CONGREGATIONAL MISSION AND VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN THE
TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: A NEW WAY TO ATTRACT THE UNCHURCHED
AND PEOPLE OF COLOR TO ELCA CONGREGATIONS.

A PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
BY
SAMUEL SUMO WALAWULU PAYNE

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
FINDLAY, OHIO
AUGUST 2, 2014
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SAMUEL SUMO WALAWULU PAYNE
APPROVED BY:

David Coffin 2-28-14
Project Mentor

Sakui Malakpa 5-28-14
External Reader

Katie M. Erickson 1-30-14
Writing Stylist

M. John Nissley 1-30-14
Doctor of Ministry Director

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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WORK CITED

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ABBREVIATIONS

ELCA means, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
NCLC means, New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church
CMP means, Congregational Mission Profile
KJ means, King James Version of the Bible
NIV means, New International Version of the Bible
D.O means Division for Outreach
LWF means, Lutheran World Federation
U.S.A means, United States of America
SEOA means Special Event Open to All
COA means, Community Outreach Activities
CSFCV means, Small Class for Church Visitors
ASSC Adult Sunday School Class
SGSH Small Group at Someone’s House
NSDS Not Sure Depends on Situation
AKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many people and congregations have helped shaped my spiritual life in becoming the leader I have become today in Christ’s church. Let me first give thanks to my Lord Jesus Christ for his gift of new life of salvation, and the Holy Spirit who granted me the gift of discernment to understand what the resources have meant for this project, the Kingdom of God, and for the broader church.

I also extend my sincere thanks to the leadership team and members of New Creation Lutheran Church Lima, Ohio for their diligence and commitment to the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their insights and suggestions played a greater role to the success of this project. Their prayers and tenacity in working with me was greatly appreciated.

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Finally, I give my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my friend and spiritual father, Bishop Marcus Lohrmann, Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod and the entire staff at the Synod’s office for their prayers and faithful Christian support for me and my family not only in good times, but also during some of the extremely difficult and challenging times in my leadership journey. I thank everyone immensely for their support in this endeavor.
ABSTRACT

The focus of this research project was about Congregational Mission and Visionary Leadership. The intended focus of the project was to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio determine new strategy in evangelism to attract the unchurched and person of color to its ministry. New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio faces a problem of membership decline in the twenty-first century. A new strategy in congregational mission and leadership in the twenty-first century would help promote growth in small congregations like New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. In an effort to develop a new strategy to reverse the declining trend at New Creation to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry, several steps were considered. First, the researcher identified the leaders and interviewed them to gather data on where they understood their congregation to be, where they thought it was going and what it would look like when it arrives. Second, a congregational survey was done with members in five key categories on congregational ministries. The data from the five categories provided valuable insights to help the researcher determine strength, weaknesses, and opportunities in the congregation. Next, the researcher interviewed persons of color attending New Creation to determine what attracted them to New Creation Lutheran Church.

Fourth, the researcher interviewed leaders of other Lutheran congregations in Allen County to determine what evangelism strategies were being implemented to attract the unchurched in their congregations, and how many persons of color were attending their congregation. The fifth step used was that the researcher also interviewed leaders
serving growing congregations in Allen County to determine what strategies were being implemented to attract the unchurched to their congregation. Finally, the researcher identified outside research sources that provided valuable insights regarding the unchurched in the United States and how many of them view the church and what local congregations like New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio needed to do to attract them to their congregation.

This research project focused on New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima. The congregation is considered a small ELCA congregation, which is the researcher’s church. New Creation presently has a core of lay group members that oversees the property and financial aspects of the congregation. Many of them also serve as valuable leaders and have become the movers and shakers as well. There is now a deep concern over the congregation regarding its future existence because most members are older and very few young families are joining. While the congregation enjoyed a strong spirit of hospitality toward the members as well as those who visit, there is a lack of strong evangelism strategy to attract the unchurched to foster growth. The researcher’s assumption of this project as described above is that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio wants to take the steps necessary to be a welcoming place for all of God’s people, including the unchurched and persons of color living in Allen County and Lima, Ohio. The process of developing a clear strategy for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color would help New Creation’s leaders and members realize that ministry takes place on two levels, first in the congregation and second in the service community. Moreover, in order for ministry to be implemented, every member of the congregation must do his or her part, because ministry is not just the work of the pastor.
The process of developing a new authentic strategy for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in the twenty-first century calls for the leaders and members of the congregation to revisit the mission statement; its values, identity, and its purpose. This effort will help provide a clear vision that will guide them to where they need to be and how to achieve their ministry goal.

This research project used Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28: 18-20 for the biblical and theological foundation to emphasize strong needs for evangelism and inclusiveness at New Creation Lutheran church in Lima, Ohio. This researcher holds the view that authentic biblical evangelism and discipleship is what a declining congregation like New Creation Lutheran Church should pursue if it desires to be vibrant, attractive and inviting to the unchurched and persons of color in the twenty-first century. A declining congregation needs not be afraid of change, its members and leaders need to trust God and embrace change as an opportunity for a brighter future rather than a threat to their comfort. That’s what it takes to reverse the declining trends of membership facing New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio and other small ELCA congregations in the United States.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

It was in the summer of 2004 when the researcher first drove into Lima, Ohio. Coming in from Interstate 75 the researcher entered the vicinity of the city of Lima while approaching the State Route 81 exit. The researcher saw a large wooden cross attached to the Plastic Company building which reads, “Jesus is the answer.” This led the researcher to think that Lima, Ohio, was perhaps a Christian conservative town. The researcher exited onto State Route 81 west bound and immediately realized that he was on the east end of the city. Following State Route 81 west bound, the researcher could see landmarks that once served as business attractions for the city. However, by now, the entire east end of the city showed very little hope of life. He saw a Fat Jack’s Pizza place and a Marathon gas station along with several small store front shops that serve the daily needs of the very few people who still live in that part of Lima. As the writer drove further on State Route 81 toward the downtown area, he could see many run down houses. The abandoned businesses, homes and rundown hotels revealed to the researcher that Lima, Ohio has been through some difficult days.

Driving further, the researcher observed Schoonover Park, one of Lima’s historical landmarks. This park has a man-made lake in the center of it, creating beautiful scenery in this run down end of town. In the park was a sign with an inscription that read, “Welcome to Lima, Ohio.” Lima is a city of 38,219 people according to the 2000 U.S.
Census Bureau on Allen County. Also according to the *1976 History of Allen County, Ohio*, Lima was officially formed when the “survey and plat of the new County Seat was completed on April 20, 1831 under the leadership of Christopher Wood.”¹ According to Mr. James Myer, a longtime resident of Lima, some of the early immigrants who came in from Pennsylvania were German, many of whom were skilled in agriculture.

Proceeding toward downtown Lima on State Route 81 west, as the researcher merged onto State Route 309 going into town, he could see the newly erected Lima Senior High School on the left side of the road. Turning right, after going under the railroad overpass, he realized that he was in the downtown area. The city of Lima has a unique history, though, in the present time it does not have much of the familiar scenery as in many of other major American cities. However, Lima, Ohio, has its special and unique qualities which may be appreciated.

For example, as one finds himself in the northwest quadrant of Town Square, there is a large sculpture that stands near the base of the twelve story building, directly across Market Street from the Veteran’s Memorial Civic and Convention Center. It is a visible symbol of pride in this community.

Another Lima historical landmark is the Lima Trust Building. According to the *Allen County Historical Society* and the *Allen County Reporter*, this building was constructed as “Lima’s daylight office building in Lima’s booming days.”² It is also

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reported that “one of the many features of the Lima Trust Building was its burglar alarm.”\textsuperscript{3} The alarm was mounted on the floor in the teller’s cage to deter robbery.

Also across Main Street in downtown Lima, directly on the east side of the street from Joey’s Subs, a person will see The Mitchell Block on 124 North Main Street. It is recorded that, “in 1838, same year after Lima was officially formed, the County Commissioners sold this lot to Christopher Stark Wood for forty dollars.”\textsuperscript{4} It is also said that Mr. Wood was Lima’s first town director. It is reported that after purchasing the lot at 124 North Main Street for forty dollars, Mr. Wood sold the property two weeks later for two hundred dollars, making himself a healthy profit. The Mitchell Block property has been owned by many different people since then.

In 1887, the passenger and freight depot was constructed to allow train travel from Pennsylvania, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois. This railroad was to help handle the increased rail traffic brought in by Lima’s oil economic success. This “railroad depot was also the last sight many soldiers saw of their home town before leaving for World War I, World War II and the Korean War.”\textsuperscript{5} The unique historical landmarks all over downtown Lima, indicate that the city has had both better days and bad days. It is a city that is still seeking ways to improve its image and create a better community for its residents. Despite the enormous challenges the city of Lima has faced over the years, it still continues to strategize in attracting both small and midsize businesses to the area.

\textsuperscript{3} William S. Lee, 67.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 73.
Through a careful strategy to attract people to Lima, the leaders of the city have worked with companies such as St. Rita’s Medical Center which remains one of the largest employment organizations in the city and in all of Allen County, Ohio. Other employers include Proctor and Gamble, University of Northwestern Ohio, Rhodes State College, Lima Memorial Hospital, Ford Motor Company, and Husky Refinery along with a diverse group of organizations within the community. Other small businesses also provide employment opportunities for the residents of Lima and its surrounding towns.

Though Lima has experienced some economic hardship over the years, it still continues to show determination by the diverse way it encourages small businesses to relocate there. Because of its location, the city is directly in the path of travelers going in all directions and the writer’s observation is that it is at the cross-roads of Northwestern Ohio. Because of that, Lima has had its share of illegal drug problems as well as some serious racial tension and conflicts. One recent example of racial tension in Lima was the shooting death of a biracial woman named Terika Wilson by one of Lima’s police officers. This incident brought Lima to national news and attracted some high profile political leaders such as Reverend Jesse Jackson to the city.6

The city of Lima looks like a city that is divided along economic boundaries. The north side of the city where people of color primarily live is mostly run down communities with abandoned houses. The west side is where one will find most of the affluent residents of the city. On this side of Lima, the streets are well lit and there are strips of small thriving businesses such as a Walgreens Drug Store, a BP gas station, a Speedway gas station, and the AAA Travel Center. There are medical offices as well as a

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Christian bookstore. Next to the book store there is a hair salon and an accountant’s office. There is also a well-recognized car dealership located across the street from the First Federal Bank. Right next to the car dealership and across the street from First Federal Bank one will find New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church at 2701 Allentown Road.

**Context of the Problem**

The context of the problem is New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. The church sits among many organizations. The entire area has been zoned as commercial with no residential homes around the church in the immediate one-half mile radius. However, driving through the two to three miles radius of New Creation Lutheran Church one will observe fine, affluent homes, and also several churches. On Eastown Road there is the Bible Missionary Church. One mile from there on the corner of Elm Street and Eastown, there is the South Side Christian Church. Also at the corner of Baty Road and State Route 81, there is Grace Community Church. Proceeding further north on Baty Road, there is the New Hope Christian Center. In the general area of New Creation Lutheran Church, there are over six congregations, many of which are evangelical denominations.

New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima was born when two declining Lutheran congregations voted to consolidate in 2001.\(^7\) Trinity Lutheran Church at 109 West Main Street in Elida, a village next to the city of Lima, was a congregation of over 150 years. Peace Lutheran Church at 2701 Allentown Road in Lima had been a congregation over fifty years. Because of the membership decline, the two congregations, which were

located just six miles apart from each other, finally consolidated in 2001 to become one community of faith. The goal for that consolidation was to reorganize and discern a new direction for a vital ministry to help the congregation grow. As a result of this historic consolidation, the congregation was given the name New Creation Lutheran Church.

New Creation Lutheran Church presently offers two worship services. A celebration (or contemporary) service is held every Saturday at 4:30 p.m. for the purpose of attracting unchurched people in the Lima area. The traditional worship service is offered every Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. for the purpose of providing a time for members who desire the liturgical and formal type of Lutheran worship. The age demographic of New Creation Lutheran Church is mostly older senior citizens with an average age of seventy years. This congregation is beginning to see a few children in the worship services. However, almost all of these children are born to the few younger members of the congregation. New Creation Lutheran Church does not have a youth group at this point but is trying to discern ways to formulate a strategy to attract youth and young adults into its worship services and to participate in the ministry of the congregation. During the last ten years, the congregation has lost many of its members by death and a few by transfer. Some have become homebound as well.

Lima has a unique diverse racial make-up of people. For example, according to the record from the Allen County Profile, 84.7 percent of the population in Lima is white while 12.1 percent are persons of color. In its effort to provide vital ministry in Lima, New Creation Lutheran Church has purchased 16.4 acres of land to build a new facility to be a witness for Christ. While New Creation Lutheran Church wants to become a vital congregation in the Lima community, it still does not know how to develop a strategy to
attract the unchurched, young families to its congregation. The lack of a concrete visionary strategy for growth is one of the problems New Creation Lutheran Church needs to address if it still desires to be effective in the ministry and outreach to the community in the twenty-first century.

Statement of the Problem

It seems as though mainline denominations, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), do not know how to respond to the dwindling memberships in their congregations. In his book, *The American Church in Crisis*, Olson argued that “In reality, the church in America is not booming. It is in crisis. On any giving Sunday, the vast majority of Americans are absent from church … As the American population continues to grow, the church falls further and further behind. If this trend continues, by 2050 the percentage of American attending church will be half the 1990 figure.”

Many congregations that once seated four to five hundred people are now only averaging fifty to sixty people in worship service every week.

What is the cause of this trend of decline in the churches in America today? Olson writes, “Before determining a strategy for change, church leaders must first understand the shifts and changes occurring within church and culture. The church needs explorers to delve into the demographic and spiritual topography of our country.” To do so, Olson said those explorers must focus on four areas in order to reverse the downward trend in church attendance. The four areas of focus includes: “observation, evaluation,

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8 David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 16.
9 Ibid., 16.
introspection and action.”\textsuperscript{10} This means that as the American culture continues to change and shift, those changes will also continue to affect the way the American church conducts ministry.

It is no secret that mainline denominations have struggled for many years in their efforts to attract new members and have had limited success in their effort. These problems exist within many of our churches because of the lack of vision for ministry on the part of some pastors. Vision for ministry, according to George Barna, is “a clear mental image of a preferable future impacted by God to his chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.”\textsuperscript{11} This lack of authentic vision for ministry on the part of some pastoral leadership tends to contribute to the downward spiral in church attendance. Many pastors and lay leaders do not know how to turn the problem around because of their lack of vision. This lack of vision for evangelism and clear direction has also been one of the problems for New Creation Lutheran Church. New Creation Lutheran church has intentionally made an effort to accept people of color on the pastoral level, and has also made a wonderful progress in being involved in the community. However, it still struggles to attract the unchurched and people of color into it corporate worship. Therefore, New Creation Lutheran Church lacks the vision strategy to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio to create a clear vision for direction and put in place an authentic strategy that will attract

\textsuperscript{10} Olson, 22.

the unchurched, seekers, and people of color to its ministry. New Creation Lutheran Church is a congregation of the Northwestern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The congregation has felt it is called to carry out God’s mission in the Lima community. Therefore, it has a mission statement in the church’s profile that reads, “God calls New Creation Lutheran Church as a community created and shaped by the Holy Spirit to share God’s gifts and love with all.”

While the mission statement of New Creation Lutheran Church calls for the need to reach out to all people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and make known his love, the broader question is, what exactly does that mean in the twenty-first century ministry context? Specifically, what are the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to New Creation Lutheran Church to be shared? Is New Creation Lutheran Church honestly ready to reach out to all of God’s people, inviting them to come as they are? How will New Creation Lutheran Church be involved with the residents of Lima as they lead? Does the mission statement indicate that New Creation Lutheran Church truly desires to be a part of the broader community that seeks to survive and prosper in ever changing times? What is the role and future of New Creation Lutheran Church within the community of Lima among all the other churches in the surrounding areas?

With this in mind, the purpose of the study is to provide clear direction and comprehensive strategy to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima not only to answer these questions, but also to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry. In order to accomplish this, the researcher will use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

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as the biblical and traditional foundation for this project. (Chapter Two will contain further details). This method is outlined as followed.

First, the researcher will use the Scriptures: to identify biblical and theological core values that will guide New Creation Lutheran Church’s progress. The researcher will also seek Saint Paul’s experience as he sought to reach out to the Gentiles as recorded in the book of Acts to guide the church’s development process to reach out to the unchurched.

Second, the researcher will use tradition to explore Martin Luther’s teaching about outreach and mission in the Book of Concord as a way to include European roots in the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church.

Third, the researcher will use experiences in successful congregations to identify principles and practices already put in place in effective missional churches relating to the topic of racial reconciliation as it relates to cross-cultural outreach.

Fourth, the researcher will use reason to discover new insights on racial relations materials in the field of sociology to show how Lima has overcome racial issues to bring peace and reconciliation among its residents.

**Research Methodology to Study the Problem**

The research methodology of this project will be done on several levels. First, the quantitative method will be used by surveying people of color in other ELCA congregations in Lima to determine the factors that attracted them to those congregations. Observations and data from this study will inform this portion of the project.
Second, a qualitative method will be used to interview selected members and persons of color to discover the reason why they were not attracted to Lutheran and mainline churches. The researcher will also contact the Research Department of the ELCA for strategies that are being used to attract the unchurched and persons of color to the ELCA. The ELCA has struggled with these questions since its inception. The qualitative research process will seek to answer the “why” questions.

Next, the researcher will use one or multiple focus groups to analyze strategies that seem to be effective in Lima and Allen County, Ohio that may help mainline churches to attract unchurched and persons of color to their churches. This invites ownership of this project’s outcome by the people of New Creation Lutheran Church.

**Research Questions to Guide the Research Project**

Every research method has to deal with answering specific questions in a quest to find answers that are appropriate to the particular problem. Therefore, the researcher will formulate the following questions to guide the research project.

1. What features attracts the unchurched and persons of color to worship in non-ELCA congregations in Allen County and Lima, Ohio?

2. What steps can be developed to prepare New Creation Lutheran Church to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its worship service?

3. What action plan can New Creation Lutheran Church put in place and implement to attract seekers, unchurched and persons of color into its worship services?
Significance of the Research Project for the Broader Church

The ongoing decline in church attendance and membership in North America is threatening the future of mainline churches including the ELCA. Because of this threat, the solution and conclusions presented in this research will be significant in providing New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima with new resources and strategy to attract unchurched and people of color to their ministry. Because of the research from this project, both the leaders and members of New Creation will be better prepared to foster the congregation to be a welcoming place and mission center for ministry in Lima and in the world.

The researcher is convinced and has faith that the resources and strategy in the project will equip the members of New Creation for a viable ministry in Lima and Allen County, Ohio.

Assumptions and Limitation in the Research Project

There are four main assumptions that the researcher is considering as he prepares to undertake this project.

The first assumption is that the members of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima want to take the steps necessary to be a welcoming place for all as the Scriptures have called them to be. It is especially important that the unchurched, seekers, and people of color will be welcomed in this community of faith.

Second, the researcher assumes that New Creation Lutheran Church believes that ministry takes place on two levels, both in the congregation and in the wider community of Lima, Ohio.
The third assumption is that in order for ministry to be implemented, every member of New Creation Lutheran Church must do his or her part. Ministry is not only the work of the pastor.

Next, the researcher also assumes that the members and lay leaders of New Creation Lutheran Church understand that there is a need for the congregation to be a welcoming place for all. The mission statement of the congregation is inviting them to welcome all of God’s people regardless of their race, gender, or social, or economic status in life. The entire congregation must live out this mission statement.

This project might be limited if funding provided by members is withheld in order to prevent the unchurched and persons of color into the ministry of New Creation Lutheran Church. Also, the project may be limited if some of the faithful contributors feel uncomfortable and transfer their membership to other ELCA congregations. These limitations are ones that the researcher will be mindful of as the project is making progress.

Definition of Terms

**Congregational Mission Profile (CMP)** This is a document that tells the history and trends of New Creation Lutheran Church since its inception.

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)** The national church denomination in which New Creation Lutheran Church holds its membership.

**Unchurched** Those people who do not attend Christian church services or affiliate with a particular church organization.

**People of color** those persons who are classified as non-European or non-white.
Organization of the Study

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to the Project

The chapter will give the introduction of the research project and clearly state and define the problems, explain the history, cultural, and theological context of the congregation. Based on that background information, the researcher will provide reasons for researching this problem and give both qualitative and quantitative descriptions.

Methodology in the research project will accurately be presented along with significance relating to the broader church. Assumptions and limitations for the research will also be clearly presented. Appropriate terms used in the research process will be clearly defined as they are presented all through the paper.

CHAPTER TWO: Biblical and Theological Foundations

The researcher will use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral procedure. This process begins with using the Scriptures to provide biblical and theological findings showing how the Holy Spirit can empower the people of God to do mighty thing in the name of God. Next, the researcher will use reason, to show how the faith community was able to overcome various racial and cultural tensions that once threatened the future of the
church. Third, the researcher will use tradition, to explore Luther’s findings on the subject of inclusiveness in the Book of Concord, and what it felt like during the Reformation period as he struggled to help the Roman Catholic Church become a more open and inclusive church to the people of Germany and all of Europe. Fourth, the researcher will also use experience to evaluate what the experiences of the church have been in the past to help the researcher materialize what seems to work better in creating visionary leadership for New Creation Lutheran Church and other struggling small congregations to grow in the twenty-first century.

**Chapter Three: Review of Literature and Other Sources**

The researcher will identify and utilize other authors or literature that have already looked into outreach to the unchurched, people of color, and inclusiveness, and then draw conclusions based on the findings. Also, the researcher will evaluate those resources that are relevant to the research project, documenting and clearly identifying sources.

**Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Procedures**

This chapter will explain the survey method used to gather the information including the qualitative method that will be used to interview people from local congregations both in Lima and elsewhere in Allen County. Interviews will be completed with selected members from different congregations in Lima and Allen County to discover the reasons they were attracted to worship in those congregations. The researcher will also observe the worship style of some of the growing churches to see what ministry strategies are being used to help them grow.
Chapter Five: Analysis of Data

This chapter will present results and an analysis of data after gathering all the information through research. The researcher will carefully analyze, organize, and codify the findings for clarity to determine if the data addresses the research project issues and purpose.

Chapter Six: Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

As the researcher does not yet know what the findings of the project are at this point, the results of Chapter Six will emerge from the previous chapters. The summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented. Based on the findings, the researcher will arrive at conclusions and present appropriate recommendations to inform New Creation Lutheran Church in its efforts to offer vital ministry to the Lima, Ohio community. It is the researcher’s hope that other struggling congregations in other mainline denominations will benefit from the insights obtained in this project.
CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

The scope of this project is to focus on what it means to conduct and implement effective visionary leadership within the Christian church in the twenty-first century. The motivation for this project came about as many congregations tend to be closing their doors and as many tend to struggle in terms of how to reach out to the communities they have been called to serve. It is the researcher’s hope that the findings and recommendations of this project will help small congregations like New Creation Lutheran Church to find a better way to conduct outreach and create robust, Spirit-filled ministry plans that will attract people to their ministry in Lima, Ohio.

In this chapter, the researcher will use the biblical and theological method to apply the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The quadrilateral is divided into four parts: Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. The researcher will also conclude this chapter with his personal theological reflections showing why he believes that there is still hope and great opportunity for ministry at New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for mission and outreach in the twenty-first century.
Scripture

Martin Luther’s Large Catechism speaks of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church or the believers. The Third Article of the Apostles Creed says, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”

According to Luther’s interpretation of the office of the Holy Spirit, one of the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify the believers preparing them for the work of the Lord. Luther also argued that no one can know anything of Christ or believe in him or accept him as Lord unless these were first offered to them and bestowed on their hearts through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit. The researcher believes that the proclamation of the gospel comes through those who are called first by God and secondly ordained by the authority of the church. This researcher also agrees that the gospel can be proclaimed by the action and good deeds of those whose hearts have been touched by the love of Jesus Christ, who are also willing to share Christ’s love with those around them.

Luther’s Large Catechism makes biblical reference to Acts 19:39, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and Matthew 16:18 to clarify his translation referring to the church as “an institution empowered by the Holy Spirit” to witness for Jesus Christ. Based on that Lutheran biblical belief, the researcher wishes to use Acts 1:6-14 to support that biblical and theological point for this project:

So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them, “it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit

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14 Ibid., 415.
comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brother.  

The researcher chose this text because it is widely used in the Lutheran tradition to support the doctrine of the ascension event of our Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the believers and the members of the body of Jesus Christ. The text also prepares the church of our Lord Jesus Christ for the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to prepare them for mission and outreach to the lost. Because of the significance of this passage in the Lutheran and other mainline Christian faith, it occurs in all the seasons of the church year for the traditional Ascension Day celebration.

After a brief prologue in Acts 1:1-5, the author turns his attention to the story of Jesus’ ascension. Acts 1 presents a unique transition in the narrative story of Christ. Also, in Acts 1:1, Luke informed his audience that he is taking up where he left off with his gospel. The gospel of Luke ended with the witness to the resurrected Christ, to bring to an end the forty day appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, concluding his ministry on earth. Ministry responsibilities were now to be transferred to the disciples.}

15 Acts 1:6-14 [NIV].
the narrative, the resurrected Jesus tells his disciples to “wait in Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶ Longman and Garland point out that, “this text along with Acts 2:1-14 presents an introduction to the ministry of the Church that commences with Luke’s thesis paragraph.”¹⁷

In the Lutheran tradition, Acts 1:1-6 serves as the theme in Acts. It is also worth noting that Acts 1:8 sets the stage for everything that follows. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”¹⁸ The researcher believes that this is an appropriate passage for New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio to explore for new insights for outreach opportunities and to witness in all of Lima in the name of Christ. This passage opens the door for the congregational leaders to discern and examine the mission in the life of the church.

Therefore, the method of biblical study used in this section will be that of narrative criticism as described by Powell in his book, What is Narrative Criticism?¹⁹ The researcher will pay special attention to the following categories:

1. Events in the text

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¹⁸ Acts 1:8 [NIV].

Macgregor writes, “Christian doctrine begins with an event from which general conclusions are drawn and on which men in faith are willing to base their lives. So the doctrine of the ascension is an illustration of that principle.” Therefore the major event in the text is “Jesus’ ascension, his disappearance from his followers.” The narrative of Jesus’ ascension told by Luke in Acts 1 gives the reader a glimpse of how the early church thought and felt about Jesus. Macgregor asserts that, “The first Christians believed that Jesus is not buried in the ground, nor stored in an archive with any limit upon him or upon his manifested power.” Christ was raised from the dead and before ascending, he transferred ministry responsibilities to the disciples and the church to win souls in his name.

In the early church thought process, there were three cardinal events after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. One was the resurrection through which Jesus is victorious over death. Through his victory, all Christian believers now have victory over death. The second event was his ascension to heaven. The ascension event was a key transitional point in the early Christian circle. Jesus’ own ministry was completed and the leadership

\[\text{References}\]


21 Ibid., 25.

22 Ibid., 25.
responsibility was turned over to the apostles. The third event was the fulfillment of the
coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church on the day of Pentecost. The coming of the
Holy Spirit upon the early church was to empower them for their evangelistic mission to
the lost beginning in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in all around the world.

Macgregor further asserts that “the event of the Ascension of Jesus Christ is the
middle ground that connects the Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.”
Longman called the text, “The Constitutive events of the Christian Mission.” Longman
further suggests that the parallels in both Luke and Acts are evident in the opening
chapters of the two. For example, after the prologue in Luke 1:1-4, verses 5 through 2:52
serve as a preparation for 3:1-4:13. Similar style in writing is used in Acts to present his
narrative of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church in the post-ascension era. In Acts
1:1-5 Luke gave a preface to his reader. Then in Acts 1:6-26, he writes to prepare the
reader for Acts 2:1-41 as a way of introduction to the ministry of the church in the world.
Longman agreed further that Acts 1:6-8 is “Christ’s mandate both to the apostles and the
church to witness to the world in his name.”

Macgregor points out that the disciples’ question regarding God’s Kingdom
pertaining to Israel, presents a classic misunderstanding on their part regarding the
meaning of the promise Jesus made to them in 1:6b. “Lord, are you at this time going to
restore the Kingdom to Israel?” He told them, “It is not for you to know the times or
dates the Father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy

23 G.H.C. Megregor, 26.

   Vol. 10 717.

25 Ibid., 717.
Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Macgregor suggests at this point, “Jesus is shifting the emphasis of speculation about the future to a demonstration in the present.”

Longman also asserts that “the disciples’ questions to Jesus in (1:6) reflected their hope for a political theocracy in which they wanted to be leaders.” As the disciples’ hope was focused on a Jewish nationalistic mind set, Jesus had something else in mind. Therefore, his answer to their question meant that they needed to revise their thinking about the divine program of God to leave with God what he chooses to do. With that being said, one can conclude that the disciples needed to take up the ministry from where Jesus left it and witness to the entire world.

One other event in the text is shown when Jesus is lifted up and hidden from their sight. “After he had said this, he was taken up from their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight.” Longman points out that “the cloud symbolizes the Shekinah, which is the visible transformation of the divine presence and glory.” One can also make the assumption that it was similar cloud that “hovered above the tabernacle in the wilderness as a visible token of the glory of God that dwelt within the tabernacle.” Saint Mark reminds his readers that it was a cloud that enveloped Jesus and three of his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration to reveal God’s visible sign both of his presence and

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26 Acts 1:7-8 [NIV].
27 G.H.C. McGregor, 28.
29 Acts 1:9 [NIV].
30 T. Longman III and David E. Garland, 721.
31 Exodus 40:34 [NIV].
approval of Jesus as his Son in Mark 9:7. So in Acts, Luke presents Jesus as the ascended Lord, who is enveloped as the Shekinah cloud, provided as the sign of the visible manifestation of God’s presence, and his glory as well as his approval of the process in which the event was taking place.

As the disciples were intently watching their beloved Jesus as he disappeared in the cloud, suddenly two men or angels showed up and begin to comfort them saying that Jesus will return to them just as they have seen him leave in the sky. This is the only place in Acts 1:6-14 where we are told, that angels appeared in human form and spoke in the voice of human beings in order for the disciples to understand. Luke does not tell his reader what happened to the two men or where they went; rather he continues his narrative with his focus on the disciples.

**The Return of the Apostles to the Upper Room**

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath Day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went up to the room where they were staying.”\(^32\) The return of the disciples from the Mount of Olives was significant because it proved their loyalty to Christ and obedience to his mandate to them. They were told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. But while they were waiting for the Holy Spirit, they dedicated themselves to prayer meetings. “They all joined together constantly in prayer.”\(^33\)

The chronological narrative presented in the text reminds the reader of the style and technique Luke uses to tell the story of Jesus. Note that before their regular prayer

\(^32\) Acts 1:12-13 [NIV].

