is evangelism, the 8 participants had similar answers. The participants all agreed evangelism is telling others the gospel message. Question 6 asked what the difference between mission and missions is, and on the second survey, the answers were not as different as they were on the first survey. One person said mission is a “specific project for Christ” and missions is the “overall attitude of sharing Christ through word and deed.” Another participant stated mission “is something you are on (i.e. a quest)” and missions is “the purposeful going out to tell/share God’s love.”

I think because of how people think of mission and missions, some confused the words with what a missionary does. For example, one participant said mission is “being on mission” and missions is “supported by prayer, giving, or supporting in some way.” Another said mission is a “strong desire to tell everyone you know or don't know how wonderful you feel when Jesus comes into your heart” while missions is “a strong desire to travel to different places & tell how he died (Jesus) for our sins, he takes all our sins & forgives us, that we will have everlasting life with him forever in heaven” Another participant stated, “you have a mission to share the word” and “there are missions around the world.”

Question 7 asked about a missional lifestyle. The participants centered the answer around living for Jesus and evangelism. One participant said, “Living for Jesus everywhere I go in everything I say & do. Sharing the gospel in the way I live & deal with others.” Another participant said, “Living for Christ in all avenues of life (home, work, church, and community) so you can stand out as distinct from the world for the promise of God's glory and pointing others to Christ.” The surveys were similar to the definition of missional living, given during the eight-week series, to live unencumbered to tell the gospel message to all people at all times.

Fourth Goal

The fourth goal was to write a ministry plan for community outreach and congregational health. The goal was successfully met using a rubric given to three church members. The goal was changed from a strategic plan to a ministry plan because the project showed the members have a head knowledge of evangelism and living missionally. The problem with a head knowledge of evangelism is it stays in the head and very little outreach is done. When talking with members about the project, they viewed it as something to be completed for me and not something that would be beneficial to the church.

During the project it became clear that writing a five-year strategic plan would not be beneficial if the church would close due to finances within one year. I was able to view the health of the church in a new way during the project. Financially, the church was spending more than it was taking in. For some members, personal preferences were more important than outreach.

There was a shift in the end goal of the project from equipping believers to make disciples who make disciples to equipping the believers for community and helping them see the need to be replanted. Replanting is the idea of planting a new church on top of what is already there. Another term for replanting is legacy church planting, where one honors the past and moves forward by giving the church new life.

Mark Clifton in his book *Reclaiming Glory* says replanting a church “is the process of ensuring a continued legacy for the thousands of near-death churches throughout North America by leading them to reengage with the missions and ministry that laid the foundation of the church.”¹ Replanting churches require remembrance of the past, repentance of sins that led to decline, and outreach into the community. Clifton

¹Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 15.

further states churches are replanted “to reclaim God’s glory in a tangible way in our communities.”² A replanted church reenacts the gospel as the church was once dead and is now living. A healthy church positively impacts the community through outreach.

My goal as a pastor of New Salem is now to continue any momentum from the project and prepare the hearts of the church members to accept the idea of a replant. The church will need the knowledge learned during the project to help with the replant effort.³ The vision statement for the replant is “We envision being a community within the community for the glory of Christ.” The mission statement is “New Salem is building a community through discipleship, service, and worship for the glory of Christ.” A typical time frame for replanting is 3 to 5 years. Replanting is not a quick fix.

Year 1 of the replant will focus on preparing the members for the replant. Members are prepared by first praying for them. I pray for hearts to be softened and eyes opened. Members need to see the church as Jesus sees it. Barriers to resistance need to be broken down with tactical patience and gentle persuasion.

Year 1 also includes finding partner churches, or individuals, for prayer, financial, and volunteer support. We need prayer support because replanting is spiritual warfare. Volunteer support helps with needed building maintenance and outreach events. Also in year 1, monthly service projects will begin. Service projects get the church members into the community meeting felt needs. The goal of year 1 is to begin shoring up the finances of the church, make members more visible in the community, and help the members see the need for the replant.

Year 2 goals include continuing the partnerships and possibly seeking out new ones, as well as continuing the service projects. The success of a replant is determined in

²Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 18.

