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Evaluating the effectiveness of outreach and retention methods of six congregations of the Brunswick Baptist Association

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTREACH AND RETENTION
METHODS OF SIX CONGREGATIONS
OF THE BRUNSWICK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

A PROJECT
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JEFFREY E. GIBBY

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APPROVAL FORM

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTREACH AND RETENTION
METHODS OF SIX CONGREGATIONS OF THE BRUNSWICK BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

I chose two hypotheses to form a survey. The first hypothesis is that persons are reached by the style of building, existing relationships, or advertising. The second hypothesis is that persons maintain their membership based on the content of preaching, the quality of teaching programs, or fellowship.

I employed The Mann-Whitney Statistical Test to analyze the data.

The data revealed that good preaching, good worship and good fellowship make a growing church. The data results also show the significance of the Pastor and revealed that age-graded Bible study groups are still valid in reaching and retaining members.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BBC</i>	<i>Broadman Bible Commentary</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>BTC</i>	<i>Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>DSBS</i>	Daily Study Bible Series
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>HBC</i>	<i>Harper's Bible Commentary</i> . Edited by J. L. Mays et al. San Francisco, 1988
<i>HBD</i>	<i>HarperCollins Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by P. J. Achtemeier et al. 2d ed. San Francisco, 1996
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951-1957
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JRT</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Thought</i>

<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>LBBC</i>	<i>Layman's Bible Book Commentary</i>
<i>Miss</i>	<i>Missiology</i>
<i>MSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
<i>OCB</i>	<i>The Oxford Companion to the Bible</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>SHBC</i>	Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>TOTC</i>	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Westminster Bible Companion</i>
<i>WPNT</i>	<i>Word Pictures in the New Testament</i>

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

ABBREVIATIONS

Chapter

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION.....	1
Goal of the Project	1
Project Setting Statement of Problem	1
An Association Responds	3
Brunswick County, North Carolina, Today	4
Research Resources	8

Chapter

2. RATIONALE.....	16
Practical Rationale	16
People Resources	19
Worship Resources	22
Program Resources	23
Facilities Resources	24
Biblical Rationale	25
Post-Exilic Community	26
Ezra-Nehemiah	28
Ruth	29
Jonah	30

Isaiah 56-66	31
Matthew 28:16-20	35
Acts 1:1-8	40
Chapter	
3. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT	45
The Respondents	46
Chapter	
4. RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS	48
Description and Explanation of the Mann-Whitney Test	48
What Attracted You to Your Church?	51
Analysis of Data	52
Attraction to a Congregation	52
Invitation	52
Church's Building and Grounds	55
Advertising	58
Retention by a Congregation	61
Worship Emphasis	61
Teaching Ministry	63
Community Life	65
Summary	67
Chapter	
5. SHARING THE DATA WITH THE CHURCHES	71
Recommendations to New and Established Churches	74

Chapter	
7. PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	83
What I would have done differently	84
Surprises and Affirmations from the Data	84
Challenges That Exist for Me Because of the Project	86
Appendix	
A. SURVEY.....	88
B. TABLES AND GRAPHS ILLUSTRATING THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCHES AND THE COMMUNITY POPULATION IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA	90
C. LETTERS TO PASTORS	93
D. TABLES OF DATA ANALYSIS	95
SOURCES CONSULTED.....	99

TABLES

4.1	Invitation.....	51
4.2	Survey Response Analysis Attraction.....	69
4.3	Survey Response Analysis Retention	70

Chapter 1

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Goal of the Project

The primary goal of this project is to determine if the methods churches utilize in reaching persons for church membership and maintaining church membership are successful in established churches as compared to newly organized churches. A secondary goal is to formulate some recommendations in regard to established churches, newly organized churches, and church plants for the Brunswick Baptist Association in Brunswick County, North Carolina, of which, I am the Director of Missions.

Project Setting and Statement of Problem

The project was situated in the Brunswick Baptist Association. The Brunswick Baptist Association is located within the geographic boundaries of Brunswick County, North Carolina. The early communities of Brunswick Town, Town Creek, and Lockwood Folly were established in the late 1600s. Groups of fishermen and their families came from Cape May, New Jersey, and formed the nucleus of the present-day community.¹ Predominantly, these early families were or soon became Baptist.² Just a few years after

¹ Lawrence Lee, *The History of Brunswick County North Carolina* (Shallotte, NC: Miller Printing, 1976), 5.

² *Ibid.*, 60.

settling in the area they established the Old Log Meeting House at Lockwood Folly in 1762. The members of this meeting house established two churches of the current association, Mill Creek Baptist Church and Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, in the early 1800s.³ The county-wide community has remained fairly static in population until twenty years ago when it mushroomed because of early retiring Baby Boomers.⁴

The Association has ebbed and flowed from the 1800s in organization and affiliations with other associations until 1899 when the current organization called the Brunswick Baptist Association originated with nine churches. Today the Brunswick Baptist Association consists of forty-six churches.

Membership of the local churches has not grown as exponentially as the local population. Brunswick County's population is currently 100,000.⁵ The Churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association have only 10,000 resident members.⁶ The Brunswick Baptist Association has 2,600 persons (less than 3% of the churches membership) in worship on an average Sunday.⁷ (See Tables 1, 2, and 3, which illustrate the progress in membership of the churches comprised from the records of the Brunswick Baptist Association from the years 1899 to 2006, in Appendix B.)

The economic base of Brunswick County, North Carolina was fishing and farming. The county has seen the demise of the fishing industry. Many farms have been

³ Ibid.

⁴ Brunswick County Planning Department, ed. *Brunswick County at a Glance: 2006 Mini Data Book Brunswick County, North Carolina* (Bolivia, NC: Brunswick County Planning Department, 2006), 6.

⁵ "Growth Rank: 14th," *Brunswick Star News*, 12 April 2007, sec. A, p. A1, 4.

⁶ *2006 Annual Brunswick Baptist Association North Carolina*, 90-92.

⁷ Ibid.

converted into gated communities and housing developments for the upper middle class.⁸ Tourism, medical services and personal services have become the largest employers of the community.⁹

In the October 19, 1997, issue of the *Wilmington Star-News* Charles F. Longino, Jr., a Wake Forest professor specializing in migration trends into North Carolina, theorized that:

the people relocating to Brunswick County were “amenity migrants,” usually pre-retirees looking to stay ahead of the baby boomer pack moving to the coast...[since] Southeastern North Carolina has everything they are looking for: a low crime rate, mild weather, good hospitals, and a low overall cost of living. This is the golden stream coming our way—the cream of the crop. They have a lot of wealth and a lot of ability.¹⁰

Brunswick County’s population has doubled in the last ten years (1997-2007), and it is predicted to double again in the next ten years.¹¹ Other data suggests unfortunately, a majority of the Brunswick Baptist Association’s churches have not experienced growth on the same level as the county population. In fact the local churches have had a very low percentage of growth. Brunswick County has grown by 28.9% from 2000-2006 and is projected to grow by 43.7% by 2030.¹² (See the population Table 3 in Appendix B).

⁸Lee, *The History of Brunswick County North Carolina*, 230.

⁹Brunswick County Planning Department, ed., *Brunswick County at a Glance*, 10.

¹⁰“What’s Happening to Southeastern North Carolina,” *Brunswick Star News*, 19 October 1997, sec. D, D1.

¹¹“Growth Rank: 14th,” *Brunswick Star News*, A 1.

¹²*Ministry Area Profile 2005 Brunswick Baptist Association* (Cary: Percept, 2007), 4.

An Association Responds

As an association of churches, Brunswick Baptist Association is transitioning in some ways of thinking and behaving while in others it is not. With the great influx of persons to Brunswick County there are many streams of thought as to what ought to be done to reach these individuals: *Should we include them within our existing churches? Form new church plants for them? Leave these people alone? Deny that this situation exists?* All of these are ways of responding to the present growing population of Brunswick County.

Brunswick County, North Carolina, Today

The Brunswick Baptist Association has had three different negative experiences with church plants in the last 20 years. These experiences have produced a reticence to explore the possibility of planting churches. The following paragraphs explain these experiences.

One church plant was a result of the Association banding together with the North American Mission Board in the 1990s. This church plant died. The four main reasons for the dissolution of the church were: (1.) the pastor had problems making contact with people residing in the area because of his inactivity. The pastor admitted to having a private business in the parsonage and spending the majority of his time involved with the business.¹³ (2.) There was a quick succession of pastors. There were six pastors in 4

¹³P. Kaye Barrier, Chairman of Trustees. *Compilation of the Church Minutes and Trustee Meetings of the Carolinas Fellowship Baptist Church* (Calabash, NC: Carolinas Fellowship Baptist Church, 1998), 20.

years.¹⁴ (3.) There was continual transition in leadership and membership.¹⁵ The Annual Church Profile from 1995 reveals that the church had 66 members and in 1996 the church had 40 members.¹⁶ (4.) There was no plan in place and seemingly no accountability. The surviving records of the church do not indicate that there was a vision statement or outreach plans to grow and nurture this church.¹⁷

The next opportunity for the Association to partner with a church plant was when a local church split and a small portion of the church removed itself to begin a new church plant. The pastor applied for membership in the Association and was accepted, but soon afterwards the church fell apart and ceased to exist. The reason for the failure of this church plant is unknown.

The most recent occasion for a partnership with a church plant was with a church planter who has established a congregation in the north end of the county in a local school. This group sought to unite with the Brunswick Baptist Association. The church plant desired to be a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Church instead of a Southern Baptist Convention Church. When this issue became known within the Brunswick Baptist Association a debate ensued at the October 14, 2002, quarterly meeting. Two pivotal decisions were made: (1.) the eventual termination of the Brunswick Baptist Association Director of Missions, and (2.) an approved motion which states: “No church or church

¹⁴Ibid., 6.

¹⁵P. Kaye Barrier, Church Clerk. *Church Roll of Carolinas Fellowship Baptist Church, 1994-1998*.

¹⁶Arlene Hallman, *1995 Annual of the Brunswick Baptist Association* (Lawrenceville, VA: Edmonds Printing, 1995), 70. Also see Arlene Hallman *1996 Annual of the Brunswick Baptist Association* (Lawrenceville, VA: Edmonds Printing, 1996), 80.

¹⁷ Personal conversation with Kenneth Holland on October 16, 2007 at NC Baptist Assembly at Caswell. Kenneth Holland was the representative from the then Home Mission Board who was the liaison with the church planter and the church plant.

start in this association shall be eligible to receive funds from this Association unless it includes the word Baptist in its official name.”¹⁸

These experiences and decisions lead one to question if the churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association are serious in regard to attracting and retaining as members the persons relocating to Brunswick County, North Carolina. The data gathered and analyzed from this project will help define our commitment to reaching the people of our community in the most effective ways. Following are some items to consider in this discussion.

The growth in our community is fueled by migrations of persons from the northeast United States and those relocating from other eastern states.¹⁹ The majority of the population growth in Brunswick County, North Carolina is due to the relocation of persons from the following states: New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Connecticut, and New Hampshire.²⁰ Our churches in the Brunswick Baptist Association are not attracting the persons relocating to our community.

Many of our churches are family chapel churches. A family chapel church is a congregation in which the majority of the members are related to one another either biologically through birth or relationally through marriage. The family chapel as well as any congregation can be seen as a family system in which the individual is not important

¹⁸Hallman, Arlene J., clerk. *2002 Annual of the Brunswick Baptist Association* (Bolivia, NC: Brunswick Baptist Association, 2002), 53.

¹⁹Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, *US Census Bureau: Demographic Trends in the 20th Century: Census 2000 Special Reports*, U S Department of Commerce (Washington, DC: U S Department of Commerce, November, 2002), 7. Likewise see Gary Greene, co-coordinator, *Just the Facts: 2006 A Portrait of Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender Counties* (*Wilmington Star News*, Sunday, 18 December 2006), 12.

²⁰Hobbs and Stoops, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century*, 18.

but the whole is; however, each individual holds a place of importance within the system.²¹ While a family chapel church might meet the spiritual needs of the local community, it is often very difficult for persons relocating to assimilate into them.²² The outsider to this type of church is most often seen as an enemy.²³ The family chapel church can best be understood as a “tribe,” according to Anthony Pappas:

What are some of the specifics of this tribal approach? The first is the realization that roles more than offices determine the social landscape. . . . There are patriarchs and matriarchs, elders, chiefs and witch doctors, gatekeepers and scapegoats, and the elderly story tellers as well as the group of gossipers who create the stuff of future stories!

What the tribe desires is continuity. It wants tomorrow to look like yesterday. Life is, in general terms, the way it ought to be. What is important is to live it out, not change it. Jockeying in order to position oneself among possible future options is a peculiar, if not incomprehensible, exercise. Where we have been is where we want to go. The patterns of our life are a given. God has established them, we are to live them out.²⁴

Perhaps the greatest problem is that our churches see no problem. Perhaps we are as Edward Hamett says:

The last several decades have proven to be a time when many churches have suffered from becoming inwardly focused. When all the world around us is changing at such a rapid pace, many of the baby busters and senior adults who comprise much of the church population have decided to fasten down the hatches and create “a sanctuary”—a safe, comfortable, familiar place. This move has

²¹Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (New York, NY: Alban Institute, 1995), 70-71.

²²Ronald W. Richardson, “Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life” *RevExp* 102 (2005): 381.

²³Anthony Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute), 1997, 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

pushed the church to an inward focus and pulled it away from the outward focus mandated by Christ and needed by the world.²⁵

In the face of the above observations and predictions, can the churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association continue to do business as usual in regard to their outreach methods? Is the local church actually reaching and teaching persons to acquire faith in Christ and to make disciples for Jesus? What is the most effective method of reaching persons in Brunswick County, North Carolina? What is the most effective thing we could do to keep people?

There are various reasons for the lack of church growth. Several reasons involve the members' view of congregational life and what it means to be a person of faith.²⁶ For example, churches stuck in nostalgic feelings for the good old days or focused on meeting the needs of people using methods from by-gone decades, which hinders church growth.²⁷ People look for something different from the church today than their ancestors did. Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger say people look for simplicity in organization, programming and fellowship.²⁸

²⁵ Edward Hamett, *Making the Church Work: Converting the Church to the 21st Century*, (2nd ed. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1984), 35.

²⁶ Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 13, 303-311.

²⁷ Robert Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Help Your Church Come Alive* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1981), 105.

²⁸ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 8.

Research Resources

There are various books discussing what is currently happening in the local church. All point to at least one concrete conclusion: things are changing!²⁹ The church's view of the mission, of how we do church, is in flux.³⁰ The challenges current faith-based communities face deal extensively with attracting and sustaining persons to faith and church membership. These tasks, attracting and sustaining membership, grow more difficult each day.³¹ Loren Mead, founder of the Alban Institute and an Episcopal priest, states it best:

. . . three things are happening around us simultaneously:
 First, our present confusion about mission hides the fact that we are facing a fundamental change in how we understand the mission of the church.
 Second, local congregations are now being challenged to move from a passive, responding role of support of mission to a front-line, active role.
 Third, institutional structures and forms developed to support one vision of our mission are rapidly collapsing. I argue that we are being called to invent or reinvent structures and forms that will serve the new mission as well as the old structures that served the old vision.³²

Mead challenges our basic assumptions about the local congregation and the effectiveness of national denominations. The generation most impacted by this reality lived through the Great Depression and World War II and for the most part developed the current denominational organizations. Persons in this generation remain active decision-makers in local congregations. The veterans returning from World War II and the

²⁹ Edward H. Hamett, *Making the Church Work*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

³¹ Ed Setzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 5.

