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Finding a missional church identity

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ABSTRACT

FINDING A MISSIONAL CHURCH IDENTITY
by
Monica D. Redmond
May 2013
138 Pages

This Doctor of Ministry project is a Case-guided study of a mega-African American church that developed a Bible study used for church wide identity formation. The study was conducted during completion of a Doctor of Ministry degree. It is a study of a church facing the formidable challenges that they must face as a church serving a community with complex and varied needs.

A case-guided research was chosen for this Doctor of Ministry project because it encompassed the process that was essential to investigation of a church searching for its mission identity.

This was a study of a church that was intentional about their methodologies, scripturally commanded requirements about church, preaching, discipline, baptism and many other biblical practices. Church and worship can't take just any form. In missional churches, those biblical forms are central, but things like worship style, evangelism methods, attire, service times, locations, and many other man-made customs are not chosen simply based on the preference of the members. Instead, the forms are best determined by their effectiveness in a specific cultural context.
This project presents an organized and systematic form for understanding the process of discovery the researcher experienced during the development and execution of a church wide identity examination. Case study research guided the basic research design.
DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry project is dedicated to more than 5,000 disciples of St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church; in particular, those of you who participated in seven Bible Study classes during the summer of 2011. Thank you so much for your prayers and support as this project was implemented.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Dr. Gregory K. Moss, Sr. my Pastor, teacher and confidante. Pastor Moss, you have been a constant encourager and friend throughout this process. Thank you for not allowing me to give up.

We both knew the importance of this study for the ministry at St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church and the global impact it could make on Charlotte, North Carolina, the Belmont Community and beyond. Thank you for pushing me towards completion.

Thank you also for the last six years! It has been fun just as you said it would be. The work we do each day has been enlightening and we will continue to press forward until we see the 5,000 disciples of St. Paul’s serving a world that God has commanded us to serve. I look forward to the continued work.

To my parents, Rev. Grant E. Redmond and Rev. Clorine Redmond, I want to say thank you to the both of you on behalf of Angie, Paulette, Jackie and Grant, Jr. for pushing us to become who God wants us to be. Mom and Dad as I began working on this project I thought about the college students from Benedict College that Dad picked up for Sunday morning worship and later inviting them to Sunday dinner and fellowship. I thought about the kids in the neighborhood who played with us and were given something to drink along with us after a day of kick ball or volley ball. You treated all of us the same! Our home was considered the good time house because of your welcoming spirit and generous heart. What a missional impact you were making back then and
didn’t even realize it. I never would have imagined many years ago growing up in Fountain Inn, SC and, later in Columbia, SC that I would be here writing but I think you did. I must acknowledge your hand in pushing me to be who I’m becoming!

Thanks Mom and Dad you are the best!

I also acknowledge Dr. Christine Chapman for your assistance with this project. You also knew that the church globally needed this information. Thank you so much.

To two teachers that saw in me years ago what I did not see; that I would one day stand on a major platform! To Mrs. Pauline Davis and Mrs. Bernice Manigo, you are certainly a part of the village that helped shape and mold me. I love you as much today as I did in 1984 when I stood on the small platform at Columbia High School’s graduation saying “success is not reached in a single bound, we mount to its summit round by round.”

Thank you, you have never been forgotten.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, religious institutions in America have experienced a need to clarify their religious identity. Although most churches are affiliated with mainline denominations, individual churches, such as non-denominational churches, are driven to clarify their particular uniqueness. Our uniqueness arises from our understanding of scripture different experiences, different patterns of socialization, the choices about mission and even the programs individual churches choose to serve their parishioners and their communities.

This Doctor of Ministry project presents a case-guided study of an African-American mega church that explored and developed its missional identity. The project focused on the processes and the outcomes the church experienced during this self-exploration of understanding what they wanted to be.

This awareness was necessary because St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church faced formidable challenges as a church serving a community with a plethora of needs. As a church St. Paul's was not convinced that it was doing a great job being a "Ray of Hope" to its community and surrounding area. It became evident to the church that they were too inwardly focused. In other words, the church focused too much on developing themselves and not on others.
The church wanted and needed to become an externally focused church. It was not about adding another ministry to the fifty or so St. Paul's already had; it was about a church-wide effort to focus on others and not on its self.

Where did St. Paul's begin? The researcher identified a beginning direction by asking the question - who is thy neighbor? This question is paramount to understanding how St. Paul's was called to respond in relationship with those around it. St. Paul's was very aware of its location and the neighborhood in which it was located; however, St. Paul's did not know its neighbors. They saw their neighbors, but they did not know them. This challenged the researcher because the church did not know nor had they reached out to the mothers of four children who died from gun violence at the local high school. They did not know the store owner who was about to lose his business to gentrification. The church did not know the thousands of single mothers in the area who could not afford childcare for their children.

As a church St. Paul's was challenged because they realized their negligence. Their negligence was not adhering to the Bible that they claim to live by. St. Paul's has a vision and mission statement but what they discovered is that for far too long they have been mindlessly going through each day seeing needs all around them without giving them adequate consideration. There are formidable challenges that they must face as a church serving a community with complex and varied needs.

The researcher was greatly concerned for herself because when she looked back over her ministry career, she wanted to look back over it as John Vincent did. She wanted to be able to see that she had “helped someone along the way.” John Vincent was the
founder of the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield, England who described his most
significant contribution in his ministerial career as the idea of walking alongside.

When Vincent surveyed his ministerial career he didn’t consider possible
economic developments he had made or membership growth, or ethnic understanding as
his most significant contributions. Rather, what was most important to him was
encapsulated in one word, alongside. Mr. Vincent says, “We’ve made a difference by
introducing the word ‘alongside’ into our life together. We’ve advanced from living
apart to living alongside our neighbor.”

The researcher was concerned because it was evident that St. Paul's was not
walking alongside its neighbors. St. Paul's had not invested time with those with whom
they had no relationship. Gregory Jones and Kevin L. Armstrong, the authors of
Resurrecting Excellence, agree with the idea that we all need people to walk alongside us
on our journeys. “Communities of people they suggest are crucial to sustaining us
through our joys and grief’s of life, the triumphs and tragedies, the successes and failures
we will be faced with over time.”

Theoretically the researcher agreed, but she admits to personally struggling with
this idea. The researcher struggled because for so long she thought like the contemporary
American the authors of Resurrecting Excellence describe who often find Christian
friendships difficult to understand, live and embrace. “Be an individual” is what the
researcher had been taught to believe. She had always been taught to think and take care
of self because no one else will. However, as we grow in the knowledge of who God and
what God expects of us, walking alongside people through their struggles is not difficult
for the researcher to embrace. At first the idea of “holy friendships” that Jones and
Armstrong talked about also concerned the researcher. “Holy friends get to know us and challenge the sins we have come to love. But Holy friends will also, ‘affirm our gifts and help us to dream dreams we think impossible to dream.” The researcher struggled with this notion because she did not see how Holy friendships and walking alongside those we served could connect.

But as the researcher reflected on St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church, she saw how this idea could essentially resurrect the lives of the people within the church and community. It could even resurrect the researcher’s life!

The researcher thought about her past, and thought to herself that if she had Holy friends walking alongside her early in her ministry career and during the time she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis she would not have felt so alone and would not have failed so miserably in some of her endeavors. It was this profound understanding of aloneness and prior failures that the researcher brought to this project. The researcher also recognized that St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church was acting alone and was not acting in a missional capacity. Even though the researcher had personal apprehension about what was needed at St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church, it was the process of moving them to come outside of themselves and learn how to walk alongside their brothers and sisters as holy friends that fueled this Doctor of Ministry project.

St. Paul’s boasts about the five thousand plus members they have on the rolls whom they see each Sunday as they enter and exit the sanctuary; and whom they see each week at Bible study on Wednesdays at 12:00 noon and 6:45pm. But the researcher wondered how many of the five thousand disciples entering and exiting on Sunday mornings and on Wednesdays walk alongside their neighbors.
In addition to asking, "Who is thy neighbor," the researcher also began the project by asking "Are you a Sunday morning worshipper only, where you sing together, pray together, worship together and forget one another until the next Sunday or next Wednesday?" She asked, "Is that who you are?" The researcher wondered what Jesus would say to St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church. She believes that He would refer the church to Luke 10:25-37 where he gives us our rule for life: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The parable of "The Good Samaritan" brings to life the reality of love for one’s neighbor. The researcher felt that St. Paul's could learn many things about loving their neighbor from this passage.

First, they would learn that our lack of love is never easily justified. The priest and the Levite “passed by” the man in need. They saw him, that is explicit from the text, but they avoided the ceremonial uncleanness and therefore would not stop to help. The researcher discovered that as Christians, there are people whom we find easier to love – our families, our church friends, our pastor, those whom we associate with or know well, etc.

For these individuals, we are more inclined to give, to stop, to sacrifice. For those we do not find so easy to love – the drug dealer, the prostitute, a difficult coworker, the disabled or elderly, a person who we have never met before, or someone of another race or gender – we justify our “passing by” with offhand excuses of busy schedules and prior commitments. This passage shows us the sinfulness of our ways for not engaging others with love, regardless of who they are.
Another truth in this passage is that our neighbors are diverse. Jesus as he so adeptly does with his re-working of the parables gives a twist to the conclusion. It is a Samaritan man of mosaic racial and cultural heritage who denies himself in order to show love to his neighbor. Considered an outcast by Jewish standards, this Samaritan could have justified his “passing by” more so than any other person in this story. Because of the inferiority and oppression afflicted on the Samaritan people, the only responsibility this man had in response to the beaten man’s need was an obligation to the commandment that sums up all of the Law: to love God and to love neighbor.

When we look closely at the meaning of the word “neighbor,” the Greek meaning is plesion (pronounced play-see-on). The Luke 10 passage is the only instance in this gospel where this definition of “neighbor” is used. According to the lexicon, there are four meanings for who our neighbor is: (1) A friend, (2) Any other person, and where two are concerned, the other person, your fellow man. (3) According to the Jews, any member of the Hebrew nation and commonwealth, (4) According to Christ, any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet.

Finally, the passage shows that needs are everywhere. This man’s needs were evident in a public way, allowing others to make a conscious decision whether or not to show love to him. When we see poverty, need, or injustice in any way, we must make a conscious decision to act or not act.

As Christians, we need to be aware that our neighbors may have needs that are not always obvious. As we love our neighbors, we must be conscious of this and be intentional about showing love and helping to meet their needs. This same Law is our
obligation, but also our delight. It is a delight to know that our loving words and actions, no matter what the situation might be, have served to help someone along the way.

There is a diverse population with diverse needs where St. Paul's is located and, the Church should delight in meeting their needs. What a great commandment the Lord has given us! What a great world we would live in if the church universal lived by the words of the Lukan passage. What a great community the Belmont neighborhood would be if St. Paul's lived by these words.

According to Lisa Withrow, author of, Claiming New Life, "the 21st Century mainline churches have become inwardly focused, caring for neighbors absentmindedly or not at all.” Unfortunately at times that statement characterizes St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church. However, with the help of David Bosch author of, Transforming Mission the church is asking new questions. They are asking if St. Paul’s is equipped for their calling in society. Is our church structurally pliable and innovative? Is the church a worshipping community that welcomes outsiders and make them feel at home? Does our pastor have a monopoly, and are our members' just objects of pastoral care? Do we defend the privileges of a select group? The church don’t know the answers to these questions but, Bosch is giving them a good place to begin asking questions and moving in the right direction to become the type of church that is equipped for its calling.

Bosch suggests that the missionary dimension of a church manifests itself when all of these elements are present. "The church’s missionary dimension,” says Bosch, evokes intentional, direct involvement in society; it engages in missionary “points of concentration” such as evangelism and work for justice and peace.
With the help of Bosch’s book, St. Paul’s is convinced that the church and mission belong together because “a church without mission or a mission without the church is both contradictions. Such things do exist, but only as pseudo-structures.”

Lisa Withrow asserts that, “The Church to be faithful constantly must renew its grounding in the love of God, and Christ’s Church must love the neighbor to whom it is connected through God’s love.” To love its neighbors they must move outside the walls of their church. When they do, they will not be surprised to see the lives of those they are serving, changed. If they do this continually not only will their lives change but St. Paul’s will, as well.

This project intends to, with the support of the pastor of St. Paul’s, move the church toward the goal of becoming an externally focused church. To begin this movement, at the end of the summer of 2009, Dr. Gregory K. Moss, Sr., pastor of St. Paul’s, challenged the Church’s position as an authentic Missionary Baptist Church. “Are we here to serve or be served,” he asked? In an effort to reposition and refocus the church he then called for a community wide mission blitz to take place. With that rallying cry over 500 of its members spanned out across the city on a Saturday morning. Some of the members served in soup kitchens; some built houses; some visited nursing homes, and others walked the streets evangelizing.

The participants saw many lives changed that day including their own because they began to see their true purpose unfolding. They understood what it meant to love God as we love and serve the people of God. As a result of their efforts on that Saturday, many souls were added to the church.
The researcher was reminded of the response to Peter’s sermon in Acts 2. It was phenomenal! The Bible says that on that day, three thousand souls were added to the church. All of the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone, as they had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all of the people.

The Scripture says they broke bread together and they had all things in common. When they saw someone in need they would sell their possessions and goods to ensure everyone’s needs were met. They couldn’t do this unless they were forging an honest relationship, becoming Holy friends and learning how to walk alongside one another.

As the researcher thought about this idea, she knew that this was exactly what St. Paul’s needed because St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is sometimes referred to as a group that views itself like a jar full of marbles. They are marbles in the same jar but there is little togetherness. Unfortunately they just roll around in the jar bumping into one another but having little effect on each other.

Vocationally the researcher is challenged by the fact that St. Paul’s is just a church that bumps into one another. The researcher is challenged as one of two full time pastors of this large congregation whose job it is to help the parishioner’s become a fellowship of believers who are unlike a jar of marbles that just bump into one another.

St. Paul’s need to become a fellowship of believers like a jar of grapes that bleed on one another; a fellowship that allows its faith to rub off on one another. If their faith is stirred up on the inside of the church then their faith will rub off onto the people outside of its four walls.
St. Paul’s believe if they are going to influence their community and this world and begin bringing people to Christ, they must as Withrow suggests, “go back to the message Jesus preached: love God and love others.” The researcher also believe the words of Dr. Edward Stetzer, author of *Transforming Missions*, who says, “They must act like a missionary” in the Belmont community.

Dr. Stetzer also wrote in an article entitled *The Missional Church* wherein he says that a "missional church" is a church that acts like a missionary in its community. He points out that "missional" is not the same as "mission-minded," though they are both important and related.

The term "missional" is the noun "missionary" adapted into an adjective. For example, an "adversary" is your enemy. Someone who is "adversarial" is acting like your enemy. Thus, a "missionary" is someone who acts like a missionary (for example, understands a culture, proclaims the faithful Gospel in a way that people in culture can understand, and uses parts of that culture to glorify God). In essence a "missional church" is a church that acts like a missionary in its community.

If St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is going to reach a changing Belmont Community, the Charlotte community and beyond, they have to contend for the unchanging faith (Jude 3). But to do so, Stetzer suggests, “using forms that are relevant to all kinds of people (1 Cor. 9:22-23). That's a missional church - a church acting like a missionary to the community around it while partnering with others to be missionary around the world.” Stetzer believes that it is unfortunate that some will say, "The culture does not matter, just preach the Word!"
The researcher concurs with Stetzer when he says culture is not irrelevant. The cultural experiences of a group are the threads that make us who we are. It's those little nuances that make us unique and different.

Stetzer believe that we should become a part of the uniqueness that we find in different cultural locations. He says, “Because we send missionaries to foreign lands and, like Lottie Moon, expect them to don the clothes, live the customs, and be part of the community while proclaiming a faithful Gospel; we should not forbid North American missional pastors from doing the very thing we train international missionaries to do.”

In his article Stetzer provides information about what a missional church looks like. He says it is:

**Incarnational:** Missional churches are deeply connected to the community. The church is not focused on its *facility*, but is focused on living, demonstrating, and offering biblical community to a lost world. Stetzer provides an example to the idea of incarnational when he mentions a man by the name of Danny Preston. Danny Preston has become a part of the biker community that he is trying to reach by working at a motorcycle store while planting Logos Church in Little Five Points in partnership with First Baptist of Atlanta. He is an incarnation of the Gospel in an unreached community.

