

SHORT-TERM MISSIONS AND MISSIONAL FORMATION
AT THE KINGS CROSSING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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BY
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For the degree of
Doctor of Ministry

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Date

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Carolina.

You probably deserve this degree as much as I do. Thank you for allowing me so many hours of time apart from you to work on this and many other projects. I could not ask for a better wife.

Being with you is the best part of my life, every day.

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Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time, now and forever. Amen.

ABSTRACT

Short-term missions are a significant part of the experience of growing up as a Christian in Western, developed nations. Millions have participated in these efforts, and with the amount of resources directed towards them, it is incumbent upon trip leaders to make their efforts as impactful as possible, both for the communities that receive their trips and for the congregations involved in making these trips possible. Concurrent with the growing popularity of short-term missions is the missional church movement. This movement has provided a source of refocus and renewal for Western Christianity, as Christians have needed to take a fresh look at their own nations, once strongholds of Christianity, now becoming mission fields around them.

The two movements carry great significance in the modern Christian context, and it is productive to explore ways in which the two can inform and benefit each other. This project is a case study of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, who participated in a short-term mission trip to Costa Rica in 2015. The project involved members of the church in interviews to learn how they believe that the mission trip impacted the congregation as a result of its participation in the trip. The responses of all interviewees are evaluated through the lens of missional theology to answer a question: How can a congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip help the congregation to become more missional?

Chapter one describes the current role of short-term missions and the missional church movement, and how these two can be mutually beneficial. Chapter two provides a theology of mission, with special consideration for short-term missions, and the role they play within God's greater mission. Chapter three is a literature review of the current thinking about what it means to be missional, and the kinds of literature available for those involved in short-term missions. It

also explains why this particular project is needed. Chapter four explains the research methodology used to collect the data, and the settings which had an impact on the results of this study. Chapter five provides an analysis of the data that was collected, looking from a missional perspective, and provides three hypotheses resulting from the data collected and analyzed in this research. Chapter six provides pragmatic solutions for church leaders desiring to help their churches become more missional through their involvement in short-term mission trips. It also suggests future opportunities for similar research related to short-term missions and how they impact sending congregations.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This is a project to investigate the ways in which a congregation can become more missional through the congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip. With the great prominence of short-term mission trips, there are many congregations who already have this sort of trip in place, and might therefore have a tool for promoting missional formation that would allow them to refocus an existing effort, rather than having to start from scratch in developing a new missional program for their church. Missional leaders should consider the potential benefits of using these trip experiences to model the kinds of missional behavior they are trying to cultivate among the congregation who sends members as participants in short-term missions.

As a location to study the connections between short-term missions and missional ecclesiology, this researcher conducted a series of interviews at the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, who sent a group as part of a short-term mission trip to Costa Rica during the summer of 2015. This is a report to highlight the areas of missional thinking that experienced greater prominence at Kings Crossing in connection to the short-term mission trip.

Reflecting on the practices surrounding the trip, the researcher will suggest opportunities to maximize the missional impact of similar short-term mission efforts on the congregations who send them. A distinguishing mark of this study, compared to other studies in short-term missions, is that the largest emphasis of this research is on members of the church who did not go on the mission trip. Though the question of what impact was made abroad is an important one, this project will look more specifically at how a sending congregation is changed through their connection to a short-term mission trip.

Short-Term Missions in Recent History

Short-term missions are the “God-commanded, repetitive, deployment of swift, temporary, non-professional missionaries.”¹ It is in response to the commission of Christ that people travel the world, seeking to spread the kingdom of God by making disciples. Short-term missions are by definition for limited durations of time, and involve people who are taking time away from other responsibilities and careers in order to make these missionary journeys. These efforts continue year after year in short bursts, rather than in prolonged single efforts of individuals and families whose salaries are provided for them to be able to serve in mission work full time.

Short-term missions have become far too prominent to ignore. The trend began in the mid-1900s, with groups such as the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Church initiating these types of efforts.² Some of the first reported statistics were in 1965, when a student researcher named Thomas Chandler reported that approximately 540 individuals from North America were involved in short-term mission efforts.³ In 1989, the estimated number had increased to 120,000, doubling within three years to over 250,000.⁴

¹ R. Peterson, G. Aeschliman, and W.R. Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries*. (Minneapolis: STEM Press, 2003), 117-23. This book was one of the first, and still best, efforts to define terminology related to short-term missions in an academic way.

² Meredith Long, "The Increasing Role of Short-Term Service in Today's Mission," in *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, ed. Edward R. Dayton (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1973), 17.

³ Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries*., 255.

⁴ Ibid.

As the practice has grown, the conservative estimates that have been quoted regularly over the last few years are that one million U.S. Christians go on short-term mission trips each year. Yet there is good reason to believe this number is closer to one and a half million per year.⁵ These trips involve both adults and young people, and average two weeks or less in length, though some are for longer periods.⁶ Though there are at least 40,000 sending entities in the United States alone, there are far more missions agencies than it is possible to track, not to mention the many congregations who make efforts on their own without reporting to any parachurch organizations.⁷

C. Philip Slate has researched the short-term missions movement within churches of Christ, and has provided a helpful overview for how this trend has developed.⁸ Among churches of Christ, there were several efforts to English-speaking countries, with mixed results on the effectiveness of their trips during the mid-1900s. Within Churches of Christ, the efforts and opportunities have grown at a rate comparable to the greater Christian community. Slate is particularly interested in the broadening uses of the word “mission,” which would have earlier been synonymous with “evangelism,” but is now used to encompass humanitarian aid,

⁵ Robert J.; Dischinger Priest, Terry; Rasmussen, Steve; and Brown, C. M., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology* 34, no. 4 (2006): 431-35.

⁶ This data comes from Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offitt, "Transnational Religious Connections," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 218-19.

⁷ Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries.*, 255.

⁸ C. Philip Slate, "A History of Short-Term Missions Associated with Churches of Christ in North America," *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 3 (2012), accessed January 20, 2016.

construction projects, medical clinics, and a variety of other things in a seemingly ever-increasing number of trips.⁹ These have become regular efforts, both for youth groups, and for college students in campus ministry programs and at Christian universities. With such a vast number of people participating in such efforts, studies for maximizing the effectiveness of these efforts are well justified.