³ See appendix 5 for a detailed ministry plan.

two ways – making disciples who make disciples and a noticeable, positive impact on the community. The service projects will help achieve the latter, and year 2 will work to address the former.

Toward the end of year 1 a discussion will take place of what membership within the church means and how to hold each other accountable. By the end of year 2, a new membership covenant will be created that will detail what is expected of members and how we will hold each other accountable. As part of the membership covenant, a new members class will be created so anyone who has joined or possibly will join will attend the class before being accepted into membership.

Year 2 will also see discussion and possible creation of an intentional discipleship process in the church. The intentional process will connect mature believers with new believers to help them grow in maturity. As part of the discipleship process and service projects, a discussion of community groups will be started. The community groups will be started by the end of year 2 or at the beginning of year 3.

The third year of the replant will focus on continuing what has been started in the first two years. The church will by year 3, hopefully, have an outward focus that sees Christ glorified. Worship of Christ and seeing him glorified is the goal of the church in replanting.

Strengths of the Project

Even though the project may not have fulfilled the stated objective, it was still a successful project. One of the strengths of the project was the survey. The survey included a question about salvation and baptism of the participants because I did not know if a few of the members were baptized believers or not. The survey helped relieve my worries about the salvation of most of my members. The survey also gave me insight into how the members of NSBC saw evangelism and missional living. At the beginning of the project, I thought the members needed to be equipped, and after the first survey, I

saw they did not need equipped but reminded to do evangelism.

Another strength of the project was the Sunday school curriculum and sermon series being linked. Doing both a Sunday school lesson with a tied-in sermon brought a cohesiveness to the project. The project went well because the application from the sermon was first introduced in the lesson and then expounded upon in the sermon. This made sure most of the members understood the concept and the application being presented. Out of the 14 adult members, 9 attend the adult Sunday school class. Three members attend worship service only, and 2 teach the two children's classes on Sunday morning. The notes for the Sunday school lesson were available for those who were not in the class.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness of the project was the lack of participation with the second survey. Ten surveys were returned the first time, or 71 percent of the members, and 8, or 57 percent of the members, were returned the second time. The goal was to increase knowledge about missional living. Eight surveys show there was an increase, yet if only 7 surveys were returned, the results would show no statistically significant difference. It is unknown who did not return the survey the second time or if those who did not complete the first survey completed the second survey.

A second weakness was not asking what the gospel or gospel message is on the surveys. Many of the answers to defining evangelism stated sharing the gospel or the gospel message. A useful question would have been to define the gospel. The survey included a third weakness of the project with two questions that could have influenced the results of other questions. Question 1 asked if the participant had professed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, followed by question 2 asking how one becomes saved. Question 5 asked to define evangelism, and question 8 asked how often the participant shares his or her faith.

What I Would Do Differently

The first thing I would do differently would have been to limit the time of the sermon series from 8 weeks to 6 weeks. The series could have been concluded in 6 weeks. After writing the sixth lesson and sermon, I felt like I had wrapped up the series; however, I had two more weeks. The evaluators stated the seventh lesson and sermon were not as well as the previous six.

I would have changed the way the survey was written as well. The question about baptism and if the participant was a Christian were irrelevant. I would add a question about what the gospel is to have a complete view of the members' understanding of evangelism. To go along with the complete view of evangelism, I would add a training component at the end of the sermon series. The training would be an additional four weeks after the conclusion of the sermon outside of the Sunday school time for anyone who would need additional training in evangelism.

One last item I would change would be the project itself. When setting out at the beginning of the project, I looked at the church and saw many problems that needed to be addressed. Evangelism was easy, yet is a scratch on the surface of items needing to be addressed. Other items that could have been addressed were finances – tithing and budgets, deacons as the church has no deacons or elders or any leadership outside of the pastor, or the children's ministry since there is an average of six children each week in attendance. I believe evangelism could lead to growth in the church which could lead to solving these other three areas of concern. If I were to do the project over, I would reevaluate whether evangelism was the item that needed to be addressed.

Theological and Personal Reflections

After looking at the project, there are three areas I want to reflect upon theologically and personally. The first reflection is evangelism. The second reflection is the rural church. The third reflection is church replanting.