**Indigenous:** Missional churches are indigenous. Churches that are indigenous have taken root in the soil and reflect, to some degree, the culture of their community. An indigenous church looks different from Seattle to Senegal to Singapore. We would expect and rejoice at an African church worshipping to African music, in African dress, with African enthusiasm. So shouldn't we rejoice
at churches of different missional expressions across North Carolina, North America, and the world?

**Intentional:** Missional churches are intentional about their methodologies. There are scripturally commanded requirements about church, preaching, discipline, baptism and many other biblical practices. Church and worship can't take just any form. In missional churches, biblical forms are central, but things like worship style, evangelism methods, attire, service times, locations, and many other man-made customs are not chosen simply based on the preference of the members. Instead, the forms are best determined by their effectiveness in a specific cultural context.

Stetzer ends the article by asking if the reader noticed that the list did not include contemporary, young, or hip. This is enlightening because many individuals at St. Paul's Baptist church are afraid to become missional because its traditional roots will be lost. But Stetzer says a church is not missional because it is contemporary or traditional. A church becomes missional when it remains faithful to the Gospel message while simultaneously contextualizing its ministry (to the degree it can) so that the Gospel can engage the worldview of the hearers. Traditional churches that are engaging communities that are receptive to traditional methods are just as missional ... as are contemporary, blended, ethnic, emerging, etc. The key is biblical fidelity and missional engagement.

A missional church responds to the sending commands of Jesus by becoming an incarnational, indigenous, and intentional Gospel presence in its context. When Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you," (John 20:21) that was not to a select
group of cross-cultural missionaries. Instead, that was a commission to you, me and our churches. We have a sender (Jesus), a message (the Gospel), and a people to whom we are sent (real people in culture). It is worth the effort to go beyond our personal preferences and to proclaim a faithful Gospel in whatever context we find ourselves. According to Stetzer, that's missional.

St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is seeking to find its missional identity by responding to the commands of Jesus to be an incarnational, indigenous, and intentional Gospel presence in the Belmont community of Charlotte, NC. With the aid of *The Externally Focused Life* a book written by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson the researcher will teach seven Bible study classes designed to raise the awareness of its missional identity.

In the second chapter the researcher will introduce the ministry context and ministry issue. The third chapter presents the conceptual framework of the project by reviewing empirical, theological, and biblical literature related to missional identity. In Chapter four the project will be detailed and outlined. The paper will conclude with chapter five wherein the researcher reviews steps taken in the project to bring about awareness of St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church’s missional identity.
CHAPTER II
MINISTRY CONTEXT

This chapter will present the ministry context of St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church by describing the ministry setting and the ministry issue.

MINISTRY SETTING

St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is a vibrant, largely African-American congregation with more than 5,000 adults and children on its membership rolls. It is situated within the Belmont community just outside Charlotte, North Carolina’s Center City and the I-277 loop. The age composition of the church is spread over a wide spectrum, and is evenly distributed between senior citizens, middle age, young adults, and youth. St. Paul’s is respected by the larger community of Charlotte’s residents and enjoys a position as a bastion in the religious life of the African-American community.

More than 235,139 people live in the Belmont community. African-Americans account for more than 49.5% of the population. An estimated 70 percent of Belmont’s households have annual incomes under $35,000. The area can be described as extremely non-traditional due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent homes.

In the area where the church is located, a study was conducted by the Belmont Area Revitalization Plan. The study focused on revitalizing one of Charlotte’s oldest inner city neighborhoods into safe and sustainable communities. The following
information was obtained: Many residents within the community feel significantly less safe in their own neighborhood, even though they perceive the city as a whole to be a safe place to live. Residents have generally positive feelings about police services in Belmont, but they are still concerned about drugs, both on the streets and in homes. They are also concerned about the number of burglaries and violent crimes that often result in personal assaults.

According to the study, 1/5 of the residents have been victims of crime in the last two years—a rate that seems comparatively high. 3/5 of the residents have had to call 911 in the last two years. These numbers were alarming to members of the church considering the late nights spent at the church for meetings, Bible study, evening worship services and choir rehearsals.

The researcher also discovered that Belmont residents rely heavily on public transportation (2/5 residents do not own a car.) And as a result, must shop for groceries at neighborhood convenience stores. This makes them extremely uncomfortable because they are aware that a lot of the drugs being sold in the community are being sold out of these stores. At the same time there seems to be a growing sense of progress in the area and a perception that conditions have improved in Belmont, although nearly half express dissatisfaction.

The beauty of Belmont is the high number of residents involved in community activities. Their involvement assures that information about programs and events reach approximately 3/4 of the neighborhood households. And while there is awareness of a revitalization plan; of every 5 residents, 2 are hopeful it will produce positive change. Many are skeptical about the plan and some are concerned about displacement. Many
residents have lived in Belmont more than five years, giving stability to the neighborhood. Being close to family and friends is a key factor for them.

While there are some reservations about the proposed changes for the area, there is also an interest in finding out more about homeownership possibilities. What is striking about this interest in homeownership possibilities is the limited awareness and use of programs that would improve prospects of self-sufficiency and future homeownership—such as job training and adult education.

According to the survey, Belmont residents would like to see community or recreation centers in the neighborhood. They maintain a high level of participation in community activities by participating in one or more of the following activities: anti-drug rallies, vigils or marches; citizen patrols and crime watch; neighborhood business watch programs; neighborhood clean-up projects; neighborhood association meetings and City council meetings with Belmont on the agenda.

After-school and youth programs are the most wildly used public services in the Belmont community. One of every four households is involved in youth or after-school programs. Educational related services are geared toward day care for pre-school children and after-school activities for school age children. After-School Enrichment Programs are operated by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools at Villa Heights Elementary and First Ward Elementary.

After-School programs are also offered in the neighborhood by St. Paul’s Baptist Church and Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church's with tutoring, sports, and art activities comprising the curriculum. The State's “Youth Network” program serves central city
neighborhoods with mentoring activities focused on sports, tutoring and community service.

The Community School of the Arts sponsors “Art Reach,” focusing on visual arts and piano, at one of the community’s apartment homes. Smart Start offers Bright Beginnings for at-risk preschoolers at the Belmont Regional Center. The YWCA sponsors a child development and day care program at the Belmont Regional Center. Seigle Avenue Presbyterian provides a “pre-school cooperative” for children and their families living in the Belmont community. And The Public Library operates a 1,600 square foot branch at the Belmont Regional Center with computers available in addition to books.

Mecklenburg County maintains four neighborhood parks and offers a series of recreational programs. Agencies such as the Girl Scouts, 4-H Program, Salvation Army, and Johnston YMCA also provide programs for general and specific interests. The Girl Scouts have 30 Belmont participants in neighborhood troops. As you can see a lot of emphasis is placed on youth and children in the Belmont Community particularly their educational and recreational development. What appears to be missing is a component for adult development.

At one point, St. Paul’s operated the “BRIDGE” jobs program (funded through United Way and the Episcopal Church at the Belmont Regional Center). Training was offered in several areas, including job search skills, occupational skills, money management, life skills, and GED preparation. It is unfortunate that it no longer exists, because people come into St. Paul’s everyday expressing interest in these services. And
while the programs are not offered at St. Paul’s any longer, they are offered at another location.

Currently, Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church is the only non-profit organization in the Belmont area offering free job training and resume preparation assistance. However, St. Paul’s hired an Outreach Director whose job it is to keep St. Paul’s focused on community needs. Several positive changes have occurred as a result of hiring a director. In the past few months, a GED preparation class and an extensive program for seniors who belong to the church and community have been established. This has proven to be very positive.

Belmont Residents also have social services available in the neighborhood at the Belmont Regional Center. Programs are geared toward families and youth, as well as individual rehabilitation and community revitalization. The Belmont Regional Center is served by a number of churches that offer various programs for neighborhood residents.

St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church and Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church are active providers of educational, employment, and recreational services in the community. Clothes closets are maintained by the Fellowship in Christ Christian Church, the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church and St. Paul’s Baptist Church. Community kitchens operate on limited schedules at New Hope and Galilean Baptist Churches.

St Paul’s theological stance is to become a community of believers who represent a "Ray of Hope" to its congregation, surrounding neighborhood and beyond. St. Paul’s is a safe haven and equipping station where each person who enters its doors can experience God and His transforming power in their lives and in their relationships with others. St Paul’s is a place where teaching the Word of God is central and made relevant to
spiritually equip, mature and empower people to represent Christ as a lifestyle through exercising their own calling and giftedness. They value ministering to the needs of the Belmont community through service and outreach, but what is their missional identity?

St. Paul's has two professional staff ministers whose job it is to assist with the realization of the church's mission. In addition to the associate pastors, the deacons and family ministries work alongside the pastor to accomplish the goal of understanding the church's mission.

Deacons assist the staff ministers by ministering to God's people through visiting, caring for, calling on, and praying for church disciples. They lead the church by their commitment to serving and by their example of faithfulness to Christian living.

St. Paul's has an outstanding group of men and women who have agreed to serve the disciples of its church. They serve the needs of the congregation without pay. The deacon family ministry is known as the Tribe of Judah. Each family of the church is served by a deacon in one of nine (9) geographic zones within the Tribe of Judah.

**MINISTRY ISSUE**

St. Paul's Missionary Baptist church has not always been located in the Belmont community where it is now. It was established in April of 1900 by a small group of people who met in a house on Crockett St. to form St. Paul's Baptist Church. Over time the members moved their worship service from the house to an abandoned building that was once a hospital on East First St.

The church split in 1944 and the church elected James Wertz as the new pastor who broadened their horizons with a new vision. A firm believer in Christian education, Rev. Wertz implemented plans for Bible studies and workshops to aid the total man.
Under his leadership, the church experienced exceptional growth and a larger church was needed. The church purchased property at the corner of East First St. and McDowell. On August 28, 1949 groundbreaking ceremonies were held for a new edifice.

The site chosen for the church was known as “crime corner.” When asked why put a church here; Rev. Wertz answered “because this is where a church is needed in the Brooklyn section.” St. Paul’s was sitting in the midst of a crime infested neighborhood, with marginal economic growth but they stayed because they felt a sense of call to this area and the people. But change was coming to the Brooklyn Community.

As St. Paul’s continued to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the community, a “Redevelopment Commission” was organized. The Commission’s report referred to the Brooklyn community as a, “blight beyond repair.” This troubled the City of Charlotte because this “blight” was next door to downtown and at the back doorstep of City Hall and the County Courthouse, so a change was eminent. However, the City was not interested in saving this church for the community.

After many meetings in 1968-69 with the commission, the congregation realized the requirements to remain in Brooklyn would be impossible to meet therefore they succumbed to a force out. This force out became known as the “raping of Brooklyn” because St. Paul’s voted to sell the church to the city, and began a search for a new location. It was important to pastor, Rev. Wertz, to find a community just like Brooklyn; a place where they could serve individuals living on the margins of society. The congregants searched and were led to an area of North Charlotte called the Belmont Community and purchased Allen Street Baptist Church and moved in on June 8, 1969.
Belmont was very different from Brooklyn because the area’s residents were primarily blue-collar workers. The residents weren’t destitute but they were far from well off. That was the community in 1969. The church continued the mission that it began in the Brooklyn community of serving the needs of people, only this time they were serving the needy in the Belmont community.

By all appearances, it seemed that St. Paul’s was doing a great job of meeting the needs of the community. But after a careful evaluation of all its efforts, the researcher discovered they could be doing a great deal more. Like all churches, St. Paul’s is engaged in a number of ministries. As they evaluated each one, they discovered that in some cases, activities that may have once seemed essential to the church were no longer useful or needed. St. Paul’s said they valued being part of the community, but when they scrutinized how they distributed their resources, they realized that community involvement had not been a priority. They have a mission’s ministry, but no intentional strategy for the people to get involved in it. What became clear is that the people of St. Paul’s can be counted on to provide gifts and money, but they don’t always show up to get their hands dirty. Their greatest resource are people and they are underutilized and missing out on the blessing of serving people outside the church. In addition, the church was not finding effective ways to create relationships outside of its four walls. They realized that they had often felt that they had done their part by donating money or other material goods to worthy causes. While these things are certainly needed, donating resources do not require hands-on involvement and often serve to relieve guilt.

The church community has a lot of needs but the most pressing need is to help people get through day to day living. To assist with community needs, St. Paul’s
currently provide assistance for emergency situations such as paying utility bills and rent and/or mortgages. The church also has a food pantry and a clothing closet. But one of the deacons pointed out that the food pantry is only open once a month and their clothing closet is open once a week. For this deacon, St. Paul’s have developed a lot of “feel good” ministries. We have a “feel good” food pantry and a “feel good” clothing closet which only serves the purpose of making us “feel good” about ourselves and they don’t address real needs. This statement gave residents from the community an opportunity to let St. Paul’s know how some members of the community really feel about the church.

To the community the church’s members are a group of people who drive in each Sunday and drive out. They feel that the church is in the community but not a part of the community. What an indictment against the Church.

The church is missionary and apostolic by its very nature. A nuance of this description is missional. Therefore the question needing an answer is, does St. Paul’s need to understand its identity as a missional church?

If St. Paul’s understand their identity as the ek-klesia – the called out people who are missionary – apostolic - sent into the world then they will have no choice but to “go into all the world-the oikoumene-the inhabited world,” making Jesus known and loved and obeyed. Therefore, St. Paul’s ministry issue is to raise awareness of its identity as a missional church.

It is not about adding another ministry to the fifty or so they already have; it is about a church wide effort to understand its identity. But, is St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church willing to discover its identity as a missional church and move outside the four walls of its comfortable pews and make a real and lasting difference in the Belmont
community? Is St. Paul's willing to live out its mission and vision which states: To become a community of believers who represent a "Ray of Hope" to its congregation, the surrounding neighborhood and beyond. St. Paul's, as its vision states, is a safe haven and equipping station where each person who enters our doors can experience God and His transforming power in their lives and in their relationships with others."
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher assesses the significance of the missio Dei concept for effective mission by examining the concept from the perspective of the missionary church in this chapter. The argument is that the concept of missio Dei is essential to the nature of the Church; in particular, St. Paul’s Baptist Church as it serves the Belmont Community and the world by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ not just through acts of good works, but also through its proclamation and witness. Participation in the missio Dei, and therefore its significance, begins with an understanding of the role and place of the Church in the Biblical story.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

In recent discussions on the church, a number of scholars, missionaries, and pastors have increasingly—and for good reason—focused on the “missional” nature of the church. The missional discussion does not begin with the question “What is the best way to do Church,” but asks the prior question, “What exactly is the Church?” Related to this is an even more important question: “What is God’s purpose in the world, and how does the Church fulfill or join with God in that purpose?” The answer to these questions may seem obvious, but upon deeper reflections, individuals are baffled by the idea that the church join with God in God’s purpose in the world. But we join God in God’s purpose by loving and serving our neighbor. The researcher asked participants of the
project the researcher if they knew why they went to church on Sunday mornings. Is it to sing a few worship songs—or hymns, listen to a sermon, give an offering, and later return home? Presumably this person has done so because he or she thinks it is an important—maybe even central—part of the spiritual life.

Does this person ask what their local church exists for, or why there is a church in the first place? What about the word “church”? What does it even mean? In Scripture the Apostle Paul speaks a great deal about the “body of Christ,” Peter mentions the “people of God,” and Jesus says He would establish His church, but besides a few mysterious phrases how does this impact what happens on Sunday mornings?

These are the questions the missional movement seeks to answer. In short, following the lead of Karl Barth in the 1930’s many theologians, ecclesiologists, and missionaries have demonstrated a great need to identify the nature of the Church in the mission of God. Prior to this point, missions was seen as a “function” of the church, yet as Darrell Guder notes, with the work of Barth and others a distinct shift occurred “from a primary focus upon the church and its expansion to a focus upon God as a missionary God.”

This shift led many to recognize that the Church does not “do” missions, it participates in the mission of God—a mission that was happening long before the existence of the Church. Therefore, in the words of Peter Van Engen, the Church—and the local church by extension—is by nature “God’s missionary people.” Using this train of thought throughout the project helped St. Paul’s realize that the church is not a gathering of separate individuals, a select few of whom take on ministerial and missionary responsibilities, while the majority attends church as casual observers;
instead, it is the corporate gathering of missionary people who are the recipients of God's redemptive purposes and who exist to fulfill God's ongoing mission in the creation.

Although a brief discussion of the development of the idea of a "missional" church is necessary as an introduction, the purpose of this chapter is not to outline the historical development of this paradigm shift in the self-understanding of the church's identity. Nor is it to explain in detail what a missional church looks like or how it functions.