³² Loren Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York, NY: Alban Institute, 1994), 5.

population of the various home fronts knew how to win a war. The principles which won World War II were applied to faith. Faith became a religious war. This religious war to convert the heathen required the building of pentagons (denominational headquarters), training camps (seminaries and training schools), and supply lines (giving systems) that could move large quantities of religious soldiers (missionaries) and materiel to the far-away mission point.³³ Public institutions in this system at least covertly supported and aided the church.

Currently, the mission point is changing. Government, schools and society no longer prop up the church or its programs. The mission point now lies right outside the church doors. The change in the mission point has moved from “over there” to “right here.”³⁴

The culture of faith as a war to be won has begun to be replaced with a consumer mentality which means we must consider our packaging of the gospel of Jesus to our respective client communities.³⁵ Pre-1950 generations asked, “What can I do to serve the church?”³⁶ The post-1950 generations (postmodern persons) ask, “What has the church done for me lately?”³⁷ A 2007 survey of the attitudes of 16-to 29-year-olds showed a

³³“Mission point” refers to where the church and seekers find each another. Ed Setzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*.

³⁴Setzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 23.

³⁵Ron D. Dempsey, *Faith Outside the Walls: Why People Don't Come and Why the Church Must Listen* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 103.

³⁶Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 90. The definition of a postmodern person involves one who is attempting to find and experience what it means to work, exist, and believe in a newly evolving world in which the past structures of belief, work, and existence no longer apply. Modernity attempts to look at the whole of the system, not its parts; attempts to carry on a conversation, not merely offer an explanation; and seeks to be spiritual instead of secular. A postmodern person is attempting to look at and find meaning in the world from an

greater degree of criticism toward Christianity than did previous generations at the same stage of life. The survey goes on to state that 91% of U.S. evangelicals believe that, “Americans are becoming more hostile and negative toward Christianity.”³⁸ George Barna describes what is happening as a “recasting of views,” a shift in the cultural expectations of the church and the ways that the message of the church resonates with those who hear the message.³⁹

Perhaps clergy and laity alike from the local church to denominational headquarters would rightly agree with Leonard Sweet: “It’s a whole new world out there.”⁴⁰ This new world requires us ministers and the people of the church to examine the notions of who we are as a community of faith, what we do as believers, and how we measure our impact on the community.⁴¹

Scripture lacks direct comment on church growth. Nonetheless, it expresses values shared by contemporary church growth literature namely, the importance of community and spiritual growth among people of faith. Phil Stone with the North Carolina Baptist State Convention says the idea of “maintenance of church membership

eastern mindset by examining the whole for meaning instead of analyzing the parts and then defining the whole. “Hence a postmodern is a “middle” person, one who has not yet arrived at the destination of meaning and understanding but is in the process of arriving.” Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), xiii.

³⁸David Kinnaman, *The Barna Update: A New Generation Expresses its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity*, (<http://www.barna.org/FlexPae.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=216&P,9/25/2007>).

³⁹George Barna, *Evangelism that Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchanging Gospel* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 20-25.

⁴⁰Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), xiv.

⁴¹Lewis and Cordeiro, *Culture Shift*, 122.

is inferred in Scripture rather than spelled out.”⁴² Stone goes on to say that the retention of the early church in Acts 2:46-47 was based upon four systems: (1) relationships—the early church built relationships, (2) evangelism—they were intentional concerning their evangelistic efforts, (3) assimilation—the church in Acts 2 made room in their relationships for new people, and (4) life-changing Bible study.⁴³

Albert Winseman in *Growing an Engaged Church* says, “People come to churches expecting to grow.”⁴⁴ Winseman states that the retention of members is based upon a pyramid that moves through successive layers that deal with four basic questions: (1) *What do I get?* Does this congregation meet my spiritual needs for nourishment? (2) *What do I give?* Do I understand what is expected of me as a member of this church? Does this congregation invite me to participate and develop as a leader and participant? (3) *Do I belong?* Are relationships expanding to include me as a part of the group? Do I accept the mission of this congregation? (4) *How can we grow?* Is the church challenging me and our group to grow in our spiritual life and commitment to the church? Winseman states that the early church was successful in reaching and retaining persons because they developed a common life of fellowship (meaningful relationships), caring for the needs of each other (assimilation) and praising God (life-changing worship/Bible study).⁴⁵

Other authors deal with the issues of attraction and retention of members. Brian McLaren emphasizes some of these issues of retention in the following statements: “We

⁴² Personal conversation with Phil Stone at Southport Baptist Church, Southport, North Carolina 2 June, 2008.

⁴³ Phil Stone, “Building a R.E.A.L. Sunday School Ministry Listening Guide-Purpose” (Cary, NC: Baptist State Convention of North Carolina), 2008.

⁴⁴ Albert L. Winseman, *Growing an Engaged Church: How to Stop “Doing Church” and Start Being the Church Again* (New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2006), 106.

⁴⁵ Albert L. Winseman, Donald O Clifton and Curt Liesveld, *Living Your Strengths* (New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2003-2004), 181-182, 195-197.

need to magnify the importance of faith.” “We need to address issues we have never even thought of before.” “We must reassert the value of community and rekindle the experience of it.”⁴⁶ McLaren writes specifically of the issue of retention through the experiences of building community, intentional evangelism, assimilation and life-changing Bible study in two books: *A New Kind of Christian* and *The Story We Find Ourselves In*. The characters in these books build community and grow together in exploring God’s love and presence in the world as they experience it and thereby become the church.⁴⁷

There are authors who define existing concerns and also suggest strategies for solutions. For example, Jim Henderson and Matt Casper in *Jim and Casper Go to Church* discuss what Matt, the atheist, and Jim, the pastor, sought. What each wanted most was authentic relationships (they were looking for friends), challenging biblical teachings (they wanted to grow), and a warm and welcoming environment (they wanted to belong).⁴⁸

In *Church Growth: State of the Art*, Edward Gibbs is describing the power behind the principles of attracting and maintaining membership. Gibbs describes a process of intentional evangelism of the unchurched, assimilation of new members, instructing new

⁴⁶ Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 179, 183.

⁴⁷ Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2001). See also Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2003).

⁴⁸ Henderson and Caspar, *Go to Church*, 47, 58, 60, 105-16.

followers of Christ in what it means to be a Christian and a church member, and involving each member in ministry.⁴⁹

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, in their book, *Unchristian*, discuss the response of the church to the rising disaffection with the established church and give some guidelines for getting and incorporating new generations within the church. Kinnaman and Lyons think the church must connect people with God by creatively and intentionally sharing the gospel. The church must connect with people where they are and in their culture—speak their language—and the church must serve people and communities.⁵⁰

Mike Regele and Mark Schulz, in *Death of the Church*, writing on the way of life for the future church, describe several steps for congregations attempting to attract and retain members. Three steps are involved in “wrestling to forge new ways to proclaim the Gospel in this changing world.”⁵¹ These steps are: (1) listening and responding to the questions that persons are asking, (2) answering the questions that we think they have, and (3) connecting with people by serving in the community.⁵² Reaching and retaining persons are part of a continuing process.

One principle that emerges from a survey of church growth literature is that relationships are of paramount importance.⁵³ In *The Church of Irresistible Influence* Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins argue: “the great need that exists today is reconnecting

⁴⁹ C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Church Growth State of the Art* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 189-96.

⁵⁰ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 205-07.

⁵¹ Mike Regele and Mark Schulz, *Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 215.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 215-19.

⁵³ Sunday Adelaja, *Church Shift* (Lake Mary, FL: Charima House, 2008), 70.

the church with the community in a way that makes the church both *real* and *reachable*. I believe the church can only accomplish this by turning outward and loving those around us the way Jesus loved his world: not just in words, but with deeds.”⁵⁴

Thom Rainer’s comment that the issue of outreach is “one of excellence more than pleasing an insatiable consumer appetite,”⁵⁵ summarizes most concerns with which current pastors and churches have. Discussions center on optimizing facilities, worship, teaching programs, and relationships in reaching persons for Christ and church membership.

From these ideas, three general principles emerge as to what it takes to retain members. (1.) The ability to connect with people in a meaningful relationship. Retaining members involves communicating in actions and words to people that the church cares for them. Incorporating members into the church means the church must be able to communicate God’s great concern for them and his desire for their best interests. (2.) Preserving church membership means that the church must make room for people within the power structure, decision-making process, and authority roles in the congregation. (3.) To keep church members means that the church must involve people in meaningful service to the community and challenge them to a broader understanding of the meaning of ministry. When a church practices these principles it will attract and retain members.

⁵⁴ Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 15.

⁵⁵ Rainer, *Surprising Insights*, 94.

Chapter 2

RATIONALE

The rationale is divided into two sections: practical and biblical. The practical rationale will consider both the present situation of the church at large and then the local church resources of people, worship, program and facilities. The biblical rationale will examine Ezra-Nehemiah, Ruth, Jonah, and the third major section (Trito-Isaiah) of Isaiah (ch.56-66), and two New Testament passages, Matt 28:16-20 and Acts 1:1-8.

Practical Rationale

The influence of the Christian church and its ministers on the community has decreased drastically.⁵⁶ This has resulted in shifts of cultural thought and behavior that cause the Christian church to respond to the culture in one of five ways: (1) deny change, (2) avoid change, (3) escape change, (4) build systems that exclude change, (5) or reach out to change.⁵⁷ Any of these ways describe how a church might respond to those who are outside the church, whether to people who have been a part of a church in the past or who have never been a part of a church.

An illustration of the first way (denial) is the position that imagines nothing has really changed in our society, so we may do what we have always done. This denial leads

⁵⁶Nelson Granade, *Lending Your Leadership: How Pastors Are Redefining Their Role in Community Life*. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 75-84.

⁵⁷Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 5.

the church to work harder at its usual practices. The local congregation expects extraordinary results from this ordinary activity. What actually happens is total failure which leads to compounded frustration with the activity. The frustration then is focused upon the individual who promoted the idea. In many instances this person is the pastor or a staff member who becomes a “scapegoat” for the congregation.⁵⁸ The congregational response is to say, “What we really need here is a new preacher.”

An illustration of avoiding what is happening is the church that avoids looking at the age, racial make-up, or other demographic features missing from their congregation. For example, when examining the ages of members we avoid seeing that the average age of the congregation is 75 or older. This denial of their aging avoids the fact that they are declining and dying.

An illustration of the church that attempts to escape what is happening is the church that moves from one location to another in order to escape the changing community around them. The problem with this response is that with the change of location there is no desire to change how they do ministry and how open they are to include new members.

An illustration of the church that builds systems that exclude change is a church that devises in its constitution and by-laws many hurdles that in reality neutralize any agent of change. These security devices take many shapes and are not limited to items such as the passing of doctrinal statements, requirements for membership, and regulation on the usage of the facilities. Though very spiritual language is used in these decisions,

⁵⁸Ronald W. Richardson, “Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life.” *The RevExp*, 102 (2005):484.

the result is that they prevent anyone from joining or anything “new” or transformative occurring in the life and ministry of the congregation.

An illustration of the church that reaches out to what is happening is the church that realizes that the basics of preaching, teaching, worship, evangelism and discipleship are the main functions of the church. However, the forms these imperatives take are fluid and are in a constant state of renewal or transformation. These five responses manifest themselves in today’s churches. Take for example two sizes of churches. Many of our boomer megachurches have begun to die, because they tend to survive only as long as the dominant leader/pastor lives.⁵⁹ Even the 100-member churches will experience significant numerical decline because of the aging process, although in my assessment with lower overhead expenses and a more intimate relationship climate, these 100-member churches may fare better than larger congregations. What we need to realize is that the true key to church success is not in bodies, buildings, and budgets but in the lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not the aim of this paper to examine bodies, buildings, and budgets *per se*, but to examine the relationship among such factors and the transformation of individuals through the church.

One current assessment of the church’s situation can be found in Sweet’s book *Post-modern Pilgrim*.⁶⁰ The questions of this ministry project were developed from three of Sweet’s ideas that worship, programs, and facilities are factors that influence both

⁵⁹ A “Boomer” is an individual born between 1945-1965 in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom or Australia. A megachurch is a church comprised of an average attendance at least 2,000. It is generally located in large suburban areas, mainly in the continental United States. “Mega Church Definition” Hartford Institute For Religion Research, n.p. [Cited 10 October, 2007]. Online: <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html>.

⁶⁰ Sweet, *Post-modern*, 84.

attraction and retention of members.⁶¹ This triad of factors can be used to examine and impact culture. Sweet affirms that the future is not to be feared but faced with faith and action. He uses the EPIC acrostic to describe the church and its ministry, emphasizing that the church must be Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, and have Connected worship. The same unchurched individual who comes asking, “What can the church do for me?” will not remain with that church unless he/she is included within the life of that church.⁶² To summarize: “Few people come to church looking for a job, but no one remains without getting one.”⁶³

The key to attracting and maintaining church members is the ability to transition to this postmodern mindset within the life of a church. Will a church be such a closed system that the transition will be aborted and that church will die when the older generation passes away? If Sweet’s theories come to fruition, then the church as presently experienced will in many ways be transformed—its people who comprise the congregations, its places and content of gatherings for worship, and its teaching and preaching programs will be changed. Given this impending change, the immediate future will be some of the most creative and challenging years to be alive and be in ministry.

People Resources

When we look at Brunswick Baptist Association’s local congregations, we find a preponderance of white hair and wrinkles. We expect to see dwindling congregations.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Edward H. Hammett, *The Gathered and Scattered Church: Equipping Believers for the 21st Century* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 56.

⁶³ Mark Gray, author’s personal conversation with Mark Gray during Operation Reach in Brunswick County, North Carolina, September 18, 2007.

Death and health issues associated with aging take their toll on the numbers of people able “to do church,” as it is currently experiencing. Our local congregations are aging out. Aging out occurs within a congregation when the age and health of the congregants keep them from worship, discipleship, evangelism, and Bible study.⁶⁴

On the other hand, there is a positive experience: Today’s twenty to thirty year-olds are finding the traditional liturgical expressions of worship a realistic and vital way of informing their world view.⁶⁵ Some of these liturgical traditions that were borrowed from both early Christianity and other denominations are creeping into Baptist worship.⁶⁶

This is a growing need among those thirty years of age and younger in our churches who desire intimacy and deep relationship, which can only be met in a small group setting. The experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connected church will find that this exists best in smaller churches or groupings of believers such as small group Bible studies.