I will keep my reflections of evangelism brief as I spent chapter 2 writing

about the biblical basis of outreach. When I discuss a church, I think about the people and their duty as Christians. The church is a group of redeemed people who have a mission to cross cultural borders to do missions. When I look back on my sermons for the project, I taught about doing the work of evangelism in all areas of life to all people. Evangelism is one area of missions, and it is the duty of all Christians to evangelize. I need to strive to do better in being the example of evangelism to my church members. They cannot effectively evangelize the community if I am not leading in that area, and this project pushed me to do better.

The reflection I think is most important to me and this project is a theology of the rural church. The theology of a church is the theology of the context of the church. The rural areas are different than the urban areas; differences include the population being more spread out over the landscape and the sense of community in rural areas. Urban areas are more densely populated, and while there is a sense of community, it is not stressed as historically as rural areas. A rural church theology should stress community, outreach, and social action.⁴ Rural and urban churches are bound to have some things in common. There are aspects of the church that are non-negotiable no matter the context.⁵

I want to look at the theology of the rural church because the context of this project was in rural, southwest Missouri. Some ideas of the project can work in an urban or suburban area, the sermons and Sunday school lessons were written specifically to a rural church and a rural people. As the population, and subsequently the church, has moved more toward urban centers, the rural church seems to be forgotten. The rural

⁴Community, outreach, and social action all tie in together. The church is a community of redeemed peoples who want to positively impact the community where they are placed by outreach and this can be done through social causes.

⁵Non-negotiables within the church include the gospel message of forgiveness through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus; believer's baptism; the church self-supporting itself and self-theologizing its immediate context; and the importance of outreach.

church plays an important part in the church universal as a sending church for those moving to urban areas.

The population of the United States is now majority urban, and it is the rural church that needs to heed the call to reach cities. Rural churches are in a unique time and place to reach cities by evangelizing, discipling, and training members to become urban church planters. The rural church survives to be a community for those members who are still in the church and community, for new members who join the church or community, and for sending out those who are moving to urban areas. The rural church evangelizing the rural area is important because it is the rural church that can have an important impact on the urban area. I firmly believe the rural church is not gone, it is not dead, and it can impact the culture as in times past.

The final area I want to spend some time reflecting on is church replants. New Salem needs to be replanted. The hope of the project was for the church to become revitalized, yet it is heading toward a demise the project could not turn around. The demise of the church does not have to be the legacy of NSBC. Replanting a church seeks to answer the question, “what about a dying church brings glory to God?” God can be glorified in a dying church that seeks after him, seeks to serve the community, and recognizes a restart needs to occur. A replant is not bad; it is a continuance of a gospel witness within a local context. The goal of any church is to see God glorified. I am confident that New Salem can survive if the church seeks to see God glorified, evangelize the community, and become a sending church that disciples/trains believers to reach urban centers.

Conclusion

The project has had an important impact on me as a pastor. I was able to see fully for the first time the problems New Salem faces. It is my hope this project can be used to help the members of New Salem see the problems as well and move toward a

replant. Evangelism is necessary for all churches to survive, and one evangelizes the rural area to help evangelize the urban area. A replant is necessary for the church to continue its gospel witness in rural southwest Missouri.

APPENDIX 1

MISSIONAL LIVING PRACTICES INVENTORY

The following instrument is the Missional Living Practices Inventory (MLPI). It consists of a thirty-question survey using a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each member's understanding of mission, missions, missional living, and evangelism, as well as any preconceived prejudices against people of other ethnicities and the members' confidence in evangelizing.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to test your knowledge of evangelism and a missional lifestyle. This research is being conducted by Philip Martin for purposes of his doctoral project research. In this research you will be asked a combination of short answer questions as well as the use of statement with answers using a six-point Likert scale to test knowledge. Please answer to the best of your ability with the knowledge that you have in this area. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1. Have you pronounced faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? __ Yes __ No
 - a. If answered no, would you like more information? __ Yes __ No
2. How does one get saved and what is the role of church membership in salvation?
3. Does the Sinner's Prayer save? __ Yes __ No
4. Have you partaken in believer's baptism? __ Yes __ No
 - a. If answered yes to question one and no to question four, are you interested in being baptized? __ Yes __ No
5. What is evangelism?
6. What is the difference between mission and missions?