In this chapter the researcher intends to offer several theological emphases of a missional church. Just as beliefs shape decisions, so a congregation's theological emphases will inevitably shape how that congregation sees it and what it does. This was an important discovery for St. Paul's because the church did not know its purpose. Regardless of the current intellectual climate, many evangelical churches have a tendency to retreat from serious theological engagement; a missional church will necessarily take theology seriously.

The researcher offers the following emphases to such a missional-minded church. The working thesis is as follows: Since missional churches find their identity in the Missio Dei, they must understand the implications of God's mission.

David Bosch defines Missio Dei as "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world and is actively involved in and with the world. It embraces both Church and world and the church are privileged to be called to participate in God's mission." Missio Dei is a Latin Christian theological term that can be translated as the "mission of God,"
or the "sending of God." Mission is understood as being derived from the very nature of God.

The missionary nature comes from God alone. In 1934, Karl Hartenstein, a German missiologist, coined the phrase in response to Karl Barth and his emphasis on actio Dei (Latin for "the action of God").

The most important aspect to understand about the missio Dei is that the mission is God's. For St. Paul's it was important for them to understand that they are not called to bring their mission into a local context; instead they are called to partner with God in His mission. In the words of David Bosch; "It is not the church which undertakes mission; it is the Missio Dei which constitutes the church."

St. Paul's often wrongly assumed that the primary activity of God is in the church, rather than recognizing that God's primary activity is in the world, and the church is God's instrument sent into the world to participate in His redemptive mission.

Barth's argument that mission must be understood as an activity or attribute of God himself was first proposed in a paper given at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932 and it reinforced the point the researcher wanted the participants to understand. The full concept was articulated in 1952 at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council. Mission was understood to derive from the Trinitarian nature of God: the Father sends the Son; the Father and the Son send the Spirit; and the Trinitarian God sends the church into the world as a dynamic embodiment of divine love towards creation.

Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not
vice versa.... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love. Missio Dei signaled a major paradigm shift in mission thinking. Mission is no longer thought of as the Church's activity overseas or in another culture. Loren Mead, author of, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* says, "the frontier of mission has shifted from being primarily a geographical one, to one of belief, conviction and commitment, thus addressing the ethical dilemmas of the imperialism that shaped mission in the colonial age, where mission moved from the world that immediately surrounded the Church to beyond the frontiers of the empire(s) of Christendom."

Mead identifies some of the implications of this shift as: 'No longer is the ordinary participant in a congregation personally and intimately on the mission frontier. The individual is no longer called to 'witness' in a hostile environment. No longer is she or he supposed to be different from any other citizen. Indeed, citizenship has become identical with one's religious responsibility.'

The Mexico City Conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (1963) described the mission shift away from Christendom thinking as follows: 'The missionary frontier runs around the world. It is the line which separates belief from unbelief, the unseen frontier which cuts across other frontiers and presents the universal Church with its primary missionary challenge.'

Missio Dei, while originally a Western development in ecumenical thinking, challenged the Western Church to recognize and participate in the mission of God within our own context, a challenge that many of our local congregations are still struggling to come to terms with.
The clerical nature of our church structures and our emphasis on our gathering for worship has served to blunt the mission potential of the church as the scattered people of God. This thought emphasizes the dilemma at St. Paul’s. It is a great worshipping community with emphasis on its structure but considered dull in its participation in the community and world.

But J.A. Kirk says, “Mission is at the heart of the Church’s life and if it ceases to be missionary, it has not just failed in one task, but it ceases to be the Church.” Now more than ever there are countless churches seeking to become missionary congregations and St. Paul’s is one of them.

The researcher noticed how individual members began to grapple with this thought. They were essentially trying to discover what it means to be church in their gathering for worship, fellowship and discipleship, but more importantly what it means to be a sent people when they scatter into the work place, leisure pursuits, home life, etc. They understood that the failure to appreciate the role of the church in the missio Dei would allow some people to talk of the church as if it were an alternative option.

The relationship between the church, the world and the missio Dei has been vigorously debated during the last half century. There have been times in the past when Christians assumed that all God’s purposes would be fulfilled exclusively through the church. There have been theologies which have either identified the kingdom completely with the Church or which have regarded the kingdom as a purely future event.iii

A Church-centered missiology has and continues to under gird the extraordinary missionary thrust of the last two centuries, with its emphasis on the planting of self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches.
Missio Dei holds that mission, rather than being an activity for the church, is the initiative of God towards the world and the essential nature of the church. As the Father has sent the Son, and the Son the Spirit, so the Son and the Spirit have sent the Church into the world. Thus it is only by going in obedience to the sending Son and Spirit that the Church truly participates in the missio dei.

At the WCC consultation on Mission and Ecclesiology in Hoxter-Brenkhausen, Germany some of the representatives challenged the coherence of these assertions. First, missio Dei assumes a direct correlation between the essence and effects of God and the consequent nature of the church.

This is open to challenge on philosophical and theological grounds. It amounts to an apparent claim for the primacy of mission over ecclesiology, which is hugely difficult for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Churches. It raises questions about ‘essence’ in terms of the convergence and distinction of being and doing. It tends towards confusion between our action in the world and God’s effective intentions towards the world. It raises the continual problem of making mission everything and therefore nothing.

Since the IMC held in Willingen in 1952, ecumenical enthusiasts have found a lot of common ground through their understanding of the missio Dei, but the danger has been to regard mission as a mandate given to the Church and has tempted us to do what we are always tempted to do, namely to see the work of mission as a good work and to seek to justify ourselves by our works. Loren Newbigin, one of the Willingen delegates, put it like this: ‘The Church is not so much the agent of mission as the locus of mission. It is God who acts in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ.’
Missio Dei can easily degenerate into a justification for the actions of individuals and the actions of the Church. For example, since the events of 11th September 2001, a lot of religious rhetoric has been used to justify 'the war on terror' and a possible war against Iraq. President Bush in one of his speeches shortly after September 11th inadvertently used the word 'crusade', thus conjuring up images of past conquests against other cultures in order to impose the United States' of life and religious values.

On a local level one can fulfill his or her participation in the missio Dei through acts of goodness, without challenging those around with the good news of Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s purpose, that is missio Dei, for His whole creation was revealed and accomplished. This good news has universal implications.

The significance in defining the missionary identity of the church; that is its participation in the missio Dei has to be first defined through its role in the Biblical story. The Gospel, the Good News, can only be understood in the context of the whole Biblical narrative. That is through creation, fall, election, redemption, and consummation.

The purpose of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ. The church is the community chosen, called, and set apart to be the bearers of that good news. The role of the church is to be God’s chosen bearers of the ultimate purpose of God.

In other words the actions of the church in mission must be consistent with the Gospel, which is revealing the meaning of human history, of ‘the origin and destiny of humankind’ and the church is the clue to the goal of history as it witnesses to its revelation, accomplishment, and future realization in Jesus Christ. The logic of mission is that ‘the true meaning of the human story has been disclosed. Because it is the truth, it
must be shared universally.' And the church is that body that has been chosen to make
the gospel known. If we carry this argument to its logical conclusion then the measure of
whether a church is church or not has to be whether it is engaged in mission or not and by
that I do not mean projects of good works. This does not mean that those outside the
Church are not fulfilling God's purposes.

The second factor in defining the missionary identity of the church is shaped by
the place it occupies in the Biblical story. The Old Testament looks forward to the
completion of God's redemptive work in the future that He began in Israel. That work
will be consummated with the coming of the Messiah equipped by the Spirit to usher in
the age to come. Jesus comes and makes the startling claim to be that Messiah. He
announces that the kingdom of God is at hand and so saying that the missio Dei has an
eschatological dimension in that kingdom of God. Yet the end does not come as
promised. Even John the Baptist is confused as he asks whether or not he should be
looking for someone else.

Later, the New Testament authors interpreted the coming of the kingdom as
hidden. However, for the original disciples and faithful Jews, the coming of the kingdom
would be the end of history. When it does not come, the question is raised 'Why?' (Acts
1:6).

If the kingdom does not come in fullness, then what is the purpose of this delay?
Newbigin's answer to this is: 'It is so that there may be time for the mission to all nations
and for the calling of all peoples to repentance and faith. The extending of the Day into
an age is the work of God's mercy. He holds back the final unveiling in order that there
may be time for repentance.' 'The meaning of this 'overlap of ages' in which we live, the
time between the coming of Christ and His coming again, is that it is the time given for
the witness of the apostolic Church to the ends of the earth.'

The time between the times opens up the opportunity for repentance and reception
of a foretaste of the promised salvation of the kingdom. And it is the calling of the
church to bear that good news to the ends of the earth. The answer to the question of the
disciples in Acts 1: 6 about the coming of the kingdom is that they will be witnesses to
the ends of the earth.

The disciples will receive the end-time Spirit that will enable them to share in the
salvation of the end and thus witness to its presence and future reality. Understanding
that the church has been called out as the first fruits of the new humankind during this
already/not yet time period defines the identity of the church as missionary. This place in
redemptive history – the time between the incarnation and parousia of Jesus – defines the
church’s nature.

It can be argued that if the missio Dei is to have any value as a doctrine it must
remain within the context of the universal history of the Biblical story, but must not be
restricted to an interpretation by the story of the Western Church. Newbigin proposes
that we should begin with salvation history of the Biblical story as universal history and
interpret the current events of world history in the context of the Bible story. The gospel
gives us a clue to the understanding of the events of world history. When placed in the
broader context of the Father's rule over history our understanding of the church's
mission is taken to a deeper level.

God is not concerned with what is going on in the historical community that arose
in the ministry of Jesus. God's rule is over all and He is sovereign Lord of history.
The events of world history are not mere props for a play in which the church is the only actor. The *missio Dei* must also always have a Biblical and a Trinitarian context. The revelation of God’s purpose for history in Jesus gives the church its compass-direction; the actual accomplishment of this end-time reign enables the church to participate in the salvation that is now present in history.

Classical theology conceived theology as a kind of objective science of faith. It was understood as a reflection in faith on the basis of scripture and tradition. This has been the tradition of the West and the theological tradition from which Karl Barth first formulated the *missio Dei* doctrine and would therefore be challenged and even be regarded as meaningless in other cultures.

The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative. It is a process that is part of the very nature of mission theology itself.

‘Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources’ for the development of a theology of mission. As our cultural and historical context plays a part in the construction of the reality in which we live, so our context influences the understanding of God and expression of our faith. Applied to the *missio Dei* we can speak of discerning the purpose of God at a certain time and in a certain place.

This does not contradict the Biblical story, but affirms the relevance of the *missio Dei* within the context at any time and place in history.
Such an understanding of the *missio Dei* resonates with the Biblical narrative and prevents us from embracing the many taken-for-granted presumptions and priorities that characterize the dominant worldview of a given context, instead of testing the values and perspectives against the biblical standards.

The interaction between the Biblical story, tradition, and the context – local, national and global - is why the church can only be missionary and subversive or counter cultural if need be. It needs to be missionary to itself – to challenge and purify itself of the surrounding culture – so as to be missionary, that is participating in the *missio Dei*, to be missionary to the world.

Thomas Thangaraj raises serious questions about whether in our post-Christian, multi-religious and secularized world we can develop a theology of mission based on an understanding of the *missio Dei* as outlined. Many of the assumptions that gave rise to the development of *missio Dei* thinking assumed an interaction with the Biblical narrative.

Thangaraj argues that neither the Christian Church nor the Christian Scriptures are suitable to construct a theology of mission within and without the Christian community because there is no definitive understanding of ‘church’.

‘The word ‘church’ is often linked with mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and it excludes people who belong to other religious traditions who have their own Scriptures.

To begin an interfaith dialogue starting with the *missio Dei* puts the theology of mission squarely in the context of the Trinity and therefore assumes the direction of the process in predetermined forms and stunts conversation.
Some would argue that the *missio Dei* is a helpful starting point because of the inclusive nature of the word ‘God’, but that would exclude so-called secular people from our circle of discussion and those who are already disillusioned with the idea of God.

Thangaraj proposes that the best place to begin a dialogue that is inclusive of all ‘is to begin with the idea of the mission of humanity. He calls it *missio humanitatis.*’ The word ‘humanity’ includes all human beings, irrespective of their faith in God or in their membership in any religious community.

Thus we see the limitations of *missio Dei* thinking once we step outside of the Christian community and into interfaith dialogue or a dialogue with those who do not advocate any understanding of God. But can we construct a theology of mission by starting from a human perspective? Karl Barth with his characteristic focus on divine revelation, in which no human involvement is possible, would certainly take issue with Thangaraj’s assertions.

Nevertheless within a theology that takes the Biblical story, tradition and the local context seriously, it is possible to dialogue with integrity with all people, while recognizing the limitations of the *missio Dei.*

*Missio Dei* placed within the context of the Biblical story tradition and our present day context remains effective for mission today. Nevertheless we need to avoid mission being equated with acts of good works or restricted to particular projects. Mission is part of the essential character of what it means to be church.

Emil Brunner put it like this: ‘The church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning.’ If we are faithful to the mission of the Church we are faithful even in an
imperfect way to the missio Dei provided that it remains rooted to the Biblical narrative and takes account of our present day context.

Missio Dei is limited as a starting point when we are engaged in inter-faith dialogue or if we are to be truly vulnerable and open in our dialogue with those who do not have faith in any god. If the church is to be actively engaged in the missio Dei it cannot simply continue what it has always done turning what should bring health and focus to church life into dullness and nominality. Missio Dei remains, despite its limitations, significant as a concept for effective mission today.

The primary purpose of the missiones ecclesiae (the missionary activities of the church) can therefore not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the missio Dei, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.

This shift of focus away from the activity of the church towards the activity of God, however, exposed a critical bifurcation in the argument, a fork in the road—and many theologians took the concept of missio Dei in a direction altogether unintended by Barth and the German missiologists. Bosch traces the development back to Vatican II.

If the church participates in the mission of God, the possibility arises that the mission of God in the world may be thought to happen more or less independent of the church. In effect, the connection established at Willingen between the mission of God
and the sending of the church could be undone and the missio Dei restated in rather different terms.

The outcome is that “the church encounters humanity and a world in which God’s salvation has already been operative secretly, through the Spirit”. The mission of God comes to be understood as the Spirit-driven betterment of humanity, and the church may—or may not—choose to align itself with this historical process. Bosch says P.G. Aring believes: “We have no business in ‘articulating’ God. In the final analysis, ‘missio Dei’ means that God articulates himself, without any need of assisting him through our missionary efforts in this respect.”

This development led many to question the usefulness of the missio Dei concept. Bosch argues, however, that it still serves to safeguard the critical theological insight that mission is primarily the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate.”

Alan Hirsch believes the purpose of the church itself is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission.

When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. To obstruct this is to block God’s purposes in and through God’s people.
The missio Dei has been used as a catalyst for St. Paul’s understanding of the Church as the missional “people of God” participating *in* God’s mission. With this understanding the researcher believes it will help to initiate St. Paul’s move and work outside the four walls of the church. Biblical Literature will also help to undergird St. Paul’s understanding of its mission.

**REVIEW OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE**

The theme of “sending” found throughout Scripture will be the focus of the Biblical Literature. The reason it is important to recognize such language in Scripture is not only because it speaks to the missionary nature of the Triune God, but it also connects – particularly in the New Testament – God’s mission to St. Paul’s mission.

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* defines “mission” as “the divine activity of sending intermediaries whether supernatural or human to speak or do God’s will so that God’s purposes for judgment or redemption are furthered.”

When examining the idea of mission in the Bible is there a “divine activity of sending” as suggested in this definition? Furthermore, is it reasonable to ask if there is consistent biblical language that speaks directly to the topic of mission? Is the concept of mission something that has been imposed upon Scripture as a result of our own background and history, or does the Bible speak consistently regarding the missionary nature of God and his mission?

Frances M. DuBose author of *God Who Sends* says, “a survey of the term sending in its various forms in Scripture suggest that it is more than a simple descriptive word,” it instead reveals the missionary nature of the Triune God, as well as the very essence of the
church. The redemptive activity of God, his relationship to the world, and his dealing with mankind is described in Scripture by the word “sending.” In fact the word “sending” is the “sum and substance of God’s creativity and activity. The entirety of redemptive history exhibits itself as a history of God sending others to participate in the missio Dei.

Theologian Darrell Guder summarizes the breath of the sending theme found throughout Scripture this way:

Mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation. “Mission” means “sending,” and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history. God’s mission began with the call of Israel to receive God’s blessings in order to be a blessing to the nations. God’s mission unfolded in the history of God’s people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God’s work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected. God’s mission continued then in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God’s good news in Jesus Christ.