Age impacts the individual’s feelings concerning the church and its place in culture.⁶⁷ In reading the literature in most instances there is a correlation between age and classification of religious consciousness. In their social and religious consciousness, most persons born between 1926 and 1964 would be considered moderns. Those born after 1964 demonstrate a shift to a postmodern social and religious consciousness.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Carol Howard Merritt, “Nurturing the Tree of Life,” n.p. [Cited 4 March 2008]. Online: <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?q=printme&id=5748>.

⁶⁵ Sweet, *Post-modern Pilgrims*, 44.

⁶⁶ Celtic Baptists (The Prayer Foundation) www.prayerfoundation.org/celtic_baptists.htm.

⁶⁷ Dempsey, *Faith Outside the Walls*, 43.

⁶⁸ George Barna, *The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators: Trends in Morality, Beliefs, Lifestyles, Religious and Spiritual Thought, Behavior, and Church Involvement* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1996), 84-85. See

Moderns are very rational thinkers who want to know the “meaning.” They want to reduce the mystery of life to scientific and rational equations. Moderns do not have to be involved in solving problems; they are comfortable in letting the professionals sort them out.⁶⁹ Moderns have a deep sense of commitment to community and church whether these institutions directly impact their lives or not.

While moderns want to figure out what life is about, postmoderns want to experience what life is—especially to experience life for themselves. Postmoderns want life up close and personal. Postmoderns desire adrenaline rushes of experience. They want life to explode all around them. They want knowledge, but knowledge with experience. According to Sweet,

Postmoderns exhibit three levels of engagement with the media (with life itself?), according to Stark: fascination, exploration, integration. Postmoderns have to explore (hands-on) before they can integrate. Of these three stages, only the first is passive (fascination). Both exploration and integration are active and interactive.

In other words, interactivity is hard-wired into the postmodern brain itself. This is media. Prints, radio, TV, are all one way. The cyberspace of phone and Web are by nature two-way communication.

The more you surf the Internet, the more you become “surf-bored,” as Jim L. Wilson puts it, and want to surf the real thing. Have you noticed kids can’t sit still and listen to a concert? They make concerts interactive. At rock concerts there is slam dancing, mashing, even “body surfing” where people get “passed” overhead during the singing in about as “hands-on” a form of interactive [sic] as one can invent.⁷⁰

also James P. Wind, “Crunching the Numbers,” n.p. [cited 10 March 2008]. Online: <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?q=printme&id=5818>.

⁶⁹ Sweet, *Post-modern Pilgrims*, 55.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

This level of engagement can be realized within small groups of people. It may be that the future of church growth could be that one must belong to a group before believing in Christ.⁷¹ For example the flow may be that (1.) there is an invitation to participate, (2.) the participant learns about the group and (3.) the person is asked to pray for and support the ministry of the group.

Worship Resources

The postmodern Christian wants both to know and experience worship. This participation is not bound by space or time. Space and time boundaries are diminishing through technology, the exchange and interchange experienced in both real time and the Internet. Sweet states,

Knowledge by dissection analytically takes apart; knowledge by dance (gestures, smell, taste, touch, etc.) synthetically puts together. In one you are rich—full of yourself. In one you are poor—empty of yourself. In one you are a distant observer or critic. In one you are an intimate lover. In the experimental you keep something at arms-length distance; it is called critical detachment. In the experiential you put your arms around the concept of “really understanding” music becomes vacuous; there is only reading it, memorizing it, performing it, composing it, and listening to it—in short, loving it.⁷²

The majority of Protestant worship and preaching is rational and didactic in nature. Worship in the future will need to be more sensory in nature. The senses of touch, sight, smell as well as hearing can be highlighted in our services. Baptists will see a return to traditional forms of worship that include touch, sight, and smell or maybe even a foot-washing service. Other, non-traditional churches will see a greater acceptance of

⁷¹ Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

⁷² Sweet, *Post-modern Pilgrims*, 146.

liturgical methods such as anointing and praying for the sick, burning candles and incense.⁷³ There will be a growing sense of the numinous. Even small congregations will employ the visual, auditory, and tactile senses through the use of multi-media, drama, etc.

Program Resources

The programs of the church today continue to offer a choice between programs that lead the participant to a greater fidelity to God and the programs that interface with the present day culture. Church programs for the most part do not answer the culture's basic questions or meet its basic needs. People will ask themselves, "Does my faith change/improve my character or lifestyle?" The development of programs that answer this question will lead to a greater simplicity and practicality in ministry and in ministry settings.

In the United States, the basic lifestyles and values of Christian persons and those of non-Christians are not that different. George Barna in a survey reported on February 7, 2007, compares twenty lifestyle elements of Americans including born-again Christians and those who are not. Barna states: "Faith commitments sometimes play a role in what people do—but less often than might be assumed."⁷⁴

Brian D. McLaren speaks of the issue of non-meaning in religious life as the privatization of religious experience. The privatization of religious experience is where religious practice and experience become a personal, private matter alone, not an

⁷³ Hannah Elliott, "North Carolina CBF Approves Budget, Elects Leaders," Associated Baptist Press (March 2006). www.abpnews.com/897.article (accessed March 23, 2006).

⁷⁴ George Barna, *The Barna Update: American Lifestyles Mix Compassion and Self-Oriented Behavior*, 7 February 2007
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=216&Pa>

experience or experiences that are tempered with the event of attending the church. One may consider oneself a member of the Christian faith, but there is no real difference in the lifestyle of one who claims to be a Christian and one who does not. McLaren continues saying, that the general consensus of Christians and non-Christians alike is that Christianity is a failed religion.⁷⁵

Facilities Resources

Facilities are more than buildings.⁷⁶ The real property of a congregation speaks volumes concerning the socio-economics, interests, and concerns of the church.⁷⁷ From Christianity's early beginnings the place of worship impacted the "how" of worship and *vice versa*. Whether a congregation meets in a house church, a basilica, or a pilgrimage site influences how it worships.⁷⁸ Individuals are drawn to or repelled by facilities.⁷⁹

Facilities communicate meaning to events and experiences.⁸⁰ But how do the church's buildings help or hinder the attraction of members? Responses garnered in Rainer's surveys in *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* give evidence that the physical condition of buildings is important in attracting and

⁷⁵ Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 33.

⁷⁶ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, Third Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2000), 82.

⁷⁷ Dempsey, *Faith Outside The Walls*, 79.

⁷⁸ Frank C. Senn, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 81.

⁷⁹ Nancy Demott, Tim Shapiro, Brent Bill, "Your Building Speaks," n.p. [3 December, 2007] <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?q=printme&id=5314>.

⁸⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New*, Revised Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 137.

retaining members. Are the buildings in good repair? Is there a smell about the building? Are the parking lots marked, well lit? Are the rest rooms clean and neat? Are the children's classrooms up-to-date with new toys, furniture, and furnishings? What type of security system is used to protect the children?⁸¹ If the response to these questions is negative, then the visitor will in all probability not consider the church as one of the possibilities he or she will join. The physical condition of buildings, parking lots, rest rooms and children's classrooms are of paramount importance in reaching the unchurched.⁸²

In the conclusion of this paper there are recommendations for established and newly organized churches as well as possible church plants for Brunswick Baptist Association. Phenomenal growth has occurred in Brunswick County in the last twenty years, and there is not a correlative growth in church membership.

Biblical Rationale

Is there biblical rationale to justify the concern to attract and retain members? The Bible gives us examples such as the issues of the post-exilic community (Second Temple) and utilizes the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, Ruth, Jonah, and the third major section of Isaiah (Trito-Isaiah or Isa 56-66), to show the tensions and divisions of views about the worshipping community within the post-exilic community. The reason for choosing the post-exilic community is that it defines the centuries leading up to the time

⁸¹ Rainer, 98-99.

⁸² Ibid., Rainer's term "unchurched" describes those persons who do not attend church.

of Jesus.⁸³ The Bible also gives believers a clear mandate in Matt 28:18-20 and in Acts 1:1-8 to reach and teach all people.

Post-Exilic Community

The issues of the post-exilic community are: how to interpret the law; how to connect with God; how to relate to the outside world; proselytism, and assimilation. The discussion begins with the sources that become the central interpreters of the pre-exilic experience in the post-exilic world.

The Old Testament has many references to God's care and interaction with humans through holy persons, places, and personal dialogue.⁸⁴ God's relationship to the individual or to the nation of Israel can be examined as the issues of holy people vs. holy land.⁸⁵ These experiences are recorded from Genesis to 2 Kings, ending with the destruction of Jerusalem (587 BCE) and the deportation of some citizens to Babylon. The Babylonian exile heightened the animosity, distrust, and division between Jews and Gentiles and between those Jews who returned from exile and those who had remained in the holy land. When the members of this exiled community in Babylon returned they formed the official nucleus of the post-exilic community's political, religious and economic authority (Ezra-Nehemiah). During this time, Temple worship was again instituted, while covenants and laws were interpreted to renew the relationship of the

⁸³ Michael Fishbane. *The Bible and Its Interpreters: Jewish Biblical Interpretation*, (HBC; San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 50-56.

⁸⁴ James Barr. *The Bible and Its Communities*, (HBC; San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 65-72.

⁸⁵ Terrence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, (SHBC; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 428.

people to their land and people to their God.⁸⁶ The return of some of the exiles, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reinstatement of the sacrifices were accomplished.

The official leaders defined their religious experience in terms of knowing and observing the law. They asked why God had allowed this tragedy to befall Israel and perceived this answer: “We sinned against God and we were removed from the land. What must we do now to remain in the land and be connected to God?” This question is addressed by Ezra and Nehemiah in this post-exile period. The return of the exiles marks the beginning of their reinterpretation of what it means to be a sacred people in a sacred land. This is the era when the written biblical texts as we know them today were being collected, transmitted, and interpreted. The interpretation dating from this time will impact the next several centuries of religious, economic, and political life in the nation of Israel.⁸⁷

The issues of the post-exilic community deal with the question: Who is included and who is excluded in God’s salvation? How could their ancient laws and practices be applied to the post-exilic community? What were the social, political, and economic implications of these interpretations? How could their history and the experiences of their people have meaning and purpose for that time?⁸⁸ The answer developed was that the law was best observed through the observance of the Sabbath and through worship at the Temple. Israel’s observance of the law developed in a growing sense of superiority and exclusivity that tended to “exile” all other nations from God’s care and love.⁸⁹ This

⁸⁶ Matthew Levering, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, (BTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos), 31.

⁸⁷ Levering, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 82.

⁸⁸ Levering, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 38.

⁸⁹ A. J. Glaze, Jr. *Jonah*, (BBC 7; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press), 156.

answer to the post-exilic community's issues informed the cultural, religious, and political issues of Jesus' ministry.⁹⁰

Ezra-Nehemiah

The Ezra-Nehemiah tradition became the dominant interpretive authority of religious life in Judaism. The biblical record contained in these two books deals with the return of the exiles from Babylon, the rebuilding of the temple, and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Traditionally, authorship has been accorded to Ezra, the priest, and Nehemiah, the cupbearer of the king, respectively. However, as a result of literary and form criticism there is evidence of an editor/redactor who attempts to tie 1 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah into a theological treatise to resist the contamination of Judaism by the surrounding peoples and to build support for the Second Temple cultus.⁹¹ In this paper, Ezra-Nehemiah will be considered basically as one source.

Ezra-Nehemiah continues the dialogue of the exiled community with the pre-exilic scripture traditions. How should they remain a holy people in a holy land? What constituted true worship? These books define the religious experience as being the observance of the law and Temple worship. The teachings of Ezra-Nehemiah became the norm of what it meant to be included in the nation of Israel. Israelites did not marry foreign wives. Israelites excluded anyone who was not genetically and racially like themselves (Ezra 10:6-19; Neh 13:2; 23-30). They had to follow the regulations regarding Sabbath observance and they were required to worship at the Temple (Neh

⁹⁰ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster, 1988), 36.

⁹¹ Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 50.

13:15-22). Ezra-Nehemiah defines the power and control of religion and religious life in the centuries that follow to the time of Jesus.

The biblical books of Ruth, Jonah, and the third part of Isaiah (56-66) however, present an opposing view. They present God as being merciful to Jew and Gentile alike.

Ruth

The story of Ruth begins with a certain man of Bethlehem with his wife and two sons who go up to Moab because of a famine. During this family's stay there the sons marry, and eventually the man and his two sons die. There remain the widows of the father and the sons. The mother-in-law, Naomi, instructs her daughters-in-law to return to their fathers' households in hopes that they may marry again. One daughter-in-law goes back to her father's household. The other daughter-in-law, Ruth, refuses to leave. Ruth promises to remain with her mother-in-law, and they both return to Bethlehem. Ruth quickly begins to seek sustenance. Ruth finds herself in a relative's field. The relative, upon learning of her connection to Naomi, encourages her to stay and glean in his fields. She finds protection and a food supply in this relative, Boaz. Naomi, the mother-in-law, encourages Ruth to seek Boaz out at the harvest festival and to remind him of the kinsmen-redeemer obligation that he owes to the family. Boaz seeks to clarify the matter and marries Ruth. Ruth bears a son who is named Obed. Obed becomes the father of Jesse. Jesse becomes the father of David, the great King of Israel.

Edward F. Campbell's position is that the book of Ruth is a post-exilic polemic against the dissolution of interfaith marriages as called for in Ezra-Nehemiah.⁹² However,

⁹² Edward F. Campbell, *Ruth*, (OCB; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 663.

the estimated date of the writing of Ruth is debatable. Scholars argue for a pre and post-exilic date due to linguistic, legal, and theological issues.⁹³ Phyllis Tribble places Ruth being written between the 10th and 7th centuries BCE.⁹⁴ Andre LaCocque offers the view which is the position of this paper. The book of Ruth is a commentary on the law where the “situations and characters” are more important than the facts.⁹⁵ LaCocque notes that Ruth is the only biblical book named after a gentile.⁹⁶ Ruth herself is a Moabite, who are descendants of Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38). The law concerning incest in Lev 18:6-7 prohibits children born of incest from tabernacle worship. The Moabites were related to Israel through Lot. Their relationship with Israel was problematic. Disputes between Jews and Moabites arose from the time of the wilderness wanderings and the conquest (Num 21-25). Moabites were forbidden to enter into the congregation of the Lord (Deut 23:3). Finally, there are some observations concerning the woman Ruth. Ruth was a single woman in a man’s world. Ruth was childless in a culture that valued children and perceived infertility as a curse (Deut 28:18). She was a foreigner to Israel. Economically, culturally, and politically Ruth was a marginal person.

Yet, in the book of Ruth, this woman is the dominant character. She acts with more faith than the Israelites. She expresses more faith in her devotion to marriage ties. Ruth is observant of Israel’s cultural customs (gleaning the edges of the field, kinsman-redeemer). Everything is reinterpreted, and one is looking at the issues differently. Andre LaCocque states:

⁹³ Campbell, “Ruth,” 663.

⁹⁴ Phyllis Tribble, “Ruth,” *ABD* 5:842-47.

⁹⁵ Andre LaCocque, *Ruth*, (trans. K. C. Hanson; CC: Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 9.

⁹⁶ Andre LaCocque, *Ruth*, 1.