Missional Church Movement

During the time that short-term mission efforts have been gaining in prominence, Christians in western nations have been confronted with large cultural shifts around them. Specifically, the cultural dominance that Christianity had enjoyed for decades has been diminishing. During such times of cultural shifts, it is necessary for the church to ask questions with open minds about what a contextually-appropriate hermeneutic might look like today, in this setting. The shifts over the last fifty years are so drastic, some have claimed that the youngest generation is not even capable of imagining the world in which their grandparents were born.¹⁰ Older assumptions about missions and evangelism must be scrutinized so that new ways of thinking about missionary encounters with culture can be imagined.¹¹ Some theologians have

⁹ In 2009, I was privileged to work with Dr. Slate on a practicum for my seminary studies. My project was planning a short-term mission trip to Monterrey, Mexico. We met a couple of times during the project, and he expressed a lot of concern that we be thoughtful about what we call “missions.” He felt we should hold ourselves to high standards in serving genuine needs of the communities in which we serve on short-term trips, and that efforts to bring people to Christ remain prominent in these efforts.

¹⁰ Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 1.

¹¹ Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997). Roxburgh’s book is an example of an effort to do exactly this.

built on the work of Karl Barth and John Stott to produce comprehensive biblical theologies that uphold the *missio Dei*—the mission of God—as the unifying principle of all scripture.¹²

In part, many in the West are having to reimagine their home nations, once strongholds of the Christian faith, now as mission fields. Lesslie Newbigin has been the most influential writer in shaping the conversation for what evangelistic encounters with Western culture might look like in the waning influence of Christendom. In chapter three, the literature review will provide a more thorough overview of the missional church movement, and the thinking that has accompanied it.

Key to the movement is a fresh effort to imagine the mission of the church in the image of the triune, sending God, who reaches out to culture in a holistic way that refuses to neglect either the physical needs of people as they live in the created world, or the spiritual needs of people's souls to experience redemption from faith in Jesus Christ. As the church is rediscovering the central nature of God's missional nature in scripture, it is helping leaders to re-imagine churches to be shaped by this mission. Guder expresses this view in his seminal work on missional ecclesiology:

We have come to see that mission is not primarily an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation.¹³

¹² Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006). Wright's book is a substantial contribution to the conversation, and is the best example of this sort of effort.

¹³ *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

Missional thinkers are resisting the dominant view of mission work during the twentieth century, which some have argued to be “church-centric,” viewing the church as the primary acting subject, responsible for doing something on God’s behalf in the world.¹⁴ Missional leaders are urging the church to see mission as God’s own, toward which God is always working, even in some ways of which the church might not be aware. Ultimately, mission comes from God, and the reasons for the church becoming a missional presence in the West is not merely because the Church has been in decline, though that may have been a catalyst for concern, but because God sent the church here for the purpose of living into God’s mission.¹⁵

Developing This Study

The starting point for this project was my own conviction of the deep value of short-term missions. In the literature review below, I will detail some of the common concerns raised about short-term missions. Despite the possibility of people making short-term missions efforts that are ineffective, or even harmful, my own personal growth through participation in these kinds of efforts convicted me that effective, transformative short-term trips are not only possible, but consistently achievable with the right kinds of planning and practices in place.

Even so, to take a group of non-professional missionaries to distant locations, often at great cost, trip leaders need to be asking serious questions about the real benefits of continuing these kinds of efforts. Are there impacts from these trips that go beyond the time frame of the

¹⁴ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation, The Missional Network* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 21-24.

¹⁵ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, Kindle ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), Location 136.

trips themselves? How deep is the impact on those who go on the trip, and how are other people affected who did not go?

In the ongoing conversations about what it means to be a missional church, there need to be spaces for experimentation and reflection. With mission trips being so intrinsically “mission” oriented, with adequate amounts of time away from normal routines, it seemed to me that these could provide an effective sort of test tube environment that would allow a church to experiment with something that would disrupt their normal routines in a way that could allow them to reflect more deeply on the greater mission of the Church. With these short-term mission trips receiving such broad participation in the west, their potential for the missional shaping of churches is an area that needs to be considered.

Short-Term Missions and Missional Churches

The missional church movement and the short-term missions movement have great potential to be mutually beneficial.¹⁶ Short-term missions are uniquely suited to help Christians get out of their routines and imagine themselves as part of a different story. There are several reasons for this. Short-term missions involve a large amount of deliberate action. Participants must have plans in place, rethinking lots of basic necessities, and what will be available or unavailable in a new place. Often, such trips involve significant linguistic or cultural barriers where the dominant culture is very different from one’s own. When there is a different language,

¹⁶ Elton asks a similarly important question about the intersection of missiology and youth ministry, and the ways they overlap, similar to what this project hopes to do for missional theology and short-term missions. T. M. Elton, "Mergers and Possibilities: The Intersection of Missiology and Youth Ministry," *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 1 (2013), 63-70.

many group participants will spend weeks or months studying new languages, trying to have a better grasp for how to operate within the culture they are visiting.

Group leaders often choose to enforce rules to help enhance the amount of focus that participants have while on the trip. One example would be to implement bans on portable technology for the duration of the trip. Of course, in some locations, even those who have phones may not be able to get service without significant fees.

The receiving person or group will provide an entirely different layer of new experiences for participants. When working with a local minister or congregation in a foreign place, the mission team finds it challenging when their own presuppositions may not be shared by people in the other locations.¹⁷ What seems like a terrific idea or desperate need to a traveling group may be a total non-issue for natives in a different context. It is hard giving up control and allowing another person to have final authority in decision-making, yet it is important for giving dignity and respect to the people whom the team is visiting.

The participants do not prepare or go in isolation. If there are needs for raising funds and gathering resources for the trip, they will involve not only their own families, but their local congregation, friends, and possibly their community. Especially for first-time goers, the decision to participate in a mission trip feels like a significant decision, and rightfully so. Many of their perspectives may undergo formidable change. This includes their view of the world, of themselves, and of the way that God acts and moves in the world. Many will have new

¹⁷ In established churches, it is not uncommon for numerous groups to form around struggles for power and control. Short-term mission trips provide good practice for considering the needs of the other, rather than labeling the other as a deviant or fool, and demanding conformity. See Rick Rouse, and Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2008), 71.

experiences in talking openly about their faith, or in serving the poor in ways they would have never tried in their own context. As individuals have life-changing experiences, person by person, they can help to shift the culture of a church to one that has a deeper commitment to and understanding of the mission of God, and their place in it.