Some people might argue that “as a collection of documents telling the story of Jesus, the Gospels do not contain a systematic theology of mission.” However, as George W. Peters contends, “the New Testament is a missionary book in address, content, spirit and design... [It is] theology in motion more than theology in reason and concept.” Furthermore, while the sending motif is clearly significant in the Old Testament concept of mission; the theological concept of sending plays an even greater and more central role in the understanding of missions in the New Testament.

As the Old Testament closes with the promise of the special messenger whom God will send as a forerunner of the Messiah”\(\text{vi}\) (Mal. 3:1), the New Testament begins with the announcement that the messenger has come in the person of John the Baptist, “a man who was sent from God” (John 1:6; cf. Matt. 11:10-15; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 7:18-28).
Each of the Gospels illustrates the importance of sending in understanding the mission of Jesus. The vocabulary of sending is most prominent in the Gospel of John, while occupying a lesser, yet still significant place within each of the synoptic gospels.

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus is pictured as one who has a profound sense of being sent:

Every mission involves a sender and a sent one. In a saying recorded in all three synoptic gospels, Jesus alluded to a relationship in connection with his own mission: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent (τὸν ἀποστείλαντα) me” (Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48). With this statement, Jesus established three facts in regard to his mission: first, there was a sender; second, Jesus himself was the sent one; third, there was a close identification between the sender and the one who was sent. (Harvey, 1998. P.31)

Jesus’ self-understanding of being the “one sent” can also be seen in other passages in the synoptic gospels. In Matthew, Jesus speaks to the Canaanite woman telling her that he “was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (15:24), in Mark Jesus tells his disciples that anyone who welcomes a little child does not only welcome Jesus himself, but “the one who sent me” (9:37) and in Luke Jesus shares that he must preach the good news of the kingdom “because that is why I was sent” (4:43).

In the Gospel of Luke there are three key sending passages. The first reference to sending occurs in the record of Luke 4:16-30 wherein Jesus returns to the synagogue in Nazareth and equate himself with the passage read from Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus selects this passage as the platform for his life and work. It became the manifesto of his ministry.

As noted earlier in the discussion on the sending language of Isaiah 61:1-3, each of the redemptive deeds listed in the passage proceed from the verb “sent.” In Luke, Jesus is not only the sent one, but he is also one who sends. The second significant sending passage in Luke is that of Jesus sending out the twelve in Luke 9:1-6: When Jesus called
the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: “Take nothing for the journey – no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

“If the foundational mission, according to Luke, is Jesus being sent by God, then the sending of the twelve is an integral part of Jesus’ own mission. From a larger group of disciples Jesus chose and commissioned twelve ‘apostles’ (apostoloi, Luke 6:12-15). He shares his power and authority with them, and sends (apostello) them on their mission (9:1-2).”

Reminiscent of Jesus identifying his ministry with Isaiah 61:1-2, he sends out the Twelve to “preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (9:2). Parallel passages of the sending out of the twelve can also be found in the Gospel of Matthew, “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions” (10:5) and Mark, “Calling the twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits” (6:7).

The third significant sending passage in Luke is the sending of the seventy-two in Luke 10:1-24. Jesus not only sees himself as the sent one, but also as the sending one. Jesus sends out the seventy-two as advance teams to prepare the towns and villages he was about to enter. Jesus not only sends out the seventy-two, but he also calls upon the people to ask the “Lord of the harvest” to send workers to assist them in their labor (10:2).
The primary focus of the Fourth Gospel is the mission of Jesus: “he is the one who comes into the world, accomplishes his work and returns to the Father; he is the one who descended from heaven and ascends again; he is the Sent One, who, in complete dependence and perfect obedience to his sender, fulfills the purpose for which the Father sent him.”

The entire Gospel is about sending and being sent. Therefore it is not surprising that John’s gospel is laden with the vocabulary of sending – the term and its derivatives appear almost sixty times.

When considering the sending motif in John’s Gospel there is at least three major areas of exploration:

(1) Jesus’ mission and the origin of that mission, the Father sends;

(2) the fulfillment of the mission in the sending of the Holy Spirit to the disciples; and

(3) the continuation of Jesus’ mission through the sending of the disciples into the world.

It is part of the fundamental structure of any sending, even the sending of a mere human being, that the one sent does not follow his own will, but that of the sender, and that he does not speak and act in his own name, but represents another.

This structure is evident in Jesus’ relationship with the Father as depicted in the Gospel of John. Jesus, the sent one, is to know the sender intimately (7:29; cf. 15:21; 17:25) and to live in a close relationship with the one who sends (8:16, 18, 29; 16:32). Jesus came not to do his own will but the will of the Father who sent him (4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40), to speak not his own words but the words of the one who sent him (7:16-18;
8:26-29; 12:49; 14:24), and not to do his own work but the work of the Father who sent him (5:36; 9:4).

The sending relationship between the Father and the Son speaks to the very heart of the gospel: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (3:17).

In addition to the theme of the Father sending the Son, the Gospel of John speaks twice concerning the sending of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 the Spirit is sent by the Father: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." And in John 15:26 the Spirit is sent by the Son from the Father: "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father."

What is important in John is the linking of the mission of Jesus with that of his followers as the "sent ones." "The disciples’ mission is essentially the same as the mission of the Son and the Spirit – to bring glory to God and to bring to the world forgiveness of sins and spiritual life." In Raymond Brown’s commentary on the Gospel of John he explains the continuity of mission in the following way: The special Johannine contribution to the theology of mission is the Father’s sending of the Son which serves both as the model . . . and the ground . . . for the Son’s sending of the disciples. Their mission is to continue the Son’s mission; and this requires that the Son must be present to them during this mission, just as the Father had to be present to the Son during His mission.

After His conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus sends his disciples to reap the harvest (4:38). In the high priestly prayer Jesus prays to the Father for the
protection of disciples as Jesus sends them into the world (17:18). And shortly before Jesus ascends to the Father he commissions the disciples to evangelize the world. “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (20:21). Here John in one periscope repeats once again three main aspects of mission he has been developing throughout the gospel:

1. Father has sent Jesus into the world,
2. Jesus sends his disciples into the world,
3. the Holy Spirit is sent to enable disciples in their mission.

By themselves the disciples are inadequate to fulfill the mission, yet by receiving the Spirit they receive authority and so also become God’s “agents, or sent ones,” the apostles. John Stott remarked that the church’s mission finds precise articulation in the Fourth Gospel: The critical form in which the Great Commission has been handed down to us (though it is the most neglected because it is the most costly) is the Johannine.

Jesus anticipated it in his prayer in the upper room which he said to the Father: “As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). In the upper room but after his death and resurrection, he turned his prayer-statement into a commission when he said: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (John 20:21). In both of these sentences Jesus did more than draw a vague parallel between his mission and ours. Deliberately and precisely he made his mission the model of ours, saying “as the Father sent me, so I send you.” Therefore our understanding of the church’s mission must be deduced from our understanding of the Son’s.

Craig Keener offers a summation of the importance of the commissioning passage in the Fourth Gospel for the life of the church: Whereas the sending of the Son is the heart of the Fourth Gospel’s plot, its conclusion is open-ended, spilling into the story of
the disciples. Thus the church’s mission is, for John’s theology, to carry on Jesus’ mission (14:12; 17:18). Because Jesus was sending “just as” (kaqws) the Father sent him (20:21), the disciples would carry on Jesus’ mission, including not only signs pointing to Jesus (14:12) but also witness (15:27) through which the Spirit would continue Jesus’ presence and work (16:7-11).


Individual aspects are illustrated through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The Lord appeared to Ananias and sent him to Paul in order that Paul would regain his sight (9:17). Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles is described twice with sending language, “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles’” (22:21) and “I will rescue you from your own people and the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light” (26:17-18). In chapter twenty-eight Paul also speaks of salvation being sent, “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen” (28:28).

The collective nature of sending in the Book of Acts can best be seen in the church at Antioch. In chapter thirteen, Luke records that after prayer and fasting, the leaders of the church placed hands on Paul and Barnabas and “sent them off” (13:3). The next verse describes the beginning of the journey by stating that “the two of them, sent on
their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus” (13:4).

In the Book of Acts the language of sending can be found in two sermons recorded by Luke. In chapter three, Peter’s messages uses sending language as he affirms God’s salvation in the sending of the Messiah: “that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you. . . . When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways” (3:20, 26). In chapter seven Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin reflects back to the Exodus story of God sending Moses back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh (7:34-35).

According to Francis DuBose (1983), there are several uses of sending vocabulary in the Pauline espistles, each conveying a different theological perspective within the larger salvific sphere. In Romans, Paul speaks of God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering (8:3). Paul also asks how the people can hear unless the one who preaches is sent (10:15). When dealing with division in the church at Corinth over loyalty to certain leaders, Paul states, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). Speaking to the heart of the Gospel, Paul makes reference to both God sending the Son and the Spirit in Galatians 4:4-6:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

In Second Thessalonians, Paul refers to God sending a “powerful delusion” to those who have rejected the gospel (2:11). Finally, in multiple places throughout the
Pauline epistles we find Paul adopting and defending the title of apostle or "sent one" (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

In the General Epistles, the author of Hebrews refers to Jesus as the "apostle" or "sent one" (3:1). First Peter speaks of the "Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1:12) and in keeping with Johannine tradition, 1 John speaks of the Son being sent by the Father (4:9-10, 14).

The Book of Revelation "uses the language of sending to convey a variety of theological ideas." In chapter one, the revelation is made known to John through the sending of an angel (1:1), later in the same chapter John is told to send messages to the seven churches (1:11), and in chapter five the seven spirits of God are "sent out into all the earth" (5:6).

In chapter twenty-two we read that both God and Jesus send angels, one to prepare the people for what was to come, "The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show his servants the things that must soon take place" (22:6) and one to give John the message for the churches, "I Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star" (22:16).

The explicit language of sending found throughout the Old and New Testament is substantial. Moreover, the usage of sending language "establishes such a clear picture of mission in the Bible that its unique missional character is unmistakeable even in events and ideas where the language is not explicit." There are multiple passages in Scripture that speak to the missionary nature of God and the missional essence of the church that
employ terms different from sending language. For example, the widespread use of the word “goes” in both the Old and New Testament “is the imperative mood of the missional idea. It expresses through mandate form what the sending expresses in description and idea through the indicative mood.”

In Genesis God told Abram to “go to the land I will show you” (12:1). There God’s plan was to bless Abram so he in turn could be a blessing. In many of the Prophetic Books the word “go” is central to commissioning of the prophets. In Ezekiel the prophet is told to “go and speak to the house of Israel” (3:1), Amos is commanded to “go and prophesy” to God’s people (7:15), and Jonah is told twice to “go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you” (1:2; 3:1).

The idea of going and the idea of sending are linked. In chapter six of the book of Isaiah not only does the prophet respond to God’s question, “Who shall I send? And who will go for us?” in the affirmative; but after he does respond, God tells Isaiah to “Go and tell this people” (6:9).

Jesus’ language of sending is very explicit in his directives to His followers as seen in the sending of the seventy-two in Luke’s gospel. They are told to: “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (10:3).

While the language of sending is explicit in the commissioning of the disciples in John’s gospel, the language of “go” (or “going”) is evident in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 (cf. Mark 16:15-18). However, it is still clear that Jesus, the one who was sent on mission and who has accomplished his mission, now becomes the sender. . . . The eleven disciples are the sent ones. Jesus had called them with a view to mission (4:19). He had taught them about kingdom living (5:3-7:27), kingdom mission (10:5-42),
the mysteries of the kingdom (13:3-52), relationships within the kingdom (18:1-35), and the future consummation of the kingdom (24:3-25:46) – all in order to prepare them more effectively for their mission.

The sending theme evidenced throughout Scripture prompted St. Paul’s to examine more closely the theological implications for the church. What this meant for St. Paul’s after studying the scriptures was to embody its “sentness” and no longer a church relying on a “come see” methodology, but truly understanding God’s mission for the Church.

It undoubtedly illustrates the sending missionary nature of the Triune God. The mission is ultimately the mission of God the Father, who has sent the Son, who has sent the Spirit, who has sent the disciples – this gives St. Paul’s mission both its power and its authority. In the book, A Sense of Mission, Albert Curry Winn summarizes the importance of having this sending theme form the church’s understands of its nature and activity when he writes: “If the sense of having been sent defines who Jesus is, from henceforth it must define what the church is.” The idea of the church being sent shifted St. Paul’s thinking from being a Sunday morning worshipping community to a church on mission every day.

**REVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE**

The theological foundation undergirding St. Paul’s missional identity was established through the use of David Bosch’s book, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Bosch’s book was an excellent tool to use in the theological grounding of the church.
In the introduction of the book David Bosch asks an interesting question that the Church universal as well as the researcher’s ministry context seem to be grappling with today: is the Christian mission a thing of the past? We must wrestle with this thought because as Bosch suggests, “the Christian mission is in the firing line today and the attack on it is coming from inside the church as well as outside.” He challenges the church to consider ways in which the world has changed since the mid-twentieth century when mission still was accepted as a normal part of life by the church universal. Bosch asks the reader to consider the following changes:

- Science and Technology have made huge advances, which may have been interpreted to mean that humans can manage everything well without God.
- The Christian West has seen massive declines in church membership.
- People of other faiths have moved into “Christian” countries in large numbers.
- Western Christians have come to feel increasingly guilty as they realize how un-Christian their nations were in the Colonial period.
- The gap between rich and poor has widened, leaving the rich Christians uncertain whether they have any credibility with the angry poor.
- Western theology is being challenged by a number of theologies based on the experience of other parts of the world.

According to Bosch, the shifts, “has exposed some serious weaknesses in widely held beliefs about the foundation, aim, and nature of missions.” The main assumption was that Western culture was superior to all others and would be the bucket that would carry the life-giving water of the gospel all over the world. Other religions would fade away as the people realized the superiority of Christianity, and we would end up with a
Christian world by the end of the twentieth century. According to Bosch, "Our predictions were unfounded. There are no longer any signs of what J. Warneck called a "dying heathenism." Virtually all world religions display a vigor nobody could have credited them with some decades ago.

The confident predictions of Dahle and others concerning the triumphant march and imminent victory of Christianity have come to nothing. The Christian faith is still a minority religion, at best holding its own in relation to the overall world population. Bosch asked, "is Christianity still unique and true?" It is obvious that we do not live in a completely Christian world. In actuality the opposite seems to have taken place. We are a melting pot of different religions.

Bosch suggests that the global changes and the exposed mistakes in mission aims and practice have led to two opposite reactions among Christians. One is "a terrible failure of nerve about the missionary enterprise," leading to "an almost complete paralysis and total withdrawal from anything that smacks of mission at all." The other is to ignore the new trends, deny the crisis, and carry on using the old colonialist model of mission as if nothing has changed.

The thesis of Bosch's book is that the events we have been experiencing at least since World War II and the consequent crisis in Christian mission are not to be understood as merely incidental and irrevocable. If the thesis is correct, we should neither withdraw from mission nor keep using the old methods. "Rather", Bosch says "we require a new vision to break out of the present stalemate toward a different kind of missionary involvement. 'The harsh realities of today compel us to re-conceive and
reformulate the church’s mission, to do this boldly and imaginatively, yet also in continuity with the best of what mission has been in the past decades and centuries.”

What has unfolded in theological and missionary circles during the last decades is the result of a fundamental paradigm shift, not only in mission or theology, but in the experience and thinking of the whole world. But according to Bosch, the Christian faith is “intrinsically missionary.” Christian mission starts with God on a mission, especially in Jesus Christ. If Christian mission is a thing of the past, so is the Christian faith, for it is faith in the reign of God through Jesus Christ over all humanity and all creation. Secondly, he asserts that, “missiology studies mission not in theoretical objectivity but from the perspective of commitment to the Christian missionary faith. This commitment does not blind us to the faults of mission but intensifies our desire to find and correct those faults.”

Bosch says we must consider the possibility that we will never arrive at a perfect definition of mission. He suggests that “the Bible will give us guidance but no magic formulas for mission”. The church in its mission is a sign of the kingdom but never a perfect embodiment of it.

If a church defines mission only in terms of this, worldly activities like promoting social justice, or only in terms of saving souls for the world to come, it is not being true to the true God. His mission has both worlds clearly in view. So to avoid a lopsided view of mission, the Church should seek to address both entities; social justice and the saving of souls.