According to the book of Ruth, the center of the Torah is *hesed*, love. Love redeems everything. Then the impasses open up, the foreigner is no longer foreign, the widow no longer a widow, the sterile woman (or so considered) gives birth, the lost property is returned to the family of the clan, the interrupted story resumes its course and is crowned by the advent of “David.” More profoundly, the Law is no longer a means of control and power (at times manipulation), but the instrument of peace, reconciliation, and equality. All the legal categories are transcended by an interpretation according to an amplifying and nonrestrictive norm. This is the reason the book of Ruth reminds one of the hermeneutic of Jesus.⁹⁷

The book of Ruth speaks to the spirit of the law that surpasses its letter. Who is “in” and who is “out?” Anyone who desires to belong is “in.” God spreads his wings over anyone who draws near to Him (Ruth 2:12). This tension-filled dialogue can be seen in Ruth, the New Testament Book of Acts, and the writings of the Apostle Paul, the dialogue continues to this day in Christianity.

Jonah

In summary, Jonah is a prophet of Israel who is called by God to go preach a message of coming judgment on Nineveh in the Assyrian Empire. Jonah instead sets sail to the farthest place away from Nineveh. During Jonah’s voyage a great tempest arises, terrifying the sailors and nearly sinking the ship. Through casting lots Jonah is deemed to be the cause of the storm. Jonah instructs the sailors to throw him overboard. When Jonah is swallowed by a great fish, the storm abates. The sailors offer sacrifices to the God of Israel. Jonah is kept in the belly of the great fish for three days and then regurgitated onto land. Jonah then goes to Nineveh and preaches the message of judgment. The king, nobles, people and animals partake of a great fast in the hope that God will spare them.

⁹⁷ LaCocque, Ruth, 27. LaCocque states that “Only when Ruth is in Judah will she become fertile and have a son, Obed. The traditional Jewish reading, is that sterility and death in Moab are signs of divine disfavor.”, 42.

God does spare Nineveh. Jonah is greatly distressed that God is merciful and complains bitterly to God for not following through with judgment.

The majority of scholars point to a time after the exile for the writing of Jonah based on linguistic studies, the descriptions of Nineveh and Tarsus and on allusion to historical matters.⁹⁸ Though the book is named for the prophet, the main character of the book is God. It is important to compare the character of Jonah to the character of the pagans who surround Jonah. Jonah attempts to flee from God. Phyllis Tribble has said that Jonah is on a down-hill slide. He goes down to Joppa, he goes down into the ship, he goes down into a deep sleep and he goes down into the deep.⁹⁹ In stark contrast to the faithlessness of the prophet is the reaction of the sailors who offer sacrifices of thanks to God for this deliverance. The response of the king, nobles, and animals of Nineveh who turn to God and ask for mercy is in direct contrast to Jonah who is angry that God is gracious and compassionate. The pagans that Jonah intermingles with seem more open to experiencing the working and movement of God in their lives than does the prophet.¹⁰⁰

James Limburg emphasizes this focus on the outsiders best:

The entire Bible tells the story of God's love for the insiders, the people of Israel and the people of the New Testament church. The book of Jonah, however, has a special concern to show God's love for the outsiders, the people of the world-and even for their cattle!¹⁰¹

⁹⁸T. Desmond Alexander, *Jonah*, (TOTC 23a; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 51-61.

⁹⁹Tribble, *ABD* 3:938 see also A. J. Glaze, Jr, *Jonah*, (BBC 7; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1972), 160.

¹⁰⁰James Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary*, (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 51.

¹⁰¹James Limburg, *Jonah*, 98.

Isaiah 56-66

Isaiah deals with the issue of what the holy land and holy people were and what they should become.¹⁰² The writing of the book of Isaiah covers a large span of time.¹⁰³ Isaiah is considered to be divided into three divisions, chapters 1-39, chapters 40-55 and chapters 56-66, also known as Trito-Isaiah.¹⁰⁴ Chapters 1-39, are for the most part, connected to the 8th century BCE prophet Isaiah.¹⁰⁵ Most scholars date chapters 40-66 as having been written in the exile and post-exile periods.¹⁰⁶

The third division of Isaiah is chapters 56-66. The Trito-Isaiah time frame is the late Babylonian exile and the post-exilic period.¹⁰⁷ The post-exilic community deals with the issues of what happened to them and how they can now be the people that God called them to be. Walter Brueggeman states that these are the issues of vision and dispute.¹⁰⁸ The post-exilic community designs the foundation for what Judaism will become.¹⁰⁹ Isaiah 56-66 emphasizes worship, keeping the Sabbath, and the implementation of

¹⁰²John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC 24; Waco, TX: Word, 1985), xxxi.

¹⁰³Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, (WBC 25 Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 2.

¹⁰⁴Cecil P. Stanton, *Interpreting Isaiah for Preaching and Teaching* (Greenville, SC: Smyth & Helwys, 1991), 8.

¹⁰⁵Page H. Kelley, *Isaiah* (BBC 5; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1971), 160.

¹⁰⁶John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC 25; Waco, TX: Word, 1985), xxvi.

¹⁰⁷Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (AB; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007) 130.

¹⁰⁸Brueggeman, 165.

¹⁰⁹Frank E. Gaebelien, ed. *Isaiah* (EBC 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1986), 315.

justice.¹¹⁰ Two issues of importance are the messages to eunuchs and to foreigners (Isa 56:1-7). These verses act as a voice calling for an inclusive vision. In them, those who have been excluded because of birth defects or man-made blemishes affecting sexual organs, and therefore, cannot reproduce, will be included in God's plan. Also those of foreign birth, those not geographically associated with Israel, will be priests and Levites. They will have an assigned position in the community to offer sacrifices and will take care of the temple.

In the Old Testament, proselytes, members of the religious community who were not Jews, could become a part of the household of faith. Not every Jew was willing to give them full covenant rights, but the books of Jonah, Ruth and the portion of Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56-66) present a view of God as one who is compassionate, merciful, and inclusive of all peoples (Jonah 4:11; Ruth 2:12; Isa 56:6; 60:10; 61:5).¹¹¹ They are of course expected to observe the Sabbath. The opposite view is contained in Ezra-Nehemiah where the emphasis is placed upon an exclusion of other peoples (Ezra 9-10; Neh 9:1-3; 13). The issue of inclusion vs. exclusion continues until the New Testament period and today. These passages are pivotal for understanding the New Testament period and the need to reach and maintain church membership.

In the New Testament, God reveals himself to his creation and calls creation into relationship with himself through Jesus Christ.¹¹² Jesus challenged the ideas and the

¹¹⁰Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 249

¹¹¹ Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 248.

¹¹² Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church*, 49, 62. See also Robert E. Morosco, "Matthew's Formation of a Commissioning Type-scene out of the Story of Jesus' Commissioning of the Twelve," *JBL* 103 (1984): 539-56.

realities of the religious establishment of his day.¹¹³ The idea of who could have a relationship with God and what type was limited at the time of Jesus by factors involving gender, racial origin, and religious background.¹¹⁴ Jesus' ministry and teaching responded to the needs of individuals with no regard to their sex, race, or creed.¹¹⁵ Jesus' last recorded words spoken on earth to his followers according to Matt 28:16-20 and Acts 1:8 give an impetus to reach and maintain disciples from among all peoples.¹¹⁶ These passages have been used historically to define the mission and programs of the church.¹¹⁷ However, different parts of these passages have been emphasized in the mission and programs of the church.¹¹⁸ Christ opened the boundaries of acceptance to all who would come and adhere to God through faith.¹¹⁹ These passages are pivotal to understanding the need to reach and maintain church membership.

Matthew 28:16-20

The estimated date of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew is around 90 CE, some thirty years after the letters of Paul and some twenty years after the destruction of

¹¹³ Jerome H. Neyrey, S. J., "A Symbolic Approach to Mark 7," n.p. [cited 9 March 2006]. Online: <http://www.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/symbolic.html>.

¹¹⁴ Janet C. Carroll, "The Mission of the Churches in Realizing a New World Order: Morality, Justice and Peace," *Miss* 13 (1985): 395-96.

¹¹⁵ Justin S. Ukpong, "Contemporary Theological Models of Mission: Analysis and Critique," *AFER* 27(1985): 165.

¹¹⁶ Walter Russell Bowie and Cuthbert A. Simpson, *IB* 7:575.

¹¹⁷ Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "The Great Commission," *BSac* 130 (1973): 258.

¹¹⁸ Arthur F. Glassner, "The Evolution of Evangelical Mission Theology since World War II," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 9 (1985): 9-13. See also Gerald H. Anderson, "Christian Mission and Human Transformation toward Century 21," *Mission Studies* 2 (1985): 57.

¹¹⁹ Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., "A Symbolic Approach to Mark 7." n.p. [cited 9 March 2006]. Online: <http://www.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/symbolic.html>.

the Temple in Jerusalem.¹²⁰ Edgar Krentz and Oscar Brooks maintain that the end of the Gospel of Matthew determines the beginning and serves as an interpretation of the whole.¹²¹ Matthew 28:16-20 has a certain discordant flow between attraction-retention, evangelism-maintenance, baptism, and teaching—all of which define discipling.¹²²

Robert Thomas and Jack Kingsbury give examples of scholars who think the words credited to Jesus in this passage were probably not the actual words of Jesus.¹²³ How could those who were on the mountain and heard those words of Jesus later debate whether the gospel could be responded to by the Gentiles in Acts 10-11 and Acts 1:1-35?¹²⁴ Donald Hagner states, “These are the words of Jesus but they are recast in Matthew’s style and vocabulary.”¹²⁵

A survey of the passage leads one to look at whom Christ called and the marching orders he gave his followers that day.¹²⁶ Jesus called his followers to a specific mountain in Galilee, the area of much of Jesus’ life and ministry and the home area for most of the disciples.¹²⁷ In Matt 28:17, Jesus came to those gathered on the mountain. This group was

¹²⁰ Edgar Krentz, “‘Make Disciples’ . . . Matthew on Evangelism,” *CurTM* 33 (2006): 23.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 24. See also Oscar S. Brooks, “Matthew 28:16-20 and the design of the First Gospel,” *JSNT* 10 (1981):2.

¹²² Daniel J. Day, “A Fresh Reading of Jesus’ Last Words: Matthew 28: 16-20,” *RevExp* 104 (2007): 375-84.

¹²³ Robert L. Thomas, “Historical Criticism and the Great Commission,” *MSJ* 11 (2000): 45, 48. Likewise see Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Composition and Christology of Matthew 28: 16-20,” *JBL* 93 (1974): 573.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, (WBC 33B; Dallas, TX.: Word Books, 1995), 883.

¹²⁶ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (DSBS 2; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1958), 417.

¹²⁷ Philip L. Shuler. “Matthew, the Gospel According to,” *HBD*: 613.

more than likely comprised of more than the eleven.¹²⁸ The group on the mountain may have been comprised of several hundred people.¹²⁹ John Broadus states, “This commission was not addressed to the eleven only; and it is plain from Acts 8:2, 4, that the first Christians all set themselves to carry it out.”¹³⁰

The church, the gathered body of believers, is the meeting point of heaven and earth.¹³¹ Does this imply that we must gather in a specific place with the specific intent of meeting Jesus and that then Jesus will come to us? Margaret E. Howe suggests that one of the ways that early Christians recognized that Jesus was resurrected from the dead was worship and fellowship.¹³²

According to Matt 28:18, Jesus begins his commission to those gathered with an assurance of his authority by describing his power: “all power” is his. Here stands the risen Christ whose power had been great to restore and revive. This is the power that Jesus has in all the creation to establish heaven and earth together as one. The powers of Jesus are claimed to be boundless.¹³³ This word “power” has in the background the passages of Dan 7:14, Exod 19-20 and Num 6:22-27.¹³⁴ Daniel J. Day states that in

¹²⁸ Kenneth L. McKay, “The Use of *hoi de* in Matthew 28:17,” *JSNT* 24 (1985): 71-2.

¹²⁹ Edmond D. Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” *BSac* 149 (1992): 341.

¹³⁰ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society 1886; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), 592.

¹³¹ Kari Syreeni, “Between Heaven and Earth: On the Structure of Matthew’s Symbolic Universe,” *JSNT* 40 (1990): 4.

¹³² Margaret E. Howe, “But some doubted, Matthew 28:17: a re-appraisal of factors influencing the Easter Faith of the Early Christian Community,” *JETS* 18 (1975): 174-77.

¹³³ A. T. Robertson, *Matthew and Mark*. (WPNT 1; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1930), 244.

¹³⁴ Krentz, “‘Make Disciples’ . . . Matthew on Evangelism,” 28.

Matthew's Gospel the power of Jesus has frequently been a contentious issue.¹³⁵ Matthew does not portray Jesus' physicality as he did at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2). With his resurrected body the teachings of Jesus become the main emphasis.¹³⁶

Jesus' main concern was for orthopraxy and not orthodoxy. Jesus emphasized right practices, not right beliefs. Jesus then instructed this band of followers to go. Where were they to go? In Matt 28:19 the Greek phrase used to describe where they must go is *panta ta ethne*: "to all the nations." This term *ethne* is generally used by the Jews of Jesus' time to describe persons who are not Jewish (that is, Gentiles). There is a great redrawing of the definition of who has been chosen to be God's people.¹³⁷ The group of persons chosen to be God's people enlarges to encompass all persons including the Gentiles and Jews.¹³⁸ Boundaries of the law, festivals, and rituals of Judaism that previously prohibited persons from coming to God are erased.¹³⁹

The call of the fishers (Matt 4:18-22), the tax collector (Matt 9:9), and the rest of the Twelve (Matt 10:1-4) is now extended to all, as an extension of the call to Abraham and in accord with the promise that all nations would finally be blessed through him (Gen 12:1-3).¹⁴⁰

The commission is to disciple all nations. This commission includes the Jews, but the Gospel of Matthew continues to rewrite the command in Matt 10 "to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" so that the mission to the Jews is factually ended and the

¹³⁵ Day, "A Fresh Reading," 378.

¹³⁶ Robertson, 29.

¹³⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures* 1, 5.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³⁹ Neyrey, *Symbolic Approach to Mark*, n.p. [cited 9 March 2006]. Online: <http://www.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/symbolic.html>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, n.p.

mission to the Gentiles is commenced and enlarged.¹⁴¹ The word *mathēteusate* is the main verb in this passage; all other participles such as “baptizing” and “teaching” take impetus from “to make disciples.”¹⁴² *Mathēteusate* is found in one other passage in the New Testament in Acts 14:21 where “make disciples” is the imperative.¹⁴³

These nations are to become more than a group of individual believers, they are to become a part of a community that understands and obeys the teachings of Jesus. For Matthew the mission is one of teaching. The way of making disciples is through Christian Education.¹⁴⁴ Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is more than a formula. Believers are invited into a holy circle of love.¹⁴⁵ In baptism the individual is given over into the care of and becomes a part of God and God’s new people or family.¹⁴⁶

The commission to “go and tell” is intrinsically bound with “teach them to obey all things” such as love God and your neighbor as yourself (Matt 5:43-48; 7:12; 21:37-39; 22:37).¹⁴⁷ The retention method of Matthew’s Gospel is to make disciples and to teach them all things that Jesus has commanded.¹⁴⁸ A symbol of commitment and the empowerment of this new commitment was demonstrated through baptism.