Just as there had been a need for research in better practices for short-term missions, there is still a need for exploring the potential ways in which a short-term mission trip can change not only the place that receives the visiting team, but also the church that works together to send the team.¹⁸ If it can be determined that short-term missions are catalysts for significant change, even among church members who do not physically go on the trip, this provides a substantive justification for continuing short-term missions participation. This also provides a rich area for future study, so that congregations are considering the full potential impact that these efforts can have on the sending congregation.

Around the time I was developing the conceptual ideas behind this project, I began working with the Kings Crossing Church of Christ in Corpus Christi, Texas as their preaching minister. The congregation had limited experience with short-term missions, having only had one trip before directly led by members of the congregation to visit a missionary in Costa Rica, an indigenous preacher for whom they are the full sponsoring church. Likewise, with the congregation having done little to no study in the area of missional theology, it provided an unbiased setting, where I could test to see if a short-term mission trip might help evoke impulses within the congregation that fit well within the framework of missional theology. If a congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip could promote missional ways of

¹⁸ In the literature review, I will detail what sorts of studies have been done related to short-term missions, and highlight a significant lacking area.

thinking and being organically, this could provide missional church leaders with a new area of focus to bridge the gaps between the theoretical and the practical.

Potential Benefits of This Study

Because of the blended disciplines of missional theology and short-term mission practices, the potential benefits are numerous. There is the immediate, important connection between the theoretical world of missional ideas and the pragmatic world of mission trip implementation. Having dates, times, locations, and costs attached to creating these experiences forces the leader to prioritize what will be practiced in preparation for the trip, implemented on the trip itself, and reported to the sending congregation as a follow-up to the experience. There are many potential points of contact at which both thinking and experiences can inform one another. The more that a mission trip is connected to the regular life of the sending church, the more potential impact there can be.

For missional church leaders, this project can highlight how a short-term mission trip might provide the needed space where hands-on learning can help the congregation reflect more deeply about the mission of God, and what all this mission involves. Some missional thinkers, such as MacIlvaine, have written about types of “crises” that can fuel missional change.¹⁹

If an experience of a somewhat disruptive nature is an aid to promoting missional change, to be able to do this peacefully and deliberately, rather than through times of crisis should be obviously desirable. If it is the case that a mission trip evokes missional thinking, without direct promptings of articulated missional theology, there is even more potential for a missional leader

¹⁹ W. Rodman MacIlvaine, "How Churches Become Missional," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167, no. 666 (2010): 218-20.

to use these experiences to teach missional ways of thinking, being aware of the times and places where these concepts are most likely to be received in formative ways. By knowing the kinds of impact a mission trip can have on a congregation, and when these impacts occur, the missional leader can be more strategic about utilizing key opportunities for missional education and growth.

For the short-term mission leaders and participants, this project will highlight ways in which the short-term trip could be having a much larger impact than what might presently be the case. The mission trip will have an impact of its own, at the destination where it occurs. But the mission trip experience involves many more participants than just the ones who go and the people who receive them. When a whole congregation is part of the sending process, there is much more potential for impact at home, beyond just the members who physically go on the trip. By having a deeper understanding of how sending members experience having a mission trip, trip leaders can be deliberate about the ways they involve the congregation, and therefore the ways in which the congregation is shaped.

Chapter Preview

Here is an explanation of how this document will flow. Because all mission stems from the ideas contained in scripture, the second chapter will be an overview of the mission of God in scripture. Special consideration will be given for the biblical grounding of short-term missions. A theology of missions leads to an ecclesiology of missions, which will come next. Building from several leading missional church thinkers, next there will be a description of key areas of missional ecclesiology that have potential connections to this project.

The third chapter will provide a categorical review of literature pertaining to short-term missions, bringing the conversation up to the present status of research. An awareness of the research that does and does not exist provides a helpful perspective on the necessity of this and similar projects in future studies related to short-term missions.

Chapter four will be an explanation of the contexts and practices involved in the implementation of this research project. The researcher's role is a significant one that needs to be explained, as does the process for how data was collected and analyzed. With a lack of research in this area, qualitative research in the form of interviews provided a solid starting point in developing more established hypotheses for future studies.

Having described the research process, chapter five will be an analysis of the research findings. There are certain times and locations where the impacts of the trip were very obviously strong. These will be evaluated, along with some specific types of missional impulses that the mission trip evoked among the participants in the research.

Finally, chapter six will contain recommendations for how churches utilize the discoveries of this research to maximize the impact of the mission trip on the sending congregation. There will also be recommendations for future areas of research that can build on what has been done here.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Even before there was creation, there was God (John 1:1-2). If the Christian understanding of God as Trinity is true, then God has always existed in the three united, yet distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. To refer to “God” is to use a shorthand reference to Trinity. Father, Son, and Spirit exist in one another and for one another, and are interdependent in giving and receiving.²⁰ Letham contends that Creation itself in all its beauty serves as a mirror of the diversity and unity of the Trinity through the variety of ways in which people experience the same creation.²¹

To view God as Trinity is to view God as a missionary. We only know God because the Father sent the Son in the power of the Spirit; demonstrating the *missio Dei* as an integral component of God’s relational nature.²² The incarnation of Christ was God’s supreme affirmation of God’s created world, and the resurrection of Christ strengthens the evidence of God’s strong attachment to Creation.²³

²⁰ *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, Archbishop's Council (Church Publishing House, 2004), 84-85.

²¹ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 439-55. Letham brings out one attribute, color, as a way of highlighting the different ways in which people can experience the same thing. He also makes contrasts between Trinitarianism and the views of both Islam and postmodernism regarding the place and value of diversity.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 433.

A missional understanding of God is traceable not only in a fully developed Trinitarian theology, but also to the story of Creation in Genesis 1. Why would God choose to act instead of not acting?²⁴ Why would God create and design, rather than doing nothing? From the moment that God speaks light into existence, God's actions continue to echo God's first statement to creation. God continues to send light to a people otherwise in great darkness (Isaiah 9:2). Implicit in the triadic manner of the earth's formation is the relational nature of God. There is distinction between God who created the heavens and the earth, the Spirit of God who hovers over the face of the waters, and the word of God who issues the command, "Let there be light."²⁵ God made Creation good, and God is always at work for its betterment and renewal. Powers of chaos and darkness are always at work undoing Creation, but God is also at work, protecting and redeeming what is otherwise subject to decay and corruption.²⁶

After the flood which cleansed the earth of all wickedness, God's next instruction to Noah was to go and multiply, filling the earth with his (hopefully) righteous offspring (Genesis 9:1). When God first made a promise to Abram, God's intentions were for all generations to be blessed through Abram's offspring (Genesis 12:1-3). Though Abraham's descendants would be a privileged lineage, through whom the Messiah would come, God's intentions were never that they would be stingy with their privileged connection to God.