We must consider that the difference between home and foreign missions is artificial. The difference between mission and “missions” is crucial. “Mission “refers to
God's own mission in which the church participates and to which it points. "Missions" refers to particular forms of mission the church develops in specific circumstances.

We acknowledge, "The original audience for the New Testament writings was not a catechism class or seminary." According to Bosch, it was an entire religious movement living a missionary life, spreading a missionary message, and along the way running into one crisis after another. The early church, "because of its missionary encounter with the world was forced to theologize." It had to find answers to the burning questions raised by announcing the gospel in non-Christian even non-Jewish, settings.

In chapter one and in the next four chapters of his book, Bosch argues that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth was the founding paradigm of the "history" and the "theology" of mission. This was a starting point, which led to further paradigm shifts. The beginning of missionary theology was the beginning of Christian theology. He summarizes this in Martin Kahler's statement that "Mission is the mother of theology." "Theology," said Kahler, "began as an accompanying manifestation of the Christian mission and not as a luxury of the world-dominating church." Bosch asserts that the New Testament writers were not scholars who had the leisure to research evidence before they put pen to paper. Rather, they wrote in the context of an emergency situation of a church which, because of its missionary encounter with the world, was forced to theologize.

Bosch's research revealed that the gospels were written as a narrative and not as history. The theologizing came later according to authors, Spindler (1967); Kasting (1969); Rutti (1972); Kramm (1979) and Frankemolle (1982).
In the New Testament we also find the theologies of mission and not one theology of mission. Words such as the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city on a hill, etc., are seen as words used in the New Testament to define mission.

Bosch points out that there is no mission in the Old Testament in the way we see mission today and therefore the decisive difference between the Old and the New Testament is mission. He sees God as the God of history; in His acts; the God of promise; in revelation; the God of election for Israel to serve; especially the needy.

The material and the spiritual are to be seen as connected in this aspect when we look at the Biblical Foundations of Mission. Bosch explains, “express themselves as manifestations of the divine at specified holy places, where the human world can communicate with the divine. This occurs in cults or rituals, in which the threatening powers of chaos and destruction can be neutralized. At the same time the religions are caught up in the cycle of seasons, where winter and summer follow each other in an eternal battle for supremacy. The emphasis, throughout, is on the re-enactment of what has once been, on repetition and remembrance”

When we look at the religious feasts such as that of the Passover, Unleavened bread, Weeks (Pentecost), Atonement, and Tabernacles etc., we can see how this may have applied to Israel. The argument which Bosch develops is true in that the historical experience of God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt was the main factor in religion.

Bosch also argues that the historical acts of God to Israel, redeeming them and giving them land are itself a missionary endeavor. That the Kingdom of God introduced by Jesus was to rule the whole earth, in word and through His mighty acts of power. Being the God of history, the feasts as acts of remembrance were experienced by Israel in
rituals and through the cult, and although He elects Israel, He also has other nations in mind. If you consider Abraham’s story for example you see that God is the God of the whole world.

Bosch later admits that there is a missionary element in the Old Testament but he says it is God who is the missionary, because it is He who will bring all nations to worship Him together with Israel (Isa 51:5; 40:5; 45:22; 42:6; 49:6 etc.).

Jesus’ understanding of mission was based on the Old Testament. And the fulfillment of the Old Testament is seen in Him. In order to understand the part Jesus played we need to look at the New Testament authors in the four gospels and the early church. Nevertheless, Bosch points out that there is no direct move towards mission from the early church until today. Within Transforming Missions, Brueggemann (1982:397, 408) says “The Bible does not function in such a direct way. There may be, rather, a range of alternative moves, which remain in deep tension with each other, but may nevertheless all be valid.”

Bosch understands various situations in Israel through the findings of A.D.Nock (1933) and Grant (1986)). Through these authors he records the spread of Greek philosophy and religion and the growth and influence of eastern religions and the Jewish faith.

The idea of salvation for the remnant was strong, but not all Israel will be saved. John the Baptist as a forerunner of Jesus preached repentance for the Jews and called them a “Brood of Vipers”.

When Jesus was born, there was a lot of sectarianism, fanaticism, religious traffic between the East and the West and Palestine was under the Romans. In setting the socio-
political and economic scenario, Bosch points out the reason for the Jews to expect the Messiah. Jesus' understanding of Himself was that He was sent to His people from the prophetic tradition. He came to challenge Judaism and to lead the remnant to repentance and salvation. We see this in His attitude to the Pharisees, His association with the outcasts, sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes etc. In Jesus God inaugurates an eschatological reign. Jesus' Mission is to breakdown boundaries and to include all, even those who were seen as enemies, He forgives. God invites all and it is those who respond who are accepted.

The Gentiles in the Jewish tradition are seen as outsiders and unredeemable, but according to the New Testament, through Christ, (the earthly Jesus) all those who repent are redeemable. So mission starts with Jesus Himself. Bosch calls Jesus, "the primal missionary". Bosch points out some of Jesus' own self-definitions, which implied His negation towards Judaism's exclusiveness.

Bosch looks at the Old Testament background and the New Testament development of this concept, to help him understand Jesus' self-understanding of his own mission in relation to this concept. Bosch sees this concept as, "a starting point and context for mission".

While Jesus understands his mission, he understands that the law was given to Moses and His way of looking at the law was different. Therefore he condemns the hypocrisy of the Jewish authorities in regard to their attitude towards the law. He sees it as authoritative but yet not living according to it. He radicalizes the law in a unique way. He abrogates parts of the law. He does this because he sees that the law is not the
decisive principle of action but the reign of God is. In Jesus’ ministry people matter more than rules and rituals.

The announcement of the coming of the Kingdom of God is followed immediately by the calling of the disciples. Bosch points out that the scene in which the first disciples were called (the lake) was a bridge to the Gentiles and therefore having a missionary implication as the disciples are called to be missionaries and the gospel was to reach the other side of the lake to include the Gentiles.

Although having disciples was normal for rabbis of His time, there was a difference with Jesus because Jesus chose and called his disciples whereas with the other rabbis their disciples chose which rabbi to follow. To be a disciple of Jesus is an act of grace. The disciples of Jesus are also those who repent and believe in him. Whereas the authority of the other rabbis’ is in the Torah, the authority of Jesus is in himself. Whereas students of rabbis’ expected to become rabbis ultimately, it was not so for the disciples. They had reached their destiny; their ultimate duty was to witness the resurrection event.

While the disciples of rabbis were only students, those of Jesus were servants. Being a disciple of Jesus meant being with him, and being sent by him to do acts of preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons etc., whereas the Talmidims of Jewish teachers were only custodians to the teachings of their rabbis. Being a disciple of Jesus is connected to future Messianic hopes and expectation. Central to all to be a disciple of Jesus was centered on the resurrection experience. It was the period of new life, victory and exaltation.
Early Christian mission focused only on Jews and later proselytes. Mission to the gentiles came as a spin-off of mission to the Jews. Early Christian mission involved the person of Jesus. It was political and revolutionary. The revolutionary aspect was seen in the new relationships among Jews, Greek, free, slave, rich, poor, women etc.

Sociologically, this seemed impossible. The ministry of Jesus was not based on false hope of the future but on real events of the coming of God’s reign. His ministry was ambiguous, conspicuous and disputed upon, it was only through his passion and the resurrection that his disciples recognized him (John 20:20).

Bosch reminds us of the imperfection of the early church, beginning with the imperfection of the disciples such as James and John wanting a prominent place before Jesus. We see this in the disputes in Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians and in John’s letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

Bosch points to three main weaknesses that threaten the undoing of a new mission’s paradigm shift (from the Old to the New Testament):

• Although Jesus had no intention of starting a new religion, Christianity later became a new religion. Jesus’ movement was to announce the Kingdom of God and the church came into being.

• Instead of Christianity being a movement, it became an institution. Instead of being progressive it became conservative. He draws the contrast between the church in Jerusalem and that of Antioch and points out the dichotomies between; Mission and consolidation; grace and law; crossing frontiers and fixing them; life and doctrine; movement and institution. This led to the settled ministry of the bishops (elders) and deacons on the one hand and the
mobile ministry of the apostles, prophets and evangelists on the other. This led to a creative tension.

• The church failed to make Jews feel at home, especially on issues of circumcision and the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Bosch explains that due to sociological reasons, these failures could not have been avoided. Having established a foundational framework on mission through the New Testament Bosch explores three New Testament authors, Matthew, Luke and Paul. Each of these authors represented a New Testament sub-paradigm of mission and can be a model for us.

In chapter two, Bosch focuses his attention on the Great Commission. Matthew’s main purpose was to make the community aware of its calling and mission. The “Great Commission” is so often quoted in Mission circles that it tends to take on a life of its own. “The Great Commission” is easily degraded to a mere slogan, or used as a pretext for what we have decided that mission should mean. Bosch says Matthew 28:18-20, “has to be interpreted against the background of Matthew’s gospel as a whole and unless we keep this in mind we shall fail to understand it.”

What does the Great Commission mean if we see it in its proper perspective as the text that draws together “all the threads woven into the fabric of Matthew?” We will not know unless we consider first the community of people for whom Matthew wrote and the burning concerns of the place and time for which the Great Commission was originally designed.

The community to which Matthew wrote may have been a group of Jewish Christians who had moved out of Judea into a Gentile setting, possibly Syria. In the 70s
or 80s AD following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem this community was facing an identity crisis. Who are we? Are we really Jewish? What are we doing here outside our homeland? Do we have a mission to our fellow Jews? Do we have a mission to the Gentiles among whom we live now?

In the midst of the questions, Matthew writes a gospel that is not merely a biography of Jesus with a missionary command conveniently tacked at the end. Instead, Matthew’s gospel is attempts to help a community of Jesus followers discover their new identity as Jews with a mission or Jews for Gentiles. The discovery is rooted deeply in their Jewish heritage yet it enables them to engage the Gentile world not primarily as Jews but as messengers. In that case it was pastoral with reference to the Old Testament helping them to see their identity and connection to the law, and it was missionary, by giving them the awareness of seeing opportunities for witness and service, led by the Holy Spirit.

Bosch sees a contradiction in this gospel, in that some places have a strong sense of support toward Judaism, and in some places it has a strong Gentile bias. Through this contradiction he guides his readers towards mission to the Gentiles, although he shows that it is the Gentiles who came to Jesus and not vice versa. However, mission to the Gentiles was only possible after the rejection, the death and the resurrection of the Jewish Messiah.

Bosch uses various themes found in Matthew to assure the reader of his commitment to mission. Matthew was neither pro-Pharisaic Judaism nor pro-gentile antinomianism. These themes included the reign of God (or of heaven), God’s will, justice, commandments, the challenge to be perfect, to surpass, to observe (or keep), to
bear fruit, baptizing, preaching and teaching. Other terms used by Matthew which have missionary implication are those such as: Send, go, proclaim, heal, exorcise, make peace, and witness.

Bosch also looks at the Beatitudes (Matthew’s Pentateuch), in light of other sermons in Matthew. While the Beatitudes emphasize discipleship, the other sermons address; the apostolic mission (Matthew 10), how God’s reign comes (Ch 13), church discipline (Ch 18), and false teachers (Ch 23-25).

Matthew calls upon his readers to engage in mission to both Jews and Gentiles. To make disciples “of all nations,” does not mean “of all Gentile nations.” It means “all Jews and Gentiles alike.” From a Jewish perspective this implies a staggering redefinition of the identity of God’s chosen people. Jews and Gentiles are placed on a par with each other before God and before Matthew’s community. Something has happened in the light of which Jews and Gentiles look “alike.” What on earth could it be?

The arrival of the “kingdom” in Jesus has redefined everything. This is seen in Jesus’ preaching, the constant theme of His teaching and the basis and heart of the Great Commission. The arriving kingdom is a new reference point, the basis for all personal and group identity ever since Jesus announced it. Whoever is oriented to this point is transformed into a disciple and a missionary.

What does this mean for St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church? It means if we understand the kind of teaching Matthew was talking about, we understand what he meant by a mission of “making disciples.” The kind of impact of this kind of teaching is discipleship. When we receive and act upon the teaching of the reign/kingdom of God,
we are not merely followers of a wise rabbi (teacher), we are followers of a king whose forefather is David. The necessary outcome of His teaching is discipleship, not churchmanship that is an internally transformed life made plain in everyday conduct, not an external conformity to a fixed pattern of religious practice; the command to "make disciples" serves as the connecting bridge between the original disciples and each successive generation of the ever-widening church on its mission. This means that all true disciples have an essentially missionary identity. The followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples.

While it is true there is only one mission described in the New Testament, it is also true that the one mission looks quite different when viewed from different angles. For instance, in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reads to His hometown synagogue from Isaiah 61 and then stuns His hearers by announcing that Isaiah's very down-to-earth messianic prophecy was fulfilled that day. Before they could adequately process that thought Jesus shocks them again by implying that the Messianic wonders would come to pass without God taking vengeance on the enemies of Israel as expected. In fact, in this messianic kingdom God would bless outsiders, possibly even in preference to His own people Israel! The crowd would not bear that reinterpretation of Isaiah's prophecy, and they almost killed Jesus for daring to suggest it.

But Luke does more than suggest this idea. The theme runs through the Gospel and Luke. The good news is that God's vengeance on the nations has been suspended while God goes on a mission of gracious forgiveness, inviting outsiders to seats of honor at the messianic banquet table.
Bosch asserts that from the beginning Luke had planned to write two volumes (Luke/Acts), to show that Jesus' mission was universal (Luke 27:47 & Acts 1:8). While Jesus inaugurated a New Testament mission paradigm, mission to the gentiles was to be the task of the church according to Luke. For Luke we see Jesus beginning in Galilee, then to Jerusalem, and finally in Jerusalem. In Acts the mission of the church begins in Jerusalem and on to Rome. Luke wanted to show who we are.

Christians are the multiethnic, multiclass community that came into being because God suspended His vengeance on all nations and sent His deliverer to Israel. Our community is an anomaly among the nations of the earth because of the way it transcends social class and ethnic identity. According to Bosch, Jervell (1972:49) and Meyer (1986:97f), points out that the Jews did not reject the gospel of Jesus as many people would contend, but that they were divided on the issue and that led to the acceptance of the gentiles.

Bosch asserts that in a unique way Jesus' mission was to include the Samaritans, even if the Samaritans themselves rejected Jesus and even though the Jews despised the Samaritans. He uses examples of Jesus' rejection by the Samaritans in Luke 9, and the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, and then he goes on to show Jesus' healing of the 10 lepers and the only one who comes to say thank you is the Samaritan. In Acts 1, Jesus points out that after Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria is to receive the gospel. Bosch sees Luke 24:46-49 as being Luke's "Great Commission." Mission to the nations is based on the promise, before pointing out how Luke compared to Matthew and Mark, is more sympathetic to the Jews. Jesus parents were Jews.
Luke attempts to avoid accusing the Jews of hypocrisy, in the passion narratives, Jesus says “Father forgive”; in the Magnificent Mary sings “(God) has helped His servant Israel” mentioning Abraham; and David is mentioned in Zechariah’s song. But central to all is Luke’s focus on Jerusalem. All the significant events such as the passion, death, resurrection, post resurrection appearances, the ascension, the pouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church all take place in Jerusalem. And mission was to begin in Jerusalem. So the restoration of Israel has been an important theme for Luke, although it does not work out in the way the Jews themselves had expected.

Bosch goes on to elaborate on other major themes contained in the Book of Luke. These themes include the gospel to the poor and the rich (social concern), repentance, forgiveness and salvation.

In Luke’s gospel he is very concerned with the poor and the marginalized. Luke sees the rich in the light of the poor. Bosch discovered in his research the following quote by D’Sa who says, “the rich as those who are greedy and exploit the poor, they are those who worship Mammon.” They are those who are arrogant and abuse power, and are also focused on the things of the world.

Salvation involves repentance, conversion and forgiveness of sins and is closely linked to sinners and Bosch gives a list of contexts in Luke where the concept applies. All of this is based on the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and faith in him for both Jews and gentiles. Those who receive salvation are justified.

Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth carries a lot of weight in the understanding of salvation in Luke-Acts, and this is why there was a mixed response from his audience. On the one
hand there was admiration for the amazing way he spoke and on the other hand rejection for not fulfilling the expectation of the Jews.

In chapter 4, Bosch concentrates exclusively on the seven letters, which are believed to be Pauline. These are Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1Thessalonians, and Philemon, all written AD 49 – AD 56.