\(^33\) Acts 1:14 [NIV].
meetings, Luke revealed in detail the names of those who were present as his way to complete this part of the narrative. This indicates that for the local congregation such as New Creation to be successful in outreach and mission, prayer has to be a part of the daily activities of the leaders. Why? Because prayer connects believers with God enabling them to discern what God expects of them. Luke is being very careful and specific in his presentation. There are other discussions relating to this topic which lead to a much deeper theological matters relating to the doctrine of the ascension of Jesus Christ and witness of the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ.

There are several key theological insights this passage presents for this researcher in verses 12-14. The first one is that this seems to be the first apostolic prayer fellowship. The narrative revealed that the transition from the ascension to the upper room is abrupt. It also makes it clear for the reader that the ascension took place on the Mount of Olives in the vicinity of Bethany. The disciples demonstrated the spirit of obedience to the command of Jesus not to leave Jerusalem before the coming of the Holy Spirit. One of the key characteristics of the body of Christ is to demonstrate the spirit of obedience and humility to the will of the one they serve and call Lord. Jesus himself demonstrated that spirit of humility to his Father, so he encourages the body of Christ to do the same.

The other key theological insights revealed in this text is that the disciples showed the spirit of oneness or unity. In their encounter with the resurrected Christ, they worked together as one body. Unity or oneness with common understanding can help the local congregation to move forward and accomplish a lot in carrying out the mission of Christ. When they returned to Jerusalem, they were together in the upper room.
The final theological insight this researcher discovered is the importance of prayer. The entire group was united and devoted to prayer as they waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The statement that “they all joined together (1:14) underlines their unity in this important period when there was a serious leadership crisis and competition among them. Adeyemo points out that the very word Luke uses their special relationships, for the same word which the KJV translates as “with one accord” is used ten times in Acts, six times to relate to the fellowship of the Christian community. It only other use in the New Testament is in Romans 15:16.  

The theological insights shown here indicates that the success in the mission of the local and universal church depends on the willingness on the part of the body of Christ to shown such spirit of obedience, unity or oneness, engaging in constant prayer as well as believing in the mystery and meaning of the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

During the days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, he built the confidence of his disciples. He demonstrated and spoke truth about himself. And then he left them with clear and defined task and the promise of the power to carry out that task. One of the key phrases Jesus used to the disciples in Acts one is, “You will be my witnesses.” This is very important for the local congregation. The leadership of the local church is to understand that everyone is a witness for Jesus in the local community. This is to be the central focus and cornerstones for the congregational mission in the twenty-first century for a successful evangelism and growth.

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34 Tukombo Adeyemo, The African Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1327.
Characters in the Text

The central character in Acts 1:6-14 is Jesus Christ. Jesus is setting a universal visionary mandate for mission that will go far beyond the limit of the Jewish community to include the Gentiles. This text sets the stage to reveal Jesus’ global power that will be inclusive, a process that would invite and welcome the Gentile community. The researcher believes that Jesus’ intention to include those outside the Jewish community would depend on the willingness of the disciples to do what he expected of them. This is the expectation of Christ to the church today. When the leadership of the local congregation understands this, they will be able to lead the flocks to be effective in their mission in the name of Christ. Regardless of the difficulties and challenges the church faces in the twenty-first century, the good news is that the church has already been empowered with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never leave as long as believers are willing to follow the call and mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ to witness and to make disciples.

The other idea worth noting in this text is that it shows a unique turning point in Luke’s effort to show Jesus’ universal plan. This plan clearly reveals Jesus’ visionary skill to include all in the Kingdom of God. This is a radical leadership method that was designed to change the world forever. In Luke’s narrative in Acts 1:6-14, the resurrected Jesus is now designating the ministry’s leadership responsibilities on earth to the disciples and the church.

Longman suggests that “as Jesus is seen as the ascended one, therefore Christian mission must be focused and based on the ascended and living God.”\textsuperscript{35} This researcher

\textsuperscript{35}T. Longman III and D.E Garland, 720.
believes that Luke’s goal is to bring the disciples to the forefront and point the spotlight on them for the global mission of the church. To do so, Jesus must be ascended to his glory which is heaven. Oscar Cullman also points out that, “Mission is an essential element in the eschatological divine plan of salvation. Thus the missionary work of the church is the eschatological foretaste of the Kingdom of God and the biblical hope of the end constitutes the keenest incentive to action.”

Carl R. Hollaway writes, “This is a narrative that traces the church’s development north and westward, using the risen Lord’s words, his story will move from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth.”

The researcher believes that if New Creation Lutheran Church is to be successful in mission and witness to the lost souls of Lima and its surrounding areas, the leadership must be willing to see this task both as a local and global adventure. Along with that, the leadership will need to invite all members of the congregation to come together in prayer, seeking spiritual discernment for God’s purpose for their ministry.

**The Disciples**

There is no doubt that Jesus is concerned not only about the disciples, but also about the future of the church. However, Jesus is silent at the beginning of the text until the disciples asked him the question about the time he would “restore the kingdom to Israel?” This gave Jesus the opportunity to give his beloved disciples his last advice before he is taken away from them. Luke is accurate in telling who the members of the

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38 Acts 1:6b [NIV].
disciples are in the text. These are the men Jesus had called earlier in his ministry in Luke 5:1-6:16. These men were called to follow Jesus and leave behind their old lifestyles to give their total loyalty to Jesus and his ministry.

In all four gospels, these men are called disciples. It is worth noting that before the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, these men were referred to as the “disciples” and afterward, they were called other names in different places in the New Testament. For example, they were called “the Way,”39 “The body of Christ,”40 and “The believers.”41 The listing of disciples in Luke 6:14-16 is in line with Matthew 10:2-4 and Mark 3:16-19 with two exceptions. First, Luke identifies the tenth in his listing as “Simon the Zealot.”42

Second, in Acts 1:6-14, Luke includes the women and mentioned Mary the mother of Jesus by name. This researcher believes that the intention of mentioning the women by name is his way of emphasizing the seriousness of the idea of inclusiveness in the mission of Christ when it comes to making disciples in Jesus’ name around the world. This new task, after the resurrection, indicates that women were now being called to leadership roles in the church in a new way. Since names meant something in that culture, the fact of mentioning a woman by name indicates that women were no longer to remain behind the scenes and now needed to take their place within the leadership circle. The new mandate in the New Testament to witness and make disciples in the name of Christ around the world now included the active participation of women.

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39 Acts 9:2 [NIV].
40 1 Corinthians 12:27 [NIV].
41 Acts 5:14 [NIV].
42 Acts 1:13b [NIV].
This is significant because the commissioning of the disciples by Jesus is also his way of commissioning his church. They will be the ones responsible for evangelizing the world. The Holy Spirit will help, strengthen and guide them in the process. The church must move forward in faith while at the same time depending on God.

**Setting of the Text**

In examining the ascension narrative in Acts 1:6-9, it is clear that the setting of the story is at the Mount of Olives. However, by the time the story ends, the disciples will travel back to Jerusalem where they have frequently met with the Lord prior to his crucifixion to await the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them as Jesus had promised them. “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Mount called Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.”

James Resseguie defined setting as, “The background where the narrative action takes place.” Therefore, the researcher believes that the setting of this narrative happened both at Jerusalem and at the Mount of Olives.

**Overall Interpretation of the Text**

The disciples met with Jesus at the Mount of Olives. He is about to depart from them for heaven. They are still waiting to hear Jesus say something concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but Jesus is not saying anything regarding this critical matter. Bringing this matter to his attention, they asked Jesus if it was time for

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43 Acts 1:12 [NIV].

him to restore the kingdom to Israel. “It is not for you to know the times or dates that the Father has set by his own authority.” 45 Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo writes on the matter:

In Acts, Luke tells about the life of the disciples when their master would no longer be with them. Luke sets the parameters in Acts by establishing a vital limit between the departure of Jesus and the advent of the promised Holy Spirit upon them with power….This no doubt is a link of the gospel of Luke’s narrative as well as the narrative about the church. 46

As it was the tradition in the Jewish culture, when the patriarch of the family was about to die or leave for a long trip, the family members would gather around the individual for words of advice regarding the best way to carry on the family responsibility. In this text, Luke is revealing similar Jewish cultural significance. Jesus, having completed his mission on earth and now ready to return to the Father in heaven, is poised to give the disciples and the church his last words. It will be a mandate they were not prepared to hear at the moment.

There are three overall interpretation insights the reader needs to take from this text. First, wait for God’s time. All professing Christians need to learn to wait for the promised Holy Spirit as the disciples did in Acts 1:4. People by nature are impatient. For example, people in modern America tend to be more impatient then people in other cultures around the world. The average American tends to be more reluctant to wait for what they want then those in Asia or Africa. There are certain things worth waiting for in life.

In this text, the church is given a wonderful lesson by our Lord. The church is to wait on the Lord for clear direction and guidance. Jesus told his disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit brings God’s power to what the church

45 Acts 1:7 [NIV].

engages in. The Holy Spirit is also the giver of wisdom and understanding regarding the plan of God. Without the Holy Spirit and his power, the strength of the disciples will soon fade. As is written in the prophet Isaiah, "They who wait upon the Lord, will renew their strength, they will mount up with wings as an eagle, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint." 47

The second overall insight is to discern what God’s time means. Jesus said to the disciples, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set in his own authority.” 48 The Greek words used for the two different types of time are chronos and kairos. Chronos is a span of time, or a measurable time, while kairos is that special, God appointed time. It is not known how much chronos time people have and it is never known when God will invade chronos time in a special way with his holy presence. So Jesus said to the disciples and to the church, your main task is to witness to the kairos (the life, death, resurrection, and ascension), which defines all times and eternity. That should be the work of both the local church such as New Creation Lutheran Church and the universal church.

The final overall interpretation in the text is that the church ought to ready itself for the second coming of Jesus Christ. As soon as Jesus ascended, two angels stood beside the apostles and asked, “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” 49

47 Isaiah 40:31 [NIV].
48 Acts 1:7b [NIV].
49 Acts 1:7 [NIV].
While some may argue that Jesus’ disciples often misunderstood some of the post-resurrection account, the disciples seem to grasp one of the main points in this text with the help of Jesus and the angels. The encouragement from the angels to the disciples in this text is similar to the mandate Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. It is a mandate to the church. Brown put it this way, “All Christians are called to respond to their salvation in Jesus through a lifetime of service to extend God’s Kingdom.”

The mission of the church is to witness and win souls for Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. This takes enormous work and involves great risk. This is a work the church cannot fulfill without the help of the Holy Spirit. The members of the Christian church will suffer and die in sacrificing for the gospel. It is all worthwhile because of what Christ did on the cross. This is where the hope and energy of the members of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima and Christ’s universal church in the world lies. If New Creation Lutheran Church is to be successful in witnessing for Christ in Lima, Ohio, this text suggests that the members learn to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and venture beyond the safe, familiar confines of its building to further the Kingdom of God which Jesus Christ has ushered here on earth.

**Tradition**

Recently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has spent much time, energy, and resources to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to God’s people around the globe. The tradition of the ELCA is grounded on biblical teachings, one of which is read in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-

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and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”⁵¹ Biblical references such as this in the Lutheran Christians’ evangelical tradition is what has enabled the ELCA to be the evangelical church body here in North America reaching lost souls both here and around the globe.

Because of the bold position the leadership holds regarding the place of these Scriptures in the practice of the ELCA specific to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the ELCA has put forth an effort to take that message of salvation through Jesus Christ all the way around the world. The ELCA has been intentional about reaching out with the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ to people of all ethnic backgrounds, inviting them into membership in the ELCA. The ELCA has also put forth a great effort in finding men and women who feel called to the ordained ministry to Word and Sacrament in the ELCA. Because of such visionary leadership and the desire for inclusiveness in the ELCA, the makeup of the ELCA is as diverse as it can be, to reflect the body of Christ in the twenty-first century as presented in Acts 1:6-14.

In the tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Christians believe that some of the important mandates of Christ as given in Acts 1:6-14 can be implemented by the church through the power and work of the Holy Spirit in a tangible way through the sacrament of baptism, and the people’s participation in holy communion, as well as through the ceremony of holy marriage. These traditional practices are highlighted in Luther’s Small Catechism when he wrote these words:

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word….Jesus Christ said to the disciples in the last chapter

⁵¹ Ephesians 2:8 [NIV].
of Matthew, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matt. 28:1952

Based on Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:19-29, there has always been a place in the tradition of the Lutheran Church to address the need of global evangelism in the work of the church. That mandate to witness in Christ’s name may have taken a little longer for the church to make progress. However, the ELCA sees the need to uphold these mandates and put them into practice. Pertaining to the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism, Tarpet goes on to back Luther’s view using portion of Paul’s letter to Titus:

With the Word of God, over the water, it is a baptism, that is. A life giving water, rich in grace, and the washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom God poured out on us graciously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trust worthy saying.” 53

In this part of the Lutheran tradition, Luther suggests that the proclamation of the Word of God is necessary in the sacrament of baptism. It is also revealed here that the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the salvation of humanity. It is the Holy Spirit that helps open the human mind to understanding the proclaimed Word and to help the individual to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The other belief that Lutheran Christians celebrate in their tradition is the place of good works in their Christian practice. Lutherans believe that good work is not done in order to win favor from God, but because of what God has already done on the cross for humanity through Jesus Christ. Good work is the response to God’s graciousness toward humanity. In the Book of Concord, which is the Lutheran Confession of faith, Luther is quoted as saying, “Good works should be done because God has commanded them, and

52 Theodore Tarpet, Luther’s Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia. 1991), 21-23.
53 Titus 3:5-8 [NIV].
in order to exercise our faith, to give testimony, and to render thanks the Holy Spirit sanctifies hearts and suppresses the devil.”

The author of the book of James reminds his audience with these words, “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by good deeds, is dead.” Good works are an intricate part of the Lutheran tradition because Lutherans believe that good work is a demonstration of faith toward those to whom we are called to take the gospel or the promise of Jesus Christ. That is why the Lutheran community has always been involved in those communities in the United States and around the world where the lives of men, women, and children have been affected by disasters, bringing hope, love, healing, and resources to those communities, thereby making Christ’s presence known.

The next tradition that separates the ELCA from many other denominations is that it is a confessional church. This practice is grounded in the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is and will remain firmly in place as the Word of God in and through which a loving God takes upon himself to come to the rescue of sinners to save them. The method of the proclamation may be revised, but the message of the gospel will not and cannot be compromised in the Lutheran tradition. Quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, R.A. Jensen writes:

The proclaimed word has its origin in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, because the proclaimed word is the incarnate Christ himself. As the incarnation is the outward shape of God being revealed to us through Christ, therefore the proclaimed Word present the outward form of this reality. Therefore, the preached Christ is both the

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55 James 2:17 [NIV].
Historical One we encounter when the Word is proclaimed in the midst of God’s people. In this process, Christ reveals himself within and through his congregation as the Word.56

Jensen suggests that when it comes to proclaiming the gospel in the Lutheran tradition, the preaching “brings Jesus Christ’s grace and gift in the human heart, mediates God’s indwelling in the believers, transforms humanity and gives birth to a new heart within us.”57

This is what the church is called and established by the Holy Spirit to be about: making the risen Christ known to those who are yet to know him as their Lord and Savior. This is the task that is given to the church to carry out. This is a visionary leadership responsibility grounded in the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples in Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:19-20 to empower the church to be successful in mission and outreach in the twenty-first century.

Visionary leadership in the twenty-first century will enable New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio to be open to the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit and to move forward in the future, making the congregation a mission center in the community. It will also empower every member of the congregation to know that they have been called to partake in this ministry as missionaries to this community for the purpose of witnessing the message of salvation to the lost by introducing the love of Christ to them. Such efforts will take many fronts in the ministry and also take some major sacrifices.

56 Richard A. Jensen, Envisioning the Word (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 44.

57 Richard A. Jensen, 45.
As many of the members get older and move into assisted living facilities, or die, or move away, New Creation congregation Lutheran Church members are coming to the realization of mission and outreach. They are also beginning to wrestle with this new reality. This is one of the reasons why this project is necessary and is being conducted to help turn things around.

**Experience**

Addressing the issue confronting the church today, Kent Hunter argues:

As the century passes, the Word of the Lord continued to grow. Lives were blessed and consciences comforted, but problems also increased. The struggle for church control often turned much of the church’s energy away from mission and outreach … dedication to tradition, ecclesiastical politics, and authoritarian leadership brought fossilization lethargy to the church in many places, intended to be salt, the church took on much of the flavor of the world.58

The church of Jesus Christ has come a long way. Between 500 to 1500 A.D., the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was preached to many non-Christian people. This was happening because the leaders were focused on the calling of the church. Such focus was to win souls for Christ and to share the good news of salvation to the lost in the middle ages. However, that reality did not last too long. The leadership of the church soon found out that problems of ecclesiastical politics along with other problems begin to distract the leadership of the church from their purpose and mission to reach the unchurched. The problems that affected the church during the middle ages also affect the churches in America in many ways today.

If the Christian church in America is to survive in reaching out to the unchurched in the twenty-first century, Kennon Calaham suggests that, “It must view itself as a

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Mission Outpost.” The church must come to grips with the truth that the mission field is not only abroad in foreign land, but that the mission field is also at the church’s door steps in the community where they are called to serve in America.

If one visits New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio, and looks at the community they serve, it is a visible community with booming businesses along with homes in the two miles radius in all directions. While many of the homes are well built and families seemed to be doing well, there still is a spiritual darkness. There is a spiritual thirst and hunger that cannot be underestimated nor denied, but can be looked at as a great opportunity for mission and outreach. That is why visionary leadership for evangelism and outreach as mandated in Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:19-20 in the twenty-first century is necessary; it will enable the leaders at New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima to face the challenges in the neighborhood as a great opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in those communities.

The researcher is an African, trained in an ELCA seminary, ordained in the ELCA as a minister in Christ’s church, and has served small congregations in the ELCA for the last fifteen years. Most of these small congregations often have limited resources and decreasing memberships. Regardless of the fewer members and limited resources, these members have always dedicated their lives to the mission of Christ to see to it that the love of Christ is shared with the lost through the sharing of the gospel. Because of their unwavering support in giving of their talents, prayers and financial resources, the church has been able to carry out the mission of Christ in those communities despite the difficulties they face.

One such example was what the researcher experienced at both Bethlehem and Calvary Lutheran Churches in Gary, Indiana. The leadership team of those congregations along with their solo pastor realized that the two congregations needed to come together for the sake of the gospel of Christ to become one vibrant congregation in the neighborhood and the Gary community. They conducted a year and a half of self-study led by the pastor, the leadership teams of both congregations, the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the ELCA and the Division for Outreach unit of the ELCA. Both Bethlehem and Calvary Lutheran Churches prayerfully concluded that it was time for them to merge and become a new congregation in Gary, Indiana.

From that bold decision, the new congregation not only took on a new identity, but it also was able to put a bold five-year plan together for outreach to the communities. That is an example of what a visionary leadership can accomplish if the people are willing to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit.

This researcher believes that the leadership of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio can do even greater ministry than what took place at Bethlehem and Calvary Lutheran Churches in Gary, Indiana. If the leadership takes a closer look at the community of Lima and considers the needs and challenges as mission opportunities and not as stumbling blocks to their ministry, the congregation can become a vibrant congregation for outreach in the twenty first-century.

The call of Jesus to his disciples to reach out and venture in unfamiliar places is not to be taken lightly. When Jesus calls a person, it is a call to move that person from a familiar and a comfortable territory into an endeavor they cannot imagine. Some will fight that call. For example, in the gospel of John, the author reminds his audience about
how Nathaniel resisted his call and made a hasty shocking remark relating not only to Jesus but also about Nazareth, the home of Jesus. “Nazareth! Can anything good come out of there?”

The charge upon the church is all about mission and outreach. Therefore, the researcher believes that mission opportunities are available to the church on three levels: the local level, the national level, and the global level. The researcher also believes further that as the Christian church faces these new challenges in the twenty-first century, the members and leaders also need to consider these challenges as great opportunities through which God is opening doors for the local mission. This optimistic thinking may help the church to be focused rather than losing sight of what they are to be doing.

While it is not the intention of the researcher to go into past history of the ELCA to see what some of their experiences have been, it is worth noting that there is part of the past experiences in the Lutheran tradition that Lutherans are not too proud of as a Christian organization. For example, during the early days of the ELCA, lots of mistakes were made. For example, when it comes to the experiences of minorities such as African American Lutherans during the early days in the ELCA, Dr. Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo point out for their audience:

The African American Lutheran thoughts, have been interpreted in the cultural experience of the African American struggle for justice in a context dominated by white. It is the African side of the African American Christians faith which has enabled the African American Lutheran to see beyond some white theologian’s contradictions of the gospel to discover God’s liberation of grace through faith. Meanwhile, it is also the Lutheran elements that help the African American Christians to engage their African roots to become useful in their affirmations of

60 John 1:48 [NIV].
life and struggle to become more than a mere imitation of Lutheran Theology from Europe.\textsuperscript{61}

As the statement by the authors may sound hard in the ears of some of their Caucasian partners in the kingdom work, this hard truth also confirms that their experiences from both cultural backgrounds have also drawn them closer to God through Christ in their understanding of who Christ is by what he has done on the cross for all who believe.

As one examines the Lutheran denomination based on his or her experiences relating to the general experience of the ELCA, Pero points out that, “It is no understatement to say that the African and African American experience has been characterized at some point by some conditions of oppressive injustice.”\textsuperscript{62} Therefore some of those injustices actually have been used by God for the good of the church, only if Lutherans learn from those bitter experiences and not to repeat them as though spiritually blind.

The researcher believes that it is worth highlighting that the ELCA has come a long way in its effort to be open and transparent in its efforts to implement the great commission given to the church in Matthew 28:19-20 and as in Acts 1:6-14. The ELCA has had a great experience in carrying out these biblical mandates. For example, the ELCA has been a long standing member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), whose mission is to help establish Lutheran ministry around the world through hospitals, colleges and universities why at the same time planting Lutheran churches in those countries.

\textsuperscript{61} Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, \textit{Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage} (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), 163.

\textsuperscript{62} Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, 163.
This has been a success story for the ELCA. But as time passes, the universal church tends to face the new challenges of the twenty-first century. The question of how to deal with those daunting challenges continues to be unanswered. As a result, many of those institutions which were established through the ELCA in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continues to wrestle with ways to be effective in witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ in an ever changing pluralistic cultures.

These local, national and global challenges that face the church today, have been the researcher’s motivating reasons for this project.

**Reason**

In their book, *The Evangelizing Church*, Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder the critical reasons while the Evangelical Lutheran Church must be serious about evangelism and witness in the twenty-first century. They argued that the, “Evangelical Lutheran Church needs to start looking at the issue of Evangelism through a Missional lens.”

This means that the church needs to know what it is about and what it needs to be doing. They also assert that, “Lutheran Christians need to go back to evangelical roots to see where they have missed the point.”

The theology of evangelism or witness is one of Christ’s mandates to the church. It is really about building relationships not only with those who are in the church as we have come to think, but it is also about reaching out and building relationships with the lost and the unchurched who have been left out. This is a critical reason why a visionary

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64 Ibid., 1.
leadership is needed. When it comes to evangelizing, Bliese and Gelder argue that “Lutherans have an incredibly theological heritage upon which to draw.”\textsuperscript{65} One of those deep theological processes of knowledge from which one can draw in these challenging days is the belief Lutherans hold that people are saved by grace through faith. This has been a core theological foundation upon which the Lutheran Church has stood over these years; its meaning is true and biblical, and the leadership needs to take and share everywhere they go.

The reason for this project is to find a way to help New Creation Lutheran Church to redefine itself in order to take its rightful place in the mission field in Lima, Ohio. It is the researcher’s intent to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima to develop visionary leadership strategies for outreach and mission that will help the congregation be visible and attractive to the unchurched to provide effective ministry in the twenty-first century.

The argument has been made by Bliese and Gelder that, “the connection of the presence of Christ in the Christian Community is not sufficiently captured in the phrase Word and Sacrament as clearly stated in Article III in the Augsburg Confession.”\textsuperscript{66} Lutherans have always had a strong connection to the community they serve. But over the years of Christian witnesses, particularly in the United States of America, that strong connection to the community has faded, resulting in the closure of many local congregations. This is simply because Lutherans no longer understand many of the communities in which we once were strong.

\textsuperscript{65} Bliese and VanGelder 1.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 10.
To put it plainly, it looks like the church has lost its way in many local communities in America. That is one of the reasons the researcher has taken on this project to help both the ELCA and the local congregation figure out what has gone wrong in the mission field and how to correct it. It is quite clear that the church seems to be disconnected from the community. Once a local congregation such as New Creation Lutheran Church figures out where it is in terms of mission and outreach, it will know what its ministry priority ought to be.

**Personal Theological Reflection**

There are many people in the researcher’s life who have helped nurture his theological understanding when it comes to congregational and visionary leadership. One of those mentors was the late Bishop Roland J. Payne, Bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Liberia, West Africa. His style and visionary leadership in the Lutheran Church in Liberia during the first significant transition period from the 1960s to the late 1980s proves that visionary leadership can help and enable both secular and religious organizations to accomplish a significant goal. Observing Bishop Payne during his tenure as bishop and how he successfully led the Lutheran Church of Liberia in building schools and hospitals to serve the people of that land left a remarkable impression on this researcher.

Rouse and Van Gelder have asked a breathtaking question: “Does the Church have a future?” For this researcher, this question is one of life and death when it comes to the future of the church he dearly loves. The question has motivated the researcher to take a closer look at the place of the church and its mission in the world in the twenty-

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first century. The question about the future of Christ’s church in the United States is one that has roamed the mind of the researcher since his seminary days. To find answers to that question, the researcher has been on a quest seeking theological insights to find out what that future will look like in Christ’s church in the United States in the years ahead.

This researcher believes that despite the enormously difficult challenges the church may be facing now in the twenty-first century, God is up to something good for the future of his church. God still has a plan to bring salvation to humanity. That salvation comes through Jesus Christ. In Acts 1:6-14, Jesus Christ told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes upon them. They were also told that when they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were to go into the world and witness in the name of Jesus beginning in Jerusalem and going out to the end of the earth. Also in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commissioned the disciples in what is now called “The Great Commission” to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey what Jesus had taught the disciples.

The researcher’s personal theological reflection on Jesus’ mandate given in Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:19-20 comes as a direct commission from Jesus himself. It is a theologically conclusive, final, and bold statement to guide and keep the church focused on its future endeavors. Therefore, all that follows in Acts is shown to be the result of Jesus’ own intent and the fulfillment of his expressed word.

This commission therefore lays an obligation on all Christians and opens the doors for honest discernment on three levels regarding the person of Jesus in the mission of the church. The three levels include: a person, a power, and a program. First, the commission presents the theological significance of the person of Jesus in the
evangelization of the world, as the one upon whose authority the church should act. Therefore the church should present Jesus as the object of the witness of the church in the local community and the world. Secondly, the researcher believes that the power of the Holy Spirit is the *sina qua non*, the power behind the mission. Third, the researcher holds the view that a program that begins at Jerusalem moves to “all of Judea and Samaria extending to the ends of the earth.”

Another personal theological view for this researcher is that the Christian church, according to Acts 1, is a missionary church that is to always respond obediently to Jesus’ commission as the first disciples did. It is to always act on Jesus’ behalf as the first disciples did, in the extension of his ministry. It is also to focus its proclamation of the Kingdom of God in its witness to Jesus, and always remember Christ’s promise that the presence of the Holy Spirit will guide and empower them in their work. The researcher believes that if the ELCA is to be successful in providing visionary leadership, the current leaders need to guide the church to put in place and follow a program with guidelines for outreach that have been set by Jesus himself.

Therefore, this writer wishes to point out that in order for the church to be effective in this twenty-first century, the body of Christ must be willing and ready to interact with those who are outside of the traditional Christian community. This type of witnessing is now becoming an intricate part of the ministry at New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. The congregation is making Christ known through worship services with Holy Communion at places like Elm Croft Assisted Living home, Wyngate Senior Living, Villa Assisted Living, and Rose Lawn Senior Living in the Lima community.

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68 Acts 1:8 [NIV].
By engaging and interacting with the most vulnerable and less fortunate in those communities, New Creation Lutheran Church has not only built relationships with those who are in those communities, but is actually helping some from those communities to feel welcome in the worshiping community at New Creation Lutheran Church. It has become the faith community where the rich become poor and the poor become rich for the sake of Christ. The people of New Creation Lutheran Church believe that vision strategy is the preferred way to be effective in ministry. As Proverbs 29:18 reads, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

It is not God’s intention that his people perish. It is his will that all come to know the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, as God planned to bring his kingdom to humanity on earth through the participation of the church in the twenty-first century, this may entail that the members of the church learn to live a countercultural lifestyle in the world.

Perhaps, a qualitative growth in terms of personal Christian faith may be the best direction for the future of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. However, one will only know by developing a comprehensive visionary leadership strategy for the congregation in the twenty-first century. For this researcher and the people of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio, a visionary leadership strategy is the desired outcome of this project to help them become the effective congregation in the twenty-first century that they have the potential to be.

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69 Proverbs 29:18 [NIV].
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW AND OTHER SOURCES

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher wrote on the biblical and theological foundations by using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral which included Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience to make the case for this project. The problem statement in this research project was identified in Chapter One as follows: New Creation Lutheran Church lacks a missional strategic plan for growth and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in the service area. The need for a strategic plan for outreach to the unchurched and persons of color will take an intentional effort as a viable option to help New Creation Lutheran Church grow in twenty-first century America.

In Chapter Two, the researcher also presented a biblical and theological foundation to show how New Creation Lutheran Church can be more open to becoming an actionary congregation using the biblical mandate presented particularly in Acts 1:6-14 to reach out to the unchurched and persons of color in the service area. This new way of thinking and the willingness on the part of the members of New Creation to put forth such effort will necessitate the need for the congregation to do ministry in a new way than they have in the past.
In evaluating and surveying literature to support the problem New Creation Lutheran Church faces today, this researcher found literature pertaining to evangelism and outreach to the unchurched in a large quantity. It is the hope and goal of this researcher to evaluate and manage the materials and present them in a helpful manner as it relates to the project at hand. Therefore, this chapter will include the literature review and other sources that convey insights related to the problem that New Creation Lutheran Church faces in the twenty-first century.

This researcher will also present any caution that may be presented in the materials in review as well as any authentic solutions they present relating to outreach to the unchurched and the lost. Additionally, the researcher will focus on how other disciplines have contributed to addressing the problem of congregational mission and leadership strategy for growth. These insights will serve to help New Creation Lutheran Church to become inviting and inclusive to the unchurched and persons of color in the twenty-first century.

**What Does the Bible Have to Say Relative to the Problem?**

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians he writes these words, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all it parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ”For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greek, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

The writer of these verses in the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, illustrates the progress the church has made in terms of inclusiveness and outreach to the lost. However, the truth is that there is still much work to be done in order for the Christian church to

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70 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 [NIV].
fulfill the point the author of Corinthians is making relating to the past, present and the future of Christ’s church in the twenty-first century.

The theology of inclusiveness and evangelism to the unchurched has been a subject of focus and intense discussion in the history of the church from its very genesis. Some Christians have fought to keep some people out of certain denominations for reasons known only to leaders within those Christian organizations. This exclusiveness, among other factors, has contributed to the decline of the church in America today.