²⁴ See Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Dutton Adult, 2012), 34.

²⁵ Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, 19.

²⁶ Romans 8:18-25 describes both humanity and Creation longing for renewal from God.

God's message to Amos is that lazy injustice among Israel is as condemnable as lazy injustice in any of the other nations (Amos 6:2-7). Though it is Israel's Exodus with which Christians are most familiar, God states to Amos that he had likewise delivered the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Amos 9:7). God cares for all nations, and longs for all nations to seek him. Isaiah and Micah share the same statement that God longs to hear from all nations:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”²⁷

In sending Jesus to live, teach, die, and be resurrected, God provided a means by which all things can be renewed.²⁸ Jesus revealed what a truly human life could look like free from sin.²⁹ Jesus was free to serve and teach the law of love because he was not bound to sin and death. Before his ascension, Jesus explained to his disciples that his people, the church, were to go about making disciples. They were to spread the knowledge—good news—about what God had done through Christ, so that many others would come to acknowledge the reign of Christ. With this knowledge, Christians can live as peacemakers, participating in the larger story of God

²⁷ Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:2 are identical passages, expressing God's hope that all will seek him and know him.

²⁸ For an excellent exploration of the missional nature of Jesus' death on the cross, see Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 312-16.

²⁹ David E. Fitch, and Geoff Holsclaw, *Prodigal Christianity: 10 Signposts into the Missional Frontier*, Kindle ed. (Peabody: Jossey-Bass, 2013), Location 1320. Fitch and Holsclaw explore this idea more extensively in their third “signpost” dealing with the incarnation.

(Matthew 28:19-20).³⁰ God is at work in all places and all times to bring about the eventual redemption of all creation into the peaceable reign of God.³¹

Missional Ecclesiology

Early Christians began to live out the mission of God through taking intentional journeys into new places, and also by simply sharing their faith in whatever communities in which they were located. Paul took a series of missionary journeys.³² Aquilla and Priscilla ended up in Corinth unintentionally, but immediately went about joining in God's purposes for Corinth during the time they were there.³³

The church is an eschatological community who tries to live out the future vision of Jesus for his Kingdom here in the present.³⁴ In the ministry of Jesus, the Kingdom of God began

³⁰ Jesus' death wasn't only to restore humanity's relationship with God. Jesus' death is the basis of reconciliation between people, and even with God's creation. Jesus came to make all things new. Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 73-74.

³¹ Isaiah 65:17-25 is a great picture of God's longing for creational renewal. See Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 406-09.

³² One such journey was in Acts 15:22, where he and Silas set out for Antioch.

³³ Acts 18 describes Paul's interactions with Aquila and Priscilla. They had been forced to leave Rome, and began to work as tentmakers in Corinth, supporting themselves as they worked to share the Gospel.

³⁴ The Church is to involve spontaneous movement and growth, yet many churches operate in ways that are almost entirely scripted. Spontaneous movements will only be able to thrive in churches that remain deliberately spontaneous. Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 87.

breaking through in ways the prophets only imagined.³⁵ This new kingdom would be a place of mercy, faithfulness, and justice (Matthew 23:23).

Where the Jews had been guilty of not being a light to the Gentiles, the Church would not be a place where anyone would be excluded for reasons of nationality, ethnicity, or gender (Galatians 3:28). Though the church is to be a living, active body of believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the mission in which the church participates is ultimately God's mission and desire.³⁶

A central part of how churches can live into the mission of God is by having a deep awareness of the larger story of God. To refer to God's story is to talk about the greater plan that God has for the process of redeeming and renewing all of creation.³⁷ All of history is moving in one direction towards God's greater purposes (Romans 8:28). Christians are a people who have claimed God's story as their own, professing the Lordship of Christ, and dying to themselves in baptism to rise up and participate in new life. The Spirit empowers us to make a difference in the world much greater than we could ever have hoped to accomplish on our own.³⁸

³⁵ Jesus attaches great significance to Isaiah 61 in explaining the purpose of his ministry. See Luke 4:18-21.

³⁶ J.R. Woodward holds up the church as a sign of God's coming Kingdom, a foretaste of the future reign of God, and a chosen instrument through which God's will for peace, justice, and freedom is done in the world. J.R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 27-28.

³⁷ See Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, 4. The church is not "missional" as an activity, but in its very essence. The Christian community is a body sent to the world, not existing for itself, but to bring good news to the world.

³⁸ Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 54. We have been given power, and that power is to be used for image bearing, though many abuse power for purposes far inferior to those for which God intended it.

If a Christian sees no redeeming purpose in their work other than to drop contributions in a collection plate so that a select few professionals can do “ministry,” they will have an understanding of Christ’s dream for the church that is far too small.³⁹ With a better grasp of God’s story, individual Christians see themselves as partners with God, working at every place and at every time to bring reconciliation between God and the world that God loves so much.

In understanding God’s active role in the world, one can see less of a sacred/secular division, because all is God’s, and God is at work in every situation, bringing things to God’s desired end.⁴⁰ Likewise, the distinctions drawn between clergy/laity begin to fade, as all are serving God in their own ways. It is not a select few of our gifts that are important, because everyone who contributes their gifts to the purposes of God is an equal participant in the mission of God. Some have served God’s purposes without even knowing it!⁴¹ The Church invites others to participate in the redemptive story that God is telling; a more meaningful story than the short-sighted, self-aggrandizing counter narratives that the world offers us to live into. Missional churches empower all members to live into God’s mission, and not only those in positions of leadership or power.⁴²

³⁹ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, 79.

⁴⁰ See Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nation: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 12. Goheen makes a helpful summary of many false dichotomies that have become accepted parts of the Western cultural narrative. “This idolatrous commitment to the methodological rationality as the only judge of truth created an enduring dualism at the heart of Western culture, artificially dividing facts from values, knowing from believing, public from private, truth from opinion, science from religion.”