¹⁴¹ Amy-Jill Levine, “To all the Gentiles: a Jewish perspective on the Great Commission,” *RevExp* 103 (2006): 147.

¹⁴² Hiebert, “An Expository,” 348.

¹⁴³ Krentz, “Make Disciples,” 30.

¹⁴⁴ Mortimer Arias, “Rethinking the Great Commission,” *ThT* 47:4 (January 1991); 412.

¹⁴⁵ Cynthia M. Campbell, “Matthew 28:16-20,” *Int* 46:4 (October 1992): 404-05.

¹⁴⁶ George A. Buttrick, *IB* 7:624.

¹⁴⁷ Arias, “Rethinking,” 414.

¹⁴⁸ Robert D. Culver, “What Is the Church’s Commission: Some Exegetical Issues in Matthew 28:16-20,” *BSac* 125 (1968): 252-53.

True evangelism results in persons adhering with their hearts, their minds, and their total being to the teachings of Jesus (Deut 6:6; Matt 22:37). In true *evangelism* one does not just know the words of Jesus; one does the work of God.¹⁴⁹ Kent Sparks suggests a three point summary of this passage in Matthew's gospel. The first point is that "Matthew's purpose was to promote and defend a more inclusive view of Gentiles among Jews." The second point is, "that Jesus actually fills several typological roles in the so-called Great Commission. He is indeed the new Moses, but he is also Daniel's 'son of man' with 'all authority' as well as the conquering namesake of Joshua." The third point is, "that this text is yet another of the creative typologies Matthew drew between the Old Testament and Jesus. . . . Matthew reinterpreted the Mosaic commissioning of Joshua before the conquest in light of what he understood to be Jesus' message of radical love and ethnic inclusiveness."¹⁵⁰

The biblical mandate is discipleship which involves a reorientation of the will, and a redirection of life. I will now look to the New Testament book of Acts.

Acts 1:1-8

The New Testament book of Acts is a two-volume work. Luke's Gospel is volume one.¹⁵¹ Frank Stagg has said that the purpose of the Luke-Acts account is summed up in the last word of Acts, an adverb, "unhindered."¹⁵² The different boundaries

¹⁴⁹ Hiebert, "An Expository," 349.

¹⁵⁰ Kent Sparks, "Gospel as Conquest," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 661-63.

¹⁵¹ Robert J. Dean, *Luke*, (LBBC 17; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), 11.

¹⁵² Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1955), 1, 2.

of gender, race, religion, status, and nationality which in many cases of the past heretofore had hindered humankind's approach to God at the temple are removed through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gathering of persons into Christ and his church through baptism.¹⁵³ In Acts 1:8 we see the risen Christ on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12) speaking with his disciples. We are not told how many were there. This group is described as "you men of Galilee" (Acts 1:11). These disciples are ordered to return to Jerusalem and there to await the coming gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, it is promised, will provide power for the commissioned witness of Jesus into all parts of the world.

Luke continues his account of all that Jesus began to do and teach in the book of Acts. An inference from the Scriptures is that Jesus is still doing and teaching (Acts 1:11).¹⁵⁴ The dialogue between Jesus and his disciples covers some key issues that were asked before his crucifixion concerning the nation of Israel's restoration to an independent state and the role that the disciples would play in this restored nation. Jesus, in response, speaks to them about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a physical kingdom built of armies, treaties, or intrigue, but is one of peace and love.¹⁵⁵ A new kingdom is established. The Kingdom of God is not a nationalistic, sexist, racist, or religious kingdom that excludes others, but a kingdom that will reach unto the far-flung corners of the earth. All nations, tribes, and tongues will be a part of God's kingdom (Rev

¹⁵³ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (DSBS 6; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1955), xvi.

¹⁵⁴ T. C. Smith, *Acts-I Corinthians*, (BBC 10; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1970), 17.

¹⁵⁵ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (DSBS 6; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1955), 3-4.

7:9). This, Jesus states, will begin in Jerusalem and will continue unto the ends of the earth. They are to wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon them (Acts 1:8).

It is reasonable to imagine that Luke knew of Paul's epistles to the churches.¹⁵⁶ The following encounters recorded in Acts describe "to the ends of the earth."¹⁵⁷ The encounter with the Holy Spirit is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost when 3,000 plus are added to the church. The church begins to grow exponentially in Jerusalem with multitudes added to it in Acts 5:14. As the church continues to grow numerically in Jerusalem a great number of priests become obedient to the faith in Acts 6:7. The message of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and the need for repentance in his name continues to be shared and responded to either by acceptance or rejection.

This message leads to the death of Stephen. Stephen's death leads to the conversion of Saul, and the good news of Jesus begins to expand into Samaria and the ends of the earth. Acts 8:25-54 relates the story of how Philip is in Samaria and many were being added to the church in the Samaritan villages.

In Acts 9, the conversion of Saul begins the expansion of the gospel and the early church moves toward the ends of the earth. The Apostle Peter preaches to the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48). In Acts 11:18 the church in Jerusalem glorifies God and affirms that God has also commanded that Gentiles, through repentance and faith, are a part of God's

¹⁵⁶William O. Walker, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 14.

¹⁵⁷Bertram L. Melbourne, "Acts 1:8 Re-examined: Is Acts 8 its Fulfillment?" *JRT* 57(2005): 7-16.

plan and kingdom.¹⁵⁸ The Gentiles are the pagan nations that inhabit the earth; in other words, everyone is invited to be a part of the new kingdom.¹⁵⁹

In Acts 13:12 Sergius Paulus, a Roman official, is converted under Paul's and Barnabas's ministry. In Acts 13:14-49 Paul and Barnabas begin to preach to the Jews and the Gentiles in the synagogue. This custom continues throughout the ministry of Paul (Acts 13:46). The churches planted in the book of Acts are for everyone and anyone. Eventually the gospel of Jesus Christ reaches Rome and is proclaimed to all. Every barrier of race, gender, nationality, and socio-economics is overcome by the gospel. Church growth begins with God. God established the promise to Abraham of being a blessing to "the nations" (Gen 12:1-3). In the Old Testament, the prophetic picture is of the nations (those who were not Jews) who would come to Jerusalem to honor and worship the Lord (Isa 56:6; 60:10; 61:5).¹⁶⁰ The Books of Jonah and Ruth describe a God who longs for all peoples to know him (Jonah 4:11; Ruth 2:12).

After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, God established the church on the day of Pentecost, and his (God's) intention was to fling the church's doors wide open. The church is to receive every person regardless of language, rank, gender, or previous lifestyle. Karl Barth states: "The community of Jesus Christ is for the world. . . . In this way, it also exists for God, for the Creator and Lord of the world."¹⁶¹ Barth further states that the church is "the society of men called to believe in, and simultaneously to testify to, the

¹⁵⁸Thomas S. Moore, "To the End of the Earth: The Geographic and Ethnic Universalism of Acts 1:9 in Light of Isaianic Influence on Luke," *JETS* 40 (1997): 397.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁶⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 43.

¹⁶¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV. 3, (Edinburgh, Scotland: 1962), 762.

Word in the world.”^{162,163} In the New Testament God called together a group of believers founded on their profession of faith in Jesus. This professing group was to reproduce other believers (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8); the church was to attract and include all kinds of people. The gift of the Holy Spirit conferred life, direction, and longevity to this group of believers. In the book of Acts, opposition and conflict became the catalyst for the church to spread.¹⁶⁴

What will it take for the church of today to examine how it attracts and retains members? Will cultural apathy toward Christianity, declining numbers of members, dwindling financial resources, or fear of the future, be the catalyst used of God to spur the Brunswick Baptist Association churches to become truly evangelistic? These factors are already at work. It is more important now than ever before to determine how to be most effective as we attempt to reach and hold on to the population of southeast North Carolina. The next chapter will begin a description of the process of implementing the project.

¹⁶² Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 37. No doubt that Barth is being gender inclusive.

¹⁶⁴ Wayne E. Weissenbuehler, “Acts 1:1-11,” *Int* 46 (1992): 64.

Chapter 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT

In the implementation of the project I exercised the following protocol:

- First, I contacted the pastor to ascertain that the letter inviting the congregation to participate in the survey had been received. (See Letters to Pastors, Appendix C.)
- Second, I confirmed with the pastor the best time and place to conduct the survey.
- Third, I secured the names and phone numbers of the persons who met the criteria for participation.
- Fourth, I asked the pastor to announce to the congregation the day, time and location that I would be at the church and to encourage those who were eligible to participate. In follow up conversations with the pastors, all reported that they had done so.
- Fifth, I asked the Pastor to speak personally with the persons that were eligible to participate.
- Sixth, I contacted the individuals by telephone and invited them to meet me at the agreed-upon day, time, and location within the church's facility. I utilized the following script:

Hi, this is Jeff Gibby with the Brunswick Baptist Association. I received your name and phone number from (pastor). I'm currently working on my Doctor of Ministry Project which involves giving a survey to those who have been a

member three years or less of (the name of their church). I'm attempting to discover what attracts persons to attend a church and what keeps them at a church. In order to do this I need your help. I will be at (church) on (day) at (time) in the (place) to give a brief survey. This survey is anonymous and only the tabulated results will be utilized in my project. I will also give a brief report to the church concerning the results of my research. Can I count on you to participate?

I then waited for their response.

- Seventh, I arrived at least fifteen minutes early the day of the survey. (See Survey, Appendix A.) I greeted each person who came to participate and explained to each individual the mechanics of the survey. I used this brief narrative as an outline:

Hello, I'm Jeff Gibby, the Associational Missionary for the Brunswick Baptist Association. I am attempting to ascertain what are the effective attraction and retention factors of your church's ministry? In other words, I'm trying to find out what attracts persons to your church and what keeps them at your church. The survey that you will take today will look at several different areas. Please, circle the answer to each question that best reflects your experience here at this church. Please, answer every question. There are no wrong or right answers to any question. Please, circle the answer that is closest to your experience as to what attracted you to your church and why you stayed as a member here.

- Eighth, I collected the surveys as the persons completed them and thanked them for their participation.

The Respondents

Twenty-three surveys were completed by individuals within the established churches responded to the survey. Fifty surveys were completed by individuals within new churches

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS

In utilizing the Mann-Whitney Statistical Test for ordinal data, one must evaluate the probability of a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between what attracts and retains members in established congregations versus new congregations. The first hypothesis is that there are no statistically significant differences in the degree to which persons in new versus established churches are reached by the style of building, existing relationships, or advertising. The second hypothesis is that there are no statistically significant differences in the degree to which persons in new versus established churches maintain their membership based on the content of preaching, the quality of teaching programs, or fellowship.

Description and Explanation of the Mann-Whitney Test

To understand the Mann-Whitney Test one must understand the philosophy behind it. Think of the Mann-Whitney Test as T-test with a kick.¹⁶⁵ The Mann-Whitney Test is a statistical measurement of the difference between two groups. These groups

¹⁶⁵ A T-test is simple averages whereas the Mann-Whitney test tells us if the averages are really significantly different.

have similarities. In this project the similarity is that both groups are churches. The difference in this project is that one group is new churches and the other is established churches. One could simply average the answers together and state a difference. However, this would be an incomplete analysis. Such an analysis would only give averages and not truly reveal if there is a significant difference between the two groups. I'm attempting to discover if there is a significant difference between two very similar groups, new churches and established churches. In order to utilize the Mann-Whitney Test three factors must be present: (1) The two samples must be independent and randomly drawn; (2) the scale of measurement for both samples must have the properties of an equal interval scale; and (3) there can be a reasonable supposition that the source population will have a normal distribution.¹⁶⁶ The parameters of the project met these criteria. The Mann-Whitney Test is a complicated formula that is easiest done on a website using your personal computer. I utilized the website <http://faculty.vassar.edu> to calculate the formula.

The first step in the process of analysis is to take the responses from groups A (new churches) and B (established churches) for each question and assemble them into one set. This one set will be designated as N , where $N = n_a + n_b$. N is the aggregate of n_a (new churches) + n_b (established churches). These responses are then ranked from lowest to highest. There will be tied ranks when appropriate. From these rankings one can compute the sum of the individual ranks and the sum of the collective ranks, and the averages of these totals. The effect of replacing the raw measures with the ranks brings two advantages. The first is that one can look at the ordinal relationship among the raw

¹⁶⁶Richard Lowry, "VassarStats: Web Site for Statistical Computation," n.p. [cited 16 June, 2009] Online:<http://faculty.vassar.edu>.

measures and speak of them in terms of “greater than,” “less than,” and “equal to” without the false implication that any of these ranks was derived from an equal-interval scale.¹⁶⁷ The second advantage is that the data are transformed into a kind of closed system, where many of the properties can then be known through sheer logic.¹⁶⁸

The Mann-Whitney Test gives two results to consider. The first is U_a . I could not find any explanation as to what U_a represents other than it is a calculated value that is on a U_A Critical Values table. The website that you utilize will have a U_a Critical Values table. U_a is a sum from the computation which may or may not be on a U_a Critical Values table. If the value of U_a from the computation exceeds the value for U_a in the significance table of U_a then there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, there is a difference between the two groups. If U_a does not exceed the table of critical values for U_a then there is not any statistical significance. The second and third results are p_1 and p_2 . If the subsequent values of p_1 and p_2 are small and fall within the table of significance then one can reject the idea that the difference is significant. The two groups agree or at least there is no significant statistical difference between new and established churches. (See Appendix D.) If after utilizing this statistical analysis, p_1 or p_2 falls outside of the parameters of the significance levels, then the response is a statistically significant variance between new and established churches. (See Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix D show the level of significance for p_1 and p_2 .) The fourth result is an average which shows that there is or is not a difference between new and established churches responses in the surveys. The sums and range of U_a , p_1 and p_2

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

are used to evaluate the statistical significance of the mean ranks or average of the responses. In the following table the mean ranks are shown:

What Attracted You to Your Church?

Invitation

When you came to your church for the first-time, how important was each of the following in attracting you to it?

Table 4.1 Invitation

An Invitation from:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
A Friend	38.6	>	33.5
A Relative	36.7	<	37.6
Pastor/Staff	36.6	<	37.8
Door to Door Visitor	36.7	<	37.6

The mean ranks show the importance of a friend for new churches is five points higher than that of established churches. However the calculations of U_a , p_1 , and p_2 reveal that there is no statistical significance between the two groups for any of their responses.

The tables in Appendix D give the mean ranks of the responses to each question in the surveys. The tables at the conclusion of this chapter give a visual summary of the data and its significance. The mean ranks and the values of U_a , p_1 and p_2 are contained in the data analysis for each section of the survey. The surveys utilized a Likert Scale.¹⁶⁹ In a Likert scale, each response may be assessed separately or collectively. A Likert scale

¹⁶⁹ A Likert scale (pronounced /ˈlɪkərt/, also /ˈlaɪkərt/) is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires. It is the most widely used scale in survey research. When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement. The scale is named after its inventor, psychologist Rensis Likert. Author unknown, <http://en.wikipedia.org> n.p. [cited 15, August 2009].

records ordinal data that is believed to have a relationship where $1 < 2$, $2 < 3$, $3 < 4$, and so on. In the evaluation of the data reported for this paper each response is examined separately as a sum of the established or the new churches.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Following is an interpretation of the analysis of the survey results from new and established churches based on the Mann-Whitney Test. The surveys dealt with two questions: (1) what brought you to this congregation and (2) what has kept you in this congregation?