Bosch sees the Apostle Paul as a creator of dogmatics, as an ecclesiastical Paul, before being seen as an apostolic missionary. Bosch sees Paul as the first Christian missionary and the first Christian theologian. His Christian vision, Christian life and mission are synonymous. Paul's theology is a missionary theology. There is no mission text in Paul but we see the whole of his theology as mission focused, and with Paul's complex mind, Bosch admits on the difficulty of the task.

Bosch begins with Paul's conversion and call, which he sees as a transformational experience. He joins other scholars such as Wilckens (1959:274), Hengel (1983b: 53), Beker (1980:6-10), Hultgren (1985:125), Stendahl (1976:7-23), and Dietzfelbinger (1985:44-82, 88f), who says that Paul's Damascus road experience should not be seen as a conversion but rather as a call to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16), although not exclusively.

This was a paradigm shift in Paul's life. "Paul's ministry thus unfolds in a creative tension between loyalty to the first apostles and their message on the one hand and an overpowering awareness of the uniqueness of his own calling and commission on the other."

Bosch points out how diverse Paul's acquaintances were, where he had the inner circle (Barnabas, Silvanus and Timothy), then his co-workers, thirdly the church
representatives. Through these relationships, Paul operated his mission. In doing mission, Paul was motivated by:

- A sense of concern over the destiny of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles. He sees that without Christ all are lost.
- A sense of responsibility to bring the revelation he himself had received to those who had not heard.
- A sense of gratitude for the grace of Christ’s love which he himself had received.

Paul points out the centrality of Christ over the law. In this he focuses more on the death, resurrection and ascension events. He sees this as a center of the eschatological hope in which the tension between the joy and agony, the now and not yet lies.

He also sees that success in mission to the Jews lies in success in mission to the Gentiles and points out that Paul is not totally against the Jews as many have seen him to be. He sees belonging to God as including sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises. He sees them as being gifts. The law was meant to point out to the distinctiveness of the people of God. But he opposed the exclusiveness, and the self-righteousness connotation, brought by the law, instead of the unconditional acceptance in Christ.

We cannot separate Paul’s theology from his mission. Paul’s apostolic task was mission and his thinking and theology was mission focused. We need to make use of what Paul’s letters meant in the first century and work out what that may mean today, to be faithful to the old text in a new situation. In the case of Jews and how they view the
Gentiles place in salvation, a lot of focus needs to be put on Romans 9-11. He therefore sees mission as:

1) The church as a new community reconciled and righteous.

2) A mission to Jews (Gentiles then Jews: Romans 9-11).

3) Mission in the context of God’s imminent triumph (Christ’s Perousia).

4) Mission and the Transformation of Society (Apocalyptic expectations of churches involvement in society).

5) Mission in weakness (Weakness, suffering and death are inevitable in the present evil age, i.e. Christ’s experience).

6) The aim of Mission (set apart for the service of the gospel).

Bosch approaches Christian missiology based on the fact that Christianity is a historical faith and that God communicates His revelation through people and events and sees this as incarnational. Following Hans Kung’s (1984:25; 1987:157) paradigms he highlights and expounds on the following:

1) The Apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity

2) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period

3) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm

4) The Protestant Reformation paradigm

5) The modern Enlightenment paradigm

6) The emerging ecumenical paradigm.

He looks at the paradigms in terms of Christian faith and mission, also deriving the idea from Thomas Kuhn’s theory of paradigm shifts. These different periods have affected various ways of looking at the text and doing theology, which is further
influenced by our ecclesiastical tradition, personal context (sex, age, marital status, education), social position (social class, profession, wealth, environment), personality and culture (world view, language, etc.).

How do we do Mission today? Bosch looks at the concept of paradigms from the viewpoint of Kuhn (1970) who says they are primarily, “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques etc. shared by the members of a given community.” According to Bosch, Kuhn (1970:163 & 175) uses the words, “models of interpretation.” He sees paradigms as one replaces another, the new replacing the old and sometimes different paradigms working together.

He sees micro paradigms as one replacing the other from the perspective of the Hellenistic paradigm, Catholic paradigm Protestant Reformation paradigm, and the Enlightenment paradigm. He points out the importance of relevance and context in theology yet emphasizing the centrality of the Christ event. He argues that Christians should share their different experiences to allow the church to function as a hermeneutical community.”

Based on the above models, Bosch focus on different historical periods of Christianity. These periods have contributed greatly to Biblical interpretation. Although Hans Kung saw the six paradigm epochs, Bosch notes that James Martin saw mainly three epochs, namely the “pre-critical (vitalistic, symbolic), the critical (analytical, mechanistic), and the post-critical (Holistic, ecumenical).” Kung also classifies these paradigms into three, namely the macro, the meso and the micro paradigms, and sees the above as representing the macro.
These paradigms represent a shift in theology. Although theologians may differ in other areas, they will share the same ideas on God, humanity and the world. He lists seven areas that he sees as a challenge to contemporary mission:

- The rise of Christianity in the non-western world to the point of acceding that of the West.
- The rise of challenge towards exploitative and oppressive structures (e.g. racism and sexism).
- Progress as the god of the enlightenment is now seen as a false god.
- The danger of damaging the environment and exhausting the resources.
- Risk of the nuclear holocaust.
- Western theology is no longer able to claim superiority over non-western theology.
- The decline of Christian monopoly over other faiths.

Bosch points to ways theology evolved and were enculturated within the contemporary cultures. Starting from the Jews and into the Greeks, Evangelicals held to the primacy of evangelism although social action was still very important, and on the other, Catholics held to both with a greater bias towards social action.

Bosch's view of evangelism is similar, yet different from how evangelism was traditionally viewed at St. Paul's. Bosch sees evangelism as both saying and doing, and he clearly distinguishes between evangelism, evangelization and mission. Evangelism is best seen as a subset of mission. "Mission denotes the total task God has set the church for the salvation of the world, but always related to a specific context of evil, despair, and lostness". Quoting Moltman, Bosch says, "Mission embraces all activities that serve to
liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to God forsakenness.” For Bosch evangelism should therefore not be equated with mission. It is better to uphold the distinctiveness of evangelism within the wider mission of the church.

Evangelism is integral to mission, sufficiently distinct yet not separate from mission. Authentic evangelism, he says, is imbedded in the total mission of the church. Consistent with Bosch, St. Paul’s view of mission is that mission is at the heart of the church’s life. Church is not a pep rally for believers! We believe that mission is essential to our church and we must organize to send people out. Authentic evangelism for St. Paul’s is that it is an expression of mission. This view is consistent with Bosch’s. They believe they are called to feed the hungry and clothe the naked but they are also called to point souls to Christ.

What the church has discovered is that it is difficult to share Christ with a person if they are hungry or naked or have nowhere to lay their head. Therefore their view of missions and evangelism is ministry to the total person. Missions happens when they offer food to the hungry from their food pantry, and clothes from their clothing closet, and evangelism when they are offering food and clothing items and then share Christ. They have a two-pronged view of missions and evangelism.

Bosch goes on to trace the background of the contextualization pattern from Arianism, Donatism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism etc in which culture and politics shaped their understanding of the scripture. The whole development in theologizing, through the Middle Ages the Reformation and the Enlightenment, theology has been adapted to the thinking of the time.
We find theologies adapting to the socio-political experience of people such as feminist and liberation to the issues of culture. Bosch sees all these to have a great impact on mission today as we see the tension between Western Theology and Third World Theology.

This has led to what Bosch calls the re-birth of the Ecumenical idea of mission, with a strong sense of interdenominational unity. Interdenominational Mission organizations began to be formed such as YMCA, YWCA etc., and Edinburgh 1910 marked this new development.

This new dimension has gone to the extent as seeing mission as dialogue, especially when reaching out to people of other faiths such as Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus etc. The issues of clergy and laity in ecclesiology were discussed with arguments supported by the threefold offices of Jesus Christ, that of the Prophet, Priest and King, legitimizing the office of Pastor, Elder and Deacon.

For Bosch, the Christ events remain central to his understanding of mission. He looks at the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost and the expectations of the second coming (the Perousia), as focal points in the identity of the mission of the church at all times.

This is intimidating to St. Paul's. What church is equal to such a calling? Considering the incarnation St. Paul's and "the western church have been tempted to read the gospels — in Kahler's famous phrase — as 'passion histories with extensive introductions'" But they understand that we do not really get down to serious theology until we reach the cross. What has been difficult and important for some is to see is the
human side of Jesus the God man, including his ability to identify with the suffering and marginalized social groups in His own day.

Liberationists are renewing the church’s appreciation for this aspect of Jesus’ life and emphasizing it as a central part of the good news. For St. Paul’s, emphasizing the human side of Christ gives validity to their evangelistic mission. Preaching that Christ was human yet divine allows people that they are ministering to see Him as one who can empathize with their situation.

Bosch highlights that the cross is a “badge of distinction of the Christian faith and it has always been central to Catholic and Protestant mission.” It is a sacrificial model for our mission, a symbol of reconciliation and forgiveness especially forgiveness of enemies. What was hopeful for the participants in this project was the understanding that “among the moral teachers of the world Christ alone does not make everything depend on moral success.” If it did it would disqualify us all. And yet in its magnificent complexity, the cross does not represent moral tolerance or a natural and understandable example of love. It is a horrific price paid by shocking love.

“The most common summary of the early church’s missionary message was that it was witnessing to the resurrection of Christ. Bosch says and St. Paul’s concurs that, “it was a message of joy, hope, and victory, the first fruit of God’s ultimate triumph over the enemy. And in this joy and victory believers may share.” The Eastern Church has retained this emphasis. So should we all, not merely by announcing it but living the life right now as signs that God’s life is arriving. By living this life, we announce the imminent death and everything that deadens. Bosch says, “We unmask modern idols and false absolutes.”
Considering the ascension of Christ St. Paul’s and the Church universal wavers because we don’t preach it enough. The ascension was particularly important in Calvin’s theology with its strong emphasis on the sovereignty of Christ.

Christ’s ascension was ascension to the throne from which He, the sacrificial lamb now reigns over heaven and earth. Since Christ’s reign is over the world and not just the Church it should be natural for Christians to be committed to justice and peace in the social realm. Dr. Gregory K. Moss, Sr. preaches and lives the social gospel that Jesus espoused. It is his hope that through this project the entire St. Paul’s community would live out the social gospel Jesus preached and take care of those who have been marginalized in our communities.

As far as Pentecost and the Parousia go the Pentecostal and charismatic movements in the twentieth century have brought these events to the fore in mission thinking and practice. Pentecost changes our way of thinking about missions by suggesting that if the Spirit is loose among us anything is possible. And anything is possible from a group emboldened by the Spirit to make a commitment to the wider community and this means the Belmont community and Charlotte for St. Paul’s.

The Parousia changes the way St. Paul’s thinks about mission and evangelism by the prospect of Christ’s ultimate return. This thought propels them to go out in to the community as a sign of things to come.

None of us qualify when it comes to building our entire missions program around all six aspects. Considering the twelve disciples onward we all have sinned and come short of the mission of God. But with that we do not lose hope because we are not on a mission because we are qualified for it but because we are being qualified for it.
Looked at from this perspective mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.”

CONCLUSION

Since the purpose of this project was to raise the awareness of St. Paul’s missional identity, David Bosch’s book Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission was a perfect tool to raise that consciousness and affect an outward focus that this project aimed to accomplish.

The title Transforming Mission “means both that mission is to be understood as an activity that transforms reality and that there is a constant need for mission itself to be transformed.”

What this book and this theological section has attempted to highlight is, the most fundamental thing under continuing transformation is the definition of mission itself.

This chapter referenced some of the works used in the project and the impact it had on the participants. Some of the research reinforced what was being learned during the bible study classes and provided new food for thought.

For instance in the empirical literature review section the missio Dei concept was highlighted to show the participants that the mission is not the church’s but God’s and the church is called to participate in that mission.

This chapter also provided information to those who wished to explore and understand what it means to be the missional church or people. Since missional churches
find their identity in the *missio Dei*, they must understand the implications of God's mission.

The researcher did not want St. Paul's to do as others have done and look upon this missional project as just another phase or program. To do so would cause them to err because being missional is more than just another movement, it is a full expression of which the ekklesia of Christ is and what it is called to be and do.

This supports the notion that at its core, missional is a shift in thinking. We did not want to add another ministry to the 50 or so it already that the church already had; instead we wanted to change the way they thought about mission. This shift in thinking was expressed by Ed Stetzer and David Putman in their book, "Breaking the Missional Code" in the following way:

- From programs to processes
- From demographics to discernment
- From models to missions
- From attractional to incarnational
- From uniformity to diversity
- From professional to passionate
- From seating to sending
- From decisions to disciples
- From additional to exponential
- From monuments to movements
Making this shift was difficult for many but to fully appreciate what the missional church is, they had to look outside of their traditional understanding of how they do church and realign themselves with the Biblical narrative.

The Biblical section of this chapter was then used to give the participant’s a biblical framework to consider for St. Paul’s. In this section the theme of “sending” found throughout Scripture is discussed. The reason it was important to recognize such language in Scripture was not only because it spoke to the missionary nature of the Triune God, but it also connected – particularly in the New Testament – God’s mission to St. Paul’s mission. In this chapter the literature review showed how the missional church recognizes that it does not hold a place of honor in its host community and that its missional imperative compels it to move out from its four walls to become “salt and light.”

The chapter was closed by giving an overview of Transforming Mission by David Bosch in an effort to lay a theological basis for this project. The three sections complimented each other as they connected God’s ministry of sending the Son and the Son sending the Church. St. Paul’s is being sent out into the world as a witness of God’s mission to the world. In the next chapter the implementation of the project will be presented to show how the project was executed.
mission to the world. In the next chapter the implementation of the project will be presented to show how the project was executed.
CHAPTER IV

THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The ministry project at St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church was designed to assist the church’s efforts to discover its missional church identity. The researcher will discuss the need for the discovery. Why do we need to know who we are? That was an important revelation for this study. The project is presented in four parts: Part 1 will discuss the needs the church identified; Part 2 presents concepts of a missionary identity important to this project; Part 3 presents the conflicts that arose; Part 4 presents the structure of the project; and Part Five discusses implementation.

THE NEED

St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is a great worshipping community with a great preaching, teaching and music ministry. Each Sunday morning hundreds of parishioners pour into our Sanctuary for that very reason; to experience a soulful and uplifting worship experience. But what we have discovered is a wonderfully crafted Sunday morning worship experience is not all there is to being the church. The church is slowly but genuinely realizing that we must not stop at great worship. After the benediction has been given and after they shake the preacher’s hand, hug their brothers and sisters, kiss the babies they must continue on fulfilling our mission as the Church. In other words what happens on Sunday morning must spill over into the
real missional work that must be done outside of the four walls. The worship, as the Pastor often says, should be an exclamation point of the work we do beyond Sunday morning. It is that work that needed to be accomplished in the community that birthed this project.

Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw’s book *The Externally Focused Church* was utilized throughout the Bible study classes in this Doctor of Ministry project. This book was chosen to help change the way members of St. Paul’s think, as it relates to reaching the community. Before utilizing his book, participants reported they saw ‘Good Works’ and ‘Good News’ as two opposing strategies that divided the liberal and fundamental camps of the church. One Camp supports telling the ‘Good News’ as a way of reaching the lost and the other Camp showing their ‘Good Works’ as a way of reaching the lost. Initially, participants felt that telling the 'Good News' of the Gospel was the road to travel. After reading Swanson and Rusaw's book, they now see that instead of two roads diverged in the road that they are really one. In other words, the avenue to the 'Good News' being heard among the nations is paved with 'Good Works'.

'Good Works' and 'Good News' are not two strategies that should divide the body but should create a symbiotic relationship to transform the heart of man and a community. The authors point out that while 'Good Works' cannot change a man's heart they prepare him to hear the 'Good News'.

'Works' gives the 'News' credibility to be heard. Not only do the authors present a biblical basis for this theology, they present a myriad of practical examples of how to get your church involved. Participants in this study felt Rusaw’s and Swanson’s message to the church is “as God's people become an asset to your community!” This is the main
message because most churches today are too inwardly focused, and a change to an external focus is needed.

But what is an inward focused church many will ask? Swanson and Rusaw define inward focused churches as those that measure success by attendance and activities in the church. Their concentration is on numbers and how many more can we get in. The churches offer great teaching and worship, things that are necessary but are not sufficient for a healthy church. Such churches are often excellent at telling the gospel message, but not at showing it.

In contrast, externally focused churches value impact and influence in the community more than attendance, and they would be missed by the community if they left. These churches focus on getting people out into the community where they can be salt, light, and leaven. They build bridges to the community around them instead of walling themselves off as an exclusive country club.