⁴¹ Joseph’s life is filled with examples of this. His descent from a son, to a slave, to a prisoner, initiated by his brothers’ betrayal ultimately brought about deliverance for God’s people. None of the people who sought to harm or degrade Joseph ever could have expected how God would redeem his life for noble uses. See Genesis 50:15-21.

Special Consideration for Short-Term Missions

God's mission and the practice of ecclesial missions are well grounded in scripture, but the methodology of short-term missions still remain questionable in the minds of some. One way in which short-term missions remain open to criticism is their tendency to utilize either untrained or slightly trained volunteers to participate in work that could be of deep significance. Why not reserve the challenge of missions for the more trained professionals? Was Paul not an extensively-educated Jew before he was a divinely-ordained apostle? Sending Paul on a missionary journey is hardly analogous in that sense to sending a few teenagers on a two-week excursion in Central America.

But on the other hand, there is precedent in the New Testament, both for sending groups for shorter durations of time as well as for sending people to participate in the mission of God whom the world would deem under-prepared for the opportunity. Matthew, Mark, and Luke detail Jesus sending out some of his followers to preach and perform healings in many of the towns to which he later intended to travel.⁴³

One of the more striking parts of these passages is Jesus' instructions that his disciples are not to bring with them what would seem like commonsense provisions; not even sandals for

⁴² William M. Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime, Anywhere, by Anybody* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 45. Easum points out how inefficient the human body would be if each working part had to first seek permission before acting. The diversity of the body of Christ contributes to a unique sense of unity when different people join together for the same purpose, and are empowered to use their gifts in ways consistent with their diversity.

⁴³ Matthew 10:5-15 and Mark 6:7-13 describe Jesus sending out his twelve apostles. Luke 10:1-12 describes what seems a very similar event, if not the same event, and says that Jesus sent out seventy-two to do the same thing.

their feet. As they traveled from town to town, they were to rely on the hospitality of those who would receive them, and if there was no welcome, they were to move on to another place. The disciples returned to Jesus, seeming thrilled to discover that God had done powerful works through them, despite their lack of credentials.

Paul engages in a significant discussion of the value of using untrained Christians in the work of the church in 2 Corinthians. He is speaking specifically against a group he calls the “super-apostles” and is careful not to define his worth or anyone else’s worth for kingdom work primarily based on pompous earthly credentials.

Paul and the Super-Apostles

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, Paul is addressing opponents that had infiltrated the Corinthian church to undermine his ministry and to promote themselves, based on very worldly kinds of credentials. They would limit ministry to only those of a similar heritage, education, or demonstrable sense of election. Paul articulates a contrasting vision, that it is actually through what appears weak that God accomplishes his purposes. God is not limited by any person’s background or credentials in how he might use them for his own glory.

After Paul had first planted the church in Corinth, then moved on, his absence created a vacuum that others would need to fill. Under most circumstances, Paul was altruistic towards those who worked alongside him in sharing the Gospel, even if others sought to create comparisons.⁴⁴ But some time after Paul had left Corinth, other men came there, most likely

⁴⁴ In 1 Cor. 3:5-7 Paul is complimentary of Apollos’ work in Corinth, though he is quick to insist that the growth of the church ultimately stems from God’s blessings, and not from those who do the planting and watering. In the face of those who proclaim Apollos is superior, Paul does not respond by belittling his fellow minister. Similarly, Paul makes a habit of commending

Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.⁴⁵ These men were not looking to build upon Paul's work, but to undermine it and to sever his relationship with the Corinthian Christians, who were his own children in the faith.

It seems that these "super-apostles," as Paul calls them (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11), were anxious to point to their Israelite pedigree and claims of new visions and revelations from the Lord.⁴⁶ They apparently brought with them letters of recommendation (2 Cor. 3:1). Unfortunately for Paul, the Corinthians were willing to accept some of their critiques of him, with word reaching him that people were saying he was physically unimpressive, and in person, did not have skills that matched up to his reputation (2 Corinthians 10:10).

2 Corinthians 2:1-13 outlines Paul's actions in response to all of this. Some time after Paul became aware of his opponents in Corinth, he made a "painful visit" to Corinth, followed by a "severe" letter that he had Titus deliver to them. Anxious to learn of their reception to the letter, Paul left his work in Troas and met with Titus in Macedonia to discuss how the Corinthians had responded.⁴⁷

Paul's attackers had been severe enough that it was necessary for him to defend himself. There would be a great temptation here for a minister to speak of himself and his own greatness,

and praising numerous brethren in the conclusions of his letters, especially. See Romans 16:1-16; Ephesians 6:21; and Colossians 4:7-17.

⁴⁵ Ben Witherington, *Community and Conflict in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 327. Witherington asserts that these Jewish Christians were also trying to undermine Paul in Galatia and possibly elsewhere.

⁴⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 278.

⁴⁷ Witherington, *Community and Conflict in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 352.

exploiting the power of the gospel to display his own ability, eloquence, and wisdom.⁴⁸ It seems likely that the Corinthian congregation would readily invite such a response, as is evidenced by their division into personality cults after Apollos had preached among them (1 Cor. 1). But this sort of defense would be inconsistent with the gospel Paul had taught them. God's new calling in Christ was not for human boasting. It was to show the glory of the task, and not the glory of those who serve the task.⁴⁹

Rather than defend himself, here Paul defends his style, which was quite consistent with his gospel. In Christ, credentials can be turned upside down to where, through loving engagement with others, what is suspicious can become trust, what is ridicule can become attention, and what is fear can become life-giving, even reflecting the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).⁵⁰ Paul does not engage his opponents at their low level of comparative credentials. He instead asserts that it is only Christ's glory that can qualify us, and our fidelity to him that is evidence of our ascribed worthiness. It is not our own strength or wisdom, but Christ's that we preach.

Implications for Who Can Serve

The central thrust of 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 is that God does not need human credentials to establish what he can or cannot do through his willing servants. Taking a step back, we see that

⁴⁸ C.E. B. Cranfield, "Minister and Congregation in Light of Ii Corinthians 4:5-7: An Exposition," *Interpretation* 19, no. 2 (1965): 163.

⁴⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 284.