Attraction to a Congregation

Invitation: Friend

In the survey concerning the influence of a friend's invitation in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time, there are not statistically significant differences between the responses of members of new churches or established churches. Table 3 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 38.6, which is greater than 33.5, the mean rank for established Churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=494.5$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source and that there is no statistically significant difference between new and established churches. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.1711$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.3421$ and not outside the parameters, which would have indicated that the groups demonstrated a significant difference in the extent to which a friend's invitation influenced the initial decision to

attend.¹⁷⁰ (See Tables 1 and 2 Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D).

Instead, members of both new churches and established churches state that an invitation from “a friend” is important in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation. It appears from the data that the effectiveness of “a friend’s” invitation is equally statistically significant for new and established churches.

Invitation: Relative

In the survey concerning the influence of a relative’s invitation in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 3 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) were 36.7 which is less than 37.6, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=588.5$ which shows that the data comes from the same source and that there was no statistically significant difference between new and established churches. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.4404$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8808$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influence than the other. (See tables 1 and 2 Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D.) Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that “a relative” is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however the data shows that “a relative’s” invitation is equally statistically significant for new and established churches.

¹⁷⁰ In a Directional test my hypothesis would have been that there was a difference of a specified degree between new and established churches in a Non Directional Test I have stated the null hypothesis that there is not a difference between new and established congregations. Author unknown, <http://psychology.georgetown.edu>. n.p. [cited 15 August 2009].

Invitation: Pastor or Staff Minister

In the survey concerning the influence of a pastor's or staff minister's invitation in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time, there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 3 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 36.6, which is less than 37.8, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=593.5$ which shows that the data comes from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.4168$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8337$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influenced than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that "a pastor or staff minister" is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however the data shows that "a pastor/staff's" invitation is equally statistically effective for new and established churches.

Invitation: Door to Door

In the survey concerning the influence of a "door to door" invitation in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 3 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 36.7, which is less than 37.6 mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=588.5$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source. The results fell within the

parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.4404$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8808$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influenced than the other. (See tables 1 and 2 Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that an invitation from “door to door” is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however the data shows that the effectiveness of “door to door” invitation is equally statistically significant for new and established churches.

Church’s Building and Grounds: Appearance or “Curb Appeal”

In the survey concerning the influence of the buildings appearance or “curb appeal” in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 4 (Appendix D) shows the mean ranks for new churches (Group A) was 35.6, which is less than 40, mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=645$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.2033$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.4605$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influenced than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that appearance or “curb appeal” is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation according to the mean ranks. However the data further shows that the effectiveness of

appearance or “curb appeal” is equally statistically significant for new churches and established churches.

Church’s Building and Grounds: Architecture or Style

In the survey concerning the influence of the building’s architecture or style in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 4 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 37, which is less than 37.1 mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=577.5$ which shows the data coming from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.492$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.984$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influenced than the other. Members of both new churches and established churches state that appearance or architecture is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however the data shows that the effectiveness of architecture or style is statistically of equal statistical significance for new churches and established churches.

Church’s Building and Grounds: Church Surroundings

In the survey concerning the influence of the building surroundings or curb appeal in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 4 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 38.4, which is greater than 34.1 mean

rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=507.5$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source with little variance. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.2119$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.4237$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group being significantly more influenced than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that building surroundings or curb appeal is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however the data further shows that the effectiveness of church surroundings is of equal statistical significance for new churches and established churches.

Church's Building and Grounds: Location or Convenience

In the survey concerning the influence of the location or convenience in deciding to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 4 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 36.4, which is less than 38.3, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=604$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source with little or no variance. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.3669$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.7339$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influenced than the other. What members of both new and established churches did reveal was that location or convenience is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation;

however the data shows that the location or convenience is equally statistically significant for new churches and established churches.

Advertising: Radio

In the survey concerning the influence of the advertisement on the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation, the influence of radio advertisement in the initial decision to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 5 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) 37, which is equal to 37, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=576$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.496$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.992$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influence than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that advertisement is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however, the data shows that the effectiveness of radio advertisement is equally statistically significant influence for new churches and established churches.

Advertising: Newspaper

In the survey concerning the influence of the advertisement on the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation, the influence of newspaper advertisement in the initial decision to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically a

significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table for Newspaper (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) 37.4, which is greater than 36.2, the mean rank for established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=556$ which shows the data coming from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.4129$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8259$ and not outside the parameters which would indicate one group having been significantly more influenced by newspaper advertisement versus the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that advertisement is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however, the data shows that the effectiveness of newspaper advertisement is of equal statistical significance for new churches than for established churches.

Advertising: Signs

In the survey concerning the influence of advertisement on the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation, the influence of signs in front of the building or along the road there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 5 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) 37.4, which is greater than 36.2, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=556$ which shows the data coming from a homogeneous source with little or no variance. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1) where $p_1=0.4129$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8259$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one

group showing significantly more influence than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that advertisement is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however, the data shows that the effectiveness of signs out front or along the road are of equal statistical significance for new churches than for established churches.

Advertising: Fliers or Other “Hand-Outs”

In the survey concerning the influence of advertisement on the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation, the influence of fliers or other “hand-outs” in the initial decision to visit a congregation for the first-time there is not a statistically significant difference between new churches and established churches. Table 5 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) 35.9, which is less than 39.5, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computing of $U_A=631.5$ which shows the data comes from a homogeneous source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.2546$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.5093$ and not outside the parameters which would have indicated one group showing significantly more influence of fliers or other “hand-outs” than the other. Instead members of both new churches and established churches state that advertisement is of importance in the decision to make a first-time visit to a congregation; however, the data shows that the effectiveness of fliers or other “hand-outs” is of equal statistical significance for new churches and established churches.

The second part of the survey dealt with the reasons why one continues with a congregation after the initial visit.

Retention by a Congregation

Worship: Preaching

In the attempt to understand what keeps persons at a church I examined whether preaching is considered to be more important or less important in new versus established churches. Table 6 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 38.6, which is greater than 33.6 of established churches (Group B). The data also revealed a $U_A=497$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.178$, and the Non-Directional Test p_2 , where $p_2=0.3576$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that the importance of preaching in retaining members is statistically more significant in a new church than in an established church in retaining members.

Worship: Music

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether music is considered to be more or less important than other factors of worship in new and established congregations. Table 6 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 38.7, which is greater than 33.3, of established churches (Group B). The results also showed in the computation of $U_A=489$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside of the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.1539$ and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.3077$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2)

The data shows that music is statistically more significant for new churches to continue as a member than in an established church.

Worship: Scripture Reading

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether scripture reading is considered to be more or less important in new and established congregations. Table 6 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches was 39.3 (Group A), which is greater than 32, the mean rank for established churches (Group B). The results also showed in the computation of $U_A=459$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.0853$ and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.1707$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that scripture reading is of equal statistical significance to continue in a new and an established church.

Worship: Prayer

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether prayer is considered to be more or less important in new and established churches. Table 6 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) was 36.1 less than 38.9 of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation $U_A=619$, which shows which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.3015$ and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.6031$. (See tables for

Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data shows that prayer is statistically more significant in remaining with an established church than in a new church.

Teaching Ministry: Bible Study on Sunday Mornings

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether Bible Study on Sunday mornings was more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 7 (Appendix D) shows the mean ranks for new churches (Group A) as 37.4, which is greater than 36.2, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=555.5$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.409$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.8181$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that Bible study on Sunday mornings is statistically more significant for new than established churches.

Teaching Ministry: Graded Programs for Children/or Teens

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether graded programs for children/or teens was more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 7 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 39.1, which is greater than 32.4, mean rank for established churches (Group B). The result also showed in the computation of $U_A=469$, which demonstrates that the two groups come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the

Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.1056$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.2113$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D.) The data revealed that the importance of graded programs for children/or teens is statistically more significant for new churches than established churches.

Teaching Ministry: Discipleship or Topical, “Life-issue” Studies

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether Discipleship or topical, “life-issue” studies is more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 7 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 41, which is greater than 28.3, the mean rank for established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=376$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.0091$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.0183$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D.) The data shows that the importance of Discipleship or topical, “life-issue” studies is equally statistically significant for new churches and established churches.

Teaching Ministry: Emphasis on Baptist Doctrine

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether Baptist Doctrine was more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 7 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 37.2, which is greater than 36.6, the mean rank for established churches (Group B). The results also showed in

the computation of $U_A=566$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell within the parameters of the Directional test (p_1), where $p_1=0.4602$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.9203$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that the importance of emphasis of Baptist Doctrine is equally statistically significant for new churches and established churches.

Community Life: Fellowship or Social Activities

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether fellowship or social activities is more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 8 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 40, which is greater than 30.5, the mean rank for established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=425$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.0375$, and the Non-Directional test (p_2), where $p_2=0.0751$. (See tables 7 and 8 Directional and Non-Directional test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D.) The data shows that the importance of fellowship or social activities is statistically more significant for new churches than established churches.

Community Life: Activities Designed for Hobbies

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether activities designed for hobbies was more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 8 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as

38.8, which is greater than 33.2, the mean rank of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=487.5$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data came from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.1515$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.303$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that the importance of activities designed for hobbies is statistically more significant for new than established churches.

Community Life: Community Action or Mission Activities

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether community action or mission activities is more or less important in new versus established churches. Table 8 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 41.3 which is greater than 27.6 of established churches (Group B). This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=359$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.0052$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.0105$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional Test Variances for p_1 and p_2 .) The data revealed that the importance of community action or mission activities is statistically more significant for new churches than established churches.

Community Life: Polity, Governance or Organization

In attempting to understand what keeps persons at a church, I examined whether polity, governance or organization is more or less important in new versus established

churches. Table 8 (Appendix D) shows the mean rank for new churches (Group A) as 38 greater than 34.9 of established churches Group B. This result also showed in the computation of $U_A=527.5$, which demonstrates that the two groups of data come from the same source. The results fell outside the parameters of the Directional Test (p_1), where $p_1=0.2877$, and the Non-Directional Test (p_2), where $p_2=0.5755$. (See tables for Directional and Non-Directional test Variances for p_1 and p_2 Appendix D) The data shows that the importance of polity, governance or organization to retaining is statistically more significant for new than established churches.

Summary

In attempting to understand if there is a statistically significant difference in what attracts a person to visit established and new churches for the first-time, I found no statistically significant difference in what attracts a person to a first-time visit to new or established churches. The results show that each group finds invitations, the church's physical facilities/surroundings, and advertisement as effective means of outreach but no one factor is statistically predominant for either established or new churches.

In attempting to understand if there are any differences between established and new churches in what helps to retain them as members, the surveys reveal that for new churches the following are statistically more significant: preaching; music; Bible Study; graded programs for children/teens; fellowship/social activities; community action or missions activities; and polity, governance or organization. In attempting to understand if there are any differences between established and new churches in what helps to retain

them as members, the surveys reveal that for established churches prayer is statistically more significant. (See the following Tables 4.2 and 4.3 Survey Response Analysis.)

Table 4.2 Survey Response Analysis Attraction

Survey Response Analysis:	Important for New Churches	Important for Established Churches.	Statistically More Important for New Churches than Established Churches	Statistically Important for the Established Church than New Churches.
		Invitation		
Friend	YES	YES	NO	NO
Relative	YES	YES	NO	NO
Pastor/Staff	YES	YES	NO	NO
Door to Door Visitor	YES	YES	NO	NO
		Church's Building and Grounds		
Appearance or "curb appeal"	YES	YES	NO	NO
Architecture or Style	YES	YES	NO	NO
Surroundings or Neighborhood	YES	YES	NO	NO
Location or Convenience	YES	YES	NO	NO
		Advertising		
What you heard on the Radio	YES	YES	NO	NO
Something you read in the newspaper	YES	YES	NO	NO
Signs out Front or along the road	YES	YES	NO	NO
Fliers or other "handouts"	YES	YES	NO	NO

Table 4.3 Survey Response Analysis Retention

Survey Response Analysis:	Important for New Churches	Important for Established Churches.	Statistically More Important for New Churches than Established Churches	Statistically More Important for the Established Churches than New Churches.
		Worship Emphasis		
Preaching	YES	YES	YES	NO
Music	YES	YES	YES	NO
Scripture reading	YES	YES	NO	NO
Prayer	YES	YES	NO	YES
		Teaching Ministry		
Bible Study on Sunday mornings	YES	YES	YES	NO
Graded programs for children/teens	YES	YES	YES	NO
Discipleship or topical "life issues" studies	YES	YES	NO	NO
Emphasis on Baptist Doctrine	YES	YES	NO	NO
		Community Life		
Fellowship or social activities	YES	YES	YES	NO
Activities designed for hobbies	YES	YES	NO	NO
Community action or mission activity	YES	YES	YES	NO
Polity, governance or organization	YES	YES	YES	NO

Chapter 5

SHARING THE DATA WITH THE CHURCHES

I met with representatives of the new and established churches on September 3, 2009, at the Brunswick Baptist Association Resource Center. I invited the pastor, and only two lay persons to discuss the data, and to give feedback concerning how the Association can help them to be effective in reaching and maintaining church members. Representatives from the three established churches were in attendance and representatives from one new congregation were in attendance, a total of eight persons. I presented a Power Point presentation concerning the results of the surveys and the analysis. At the conclusion, I distributed a handout with a summary of the recommendations to the churches. There were no questions during the presentation. A discussion session followed the presentation. The issues mentioned by the pastors and lay persons concerned where to spend their advertising dollars, increasing fellowship with each other, and sharing of the success programs/events of the churches in the Association.

A question raised by one pastor was, “How can we effectively use our advertising dollars to get the ‘biggest bang for our buck?’” I shared with them that, in the survey, the advertisements in newspaper and radio were not very effective in Brunswick County, North Carolina. The surveys indicated that the signs along the road were the most effective advertising in helping to attract first-time visitors to the church. The pastor

asked, “What vehicles do citizens of Brunswick County use to get the community news?” I shared with the group a Probe Report (a survey of Brunswick County prepared by the North Carolina Baptist State Convention) that states the majority of people in Brunswick County receive their news from the cable channel four which is a continuous scrolling bill board of community events.¹⁷¹ The pastor asked, “What about the Internet?” I shared with the group that there was not a question in the Probe report dealing with the Internet, but that there were national studies which showed that for many people the Internet is becoming their primary news source.¹⁷² There is also a survey by George Barna that indicates that church websites are becoming “the new front door of churches.”¹⁷³

The pastors present stated that they thought it best to invest advertising dollars in websites and signage in attracting the first-time visitor. One layperson stated, “I think we need to have more emphasis and encouragement to invite our friends and family to church.” No one present responded to this statement.