7. What is a missional lifestyle?

8. How often do you share your faith?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly | <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly |

In the following section, please answer each statement honestly and as it applies to you. Please use the below scale when responding to each statement by circling the response you feel is correct for your life.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I have a firm understanding of the mission of God						
10. The local church is a missionary sending agency						
11. Evangelism is an important part of the life of a Christian						
12. I am equipped to tell people the gospel message						
13. I feel equipped to tell anyone, anywhere about Jesus						
14. Living my faith is evangelism						
15. People know that I am a Christian by observing my behaviors						
16. Inviting people to services is just as important as telling them about my faith						

17. The church is multinational	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I do not save anyone, but God does	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I like to experience the differences between me and other ethnicities	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Prejudice is a sin	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I recognize sin in my life and repent of it	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. Communicating the gospel must be done with words	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I can lead an evangelistic Bible study	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. There is no gift of evangelism	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I am a missionary	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. Anywhere, including my workplace, is a mission field	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. My culture is based on my ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. The borders of a culture are contained within the borders of a specific nation	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. Language can be a hindrance to evangelism	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. Certain terms used in church, i.e. the blood of the lamb, can be a hindrance to evangelism	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31. I do not trust people of other ethnicities	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32. Other ethnic groups do not understand cleanliness	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33. Other ethnic groups are lazy	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
34. I mainly associate with people of the same ethnicity and culture as me	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
35. The church is to be multinational	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
36. I have to travel to do missions	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
37. Missions is not done in the workplace	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
38. My faith is kept separate from my work life	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

39. Involvement in community events, outside of church, is not missions SD D DS AS A SA

40. Only those called can do missions SD D DS AS A SA

41. I am not a missionary SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2

MISSIONAL LIVING CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel of four pastors. This panel evaluated the course material and sermon series to ensure it was biblically faithful, had a clear teaching methodology, and was practically applicable.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum/Sermon Series Evaluation Tool					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of missional living					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on evangelism					
The material is theologically sound					
The thesis is clearly stated					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis					
The points are practically applicable					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material					
The sermon supports the lesson					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented					

APPENDIX 3

NSBC MINISTRY PLAN FOR OUTREACH EVALUATION

The following instrument was given to an expert panel of three NSBC members. This panel evaluated the plan for the process of communication, the functionality of the plan, the training needed, and the effectiveness of the plan.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Ministry Plan Evaluation Tool					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The plan points toward a bigger picture					
The plan contains steps that are easy to follow					
The plan is flexible to allow changes in the vision					
The plan follows a Biblical pattern					
The plan allows for growth					
The plan allows involvement of everyone					
The plan allows transferability to another minister if necessary					
Overall, the plan is thorough in its scope					

APPENDIX 4

NSBC EVANGELISM REPORT

The following instrument was designed during the eight-week project. The evangelism report was given to members of New Salem Baptist Church in week 6 of the project to aid them in staying accountable to each other and to record/report any evangelistic encounters.

EVANGELISM REPORT

Name: _____

Date, Time, and Place: _____

Person's Name: _____

Brief Explanation: _____

Decision: _____

APPENDIX 5

NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH MINISTRY PLAN

The following ministry plan was developed to aid New Salem Baptist Church in replanting. The plan presents the church as it is currently, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. The plan then states the new vision and mission statement. The final part of the plan is a three-year list of goals and objectives.

NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH MINISTRY PLAN

Context

New Salem Baptist Church (NSBC) is located in rural Newton County, MO at the corner of Norway and Falcon Roads. The church building is 8.2 miles to the west of Neosho's city center and 8.2 miles to the east of Seneca's city center. From city limits, it is 4.4 miles from Neosho and 6.7 miles from Seneca. It is located within the Westview Elementary School district. The school is located 1.7 miles from the church.

Bethany Baptist Church is located 2.1 miles from NSBC with an average Sunday morning attendance of 30 people. Two church plants are within two miles of the church as well, Cross Bar Cowboy Church and Grace Bible Baptist Church. The number of worshippers in those two churches is unknown at this time. There is a fourth church within two miles of NSBC as well – Full House of Mercy Gospel Tabernacle. The majority of attenders of this fourth church are from the islands of Micronesia. Reported attendance at Full House of Mercy Gospel Tabernacle is 250. New Salem has an average Sunday morning worship attendance of 20. Sixteen of the twenty attenders are adults. The average age of the adults in the church is 65.