⁵⁰ Wes Avram, "2 Corinthians 4:1-18 (the Church and Postmodernity)," *Interpretation* 55, no. 1 (2001): 72.

this was not just Paul's way of avoiding a comparison with his opponents. In his ministry, Paul was deliberate to have others share in his works of ministry. He was more credentialed than most through a worldly perspective, but he never used these sorts of credentials as criteria either for himself, or for others who had become Christians. Though some may have had gifts which made them better suited for particular tasks (1 Cor. 12:4-11), Paul was glad to serve along side anyone who was walking in sincere faith.

This is readily evidenced in the way Paul planted churches. Most of his ministries were "short-term" by modern missiological standards. Bowers has a helpful summary of Paul's standard church planting methods.⁵¹ Paul was committed to bringing the gospel where it had not been heard. Fulfilling this commitment involved geographical movement, which Paul conceptualized by region. Paul moved from East to West, canvassing these geographic spaces, trying to form Christian communities in main population centers. Paul's missional commitment involved not only converting, but also nurturing communities toward stability. But when he perceived the community was able to move forward on its own, he was quick to empower local leaders so he could move on to the next location.

All of Paul's theological articulations contained in his epistles were written in the context of his greater mission to the Gentiles.⁵² While working in one place, he would send emissaries to other places, bringing and returning with correspondences, or occasionally aid.

⁵¹ W. P. Bowers, "Mission," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 610.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 609.

Ellis estimates that the total number of individuals named in scripture who aided Paul in his mission efforts would be between 81 and 95.⁵³ He gave one of 9 special titles and designations such as “coworker,” “minister,” or “apostle,” to 36 of these, often heaping lavish praise on his companions—men, women, slave, and free—in conclusions of his letters.⁵⁴ Paul did not view people in terms of who they had been; only in terms of what they were becoming in Christ.

All of this highlights the potential role of short-term missions. Though these works should be carried out with prayer, planning, and meticulous preparation, the work is ultimately God’s, as is the success of any such efforts. Paul had a variety of people who helped him, both as traveling companions and as sending sponsors, and he lavished praise upon them all in his letters. Though education and training are praiseworthy and important, they are not prerequisites for serving in Christ’s kingdom. It is through the whole church’s collective participation in the mission of God that we are shaped into Christ’s vision for who and what he intended the church to be. Short-term missions provide a unique opportunity to invite the lesser credentialed members of the body of Christ to experience the possibility of God using them in ways greater than they could have imagined prior to the experience. They also provide a way for all Christians to pool their physical and spiritual resources together for a common cause in the name of Christ.

⁵³ E. E. Ellis, "Coworkers," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 183-84. See Ellis for an excellent chart of the different terms Paul had for his coworkers, aligned with those for whom he used them.

⁵⁴ See Romans 16:3-16 and Colossians 4:7-17. Even in problematic Corinth, Paul is ready to point out that in Christ, they have become much more than what their personal origins would have dictated (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Having looked at some of the scriptural underpinnings of the mission of God in general, and short-term mission specifically, this section will survey some of the more recent thinking about missional church and also about short-term missions. Seeing how these two areas have developed will provide opportunities for connection between them in both thinking and practice. The concluding portion of this chapter will explain the importance of this project in advancing both conversations.

Key Developments in Missional Theology

In chapter one, we characterized the missional church movement as a response to the need for churches in the West to begin thinking of their own context, formerly a stronghold of Christendom, as a mission field. Below is a more nuanced description of how the missional church movement developed, and some of the current elements of thinking that are prominent among leading missional writers. In the missional church movement, two key areas of development are (1) the theology which undergirds the movement and (2) the pragmatic efforts to teach churches how to put these ideas into practice.

Regarding the theological basis for the movement, it stems in large degree from a reaction to the theological imbalances caused by the Enlightenment. The Western Enlightenment produced a high regard for humanity's activities, and this emphasis subsequently led to an anthropocentric theology that would characterize much of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Most missionary endeavors came from Europe and North America, and tended to carry Western values

⁵⁵ MacIlvaine, "What is the Missional Church Movement?," 94.

with them as much as Christian teachings; specifically, a view of mission that it was primarily a human effort and not God's own work.⁵⁶

The next significant figure in shifting views of mission was Karl Barth, whose writings followed the wake of World War I. Barth was uniquely impactful because his thinking was both strongly Christ-affirming and culture-affirming, forcing liberals and conservatives alike to rethink their definitions of mission.⁵⁷ Where liberals had tended to treat mission in entirely humanitarian terms, conservatives had tended to avoid meaningful contact with culture, spiritualizing the nature of mission.⁵⁸ Barth insisted that mission was an activity of God himself, rooting it within the Trinitarian relationship of the Godhead as the source of all mission.⁵⁹

Following Barth's lead, John R. W. Stott was a key figure in helping the Evangelical movement come to embrace a broader understanding about the *missio Dei*. He emphasized the sending of the Son, culminating with the sending of the Spirit, and finally, the sending of believers just as Jesus himself was sent.⁶⁰ In his book *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's*

⁵⁶ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee, and Douglass McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 78-79. The authors express that the Enlightenment left an indelible mark on attitudes towards missions in the West. For an early example of one pointing out this potential corrective, see Rodger C. Bassham, "Seeking a Deeper Theological Basis for Mission," *International Review of Mission* 67, no. 267 (1978): 329-31.

⁵⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 238.

⁵⁸ Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 577-79. Olson highlights the nuanced differences and how Barth was able to engage both sides in ways that they found disarming.

⁵⁹ MacIlvaine, "What is the Missional Church Movement?," 95-97.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Grand Narrative, Christopher J. H. Wright has produced groundbreaking theological work in rooting the mission of God in the triune God, and in a way that embraces both evangelism and social action as part of the mission of God, looking to examples of God's saving acts in the Bible to portray what God's mission is intended to be. Wright believes that having an appropriate hermeneutic is critical, and his book is an effort to lay out a missional hermeneutic for reading the text as a way to evaluate whether such a hermeneutic enhances or distorts a reading of the biblical text.⁶¹

In the missional church movement, while the theological basis provided by people like Barth, Stott, and Wright has been invaluable, there is a pragmatic branch of the movement that began to a large extent with the work of Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin was one of the first to provide a substantive vision for how Christians in the West could begin thinking about what missionary encounters with their own nations would need to be.⁶²

Born in the UK in 1909, Lesslie Newbigin lived as a missionary in India from 1936 to 1974, discovering upon his return to the UK that it had become dominantly secular.⁶³ Despite the

⁶¹ Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 26. For a fair-minded evaluation of what missional scholars like Wright have done in seeing mission as the central theme of scripture, contrasted with others who have pushed back on this approach, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Determine the Significance of Mission within the Scope of the New Testament's Message as a Whole," *Missiology* 27, no. 3 (1999). He warns against compromising the Bible's own storyline by imposing an "artificial uniformity concerning mission," but likewise insists that a salvation-historical approach to scripture is imperative for an accurate understanding of the Bible's own teaching on mission.