However, as the American culture continues to experience drastic change, it has become clearer that the American church will have to adjust and become more welcoming to those around them then they have in former times. To be effective and attractive in the twenty-first century, the leadership and members of the local congregation will need to take on a spirit of outward focus and be attentive to what is going on outside the walls of their own worship centers. They will need to get outside of their comfort zones to meet their neighbors and invite them to that which God is doing through the Christian church in the local community. They will need to be the inclusive church that Jesus Christ envisioned when he commanded his disciples to go witness to and evangelize the world. The Great Commission was a statement of inclusiveness. A lack of outward focus has been the problem of the church since the beginning of the Middle Ages.

It is worth noting that in order for the church to be inclusive and inviting to the unchurched, it first needs to find out whether the members and the leaders are ready for such a drastic move. Secondly, the members and leaders of the local congregation also need to understand that such a decision and or intention will need to be based on biblical
and theological principles rather than being another way to get people in to help pay the bills.

**God is Calling the Church to Become Inclusive**

To speak of outreach to the unchurched and all of God’s people is to speak of evangelism in a new context. In his article entitled “Imagining Future Parish Life,” Jewell calls this “*Theology of Inclusion.*”\(^{71}\) Speaking on this plaque of the church in the twenty-first century, Jewell writes these words:

> “Participants in the Emerging Church Models Project spoke of the “welcoming spirits” of the community. Their theology of parish appears to be defined not only by the community that is gathered but also by how the community is gathered, using the language of “inclusion” found in the church’s long tradition. “Welcoming the stranger” has become one of the great challenges in today’s church, certainly in the United States. Catholic parishes are called to welcome women and men of different generations and differing ideologies, the poor and outcast…They are challenged to welcome people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds with their differing spiritual needs.”\(^{72}\)

In this article, the author confirms the problem that the Christian denominations are facing in America. Churches are declining in membership at a greater rate. The cause for that seems to be clear: the denominations have focused inwardly for a long time while the world is changing and evolving around them. They have done well in maintaining and protecting their denominational tradition while the Spirit of God has been engaged in preparing and shaping the mission field for evangelism right outside the walls and doors of their buildings. The call for missional focus and congregational transformation for outreach is what New Creation Lutheran Church needs to engage as it tries to discern

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\(^{72}\) Ibid., 38.
authentic ministry focus in the twenty-first century. The Holy Spirit is moving over the church with power, inviting the leaders and members to be inviting and inclusive for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the mandate of the Great Commission, the Lord is calling, equipping, and sending the body of Christ out to make disciples of all people.

Citing one of their council members on the subject of outreach and inclusiveness, Jewell and Ramey write, “This new challenge is bridging the gap between the sections of the individual congregation, getting the section of parishioners content with celebrating the Eucharist to ‘transform’ and become truly active members living out Christ’s mission of loving one another in all that we do. Reaching out to the Hispanic community and truly welcoming them to be an integral part of the whole community.”

The parish mentioned in the article was already discerning the challenge before them. The members felt called and challenged by the Holy Spirit to reach out to their Hispanic neighbors to welcome them in the church community. This is what other denominations need to be doing. This is what the Holy Spirit is calling New Creation to do, that is, to design missional strategy that will enable them to be aware of their neighbors in the service area. This involves a willingness to see them as part of God’s children who not only bring unique gifts of diversity to the community, but also as those who need to hear and receive the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To reach out to the unchurched and persons of color also means to see them as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ rather than strangers. As the Holy Spirit moves with power over, within and among the members of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, the same Spirit is empowering the members to reach out to the unchurched and to become intentional about creating a spirit of inclusiveness and understanding what it

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73 Marti Jewell, 38.
means to invite people from other cultural, economic and social backgrounds into the body of Christ.

Jewell asserts further that, “Deciding who will be included or excluded has long been a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Radical inclusion surely marks Jesus’ life and ministry. The inaugural activity of the church at Pentecost, found in Acts, was the proclamation of the Good News to people of many nationalities. That the first council dealt with this very difficult question and it continues today.”

Kent Hunter illustrates the decline in North American churches today. He writes, “As the church moves into the twenty-first century, it faces the reality of change.” Change is something the church is not waiting to experience, it is already experiencing it. Change has affected the church and is still affecting the church. Alluding to this challenge, Hunter writes, “While well-meaning Christians might hold up a sign at a sports event that says, ‘John 3:16,’ most unchurched Americans don’t have a clue what that refers to. They don’t even recognize it as a Bible verse.” Hunter’s comment sets the stage for where the American church is and what it is faced with today.

Hunter argued that this lack of Christian faith and understanding by many Americans has presented a new challenge to the church in America. It is the type of challenge that this project is attempting to address. Hunter suggests that “while the greater population in America has become unchurched, the membership in many denominations is declining remarkably. Congregations’ memberships are getting smaller

74 Marti Jewell, 38.

75 Kent Hunter, Move Your Church to Action (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 11.

76 Ibid., 11.
forcing many to merge, consolidate and even close their doors. This trend has caused the United States to become a mission field.”

The problem statement for this project as stated in Chapter One is that New Creation Lutheran Church lacks the strategy to reach out and attract the unchurched and persons of color. Hunter’s observation of the problem the American church is facing today illustrates the point and highlights the problem on a greater level. As the mission platform experiences enormous changes in the U.S. how can the Christian church deal with this challenge? What does it mean for New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima? If New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima continues what they call, *business as usual*, will it be able to sustain itself and remain a viable congregation in Lima? This researcher believes that this is not a matter to push aside to consider later. It is a matter to confront right now.

If New Creation is to overcome the problem of the lack of authentic strategy for outreach to the unchurched in the service community, the leadership will need to first be informed of this drastic reality and educate the membership to see themselves as missionaries in this community. They will need to see the congregation as a mission center available to those who will be invited to come. They will need to see Lima and its surrounding areas as their mission field. They will also need to be intentional about moving the congregation into action for Jesus Christ by putting evangelism to the forefront of their activities.

In Matthew 28, the author writes these words: “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

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77 Kent Hunter, 12.
the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."\(^7\) The mission of the church is to be about making Christ known in the local communities. By doing so, the leaders ought to remember the promise of God with them. In order to become an inviting and welcoming church, the Holy Spirit is calling the American church to put Jesus’ commands into actions that will stir up still waters.

To be an actionary church means to take on a new identity for the sake of the gospel. Hunter points out that “the actionary church has it lifeline in the age of action, discipleship, and mission for the body of Christ.”\(^7\) He asserts:

The seeds planted in the disciples by the message of Jesus Christ are blossoming and bearing fruits. The Great Post-Reformation revivals and missionary movement of the past century spread the gospel worldwide. The Christian Church grew at an increasing rate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That growth rate slowed in this century as the world population … The Lord who has given us his great challenge in his Great Commission has given us the resources and opportunities to work. Our era is the era is still the era of the New Testament, still the age of the Reformation. Today is the day of the Great Commission. Ours is the age for completing the challenge our Lord gave us at his ascension. It is the time to make disciples of all peoples.\(^8\)

The desire to engage in making disciples for Christ means the church must be willing to take several actions. First, it needs to venture outside of its comfort zone. Secondly, it needs to engage those who are outside the Christian tradition—to those who do not look, talk and act like Christians. It means to reach out, invite and welcome those whose culture and tradition may not match traditional church. It means to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and be the first to reach out to them as Jesus did. The Gospel of

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\(^7\) Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV].

\(^7\) Kent Hunter, 26.

\(^8\) Ibid., 26.
Jesus Christ is calling the church to engage in the radical and bold action of reaching out to the unchurched and welcoming them to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The mandate of Christ in the Great Commission, stated above from Matthew 28, is a mandate of action on the part of the church in America in the twenty-first century as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**The Four Steps of the Actionary Church for Outreach to the Unchurched**

Hunter suggests that the church needs to take on several characteristics if it wishes to reach out to the lost and the unchurched in the twenty-first century. “First, it needs to have servant leaders to lead the church into action in the twenty-first century. These leaders will lead, teach and equip the saints. Second, it will need leaders to help the church refocus its practice. During the Reformation era, the goal was to defend the truth of the gospel. Hunter points out that in this new era known as the Age of Action, the church’s priority is to take that truth of Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament and share it with everyone.”

Third, the church today needs to hold the spirit of local and world evangelism as a priority to be held high by both members and leaders of the local congregation in all denominations. “Success comes not as a result of good administration, but as a result of God’s activity through his Word; yet self-analysis and accountability helps aim and support our human efforts at spreading the gospel” and bringing salvation to the lost and the unchurched.

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81 Kent Hunter, 19.

82 Ibid., 27.
The fourth step of the actionary church is that “mission and risk describe the commitment of the actionary church. The actionary church acts from the bottom up.”

Hunter suggests that “mission and risk describe the commitment of the actionary church. The age of action is a grassroots movement that progresses from the bottom up. This is a time when God is calling forth dreamers and visionaries who are enlightened by Word and Spirit, and characterized by boldness. This is the evangelistic passion of the church endured with tenacity that sustains its leaders beyond the challenges of mediocrity and business as usual.” This is the reason that this researcher has undertaken this project to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima address membership decline and transformation within the congregation to the unchurched in the surrounding service area.

This researcher agreed with Hunter that one of the key factors for a successful church is based on many key steps. However, “Moving the church into action begins with church analysis and diagnosis of the general health of the church.” To determine the general health of congregation readiness, Hunter provides six questions for diagnostic observation. They are as follows:

1. Mission or Maintenance?
2. Sensitive or Self-Centered?
3. Is it Risk Taking or Rut?
4. Is it Progressive or Petrified?

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83 Kent Hunter, 27.
84 Ibid., 32.
85 Ibid., 32.
5. Does it work on Planned or Pasteurized?

6. Is it Organized or Ossified?  

This researcher believes that many of the problems presented by Hunter tend to be part of the symptoms that New Creation Lutheran Church tends to experience in its ministry. Some of these have caused the decline in membership over these years. As a result, New Creation Lutheran Church has been in a maintenance mode. This researcher has undertaken this project to help New Creation Lutheran Church identify where its weaknesses exist, how to strengthen its weaknesses and how it can move from maintenance to mission to become a viable congregation that will help members and leaders reach out and attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry.

**Paul’s Understanding of the Missionary Church**

What did the apostle Paul think about the place of evangelism in the work of the early church? Plummer takes on this question for his reader. In his observation on the question, Plummer argues that “Paul’s letter demonstrates that he expected both overt gospel proclamation and a more passive witness of morality and Christ-likeness.”

Plummer asserts that “when one thinks of the biblical imperative to expand the Christian mission by relating the gospel to others, Matthew 28:18-20 probably comes to mind. Plummer believed that this statement was taken seriously by the church throughout

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86 Kent Hunter, 33.

the ages.”88 Plummer argues that, “significant evidence can be called from the apostle’s epistles to affirm that Paul did encourage his churches to evangelize.”89 Plummer emphasizes that the need for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched is to be considered a priority for the local and universal church as the apostle Paul demonstrated at the time of the early church. Plummer establishes the theological link between the apostolic mission and that of the Christian communities that accepted the gospel.

Plummer presents to his readers that the influence of the Great Commission is presented as improbable of God’s word. A review of Plummer’s writing suggests that “in fact, Paul did expect his churches to evangelize for Jesus Christ for the sake of the gospel.”90

Also in arguing that the apostle Paul encouraged the New Testament church to evangelize, Plummer examined Paul’s own writing when he commanded the Body of Christ to witness actively when he wrote to the Philippians, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. Secondly, Paul commanded his followers to witness or evangelize passively. He shared this view in his pastoral epistles. On the subject of congregational mission relative to evangelism, Plummer concludes that “not only that both of these elements are present, they also suggest that missional outreach is an intricate part of the church’s existence if it desires to be effective and an influential organization in the community and in the world.”91

**The Church as Communion to the World**

As the American church struggles with membership decline across all denominational lines, the threat is being taken seriously. For example, Russell Murray of the Catholic Church asserts that “the Church is a Communion”92 in the world. Citing

88 Ibid., 176.


90 Ibid., 829.

91 Ibid., 830.

Susan Wood’s Council’s Communio ecclesiology, he writes that “participation in the gifts of salvation won by Jesus Christ and bestowed by the Holy Spirit and the bond of fellowship or the community of Christians thus results from union with God.” Russell argued that the “Communio ecclesiology has both a vertical and horizontal dimension. That is, communion with God will demonstrate man’s relationship with the creator. The other side to the dimension is that this will reveal the believer’s own communion with other believers in the world. The vertical dimension is connected and cannot be separated from the horizontal dimension.” They both are inseparable.

This researcher’s own interpretation of Russell’s illustration of the church as Communio ecclesiology is that the vertical connecting to the horizontal represents the cross of Jesus Christ in the world. It is Christ that is crucified and the one that also reaches out his hands to the world. Christ is reaching out to save the lost through the work of the church. He is doing so by calling, equipping, and sending out men and women that yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide them in reaching out to the lost souls known as the unchurched. This is significant for New Creation Lutheran Church’s problem in Lima, Ohio. To be successful in reaching out to the unchurched and persons of color in Lima, New Creation will need to keep focused on the purpose for which it is called to be the church here in Lima in the twenty-first century.

The leaders and members of New Creation Lutheran Church will need to look at the cross of Jesus Christ and determine what it means in the ministry they offer in Lima. They will need to see that the cross symbolizes Christ’s outreach effort in reaching out to the community of service and the world. That is why New Creation will need to develop

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93 Russel Murray, 6.
94 Ibid., 6.
a strategic plan to help them reach out to the unchurched and persons of color who desire to be a part of New Creation Lutheran Church’s ministry in Lima, Ohio. The point is well expressed in these words of Russell:

Christ is the light of the nations. Because this is so, this sacred synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the church. Since the church is in Christ like a Sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of very closely knit union with God and of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold to the faithful of the church and to the whole world, its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do…the present day condition of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.\(^95\)

While Russell’s point in the above statement is presented to highlight the Roman Catholic Church’s view on their struggle to relate and be open beyond the members and leaders of their particular religious body, it also depicts the issues of church decline. It also shows the need for the leaders to take a new look at what it means to be the community of faith called, gathered and nurtured by the Holy Spirit as it serves among the lost and the unchurched. While the expression of Communio ecclesiology is an effort intended to encourage the Roman Catholic body of Christ, it can also be used to inform and educate other denominations facing the issues of church closures and merger. This observation depicts that all denominations are facing the same challenges of church decline in North America today in the twenty-first century.

This biblical mandate is realized in Jesus’ words to his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”\(^96\) On the other hand, the church or the body of Christ go forth imitating Jesus, as pointed out in the Scripture, “The Word became flesh and

\(^{95}\) Russel Murray, 6.

\(^{96}\) John 20:21b [NIV].
made His dwelling among us.” This being stated, this researcher believes that the members of the body of Christ find their proper dwelling in the neighborhood of humanity. This researcher agrees with Russell that it is within the local parish that together we realize this most visibly. This literature is reminding the reader that the church is a visible symbol of the body of Christ, called and sent by Christ for the purpose of evangelizing the world for God. This task cannot be accomplished while the members are confined behind the walls of their worship centers excluding themselves from those that they are supposed to reach for Christ.

This researcher believes that God’s plan and desire for his church on earth is to grow in Spirit and in number. His statement to the disciples before his ascension in the book of Acts 1:4 to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon them to do the work of global evangelism was intentional. Christ’s intention for the lost souls or unchurched is to bring them life everlasting through the work and mission of the local and universal church.

The question one asks is this: how can the body of Christ work with God to build a faithful church? Gary McIntosh shares some spiritual insights on this question for his reader.

**Working with God to Build a Faithful Church in the Twenty-First Century**

McIntosh suggests that “to understand authentic church growth, the phrase “church growth” must be redefined to include the needs society faces in the twenty-first

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97 John 1:14a [NIV].
century. He also suggests that authentic church growth in the twenty-first century must be based on true biblical understanding. “

Originally, the term “church growth” was coined to reference the results that could be expected from faithful disciple making. “A congregation that wins people to Christ, assimilates the new converts into the local body, and then teaches them all that Christ commanded can expect to see church growth-numerical and spiritual.”

McIntosh asserts that all congregations want to grow. That is why if you ask any congregational leader about their hopes and dreams regarding their church, none will say they want their congregation to decline; instead they respond that they want their church to grow. He writes, “Jesus Christ did not suffer and die on Calvary to build a powerless, declining church. Rather, he sovereignly promises that his church will grow…biblical growth can only take place when the church universal and local obediently cooperates with God’s life giving principles.”

The author also observed further that “growing and declining churches over the last three decades, as well as various research studies, suggests that the weaker a church’s position is regarding the authority of Scripture, the less likely it is to experience biblical church growth.” McIntosh suggests that churches that are grounded in the authority of the Bible are most likely to grow than those that are not. The author asserts further that “where the authority of the Bible is accepted, there will be greater potential for biblical

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99 Ibid., 18.

100 Ibid., 18.

101 Ibid., 37.
church growth. He also point out that where there is lesser acceptance of a biblical authority, there will be less potential for biblical church growth.”\textsuperscript{102}

McIntosh’s point is well expressed. This researcher believes that many of those declining churches have not accepted the full authority of Scripture. Where the authority of Scripture is undermined with human knowledge and diluted with human agenda, the church will not grow to its full potential. Christ’s church was established fully on spiritual power and wisdom rather than on human power and wisdom.

As the researcher presented in Chapter One, there is great potential in the life of New Creation Lutheran Church for a viable ministry and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in the twenty-first century. However, for that potential to become reality, the congregation will need to face the truth of its limitations and dive into the full authority of the Bible. In so doing, the Holy Spirit will unleash his power upon the people of the congregation to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of Christ to the unchurched and those to whom the Holy Spirit chooses to reach in the Lima and its service area.

McIntosh argued that “biblical church growth begins with the right premise—which is the Word of God and those life giving churches have a strong commitment to the authority of God’s Word.”\textsuperscript{103}

Since “all truth is God’s truth,”\textsuperscript{104} therefore, “knowledge gained through revelation is God’s truth. It is true because it is sourced in the life giving word of God. As

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{102} Gary L. McIntosh, 37.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 37.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{104} John Nissley, (DM 880 Classroom Lecture, Winebrenner Theological Seminary, Findlay, OH, January 23, 2012)
such it is biblical to make full use of the empirical research in the field of anthropology, sociology, and other sciences.\textsuperscript{105}

It is also worth noting that McIntosh presents a caution when speaking of biblical church growth. He suggests that it is important to understand that churches that are more evangelical, even those who express that they believe in the authority of God’s Word, in practice may do very little. The reason is that “some may know what they believe but do not always believe what they know.”\textsuperscript{106} For example, a congregation may say unbelieving people are lost and heading to eternal hell without Christ, but do almost nothing to share the life giving message of Christ with them. This is where many professing believers stand. This is not a statement of judgment; it is a statement of truth. If Christians in America will be bold in love and willing to share the message of salvation with the unchurched or unbelievers, the twenty-first century would be a great century for the church.

McIntosh points out further that, “Churches that have a high commitment to the authority of God’s Word and passionately communicate their beliefs to those outside the faith community have greater potential for biblical church growth.”\textsuperscript{107}

Earlier in this project, this researcher pointed out that one of the problems New Creation Lutheran Church is facing is that it lacks an authentic strategy to attract the unchurched and persons of color into it ministry. Also in Chapter One, this researcher

\textsuperscript{105} Gary McIntosh, 39.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 47.
formulated four research questions to help find answers to the problems that New Creation Lutheran Church is facing.

As this researcher sorts through literature and sources to address the role of congregational mission relating to congregational growth and outreach to the unchurched, much of the literature argues that the church in North America is in need of transformation and change to survive in the twenty-first century. It is time for a new vision for the future of the church in North America today.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King observe that, “The church is called to find out where God is working and join God in his mission as God is working all around us.” Their point is that if the church wishes to reach out to the unchurched and the lost in their local community, they must first find them, and in order to find them, they must first join God in his mission of bringing salvation to those whom God has chosen to save. For this to be possible, the leaders and members of the local congregation must seek the wisdom, guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit.

**How Can the Church Find the Lost and Unchurched to Lead to Christ?**

In the Bible, these words are written: “For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.” In reading Jesus’ words in the Great Commission, McIntosh points out that “the first word in there is the word, go. The word go logically comes before the command to make disciples. If the church does not take action to go, it won’t find the lost

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souls and be able to ‘make disciples.’”\textsuperscript{110} He asserts further that “the Father’s priority is clear and apparent in the birth, life, death, burial; resurrection, ascension, intercession, and ultimate return of Jesus Christ are all tied to the desire of the father to find he lost and bring them into reconciliation with himself.”\textsuperscript{111} Citing Arthur Glasser’s comments on this problem of congregational mission and church growth, McIntosh writes:

The crucified and resurrection of our Lord are inherent to the record of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet the event surrounding his cross and empty tomb do not climax the gospel narratives. The climax is his issuance of the mandate to make disciples of the nations. And this mandate is to be obeyed. Jesus Christ expects us to give ourselves to the task of gathering the lost.\textsuperscript{112}

If the church is to gather the lost or the unchurched, then evangelism and inclusiveness must be given a high priority in the twenty-first century. If the decline and closure of churches in American cities and small towns and rural areas is to be reversed, then the churches must put aside the idea of business as usual and face the hard reality the church faces today and be bold in taking steps to correct this problem in the United States. Evangelism must be given first priority in the process of making disciples. We must proclaim Jesus Christ as God and Savior and share that wonderful good news with the lost.

**The Right Philosophy and Cultural Relevance**

The other point that McIntosh highlights in biblical church growth is that “life giving churches relate to their communities in culturally relevant ways. Authentic outreach and evangelism will result when a church adapts itself in appropriate ways to its

\textsuperscript{110} Matthew 28:19b [NIV].

\textsuperscript{111} Gary L. McIntosh, 69.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 69.
culture so that the culture will receive a hearing of the gospel. Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.”\textsuperscript{113}

The author also suggests that “churches that isolate themselves from the culture do not fish. Those that seek to dominate the culture fish with dynamite. Those churches that incarnate themselves into the culture fish with the proper bait and tackle.”\textsuperscript{114} What that amount to is, biblical outreach to the unchurched takes place in churches that are aware or indigenous to their communities or mission field. In so doing, they customize their worship, teaching, outreach strategy, to their specific and demographic settings using the right philosophy. Cultural relevance helps churches desiring to grow in the twenty-first century to relate to their communities in culturally relevant ways.

New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima is searching for ways in which it can understand the community to which it is called to serve. Though it lacks an authentic strategic plan to reach out to the unchurched, a desire to understand the communities and to fully accept the authority of the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit will help them become a viable congregation in Lima.

The narratives in the gospels are filled with examples in which Jesus engaged the people with effective strategy and was successful. For example, Jesus engaged in his culture by understanding it and selecting approaches that communicated effectively with people in those cultures. In John 3, he ministered to Nicodemus, and in John 4, he also reached out to the Samaritan woman. The two characters were as different as they could ever be. Nicodemus was an elite Jew with formal training as a Pharisees, and an inquisitive, self-righteous teacher. The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, was

\textsuperscript{113} Gary L. McIntosh, 69.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 123.
culturally a lower class, God-fearing minority with an informal education. Having lived a life of sin, she was indifferent to Jesus. She was surprised he would talk with her.

Jesus used special evangelism techniques to win them to himself. The strategic biblical techniques are written in the Bible for the church to follow and use to evangelize the unchurched and all who are lost. This writer believes that the body of Christ needs to know and engage the culture with the gospel message for Christ in order to grow the church in the twenty-first century. This is the strategy New Creation Lutheran church leadership and members need to understand and the mission they need to be about in the twenty-first century.

A strategy of the gospel designed to bridge human relationships that have been broken by sin in the world is needed by the church. In order to be effective in mission outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in Lima, the church needs to know and understand the ways in which the culture is changing. McIntosh points out, “as the culture changes and people manifest different needs, the church must update its techniques to accomplish the goal”\textsuperscript{115} in the twenty-first century. While using appropriate techniques to reach the unchurched and those who are spiritually lost is important, McIntosh urged “the leaders and members of the church to be cautious. To be aware that while a specific technique may be appropriate for a specific group of people, it is often necessary to adjust the approach, to reach a different people in a different cultural setting.”\textsuperscript{116} Paul and Jesus approached ministry with appropriate contextualization of the good news of the kingdom.

\textsuperscript{115} Gary L. McIntosh 131.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 136.
Know Your Target Audience for Evangelism and Outreach to the Unchurched

The final point this researcher found interesting in the literature review is where McIntosh warned that the church leaders and their members need to know which group they are targeting for outreach. The church cannot be all things to all people. McIntosh writes, “Despite our timeliness and good intentions, if the method of evangelism we use does not fit the particular harvest, we will be ineffective.”117

The right plan for effective evangelism is the one that has a target focus. Know which age group of the population segment you want to reach. Be aware that all people are not the same and you cannot be the same to all people. Know your target group and aim at them with a specific strategic plan. Be ready to adjust the plan if necessary, as the cultural needs tend to be changing so fast in the American society. Study the community to know what the local congregation needs to do. McIntosh presents five questions to help congregations study their communities that are helpful in this literature review. In order to be effective in understanding the service community, McIntosh suggests that congregations need to ask themselves:

1. Where are we as a congregation?
2. Where should we be headed as a congregation?
3. What steps will take us there as a congregation?
4. How can we align our resources to support our vision as a congregation?
5. How are we doing as a congregation?”118

117 Gary L. McIntosh 136.
118 Ibid., 137-8.
Considering these questions prayerfully and seeking wisdom from the Holy Spirit will help those congregations who desire to reach out to their communities with the good news of Jesus Christ to be successful. It will enable them to get in line with God for great evangelism effort to be put forth in Christ’s name and in his power. This is why this project is necessary for New Creation’s future in the twenty-first century.

**Welcoming the Strangers in Your Service Area**

In his book, *Welcoming the Stranger*, Patrick Keifert shares light on how sociology is linked with congregational mission in leadership and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color. Alluding to the need for the church to reach out to the service community with the gospel, Keifert asserts that for Christ’s church to be effective in these challenging times, the church leaders and members will need to understand four important realities in public life. “First, they need to understand the public senses of the realities of social expressions in their community of service. Second, they will need to understand the geography. Third, understand the public code of believability, and finally, they need to understand the audience of intention.”

This researcher supports the view presented by Keifert when it comes to the social context of congregational mission and leadership in an effort to reach out to the unchurched and person of color. The four points presented by the author for his audience are significant for congregational outreach. This literature reveals that failure to study and understand the service community on the part of the local congregation will be like driving a car in a crowded neighborhood with the driver’s eyes closed. In order to be

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successful in the twenty-first century, the leaders of the local congregation need to have a clear understanding of the community to which they are called to serve.

They also need to have a clear understanding of their mission in the community. There are key questions Keifert asked his reader to consider if they truly wish to help their local congregation to grow. Such questions are as follows: 1. Why do they exist as a congregation? 2. What is God up to in the service community as they seek to join God in God’s mission? These questions are what Keifert alludes to as “the public expression of the community of service.” It will help the local congregation in accomplishing its goal if they obtain a clear sense of the social context of their community of service.

A clear discernment of Keifert’s four categories regarding social context of service community will no doubt enhance the leadership efforts in designing a strategic plan for a long range congregational ministry to foster growth and transformation in the twenty-first century. Such effort will provide two opportunities for New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. First, it will help save cost for the ministry. Second, it will help the leadership team design a realistic strategic plan based on the social context of the residents in the service community and attract them to the congregation’s mission. Keifert argued that the congregational leaders should be willing to design “worship services that will present profound emotion and values that reach beyond the particular moment.” He argued further that, “Congregational leadership team needs to encourage,

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120 Patrick Keiffert, 131-2.

121 Ibid., 131.
motivate and lead their members to understand that Christian values are not primarily self-expressive of private thoughts, but participatory, public action.”

One of Keifert’s concerns is that “in some social context, the ideology of values of social expression of emotion authentically represents the self. That is often seen in some preaching styles in different denominations of the church.” The author asserts again that “in the social context of the congregation, a public understanding of social expression particularly in worship, the leadership focus should be on self-giving, self-sacrifice, and be aware that God is present not only in the faith community, but also in the secular community.” God is not confined only to the faith community; he is also available in the secular community for the purpose of bringing both communities together to God’s glory. As the church understands the place of the cross in the outreach effort relating to their mission, they will see that the vertical line of the cross is also passing through the horizontal line.

What this means is that theology of the cross defines what God is up to with his people as he reaches the world with the grace and the message of the resurrection of Christ. This also means that through the cross, God is connecting the local church with the local community to bring salvation to all.

Keifert’s work not only calls the church to welcome the strangers around them, he also shows why this effort is a biblical mandate and necessary for outreach to the unchurched and the lost. This researcher agrees with Keifert that “Sociological

122 Patrick R. Keiffert 131.
123 Ibid., 131.
124 Ibid., 132.
expression can be linked to geographical understanding” when it comes to the place of congregational mission and leadership in a particular social context. When the congregation’s leader grasps a clear understanding of the two dimensions of ministry needs, the members can succeed in achieving their mission in attracting the lost and the unchurched into their faith community.

Pushing this fact further, Keifert directs his readers to other helpful sources of literature to help congregations be effective in their local ministry. Such places to find resources include “existing documents, conducting surveys to determine who is most likely to worship from that area, studying recent census bureau data, attending school boards meetings, and looking at public utilities records.”

Finally, the sociological understanding of congregational mission and leadership relating to outreach to the unchurched suggests that before using important resources on ideas assumed by few members, it is helpful for the leaders of the local congregation to take several steps to foster success. For example, begin by discerning the “public sense of the realities of the social expression in the community of service. Also, seek to understand the geography and the public codes that the people in the community believe in, as well as finding out the service audience that is intended in the service community.”

This means that the congregation must know the audience that they are called to in outreach. The success of the congregation’s mission in outreach to transform the local congregation will depend on the type of leadership team they have and what that

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125 Patrick R. Keifert, 134.

126 Ibid., 135.

127 Ibid., 135.
leadership means in the work and mission of the church. The church cannot function effectively without Christian leaders leading them. How does one define the Christian leader? With this question, the researcher will review the literature for a summary of the definitions of a Christian leader.

**Definitions of Leadership**

Herbert Byrne defines a “good Christian leader as one who by their leading also attracts people to follow Christ. A Christian leader is one who is able to see when others cannot see their way through things.” Byrne argued that character is important in terms of being successful in implementing leadership objectives. He suggests the following characteristics of the Christian leadership:

1. A Christian leader is one who leads others to the way and personal knowledge of God. The two biblical characters who demonstrated this type of personality were Jesus and Paul.

2. Faith: The leader in the church must have faith in God as they lead others to God. The Christian leader must believe in the God of both the Old and New Testaments.

3. Service: The leader in the church needs to know that they are not in leadership position to be served but to serve others as Jesus showed his disciples when he washed their feet.