The issue of increasing fellowship among established and new churches was presented by a pastor with twenty-five years tenure in our association. He stated, “Some years back the Pastor’s Conference organized a pulpit exchange among our churches and that greatly promoted the fellowship among our churches.” There were some comments by the lay persons present that they thought “that sounded good” and, “we ought to try

¹⁷¹ A Probe Report is a community analysis of socio-economic factors of a local community or county available through the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. www.ncbaptist.org.

¹⁷² Presentation by William Jameson, ed., Biblical Recorder in a Brunswick Baptist Association meeting on April 14, 2009. Mr. Jameson stated, “When the Internet came along those of us who produce newspapers placed our papers online without charge and we saw our subscription rates plummet, while our “hits” on the web soared.”

¹⁷³ George Barna, “Websites: The Church’s New Front Door”, n.p. [cited 12 Oct. 2007] Online: barna.org.

that.” One lay person stated that “when I lived in Florida our Association had picnics where the churches that were closer in proximity joined together to fellowship on fifth Sunday evenings.” No comment was made on this statement by the others present.

Communicating the success stories of other churches within the Association was brought up by a chairman of deacons from one of the established churches. He stated, “What I think we need is to be made more aware of the successes of other churches in our Association and that there could be some things we could emulate.” His pastor responded, “That type of thing already occurs in our Association’s newsletter and the mailings from our state convention.” No other comment was made concerning this statement.

I then asked the question “How can our association of churches help each church to attract and to retain members?” The pastors shared the following: “We need more meetings like this that inform us about the state of our Association and the great need to reach people,” “We need more attendance at the Pastor’s Conferences,” and “We really don’t need the Association to help us attract and retain members. What we need is information from the Association about current trends in ministry.” The lay persons present stated the following: “We need more communication between churches,” and “We need to do more community events.” I then asked “What is the best way to communicate with the churches?” The response was “Just keep up the good work.” I then asked if it would help the churches if the Association planned with the churches a “Friendship Connection Day” in the spring, and possibly a forty day challenge to listen to the Gospels in which audio Gospels could be made available to everyone in our churches

and to the community in preparation for simultaneous revivals in 2010.¹⁷⁴ These suggestions were met with silence.

Recommendations to New and Established Churches

The following was the handout of recommendations based on survey findings I prepared and distributed to pastors and church representatives.

1. In attracting first-time visitors a variety of methods work. When asked to respond to which type of invitation influenced the first-time visitor to attend, respondents indicated that each method was helpful to some degree. The new and established churches would do well to utilize different types of invitations in their efforts to attract first-time visitors. By providing these varied invitations the church will be able to enlist all the available relationships in the congregation to reach first-time visitors and provide various methods which the members can be involved in according to their interests. The survey responses show that for both established and new churches the relationship to an individual is important for the first-time visitor to see it as effective. All respondents ranked the importance of the invitations in the following order: friend, pastor, relative, stranger. The question we could ask is: “How can we use this finding to help us to attract first-time visitors to our church?” One way to utilize this finding is to design an overall outreach strategy that includes all forms of invitation. This strategy could include high attendance days, special worship events, or community events.

¹⁷⁴ Friendship Connection Day is an attendance campaign developed by Elmer Towns and the Institute for Church Growth. Information can be found at <http://churchgrowth.org>. The listening through the gospels can be found at <http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com>.

2. In considering the impact of the church's building and grounds in attracting first-time visitors, there was no statistically significant difference between established and new churches. However, both groups stated that the different components were meaningful in their decision to visit a church for the first-time. In ranking the total responses of the surveys, both established and new churches ranked the church's building and grounds in the following order; location or convenience, appearance or "curb appeal," surroundings or neighborhood, and architecture or style. While the surveys did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the responses of new versus established churches, both groups stated that the church's building and grounds were important to attracting a first-time visitor. Location of both established and new churches buildings impact first-time visitors. Location is important. The buildings need to be in good repair. The buildings need to be up-to-date, especially in regards to building code issues such as handicap accessibility and bathroom facilities.
3. In considering the impact of advertising in attracting first-time visitors there was no statistically significant difference between established and new churches. The respondents stated that for the most part advertising was not a very effective way to get them to visit for the first-time. Both new and established churches stated that the most effective advertising attractor for them was signs out front or along the road. New and established churches need to have highly visible, easily readable and attractive signage along the road. Another signage issue for new and established congregations is that there is clear signage for the use of the building.

4. Addressing the issue of worship elements in remaining with a congregation, the respondents were asked to rank the influence of preaching, music, Scripture reading, and prayer. New church respondents stated that preaching, music, and Scripture reading were statistically more important than prayer in their decision to remain with a congregation. Established church respondents stated that prayer was a major factor in their decision to remain in a congregation. Both new and established churches would benefit by providing two study weeks during the year for their pastors to plan and improve their preaching. Both new and established churches would benefit by having a trained music team. Musicians could possibly come from local school systems, community colleges, and nearby universities. If these institutions could not provide weekly musicians, they could provide “special guests” for brief times throughout the year to enhance the worship experience. Established churches would benefit from forming prayer ministries within their congregations. Training and materials for prayer ministries are available from numerous sources, most readily available from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.¹⁷⁵
5. On the issue of deciding to remain with a congregation, the respondents were asked to rank the influence of Bible study on Sunday mornings; graded programs for children or teens; discipleship or topical, “life-issues” studies; and an emphasis on Baptist doctrine. New churches ranked Bible study on Sunday mornings, graded programs for children or teens and discipleship or topical, “life-issue” studies as statistically significant in their decision to remain in the congregation. Both new and established churches ranked these factors as being

¹⁷⁵ www.ncbaptist.org., [cited 14 Oct. 2007].

highly influential in their decision to remain. Therefore, both new and established churches would benefit from improving their education leaders and programs.

This could include effective training for leaders of all ages. These training opportunities are provided through the Brunswick Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and through self-study modules such as workbooks, videos, DVDs, or online programs. Both new and established churches would benefit from an analysis of the ages and groupings of their current educational organization. The data shows that there is an interest in short term studies. Baptist doctrine was not statistically significant in either new or established churches regarding the decision to remain with a church. Baptist doctrine was ranked as a factor but not a significant factor. Perhaps this ranked as a factor because I included it in the survey. None of the literature utilized in my research stated that Baptist Doctrine was significant to retaining church members.

6. On the issue of deciding to remain with a congregation, the respondents were asked to rank the influence of fellowship or social activities; activities designed for hobbies; community action or mission activities; and polity, governance or organization. New churches stated that fellowship or social activities; community action or mission activities; and polity, governance or organization was statistically significant in their decision to remain with a congregation. Both new and established churches ranked these as significant items. Both new and established congregations can improve the retention of members by providing meaningful fellowship activities in which new members feel that they belong to the church. This can be done in different ways. At events there can be brief

getting-to-know-you time in which you encourage persons to introduce themselves to those they do not know or recognize. One item which respondents ranked the lowest was that of activities designed for hobbies.

In conducting the survey in the different churches I found some things that were common to both established and new churches. Most of the items were stated in the form of observations by the participants. People who participated in the survey asked several questions: Why do we need any more churches in Brunswick Association? Will you make us change? Does what works in one church work in another? The following observations come from my visits to the forty-six churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association as Director of Missions.

The first observation is that there is not a strong sense of cooperation within and among the local churches. There does not seem to be a sense of “we are in this together.” People are interested in reaching and retaining members as long as they do not have to do too much to change routines, expend financial resources, or commit a large block of energy to reach them or to retain them as members. According to the comments that I overheard from the surveys was “that is the pastor’s job” to attract and retain people.

The second observation is that the needs of people of belonging, significance, and personal and spiritual growth fuel the movement of persons to unite with a church. Persons unite with a church in order to belong to something that is greater than themselves and something that reflects who they are as well. The old adage kept coming to mind “birds of a feather flock together.” As I reflected upon the persons who were in each group that completed the survey I came to the conclusion that maybe church membership can be understood more when one considers socio-economic and cultural

background factors. The paramount factor is always a relationship through Christ with the church. A common statement that led to this was that “I joined here because I was not being fed where I was a member.” With further dialogue I realized that the individuals who made this comment had experienced a significant shift in their socio-economic or educational level within a few years previous to uniting with their current church.

I also noticed in visiting the churches that each type of church attracted people of a different socio-economic level. There are of course some members who do not strictly fit within these constructs but the following questions came to mind. What is the socio-economic status of the members? What is the socio-economic status of the community surrounding the church? What type of music is used in this church? What is included in the order of worship? Is the order of worship printed and distributed or just announced throughout the service? It is a common site to visit churches located in blue collar communities and find church members who are well educated, white collar professionals driving higher end cars, wearing best quality clothing, and speaking about the latest trends. But this person or persons are not included in the organizational life of the church. In subsequent conversations I find that these persons were reared in a blue collar family and that education or professional training has dramatically increased their earning power but their way of thinking and relating to the church is strongly influenced by their blue collar thinking. Another common site is to visit a higher socio-economic, white collar church and to encounter someone on a lower middle income economical scale as a member.

Socio-economic criteria influence the relationships in the church in the way programs are resourced, staffed and how people relate to one another. For example a

white collar individual has an easier time considering paying someone to organize a set of programs or provide a service such as music to the church. Persons who value education usually require persons with formal training to serve as ministers and staff members. What is considered as good or excellent in one socio-economic level will not necessarily appeal to all socio-economic levels. Other factors which impact the ecclesiology of Brunswick Baptist Association churches is cultural.

The third observation is that fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of losing who we are, fear that we will not have a place in the new order of things causes many people in the local churches to build walls which do exactly that. These fears keep us from including others; they keep us from fellowshiping with those whose practice of worship or organization is somewhat different than ours. This leads us to misinterpret and misunderstand each other. Fear leads to distrust and distrust leads to conflict.

Pastors in particular fear new persons arriving on the churches doorstep. There are so many variables that come to play when that person shows up. These variables are emotional, relational, doctrinal, and experiential. Possibly, new persons bring unrealistic expectations of what congregational life and the role of ministers consists. These issues are most likely sorted out in the first year of membership in a new church.

Current church members fear that they will lose their status in the church. After an influx of new members the following statements have been made to me: "We're going to take our church back." "They are just there for the preacher."

The fourth observation is that the local Baptist Churches are the guardians of local culture. This culture expresses itself in the style of music, the form of preaching, and in questions and statements such as "Why do we need any more churches in Brunswick?"

“Those folks are just liberal if they are singing choruses or doing that rock music.” There is a strong pull to be just alike. Yet each of our churches is unique in the make-up of the congregation. People, preferences, and socio-economic factors heavily influence the rhythm and flow of local congregational life. When reading through past minutes of the association there has never been a time when there were not issues of one sort or another that has not impacted the churches. The churches are willing to change but want to do so with integrity. Churches know who they are yet are unable to express in words who they are. Churches desire that the significance they receive from the fellowship, nurture and ministry of the church is not mitigated. The focal issue is how to have the least amount of conflict in making two groups one.

The factors of cooperation, socio economic status, and fear of new people have an immense impact on the local church. These unspoken factors impact the decision of the first time visitor. How the church handles these issues decide whether a first time visitor will unite with a church, but these are only factors. How it all works together is still a mystery. That the church exists at all is the work of the Spirit. How an individual first visits and then chooses to remain with a congregation can only be fully comprehended as a great and mighty work of God in the hearts of persons and in the hearts of the church members.

Church is church. Each church emphasizes the differences between their congregation and another one. However, there are but subtle differences between established and new churches. Both established and new churches are concerned about attracting and retaining members. Each congregation conducts worship, has a teaching

ministry, provides fellowship, and has a facility in which they meet. All these factors have a part in attracting and the retaining members.

Where is God in all of this? God is still in love with the church that Jesus gave his life for. In the midst of the messiness of church God is still in control and working out the salvation of humanity. In spite of the churches failings and short sightedness God is at work.

Chapter 6

PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The idea for this ministry project arose out of a desire to understand two things: the first is what influences a person to visit a local church and what influences one's membership in a church in Brunswick County, North Carolina. The second is there any factors that are more important for a new church versus an established church or vice versa. I chose two hypotheses to comprise the survey. The first hypothesis is that persons are reached by the style of building, existing relationships, or advertising. The second hypothesis is that persons maintain their membership based on the content of preaching, the quality of teaching programs, or fellowship. I chose these hypotheses in order to prove or disprove common assumptions regarding what attracts persons to worship and church membership and what significant factors influence the decision to remain in a particular congregation. The primary goal became to determine if methods utilized in reaching persons for church membership and maintaining church membership differ in established churches as compared to newly organized churches. A secondary goal became to formulate some recommendations in regard to established churches, newly organized churches, and church plants for the Brunswick Baptist Association in Brunswick County, North Carolina.

I chose to work with six churches divided into two groups. Group one was comprised of three established churches. Group two was comprised of three churches that are newly organized. Over a period of six weeks I distributed and administered the surveys, and collected the data. At the close of the six weeks, I analyzed the data. This

project paper reports the data analysis. The six weeks of gathering the data were very smooth and efficient. The Mann-Whitney Statistical Test was utilized to analyze the data. The Mann-Whitney Statistical Test allows for a greater accuracy in results with small samples of survey. After the analysis of the data, I invited the six churches' pastors and at least two other church members of their choice to a meeting. The meeting objective was to report the data findings and to make recommendations to the churches. Having worked through the process described in the introduction to this paper and having evaluated the data, I will evaluate the project.

What I Would Have Done Differently

There were few significant results from the data. If I had the opportunity to repeat this project I would use a larger sample size and a more exhaustive survey. I would have more questions covering each topic of attraction and retention of members. I also would have done socio-economic studies of the members of the churches to ascertain if some factors are more important to different socio-economic groups. By doing this there might have been more significant results to help the churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association.

Surprises and Affirmations from the Data

There were surprises and affirmations in the data and analysis. What surprised me in the project data were the statistical differences between new and established churches. This is evident especially in the categories of "what kept you at your church." From this data it is evident that there are greater expectations from the members of new churches

than of established churches. The general understanding that I had before this project was that new churches were willing to do without programs, facilities, etc., but in reality these are vitally important to a new church. Another surprise is that all the outreach methods worked. In many conversations with pastors I hear that such and such evangelism method just doesn't work anymore. And yet each method worked. Whether door to door, personal invitation, or media, every method works to draw someone to the ministry of the local church. The data does show that it takes a "mixed bag" approach to attract and maintain membership in both new and established churches. One method is not the panacea for all the needs of the new or the established church. Each church has significant strengths. Though each method may be limited in effectiveness in regard to the use of resources, each method worked to attract someone to a first-time visit to the church. A shock is how close the established congregations and the new congregations are in the data concerning the effectiveness of various types of invitations, different physical facilities/surroundings, and advertisements in one form or another.