These churches seek to promote the welfare of the cities they find themselves in. Rusaw and Swanson report that in churches where God's people work together to express Christ's love outwardly into the community, people grow spiritually. Of course, mere human action is not the issue. It's the combination of truth (which includes ideas and content) and love (putting the truth into action) that matters. What Rusaw and Swanson offer is a practical primer on how to take the truth of what we believe as God's people and put it into action in our communities.

The result has been changed disciples and changed communities open to the gospel. The researcher wonders sometimes what the church is waiting for because this book makes the case for the Biblical directive that the church exists not for itself, but to
carry out Jesus’ commission to serve and save the world. The case from Scripture is so strong that those who disagree will be hard pressed to deny it. Many churches talk a lot about the Great Commission; but, when all is said and done, more has been said than done. An externally focused church does what others only verbalize. They realize that talk is cheap when confronted by a dying world.

Rusaw and Swanson point out that throughout history some of the greatest movements have sprung up when a paradigm-shift occurs and something is rediscovered that was perfectly obvious but blocked from view by old habits of thinking and acting. Once people see it again, they are amazed that they had not seen it before. Maybe the emphasis on an externally focused church is an idea whose time has just come. This book puts a magnifying glass on the critical points between two fundamental categories of churches: those focused internally, and those externally focused. This creates a watershed between authentically effective churches and stagnant or declining churches. Some readers would say their church is externally focused will be surprised at how fully their churches fit the description of an internally focused church. This external-focus principle is an application of Jesus’ paradox: serve yourself and die; forget yourself—be crucified with Christ—and live. Seek your life and lose it; lose your life in God’s service and find it. Seek to be served and miss out on abundant living; seek to serve and find the abundant life here and in Heaven. For many churches, success tends to be measured in terms of institutional concerns such as attendance, buildings, and budgets; but if a church is to live, it has to become a “living sacrifice” to the Lord’s enterprise in the world.

The message of this book is authenticated by the many examples of real-life churches actually doing what they are advocating. The case studies cover a wide variety
of conditions and locations that every church can identify with. The standard cannot be dismissed as “but our situation is different.” Each chapter provides exercises to help readers move to the right side of the watershed so they can, in turn, help to change their churches as well.

The book goes far beyond proving programming ideas. It helps to bring a transformation of instinct so that a church can creatively do what is appropriate to its time and place. The authors speak of dealing with the church’s DNA, its innate character that will issue into the right thinking and acting. They feel that churches have been neutralized making them self-centered, ingrown, inward-focused, self-serving, distracted, sin-corrupted, and thus passive or inert. They become ineffective or useless for God’s purposes.

To become truly effective, a church must undergo transformation at the instinctive or intuitive level so that we find ourselves automatically thinking and acting in accord with the principle. An external focus is not an option; it is in the very genetic code of authentic Christianity. This is the need and hope for St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church and the ultimate goal of this project.

THE CONCEPT

The researcher for this Doctor of Ministry project developed a six week program based on the book *The Externally Focused Life* by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson.

This book was chosen because of the many case studies presented that showed how churches became outward focused. Through the teachings, the disciples of St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church would come to understand its identity as a missional church.
A part of the concept is how St. Paul’s church found its missional church identity and began the transformational process of thinking outside of the four walls of their church. This project was chosen because St. Paul’s felt it made little sense to continue talking and singing about faith and about their savior, and even their God outside the context of mission. Several participants indicated they felt it was strange at first to begin asking how we could know God apart from His mission.

Through this Doctor of Ministry project the church sought understanding for their existence and to reorganize as God’s people on mission. Simply put, without mission there is no church. Through the project participants wanted the members of their congregation to know that God has established that their relationship to Him and to one another is in His mission to redeem the world.

The researcher believed if she taught this then this way of thinking would transform St. Paul’s thinking and even the way they did ministry. They would become excited about the fact that they were in partnership with God to make a difference in the lives of others.

Through participation in this project it was hoped the understanding of who they were would cause participants to realize that they could no longer refer to mission as a mere activity, something they did instead of something they were because that kind of thinking has robbed them of their identity as Christians.

Through the teachings, participants came to understand that it in Christ, they are sent out ones. Making mission an activity implies that there is a passive state, times when they’re not on mission. But this isn’t the case. Participants felt that their presence
in the world is necessarily a missionary presence. There’s no other kind. A part of the conceptual understanding is the discovery that they were made for missions.

The only reason we have been saved is because that is God’s mission. Now, our identity is in Him, and He sends us. When we lose sight of that—when we lose our identity—mission becomes a chore. It becomes a challenge to motivate people to go. We develop a special class of Christians to do missions for us. We’re either confident we can “finish the task” or paralyzed by the overwhelming need all around us. To what have we disciple people if not missionary? The Scriptures give us no other category.

Therefore since they are a missionary Baptist church they wanted to know what that really means. With the concept for this project being to engage its members in a process of discovery they can fully understand and identity themselves as a missional church. They now know if a church identifies itself as having a “missional identity” that it means being outward and others-focused, with the goal of expressing and sharing the love of Jesus. Jesus told His followers not to remove themselves from the world and create an isolated Christian sub-culture. Rather, He taught His followers to be engaged in the world with people (John 17:15).

THE CONFLICTS

Whenever a large organization decided to review it identity, there are always conflicts. What was discovered from the outset was the dichotomy of understanding revealed as the purpose of the church. Is the purpose of the church for worship or missions? This question undergirded participant’s pursuit to understand its identity. What participants discovered in the process is that there is a group that believes that the church exists for the worship of God only.
Prominent theologians were discovered in the processes who have written about worship being the most important purpose of the church, one of whom is John Stott. In his book, ‘The Living Church’, Stott dismisses evangelism as the church’s pre-eminent responsibility. This project’s was not to dismiss the idea that we are to worship God but to present why evangelism or more accurately, mission is the central purpose of the church.

Stott sees worship as the pre-eminent responsibility of the church because it will go on forever, whereas evangelism will cease after the second coming. It is perplexing that Stott dismiss evangelism as central due to its temporal nature. It is precisely because evangelism is a temporary activity that we should make use of every chance we have now to do it. It is a sobering realization that there will be no more opportunities for mission in heaven. Hence, it is critical that the church places mission as its central purpose and treat it as utmost priority. This same argument permeated our congregation at the beginning of this project. Why are we here some asked? Isn’t it to worship God and him only they wanted to know? Of course it is but our task is twofold; to worship God and bring him glory and to evangelize the world.

When Stott drafted the Lausanne Covenant he himself made this observation:

“We are ashamed that so many (2,700 million unreached people) have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole church... The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and receive the good news.”

Although it has been several years since Stott penned those words, it is estimated that there are still over 2,000 million people in unreached groups today. The sense of
urgency of the evangelistic task should not be diluted. John Piper’s famous phrase “missions exists because worship doesn’t” was written to express what he feels is God’s most important motive for missions - to obtain more worship and more glory for Himself. While Piper may echo some of Stott’s sentiments regarding the importance of worship for God’s own glory, Piper stops short of saying that missions is the most important task of the church. To him, worship is the goal while mission is the key task to achieve that goal. The researcher presented this information to the participants to bring greater awareness of their need to become outward focused. The more they spread out into the community sharing the good news the more God would be honored. Staying inside the four walls of the church doesn’t bring Him glory only going outside does. When this information was presented it made sense to them. It made sense that the more they did for other people would bring God the kind of worship He deserves. Please tell us how this information was received by participants. How does it relate?

In his volume on ecclesiology, Donald Bloesch understands worship in the fuller biblical perspective as “a creative response to God’s gracious act of condescension in Jesus Christ, a response that takes the form of praise, proclamation, recollection and prayer”. However, he is also quick to note that worship and service belong together in the Christian life, although he gives preeminence to worship. Churches that focus too much on worship have the tendency to become introspective, detached, and hence lack transformative power in society. This information was presented to the participants to ultimately help them to see that the church’s purpose is not for worship only. If they worship and not combine missions with their worship then they are in danger of losing transformative power in the Belmont community. When the information was presented
and backed up with biblical passages the response was overwhelmingly positive. The participants felt losing its transformative power in the Belmont Community would go against their dreams for the community. Please tell us how this information was received by participants. How does it relate?

The researcher was able to show how it related through Scripture. For instance the people of Israel in Isaiah 58 appear to offer genuine worship and yearning for God, but God remains distant. The problem lies in Israel’s worship being detached from the rest of their lives (v3-5). The kind of worship that God is looking for is expressed in our service to others – social action, helping the oppressed and meeting the needs of others (v6-7). Love for God is expressed as love for our neighbors.

In Isaiah 12 familiar worship terms, such as ‘give thanks to the Lord’, ‘sing to the Lord’ and ‘shout aloud’ are used. But these responses are not done in the setting of the temple gathering. Instead, it is ‘among the nations’ that we are to ‘proclaim that his name is exalted’ (v4). The call to worship is a call to missions. There is a strong link between worship and mission – missions exist because worship does not. True worship is missional because the greatest offering we can offer to God is to gather more worshippers for him.

When theology and church are viewed as missional, ordinary life naturally becomes missional. This is because every situation is, in fact, a missionary situation. Being a missionary does not mean traveling abroad to preach the gospel or plant churches. Similarly, serving God “full-time” does not mean working as a clergy or missionary. This view advocates that every believer functions as a gospel minister in their respective stations in life. Each believer becomes one another’s minister, priesting
fellow believers and priesting the lost. They become vital instruments for God to carry out His mission in the world, be it while washing the dishes, lining up at the cashier, or waiting for the bus. This spells the end of the dualistic lifestyle of church on Sundays and work on Mondays. Ultimately this is the hope of this project that what participants do on Sunday’s will spill out into what they do Monday through Saturday.

THE STRUCTURE

For seven weeks, beginning July 6, 2011, Bible study classes were taught on Wednesday nights using the book *The Externally Focused Life* by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson. It was chosen because of its usefulness in encouraging people to embrace a lifestyle of service. The researcher chose this book because of its easy readability. The participants who attend bible study each week are not theologians and seminarians and this book speaks to everyday people. The stories they present are real and practical. The researcher thought it best to use a book that was simple but could show participants that any person can live an externally focused life.

Bible Study classes began each Wednesday night at 6:45pm and ended at 8:00pm. This night was chosen because this is St. Paul’s regular night for Bible study. Pastor Moss, the Senior Pastor of St. Paul’s, was supportive of the project and allowed the regular Bible study classes to be interrupted for seven weeks to address such a rich and meaningful topic.

The Bible study classes were supplemented by handouts and group discussion. A focus group was also developed out of the larger group for more intense reflection and direction. The Broadcast Ministry of St. Paul’s was instrumental for the seven weeks
with providing mikes which were placed in strategic places of the congregation to encourage feedback and discussion.

Prior to the classes being offered, several weeks were spent announcing the project from the pulpit as well as in the church’s bulletin to determine if there was any interest in the topic. Signup sheets were placed on the H.O.S.T. tables located in the vestibule area of the church and everyone was encouraged to sign up if they were interested.

The way the researcher chose to evaluate the effectiveness of the bible study classes was to utilize the church’s Food Pantry Ministry, one of their outreach ministries, as their barometer. No one could have imagined how profoundly effective utilizing this ministry was going to be. The day they stood on the steps of the food pantry to survey the participants another idea was born that caught participants off guard. That idea will be discussed later in the paper.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

July 6, 2011 was the day chosen to begin the project during the evening Bible study class at 6:45pm. Prior to beginning the Bible study tables were set up at the entry of the sanctuary for sign-in and receipt of the night’s bible study outline and an initial profile and outreach survey. (see Appendix A for survey) The purpose of the profile was to determine the makeup of the participants. The researcher wanted to know the ages and gender of the participants. How long have they been disciples of St. Paul’s and what their knowledge of our present outreach ministries were questions asked. Moreover the researcher wanted to know if they thought the current outreach ministries at St. Paul’s were affective in meeting the needs of their church and community.
Class One: Writing God’s Story

At 6:45pm the bible study began with an opening prayer. After the prayer the 97 participants were welcomed and thanked for being there for the execution of this project. They were given a detailed explanation of the project and the evening’s bible study lesson. The researcher began by asking someone to stand and read the following paragraph, which is found in *The Externally Focused Life* book:

“God is writing a story, and we’re each a part of it. That’s the main idea of our first lesson and our challenge. Taking this to heart means we’ll have to overcome any notions we have about being ordinary or unimportant. The Bible declares otherwise. Once we let our relationship with God transform our interactions with others, our lives become extraordinary because God works through us to accomplish His purposes.

As He writes the faith story of mankind, we are being inked into the pages.” This was an important beginning for the class because so many people feel that their lives are not important and hence useless. Participants were invited to go to a mike and describe how God is utilizing their life to impact others. What a wonderful discussion we had for about ten minutes as the participants stood and revealed how God is using them for His service.

The main biblical text for that night was Ephesians 2: 8-10 which comes from the Apostle Paul’s letter to Christians living in the city of Ephesus, in modern day Turkey, around A.D. 60. What is interesting is in this passage Paul presents an amazing truth that can transform our thinking. After revisiting the foundational issue of the need for faith in Jesus, Paul leads us to understand how our lives as believers have a continuous impact as we accomplish the good works that God intends for us. When we do that, our story
contributes to God's story and impacts the life stories of those around us. The researcher explained how this speaks to St. Paul's as they sit in a community with the plethora of needs that it has. Why are you here? You could have moved to another area of the city but you made a conscious decision to remain here. Why? The researcher emphasized that they stayed in the Belmont community because God wanted to use their lives to impact the lives of those who live in the Belmont area.

The researcher read aloud Ephesians 2:8-10 and asked the following questions: When did you realize that God wanted to connect His story to your story? What part did He play and what part did you play? What do you think your purpose is? What good works can you do to show God's story to others? Paul says the believer's life should be marked by doing good works that have been preplanned by God. It is the way Christians should live. How does that change the way you live?

After several minutes of spirited discussion the researcher asked a question based on what the participants learned from the lesson. They were asked to list two or three things they will do differently that will express a life of serving others.

Prior to dismissal the researcher asked if anyone wanted to help with conducting a survey the next Wednesday at the food pantry. All interested persons were encouraged to sign up. After encouraging everyone to come back the next week the bible study was closed out with prayer. The researcher was pleased to discover after being given the signup sheets that 96 people had been in the bible study.

The next Wednesday of Bible study and the second week of the project was also the food distribution day at the food pantry. On the second Wednesday of each month
hundreds from either the neighborhood or Charlotte area are gathered outside of the pantry to receive food.

With clipboards and surveys in hand the researcher and 10 individuals who had signed up the previous week arrived at the pantry at 9:00am. The doors usually don’t open until 10:00am but the people started arriving pretty early. Because the line was very long and going down the street we began to comment among ourselves about the economic downturn that was happening in our nation. It was difficult to see the number of people knowing that any one of us is just one pay check away from standing in that line. We were very polite and respectful as we began to survey the crowd.

The pantry doors opened right at 10:00am that morning but by 11:00am we received disturbing news from the Pantry leader, Ms. Ann Rhodes. “The pantry is out of food”, she informed us. How could this be we wanted to know. Ms. Ann informed us that St. Paul’s Pantry receives food from Second Harvest a large food distributor that supplies food to Emergency Food Pantries just like ours. When St. Paul’s Food Pantry coordinator went to pick food up they were told that Second Harvest’s contributions were down. Because of the economic down turn the supply was limited that day. This was a sad story especially when the line was sill incredibly long. What were we going to do? The only thing we could do that day is direct the people to nearby pantries. Our hearts were saddened but Dr. Moss’s son, Gregory K. Moss Jar was with us that day and he said something that sparked us to thinking. He asked why are we relying on Second Harvest to supply our pantry. We have over 5,000 members in our congregation don’t we he asked? Can’t they help? This day got us to really thinking how to motivate our disciples.
Class Two: Merging Our Passions With God’s Purposes

That night we started at 6:45pm once again. The researcher prayed and began to review the last week’s bible study class. The first lesson was about awareness. We need to understand that God plans to get meaningful things done through us the researcher said. In fact we learned that God has some outcomes planned for our lives. After the review the second night of bible study was introduced. God doesn’t just call us to do good works the researcher said, but He also equips us to get them done. In doing so He creates areas of passion within us that merge with His purpose. Living an externally focused life involves using the gifts, abilities, and vision that God provides to serve others on His behalf the facilitator said.