⁶² For a helpful overview of Lesslie Newbigin and his contributions to these areas, see Wilbert R. Shenk, "Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to Mission Theology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 2 (2000), 59-63.

⁶³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 3-6.

significance of his life and work in India, it is his writings after his return about the church's mission and ecclesiology that likely have had the broadest influence.⁶⁴ Newbigin anticipated several elements of Christian practice that would become integral to the missional church movement, such as a missiologically contextualized view of scripture that ties it to universal history⁶⁵, an eschatologically-driven ecclesiology, rooted in the breaking through of the new creation⁶⁶, and an urging that Christians must not create false dichotomies between sacred and secular components of their lives, embracing the all-encompassing lordship of Jesus.⁶⁷

Taking a lead from Newbigin and others, the missional church movement has emerged as a serious effort to imagine what a Gospel-shaped community should look like in a postmodern setting. Some have contributed large theological books, tracing the missional nature of God in

⁶⁴ W. Rodman MacIlvaine, "What Is the Missional Church Movement?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167, no. 665 (2010): 98-99. MacIlvaine provides an excellent historical overview of the *mission dei* and its attempted applications and interpretations over the centuries.

⁶⁵ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 89.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 120. Wynne evaluates Jürgen Moltmann's eschatology in light of Trinitarian implications for a theology of mission. See Jeremy J. Wynne, "Serving the Coming God: The Insights of Jürgen Moltmann's Eschatology for Contemporary Theology of Mission," *Missiology* 35, no. 4 (2007), 437-450.

⁶⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 220.

scripture.⁶⁸ There have been an increasing number of field manuals for those wishing to lead their churches into a more missional way of being.⁶⁹

The first significant book of this type, which has spawned many others is Darrell Guder's work, *Missional Church*, who builds specifically on the work of Newbigin.⁷⁰ Following his notable contribution, there has been extensive interest in missional ecclesiology.

The various books in a rapidly expanding array will often show nuances of their denominational heritage. Stetzer and Putman write as Southern Baptists, and discuss missional church with a heavy emphasis on missionary evangelism.⁷¹ Though there is an increased awareness of people's situation into which the church is reaching, the motivating drive is still

⁶⁸ The first significant work of this type was Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). It was followed by Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Varsity Press, 2006). More recently is Goheen, *A Light to the Nation: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. These works are helpful in rooting these new attempts at ecclesiology deep in the story of God's work among his people throughout history. As the missional church movement continues to define and refine itself, the books have become progressively nuanced in light of missional theology. For an earlier analysis of shifting views in the theology of missions, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Publishers, 1991), 390.

⁶⁹ For some examples of this type of work, see Rouse and also Woodward. Some have also written shorter treatments of the subject as articles, such as Stephanie Spellers, "The Church Awake: Becoming the Missional People of God," *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2010), 29-44.

⁷⁰ Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, 5.

⁷¹ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, Kindle ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), Location 111.

primarily saving souls.⁷² Pat Kiefert writes from a Lutheran perspective, advocating strongly for the Holy Spirit to be the driving force of congregations in their missional activities.⁷³

Toward a Shared Definition of Missional

There is no universally accepted definition of what a new missional ecclesiology should be. Some of the more interesting contributions in recent years are the efforts of missional leaders to come together and form a more cohesive set of ideas, clarifying what they mean when they refer to the “missional” church.

There are a few themes that emerge most prominently and are somewhat integrative of the other principles which distinguish missional churches from the status quo churches in the West. After providing a few core distinctions, we will examine recent efforts of missional scholars to expound and clarify what they mean when they talk about missional churches.

One key aspect has to do with the agency of God. Missional churches will take an active view of God in history, including both the present and the future. God’s very nature is to be active in God’s mission, and this understanding of God permeates the church’s response to God in imitating God. Another aspect is God’s relationship to creation. Missional theology looks strongly to passages like Romans 8, anticipating that God’s cleansing of the world will one day reconcile all things to himself. The church is to be active as harbingers of this process, working towards restoration now in light of the final restoration that will occur when the full presence of

⁷² Chapters four and fifteen both describe processes of discernment within one’s local community to learn what needs exist, with church growth still being the ultimate desired outcome.

⁷³ Patrick Keifert, *We Are Here Now: The Journey of Missional Discovery* (Eagle, ID: Allelon, 2006), 29-34.

the reign of God has arrived. These views of God and God's activity in the world will lead missional churches to have strong commitments sociologically to each other, and to the world around them. Because all of creation is within the scope of what God wants to redeem, there is no part of the human experience that is outside of the interests of the church. Spiritual imperatives are acted out through physical means, and so missional churches will resist the natural/metaphysical dichotomy that would be more typical of Western culture. This summary lays out with broad strokes what will be described in more detail below.

In the larger discussion of what attributes define the missional church, one important contributor to this conversation is Graham Hill. Hill has provided a fascinating look at several strands of Christian thought, with their contributions to the missional movement. Hill suggests:

Missional ecclesiology is a movement of thought, rather than an organized movement, which is concerned with all cultures as missional fields, the missional nature and expressions of the church, the missional nature of God and Scripture, and the missional presence of God in the world.⁷⁴

Hill's book *Salt, Light, and a City* demonstrates the breadth of the missional movement by summarizing views of Christian thinkers including leaders of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Free Church traditions; all of whom have unique nuances that contribute to a larger picture. There are numerous areas of overlap between these various theologies, but Hill's work helps to portray the great variety of thought involved in the missional conversation. But where Hill's work is more expansive in terms of a missional definition, other efforts are being made to narrow down the common criteria and refine the approaches of missional leaders.

⁷⁴ Graham Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 3-5.