The two mile radius surrounding the church's location at the corner of Norway and Falcon Road is the target community for NSBC. According to the 2010 Census, 934 people reside within the community. There are some noticeable differences in age between NSBC and the community. Figure 1, below, shows a comparison in percentages of the different age ranges. New Salem has the highest numbers, percentage wise, between the age ranges of 70-79 and 80+. The community has the highest numbers, percentage wise, between the age ranges of 0-9, 10-19, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59; while the lowest numbers are in ranges 60-69, 70-79, and 80+. The community is noticeably

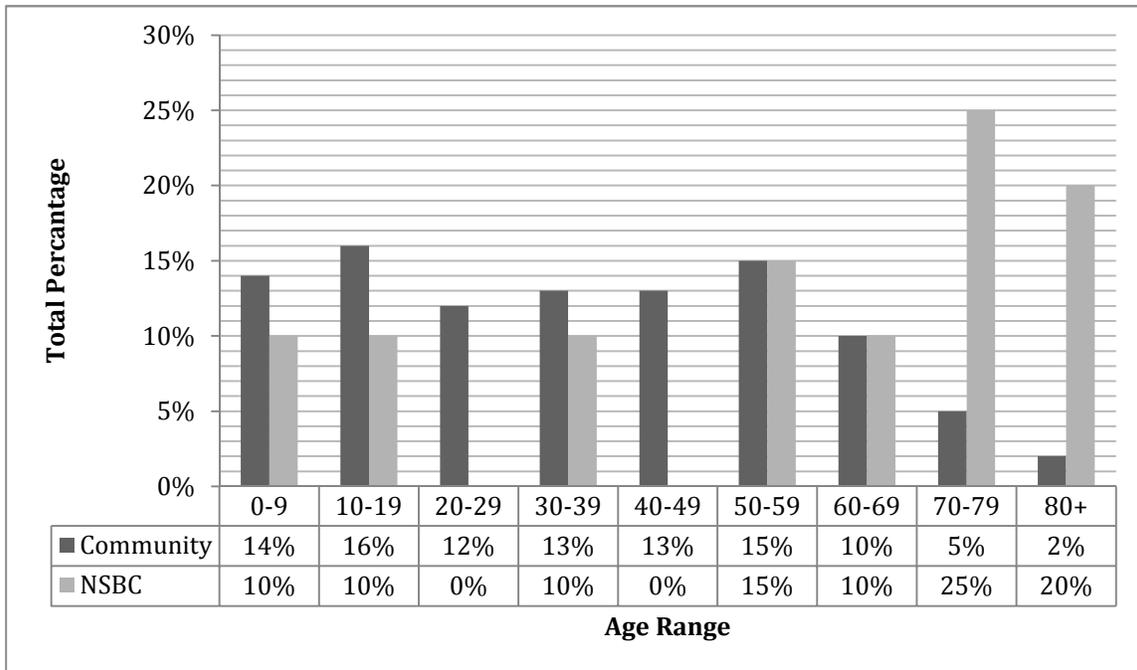


Figure A1. Comparison of age percentage between NSBC and immediate community younger than the church: 83 percent between 0-59 in the community compared to 45 percent for the same age range in the church.

Despite not resembling the community in age, NSBC does resemble the community ethnically. Those in the community reporting to be Caucasian is 91.2 percent, 2.9 percent Native American, 0.4 percent Asian, 0.1 percent Pacific Islander, 1.9 percent some other race, 3.4% two or more races, and 3.2% Hispanic. Ninety percent of Sunday morning attenders, both children and adult, could be classified as Caucasian or 2+ races. Ten percent would be classified as Hispanic.

New Salem Baptist Church was organized in 1868 at the Martin School house. The members met at the school house until 1871. The current building has been housing worship services since late 1956 or early 1957. The cornerstone was set in 1954, and services were meeting in the basement from 1954 until worship services moved upstairs in 1956-57. Due to an ice storm in 2006-07, the sanctuary was remodeled. In 2016, a two-story storage addition was added to the back of the building.