4. Ambition: A leader needs to be a person who is a self-starter. Charles Schwab once said, “A man can succeed almost at anything for which he or she has

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5. unlimited enthusiasm." Therefore, Byrne argued that “ambition is an attitude that drives and energizes a person to action.”

6. Confidence: In the Bible, Paul said, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Based on this verse, a good Christian is one who has confidence in self and those around him.

7. The good Christian leader is one who commits to what it means to be the leader of the church.

8. Finally, the good Christian leader is one who is “positive and can set goals to follow.”

The thread that connects these definitions is one that helps the reader understand that a leader is one who leads God’s people toward the direction God wants them to go. The leader is also the visionary one who knows what needs to be done by the church and how to do it. When it comes to kingdom work, the leader sees no boundaries and takes no delight in any sense of discrimination toward any child of God based on any personal pretext. The definitions presented in this review are significant as they pertain to the success of the local congregation. The church has always been guided and led by leaders who humble themselves before God to do God’s will. The mission of Christ is a process by which God is always identifying leaders and sending them for various purposes to accomplish his goal.

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129 Henry W. Byrne, 157.
130 Ibid., 157.
131 Philippians 4:13 [NIV].
132 Byrne, 157.
The theology of congregational transformation and growth underlies the intention behind the project to help New Creation Lutheran Church discern that it is a congregation called, gathered and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be sent in the local community of Lima to engage the people of God. This project is also to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima learn how to share the love of Christ and to invite everyone to come to the saving knowledge of Christ through the gospel. This is what outreach to the lost, the unchurched and persons of color means.

**The Role of Meditative Thinking in Outreach to the Unchurched**

Another piece of literature that addresses the project on outreach to the unchurched is by Lovette Weems. In his book titled *Churched Leadership, Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity*, the author reminds his reader that meditative thinking plays a vital role in the success of the congregation in regard to transforming the local congregation for outreach to the unchurched. Weems based his theory on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians in which Paul wrote, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”\(^{133}\) Weems points out that “visioning is more relational and holistic than ordered and sequential. It is more intuitive than intellectual. It is more spiritual than scientific. In this sense, visioning is very much like other creative process.”\(^{134}\) In other words, visionary thinking will enable any local congregation and the leaders to move forward knowing where they are headed and how they can get there.

\(^{133}\) Ephesians 1:17 [NIV].

\(^{134}\) Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Church Leadership, Vision, Team, Culture, & Integrity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 59.
Citing C. S. Lewis, Weems writes, “I am a rationalist. For me, reason is a natural organ of truth, but imagination is the organ of meaning. Meanings, therefore come from the integration of both reason and imagination in which reason is guided not by its own structural logic, but by that which comes cooperatively from the domain of imagination.”\textsuperscript{135} In other words, for the church to be effective and successful in the twenty-first century, it must acquire visionary leaders whose imaginations for the future of the church are far superior and grounded in biblical knowledge and reliably sound in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This researcher agrees with Weems’ assertions that a great leader is one who not only concerns himself with knowing where the church is in its local ministry, but also concerns himself with where the church is going. The leader is to have that urgency to know where the organization is going and where the organization must be if it is to grow and thrive in the future. This view is significant to the problem statement for this project. For New Creation Lutheran Church to thrive in reaching out and to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry, visionary leadership will play a crucial role in the process. As Weems points out, “Visioning is a continuing process of discernment.”\textsuperscript{136} For a successful church growth and inclusiveness, the transformational church in the twenty-first century will need “effective leaders who have a sense of where the entire organization is going and must go.”\textsuperscript{137}

If the Christian church in America is to be alive and well and healthy to grow and become attractive to the unchurched, it will surround itself with leaders who have a sense

\textsuperscript{135} Lovett H. Weems, 59.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 60.
of where both the local and universal church is and where it must go. To accomplish that, Weems presents six functions of vision that might help the congregational members and leaders to be prepared for outreach in the local ministry to the unchurched and the lost. He suggests, first, a vision needs to unite, second, it needs to energize, third, it needs to be focused on priorities, fourth, it needs serve as the ultimate standard, fifth, the vision must raise sights, and finally, it must invite and draw others to God.\(^{138}\)

This researcher believes that Weems’ visionary insights presented in this review can be of great access to those congregations needing some clear direction regarding where the Holy Spirit is leading them in the future. These visionary steps speak of the problem this researcher addressed in Chapter One and may help New Creation Lutheran Church to move forward to bring some solutions to the evangelism problem the members face in the twenty-first century. Weems’ observations relating to the project at hand addresses the need for visionary leadership if New Creation Lutheran Church is to avoid the pitfalls that have fallen upon other small Lutheran congregations that have dwindled and closed their doors in many communities in America. The intention for this project is to help New Creation rise above the problem and become a viable congregation in Lima, Ohio in the twenty-first century.

Aubry Malphurs is another researcher in the area of church renewal and church growth in the twenty-first century. This researcher found his insights appropriate for the project. In his book, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, he writes,

Changes are cascading around us with hurricane force. Newspaper and television reporters can no longer keep up… can the church be our safe haven for change? Hardly! The church is no more exempt from change than business, school, family,
or government. Like it or not, the church is in the world, and the world is changing.\textsuperscript{139}

In this statement, Malphurs uses the word “change” several times as his way to highlight the challenges the North American Church faces today. Change is a taboo word that many churches members do not like to hear. On the other hand, change is reality. It cannot be stopped. It is not that change will happen in the future, it is in fact, happening right now at a faster rate. The point Malphurs is presenting is that if the North American church wants to remain in business, it must embrace change and put forth a new strategy to foster growth in the twenty first century.\textsuperscript{140}

Malphurs continues to say that “our choices are few. We can pretend that changes are not happening. We can build walls to keep changes away or we can open all the doors and windows and be changed by the changes. The best choice is to deal with change from a biblical base, incorporate the best and exclude the worst.”\textsuperscript{141} In other words, changes that are affecting the church in North America are unavoidable. They must be addressed.

Malphurs does not have all bad news for the church in North America. He observed that there is still great hope for the church to bounce back and grow in the twenty-first century. He argued that thousands of Christian churches are following the pattern of the descendants of Issachar as those who understood the times and knew what to do. In their case, it was the change from the reign of Saul to the reign of David. He argued further that “it is from the old paradigms of doing church to the new paradigms of

\textsuperscript{139} Aubry Malphurs, \textit{Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins} (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 9.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 9.
doing church.”142 This researcher agrees with the author that to grow the church successfully in the twenty-first century, the church in North America must embrace the new way of doing ministry in order to attract the new generation.

This researcher agrees with Malphurs that the changes facing the church are everywhere. The success and survival of the church is at stake. It is not a matter of a single sick church or a misfit pastor. Changes are necessary in the entire system regardless of denominational affiliation. The church leaders will need to allow the Holy Spirit to transform the church from within.

As it has been stated in Chapter One, this project is not about formulating a strategy to start a new church even though that would seem to be easier. The purpose for this project is to find ways to help a small struggling Lutheran congregation such as New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima to be a transforming and growing congregation in its missional efforts. It is about finding a new way to put new wine in this old wineskin so that it may grow again. The question to ask is this: Can new wine be poured into the old wineskin of New Creation Lutheran Church?

This question echoed the question that God asked the prophet Ezekiel, “‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I said, ‘Sovereign Lord, you alone know.’”143 Only God knows the future of the church in North America and what that future will look like. At the same time, the Body of Christ needs to reposition itself for ministry in a new way in the twenty-first century. The North American churches have become like dry bones in the valley needing the breath of life from God. In the midst of its decline, God is asking,

142 Aubrey Malphur, 9.

143 Ezekiel 37:3 [NIV].
“Can these declining churches live to carry out the mission in the twenty-first century?”
The answer lies within God’s own plan for the future of the church. “Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”

Malpurs argued that there are churches that have experienced new life through change. Notable examples are: Bear Valley Baptist Church in Denver, Colorado, Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, among others. These ministries among countless others indicate that it is possible to pour new wine into old wineskin. This means that it is possible to take advantage of the resources of the typical, established North American church such as it exists in its people, property, and facilities. It is possible to figure out the best way to use them to foster the Kingdom of God in the twenty-first century.

Citing Kirk Hadaway, a church growth research specialist with the Southern Baptist Convention, Malphurs writes, “The typical church in almost any American denomination is either on a plateau or declining in membership and participation. Rapid growth is atypical, and among older congregations the pattern is even more pronounced.”

When Malphurs observed the way some of the mainline churches and conservative churches grew from 1965-1988 based on the Henry Plarmley review on church growth in that period, he suggests three observations on the matter. He writes:

When talking about church growth in an effort to turn the congregation around, a key question to ask is, what kind of growth are those churches experiencing? Because churches grow in one or a combination of three ways. The first is transfer growth which is the movement of people from one similar church to another. The

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144 Ezekiel 37:3b [NIV].

145 Aubrey Malphurs, 28.
second is biological growth, through which members have babies who grow up and eventually join the church. The third is the growth by conversion. This is the process that focuses on winning the unchurched or lost souls to Christ. The latter is the biblical mandate given in the Great Commission.\footnote{Aubrey Malphurs, 30-31.}

This researcher believes that in order for the North American church to turn the declining membership trend around, it will need to be intentional about the task of the Great Commission given by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. That task is to make disciples out of the lost souls and the unchurched rather than accepting an individual family or families who may be upset about something in one congregation and transferring their membership to the congregation next door. It is also worth noting that as the average age of many members of a typical congregation in America seems to be at least 65 years and older, growing the local congregation through new birth in many congregations is getting to be a remote idea in many declining congregations in the United States.\footnote{Ibid., 32.}

Another insight Malphurs presented in his book is that “not only are United States churches plateaued and declining, many are dying. In past decades, some churches have declined to twenty to thirty people and linger at that size with flat vital signs. Their life support was infusions of money supplied by individuals or the denomination outside the church.”\footnote{Ibid., 32.} Citing Lyle Schaller, Malphurs points out that, “An average of fifty to sixty congregations in American Protestantism choose to dissolve every week compared to five to ten that are able and willing to redefine their role.”\footnote{Ibid., 32.} After evaluating another source by WinArn, Malphurs writes that, “at least 3,500 to 4,000 churches die every year.”\footnote{Ibid., 32.}
The hard statistics presented by the author indicate the difficulties Christ’s church faces in the twenty-first century. It is also for such reason that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima needs to be intentional about putting forth an authentic strategy for outreach to the unchurched to foster growth in the twenty-first century. If the North American church desires to reach out and evangelize the unchurched, it is important for the leaders to answer this question about the way to identify the unchurched.

The question one needs to ask is, who are the unchurched? Malphurs writes that “while the American church tends to struggle, the unchurched population is growing. This raises three questions: 1. Who are the unchurched? 2. How many unchurched are now in North America? 3. Can they be reached?”

The answer to these questions is fundamental and essential to the renewal, revitalization and the growth of the declining congregations in North America today.

Malphurs informs his reader that “the American unchurched population consists primarily of baby boomers and baby busters. The baby boom is the term for the birth explosion which took place from 1946-1964. The baby-bust generation, on the other hand, are the children of the baby boomers.” This generation has a different way of thinking when it comes to the way they view the world around them. Alluding to McIntosh’s view on the subject, Malphurs suggests that the buster generation is divided into three categories: “the older busters ages 20-25 years, the teenage busters, ages 13-19 years old, and the younger busters ages 8-12 years.”

150 Aubrey Malphurs, 33.
151 Ibid., 34.
152 Ibid., 34.
“busters are the children of baby boomers, they have become the second generation of the unchurched.”

**Is There any Hope in the Future for the American Church in the Twenty-First Century?**

According to Malphurs, “indications are that the unchurched can be reached in this generation. The fact that the unchurched are not in church does not mean they are not uninterested. Pointing to the Gallup study, according to Malphurs, reveals that there is a potential for the unchurched to return to church. Also according to Malphurs, another Gallup survey suggests that there is considerable potential for a return of the unchurched to a more active church life. The author point out that “the unchurched are more religious now than a decade ago. The author concludes that the problem is not a lack of interest in spiritual matters, rather, it is a lack of interest in the established old paradigm church.” If this observation by Malpurs is correct, this researcher believes that it is good news for the American church in the twenty-first century. This is one of the reasons for which this researcher has chosen to carry out this project to help New Creation Lutheran Church to put a strategy in place for growth in the twenty-first century.

**The Need to Educate the Saints as the Church Makes Disciples**

Another source of literature this researcher found interesting was presented by Craig Nessan. In his book, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission*, Nessan presents two key factors for his reader. One is the “educational factor in which he makes the case for the

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153 Aubry Marphurs, 34.
154 Ibid., 35.
155 Ibid., 35.
need for the local church to make disciples and the other is evangelism in which he emphasizes the need to tell the story about the Kingdom of God to others. On that note, Nessan is suggesting that the Christian life is a life about going and telling God’s story of the gospel of Christ.”

Nessan argues that “the number one educational priority of the Christian church is the fulfillment of the baptismal charge to make disciples of all nations. This is the charge that the Lord Jesus Christ left with his church.” He points out that “while the church over the centuries has been relatively successful with the baptizing portion of this commission, the making of the disciples and teaching dimensions have been too often to happenstance.” One of Nessan’s arguments pertaining to Christian education in the church is that “responsibility for initiation into Christian belief and practice falls not exclusively to parents, but to the entire Christian congregations.”

This point is well stated. As New Creation Lutheran church in Lima tries to understand its identity as a Christian organization within the community, it will need to be intentional about why it will need to go out in the community to make disciples and how it also needs to go about educating those new converts or returnees to live the best Christian life that will glorify God. Nessan writes,

As we undertake the tasks of Christian education in this generation, there are significance lessons to be learned from the catechetical instructions as practical in the early church…Like those early Christian generations, we need the model of saints and martyrs who witness to us the costly nature of Christian discipleship. We need to focus on how Christian people connect their faith with ministry in

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156 Craig L. Nessan, Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1999), 44.

157 Ibid., 45.

158 Ibid., 45.

159 Ibid., 45.
daily life. In order words, we need once again to take seriously the Reformation slogan that the church is the priesthood of all believers.\footnote{Craig L. Nessan, 45.}

Again, this researcher agrees with Nessan that the first task of Christian educators is to assist the children and the membership to learn the Christian story starting in preschool and going forward. Doing so will help all members of the local congregation to learn how to think through the stories they learn. Nothing is far more dangerous than having people tell a story that they have not properly learned.

It is the hope of this researcher that New Creation Lutheran Church will go back to the biblical roots that once glued its entire mission together. Learning the meaning of the true biblical mandate means to make disciples and baptize and teach what Christ has first taught.

The other point Nessan asserted in his book was about evangelism. This is a term that he defined as a means to be able to tell the story about the Kingdom of God. Nessan’s point is that “when it comes to evangelism, congregations need to return to the basic notion and go out and spread the word of God.”\footnote{Ibid., 83.} As the author analyzes Mark 6:7-13, he suggests four guidelines from Jesus’ teachings that continue to be relevant for the church even in the twenty-first century.

First, Jesus extends to the disciples his own authority which is the authority of the Kingdom of God. The second lesson is that the disciples are sent out in pairs and return to share their experiences from the mission front. Third, he argued that the body of Christ go forth to tell the news unencumbered, both of material attachments and of status. Finally, the disciples were dependent on the hospitality of whoever might welcome them.\footnote{Ibid., 83-84.}
As broad as the observation may be, in this researcher’s opinion, the points still present clear insights for the church to consider for evangelism to grow in the twenty-first-century. The leaders must not take their focus away from the clear strategy the Lord has set forth in the gospel for the church to follow if it wishes to be authentic and viable in the twenty-first century. It is the hope of this researcher that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima will be intentional by exhibiting these teachings on evangelism as it continues to foster new ways for growth by being inclusive to all who may wish to be a part of its ministry.

From the transformational aspect of church growth, Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer write about the “transformational loop.”¹⁶³ In this observation by way of transforming declining congregations, they suggest that one of the ways in which a declining congregation can be transformed is to start with three initial steps. They need to “discern, embrace and engage.”¹⁶⁴ To discern through a transformational process for growth is to have a missionary mentality. A church that intentionally takes on a discerning spirit often “actively seeks to understand their community.”¹⁶⁵ To understand your community of service is to be able to put in place ministry strategy that will succeed.

The second initial step is to embrace. To embrace is to have a vibrant leadership, relational intentionality, and prayerful dependence. The authors point out that “the first element of embrace is vibrant leadership. This is necessary in any environment where movement is needed. Transformational churches are places where these important values


¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 34.
are not just touted on a church web site, but are embraced by the congregation as a whole.”166

The third piece suggested by the authors for transforming a congregation is to be able to engage. To engage means to have a worship service as a mission for the community. This researcher holds the views that since all churches are located somewhere and value certain principles, therefore their focus ought to be on making disciples as mandated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Such focus will not only empower the local congregation, is will also help lead to transformation.

The authors suggest that “transformational churches are bearers of hope for the church leaders and all believers.”167 They assert that “transformational churches focus stubbornly on the gospel’s abilities to change people.”168 This researcher believes that, “There can be no renewal, revival, or rebuilding without a vision for and an experience of the all-consuming, all-illuminating presence of God. It all begins with God.”169 It is God’s Holy Spirit that enables churches to change. The authors point out that, “Churches do not change until the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change.”170

To say something on the missional front in this literature review, one area among many resources this researcher found to be significant was presented by Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder. In their book titled, A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation, the authors assert that “it is important that the congregations learn not to depend on one

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166 Ed Stetzer, and Thom S. Rainer, 35.
167 Ibid., 9.
168 Ibid., 10.
169 Ibid., 15.
170 Ibid., 18.
particular leader to either save them or restore their church to its formal glory.” They suggest further that “a more missional and vital future is ensured when a variety of leaders are called forth with their many and varied gifts to form a genuine partnership for the sake of helping the congregation to participate in helping with God’s mission in the world.”

The authors inform their audience that working together in the leadership circle is vital and important in developing a missional congregation. The authors write that “Keeping God’s perspective in view is foundational if developing a missional leadership team is to occur.” They assert that the primary way God’s people exist in the world today is in the form of congregation. They write that “congregations are at the center of God’s plan and purpose.” The congregation “bears witness through the spirit to the reconciling power of God through Christ in their own midst and in the larger community.” A missional congregation is a community where persons live and worship knowing that they are in a reconciled relationship with one another.

The authors assert that “a missional congregation is one whose members understand God’s vision for their congregation.” In the missional concept of the congregation, the authors argued that “the church has a dual nature or essence. The way

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172 Ibid., 82.

173 Ibid., 82.

174 Ibid., 82-83.

175 Ibid., 82.

176 Ibid., 30
to understand the congregation identity is to study it nature.”177 This researcher agrees with the authors that the missional church begins with understanding the Scriptures. For example, “Scripture teaches us in Acts 2:1-4 that it is God the Holy Spirit who creates the church. In doing so the same spirit gives to the church a holy nature in the midst of its humanness.”178 The illustration below is courtesy of Rouse and Van Gelder’s theological, practical breakdown:

THE DUAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH

HOLY    DIVINE    THEOLOGICAL (As seen from above)

HUMAN   HISTORICAL   SOCIOLOGICAL (as seen from below)179

In the missional concept of the congregation, the church is to be observed from the holy perspective that is, a view from above and from the human perspective, that is, a view from below. This means how people form personal theological understanding of God here on earth. This researcher believes that these two views are essential in helping the congregation’s members understand the church from a missional aspect.

The other literature this researcher found helpful for this project addressed strategies the ELCA has used in attracting unchurched and persons of color in the denomination to foster leadership and congregational mission and growth.

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177 Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, 31.
178 Ibid., 31.
179 Ibid., 31.
The ELCA Strategy to Transform Small Congregations for Growth in the Twenty-First Century

In review of literature regarding this project, this researcher found that the ELCA has made significant progress in its efforts to be attentive and effective in the twenty-first century to foster growth in leadership and congregational mission. To accomplish their goals, the denomination has put together series of documents referred to as a leadership series which include the following to accomplish their goals. This includes ELCA’s Mission in the Local Community and the World, How to Help Members Discover God’s Call, and Talking Together as Christians Cross Culturally.

The ELCA’s Mission in Discovering God’s Call to the Church

In their effort to help members to discover God’s call to the church, leaders believe that proper planning as well as organizing produces excellence in the work. The literature is designed by the denomination to help local congregations discern a clear understanding of their mission and how to structure ministry format effectively. The material also provides a plan for the local congregation how to plan for the future, and to figure out where the resources for the ministry will be used.

We Are All Ministers

McCullough-Bade writes, “Everything we do and plan is communal. We cannot plan unilaterally or devise strategies in isolation…each of us is a minister, whether pastor or lay person and each of us is called to serve others.” To be successful in implementing congregational mission, it is important to understand the DNA of the
congregation. This leads to what McCullough-Bade referred to as a model for understanding congregations. He asserts that congregations are complex. With such complexities, the author invites the congregation leaders to look at their particular congregation through a sense of lenses. This piece of literature points out that every member of the ELCA is a minister in their own specific giftedness and calling.

**The ELCA Structure in Carrying Out the Vision**

One other way in which the ELCA has fostered strategy to structure the vision of the organization is found in the writings of Brian H. Hughes. He asserts that for a congregation to be successful, “it is important for the leaders to be properly trained to help their congregations to identify its mission and goals. Different congregations have different needs for organizational structure.” \(^{181}\)

**The ELCA’s New Way for Congregational Mission**

Hughes asserts further that how the church organized ministry in the past no longer seems to work. “Traditional ways of organizing congregational life are breaking down as fewer people give their time to serve on committees and as membership in many mainline denominations declines. These challenges have forced the visionary leaders to conclude that this cannot continue to happen.” \(^{182}\) Hughes suggests that “The first step toward positive change is being uncomfortable with the present. Without urgency we do not have sufficient emotional energy to begin and sustain any sort of change process.” \(^{183}\)

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\(^{181}\) Brian H. Hughes, *Our Structure Carrying Out the Vision* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 15.

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 18.

\(^{183}\) Ibid, 18.
This researcher believes that this is one of the key problems causing many ELCA congregations to decline. The fear of change and the unknown is another problem. As the researcher has already addressed the issue of change in other part of this document, it is his intention to note at this point, if the ELCA congregations wish to survive in the twenty-first century, they will need to accept change on all levels. The reality is that the old status quo does not work well in this new century.

The next literature this researcher found important that relate to the project was what the ELCA called *Talking Together as Christians Cross-Culturally: A Field Guide*. In this book, Duty points out that the “congregational mission and focus should be on God’s work. This work is carried out through the members of the body of Christ.”

One of the ways in which the ELCA thinks it can be successful in attracting people of many cultural backgrounds is to be able and willing for people to dialogue as Christians across cultures. Duty writes:

> A cosmopolitan worldview does not mean denial of one’s race or culture. We can be fully aware of the views of others, able to appreciate their perspectives, and able to work with them without denying our own perspectives…These differences are not to be silenced. They are to be celebrated. Because we value the differences we can take part in intercultural dialogue without denying our own perspective on the truth.\(^{185}\)

Duty points out that the Christian community is very rich. When Christians discern together, they exercise their Christian imaginations to determine what to do in their specific circumstances. One of the ideas suggested by Duty is that the congregation is to be able and willing to form Christian community. He asserts that “this kind of discernment of what God is calling us to be and empowering us to do as Christian

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\(^{184}\) Brian H. Hughes, 18.

community; will form and shape, enhance and enrich our community through
conversation with God and each other.”  According to Duty, this process not only
“becomes a way for congregations to start talking, deciding and acting together, but it can
also become a process by which the Christian community begins dialogue. That form of
conversation could be the community of believers in Christ gathered and empowered by
the Holy Spirit for free conversation and deliberation about ministry matters in the name
of Jesus.”

The author points out that the “ELCA cannot invite people from other cultural
backgrounds without first cultivating a willingness to invite them to talk together. Some
of the choices for such an adventure are to understand both public and private
conversations. Inviting people from other cultural backgrounds to talk together means
that both parties must be willing to talk about the issues that are difficult to talk about, as
well as those that are not so difficult to talk about. To invite people from different
cultural experiences to talk together is to invite them to lower their masks so that each
can see the other for who they are. This means talking about race, color, class and
religion.”

This researcher believes that exhibiting this type of attitude in the congregations
of the ELCA will also strengthen those congregations and their leaders to more openness
to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. It helps the congregation to be a more welcoming place
not just for the few, but for all of God’s children. To engage in an honest conversation
with other people cross-culturally makes the congregation inviting, both to those who are
raised in the Christian tradition as well as those who are unchurched and are seeking to be
a part of a congregation that will not judge them. They will be drawn to a congregation
that is welcoming and willing to help them grow in their own Christian spiritual journey.

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186 Ronald W. Duty, 30.
187 Ibid., 13.
188 Ibid., 19-22.
The strategy taken by the ELCA to become a welcoming, learning and serving community is a sound step for congregational mission and Christian leadership.

**Conclusion**

The goal for this chapter has been to identify sources of literature that address congregational mission for transformation and growth relating to visionary leadership in the twenty-first century. The researcher’s goal is to foster growth and encourage outreach to the unchurched and persons of color at New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima in the twenty-first century.

This researcher also wishes to inform his readers that the pages presented here have provided the literature review obtained from both contemporary and biblical sources that are relevant to church growth and congregational transformation as a means to attract the unchurched. This chapter has also shown literature that supports the assumption that there is a serious decline in the North American Church in the twenty-first century. The literature review further reveals that efforts to engage in intentional steps to foster growth and transform ministry in the future is needed now. The sources in this review collaborates this project’s assumptions that the changing culture in North America has contributed to the current crises that the North American Church is facing today. Having said this, it is worth noting that the church growth and congregational renewal movement has never been without its critics. Therefore, this researcher believes that this literature review has accomplished the intended purpose for which it was deemed.

This literature and other sources have all shed light on steps that the ELCA’s congregations and visionary leaders need to take in order to grow in the twenty-first century. There are also several issues that have emerged from this chapter for the
researcher. The first one is that there is not a single universal way of looking at the nature of a church. To understand the nature of a church, the leaders will need to view the church from both a theological and sociological prospective or from a heavenly and human prospective. These dual prospective can help provide a deeper understanding of the dual nature of the church.

The second issue is that congregations or churches are complex in their nature. That complexity suggests that individuals serving in pastoral leadership are encouraged to understand the congregational context in which they serve. Understanding ministry context also helps leaders design ministry goals and objectives that may produce quality results. The third issues that emerged from this chapter for this researcher is that there seemed to be a lack of understanding on the part of some congregational leaders pertaining to the difference between congregational mission and vision. Mission is what God’s intended purpose is for the church and vision is where the Holy Spirit is leading the church in the future. Knowing what the church ought to be doing and seeing and knowing where the congregation is going as the people are doing what God wants them to do are linked but are two different things.

The next issue that emerged from this chapter for this researcher is that most of the valuable literature and other sources presented insightful ideas about how to help transform the declining trends in the American churches. The one important question that still needs to be answered is, when is it right to let a congregation close and die? It is fair to assert that while many of the declining congregations can be revised and transformed if there is a gifted leader or leaders who would help them, there are also many who cannot be revised or many never grow to their potential. When is it right to say to the faithful
few of such congregation, it is time to let it go? This researcher still continues to struggle with that question. He also believes that in the case when a congregation can no longer provide vital ministry to make a difference as they would like, there should be a way to end that ministry. The process should start with prayer along with an honest and open conversation. The members should also be encouraged that sometimes even in death they find new life. That it is in dying that they are resurrected. The writing of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3 and Jesus’ teaching about his resurrection and the new life in St. John 11 can be the place to start.

In the next chapter, this researcher will focus his attention on research methodology and procedures through survey, interviews, qualitative and quantitative methods.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Congregational mission through visionary leadership is not always an easy project to research. As all congregations tend to carry their own identity, this researcher’s focus is on New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio regarding steps it needs to take to transform itself for authentic ministry in the twenty-first century. With that being said, this researcher wishes to point out that the research methodology for this project has been conducted on several levels. First, the quantitative method has been used to survey people of color in other ELCA congregations in the Lima area to determine the factors that attracted them to those congregations.

The second method and procedure for this project has been a qualitative and proactive method. The qualitative nature of this research included a gathering of data that takes the form of words and in some instances, pictures rather than numbers. It is an inclusive as well as descriptive analysis of the way church leaders and their active members make sense of their mission. This method was chosen to demonstrate the congregation’s members reflection and discernment process in transforming the mission and purpose of the congregation through evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in their service area. The analysis of the project will provide a clear outlook or portrait of New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. This will help New Creation Lutheran Church to identify healthy characteristics to create a
missional environment while working to deal with those characteristics that present barriers to the missional and transformational process.

The research data identified in this chapter will be added to a mixture of biblical and theological foundations, literature insights, and other sources already presented in previous chapters. Along that line, a more prayerful discernment from the Holy Spirit regarding the necessary steps New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima will be needed to become a transformational congregation that will reach out to the unchurched and persons of color in their service area.

It is worth noting that the proactive dimension of this project means that this researcher remains an active participant in the life of New Creation Lutheran Church’s leadership circle. As a participant, this researcher’s aim was to gather data that will be used to strengthen New Creation Lutheran Church’s mission to foster authentic growth and effective ministry in the twenty-first century. This researcher also wishes to mention that having served New Creation Lutheran Church as pastor, he has witnessed the diligent effort by the members of the congregation in attempting to help their congregation grow. He has stood with New Creation through some of the most difficult challenges in their ministry, and he stands with them as they now engage the reality the congregation is facing in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, the researcher wishes to mention that data gathered in this project is prone to subjective interpretation. One example is that as the researcher looked at the role of leadership in the congregation, he realized that he cannot do so without facing his own personal failure and at the same time is tempted to embellish his own personal success. Because this researcher is also a part of the leadership team of New Creation Lutheran
Church in Lima, he took into consideration his personal assets, liabilities, and personal responsibility. Such awareness on the part of this researcher was to help him avoid injecting his own biases in the research procedures and methodology.

In the context of the research methodology and procedures in this chapter, several instruments were designed and developed by the researcher and other individuals for gathering data. The first instrument was to formulate a diagnostic analysis on the financial viability and the giving pattern of the members. To achieve that goal, the researcher encouraged the congregation’s council to identify and interview an expert who was trained to do a fair financial analysis on the congregation’s financial strengths and weaknesses.

The Northwest Ohio ELCA Synod’s office suggested several names to the researcher. The researcher submitted the list to the council who in turn interviewed two individuals based on their profiles. Mr. Carl L. Beck, president of Church First, Inc. was hired by New Creation Lutheran Church’s council and members to do a financial diagnostic and analysis on the giving pattern of the congregation. This process took place in 2007. This feasibility study or financial diagnostic was intended to give the researcher a clear snapshot on the financial strength and weaknesses as the congregation discerned the future direction of their ministry.

There was a suggestion that for New Creation to become a stronger and viable congregation, it needed to consolidate all its assets, sell the two sites, purchase a new land, and build a new worship center to reflect the new makeup of the congregation. This led the researcher to suggest to the congregation and leaders that there was a need for a
feasibility study to find out whether the congregation was able to undertake a project of that magnitude.