One unusual finding for me is that in established churches prayer is a statistically significant factor in retaining members. The established churches in the survey do not have an organized prayer ministry other than the taking of prayer requests on Wednesday evenings and a very brief time is devoted to prayer in the prayer meeting. Another unusual item for me is the importance that the new churches placed on the polity, governance and organization of the church. I often think of new churches as being very fluid in their governance.

Some of the data from the surveys not only surprised me but also affirmed some beliefs that I intuitively knew but had not proven statistically. These beliefs are that

preaching, music, and fellowship are important to the direction and health of the local congregation. Good preaching, good worship and good fellowship make a growing church. The data results show that pastors are significant in both the established church and in the new church, especially in regard to their preaching. The survey, however, did not touch on the style of preaching. The data also revealed that age-graded Bible Study groups are still valid in reaching and retaining members.

Challenges That Exist for Me Because of the Project

In viewing what was statistically significant in reaching and retaining members I find some challenges exist for me because of the data of the project. Some areas to develop include visioning, implementation, and measuring the success of the Brunswick Baptist Association Ministry. I need to develop the ability to look at the big picture and to better formulate the next step. Asking questions of me and others removes some risks and inherent dangers with any endeavor. In the implementation process, I need to pay close attention to what I am attempting to achieve and help others to keep the big picture before us. Pedagogically, I need to teach step by step where the Brunswick Baptist Association is and where we are heading. In the measuring of success I need to realize that the finish or arrival point may be different than first we envisioned.

Further challenges involve developing small-group ministry to the Brunswick Baptist Association pastors. I need to nurture relationships among the pastors. I will do this through interest-based study groups. I will strengthen fellowship by creating fellowship opportunities. I will work to connect pastors according to interests. Simplicity of action is the key to building relationships among the pastors. This will help to build

fellowship and a cooperative spirit among the pastors and churches of the Brunswick Baptist Association.

In the final analysis I consider the project to be unfinished in that there was no earth shattering, ministries-molding statistical evidence that one method or several methods were the best. I was thoroughly surprised by the fact the data showed some differences between new and established congregations, but the differences were not overwhelming. We must not assume that one should follow one method to the exclusion of others.

Appendix A Survey

Rate the following aspects on a continuum of 1-5, with 1 being not important and 5 being all important. Please circle a rating number beside each item.

1	2	3	4	5
Not important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Very important	All-important

When you came to your church for the first-time, how important was each of the following in attracting you to it?

- A. An invitation from
- A friend 1 2 3 4 5
 - A relative 1 2 3 4 5
 - The church's Pastor or staff person 1 2 3 4 5
 - Someone who came to your door; a stranger 1 2 3 4 5
- B. The church's building and grounds
- Appearance or "curb appeal" 1 2 3 4 5
 - Architecture or style 1 2 3 4 5
 - Surroundings or neighborhood 1 2 3 4 5
 - Location or convenience 1 2 3 4 5
- C. Advertising in the form of
- What you heard on the radio 1 2 3 4 5
 - Something you read in the newspaper 1 2 3 4 5
 - Signs out front or along the road 1 2 3 4 5
 - Fliers or other "hand-outs" 1 2 3 4 5

Since you have been with your congregation, how important was each of the following in your decision to continue there?

A. Worship emphasis on

Preaching	1	2	3	4	5
Music	1	2	3	4	5
Scripture reading	1	2	3	4	5
Prayer	1	2	3	4	5

B. Teaching ministry that includes

Bible study on Sunday mornings	1	2	3	4	5
Graded programs for children and/or teens	1	2	3	4	5
Discipleship or topical, "life-issue" studies	1	2	3	4	5
Emphasis on Baptist Doctrine	1	2	3	4	5

C. Community life

Fellowship or social activities	1	2	3	4	5
Activities designed for hobbies	1	2	3	4	5
Community action or mission activities	1	2	3	4	5
Polity, governance or organization	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B
TABLES AND GRAPHS ILLUSTRATING THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCHES
AND THE COMMUNITY POPULATION IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY, NORTH
CAROLINA

Year	Total baptisms	Additions by statements, letters, etc.	Resident church members	Total church members	Sunday School enrollment	Training Union enrollment	WMU enrollment	Brotherhood enrollment	V.B.S. enrollment	Total churches V.B.S.	Cooperative program	Associational missions	Total mission expenditures	Total receipts	Number of churches
1899				575											9
1904	79	43		1594	991							18	213	1428	22
1909	92	53		1547	1078							30	469	3698	19
1913	73	70		1550	1275							94	486	3787	25
1917	76	83		2013	1277		438					44	1008	4416	22
1925	58	46		1428	1255	53	403*					84	2632	8769	15
1930	153			1644	1533	251**	421					44	1527	7100	19
1935	99	77		1961	1468	288	261		158	1	335	53	1253	9023	20
1940	93	65		2382	2110	227	311		166	2	457	46	1497	8452	22
1945	62	46	2338	2680	2128	222	439		457	7	2298	94	6112	28374	23
1950	93	64	2307	3004	2848	692	623	30	1587	25	1841	1531	8293	54517	27
1955	165	172	2919	3755	3514	1006	729	290	1709	27	3741	2309	12014	98302	29
1960	158	131	3379	4282	3510	1185	786	267	1655	26	5483	3050	15965	142759	29
1965	130	153	3585	4746	3874	1109	791	141	1885	29	9522	3637	21419	195653	37
1966	109	133	3701	4814	3860	1061	794	196	1825	29	10235	4692	23618	198352	37
1967	139	113	3618	4778	3849	941	804	187	1948	32	10728	6777	27023	236282	37
1968	216	112	3800	4922	3942	928	769	139	1982	29	12173	6804	29793	270504	37
1969	185	133	3751	5028	3823	933	795	148	1724	26	12778	6892	31969	317513	37
1970	236	202	3910	5324	4051	947	774	192	1973	32	14910	6914	34786	354764	38
1971	172	223	4096	5455	4141	682	832	280	2028	29	16620	8056	41401	410569	38
1975	219	295	4932	6509	4469	768	1016	344	2607	32	28700	13237	40595	704304	38
1980	232	202	5416	7002	4429	725	977	403	2055	30	51504	29212	138162	1707438	39
1985	235	338	6673	8245	4789	621	1299	517	2618	32	92803	42000	248234	1778870	41
1990	279	370	6954	8746	5098	648	1255	531	2596	33	125492	54366	324602	2306602	42
1995	315	365	7265	9234	5513	633	1198	644	3094	31	200003	86489	534927	3512901	42
1996	232	316	6755	8698	5243	815	1085	575	3122	31	187064	84132	406713	3380188	44
1997	278	366	7037	9786	5676	1202	1134	899	3002	27	239268	99954	564190	3877775	43
1998	270	362	6661	8510	4915	1490	1023	825	2368	27	213722	90503	520560	591511	40
1999															

* 1927 Minutes

** 1932 Minutes

Table 1. Digest of Growth--Brunswick Baptist Association, 1899-1999

Number of Reporting Congregations: 44							
<u>Statistics</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>Cong Avg</u>
MembershipTotal	9,626	9,887	9,890	9,778	9,467	9,966	9,769
ResidentMembers	6,413	6,639	6,767	6,919	6,654	7,496	6,815
BaptismsTotal	0	192	221	223	239	355	275
OtherAdditions	280	350	252	293	333	309	303
AMWorshipService Attendance	3,913	3,868	3,650	3,691	4,126	4,786	4,006
SSTotal	0	4,685	4,209	4,926	5,001	5,105	5,380
SSAvgWeeklyAttendance	2,497	2,338	2,507	2,595	2,838	3,008	2,631
VacationBibleSchool	2,703	2,434	2,664	2,685	2,793	2,961	2,707
OngoingDTTotal	315	199	392	447	793	970	519
ShortTermDTTotal	374	166	280	480	589	909	466
MusicTotal	1,524	1,275	1,407	1,585	1,589	1,705	1,514
MissionsProjectsParticipation	0	2,053	1,601	1,578	1,205	2,800	2,376
WMUTotal	1,141	1,013	1,009	1,231	1,173	1,263	1,138
BrotherhoodTotal	643	502	481	573	664	830	616
OtherMissionsEducation	26	57	8	6	174	114	64
UndesignatedGifts	5,444,447	4,427,971	4,215,884	3,978,765	3,681,072	3,787,863	4,256,000
DesignatedGifts	1,163,431	1,307,336	2,118,747	1,056,342	1,173,849	724,966	1,257,445
OtherReceipts	134,380	95,877	132,920	210,074	127,692	134,724	139,278
CooperativeProgram	253,573	201,233	224,046	221,536	245,582	250,092	232,677
StateMissions	40,969	50,390	31,711	17,674	26,425	28,074	32,541
AnnieArmstrong	47,468	38,510	40,766	36,559	39,334	36,053	39,782
LottieMoon	80,227	61,856	77,410	70,215	70,807	71,091	71,934
OtherSBCMissExp	65,636	47,102	39,921	30,970	11,551	22,955	36,356
NonSBCMissExp	150,379	125,928	108,184	84,303	65,366	100,534	105,782

Table 2. Annual Church Profile Totals 2001-2006

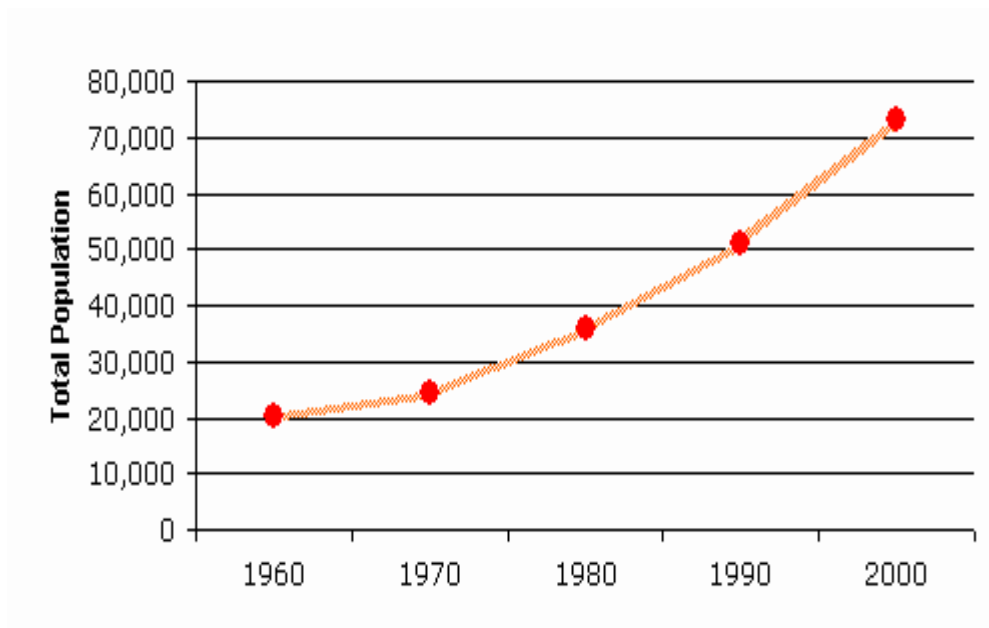


Table 3. Brunswick County, North Carolina Population, 1960-2000

APPENDIX C
LETTERS TO PASTORS

Brunswick Baptist Association
1041 Old Ocean Highway, Bolivia, N.C. 28422
PO Box 80, Supply, N.C. 28462
Email: brunsbaptist@atmc.net
Office: 910.754.7979 Cell: 910.612.7605 Fax: 910.754-5734
Rev. Jeff Gibby Associational Missionary

June 30, 2008

Pastor's Name
Mailing Address
Town, State, Zip Code

Dear Pastor's Name

I trust that all is going well with you and your ministry. Mine is going well but I need your help. I am requesting your assistance in completing my Doctor of Ministry Project for the Christopher M. White School of Divinity. To fully understand my request of you and your church, please read the description of my Doctor of Ministry project.

The goal of my project is to study the effectiveness of attracting and retaining members in six congregations within Brunswick Baptist Association. The data gathering tool I will use is a survey which can be completed within a few minutes. There are certain criteria that the respondents must meet. First they must be 18 years old or older. Second the participants of the survey must have been a member of your church for three years or less. Third there is only one survey per household. These criteria will necessitate the

church clerk helping me by providing names, addresses and phone numbers to contact persons meeting the above criteria. I would then like to determine a Sunday to come and give the survey to these select individuals in your church. I would hope that I might conduct this during the Sunday school hour.

In addition pastor, I need your help in three matters. I ask you to contact me if you and your church will allow me the privilege of participating in this study. Also please provide me with the name and contact information of your church clerk. I ask that you contact the church clerk to notify him/her that I will be contacting them. Please announce to the church that I will contact those individuals who meet the criteria. Finally, thank you so much for your willingness to help in this step towards my degree. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Rev. Jeff Gibby
Association Missionary

Appendix D

Tables of Data Analysis

Table 1 Level of Significance for a Directional Test Variance p_1

.05	.025	.01
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Table 2 Level of Significance for a Non-Directional Test Variance p_2

--	.05	.02
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What Attracted You to Your Church?

Invitation

- A. When you came to your church for the first-time, how important was each of the following in attracting you to it

Table 3 Invitation

An Invitation from:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
A Friend	38.6	>	33.5
A Relative	36.7	<	37.6
Pastor/Staff	36.6	<	37.8
Door to Door Visitor	36.7	<	37.6

Building and Grounds

B. When you came to your church for the first-time, how important was each of the following in attracting you to it?

Table 4 Building and Ground

The church's building and grounds	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
Appearance or "curb appeal"	35.6	<	40
Architecture or style	37	<	37.1
Surroundings or neighborhood	38.4	>	34.1
Location or convenience	36.4	<	38.3

Advertising

When you came to your church for the first-time, how important was each of the following in attracting you to it?

Table 5 Advertising

Advertising in the form of:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
What you heard on the radio	37	=	37
Something you read in the newspaper	37.4	>	36.2
Signs out front or along the road	36.2	<	38.8
Fliers or other "hand-outs"	35.9	<	39.5

Why You Stayed with Your Church.

Worship

- A. Since you have been with your congregation, how important was each of the following in your decision to continue there?

Table 6 Worship

Worship Emphasis on:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
Preaching	38.6	>	33.6
Music	38.7	>	33.3
Scripture reading	39.3	>	32
Prayer	36.1	<	38.9

Teaching Ministry

- B. Since you have been with your congregation, how important was each of the following in your decision to continue there?

Table 7 Teaching Ministry

Teaching Ministry that includes:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
Bible Study on Sunday Mornings	37.4	>	36.2
Graded Programs for children/or teens	39.1	>	32.4
Discipleship or topical, "life issue" studies	41	>	28.3
Emphasis on Baptist Doctrine	37.2	>	36.6

Community life

C. Since you have been with your congregation, how important was each of the following in your decision to continue there?

Table 8 Community life

Community life that emphasizes:	New churches (Group A) Mean Ranks	Greater Than, Less Than, or Equal To	Established churches (Group B) Mean Ranks
Fellowship or social activities	40	>	30.5
Activities designed for hobbies	38.8	>	33.2
Community action or mission activities	41.3	>	27.6
Polity, governance or organization	38	>	34.9

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