As with any building that is 60+ years old, there are maintenance issues. The building is still in good condition, yet there are areas that need to be fixed. For example, when there is heavy rain, water seep into the basement. There is a draft around where the storage addition was added, and the addition is not insulated. There are cracks in the outside stucco. The pews have orange, crushed velvet upholstery that does not match the sanctuary or anything else in the building.

Expenses for the church are approximately \$1,500 per month, while the church takes in approximately \$1,400 per month. The budget has been cut back, as recently as the 3/7/2018 business meeting. Changes to the budget include: No purchase can be made with the church's money without prior approval from a majority of the church members. In case of a true emergency, i.e. leaking pipe, permission can be obtained from the pastor and treasurer.

Sunday morning attendance has gone from a high of 25 to a low of 18 in the past eight years. The current average is 20. There have been four baptisms since 2015. There has been one funeral in the same time period. In 2007 and 2008, the attendance on Sunday morning was 50. Previous high average attendance was 49 in 1986.¹ Giving has gone down along with the numbers. In 2007, undesignated receipts totaled \$37,393 while in 2017 the total was \$17,756.²

S.W.O.T. Assessment

Strengths

- Core Group
- Centrally Located
- 150-year History
- Missionary Thrust – gives to support missions, occasionally goes on trips

Weaknesses

¹Worship attendance numbers information taken from the SBC Annual Church Profile survey.

²Undesignated receipts information taken from the SBC Annual Church Profile survey.

- Finances
- Age
- Scattered Church Members (1/2 of adults live outside 2 mile radius)
- Lack of Discipleship Process

Opportunities

- Outreach – completed series in Fall 2017 to equip members
- Small-Group Bible Studies — create pockets of community
- Monthly Service Projects — get members out of the church and in the community
- Discipleship Process — create process to reach and teach those in the church/community

Threats

- Finances
- Death (members/church)
- Fear of Change
- Pride

Vision and Mission Statements

Vision:

We envision being a community in the local community for the glory of Christ.

Mission:

New Salem is building a community through discipleship, service, and worship for the glory of Christ.

Who We Are:

New Salem is a community church between the cities of Neosho and Seneca.

Vision

When New Salem Baptist Church was organized in 1868, at its heart was the community. For several years it met in schools and private homes. The first building was erected in the early to mid-1870s. The log building was eventually destroyed, and the church moved to meeting in private homes again until a new building could be built on new property. The second building burned down, and the current building was built in its place.

A couple of times in the life of the church the organization almost disbanded, once at the turn of the twentieth century and once in the 1940s. Each time the church refocused on community. Now is no different. After an inward focus and a decline in numbers, the church is facing death again. The legacy of NSBC cannot be a church that focused on the priorities and preferences of its members to the neglect of the larger community.

We look to the past to remember what once occurred, repent of our inward focus, and return to the goal of making disciples to positively impact our community (Rev 2:5). Community is important in the life of any church. The local church is a community of believers who offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5) and “proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

As a local church, we strive to first become a community of like-minded believers with the intention to glorify God through Christ Jesus. As community takes shape within the church, the community will spill out into the two-mile radius of the church.³ As stated above, we envision being a community within the local community to the glory of Christ.

Mission

To reach the vision of being a community within the local community, NSBC is building a community through discipleship, service, and worship for the glory of God.

Discipleship

When Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the nations, he told them to make disciples. Making disciples does not mean reach them with the gospel only.

³The two mile radius of the church building will be considered the immediate community of NSBC. In an Acts 1:8 view, the two mile radius will be considered NSBC's Jerusalem.

Evangelizing someone is part one of the discipleship process. Remember what Christ said in the Great Commission, “Make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” (Mt. 28:19-20) Jesus gives us the paradigm for discipleship: evangelize, baptize, and teach.

Discipleship must be organic, simple, and reproducible. To make the mission of NSBC possible, an intentional discipleship process will be created within the church that will link mature believers with new believers. Community will be built within this discipleship process. Another part of the discipleship process will be community groups within homes of church members. Home groups will allow for simple, organic discipleship to take place. When a community group grows too large, it can be multiplied into a new community group with a leader selected from within the group by the current group leader and church leadership.