Mr. Beck did an initial survey and interview on thirty families of the congregation. He identified leadership positions and trained those leaders to conduct interviews among the members. Overall, sixty-five families were interviewed. Mr. Beck also identified the potential for larger gifts from certain donors in the process. Some of the reasons for the study were to find out how the families that were interviewed felt about the financial future of the congregation to undertake a major project, the church’s overall ministry, and their participation in the ministry.

In the twelve-week period of the survey and interviews, and after reviewing the congregation’s giving records, Mr. Beck presented his findings and reported on the financial viability of the congregation. Based on that report, the members of New Creation congregation felt it was able and ready to undertake a $320,000 project to purchase a land for their new worship center. In five years (2007-2012) the congregation raised the money with interest to complete the purchase of the property.

The second method the researcher used in this project was a questionnaire and survey method. In this method, the researcher developed and distributed six questions to the leadership team, which is also known as the members of the council. The purpose of the short survey to the members of the leadership team was to bring them on board regarding the direction of this research project and how it would affect the congregation. The second part of the questionnaire was distributed to all the active members of New Creation Lutheran Church. The purpose of this questionnaire was to bring them along
with the mission and to get a clear understanding on how they felt about the ministry of their congregation.

The third method was an interview with pastors from other Lutheran congregations within the Lima area. The goal for the interview was to help the researcher to find out whether there were strategies being used for outreach to attract the unchurched and persons of color to their congregations.

Another method used by the researcher was to interview persons of color from New Creation Lutheran Church to find out what attracted them to the congregation.

The next method used for the project was to interview the pastor from one of the largest non-Lutheran congregations in Lima. The purpose of this interview was to find out their strategy for growing their church and how they were able to reach out to the unchurched to attract them to their congregations.

The two persons interviewed at Philippian Missionary Baptist Church in Lima, Ohio were Dr. B. LaMont Monford, the senior pastor, and Pastor Tony Joiner, the associate pastor. Their congregation has attracted people from all cultural, racial, social, and economic backgrounds. The congregation has become one of the fastest growing congregations in Lima with many outreach opportunities. For that reason, this researcher decided to interview these leaders to see how they were attracting the unchurched and seekers to their congregation. The interview covered several areas of their ministry--evangelism, worship, youth ministry, and leadership structure within the congregation.

The final research method and procedure used for this project came from data obtained through the researcher’s personal observations and field notes obtained through reflection and listening to those he was able to meet through the journey of this research project.
Preliminary Questionnaire and Survey

The preliminary questionnaire and survey were not to take the place of the research questions, but instead to serve as a means by which data were gathered for this research project. They were to shed light on the fundamental issues of the lack of congregational mission strategy for growth and transformation in the twenty-first century at New Creation Lutheran Church. The research questions formulated in Chapter One to guide the research project were as follows: What attracts the unchurched and persons of color to worship in non-ELCA congregations in Lima and Allen County, Ohio? What steps can be developed to prepare New Creation Lutheran Church to attract the unchurched and persons of color to its worship services? What action plan can New Creation Lutheran Church put in place to attract the unchurched, seekers and persons of color into its worship services? In order to address these questions and find an authentic solution to the problem, this researcher took several steps.

In an effort to engage the leadership team of New Creation Lutheran Church, this researcher designed four brief questions as follows: What was God calling New Creation Lutheran Church to do as a congregation in Lima? What are your hopes for New Creation for the future? What do you see as God’s purpose for New Creation in the future? How can New Creation be more effective in evangelism to the unchurched and what was stopping the members from accomplishing that?

The direction of the questionnaire was informed by several sources which include: Thomas G Bandy, Facing Reality: A Tool for Congregational Mission Assessment; Nancy T. Ammerman, Studying Congregations: A New Handbook; George Barna, The Power of Vision; and Kent R. Hunter, Moving Your Church Into Action. The
researcher formed a small study group carefully selected from among the members of the congregation to conduct the interview. This process took two months to complete. There were seven members in the research team including the researcher. Initial data were collected and analyzed by the team members with the results presented to the council and the congregation. The initial data provided general insight for the research regarding the members feeling about their current ministry status and the future of their congregation.

**Broader Survey of New Creation Lutheran Church Congregational Assessment.**

After the initial interview and survey of the leadership and members of the congregation, the four questions were expanded to cover a broader area using Thomas A. Bandy’s book, *Facing Reality*. The questions were designed under the title, “The Congregational Mission Assessment, Random Congregational Survey.”¹⁸⁹ There were a total of thirty-five questions which covered several areas of congregational life such as, the worship service, the role of the pastor, the role of the lay leaders, the members’ understanding of congregational core values, vision and mission, discipleship, and stewardship as well as training of lay leaders and volunteers.

In order to remain committed to the purpose of the project, this researcher felt the need to be attentive to the procedure of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This format used was in correspondence with the standard suggested by Ammerman and Bandy. The Congregational Mission Assessment Random Survey is designed to assist congregation seeking God’s direction for its future ministry and mission. It is to help congregations understand the obstacles and opportunities it may be facing. In the Random Congregational Survey, the questionnaire focused on the following areas,

“worship,”190 “pastoral leadership,”191 congregational leadership readiness,“192 Nancy Ammerman’s survey questionnaire on understanding “Tasks of the Church, Organizational Characteristics, and Congregational Identity,”193 was very helpful in this research project.

The purpose of the broader survey was to intentionally engage the members of New Creation to get their sense of direction, plan, and purpose for growth and outreach to the unchurched in the future. This researcher’s goal was to contact at least eighty members out of the total membership of 125. Therefore, reaching seventy-five active members and hearing from at least five of the home-bound members of the congregation brought the survey near the goal. When the process was conducted, the total active members of the congregation (seventy-seven people,) and an additional six home-bound members responded.

Active membership describes those persons who are visibly most active in the life of the congregation. They attend most worship services, participate in communion, as well as give time and talents to the church. Although the membership of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima is 125 persons, the weekly attendance at worship services varies from sixty to seventy-five worshippers. Since New Creation Lutheran Church is a small congregation in size, this made it easier to have a 100% response from the active members on the questionnaire.

190 Thomas G. Bandy, 68.
191 Ibid., 91.
192 Ibid., 90.
Interviews with ELCA Pastors in Allen County, Ohio

The interviews with some of the ELCA pastors took place at different settings. There are several ELCA pastors serving in the Lima area. Three of them agreed to participate in the interview process. The amount of years they have each served in the local congregations ranked from a year and a half to eighteen years. The questionnaires for those pastors were designed somewhat differently from the other groups surveyed.

There were thirteen questions covering three categories. Questions one through three evaluated how well the pastor understood the context of their own congregational ministry. In the first three questions, the researcher’s goal was to understand how long the individual pastor has served the congregation, what they saw as God’s mission and purpose for them in their community, and where they felt God was leading them as a congregation. Specifically, question three was designed to help the researcher get a clear insight on the size of the congregation’s membership and the breakdown of the membership by race or ethnicity.

The second part of the interview focused on evangelism and outreach. Questions four and five focused on what type of evangelism strategy was being formulated by the pastor and the congregational leaders to reach out to the unchurched and persons of color in their service area. They were asked about their readiness to reach out to the unchurched and persons of color.

The third part of the interview dealt with the pastor’s own hopes and dreams for their congregation’s future. The fourth part of the interview was centered on what the pastors saw as God’s mission, values, and purpose for their congregation, and how well those values were understood by their members. The final part of the interview prompted
a question to give the researcher insights as to how informed the pastor was regarding the congregation’s readiness to welcome the unchurched and/or persons of color in the faith community.

**Interviews with Pastor(s) Serving Growing Non-Lutheran Congregations in Allen County, Ohio**

It has been said that this project is about congregational mission and visionary leadership in the twenty-first century. The purpose statement in Chapter One was that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio needs an authentic strategy to reach out to the unchurched, seekers, and persons of color. One of the key questions this researcher wishes to answer in this project is to find out what will it take to attract the unchurched and persons of color to New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima.

During the interviews with persons of color in non-Lutheran congregations, interviewees were asked about what attracted them to their present congregation. Their responses were given on several fronts.

**Interview with Selected Individual Persons of Color at New Creation**

New Creation Lutheran Church is comprised of fifteen percent African American and ten percent Asian Americans, totaling twenty-five percent of the minority or persons of color in the congregation. New Creation Lutheran Church currently has more persons of color than any other Lutheran Congregation in Lima. Persons of color were probed to see how they felt about their membership and involvement in the life of New Creation’s ministry in Lima, Ohio,

The respondents were asked to rate their feelings on a scale from one to ten indicating whether they felt welcomed in the life of the congregation. The respondents
were also asked in an interview process whether they would invite other persons of color or unchurched friends or family members to New Creation Lutheran Church.

When the respondents were asked whether they would actually participate in evangelism, the responses varied. Below is a question that shed light on how members were actually thinking when it came to getting them involved in evangelism and outreach to the unchurched. They were asked, “Will you participate in inviting and doing evangelism to your unchurched neighbors and members of your family?” The respondents were given the following choices to choose from:

a) Yes, I will strongly participate  
b) No, I will not participate  
c) I will try to participate  
d) I will help as I am able to  

When the members of the congregation were asked the same question, their responses turned out to be a little different. The results of the responses will be presented in the next chapter. The members and leadership team were also asked:

1. What is the motivating vision of the congregation? A motivating vision is the song, image, picture, or symbol, the mere recollection elicits joy, shapes personal lifestyle, and demand to be shared with strangers.\footnote{Thomas G. Bandy. \textit{Facing Reality: A Tool for Congregational Mission Assessment} (Nashville: Abington Press, 1996), 56.}

2. What is the key mission of the congregation? A key mission is everything that needs to be said to invite enormous congregational courage and excite the imagination of the public and can be printed on the side of a city bus.\footnote{Ibid., 56.}

3. How is the genetic code of identity, such as values, beliefs, vision, and mission, embedded in every new member, leader, program, alternate worship service, and ministry of the congregation?
4. Procedures (Tactics)  
   Materials used (Resources)  
   Each Leader  
   Each Program  
   Each worship Service  
   Each Ministry  

   How is the genetic code of identity such as values, beliefs, visions, and mission 
communicated beyond New Creation Lutheran Church worshipping community in 
Lima?

5. Procedures (Tactics)  
   Materials used (Resources)  
   To the general public:  
   To the social service sector:  
   To the government sector:  
   To the business sector:  
   To the education sector:  

The other questions covered areas such as organization, changing leadership personnel, 
growing Christians in faith formation, discerning call, equipping disciples, and the 
members’ and leaders’ own understanding of financial stewardship in Christian ministry.

The interviews were conducted in different settings. Some of the interviews took 
place in the researcher’s office. Others took place in the homes of some of the members, 
while others took place in New Creation Lutheran Church’s conference room. The 
questions were mostly open-ended. The individual respondents’ names remain 
anonymous to protect their identity and to provide a comfortable environment for 
sharing. The researcher informed those who were being interviewed about the reasons for 
the interview. Open and closed ended questions were posed to the respondents to use 
qualitative and quantitative method.

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196 Thomas G. Bandy, 56.

197 Ibid., 56.
The most obvious data gathered during the open-ended questions was the awareness of the active members of New Creation Lutheran Church about the motivating vision and mission of the congregation and its implications for New Creation’s ministry in the twenty-first century. The open-ended question regarding the congregation’s motivating vision and mission was to find out the members’ own understanding of their congregation’s purpose and mission in the community. If a low percentage of New Creation Lutheran Church’s members knew the significance of the motivating factors in the ministry, then the first obstacle is a lack of vision acquisition. On the other hand, if the members knew the motivating factors such as vision and mission for the future but saw the purpose of the congregation as something else, this disconnect would indicate a lack of knowledge in the direction of the congregation.

Another open-ended question asked was, “What does it mean to be a Lutheran Christian?” This question provided insight into the respondent’s theological understanding of their Christian faith regarding salvation in Jesus Christ. It is this researcher’s assumption that if the respondent was biblically unclear on their own understanding of salvation relating to their faith in Jesus Christ, they would be equally unclear about the salvation of others and what it would take to bring them to true salvation in Jesus Christ.

The next research methodology and procedure this researcher used was closed-ended questions. These questions were designed to provide a profile of individuals who are actively engaged in the ministry of evangelism as well as those individuals who are not actively engaged in fulfilling Jesus’ command to his disciples and the church to make disciples as in Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:18-20. The closed-ended questions were
asked to help the researcher probe theological convictions, practical concerns, and spiritual maturity, and to gain general understanding from the respondents.

**Personal Observations**

As mentioned in the first chapter of this project, this researcher’s goal is to help New Creation Lutheran Church become a viable, growing congregation in Lima, Ohio, as well as to become a welcoming place for all who desire to be a part of the ministry.

During part of the researcher’s personal observations of members of the congregation, he was attentive to his impression that the older members knew how to make first-time visitors to the church feel welcome in the congregation. The observations took place mostly before, during, and after the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning worship services. The timeline for the observations was for a period of five months starting in late 2011 to the end of February 2012. The purpose for the observations was to help this researcher gain some insights on how New Creation members interacted with one another and how they responded to visitors.

**Field Notes in Gathering Data**

In gathering data for this project, field notes played a vital role for this researcher. These field notes came from conversations with leaders from churches that are growing and successful in attracting the unchurched and seekers to their congregations. Listening to these leaders is one possible way to move toward understanding what New Creation needs to look for in an effort to put forth a strategic plan for growth in the future. Learning what makes growing churches successful, especially those with missional intentions, is a helpful insight for this project.
On the other hand, there are lessons or insights to be learned from struggling congregations as well. During the research procedures, this researcher also spent time with some local non-Lutheran mainline denomination pastors and leaders whose congregations tend to be struggling to grow. These clergy included the pastors from Market Street Presbyterian Church in Lima, the United Church of Christ in Spencerville, Ohio, and St. Paul United Methodist Church in Elida, Ohio. These clergy were all helpful in providing this researcher a snapshot for what tends to be their greatest challenges for ministry in the twenty-first century. Their openness to share their joys and concerns in their ministry journey added great deal of insight to this researcher’s understandings of things that need be considered and implemented for congregations like New Creation Lutheran Church to attract the unchurched to its ministry.

On one occasion the researcher met with some leaders of Shawnee Alliance Church in Lima. This church is one of the growing churches in the area. The reason for the visit was to get an insight on what strategic plans were being applied to help growth in that congregation. During the interview, the leaders indicated that their goal was to keep focus on mission and core value for their ministry. Part of their values were to remain faithful to clear Bible teaching and to turn the congregation into a more welcoming place for all people. Another value is to make sure that their worship services are inviting and to help the members to be non-judgmental toward the unchurched individuals attending those worship services. The congregation averaged at least 750 to 800 people in attendance. The leaders also indicated that the membership was over 1500 people.
Conclusion

The final instrument for gathering data for this project was the researcher’s personal notes. These notes were based on observations and keeping a daily and weekly journal as events occurred. In the field, as the researcher conducted interviews, gathered information and reviewed literature, the data seemed quite overwhelming. The notes emphasized the researcher’s own theological reflection as it relates to where New Creation Lutheran Church is in its outreach ministry. Other insights include the direction where New Creation Lutheran Church is headed and what part the congregation’s own core values, mission, vision and purpose will play in achieving its goal for growth.

In this endeavor, the researcher gathered insightful information. It is important to highlight that personal notes are vulnerable to distortion, selective recall, and self-protecting observation of self-interests. With that being said, this researcher remains aware of his personal points of view. This is the reason he is thankful to have his team members on this project, all of whom this researcher hold in high esteem, share their gift of candor and read this research project to identify any biases that may hinder the goal of this project. The doctoral program process seeks to identify and clarify misinterpretations based on any overly subjective field notes.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS OF DATA

This research project started in Chapter One where the researcher developed a statement of the problem, which states that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio lacks the vision strategy to attract the unchurched and persons of color to their worship life. The researcher also pointed out that purpose of the study is to help New Creation Lutheran Church create a clear vision for a new direction, and to put in place a clear strategy for evangelism to the unchurched and persons of color. This writer also formulated three research questions to guide the research process. Those questions are as follows: A) What attracts the unchurched and persons of color to non-Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) congregations in Allen County and Lima, Ohio? B) What steps can be developed to help New Creation attract the unchurched and persons of color to its worship services? C) What action plan can New Creation put in place and implement to attract the unchurched and person persons of color into its worship services?

This research project is about formulating strategies for outreach to the unchurched through evangelism under the discipline of congregational mission and leadership. The intention of this researcher in this chapter is to present a careful analysis of the data and results which were gathered during the research process in Chapter Four. With that being said, this researcher found the words of Reggie McNeal helpful in putting
the goal of this chapter in proper context regarding data relating to congregational mission and visionary leadership. McNeal writes, “Great leaders want results. Great organizations get results because they go for results and are willing to live and die by the result they identified as their benchmarks for success. Effective missional congregations are no exception. They know what constitutes success for them in God’s eyes and they go after it.”

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This researcher’s intention in this chapter is to present results that are fair and balanced. The data formulated through the research methodology and procedures were based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method was done through experiments and surveys, while the qualitative method was done through interview and observation.

**Data Gathered Through Survey from Church Council Members**

One of the research methods used for this project was a short survey of the congregational council. The group is comprised of nine members - three women and six men. They are the leaders who oversee the business of the congregation and work in partnership with the pastor. The survey contained six short questions that centered on evangelism, mission, and vision (future direction) of the congregation.

On the question regarding evangelism to the surrounding community, the data from the responses revealed that all the participants wanted to see the congregation grow in a numerical form. The overall response was that they wanted to see more youth and children in the life of the congregation.

The data also revealed that all of the nine respondents shared a common concern over the future financial status of the congregation. They pointed out that without authentic growth, the congregation was headed toward financial difficulty in the near future. One respondent was concerned that the congregation needed more members to help pay the bills. This view was also held by others who participated in another interview that was conducted by Carl Beck, CEO of Church First, Inc. The findings from this survey also indicated that all nine respondents were concerned about a certain type of worship music used mainly during the traditional worship services. This response was a surprise as there was no question in this particular survey about music.

There was unified agreement among those respondents of their concerns over specific ministry aspects including evangelism (such as membership growth), youth and children’s ministry, financial support, and revising the order and style of worship services. The overall feelings from the respondents did not indicate that the congregation was in any immediate danger or serious trouble. However, the concerns reflected symptoms of what was looming over the congregation.

On the question regarding the mission of the congregation, the results from the respondents reflected that all of them held the understanding that the mission of New Creation Lutheran Church was to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the residents of the service community. Five of those respondents pointed to the Sunday morning and Saturday evening worship gatherings as the place to share the gospel. Four of the respondents pointed out that the members were to be about getting involved in the life of the service community. One strong trait of the respondents was an overwhelming sense of God’s love in their lives and their desire to help carry out the work of evangelism. The
one challenge the data revealed about the respondents in the leadership circle was that many of them were over the age of eighty with health problems. As in most of the ministry aspects, they wish they could help with evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and minority in the community but they feel that because of their ages in life, they cannot implement this desire and hope.

**Interview Conducted on the Financial Viability**

The purpose of the congregational interview was to gather data as to how able and ready the members of New Creation Lutheran Church were to financially support the ministry of the congregation presently and in their future endeavors. During the initial interview conducted by Carl Beck, the CEO of Church First, Inc., forty-seven members of the congregation were interviewed in thirty-one sessions. Some interviews were conducted at the church in Lima, while others were conducted in neighboring Elida, Ohio, and still others in their homes.

Interviewees ranged from those who were charter members of Peace Lutheran Church, those who had grown up at Trinity Lutheran Church, and those who had joined New Creation Lutheran Church since it began. Data revealed that those interviewed were deeply involved and informed well enough to provide valuable information for the study.

An overwhelming majority of those interviewed had a favorable opinion of New Creation. The congregation sees itself as friendly and open to new people.

The other area this researcher wanted to understand was how the members of the congregation felt about the plan regarding New Creation’s future building project. Interviewees’ hopes and dreams for New Creation’s new facilities had some common themes. One of those themes was to correct the problems that interfere with ministry at
the present existing facilities. It was indicated that the new facility should be on one level. The other was to incorporate the very successful daycare center in Elida into the facility. The most common wish was for the new facility to be designed to attract new young families.

Almost three-fourths of those interviewed felt that the new facility would allow New Creation to expand its ministry. Some recognized that a new facility would further energize those already involved at New Creation and that enthusiasm would draw others to it. Almost two-thirds felt that the congregation would actively support a capital campaign to help pay for a new building. Almost nine out of ten felt that the congregation would or probably would support a campaign. The data further revealed that a campaign would be a new experience for most of the congregation’s members. However, most of the interviewees were reassured by the high level of trust most have for congregational leaders who have led them to this point. The data also revealed that interviewees held the notion that a campaign is a high or very high priority for over one-third of those interviewed. Another one-third indicated a campaign was a medium priority. Less than one-third said it would be a low or very low priority.

Only one percent indicated that they would not contribute to a campaign. The great majority (seventy-seven percent) suggested that they would give toward a major campaign. Sixteen percent of those interviewed had thought seriously enough about giving gifts to the church toward a campaign. The total amount suggested by those sixteen percent was near $100,000.

Another sixteen percent indicated that they would not be able to give more to the church than they were presently giving. Therefore, their gift to the campaign would be at
the expense of their giving to the current ongoing ministry of New Creation. A total of fourteen individuals, who were mentioned as leaders that the congregation would be comfortable following, make them strong candidates to chair a campaign. Eighty-seven percent said they would or perhaps would be comfortable being involved in a campaign. Only thirteen percent indicated they would be uncomfortable being involved at any level. An overwhelming majority of those interviewed indicated they were looking forward to the future and expected to be a part of New Creation Lutheran Church in a new location. This data proved that New Creation, though small in number, has the financial capability and willingness to undertake a major ministry project in the future.

**Breakdown of Questions Used in the Interview Regarding Financial Viability**

The questions used in the interview were as follows:

1. **How and when did you become involved with New Creation Lutheran Church?**
   
The answers to this question ranged from late 1969 to 2004. The purpose of this question was to give insight to the interviewer of how long the participants have been involved with the ministry of New Creation Church.

2. **What is your general opinion of New Creation Church?**
   
   Ninety-two percent responded favorably, but six percent had a mixed response. Two percent had no opinion.

3. **What do you consider to be New Creation’s greatest strength?**
   
   Two respondents indicated that the congregation was friendly and cares for one another. Another commented that combining both Trinity Lutheran and Peace
Lutheran to make New Creation was the best thing the members ever did. Eight respondents commented that they find New Creation to be warm and accepting, and that they found their pastor to be a great asset. Five respondents also pointed out that they find the daycare to be a wonderful ministry. Others pointed out that the church preaches the Word of God as it was meant to be preached.

4. Since no organization is perfect, what area(s) do you feel need to be strengthened?
   Some comments were that we must be evangelistic in order to attract young families (10 respondents); we want to grow and bring in young families (3 respondents); and we must serve youth and young families (8 respondents).

5. What is your opinion of New Creation’s lay leadership?
   Answers: Favorable 94%, mixed or unfavorable 3%, no opinion 3%.

6. What is your opinion of the pastor?
   Answers: Favorable 100%, mixed, unfavorable, or no opinion 0%.

7. Do you feel that the new facility if built, will allow New Creation to expand its ministry?
   Yes 71%, perhaps 13%, no 13%, no opinion 3%.

8. Do you feel that the congregation will actively support a capital campaign to enhance New Creation’s ministry for growth?
   Yes 62%, perhaps 26%, no 6%, no opinion 6%.

9. Where would you place such campaign on your list of giving priorities?
   Very high 10%, high 29%, medium 32%, low, 13%, very low 16%.

10. Who would be some of the strongest candidates to lead a successful campaign at this church?
The names provided from this particular question were furnished to the researcher under separate cover.

11. If one of these persons asked for your financial help to foster New Creation’s ministry, would you agree?

Yes 81%, perhaps 6%, no 13%, no opinion 0%.

**Interview Conclusion**

The data collected in this interview process on the financial viability of New Creation reveals that most members were not only excited about the future prospects of their congregation, but that they were also willing to financially support the ministry ambitions of the congregation.

**New Creation Lutheran Church Congregational Assessment Survey**

There were forty-seven questions total in the survey. Ninety-five surveys were sent out to members of New Creation Lutheran Church Lima, Ohio. Eighty-three surveys were returned. The survey covered five categories which included individual spirituality, financial stewardship, evangelism/outreach to the unchurched, leadership, and worship. The data results in this survey were computed based on the selected questions from each category. The forty-seven questions used in this survey were centered on both quantitative and qualitative research procedures, and they are made available in Appendix “A” in this research project. Meanwhile, the questions presented with data results in these sections were only parts of the total questions used in the survey. These questions were carefully selected from each category because they were designed to give clear insight on how the respondents responded to questions in the particular category. The questions
were also to help the researcher understand how respondents were feeling about the ministry of New Creation at this particular time in the ministry.

In Category One of the survey, there were eleven questions total. The researcher’s intention was to find out how the members chose to join New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio and how welcomed and included they felt in being a part of the congregation. Other questions focused on how they felt about worship and how they viewed the pastoral leadership. Part of the questions covered whether individual members had a particular spiritual practice they exercised outside of the worship services. In this category, the researcher also wanted to know whether the members were ready and willing to address issues that relate to changes in the life of the congregation. Questions 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, and 11 were chosen out of eleven questions in this category to give a snapshot to the reader on how members responded and how the data were computed. The responses and data on these questions are presented in the appropriate graphs below.

**Data Results on Selected Questions in Category One of the Survey**

**Question 1:** Are you a member of this congregation?

A. Yes 78  
B. No 7
Question 2: If yes, how did you start attending this congregation?

A. As a result of a particular ministry or mission of the church  15
B. As a result of an invitation from a member  10
C. By choosing this church out of several visited  58

This question was designed to help the researcher understand how many attenders of this congregation were regular members and how many were non-members. The response to the question indicated that fifty-eight of the respondents were actual members and seven other respondents were participants.

Question 3: How welcome and included do you feel in this church?

A. I still feel like an outsider  13
B. They took me in and made me feel welcome  68
C. No Comment  2

The purpose for this question was to find out how well those who called the church their own felt welcomed in the congregation. When people feel a part of an organization, they are most likely to support the mission of that organization. The data on this question indicated that most of those who responded felt welcomed into the life of the congregation. Only two had no comment.
Question 9: Based on your understanding of the values, beliefs, vision and mission of New Creation Lutheran Church, how ready do you feel when it comes to telling the unchurched about the work of Christ at New Creation Lutheran Church?

A. I feel not that ready  34
B. I feel ready to tell the story about the work of Christ  42
C. I am not sure  7

This question was designed to help the researcher find out whether members of the congregation clearly understood the values, beliefs, visions, and mission of New Creation and whether they would be willing to share that with the unchurched in order to evangelize them. The data indicated that thirty-four respondents did not feel properly ready to share with the unchurched. Forty-two respondents indicated they were ready to do so, while seven respondents were not sure.

Question 10: Do you think most members and staff of New Creation Lutheran Church are anxious about or open to creative new ideas?

A. Rarely anxious  0
B. Very open  68
C. Not sure  15
While the data on this question showed that sixty-eight respondents indicated that they were opened to creative ideas, fifteen respondents were not sure. The data on this question did not show whether the sixty-eight respondents were ready for a change, although they were open to new ideas.

Question 11: Do you think most members and leaders of New Creation Lutheran Church are fearful or daring talking about issues that addresses change in the life of the congregation?

A. Very Fearful 18
B. Positively daring 54
C. Not sure 11

This question was intended to help the researcher understand whether the leaders and members of New Creation were ready to address and deal with issues that bring about changes in the life of the congregation. The data on this question indicated that fifty-four respondents were positively daring and were willing to address the issue of change. Eighteen respondents indicated they were fearful, while only eleven respondents indicated they were not sure.
Data Results on Questions in Category Two of the Survey

There were six questions total in this category, which are included in Appendix A. This researcher selected question numbers 1, 4, 5, and 6 to show how the members of New Creation responded to this section of the survey. These questions were designed to help the researcher understand the ministry tasks of New Creation. Other areas in the life of the congregation the researcher wanted to understand in this category included: a snapshot on the weekly worship services, how the members felt about Christian education in the congregation, members’ spiritual relationship with God, and the steps being used to help members discover their personal gifts for ministry in the congregation.

Question 1: When it comes to providing worship services that deepen the member’s experience of God and the Christian tradition:

A. I feel the worship service needs more emphasis  4
B. I am generally satisfied  76
C. I feel it receive too much attention  0
D. No comment  3

Question 4: When it comes to helping members deepen their personal relationship with God:

A. I feel it need more emphasis  8
B. I am personally satisfied  75
C. I feel it received too much attention  0
Question 5: When it comes to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unchurched and seeker:

A. I feel it needs more emphasis  73
B. I am generally satisfied  5
C. It receives too much attention  5

Question 6: When it comes to helping members discover their own spiritual gifts for ministry and outreach to the unchurched and seekers in the community:

A. I feel the need for more emphasis  55
B. I am generally satisfied  24
C. I feel it receives too much attention  4
Data Results on Selected Questions in Category Three of the Survey

The questions in this category were designed to help the researcher understand New Creation Lutheran Church’s organizational characteristics for congregational mission in the community they serve. The questions in this category are also carefully crafted to help this researcher understand how well New Creation members are informed about the needs of the service community and also to see whether the community is aware of New Creation’s presence among them. There were ten questions in this category which are also included in Appendix A. Questions 2, 3, 4 and 8 are presented here to show sample of data collected in this category.

Question 2: The community around the church is well informed about the activities taking place in our church.

   A.  I strongly agree 11
   B.  I moderately agree 2
   C.  I slightly disagree 26
   D.  I disagree 49
Question 3: Study of the needs of our congregation and the community is regularly undertaken as the basis for the church planning.

A. I strongly agree  14  
B. I moderately agree  5  
C. I slightly disagree  38  
D. I disagree  26

Question 4: The theological and biblical implications of important decision making are regularly discussed among the members of our congregation.

A. I strongly agree  60  
B. I moderately agree  15  
C. I slightly disagree  5  
D. I disagree  3
Question 8: It is easy to summarize for visitors and non-members what our congregation is about in the community.

A. I strongly agree   32
B. I moderately agree  13
C. I slightly disagree  11
D. I disagree   13

**Data Results on Selected Questions in Category Four of the Survey**

This category was of a different style than the other category questions. The respondents were asked to measure their thoughts or feelings on a scale of 1-7 regarding the congregation’s identity. They were asked to show where they thought the congregation was on that scale at this point in the ministry. There were nine questions total in this category. On the scale of 1-7 the measurement from between 1-4 could be considered favorable to the statement and the measurement from 6-7 could be measured as less favorable to the statement. In the case where the respondent marks 5, it indicates in the data that they are undecided.
The respondents were asked to rate the nine questions in this category. The questions were designed to gather data results on their understanding of the congregation’s identity, the level of the congregation’s involvement in the community, and whether the congregation is fully aware of the needs of the community. Part of the questions were designed to help the researcher understand whether the congregation was moving toward incorporating contemporary ideas in its worship practice or if it was strictly influenced by history and tradition.