In chapter two of the Externally Focused Life, Eric Swanson notes five things that God gives to help Christians discover their passions and pursue God’s purpose. First of all God gives us leaders to prepare us for good works (Ephesians 4: 11-12) Second of all, God gives us the Bible to equip us for good works (2 Timothy 3: 16-17) Thirdly, God gives us other Christians to spur us on toward good works (Hebrews 10:24) Fourthly, God gives us spiritual gifts to enable us to do good works (1 Peter 4:10) and lastly, God gives us money to finance good works (1 Timothy 6: 17-18). In this lesson they were introduced to the idea that God equips us to do what he needs to be done in this world. He uses our abilities, the Scripture, other believers, and even our past experiences to serve up His grace in our world.

Everyone got excited up when the researcher said, one day we will stand before God to ‘give an account’ of ourselves. He will have two questions for us to answer: why should I let you into heaven and what did you do for others? The two question concept
stems from what is called the Great commandment, found in Matthew 22:37-39. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment in all of Scripture was, his answer was twofold, to love God and to love people. When we live externally focused lives, we really have the questions answered ahead of time. We belong to Him. That answers the first question. Our passion for God should then automatically motivate us to right actions. That answers the second question. The bible study was a perfect segue into the next statement.

The researcher informed the bible study class of what happened at the food pantry that day. The people were alarmed and disheartened by the fact that we had to turn people away. As the researcher continued talking about the events of the day a hand was raised in the back of the room. The student echoed Gregory Jr.'s question that morning. Why can’t we fill our own pantry she asked? As a matter of fact why can’t we bring food for the next few weeks as a part of our bible study she asked? The researcher knew in that moment that this would be the perfect way to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Next week, everyone bring chicken and ground beef and place in the barrels in the vestibule the researcher said. Shouldn’t we introduce this to the Sunday morning groups someone asked? Yes we should and we will. In that moment a "movement" began. One hundred and seven people were in Bible study this night. The researcher was amazed because of the increase in numbers.

Class Three: Merging Our Passions With God’s Purposes

The third week of the project the participants were extremely driven. They came in that night with two and three grocery bags full of chicken, ground beef, ham and other kinds of meat. As soon as one barrel was filled the custodians were running taking to
their pantry to put in the freezer. It was an exciting moment to view participant’s energized about helping other people.

That night’s Bible study lesson was a continuation of the previous week’s lesson entitled “Merging Our Passions with God’s Passion. In that lesson Swanson and Rusaw talk about “finding our sweet spot.” They inform the reader in this chapter that the sweet spot is at the intersection of two things:

1. Our passion - the way God designed us, and (Psalm 139:13-14)
2. God’s purpose - the good works he prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10); not ours to create but discover

The class is encouraged to let Jesus’ life serve as their guide (Acts 10:38). He chose to serve others during the very times we might feel it is inconvenient or untimely. The researcher informed the class that Jesus served others when He was:

- Celebrating – He turned water into wine at a friend’s wedding (John 2:1-11)
- Sad - He fed the 5,000 during a time he had withdrawn from the crowds to mourn the death of His cousin John (Matthew 14:6-21)
- Tired -After a long day of ministry, Jesus was asleep in the boat when His frightened disciples woke Him. He then calmed the storm (Mark 4: 35-40.
- Angry - After overturning the tables and driving out the money changers, the blind and lame came to Him and He healed them (Matthew 21:12-14).
- Teaching - While Jesus was still speaking, some men interrupted Him, which led to the healing of the synagogue ruler’s daughter (Mark 5:35-42)
- Arrested - When Jesus was in the midst of being arrested, one of His followers cut off a soldier’s ear, but Jesus healed him (Luke 22:50-51).
• Near death - Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world, and He took the time to wash His disciples' feet (John 13:1-5)

Serving always seems like an interruption unless, like Jesus, it is part of who we are. We give hands and feet to the words of Jesus when we engage in doing good for others. Sometimes that service comes in unlikely packages.

The researcher says to the class in a way of closing the lesson that the authors of the Externally Focused Life define the “sweet spot” (optimum performance point) of serving God as the intersection of our passions (how God has fashioned us) and God’s purpose. Based on your past experiences, the researcher asked, when do the two most obviously come together in your life? After a few minutes of dialogue the researcher closed the lesson by asking what important change in attitude or perspective do you have as a result of this lesson? Several students offered their views.

The night was closed when Gregory Jr. came and slipped the number of meat packages that had been collected that day to the researcher. 1200 meat packages were collected, the researcher told the group. They were elated because they didn’t want another distribution day to come and they not have enough food. Instead of collecting meat the next week, the researcher asked the group to bring nonperishables. The group agreed and they prayed together and dismissed. The researcher was excited when she was told that there were 112 people in attendance for Bible Study.

**Class Four: Salt and Light**

The Fourth night of the Bible study participants gathered and begins to bring in their non-perishable items. Items that were brought in ranged from canned goods to bags of rice and boxes of mashed potatoes. There was a sense of excitement tonight so they
did something different. The Minister of Music assembled some of the people from the Adult Praise Ensemble to lead them in songs of praise to God. They were so encouraged about what God was doing in and through them they couldn’t begin tonight’s lesson without first giving praise to God. They felt and knew that they were changing their way of thinking and the outcome was changed.

Tonight’s Bible Study lesson was about Christians being salt and light. The text used was Matthew 5:13-16. The background of the text teaches that the church will be ineffective and useless if they believe that they are not or cannot make a difference. Disciples always make a difference, the researcher said, though we may never see the fruits of our labor. (1st Corinthians 3:6) The researcher asked the class how do we know that as disciples we influence the world. Class the researcher told the class that it’s the emphatic statement at the beginning of our text; “You are.” Jesus didn’t say “you will be,” “you should be,” “you might be,” or “you can be,” He said “You are!” Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that they had it within themselves the power and purpose to make the lives of those around them better.

Christ calls His disciples to influence the world; and “genuine” disciples are God’s way of implementing His plan in the world. So we see that it is Jesus’ aim in this portion of His message to instill in His listeners the importance of seeing and acting on the opportunities they have, and Jesus presents this message by the use of two commonly used metaphors in scripture, salt & light, which make it crystal clear to His listeners that number one, disciples are different from the world. As disciples they make a difference in the world they live in because they are different from that world the researcher said. We have a different pattern, standard, and hero to imitate. We must understand that
Jesus' examples to His followers about genuine discipleship were a radical departure of the norms of the day, the Law and its interpretation. That probably would have struck most Jewish ears as being presumptuous because it is not the law, the temple, Israel, or some faction that is the light of the world but it is the followers of Jesus. The metaphorical image of light the researcher stated is a symbol in the Old Testament that was used for Israel. The role of Israel, a country at the cross-roads of the world has been transferred to the disciples, because they didn’t take their mission seriously. Israel was to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6), but she was derelict and neglected that call. The salt and light metaphors that Jesus uses demand a stricter standard than the world does, in such areas as, sexual purity, honesty, love, integrity, grace, obedience, etc. Those standards aren’t well accepted by our society because it seems to be “extremely strict and allows for almost no fun.” When we look at the concept of salt there are 3 common applications presented for this statement. Salt is a necessary ingredient for life. It is life preserving and without it we would perish. Disciples are spiritual preservatives against the moral decay of mankind.

When it comes to light, the light is not something that we generate, its reflected light which comes from our relationship with Christ. This light works like the moon works, it reflects the light of the sun. Being salt and light at the intersections of life can have a huge impact on others the researcher ended. Jesus commanded His followers to be an influence on this world. They are to focus on doing what needs to be done.

At its core the power of influence is the act of turning character into action. Our doing something is contingent on being something first... being “genuine” disciples. What we are must precede what we do, and who we are determines our effectiveness. So
there are two challenges presented to those who are disciples of Jesus, First Develop Character! Second Deploy to the World! Are you willing the researcher asked? Before closing with prayer the researcher gave a review of the night's class and gave them their next week's task. Next week please bring baby food for the pantry. There are a lot of single mothers who come to the pantry and the pantry doesn’t have food for their babies. The group agreed. They prayed and dismissed.

Lessons 5-7

Learning Leverage

Tonight’s class began at 6:45pm as the previous did. The researcher reviewed the previous weeks by saying to the class so far in this lesson series we have learned that we are re-created by God, and he intends to do good for others through us. What He does is give us gifts and He supports us as we offer both good works and good news to people in our sphere. Now, the researcher says we have come to the portion of our study where we realize that we need to be wise in the use of the time and money resources that God has put at our disposal in order to leverage them for His purposes. Tonight’s lesson as well as the next two will tell the story of loving people when it’s costly and inconvenient. We will talk about investing in people because we love God and He loves them. It’s not a lesson about getting a good return on God’s investment in us because we honor Him with our time, talents, and resources.

To engage the class the researcher asked the following questions: have you or someone you know ever acted as a good Samaritan? What was it like, and what was the reaction of the person receiving help?
The researcher then asked someone to read Luke 10:25-29. The following questions were asked in order to encourage dialogue:

- Luke 10:25-29 provides the historical context for the story of the good Samaritan. Why did Jesus tell the story?
- Look again at verses 10-35. What personal resources did the good Samaritan leverage to love a person in need?
- Why did the Samaritans go out of His way to help the man in need?
- What is the significance that those who did not help the man in need were religious leaders?
- What are some of the “good” reasons the Samaritan could have come up with for not helping the man in need?

The meaning of the lesson was much clearer after questions were answered during the discussions. It was determined that we cannot love our neighbors in a hurry. If we are going to live an externally focused life we will have to make sacrifices. We will also have to slow our lives down so we can have meaningful relationships with other people. It’s hard sometimes because we live such a fast paced existence. Rusaw and Swanson say we will have to love people enough to be inconvenienced. The key concept of this lesson is leveraging. We want to leverage our time, talents, and money because God wants to leverage us.

Classes 6 and 7 were a continuation of lesson five, Learning Leverage because the researcher wanted to end on a good note with the students really understanding the need to use their resources wisely to help others in need. This concept was demonstrated as participants continued bringing food for the pantry. Because of the giving by the Bible
study group as well as other members on Sunday mornings the pantry had to be extended. A Food Pantry team was organized to give additional help to the team leader and the project came to a completion. Surveys were handed out to give the researcher appropriate feedback for the success of the project. They prayed together and the researcher thanked the group for their participation in the project.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter a summary of the process St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church went through during the summer of 2011 to find its missional church identity.

The researcher concluded that this study was particularly significant to St. Paul’s, the researcher and other churches willing to find their missional church identity. You will also find at the end of this chapter an evaluation of this case study.

On July 6, 2011 St. Paul’s began a study to find its missional church identity. In the classes they addressed questions like what is the mission of St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church and what should they be doing in light of that mission? This was where they started. The authors of The Externally Focused Church speak of dealing with the church’s DNA, its innate character that will issue into the right thinking and acting. They feel that churches have been neutralized making them self-centered, ingrown, inward-focused, self-serving, distracted, sin-corrupted, and thus passive or inert. They essentially become ineffective or useless for God’s purposes. The significance of this study was for St. Paul’s to become truly effective. It was apparent they had to undergo transformation at the instinctive or intuitive level so that they could find themselves automatically thinking and acting in accord with the principle. An external focus was not an option for them because it is in the very genetic code of authentic Christianity. This was the hope for St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church.
Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw in their books, *The Externally Focused Church and the Externally Focused Life* helped the researcher tremendously with direction for this project. The project was designed to transform St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church from being internally focused to being more oriented to the world around them. The project was not about getting their church to have an annual day of community service as a tactic but changing the core of who they are and how they see themselves as a part of their community. This was the desire of this researcher for St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church to become more outwardly focused. The steps that were used to effect this change was through the seven bible study classes.

To measure the effectiveness of their efforts was through the surveys passed out and replenishing the food pantry.

Rusaw and Swanson echoed this measuring tool by saying measuring begins with mission. Mission they say is the only solid standard against which you can measure progress they say. The participant’s mission was to become outward focused and ultimately show their effectiveness by replenishing St. Paul’s Food Pantry.

Through the use of a core group of people in the Bible study it was found that individuals really do want to be outward and other focused. By the end of the project the members were asking when we can do this again. The researcher noticed the change within the participants at the end of the project. This was evidenced in their assistance with replenishing the food pantry by bringing meat and non-perishable items to the extent more space was needed to accommodate their response. The researcher also noted the increasing desire amongst the participants to know and do more. The pantry walls were torn down for expansion to accommodate the space needed for food being given not only
by the participants but the entire church community! The Ministry team was redeveloped to include an assistant to the team leader whose responsibility would include monitoring the amount of food in the pantry and alerting the team if a food drive was needed to keep the pantry filled. In the event a food drive was necessary an Event Coordinator was added to help facilitate any drives necessary.

What is significant about this study is how the church is beginning to change because of the influence of the group who came to the bible study classes and changed their way of thinking about their purpose. Their objectives are changing. They now understand their mission and purpose.

They also understand the implications of the “The Great Commission.” It’s as if they are hearing for the first time (Matthew 28: 19-20) that it was His desire and command for His followers to continue His mission in the world. Jesus was not just speaking to the eleven disciples; He was speaking to the whole church and that includes St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church!

What is significant about this study is how St. Paul’s has learned that its mission is clearly seen as “being sent out.” They understand that Jesus lived in the world as one who was on a mission. As a “sent” one, Jesus came to fulfill the Father’s will. Jesus spoke the Father’s words. Jesus lived among people so that He could teach and reach them.

Christ instructs His disciples that just as He was “sent” by the Father that they also must understand and recognize that they are being “sent.” The followers of Jesus have clearly received the responsibility of continuing the gospel-mission and ministry of Christ Jesus in this world.
It is important for St. Paul’s to understand that it is to dwell in the Belmont Community as “sent” ones. Before this study they weren’t “sent” ones because they constantly invited people in to see them. This had to change for them because they were in danger of becoming disconnected from their mission to the community. It became important for them to realize to effectively reach their community for Christ that they had to maintain their corporate identity as missionaries in the Belmont community. Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit is still sending them to reach their neighbors for Jesus.

The future studies for this researcher and ultimately St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church is the book of Acts but particularly the opening verses of the book of Acts. It is the key verse in understanding the expansion, growth, and power of the church as chronicled in the rest of the book of Acts. Here Jesus declares:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1.8)

In this passage, the Lord makes it clear that the Holy Spirit was going to give His disciples power to be witnesses and missionaries even to “the end of the earth.” But the theological truth found in this passage is that not only is the triune God sending the church into the world to be on a gospel-mission, but that this same God would by the presence of the Holy Spirit, be with them and empower them in carrying out this great task.
The researcher believes this type of study will give St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church the will to continue on the mission field by understanding that they are “sent” and equipped with the power to finish the race.

It is the recommendation of this researcher that every church spend time in finding its identity. It’s important for churches to have a clear understanding as St. Paul’s has, of who they are as the church and have a full acceptance of who they have been called to be and do. They must understand that as the church they must accept that they too are to live as “sent ones” on mission to reach people with the gospel.

**EVALUATIONS**

Dr. Stephen Razor, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at The Interdenominational Theological Center, and the committee that reviews all Doctor of Ministry proposals reviewed this project and found the topic to be relevant and an important ministry issue. The committee understood that our country is in a period of ongoing military action and the need for identification of the ministry need was an important issue to be examined.

Dr. Christine Chapman served as the committee chair and evaluated my work throughout the process of conducting the project as well as providing oversight during the writing of the research.

Dr. Gregory K. Moss, Sr. the pastor of St. Paul’s Missionary Baptist Church evaluated the need for this project for St. Paul’s from its inception and noted its value not only for the church but the community as well. He said specifically that “during a particularly difficult time due to recession, our food ministry was challenged to meet the demand. This Dmin project led the congregation to contribute more than 3000 items.
The project has totally revitalized our approach to providing food for those who are in need.

The project has also been the catalyst for forging a collaborative effort between our church and a feeding program, Kid's Against Hunger. It is designed to provide packets of rice fortified with nutrients and vitamins to impoverished persons in two-thirds countries and the US. Because of the researcher's efforts we had 3 shifts of approximately 200 persons pack 104,000 packets in less than 6 hours. Now 350 persons will have meals for a year."

A focus group made of some of the participants in the bible study class was given a survey to give the researcher a measuring tool for the project. Those in the group stated that the Bible Study classes helped them know God better and to understand that God is sending the church into the Belmont Community and the uttermost parts of the world.

A survey was taken on the last day of the project and all of the participants evaluated the project. For the most part participants believed that the project helped to give them a new perspective about missions and God's call to service.
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