Service

Community cannot be built if the members of the church remain within the confines of the building and grounds. Service to the community reminds members that “the community is not there for the church; the church is there for the community.”⁴ Tim Keller states “Gospel neighboring is gospel messaging. Loving deeds of service to someone . . . are always an attractive testimony to the truth and motivational power of the gospel.”⁵

Christ gave us a paradigm of service as well. In Matthew 20:28 Jesus says, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” Likewise in Luke 22:27, “For

⁴Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2016), 27.

⁵Tim Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 322.

who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves." In one of his final acts with his disciples, just before they partook of the Passover meal, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Jesus wants us to serve others.

Serving those in the community does three things. First, it meets the felt needs of our neighbors. People are both body and soul. Just as the soul needs saving, the body has needs to be met as well. Second, serving makes a connection. People enjoy being connected to other people. Community is formed with connections. Third, serving opens the door to the gospel message. People are more likely to listen to a gospel presentation if they are connected with the presenter and feel important.

Worship

John Piper said it best in his book *Let the Nations Be Glad!* — "Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more."⁶

The ultimate goal for our neighborhood is not to see the church grow but to see Christ glorified. Community is built by discipleship and service for the glory of Christ. Christ is glorified when we worship Him with one heart and one voice, regardless of age or race. The worship of the church is to be the shadow of what is to come as promised in Revelation 7:9-10. The promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 is fulfilled through Christ and his church, which leads to worship from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

We aim to see Christ glorified in all that we do. Worship is an act of a united church glorifying Christ. The hope and life of the church is to see Christ glorified.

⁶John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*. (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2010), 15.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives are tentative. The process of replanting a church cannot be held to a fixed schedule, as there are many reasons a stated goal may not occur during the year stated. The listed goals and objectives for the first three years of the replant are flexible and can be updated as needed. Three years are used to show the direction in which the church will be heading to create a community within the local community.

- Year 1
 - i. Find partners — churches or individuals — for prayer, financial, and volunteer support
 - 1. Help get finances in order.
 - 2. List all needed building maintenance – work until completion, may take more than one year
 - 3. If possible update seating in sanctuary
 - ii. Start Monthly Service Projects
 - 1. Begin by studying community to determine needs
 - 2. Have members visible in the community for the community
 - 3. Partner with Westview to serve community
 - iii. Start discussion about changing membership standards – membership needs meaning
- Year 2
 - i. Continue Partnerships, possibly seek out new ones
 - 1. If not completed, continue working on needed building maintenance
 - 2. If possible, and not completed, update seating in sanctuary.
 - ii. Continue Service Projects – be more visible in the community
 - iii. Create Membership Covenant
 - 1. Sunday school lessons and sermons to show need of one and how it works
 - 2. Create committee to work up document to present to church
 - 3. Have members sign it, hold each other accountable, create new members class to go through membership expectations
 - iv. Explore intentional discipleship processes for the church
 - v. Work through starting community groups

- Year 3
 - i. Continue Partnerships and service projects
 - 1. Stay visible in the community
 - 2. Continue with maintenance, if list of needs is not completed, on building and grounds
 - 3. If not completed, and possible, update seating in sanctuary.
 - ii. If not started, start intentional discipleship process
 - iii. Start community groups, if not already started

Conclusion

The goal of the ministry plan is to see dry bones living, a community impacted, and Christ glorified. New Salem has gone through hard times and almost disbanded more than once. The ministry plan is created with the hope that the church will become healthy and positively impact the community once more. Through discipleship, service, and worship New Salem will be a community church in the rural area.

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH OF RURAL NEWTON COUNTY, MISSOURI, FOR OUTREACH

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
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This project sought to equip members of a local church for outreach in a rural community. Chapter 1 introduces New Salem Baptist Church and the context of the approved project. Chapter 2 presents a biblical and theological support for outreach as God's plan to reach the nations in the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 3 presents the history of rural America and the impact of rural and numerically-small churches. Chapter 4 presents a detailed account of the project. Chapter 5 gives an assessment of the project, including the strengths and weaknesses.

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