Statement 1: I think our church is more influenced by history and tradition ... Our church is more influenced by contemporary ideas and trends.

On this question, 3 respondents marked number 2. Two respondents marked number 3, sixty-eight respondents marked number 4, one respondent marked number 5, and one respondent marked number 6, while eight respondents marked number 7. The data on this question showed that seventy-three of the respondents shared the view that New Creation Lutheran Church is more influenced by history and tradition while ten respondents shared the view that New Creation was influenced by contemporary ideas and trends.

Statement 2: Members of NCLC are similar in values and life style to the people who live immediately around the church ... Members of NCLC are very different in values and lifestyle from people who live immediately around the church.

Seventy-one respondents marked number 2, nine respondents marked number 4, and three respondents marked number 6. The data on this statement indicated that about eighty of the respondents shared the view that members of New Creation Lutheran
Church share similar values in life style to people who live immediately around the church. Three respondents did not share that view.

Statement 3: Our church is very involved with the community around it ... Our church is not involved with the community around it.

On this statement, fifty-eight respondents marked number 1, two respondents marked 2, four respondents marked 3, five respondents marked number 4, and seven respondents marked 6, while 3 respondents marked 7. Based on the data gathered on this statement, sixty-nine respondents believed that their NCLC was involved with the community around them. Fourteen respondents did not share that view.

Statement 4: Our church is primarily oriented in serving our members ... Our church is primarily oriented to serving the world beyond our membership.

The data on this statement revealed that forty-nine respondents marked number 3, twenty-one respondents marked number 4. Ten respondents marked number 6, while three respondents marked number 7. The overall data from this statement showed that sixty respondents believed that New Creation Lutheran Church is primarily oriented in serving their own members while twenty-three of the respondents believed that the congregation was about serving the world beyond their membership.

Statement 5: Our congregation feels like one large family ... Our congregation feels like a loosely knit association of individuals and group.

The results from this statement revealed that twenty respondents marked 1, one respondent marked 2, three respondents marked 3, forty-nine respondents marked 4, and ten respondents marked 6. The overall data revealed that seventy-three respondents
shared the view that their congregation is like a large family. Ten respondents share the view that the congregation is like an association of individuals and group.

Statement 6: Our congregation’s approach to individual salvation emphasizes education, nurture, and gradual growth in the faith ... Our congregation’s approach to individual salvation stresses conversion and a born again experience.

The results from this statement revealed that fifty-nine respondents marked 1, one respondent marked 2, eleven respondents marked 3, and twelve respondents marked 4. The overall data from this statement showed that all of the respondents in this statement shared the view that the congregation’s approach to individual salvation emphasizes education, nurture and gradual growth in the faith. This view supports the Lutheran understanding of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Statement 7: Our congregation gives strong expression to its denominational identity and heritage ... It is difficult for a visitor to know to which denomination our congregation belongs.

Seventy nine of the respondents on this statement marked 1, four respondents marked 2, and eight respondents marked number 3. The data from this statement clearly showed that all the respondents hold the view that the congregation gives strong expression to its denominational identity and heritage. The data strongly supports the view of what Lutheran Christians believe about their Lutheran tradition.
**Statement 8:** Our congregation needs to prioritize a strategy to attract the unchurched and people of color to its worship services ... Our congregation needs to relax and maintain the status quo.

Among those responding to this statement, seventy-one of them marked 1, four marked number 2, while eight marked number 3. The overwhelming result to this statement points out that all those responding agreed that New Creation needs to prioritize its strategy to attract the unchurched and persons of color into its worship services.

**Statement 9:** In the next five years, our congregation needs to be intentional about evangelism/outreach to people ages 18-35 ... identifying and recruiting young people ages 18-35 should not be a priority for our congregation at this time.

Among those responding to this statement, seventy-seven marked number 1 on the scale, while six of those responding marked number 3 on the scale. The total data on this statement strongly revealed that all those who responded strongly believe that in the next five years, New Creation Lutheran Church need to be intentional about evangelism/outreach to people ages 18-35. This view is also strongly shared in other survey and interview previously conducted

**Data Results on Selected Questions in Category Five of the Survey**

To give a snapshot on how members responded to these eleven questions, the researcher selected questions 2, 7, and 9 to show how members felt about sharing the gospel with the unchurched in the service community. The questions were also designed to help the researcher understand how much the members of New Creation Lutheran Church were
willing to invite the unchurched in the life of the congregation. Question 2 was designed to help researcher find out how well the members of New Creation Lutheran Church understood their identity as a Lutheran Christian. Question 7 was designed to find out from members why they thought the congregation existed as a congregation. Question 9 was prepared to find out from members what strategy they thought the congregation needed to put in place for evangelism and to help invite the unchurched in the life of the congregation. Questions 1-11 in this category are included in Appendix A to help the readers get a clear understanding on the data gathered in this survey in its entirety.

Question 2: What does it mean to be a Lutheran Christian?

A. I am saved by grace through faith  7
B. It means salvation is offered through Christ alone and the Bible is God’s Word therefore it is true  13
C. In Holy Communion, I believe that bread and wine are the true body of Jesus Christ  15
D. I believe that all the above are true  48

Question 7: Why do you think New Creation Lutheran Church exists?

A. For members to connect with one another  7
B. To worship  9
C. To study the Bible, preach, teach, and make disciples for Jesus Christ  13
D. All of the above  55
Question 9: In your opinion, what can New Creation Lutheran Church do to be successful in Evangelism, and inviting to the unchurched in the twenty-first century?

A. Be opened to the will of the Holy Spirit 12
B. Be willing to try new ideas that will be inviting to young people ages 18-35 48
C. Be intentional and opened about changes that are necessary to help the congregation be transformational in the twenty-first century 13
D. All of the above 10

The data regarding the responses to this question reveals that the members of New Creation paid close attention to this question and responded on all levels. Twelve respondents indicated that members of the congregation need to be open to the will of the Holy Spirit when it came to evangelism and attracting the unchurched. Forty-eight respondents indicated that the congregation needs to be willing to try new ideas and be inviting to the particular age group from 18-35. Thirteen respondents indicated that the congregation needed to be intentional and open about changes that are necessary to transform the congregation in the twenty-first century.
The data here further indicates that those who responded to the middle answer were most likely to participate in some way in the congregation’s effort toward evangelism.

**Data Results from Interviews with ELCA Pastors in Allen County, Ohio.**

Three ECLA congregations in Allen County participated in the interview. The interview took place at different settings agreed upon by the pastors and the researcher. All the pastors were asked the same questions during the interview: why do you think your congregation exists as a church in your community?

One pastor responded that his congregation exists because the members have a sense of commitment to the community. Another pastor commented that one of his congregation’s commitments was to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to make Christ known. The third pastor responded that their congregation decided to participate in a soup kitchen ministry to help serve hot meals to the people of the inner city of Lima community as another way to proclaim Christ’s love.

The pastors were asked about the ethnic breakdown of the membership such as Anglo-Saxon, African-American, and Hispanic. Data collected on this question indicated that minority members such as African-American and Hispanic only made up less than one percent of the membership. They were asked what attracted these minorities to their congregations. It was revealed that those persons of color (minorities) became members mostly through adoption rather than through evangelism or outreach to those specific ethnic groups.

The interviewees were asked about specific evangelism strategies to invite the unchurched and persons of color into the membership of their congregations. One person
indicated that there was no specific evangelism strategy put in place to attract new members, nor the unchurched in the life of their congregation. Another respondent commented that they have erected a new electronic sign on one of high traffic streets to show the Lutheran presence in the community and show the location of their church to the residents in their service community. This respondent also pointed out that their congregation also decided to conduct outdoor services during the summer to invite their unchurched neighbors to their worship services. They sponsor community events to address social issues and the need for inclusiveness.

The leaders were also asked, how will your congregation feel about putting more emphasis on evangelism to attract the unchurched and persons of color to your congregation?

The responses and data collected through the interview indicates that while members of the participating congregations seemed open to new idea of evangelism and inclusiveness to the unchurched and persons of color, most members honestly did not feel that they were ready for such transition and change.

The leaders were also asked about the total membership of their congregation at this time under their pastoral leadership. The word membership in this denomination is broken down into four main parts: (1) total numbers of people on the congregation’s roster, (2) the number of people who are considered active members, all of whom do not attend regular worship but regularly participate in other regular functions of the congregation, and regularly make financial contribution to the church (3) the number of regular weekly worshippers who tithed, and (4) inactive members. Active members means those who are active in helping keep the work of the ministry going on a regular
basis, but some of those individuals may not attend all weekly worship services but may
attend worship services at least one or twice a month, participate in Holy Communion,
and give their tithes. The third part includes those who are regular weekly worshippers;
who regularly contributed their tithes to help meet the financial budget of the ministry of
the congregation, and participate in Holy Communion. Inactive members are people who
were once active in the life of the congregation but for some reason are no longer
involved in the life of the ministry, but still have their names on the roster as members.

The names of the three ELCA congregations who participated in the interview
process in Allen County Ohio are not mentioned specifically here but will be identified
by the following letters: Congregation A, Congregation B and Congregation C. The
reason for that is to help respondents and participating congregations to provide a clear
and honest data to the researcher for this project. The chart below presents a breakdown
of results based on the three categories, total congregation membership on the roster,
active membership, actual weekly worshippers, and inactive members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Actual Weekly</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roster</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Worshippers</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>81.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The leaders of the participating congregations were asked to measure their
members’ attitude on a scale from 1 to 10 regarding evangelism and outreach to the
unchurched and persons of color to their worship services. The number 1 is the lowest on
the scale and the number 10 is the highest on the scale.
The overall average of the data from the interviews regarding the congregations’ attitude toward evangelism to the unchurched and outreach to persons of color was at 4 on the scale. When the pastors were asked whether the members would be willing to get involved in evangelism and whether they were ready to welcome the unchurched and persons of color into their worship community, the results revealed that all three congregations welcomed the idea, but were not ready to act.

Secondly, the data results on the chart above revealed that while there were a large number of members on the rosters of all three Lutheran congregations ranging from 600 to 800, the numbers of inactive members were greater than active members in all three congregations. The data break down on congregation A revealed that the congregation has 600 members on its roster, but they only have 200 active members which is 33%. Their average in worship attendance of 120 amounts to 20%. This also indicates that there are at least 80 active members who were not worshipping regularly but were involved in other aspects of the ministry of the congregation. This also leaves a total of 400 inactive members at 80%. This data proves that this congregation is rapidly declining in membership with no clear evangelism strategy to reverse that state.

In congregation B, the data shows that this congregation has 800 members on the roster. This congregation has 200 active members, which is equal to 25%. The congregation also has an average of 150 people in their weekly worship services. This amounts to 18.75%. This congregation also has 600 inactive members which amounts to 81.25%. This data proves that this congregation is declining in membership as well.

The data also points out that congregation C has 700 members on the roster with 200 active members, which make up 28.5%. The average weekly worship attendance is at
175 people. This makes up 25%. This congregation also has 400 inactive members, which makes up 75%. Like the other two congregations, congregation C is also declining in membership.

The overall data revealed that while there were many names on the roster of all three congregations, there were actually smaller numbers of their members participating in the weekly worship services. The data revealed that all participating congregations were facing serious decline in membership.

Data Results from Interviews with Pastors Serving Growing Non-Lutheran Congregations in Allen County Ohio

This researcher interviewed two pastors serving at two growing non-Lutheran congregations to find out what strategies were being used to attract people to their congregation and their ministry. The two growing congregations that participated in this research project were also in Allen County, Ohio. The interview took place at each of the participating congregations’ sites.

During the interview with one of the pastors, it was discovered that the membership of their congregation at the time was up to 1,300 people on the roster, with 900 active members. The average weekly worship attendance was about 700-750. The ethnic breakdown of the particular congregation at the time of the interview was as follows: 80% African-American, 15% white, and 5% percent Hispanics. The makeup of the staff members was said to be diverse with black and white working side by side. This congregation is situated in a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Lima.

The data also showed that the congregation had a strong youth ministry going on. However, while the congregation was said to be enjoying a good youth program, there
was an underlining concern that youth ministry was becoming a bit difficult to implement. The reason given was that as youth graduated from high school and moved away for college, effort to recruit and replace those leaving was becoming a bit in the life of the congregation. It was discovered further that the leaders were always trying to design new strategy and youth events such as Youth Sunday, youth retreats, and youth car wash to keep their youth interested in the ministry.

When asked about a specific evangelism strategy to attract the unchurched to their congregation, the respondents indicated that there was not a specific evangelism strategy. However, the leaders taught their members to learn how to tell their story with their friends and neighbors about how their life has changed in Christ as they participated in the church outreach program. The respondents indicated that they encouraged their members to be diligent and intentional about inviting their neighbors and friends to worship and help them join one of the congregation’s small support groups.

One of the interviewees said, “People were not joining this congregation because of the Baptist denomination. Denomination is not what draws people to a congregation. What draws people to this church is the clear authentic preaching of the Word of God with the working and presence of the Holy Spirit.” This pastor asserted further by saying, “When the members and leaders of a congregation seek ways to be informed and aware of the needs of the people of the community they serve, and design their ministry plan around those needs of the residents of the community, God will bless such a

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199 This quote was made by Reverend Joiner, pastor of one of the growing congregations in Allen County, Ohio during the August 2012 interview at his church.
congregation with new members and all other resources they may need to carry out their mission in Christ’s name.”

One other insight this researcher discovered was that the congregations’ leaders also made it part of their mission to identify particular needs such as small groups for singles, widows, and widowers, those who were grieving for the loss of loved ones, or support for those who were suffering from drugs and alcohol addiction in the community. They created space in their congregation for those people to meet and provided help to them. The members of the congregation understood that evangelism was the work of all the members, not just the leaders nor the few.

One of the growing congregations used a strategy called “Closing the Back Door” to help new members join the congregation and stay. Many congregations are trying to attract new members, but they do not know how to maintain and keep those new members who join the congregation. The idea of “Closing the Back Door” was used by one of the growing congregation to help solve that problem.

The other insight this researcher discovered through interviews with pastors from the growing non-Lutheran churches was a high level of hospitality and authentic, biblically focused worship and preaching. People were pleased with the direction the congregation was taking and were pleased to see their congregation involved in the community. As a result, members were excited to be a part of the ministry of those growing congregations. This researcher also discovered that one of the common traits or

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200 The quote was also a continuation of statement from Reverend Joiner made during the 2012 summer interview in August in Allen County, Ohio.

201 This was a phrase used during an interview process by Reverend Joiner at one of the growing Churches in Allen County. He used the phrase, “Closing the Back Door” as one of the strategies their leadership team used to help new members to stay and be involved in the life of the congregation. The interview took place in August, 2012.
efforts the participating growing congregations used were that they wanted to understand the needs of the service community. By doing so, they were willing and able to design their ministry around the needs of the people in those communities.

For example, the pastor of one of the growing congregations located in Shawnee Township in Allen County, Ohio, revealed that they created small group opportunities for those who have gone through divorce or are in the process of divorce. They were also providing support group opportunities for those who were suffering from drug and alcohol addiction. The congregation made a pledge commitment never to make a judgmental comment toward those who were in those small group settings within the congregation, but to encourage them to feel the love of Christ and as they grew in the love of Christ. They made it as part of their mission to help those individuals feel welcome and be assimilated in the congregation’s worshiping community. The research revealed that those growing congregations were not only ambitious, but the leaders were willing to help their members to be both outwardly and inwardly focused. The leaders of the growing congregation aimed high on what they felt they could do.

The data pointed out that growing congregations were visionary in where they were going in their ministry. They also knew what they thought God was calling them to be about. They had vision for their ministry and they knew what their mission was.

The growing congregations were goal-oriented and seemed to be intentional about making sure that everyone knew where the church was headed and how they were to get there. The overall traits found through the interview with the growing congregations pointed out that the leaders had a sense of clear vision that was tied in to the mission for
their congregation. The insights from the leaders’ own sense was that they considered their ministry as a calling from God to help improve the lives of those they served.

The researcher also interviewed individuals from one of the growing congregations. One couple responded that they felt welcomed by both the pastor and members of the congregation. A common theme shared by some of these individual members was that hospitality was a factor in their joining the congregation. Data also revealed that the pastor’s friendliness was a big factor in their decision to join the congregation.

**Data Results from Selected Persons of Color at New Creation Lutheran Church**

New Creation Lutheran Church has a group of individuals from many different cultural backgrounds such as Vietnamese-American, African-American, and African. These individuals are actively involved in the ministry activities of the congregation. Through their active involvement, they help implement many tasks in the congregation. They take the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ in Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:18-20 seriously.

When the selected individuals were asked about what attracted them to New Creation Lutheran Church, almost all of them cited that both pastor’s and members’ friendliness toward them as a great factor in their joining the congregation. The respondents also indicated that another contributing factor was the congregation’s involvement in the service community. An African-American family who joined the congregation five years ago expressed their desire to join the congregation this way:

We read a short article in the Lima News telling how New Creation Lutheran Church opened her doors to the people of the community, providing shelter for
two weeks to everyone who needed place during the ice storm. We were very
moved by their service and we called the church office to find out about their
service time. We came to one of their services, and we knew that this was the
place God was calling us to be.\footnote{202}

Another factor the data revealed from those interviewed was that the message of
the gospel of Christ was preached in a way it related to their everyday life experience.

The results and data from these individuals revealed that New Creation’s
membership was not only diverse in nature, but also that those who were part of the
congregation had high respect, love and appreciation for each other. New Creation
Lutheran Church in Lima is a very diverse congregation socially, culturally and
economically. It is a multicultural congregation among the Lutheran congregations in
Lima and in the Southwest Ohio conference.

**Researcher’s Personal Observation**

Part of the research process was based on the researcher’s personal observations.
One group within the congregation of New Creation was chosen for this purpose. One of
the reasons for the observation was to see how and why the group members function the
way they do and how that relates to and fosters the mission of the congregation. The
group that the researcher observed was the Lunch Bunch group, which meets every week
on Tuesday at 12:00 for lunch. The researcher observed that the members are very
friendly and very comfortable with one another. The group members joke with one
another and often talked about social issues, religion, politics, and sports.

\footnote{202 This quote was made by an African-American couple who have joined New Creation Lutheran
Church five years ago. They shared this view both during their new member class and also during the
interview process in 2008.}
The group members are all very active in the life and ministry of the congregation. Almost everyone in the group attends the Saturday praise and worship service.

The members of this group are very stable middle class families, though many of them went through the Great Depression in America. Politically, the majority of the members are Republican with very few who are Democrat. In this setting, the members have no reservations in expressing their political views. They are very generous in providing help for those who are in need outside of the faith community. They are very good at providing financial assistance to the ministry of the congregation. Another insight the researcher observed about this group is that they love their congregation and often share their feelings about the future of the congregation regarding youth and children’s ministry, membership growth, and stewardship. These feelings were clearly shared during the congregational assessment survey. Overall, the members of the group seemed to have high appreciation for being a part of the ministry of the congregation. Team spirit seemed to be very high among the group members. Such a spirit of unity creates a welcoming environment for most newcomers who attend this group setting.

At some point during the process of the observation, mainly during the election seasons in 2008 and 2012, the group’s conversations tended to be clearly partisan between Republicans and Democrats. When the group members engaged in political discussions during their fellowship time, such discussions tended to be very tense between the two parties. However, while individuals did not hold back either in backing their favorite politicians or expressing their view or opinion, at the end of the day they always joke and laugh over their discussion and leave in peace. The group members had
no reservation mixing politics with religion, but overall they always turn their focus on the main purpose and mission of New Creation Lutheran Church.

**The Researcher’s Personal Notes**

Since 2010 until the present in 2013, this researcher has kept notes he deemed to be important and significant to this project. This process has come through both written and mental notes, all of which reflect the researcher’s personal feelings regarding the project. These notes also reflect critical aspects of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. That process has amazed the researcher regarding the issues in congregational mission and leadership in the twenty-first century. This is critical for New Creation Lutheran Church’s success in the future. The process has also shown what seemed to be some possible solutions to the issues and problems New Creation Lutheran Church tend to face at the moment. All of this has helped this researcher to personally reflect on this project. This personal reflection falls on several levels of separate and yet interconnected parts such as: 1) What would New Creation Lutheran Church really look like as a growing healthy congregation? 2) How has this endeavor helped the researcher tell his personal story? 3) How has God been involved in this entire project? 4) What does it mean to be a pastor of color in a declining congregation and denomination, and an evangelist in a mostly white affluent community? The personal notes gathered through the project have helped this researcher with focus and clarity in the direction of this project.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reason for this research project has been to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio to create and put in place a clear strategy for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color. New Creation Lutheran Church’s mission statement says, “New Creation Lutheran Church is called by God to gather, shape and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of God’s children.” However, the effort to implement the mission statement through evangelism and outreach to all of God’s children seemed to be failing. It has been the intention of this researcher to help the members and leadership of this church to refocus and be intentional about their mission in the service community.

This chapter provides the four final steps in this research project. The steps include a summary, findings, conclusion, and recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations of this project will be presented to the leadership and members of New Creation Lutheran Church to help them create an authentic strategy for outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in the service area. As part of the discipline in congregational mission and visionary leadership, the resources discovered through this project hopefully will help New Creation Lutheran Church to design a clear strategy for its ministry goal through outreach to the unchurched in Lima and Allen County, Ohio.

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Summary

This research project began with Chapter One providing an introduction, which included a review of the problem, the purpose of the project, the research questions, the research methodology used, the assumptions and limitations of the project, definitions of key terms, and a proposed organization of the study. Overall, this researcher used Chapter One to establish the direction and focus of the project.

In Chapter Two, this researcher presented a biblical and theological foundation for the research project. The biblical text of Acts 1:6-14 was used to establish the case for the primacy of Jesus’ command to the disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them to go out and be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all around the world. This researcher also used Matthew 28:18-20 as a background text to make the case of why New Creation Lutheran Church needs to be intentional about carrying out the mandate of the Great Commission to reach out to the unchurched and persons of color.

The need for inclusiveness is not a new thing; it is a plan God had intended for his church as clearly stated in these two biblical texts. For the purpose of this project, Acts 1:6-14 was used to show Jesus’ original blueprint for evangelistic strategies, inviting people of every race, culture, class, and social background to be a part of God’s Kingdom.

Chapter Three reviewed literature and other sources that pertained to the subject of being witnesses of Jesus Christ to the unchurched and persons of color in the local community. During the literature review, this researcher used 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, among other texts, to make the case of why New Creation Lutheran Church needed to
reach out to the unchurched and persons of color as a witnessing community of faith. In this passage, Paul used the metaphor of the church as a body with many parts which is baptized and united by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greek, slave or free. This text supported the need for the church in the twenty-first century to be inclusive and inviting to all people, regardless of their race, creed, ethnicity, or social or economic background.

Also in Chapter Three, this researcher found the writing of Marti Jewell to be supportive of the purpose of the project. Jewell’s writing on the theology of inclusiveness supports the need for New Creation Lutheran Church to have a missional focus in order to successfully transform itself to be inviting and welcoming to the unchurched and persons of color. Kent Hunter’s insights also shed light on the topic of change and the challenges it poses to the local and national church. Hunter points out that as the church moves into the twenty-first century, it faces the reality of change. He also presents four steps of the “actionary” church for outreach to the unchurched. These steps are to help determine the general health of the local congregation in its own context. Also, Hunter provides six questions for diagnostic observation within the local congregation.

Gary McIntosh’s insights on biblical church growth also provided understandings in helping this researcher gain more knowledge for this project. He made the point that no member or leader of a congregation ever wants to say they want their congregation to decline, because they all want their congregation to grow. This exertion holds true to many congregations this researcher has come to know and work with in the past. The members and leaders always speak highly of their congregation and ministries.
Other key areas of focus during the literature review in Chapter Three were the role of the spiritual leader in the church, the importance of visionary thinking, and understanding the mission of the local congregation. The purpose was to help this writer gain some insights as to how this literature contributed to these areas of congregational mission as it relates to their ministry. The ELCA’s strategy on how to transform small ELCA congregations for growth in the twenty-first century turned out to be of great value for this researcher.

All of the literature and other sources presented in Chapter Three shed light on steps that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio can take in order to reverse the declining trends it now faces in its ministry in the twenty-first century. The literature and sources pertaining to congregational mission and leadership reveal that the declining trends in congregations are real, but also that there is hope for the church in the United States to reverse such decline if the right strategy is used to deal with the problem.

Chapter Four contained the research methodology and procedures. The researcher used several methods, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, to gather data for this project. Quantitatively, specific questions relating to the project were used to survey people and gather data. Qualitatively, selected individuals or groups of people were interviewed in person or by phone to gather data. Interviews took place over a period of time and on several levels. Those interviewed included members of the council at New Creation Lutheran Church, persons of color at New Creation Lutheran Church, pastors at selected growing congregations in Allen County, and pastors at three ELCA Congregations in Allen County. Other procedures used included observation of selected
small groups at New Creation Lutheran Church and field notes. All of these procedures helped with the gathering of data for this research project.

Chapter Five provided analysis of the data gathered by the researcher. Three research questions were used to help guide the project:

A) What attracts the unchurched and persons of color to non-Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) congregations in Allen County and Lima, Ohio?

B) What steps can be developed to help New Creation attract the unchurched and persons of color to its worship services?

C) What action plans can New Creation implement to attract the unchurched and persons of color into its worship services?

Findings

Findings presented in Chapter Five covered seven main areas of the project:

A) What this researcher called the Cottage Conversation, which this researcher spoke of earlier in Chapter Four.

B) Interview on the financial feasibility on New Creation’s congregation.

C) Congregational assessment survey on New Creation.

D) Interview with persons of color attending New Creation Lutheran Church.

E) Interview with pastors leading Lutheran congregations in Allen County.

F) Pastors leading growing congregations in Lima and Allen County.

G) Outside research findings provided by the Barna Group on the unchurched in the United States.

The main focus for examining the research data for this project is to present a fair and balanced result that will help New Creation Lutheran Church’s leaders and members
design a clear strategy for the congregation’s mission and vision for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in its service area.

**Findings Through the Cottage Conversation**

The Cottage Conversation interview took place in 2009. In this interview, there were five main questions the members were asked. Sixty-five active members participated. The purpose of this interview was to get the general feeling among the members of New Creation Lutheran Church about the future directions of the congregation.

Participants were also asked what their concerns are for New Creation Lutheran Church. All respondents showed concern for burnout for active members of the congregation. A unanimous strong concern was shared over the new ELCA decisions regarding same-sex marriage in the church, which could bring division within the denomination nationally. However, when prompted whether the ELCA decision on same-sex marriage would cost them to withdraw their membership, sixty percent of the respondents did not think they would do so. Fifty-five respondents indicated that there was a need for cross training to ensure continuity during absences.

When the respondents were asked about what they see as God’s purpose for New Creation, almost all of the respondents indicated that they felt God’s purpose for the congregation was to spread the gospel of Jesus and his love with all people. Other phrases that came up in response to this question included outreach, evangelism, seeker friendly worship to the unchurched, and to make Christ known in Lima.

Other findings from this interview process indicated that most members of New Creation wanted to see the congregation make more contact with the outside community,
be more personal, provide training for evangelism, ensure clarity for a new direction, build effective communication among members, and set goals for the future ministry.

**Findings on New Creation’s Financial Feasibility**

An outside group called Church First, led by Mr. Carl Beck, provided this part of the study, to keep the process fair and balanced in collecting honest data. One finding revealed that those who were interviewed were deeply involved and informed well enough to provide valuable information about the congregation. An overwhelming majority of those interviewed had a favorable opinion about New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio.

Another important finding was regarding the possibility of a new facility. Three quarters of those interviewed felt that the new facility would allow New Creation to expend its ministry to attract new members. Nine out of ten respondents indicated that they would financially support a new building program. Only one percent indicated they would not contribute to a new building program, and nine percent had no comment.

Eighty-seven percent of those interviewed said they would be comfortable being involved in a campaign. Thirteen percent indicated they would be uncomfortable being involved at any level. An overwhelming majority of those interviewed indicated they were looking forward to the future and expected to be a part of New Creation Lutheran Church in a new location. Furthermore, the findings also showed that New Creation Lutheran Church, though small in size, has the financial capability and willingness to undertake a major ministry project and fund it in the future. At the time of the interview, the findings revealed that most members were not only excited about the future prospects of their congregation, but that they were also willing to financially support the ministry
ambitions of the congregation. A breakdown of questions used in the interview regarding New Creation Lutheran Church’s financial viability can be found in Chapter Five of this document.

**Congregational Assessment Survey Findings**

The congregational assessment survey had five categories. There was a total of forty-seven questions. Ninety-five survey questionnaires were sent out to New Creation Lutheran Church members. Eighty-three were returned; that is eighty-seven percent. The forty-seven questions were based on qualitative method. The entire questionnaire can be found in Appendix A in this research project. The survey covered individual spirituality for spiritual growth, financial stewardship, evangelism and outreach to the unchurched, congregational leadership, and worship life of the congregation. Data gathered provided the researcher with some insights as to how members are thinking pertaining to the congregation’s ministry.

In category one, the members of New Creation were asked how they started attending this congregation. Fifteen members responded that they joined as a result of a particular ministry, ten respondents indicated that they received invitation from a member, and fifty-eight respondents indicated that they chose New Creation Lutheran Church after visiting several congregations in the area.

Findings in category one revealed that members’ understanding of the values, beliefs, vision, and mission of New Creation Lutheran Church was mixed. Most members considered mission to be the same as vision. The same amount of respondents also understandably lumped beliefs with values in the Christian understanding. Overall data
revealed that seventy percent of the respondents found it somewhat difficult to differentiate mission from vision and beliefs from values.

On the question of members’ readiness to tell the unchurched and persons of color about the work of Christ at New Creation Lutheran Church, thirty-four respondents indicated that they did not feel that ready, forty-two respondents indicated that they felt ready, and only seven respondents indicated that they were not sure. The overall findings on this question indicated that while half of the respondents felt ready to tell the story about the work of Jesus Christ, the other half did not feel comfortable telling the story.

Questions on members’ openness to new ideas that would foster growth and new energy into the congregation revealed that sixty-eight respondents were open to creative new ideas, while fifteen respondents were not sure. When the same respondents were asked whether most members and leaders of New Creation Lutheran Church were fearful or daring in talking about change in the life of the congregation, fifteen respondents indicated that they felt most daring or fearful talking about change. Fifty-four respondents felt positively daring about change, and eleven respondents were not sure. This indicator reveals that while eighteen respondents were fearful about the issue of change in the congregation, most members had a positive attitude toward addressing the issue of change in the congregation.

Another segment of data was gathered in category two. The overall findings in category two were as follows: when it comes to providing worship services that deepen the members’ experience of God and Christian tradition, seventy-six respondents indicated that they were generally satisfied, four respondents indicated that the worship services needed emphasis, and three respondents had no comment. When respondents
were asked about the need to share the gospel of Christ with the unchurched, persons of color, and seekers, seventy-three respondents commented that there was need for more emphasis, five respondents felt a general need for it, while five respondents argued that it receives too much attention. When asked about the need to help members discover their own spiritual gifts for ministry and outreach, fifty-five respondents suggested that it needs more emphasis, twenty-four respondents indicated that they were generally satisfied, and four respondents indicated that there was too much emphasis.

Questions in category three were designed to help the researcher understand New Creation Lutheran Church’s organizational characteristics for congregational mission and leadership in the community, and to understand how well the members and leaders of New Creation Lutheran Church are informed about the needs of the community they serve.

On the question pertaining to the service community around the church being informed about the activities taking place at New Creation, eleven respondents strongly agreed that the community was informed, two respondents moderately agreed, twenty-six respondents slightly disagreed, and forty-nine strongly disagreed. The overall indicator on this question shows that most members did not believe that the community around New Creation Lutheran Church is aware of activities taking place here. Findings further suggest that most members of the congregation also do not believe that the needs of the congregation and the community have been shared regularly to help New Creation in planning for its ministry. This researcher believes that this lack of effort to identify the needs of the community presents a new opportunity to be explored by the leaders of New Creation in putting forth steps to reach out to the unchurched in Lima and Allen County.
In category four, the members were asked to measure their understanding of the congregation’s identity on the scale of 1-10, such as traditions, lifestyle, history, or influences from contemporary ideas.

In statement one, the overall finding was that seventy-three respondents shared the view that New Creation Lutheran Church’s members are more influenced by history and tradition, while ten respondents shared the view that the congregation’s members were influenced by contemporary ideas and trends. Statement two revealed that eighty respondents believe that members of New Creation Lutheran Church share similar values and lifestyles to people who live immediately around the church. Only three of the respondents did not hold that view.

In statement three, it was revealed that sixty-nine respondents believed that New Creation’s members were involved with the community around them. Fourteen respondents did not share that view. In statement four, the data showed that sixty respondents believed that New Creation Lutheran Church is primarily oriented in serving its own members, while twenty-three of the respondents believed that the congregation was about serving the world beyond its membership.

Other findings in this category revealed that most members of New Creation believe that when it comes to individual salvation, the congregation mostly emphasizes education, biblical teaching, and gradual growth in the faith. This finding supports the Lutheran understanding of salvation through grace in Jesus Christ.

Category five of the survey was to help the researcher understand whether members of New Creation understood what it means to be a Lutheran Christian, or whether they were able to clearly articulate their Lutheran belief in words in a way that
the unchurched person could understand. It was also to help the researcher understand whether members were willing and able to do evangelism by inviting the unchurched to their ministry.

When members were asked what it meant to be a Lutheran Christian, seventy-six individuals believed that they were saved by grace through faith, and that the Bible is God’s Word. The same number also holds the view that in Holy Communion, participants in worship, eat, and drink the true body and blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. This finding shows a strong Lutheran understanding of the theology and sacrament of Holy Communion.

When participants were asked what can New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio do to be successful in evangelism and be inviting to the unchurched, twelve individuals said that the congregation needed to be open to the will of the Holy Spirit. Forty-eight individuals suggested that the congregation be willing to try new ideas that would be inviting to young people ages 18-35 as a target group. Thirteen individuals suggested that the congregation be intentional and open about changes that are necessary to help foster transformation in the twenty-first century. The findings in this category indicated that most members are ready for some sort of changes if those changes will bring about transformation, good results, and growth in membership.

All of the respondents indicated that they felt strongly welcomed in the life and activities of the congregation. All respondents indicated that they would have no problem inviting their friends or other relatives to become a member of the New Creation family.
Findings from ELCA Pastors in Allen County Ohio

This researcher interviewed three Lutheran pastors’ presently active serving congregations in Lima and Allen County, Ohio. The goal was first to find out what evangelism strategies were being implemented, and secondly to find out how many persons of color were attending their congregations. Findings revealed that all three congregations did not have a clear evangelism strategy for their ministry. One congregation has not emphasized evangelism for many years. Another leader revealed that the last time his congregation tried an evangelism effort by canvassing the neighborhood was ten years before this interview. When the pastors were asked about the style of worship held in their congregation, all the participants indicated that the worship services were strongly traditional Lutheran worship with liturgical emphasis and traditional Lutheran European hymns. One leader indicated that he has encouraged his worship leaders to try injecting songs from the Hispanic and African American cultural backgrounds. His members seemed to enjoy some of the diversities in the worship music.

Another congregation has tried events such as outdoor services and inviting the residents in the neighborhood to come and share in the activities. They have also erected a new electronic sign to show worship times and upcoming events to the community. The data further revealed that there were more names on the membership list of all three ELCA congregations then there were in the weekly attendance. As less emphasis was placed on evangelism, all three congregations have experienced a slow decline in membership over a period of ten to fifteen years.

In examining the membership breakdown of the three participating Lutheran congregations by race and ethnicity, the data revealed that ninety-nine percent of the
membership in each of the three participating congregations was Caucasian, and one percent was persons of color. Many of those who are considered persons of color are children who were adopted by members of the congregation, not through evangelism to the service community. The findings revealed further that persons of color were less attracted to Lutheran congregations in Lima and Allen County, Ohio.

**Findings from Pastors Serving Growing Non-Lutheran Congregations in Lima and Allen County Ohio**

The research process in this section was primarily to help this researcher gain insights on what strategies were being implemented to help the participating congregations to grow. This researcher identified two non-Lutheran congregations in Allen County that were growing in their ministry. One pastor who was interviewed had served his growing congregation for several years in Allen County, Ohio. This congregation holds a membership of 1,300 people on the roster. The congregation is located in a primarily African-American neighborhood. A prominent leader in this congregation indicated that the congregation has gone through some conflicts several years back over leadership structure, and that conflict brought about a change in pastoral leadership. Conflict presented an opportunity to help the members to evaluate their ministry and reorganize themselves for what God wanted them to be about in that community. That brought about a change in the leadership.

During the interview, it was realized that out of the 1,300 rostered members, there were 900 active members with a weekly worship attendance of over 700 people. It was also realized that eighty percent of the membership was African-American, fifteen percent Caucasian, and five percent Hispanic. The leadership staff was also somewhat
racially mixed. While the congregation is mostly African-American, the staff is diverse, although pastoral leadership is primarily African-American.

The interview results revealed that there were several factors contributing to their success in evangelism. One key factor was that the leaders carefully identified some of the needs of the community they were serving. They referred to the community needs as ministry opportunities. For example, there was ministry for those who were grieving the loss of loved ones, ministry for singles, ministry for people struggling with financial problems, ministry to the youth, and ministry toward the neighborhood watch to fight against crime, and an effort to encourage neighborhood economic development. They also provide ministry opportunity for people who were suffering from drugs and alcohol addictions. They created a ministry for the widows and widowers in the community. Prayer and weekly Bible study were another way they got their members involved and encouraged them to invite their unchurched neighbors. They built trust and relationships between the church and the residents in the community. These efforts allowed the visitors to become involved in the life of the congregation which also got them to call the congregation their home.

This result confirms the researcher’s view that building relationships between the local congregation and the community can be a key factor in attracting the unchurched to the local congregation. Another factor that contributes to attracting the unchurched to the local church is when local congregation tried to identify needs of the community and neighborhood, and was willing to work with residents in meeting some of the needs. Finally, the leaders in these growing congregations were all visionary leaders. They had big dreams and vision for their ministry, and they were willing to take risk by venturing
outside of the denominational traditional norm. They were willing to identify the needs of
their service community and had a broader picture of what God’s mission could look like
in their service community. While all the growing congregations this researcher studied
did not use identical strategies for their ministry, they all started with having a vision,
understanding their purpose, and striving to understand what God’s mission and purpose
were for their ministry. They all held prayer and Bible study as a high priority for being
members of their faith community. They were intentional about seeking guidance from
the Holy Spirit for direction.

**Outside Research Findings about the Unchurched**

This researcher also looked outside the local area to seek what other researchers
have written about the unchurched in the United States. In this case, the Barna Research
Group was a valuable source. One result from the Barna Group was that the unchurched
are a large number of the American population. They can help turn around the declining
trend if they are approached the right way. Secondly, the local church should not assume
that the unchurched population in the United State is just a monolithic group; the
unchurched population is a diverse group in the American population. A strategy to reach
out to them will mean that the local congregation will need to know what the unchurched
population thinks about and wants from the church. Third, the Barna Group suggests that
the title, “unchurched,” is not what this group of non-churchgoers wants to be called.
Barna argued that understanding this simple reality in the churches’ effort regarding the
unchurched through evangelism will help local congregations attract new individuals
from this group.
The Barna Research Group has discovered that those who are considered to be unchurched or non-churchgoers are often the neighbors of those who consider themselves to be churchgoers. In its book, *Grow Your Church From the Outside In*, Barna revealed an interesting dynamic on how the unchurched in the United States thinks. Barna writes:

> When we examine the attitudes of the unchurched, we discovered that a majority of them indicates that the best way to get them connected to a Christian church is not through a worship service. While it was the number one answer, only 4 out of 10 unchurched adults said that attending a worship service would be their preferred means of access. One out of 5 said they would prefer to connect through special events that were opened to all people, both regular and outsiders.  

> “The desired entry point to attract the unchurched” was broken down on seven levels by the Barna Group, based on the following areas: worship service, special event open to all people, community outreach activity, small class for church visitors, small group at someone’s home, adult Sunday school class, and not sure, depends on situation. The results of this research by Barna was made public in their book, for those churches like New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima whose desire it is to attract the unchurched into their church fellowship.

**The Unchurched Response to the Categories of Inquiry**

A. Worship service 40%

B. Special event open to all people 19%

C. Community outreach activity 15%

D. Small class for church visitors 6%

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205 Ibid., 90.
This researcher assumes that the lessons church leaders and their members can learn from this statistic seems to be simple. First, it is not impossible or wrong to attract or invite the unchurched to worship services. This data actually suggests that most unchurched people expect to connect with a local church through the means of worship. However, the statistics also reveal that using worship service alone to attract the unchurched neighbor is not enough in outreach ministries. There needs to be multiple sources of entry provided for unchurched people if the church family wants to attract them to their fellowship.

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206 George Barna, 90.
Next, the leaders and members of the Christian churches need to know who the unchurched individuals are if their desire is to attract them to the church fellowship. The Barna Group describes the unchurched Americans as, “people who do not attend a Christian church, in spite of the presence of 324,000 Protestant and 20,000 Roman Catholic congregations in the United States today.”207 This researcher’s definition of the unchurched is those people who have not attended a Christian church service for the last twelve months, other than a special event such as a wedding or a funeral.

The Barna group identified a person as unchurched “if he or she has not attended a Christian church service at any time during the past six months other than special events such as wedding and funeral.”208 The Barna research shows that unchurched people are most likely to respond to a personal invitation than they are to surrender to pressure to belong to a group. This is a very significant finding and is considered a sign of hope for the declining denominations in the United States. Church leaders and their members cannot assume that just by building beautiful buildings with stained glass windows or doors will cause the unchurched to flock at their doors. There need to be a common relationship built between the unchurched and the faith community.

**Other Insights from the Barna Group about the Unchurched**

The seven choices of preferred titles used by the Barna Research Group for the unchurched were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred term, by percentage</th>
<th>Subgroup especially fond of this label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Inquirer, 52%</td>
<td>Men, parents, Democrats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

207 George Barna, 22.

208 Ibid., 23.
B. Explorer, 48%  
Men
C. Seeker, 40%  
Midwesterners
D. Non-Christian, 20%  
Liberal, never been married
E. Prodigal, 13%  
Born-again Christians; blacks
F. Lost, 11%  
No single group
G. Non-believer, 10%\textsuperscript{209}  
College graduates

Figure 2. What do the unchurched want to be called?

When the results of this survey were placed on the graph, it indicated that the top three preferred names for unchurched group in the U.S. are inquirer, explorer, and seeker in that order. The least preferred names or terms were non-Christians, prodigal, lost, and non-believer.

When the same group was asked regarding their preference of treatment by members of the church if they went to a worship service, seventy-eight percent of unchurched people want to receive a thank you note from the pastor inviting them to

\textsuperscript{209} George Barna, 94.
return, thirteen percent said no, and only ten percent were not sure. The group was also asked by the Barna Group if they would take information given to them about the church. Seventy-two percent responded yes, sixteen percent said no, and eight percent were not sure.

This finding also revealed that most unchurched people often return to mega churches rather than small churches. One reason for this is that people who worship at mega churches are more likely to invite their neighbors than those who attend small churches. Many churches are small because the members are comfortable in a small body. Each time a newcomer visits, the security of the known is dissipated a bit, creating greater discomfort for them. In contrast, common expectation expressed to the people who attend larger churches is that they should invite their unchurched friends.210

This point also confirms the finding from the research in Chapter Four in an interview with growing churches in Allen County. During the interview, the data pointed out that members of growing churches were encouraged to invite their unchurched neighbors and friends to the worship services. Word of mouth invitations and personal relationship with the unchurched friends and neighbors are some of the best marketing strategies that can be used to attract the unchurched to the local congregation. They will not go to the local churches if the local church leaders and members do not invite and welcome them.

210 George Barn, 105-6.
Conclusions

The research findings have led this researcher to draw the following conclusions.

1) Congregational mission and visionary leadership in small congregations is about knowing God’s purpose for the local church in the service community.

2) To reverse the current declining trend, New Creation Lutheran Church’s members and leaders will need to overcome their fear of change and work toward a healthy change that will foster growth.

3) The congregation needs to construct an effective vision statement to help the leadership guide the congregation in the right direction in the twenty-first century.

4) The congregation needs to improve the worship services to be more appealing to young adults and the unchurched.

5) The congregation shows greater strength in hospitality efforts toward visitors and strangers.

6) It will be in the best interest of the congregation to put into place a clear evangelism strategy based on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:6-14 to foster growth in the twenty-first century.

7) New Creation Lutheran Church, being a product of two traditionally established congregations, still functions like two existing congregations. It will be in the best interest of the congregation to develop both short-term (2-3 years) and long-term (5-9 years) ministry strategies to help New Creation achieve its goals to foster growth in the twenty-first century.
Congregational Mission and Visionary Leadership is about Knowing God’s Purpose in the Local Church to Foster Growth

After consulting the writing of many authors and reviewing many resources that speak on the declining trends in the American church in the twenty-first century, it was clear to this researcher that in order for the local congregation to effectively reverse the declining trend in their congregation, they will first need to understand what God’s purpose is for them and for the community. Pastor Rick Warren is right when he asserts that, “Churches grow by the power of God through the skilled effort of people.”

Knowing God’s purpose and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide the leaders will help mobilize the members to follow and implement God’s intended purpose for New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio.

Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.” This verse shed light on one of the critical mistakes many church leaders make. The church is not ours; it belongs to God, but he has called people to be the body of Christ to carry out his mission and purpose. Therefore, the leaders of the local congregation, while praying and working to put many programs and activities together in the name of the church, need to seek spiritual discernment for God’s holy mission and purpose for that particular congregation in that particular community. Human hands or human understanding cannot build a church numerically. The church must let Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit be involved in

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212 Psalm 127:1 [NIV].
the building process. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said to Peter, “and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

One of the many lessons this researcher has learned is that there is not one particular way to grow a church. The leaders and members of the local congregation need to understand their particular context. In order to be a transforming and viable congregation that will be an inviting and welcoming place for all, they need to separate myths from reality. Below are three of Pastor Warren’s myths and three which this researcher finds helpful for this project. They are listed with the appropriate numbers. These myths are often misunderstood for facts when it comes to how many congregations think about the unchurched.

**Myth #1: “You Must Choose Between Quality and Quantity in your Church.”**

Rick Warren argued that it is a mistake to choose between quality and quantity. He suggests that, “every church should desire to reach as many people for Christ as possible as well as desire to help people become as spiritually mature as possible.”

This argument resonates with this researcher because the chance to choose quality over quantity may also create reasons for some individuals to be left out or not to be welcome in certain churches based on social or economic status. Also in this researcher’s view, this myth is a contradiction of what Christ’s purpose and mission is as presented in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:6-14. In both of these biblical texts, the body of Christ is asked to make disciples of all people,

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213 Matthew 16:18 [NIV].
214 Warren, 50.
215 Ibid., 50-51.
Myth #2: “You Must Compromise the Message and the Mission of the Church in Order to Grow.”

Warren’s statement means that the mission of the local church should never be different from the mission of Christ for that local congregation. Christ’s mission and his message should never be compromised, no matter how the culture around the church may be changing. The authentic message of the gospel will always draw people. This researcher agreed with Warren that “The gospel is good news and that it has an attractive power when it is clearly presented.”

It is Jesus who draws people to his church. This is done through the power and help of the Holy Spirit. In John 12:32 we read these words: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” The local church cannot draw people to its ministry by using manmade strategies alone; the church must seek and understand God’s purpose and mission for their ministry in the local context.

Myth #3: “If you are Dedicated Enough Your Church will Grow.”

Warren exerts further in his book that dedication alone is not enough. He pointed out that both dedication and skill are needed to make a church grow. One particular biblical reference, among many, that supports this argument is found in Ecclesiastes 10:10
which read, “If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success.”

One of the many ways through which God has blessed New Creation Lutheran Church over the years is through the many dedicated members that call the congregation their own. They come from different backgrounds with diverse gifts. The demonstrated strong desire and love for Christ’s church and his mission. This is a great strength in the congregation.

**The Fear of Change is an Enemy to Congregational Growth**

All through the interview and survey process, the data regarding New Creation Lutheran Church’s members’ feelings was very clear when it comes to change. The conclusions from the data indicated that the members are not afraid of approaching minor changes, as long as the changes do not take place on a large scale. The data further indicates that members of New Creation want to see changes on several levels in the life of the congregation. Most members shared a strong desire that they want to see changes relative to both worship services.

The next conclusion is that members want to see the leadership guide the entire congregation in designing a strategic plan based on evangelism that will focus on attracting young families with children. Most respondents supported the idea of focusing on the specific age group of 18–40 years old.

This view confirmed Aubrey Malphurs’ argument in favor of the need for healthy change in the life of small, struggling congregations. In his book *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, Malphurs tried to answer one of the most critical questions every

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220 Ecclesiastes 10:10 [NIV].
congregation faces today: “Can new wine be put into old skin?” This raises the question whether an existing church can be changed without destroying it?

Malphurs used the following Scripture verses to make his case. In John 1:17, Jesus presents a contrast between two systems. First, Jesus’ own system of grace, and the second is the Law which was used by the Pharisees. Though they had many things on which they disagreed, Malphurs points out that even the Pharisees were willing to change their view at some point allowing the antithetical system of law and grace to work together. In Acts 15:5, Luke make it known that even some Pharisees changed to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah. This means that there is hope for the church in the twenty-first century. In his conclusion on the hope for a change in the future regarding the future of the church, Malphurs writes:

One of the reasons why so many churches struggle at the end of the twentieth century is because their way or system no longer works. They performed well in the 1940s and 1950s but are antithetical to the ways of the 1990s. But just as John’s disciples and Pharisees can change and adopt new systems, so people in struggling churches can follow suit. In light of the difficult circumstances of 80 to 85 percent of North American churches at the end of the twentieth century, the hope for the future of the church is change. More specifically, this hope focuses on change through two primary areas of ministry: church birth and church revitalization. The future of the church in North America is dependent on them.

The second conclusion this researcher drew pertaining to this project is that in order for the mandate of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:6-14 to be fulfilled, New Creation Lutheran Church will need a clear vision for its ministry in the coming years. Vision is about knowing where a congregation is and where it is going in its ministry process. This means the leaders and members of New Creation will have to

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222 Ibid., 181-182.
draw a clear vision statement to show where they are going as a congregation. It will be in the best interest of the congregation if the leaders can clearly articulate a positive narrative or story of what they would like to see New Creation Lutheran Church accomplish. Such a vision statement needs to find its roots in the Holy Scriptures.

The Need for an Effective Vision Statement

During this research project, this researcher has learned that effective visionary leadership in congregational mission will help promote, revitalize, and strengthen small congregations such as New Creation Lutheran Church in the twenty-first century. This conclusion is supported by the data gathered during the research process. Most participants in both the survey and interviews indicated that the pastor’s involvement and willingness to interact with them played a significant role in their joining the congregation. For example, in the last six years in the life of New Creation Lutheran Church, almost all those who joined the congregation cited that the pastor’s personal friendliness played an important role. They also shared a similar view that they were glad when the pastor took time to explain to them what the ministry at New Creation was about and what they intend to accomplish in the future as they strive to witness to the people in their service community.

Writing in the forward of Aubrey Malphurs’ book, Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century, Haddon Robinson writes, “Strong leaders possess a vision as great as God and as specific as zip code. Our vision must arise from recognizing what
the transcendent, contemporary God wants to do for his church and through his church today."\textsuperscript{223}

This conclusion is also affirmed by Charles Worley who wrote these words in the review of Malpurs’ book, “Vision is a key foundation on which church plans and activities must be built.”\textsuperscript{224} A vision that is given by God, or has God in it, will succeed. For New Creation Lutheran Church to be effective and successful in evangelism and growth in the twenty-first century, the leaders and members will need to (a) cultivate a new vision, (b) communicate that vision, and (c) clarify that vision for people to understand and grab as their own. While part of the pastoral role in the congregation is to go and meet people in the neighborhood and invite them, the pastor is also to help teach and train the members to also take ownership of that responsibility to invite people to their church.

Malphurs also exerts that, “Vision is not a mission.”\textsuperscript{225} There are six things that a vision statement must demonstrate according the Malphurs: the ministry’s purpose, the ministry’s mission, the ministry’s values, the ministry’s strategy, the ministry’s people, and understanding the ministry’s location.\textsuperscript{226} New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio will be stronger if it considers these areas as it works in transforming its ministry to be inviting to the unchurched and people of color in Lima and Allen County.

This researcher also finds George Barna’s insights on this topic very helpful. In his chapter, “Capturing God’s Vision,” Barna presents four ways to capture God’s vision,


\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 75.
“a) Know yourself, b) know your ministry environment, c) know God, and d) know objective wisdom.” This researcher believes that a clear and precise vision statement that will define the direction of New Creation Lutheran Church’s ministry will also provide a road map for where it is going in the twenty-first century.

A Strong Need for Improvement on the Worship Services

Another conclusion this researcher drew from this project is that New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio needs to reorganize and design its worship services to be more appealing to youth, all young adults including those with children, and the unchurched.

Most participants shared deeper concern over the type of music used in the services. About sixty-five percent of those responding strongly suggested their dissatisfaction with the music during the Sunday morning traditional service. About forty-five percent of those who responded expressed their strong concern about the repetitiveness of the music in the contemporary Saturday evening worship.

New Creation currently practices two different services, one of which is a Sunday morning Lutheran traditional service at 10:00 a.m. The Sunday service is comprised of liturgy, hymns on a pipe organ, confession, a traditional pre-written prayer, and the three readings plus the gospel lesson. Holy Communion is served on the first and third Sundays of the month, while it is served in the Saturday contemporary service every week. The Saturday evening celebration, or contemporary worship service, is held at 4:30 p.m. The dress code is less formal and everything is made simple. The music is more contemporary and much more participatory. All music is played on the keyboard and lay

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leadership plays a larger role all through the service. The two different styles of worship services have created hidden tension within the faith community at New Creation Lutheran Church. From a pastoral leadership viewpoint, this issue has often created some frustrated feelings among those involved.

In Psalm 96:4-5, the psalmist reminds Christians about the greatness of the one who the people gather to worship. In doing so, the psalmist sheds light on the importance of Christian worship. “For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared, above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.”

Worship is to be centered on God, not always on other needs and demands.

In her book *How Shall We Worship*, Marva Dawn explores the battle over worship in many Christian congregations today. She writes:

Simultaneously, we must also ask, why do congregations seem so often to be fighting over worship and music, styles and forms? To end the battles, some churches start multiple services, with two or more styles at a separate times, and labeled with such terms as ‘contemporary’ or ‘traditional’ or ‘blended/convergent.’ Other churches specialize in a certain kind of “praise and worship” or advertise their services as “exciting” and “upbeat.” Do these descriptions and understanding enable churches to be all that they could be for the sake of the world around them?

Dawn is correct; this researcher believes that the battle over the issue of worship in many churches is one that cannot be taken lightly. If not carefully addressed, arguments about worship can present devastating consequences to a congregation’s ministry.

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228 Psalm 96:4-5 [NIV].

Next, this researcher concludes that New Creation, being a product of two previously established traditional Lutheran congregations, still struggles with their new identity under the new name. As a result, the congregation still functions like two separate congregations. This is a hindrance that could potentially harm the congregation’s ambition for growth and outreach to the unchurched in the future.

This researcher’s final conclusion in this project is that it will be in the best interest of New Creation Lutheran Church to develop both short-term (2-3 years) and long-term (5-9 years) ministry strategies for its mission, to foster growth in the twenty-first century. Both short and long term strategies will be linked with the vision and mission statements of the congregation.

**Effective Spiritual Leadership Helps Promote Congregational Growth**

J. Oswald Sanders is a writer on Christian leadership. In his book *Spiritual Leadership*, Sanders presents some insights that this researcher found helpful for this project. He writes, “True leadership is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing, or inducing others to serve to serve you.”[^230] He further points out that, “The real spiritual leader is focused on the service he or she can render to God, and other people, not on the residuals and perks of high office or holy title. We must aim to put more into life than we take out.”[^231]

In this researcher’s opinion, in order for the spiritual leader to be successful, they must understand who they are serving and why. The spiritual leader is never in the ministry to serve their own self-interests; rather they know that they are in the position to


[^231]: Ibid., 14.
serve God and other people. Sanders asserts further that, “True spiritual leadership is about giving yourself in service to others.” Citing the great Salvation Army revival preacher Samuel Brengel, Sanders writes, “The final estimate of men shows that history cares not an iota for the rank or title a man has borne, or the office he has held, but only the quality of his deeds, and the character of his mind and heart.”

This is one of the ways that separates the Christian leader from that of other leaders. The Christian spiritual leader is to be about serving other people. Jesus exhibited that kind of characteristic of a leader. He said to his disciples, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” In his outreach to the people he encountered in his ministry, Jesus first had compassion on them. Compassion is the work of the heart. When the Christian leader’s heart is in what he or she is called to do, he will do it not for him to get the glory, but for all the glory to go to God. The Christian spiritual leader is one who exercises essential spiritual qualities in his leadership role. Enclosed are three of Sanders’ eight essential qualities, which this researcher found appropriate for the purpose of this project.

1) Discipline: Without this special quality, Sanders argued that, “all the rest are dwarfs.” The lack of discipline on the part of the leader can lead to devastating consequences.

2) Vision: Spiritual vision allows the leader to see where he or she is leading the people of God. It allows the leader to stay in line with the plan, purpose, and

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232 J. Oswald Sanders, 14.
233 Ibid., 14.
234 Mark 10:45a [NIV].
235 Sanders, 52
agenda of the one whom he serves. Those who see spiritually can powerfully influence their generation and those around them. The leader must be a visionary.

3) Wisdom: Wisdom is a gift from God. When God asked David’s son Solomon what he wanted the Lord to give him as he prepared to lead the people of Israel, Solomon asked for wisdom. Sanders exerts that, “Wisdom is the faculty of making the use of knowledge, a combination of discernment, judgment, sagacity…in Scripture right judgment concerning moral and spiritual truth.”

The spiritual leader is one who is able to separate knowledge from wisdom. These two are not the same as some leaders often think.

**Recommendations**

The purpose of this project has been to find ways to help New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio, to design an authentic evangelism strategy to reach out to the unchurched and persons of color in Lima and Allen County, Ohio. In the entire process, this researcher has viewed himself as a practical visionary congregational leader.

Practicality entails that this researcher seek ways to diagnose dangerous trends that have threatened the future of the local congregation such as New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. Insights presented in this project have been for the purpose of finding a healthy way to address those threats in a way that will allow new life in declining ELCA congregations like New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima.

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236 J. Oswald Sanders, 58.

237 Sanders, 52-63. This researcher found these spiritual leadership qualities very important for this project. The full list is made available at the end of this document in the Appendix.
Theology is another way this researcher seeks to discern God’s working presence in congregational ministry and visionary leadership. This researcher holds the view that theological understanding and discernment can help a spiritual leader see what God wants them to see, and help them make sound and reasonable decisions that will bring glory to God and enhance ministry efforts in a positive way.

Based on the findings and conclusions presented in this document, the following recommendations are the final products of this research project pertaining to New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. These recommendations can be useful for all small struggling congregations whose desire is to make their congregation stronger and viable to proclaim God’s kingdom and Christ’s love in the world. It has been this researcher’s feeling that the problems New Creation faces seemed to be similar problems for many congregations in the United States today.

Much of what has been discovered through this project are universal truths that transcend the particular nature of and needs of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. The practical applications may be different based on the context of other congregations, regardless of their denominational affiliation. This researcher believes that the principles presented in this document are transferable in many cases.

1. It is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church adopt Acts 1:6-14 and Matthew 28:18-20 as their core values for a biblically sound foundation for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color in the twenty-first century.

2. It is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church revisits its current mission statement, and prayerfully considers redesigning this mission statement to
include Matthew 28:18-20 as part of the core values. This will encourage New Creation as it thrives to fulfill the Great Commission in an effort to attract the unchurched and persons of color. This researcher will help start this process in the fall of 2014.

3. It is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church reorganize and restructure the current worship services to make them transparent and attractive to the unchurched, young adults, and families with younger children. Transparent worship service is one in which participants will feel the presence of God through the songs, prayers, and in their fellowship with one another. It is also a moment where the participants feel the ability to magnify God with their whole being, body, soul, and spirit; a moment where tradition will not be a front and center but that God’s Holy Spirit will be in control of what is taking place; and a moment when participants feel the overwhelming joy that will leave them wanting to return again. Doing so will mean that the leaders and members will hire a worship and music leader who is trained in designing a worship service that can blend both traditional and contemporary styles together. This person will understand the kind of worship service that would be inviting and nurturing to the need of a multicultural and intergenerational worshiping community.

4. It is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church put in place both short-term and long-term ministry plans in an effort to focus on prioritizing and strengthening the basic foundation of their ministry here in Lima, Ohio. The short-term plan will be two to three years, while the long-term plan will be five to nine years. The short-term ministry plan should be addressed immediately and
should not be put off. This researcher will work with the leaders and members of New Creation in September 2013 to accomplish this goal. This researcher will also work with the leadership of New Creation to see these recommendations as an opportunity that will help strengthen their ministry by drawing support from the Northwestern Ohio Synod, the Southwest Conference Churches, and a partnership support from the ELCA general office.

5. It is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church be open to the opportunity for a redevelopment partnership with the ELCA Synod and Southwest Conference Churches. As the age of the congregation’s members continues to increase as the research data indicated, it is a high concern for many of the members. In this researcher’s opinion, a redevelopment program can help inject or provide some financial assistance as well as human resources with specific gifts in the evangelism process to help recruit new members to the congregation which could help reverse the declining trend.

6. The researcher understands that the congregation is struggling at this moment to meet its financial needs, so this next recommendation could be seen as impossible. However, the results and findings from the survey and interviews indicated that the majority of the members of the congregation hold the view that the congregation needs to work toward improving the Christian education ministry, particularly the Sunday school department. Therefore, it is recommended that New Creation Lutheran Church identifies and recruits an individual or individuals who are skilled in Christian education, which will also have the passion for teaching Sunday school with young children and youth. This
is very important for the redevelopment effort of the congregation at this point. New Creation has a wonderful childcare program in Elida, Ohio, a village that neighbors Lima. However, while the childcare serves as an outreach program, it does not provide Sunday school opportunities for families with young children who may consider joining the congregation. Presently, New Creation does not have a Sunday morning Sunday school program for the children who come to church. A comprehensive Christian education program will need to be developed and be a part of the overall redevelopment program of the congregation.

To accomplish all of these recommendations, the leaders and members will have to look outside of the congregation. These recommendations are important to the future of the congregation’s ministry and mission in the twenty-first century.

**The Researcher’s Personal Story**

Literature has helped nurture this researcher’s own approach and understanding of Christian living and service to the Lord. As the pastor serving New Creation Lutheran Church, this researcher is fully aware of the responsibility that comes with the office of pastoral leadership. This researcher was brought to this point to undertake this project due to the trend of decline in the Lutheran denomination, a denomination which he loves a great deal.

Having spent the past fifteen years serving multiple small congregations, including New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio, the question that kept coming to this researcher’s mind is what are the reasons for the decline in these congregations? Here at New Creation Lutheran Church, how has denominationalism played a role? How has a lack of understanding for evangelism played a role? What would New Creation Lutheran
Chu
rch in Lima look like in the future if its members were to act in missional authenticity for spiritual and numerical growth? Just as God asked the prophet Ezekiel, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

Likewise this researcher asks: Can New Creation Lutheran Church live to continue to be the missional congregation God has intended it to be? How can New Creation attract new members from all cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds to reflect the community God has desired and intended it to be? All of this has become the driving force in the heart of this researcher to undertake this project in congregational mission and visionary leadership in the twenty-first century.

Where New Creation Lutheran Church has been and where it is going has to do with the pastor, the leadership team, and the members of the congregation. While there seems to be a high percentage of older members in the congregation, this researcher still believes that the daunting reality of the congregation’s future can still be turned into the positive reality of growth.

Nevertheless, in this final analysis, New Creation has been and continues to be shaped by the working power of the Holy Spirit through the pastor, the leadership team, and the members of the congregation. As a pastor and the researcher for this project, this researcher believes that strong visionary leadership is essential to understanding where New Creation is and where it is going in its endeavors, and what it can look like in the future.

As a Lutheran Christian, part of this researcher’s ministry style has been based on the Lutheran pastoral leadership tradition, which is fully grounded on a biblical emphasis.

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238 Ezekiel 37:3 [NIV].
This researcher considers himself as a pastoral servant leader, one who feels called to provide Christian spiritual direction to those he leads.

Over the period of the past seven years, it has always been part of this researcher’s convictions to compile information that would help the members of New Creation to line up alongside the purpose and mission of God to help provide a better and stronger ministry. The Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:6-14 should be intentionally lifted up as biblical teaching resources to train members on evangelism to the unchurched in the service area.

Another lesson this researcher has learned, while serving as a solo pastor at New Creation Lutheran Church, is that the researcher has had a heartfelt desire for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched, the disenfranchised, and those who feel no hope in the American society. This has lead this researcher to this point to seek better ways in which the church community and unchurched community can come together for the sake of authentic ministry in fostering the kingdom of God.

This project has given this researcher a renewed hope as well as a spirit of optimism for the future of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, and the entire ELCA organization. For example, the results from the interviews with leaders of growing congregations in Allen County, Ohio indicated that there are other strategies New Creation Lutheran Church can integrate in their efforts to attract the unchurched and persons of color in their effort to make their ministry viable in Lima and Allen County.

Finally, it is worth noting that the success of this research project has been on knowing that God has been working alongside the researcher and all who have been involved. God’s presence has been felt in every step during the entire duration of this
project. The ultimate success of seeking to plan a clear strategy for successful congregational mission and leadership in the twenty-first century and outreach to the unchurched and persons of color is to believe and rely fully on God’s power and always be aware of God’s presence. That truth is held strongly by this researcher.

As Paul writes, “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”239 This indicates that congregational growth does not occur based on human intelligence; growth happens when the members and leaders of the local congregation seek the will of the Holy Spirit and dedicate themselves to following God’s will. When the members and leaders of the local congregation discern what God’s mission is for their congregation, and act on the implementation of that mission, then spiritual maturity and numerical growth might just be the final result.

What is Considered a Good Evangelism Strategy for Congregational Growth?

This is not a simple question to answer. There is not a simple unified strategy that everyone may agree with since all congregations are not the same. A congregation is like an organism; if it is not nurtured adequately, it will dwindle and fade away. When the church is healthy, it can accomplish great things for God in the name of Christ. One of the goals of this project has been to find resources that could help New Creation Lutheran Church becomes a healthy, vibrant, growing, and inviting congregation in Lima, Ohio. In the Nelson’s Three-In-One Bible Reference Companion, the Church is defined as, “all

239 1 Corinthians 3:7 [NIV].
who have been redeemed; or a group of Christians assembled for worship.” Nelson also defined congregation as “an assembly of people.” The characteristic of a healthy and growing church is a church that understands its mission, has vision for ministry, and knows what it is called to be about.

In Acts chapters 13-14, Luke presents what Phyllis J. Peau calls “the character of evangelism.” In these texts, Luke has ushered in Paul as the leading evangelist of the early church to the Gentiles. The reader hears about Paul’s first missionary journey and his classic master plan for evangelism outside of the Jewish community. These chapters also reveal qualities that enabled Paul to be so effective in carrying out his evangelism strategy to the Gentiles.

Paul’s qualification for evangelism to the Gentiles in the early church was a gift from God bestowed upon him by the Holy Spirit. That same gift has been given to the church today. The gift of the Holy Spirit was not only promised to the disciples, but that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Since then, the power has been upon the church even to this point. Congregations that wish to be authentic in evangelism need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and follow the Spirit’s lead. This is a core teaching in the book of Acts. That is what the early church leaders did, and that is what the church’s mission is to be about in the twenty-first century. There are many resources now available to help congregations to achieve their goal if it so desires. This leads to the


241 Thomas Nelson, 147.

The Importance of Resources for Congregational Mission and Leadership

During this project, this researcher has been amazed and overwhelmed by the mountain of articles, books, and the many individuals who agreed to be interviewed and share their insights to help make this project successful. Additionally, there are many Internet sites that relate to the discipline of congregational mission and leadership, and evangelism and outreach to the unchurched. This researcher is very grateful for the many staff members from Winebrenner Theological Seminary who was always so helpful in helping redirect this researcher in the right directions all through the duration of this project.

This researcher realized that congregational mission and leadership is a complex and diverse field. The researcher has also realized that the leadership aspect of mission in the local congregation within the Lutheran denomination is key aspect that cannot be taken lightly. Leadership is a complex role and has many critical responsibilities to carry out. For this researcher, the leadership materials discovered during this project have opened the doors to uncountable opportunities that the researcher did not know were available for congregation’s mission, spiritual leadership, and evangelism. Above all, the research project revealed that the two most important resources available in the discipline of congregational mission and leadership are the human resources and the Holy Bible.

God has always identified people to empower, and to send them out in the world for mission. One of this researcher’s words of encouragement to the leader who may read this document is to seek gifted and faithful individuals to work with in ministry. Their
honest advice can strengthen the work of Christ within the church. Secondly, always be ready to ask people who can share spiritual insights that may strengthen the ministry. Be surrounded with those who will pray for the ministry. Also, do not waver in seeking the truth of God through the Holy Bible. In God’s Word, a faithful leader will often find the truth about what God wants them to do and how to accomplish God’s purpose.

In the New Testament Paul writes these words, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” Also in verse 8, Paul writes, “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayers, without anger or disputing.” This researcher understands that these instructions were part of a broader strategy for Paul’s ministry as he mentored Timothy in his own ministry. In the Christians’ witness and mission, the leader(s) need to understand that prayer is both the most ancient and universal expression of the Christian instinct. It is also worth noting that regular Bible study and discernment is also an important part of the Christian witness and mission. This is significant because the Bible is the guide through which the leaders and members of the body of Christ gain spiritual insights to do what God intends for them. Therefore, these strategies will also be included in the broader plan for New Creation Lutheran Church mission and vision for the future.

One other way this researcher believes that prayer can play an intricate part in the mission and ministry of New Creation is by encouraging the leaders and members to look at Christ’s own prayer life in St. John 17. In that chapter Jesus prayed for unity among his followers and the members of the church. Prayer of unity can help release the power of

243 1 Timothy 2:1 [NIV].

244 1 Timothy 2:8 [NIV].
the Holy Spirit for success among the body of Christ. When members pray without ceasing, it allows them to discern God’s purpose for them in their mission and ministry.

This researcher believed that prayer is to be an important part of the core strategy for the ministry and mission of New Creation Lutheran Church. Presently, New Creation Lutheran Church Prayer Team has worked diligently with the pastor in the past and will be encouraged to do so in the future endeavor. The role of prayer in this process is to help the body of Christ with a clear vision to understand what God’s mission and purpose are for the ministry of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio and beyond.

It is the prayer and hope of this researcher that the materials discovered and presented in this project will be used by the church leaders and members to bring glory and honor in building God’s kingdom in the local faith community and in God’s church around the world. As a pastor, a lay leader, or a member of a local congregation, God has placed everyone in their specific community for a reason. He wants to use them to bring glory to himself. God has a plan to use every one of them. He has given every member specific gifts or talents to be used to foster his kingdom here on earth. The purpose of this research is to invite and encourage everyone to identify their gifts and use those gifts to bring glory to God and to foster God’s kingdom.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The context of this project has been New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio. The purpose of the study is to find ways to help this church create a clear vision for a new direction and to put in place an authentic strategy that could attract the unchurched and persons of color to its ministry.
As this researcher has shared in this entire document, the significance of this project is that the ongoing decline in church attendance and membership in North America is threatening the future of the mainline churches, including the ELCA denomination. The findings the conclusions from the data collected are now considered significant to provide New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio with new insights, resources, and opportunities for a new strategy to attract the unchurched and persons of color to their ministry.

The researcher strongly believes that Christianity is a religion of reconciliation and inclusiveness. In their book *The Church Enslaved: A Spirituality of Racial Reconciliation*, Tony Campolo and Michael Battle write, “Reconciliation flows from spiritual commitment. It entails the hard work of restorative justice.”245

In Jesus Christ, God has reconciled the body of Christ to himself and has redeemed his people to a new life. The purpose of this research project has not been about racism in America or in the church; instead, the purpose has been to find ways for the church to be more inviting in its evangelism efforts to reach out to the unchurched in the service area to become a reconciling faith community. This researcher’s African understanding of *ubuntu* also helps form his understanding of community and people’s relationship with one another. *Ubuntu* was a term used to emphasize and encourage racial reconciliation in South Africa during the apartheid system of government. The Christian church can learn a lot from African understanding of *ubuntu* as a way to reach out to one another regardless of the color of skin, economic status, or social background. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that in Christ, all people have become one.

The resources, insights, and the wonderful people he has come to know have all given this researcher great hope for the future of God’s church in the United States. There is still hope for interconnectedness between the church community and the community they are trying to reach with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This understanding of interconnectedness can help both the Christian effort of racial reconciliation and contribute to the church’s efforts in reaching out to the unchurched to bring them to the reconciling God who has established his church. Campolo and Battle summarized this view well by saying:

Reconciliation is the slow, arduous work of Christians. In our Christian baptisms, we claim to embody the continuing presence and memory of Christ in the world. This work of being a Christian is not a quick fix, as the past two millennia clearly demonstrate, but rather the deliberate engagement that often involves discomfort and unease.246

The gospel of Jesus has called the body of Christ to be a reconciling community. Jesus’ message to the disciples in the Great Commission was and is still a call for the church to make disciples, teach them, and baptize them in Christ’s name. Jesus’ entire ministry was based on inclusion. He reached beyond the cultural, social, economic, and religious boundaries to bring all people to God. He broke down the dividing walls between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, black and white. In Jesus Christ, they have all become one. He set the example. That is the essence of the gospel, and it should be the purpose and mission of the local congregation in the twenty-first century.

When the members of the local congregation see those outside the faith community as God’s children, it helps them to reach out and welcome them to Christ’s
reconciling community. “Reconciliation flows from spiritual commitment.” The local congregation will never grow to its full potential if the members and leaders do not clearly define their mission, have a clear vision for where they are going with the mission, and set clear goals about how they can accomplish this mission. They can be intentional and know “the proper context for gospel cultivation is relationship” with the people outside the faith community.

It was Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church, who said in Acts, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This text has been one of the key benchmark Bible verses used to support this project. The Christian church does not survive on its own power. The members of the body of Christ function under the power of the Holy Spirit. The promised Holy Spirit has already come upon the church; that gift was given fully to the church on the day of Pentecost. The goal and strategy to transform and redevelop New Creation Lutheran Church starts with the ministries of prayer, faith, and members will need to pray for God to give them wisdom, to empower them to be bold, and to not be afraid of what they do not know.

It is this researcher’s hope, dream, and prayer that the almighty and triune God will bless all who read this study and lead them toward the building of God’s kingdom in their own community and around the world.

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247 Campolo and Battle, 90.


249 Acts 1:8 [NIV].
APPENDIX A:

SURVEY
Dear Members of New Creation Lutheran Church:

I am writing you this letter as I seek God’s direction for the future ministry and mission of our congregation. In order for me to understand the obstacles and opportunities for our congregation, I need your help. Please take a moment to complete this congregational Mission Assessment survey to the best of your ability. Please do not sign your name. This Mission Assessment survey is also a part of my Doctor of Ministry project which I am working on at Winebrenner Theological Seminary Findlay Ohio. There are five categories total in this survey. All the information will be compiled to complete a broad, clear picture of our congregational life. An interpretation and recommendations will be shared with the whole congregation.

Thank you very much for your participation in this project.

In Christ’s Service,

Rev. Samuel S. Payne, Pastor
New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima Ohio Congregational Mission
Assessment Survey

Category One

This section of the survey was intended to find out how the members decided to join the congregation, whether by particular invitation through other members, as a result of a particular ministry, growing up in the church or by choosing New Creation Church after visiting other churches.

1. Are you a member of this congregation?
   A. Yes
   B. No?

2. If yes, how did you start attending this congregation?
   a) As a result of a particular ministry or mission of the church
   b) As a result of an invitation from a member
   c) By choosing this church out of several visited

3. How welcomed and included do you feel in this church?
   a) I still feel like an outsider.
   b) They took me in and made me feel welcome:

4. When you come to worship, what is the most important benefit you receive from the worship? (please circle one)
   a) I feel change
   b) I feel care for and supported
   c) I feel motivated
   d) I learn important spiritual insights:

5. Rate the quality of pastoral leadership for nurturing personal, relational, and spiritual growth that you personally have experienced as a member of this congregation. (mark one letter below)
   a) Poor:
   b) Better:
   c) Great
   d) No Comment
6. Do you have a spiritual practice that you exercise during the week, including daily prayer, Bible reading, conversation about faith, theological reading)?
   a) Yes  b) No

7. Based on your understanding of the identity of New Creation Lutheran Church, does the pastor model the values, beliefs, vision, and mission of the congregation? (circle the most appropriate number)
   a) No, not at all
   b) Very much so
   c) Yes, completely

8. In your opinion do the elected officers of New Creation Lutheran Church model the values, vision, beliefs, and mission of the congregation? (please circle the most appropriate letter below)
   a) No, not at all
   b) Yes, completely

9. Based on your understanding of the values, beliefs, vision, and mission of New Creation, how ready do you feel when it comes to telling the unchurched and seekers about the work of Christ at New Creation Lutheran Church? (please circle the appropriate letter below)
   a) Not that ready
   b) I feel ready
   c) No sure

10. Do you think most members and staff of New Creation Lutheran Church are anxious about, or open to creative new ideas? (circle the appropriate letter)
    a) Rarely anxious
    b) Very open
    c) Not sure

11. Do you think most members and leaders of New Creation Lutheran Church are fearful or daring in talking about issues that addresses change? (circle the most appropriate letter below)
    a) Very fearful
    b) Positively daring
Category Two: These questions are designed to help provide insights to help the researcher understand how members view and understand the ministry tasks of New Creation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio.

1. When it comes to providing worship that deepens members’ experience of God and the Christian tradition,
   a) I feel it need more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) I feel it receives too much attention

2. When it comes to worship that expresses the gospel of Jesus Christ in a contemporary form,
   a) I feel it needs more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) It receives too much attention

3. When it comes to providing Christian education for children and youths,
   a) I feel it need more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) It receives too much attention

4. When it comes to helping members deepen their personal spiritual relationship with God,
   a) I feel it need more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) It receives too much attention

5. When it comes to sharing the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched, seekers, and persons of color,
   a) I feel it need more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) It feel it receives too much attention

6. When it comes to helping members discover their own gifts for ministry and service to the community,
   a) I feel it need more emphasis
   b) I am generally satisfied
   c) I feel it receives too much attention
Category Three: This section is designed to help the researcher gain clear understanding regarding New Creation Lutheran Church’s organizational characteristics for congregational mission and leadership

1. Members of NCLC are well informed about what the various committees and small groups in the congregation are doing.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

2. The community around the church is well informed about the activities taking place in our church.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

3. Study of the needs of our congregation and the community is regularly undertaken as the basis for the church planning.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

4. The theological and biblical implication of important decisions is regularly discussed in our congregation.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

5. Important decisions about the life of the church are rarely made without open discussions by the church’s leaders and members.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree
6. Disagreement and conflicts are dealt with openly rather than hushed up or hidden behind closed doors,
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

7. It is easy to summarize for visitors and non-members what our congregation is about in the community.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

8. The current morale of our church members is high.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

9. There is a sense of excitement among members about the future of our congregation.
   a) I strongly agree
   b) I moderately agree
   c) I slightly disagree
   d) I disagree

10. Our congregation has an effective program for new member recruitment.
    a) I strongly agree
    b) I moderately agree
    c) I slightly disagree
    d) I disagree

**Category Four is designed to help the researcher understand the congregational identity.**

1. I think our church
   is more influenced by history and tradition
   1,2,3,4,5,6,7
   Our church is more influenced by contemporary ideas and trends
   1,2,3,4,5,6,7

6. Members of NCLC are similar in values to the
   Members of NCLC are very different in values and lifestyle then people who live
people who live immediately around the church.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
immediately around the church.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

7. Our church is very involved with the community around it.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Our church is not involved with the community around it.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

8. Our church is primarily oriented to serving the world beyond our members.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Our church is primarily oriented to serving our member.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

9. Our congregation feels like one large member.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Our congregation feels like a loosely knit association of individuals and groups.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

10. Our congregation approach to individual salvation emphasizes education, nurture, and gradual growth in the faith.
  1,2,3,4,5,6
Our congregation’s approach to individual salvation stresses conversion and a born again experience.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

11. Our congregation gives strong expression to its denominational identity and heritage.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
It is difficult for a visitor to know to which denomination our congregation belongs.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

12. Our congregation needs prioritize strategy to attract the unchurched and seekers to its worship services
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Our congregation needs to relax and maintain the status quo.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7

13. In the next five years, our congregation need to be intentional about outreach/evangelism to people ages 18-35.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Identifying and recruiting young people ages 18-35 should not be a priority for our congregation at this time.
  1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Category Five: Sharing the Gospel and Inviting the Unchurched

1. What do you like best about New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima, Ohio? (Please mark all that apply.)
   a) Music ministry
   b) Preaching and teaching
   c) Friendliness/hospitality
   d) Sunday School and Youth ministry

2. What does it mean to be a Lutheran Christian? (please mark all that apply)
   a) It means I am saved by grace through faith
   b) Salvation is offered through Jesus Christ alone
   c) The Bible is God’s word and it is true
   d) In the Holy Communion, we eat and drink the true body and blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin
   e) All of the above

3. Can you recite from memory the mission statement of New Creation Lutheran Church and summarize what you think about it?
   a) Yes, word by word
   b) Almost exactly as it is
   c) I think mission statements are worthless
   d) Mission statements change every year, therefore they are not that important

4. How important is the New Creation mission statement to the future of the congregation?
   a) I think mission statements are a road map for the congregation to the future
   b) I think mission statements are full of eloquent words for feel-good purposes
   c) Mission statement are not to be taken lightly
   d) They provide meanings and purpose for the congregation

5. Are you presently participating in one of New Creation’s small groups for outreach?
   a) Yes           b) No

6. How often do you pray for New Creation’s ministry outside of regular worship services?
   a) Once a week   b) Twice a week  c) Every day of the week
   d) When I feel like it
7. Why do you think New Creation Lutheran Church exist?
   a) For members to connect with one another
   b) To worship
   c) To study the Bible
   d) To preach and share the gospel of Jesus Christ
   e) All of the above

8. How can you describe your spiritual life at New Creation Lutheran Church?
   a) I am growing spiritually
   b) I am at a standstill spiritually
   c) I feel empty spiritually
   d) I am not sure

9. In your opinion, what can New Creation Lutheran Church do to be stronger, and inviting to the unchurched in the twenty-first century?
   a) Be opened to the will of the Holy Spirit
   b) Be willing to try new ideas that will be inviting to young people ages 18-35
   c) Be intentional and open about changes that are necessary to help New Creation to be transformational in the twenty-first century.
   d) All of the above

10. How satisfied are you with New Creation present ministry procedures?
     a) I feel very satisfied
     b) I feel somewhat satisfied
     c) Not satisfied
     d) Not sure

11. Is there any other information you wish to share at this time that might be helpful in strengthening the ministry of New Creation Lutheran Church in the twenty-first century?
     a) Yes
     b) No
     c) No Comment
APPENDIX B:

PERMISSIONS FROM NEW CREATION LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL
December 20, 2013

Dear Pastor Payne,

The members of New Creation Lutheran Church Council voted to give you permission to publish the Congregation Mission Assessment Survey results which were gathered for your Doctor of Ministry project. We are pleased to be a part of this project and pray that the materials and information gathered in the document will be a blessing to help other congregations whose desire is to reach out to the unchurched with the gospel of Jesus Christ as we have found helpful here at New Creation Lutheran Church.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Jim Myers
President of New Creation Lutheran Church in Lima
APPENDIX C:

OTHER DOCUMENTS
Some Myths about Large or Growing Congregations

1. “The only thing that large churches care about is attendance.”

2. “All large churches grow at the expense of smaller churches.”

3. “You must compromise the message and the mission of the church in order to grow.”

4. “If you are dedicated enough your church will grow.”

5. “There is only one secret key to growing a church.”

6. “All God expect of us is faithfulness.”

There are many myths out there relating to what some people think about church transformation or how to grow your church. This researcher personally appreciate the insight Rich Warren presented on this issue. The list of myths presented here were gathered from his book, The Purpose Driven Church. For more detail on myths about growing churches, please consult pages 47-71 in Warren’s book, the Purpose Driven Church.
Lauback and Bandy’s Twelve Steps to Help Transform Your Congregation

Step 1: “Make a U-turn”\(^\text{251}\) if you know you are going the wrong way in your ministry. Revelation 2:1-7

Step 2: “Choose to change” before change catches up with you.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Step 3: Check yourself as you lead the congregation through a change to transform your congregation. Be prepared spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically

1 Timothy 3:1-9

Step Four: Assess your congregation and expect stress when you embark on bringing about change to transform your congregation.

Matthew 13:1-3

Step Five: Convert the congregation by remaining faithful to God’s Word.

Ezekiel 37: 1-16

Step Six: Be sure to count the cost of transforming your church. Luke 14: 25-36

Step Seven: Unmask your lone rangers. Knowing who will work with you and who will work against you is always helpful in the transformation process.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Step Eight: Be Persistent in the Transformational Process. The lack of persistence is always a great enemy to change agent.

Luke 10:1-20

Step Nine: Make the connection. Do not underestimate the ripple effect of change. Connect with those individuals who desire to work toward healthy change to foster strength and change. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Step Ten: Envision purpose and work toward empowering your people to own the vision.

Habakkuk 2:2

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Step Eleven: Coach and be coached. Seek knowledge from those who know more about the subject or the ministry particular. Secondly, allow those around you to share their ideas and insights about the particular ministry effort. Remember, a leader is not gifted in everything. Acts 4:1-22 and 1 Corinthians 12: 28-31

Step Twelve: Be your very best. Remember, you are called to ministry as a leader, not to be glorified, but for your work to glorify Christ, the Lord of all to the glory of God. Seek discernment and understanding through prayer.

Matthew 9:16-17, Mark 2:19-22; and Luke 5:36-39

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Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder’s Seven Keys to Transforming your Church

Key One: Answer this important question. Does the church have a future?

Key Two: Know your missional identity. Know God’s vision for your congregation.

Key Three: Develop a vision for God’s mission in your church.

Key Four: Focus on God’s mission and work toward discipleship and focus on it.

Key Five: Cultivate a healthy climate as you embark on becoming a missional congregation and as you work to transform your congregation.

Key Six: Built a supportive team of staff and lay leaders. They are movers and shakers in the congregation. They come with specific and enormous gifts to help strengthen the congregation. Win them to your side.

Key Seven: Stay focused and stay the course even in the times of conflict and tension.253

253 This researcher wishes to remind his readers that the “Seven Keys to Transforming Your Congregation” listed here are directly from the book called, Field Guide for Missional Transformation, by Rick Rous and Craig Van Gelder. The insights are an effort to finding solutions to the problem of membership decline in many congregations. This was too important for this researcher not to include in this document. This researcher believes that the book will be of a great value to those whose heart’s desire is to find a way to transform their local congregation.
Some Definitions of the Word “Vision”

Lovett H. Weems: Vision is a dream…it is a picture of what is possible.

It is a picture of a preferred future
Vision is a gift from God
Vision is a reward of disciplined, faithful, and a patient listening to God

Aubrey Malphurs defines vision “as a clear and challenging picture of the future of a ministry as you believe that it can and must be.”

Malphur’s seven ways to differentiate Mission from a Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Vision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Planning</td>
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<td>Length</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Informs</td>
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<td>Activity</td>
<td>Doing</td>
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<td>Source</td>
<td>Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Science (taught)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Art (caught)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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256 Ibid., 32.

The seven differences of a mission and a vision presented in this document are also based on Malphur’s insights presented in his book, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*. This researcher found these insights very helpful in helping any spiritual leader whose intention is to help their organization understand their purpose for ministry (mission) and the direction they want to go (vision). These seven differences of mission and vision are found on page 32.
Some Definitions of a Congregational “Leader”

John Maxwell writes, “Leadership is not an exclusive club for those who were born with it. The traits that are the raw materials of leadership can be acquired.”

Brian Tracy suggests that “Leadership is the ability to elicit extraordinary performance from ordinary people.”

“Spiritual leadership is moving God’s people towards God’s agenda.”

Quoting J. Oswald Sanders, Henry Byrne exert that “True leadership always exerts a heavy toll on the whole man, and the more effective the leadership is, the higher the price to be paid.”

Herbert Byrne: “a good leader is one who by their leading, also attracts people to follow. A leader is one who is able to see when others cannot see their way through things.”

Byrne argued that character is important in terms of being successful in implementing leadership objectives.


258 Ibid., 64.


261 Ibid., 157.
Some “Essential Qualities of Spiritual Leaders” see J. Oswald Sanders. *Spiritual Leadership*

1 Timothy 3:2-7

a) Be Disciplined

b) Have a Clear Vision

c) Seek Spiritual Wisdom

d) Be Honest in Your Decision Making

e) Be Courageous

f) Exhibit the Spirit of Humility

g) Have Integrity and Sincerity

Four important biblical leaders whose leadership styles are worth studying and integrating in the twenty-first century: David, Jesus, Moses, and Paul.

David: He had a heart that was after God. Through him the nation of Israel rose. He was secretly anointed. His victory over Goliath drew public support in his favor. He was also a man after God’s own heart. He had a sense of destiny. He was known as the Shepherd King who also broke important layers of the commandment, namely adultery, and murder, yet he was forgiven by a gracious and compassionate God. 263

Jesus: Jesus was not only the greatest spiritual leader revealed in the Bible, he was also the heartbeat of God. He was both divine and yet fully human. His leadership priority was to do the Father’s business. He was also the leader of the band. He was in line with his Father. He battled Satan on the Cross and won. Through Jesus, God anticipates all his children coming home. 264

Moses: The colossus of the Old Testament, known as the Prince of Egypt. He had a false start in his leadership. This led him to flee into the desert. His greatest leadership lessons were learned in the Desert School of Leadership. He was recalled from the desert into the active duty of leadership. From there he met face to face with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses was truly a leader whose heart was on a mission for God 265

Paul: The man whose heart was captured by God. He had the heart of a Pharisee. He was blinded by a light from heaven. God shaped his movement by shaping his heart. In his leadership journey, Paul had many close encounters. Jesus rescued Paul from the road to destruction and allowed him to know the truth. 266


264 Ibid., 51.

265 Ibid., 3.

266 Ibid., 36.
Some Insights from the Barna Research Group about the Unchurched

Listed below are thirteen facts congregations and there leaders need to know about the unchurched if they so desire to reach out to them. These facts are based on work done by the Barna Research Group in helping us understand the unchurched community in the United States.

1. Two-thirds of all Americans believe that the purpose of life is to enjoy blessings and gain the maximum fulfillment from their options and temptations.
2. If all the unchurched people in the United States were a nation of their own, they would be the eleventh most populated country on Earth.
3. In mid-2000, about 95 to 100 million Americans of all ages were unchurched.
4. Encountering hypocritical Christians is what the unchurched like least about their past experiences at church. They also do not like the straight or inflexible belief systems.
5. The unchurched says, the main reasons they do not attend church is because they do not have the time.
6. Most people who accept Christ as Savior do so between the ages of 5 and 13.
7. Most of the unchurched (91 percent) describe themselves as self-sufficient, and say they like to try new experiences (81 percent).
8. Most unchurched (65 percent) are satisfied with their marriages than Christians (59 percent) are satisfied with theirs.
9. Three-fourths of the believe that God helps those who help themselves, even though this principle came from Ben Franklin and it is not biblical.
10. Only 45 percent of the unchurched say they are searching for meaning in life.
11. The unchurched preferred to be called inquirers, or explorers. They do not want to be called lost.
12. How much the people in a church seem to care about each other is the most important factor for the unchurched when selecting a church.
13. Unchurched people are most likely to respond to a personal invitation than they are to surrender to pressure to belong to a group.267

267 The insights presented about the Unchurched in the United States were gathered from the Barna Research Group Ltd. This researcher found these insights very valuable for this research project, and feels it will be benefit those who are seeking to transform their local congregations or organizations.
WORKS CITED


______. *Biblical Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books,


WORKS CONSULTED