An significant organization in refining the larger conversation about the missional church is the Gospel In Our Culture Network.⁷⁵ This ecumenical network functions as an ongoing interaction between a variety of theological educators and ministry practitioners who seek to give shape to the “missionary way the church is called to live” through social and cultural analysis, Biblical and theological reflection, and envisioning the church and its mission.⁷⁶ On their website, they provide access to numerous discussions from conferences, papers published, and an archive of their newsletters dating back to 1987. The GOCN has partnered with Eerdmans to create The Gospel and Our Culture series of books that are a good representation of the flow of thought in missional theology over the last few decades.⁷⁷ The most influential of their

⁷⁵ <http://www.gocn.org>

⁷⁶ "About the Network," accessed March 9, 2016. <http://www.gocn.org/network/about>.

⁷⁷ On neither Eerdmans' website nor the GOCN website is a comprehensive list of all books in the series. I am providing a complete list here for reference, current as of March 2016: *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*; George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); *Confident Witness--Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); James V. Brownson et al., *Stormfront: The Good News of God*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, ed. Lois Y. Barrett, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); George R. Hunsberger, *The Story That Chooses Us: A Tapestry of Missional Vision*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

contributions is the book edited by Guder, *Missional Church* (1998), though their contributions have been numerous and ongoing.

One of the more important contributions of the GOCN is their effort to articulate several “hallmarks” of a missional church. Though an ecumenical consensus of many of their scholars, they have posited twelve core principles for what it means to be missional:⁷⁸

1. The missional church proclaims the gospel.
2. The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.
3. The Bible is normative in this church’s life.
4. The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death and resurrection of its Lord.
5. The church seeks to discern God’s specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.
6. A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.
7. It is a community that practices reconciliation.
8. People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.
9. The church practices hospitality.
10. Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God’s presence and God’s promised future.
11. This community has a vital public witness.

⁷⁸ These are covered more extensively in *Treasure in Jars of Clay*, ed. Lois Barrett (2004), x.

12. There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.

These hallmarks provide a helpful portrait of some of the key elements held in common by many missional thinkers. Even so, the GOCN is not the only group of missional thinkers collaborating to define what the missional church should be. One of the leading voices in nuancing the efforts of the larger missional community is Ed Stetzer. Stetzer is concerned that in an effort of many missional Christians to “be” the Gospel, they are neglecting to *tell* the Gospel, resulting in societal transformation but not global evangelization.⁷⁹ Quoting Stephen Neill, he warns that “if everything is mission then nothing is mission.”⁸⁰ While Stetzer would affirm it is critical to look out for the poor and marginalized of society in order to be a voice for justice, God’s mission is not limited to one’s physical wellbeing, but looks to the salvation of people’s souls, even as their lives are redeemed from sources of pain and oppression.

Stetzer’s other concern is that if all churches are focused only on the local hurting, they may inadvertently localize God’s mission itself and lose sight of the global vision that God has for the church and the lost world that surrounds it. One of the strengths of the missional movement is its sensitivity to the immediate community around each church, but Stetzer urges we must not emphasize this area to the neglect of the larger mission which is still a critical part of the church’s mission.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ed Stetzer, "What Is the Missional Church? (Part 5) - Forgetting Missions," *The Exchange*, November 9, 2015, 2015, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/november/what-is-missional-church-part-5-forgetting-missions.html>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Missional Manifesto

In 2010-2011, Ed Stetzer and Alan Hirsch collaborated with a group of church leaders to define what they meant when using the term “missional.” The result of their combined efforts they have titled *The Missional Manifesto*.⁸² Their definition is a slight pushback against other missional efforts that they believe have underemphasized evangelism or possibly compromised the centrality of the Gospel in the practices of the church. One of the collaborators, J.D. Greear, expressed such a view on his blog in describing the creation of the *Manifesto*:

The word “missional” has been around for a while. I think this document is timely and necessary, because it articulates a theologically faithful but missionally practical way what all the fuss is about. Most of all, the document keeps the Gospel right dead in the center of all that we do.⁸³

It will remain to be seen whether the *Missional Manifesto* carries the significance in the larger missional conversation that Stetzer and others desire for it to have. Despite his group’s contribution to the conversation, Stetzer is not put off by the idea that “missional” is a difficult concept to define. There are many theologically rich terms in Christianity that are subject to constant discussion and debate in how they are defined, such as grace, justice, and gospel.⁸⁴

⁸² Collaborators included Ed Stetzer, Alan Hirsch, Tim Keller, Dan Kimball, Eric Mason, J.D. Greear, Crait Ott, Linda Bergquist, Philip Nation, and Brad Andrews. The original website created for this effort no longer exists. *The Missional Manifesto* in its entirety has been included in *The Mission of God Study Bible: On Mission, with God, Wherever You Are*, ed. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, Kindle ed. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2012), Location 591. Because the original website has been removed, for easier access, I have included the full text of the *Missional Manifesto* as Appendix G.

⁸³ J.D. Greear, "The Missional Manifesto," *J.D. Greear: Pastor, Author, Theologian*, May 14, 2011, accessed March 10, 2016, http://www.jdgreear.com/my_weblog/2011/05/the-missional-manifesto.html.

Stetzer created a new six part series of blogposts in 2015 in reference to the *Missional Manifesto*, attempting to continue clarifying what it means to be a missional church.⁸⁵ Missional will undoubtedly continue to be explored and debated as a way of conceptualizing what the church is intended to be.

Elements of a Missional Church

Despite the absence of a universal definition of missional theology, there are certain themes that have emerged prominently. Following the GOCN's twelve hallmarks of missional churches in the early 2000s and Stetzer's group's *Missional Manifesto* in 2011, one particularly helpful attempt at expressing core missional principles is Fitch and Holsclaw's book, *Prodigal Christianity: 10 Signposts into the Missional Frontier* (2013). In the introduction, Fitch and Holsclaw articulate their dissatisfaction with new types of Christianity, such as the emerging church movement, which they believe ultimately settled into being a new branch of "mainline" Christianity without providing substantive answers for how Christians ought to live.⁸⁶

Fitch and Holsclaw contend that there are more than the binary options of either focusing exclusively on social justice in "the way of Jesus" or focusing exclusively on doctrinal orthodoxy

⁸⁴ Ed Stetzer, "Releasing the Missional Manifesto," *The Exchange*, April 28, 2011, accessed March 10, 2016, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/april/releasing-missional-manifesto.html>.

⁸⁵ Ed Stetzer, "Monday Is for Missiology: What Is the Missional Church? - a New Series," *The Exchange*, October 12, 2015, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/missional-church-and-its-manifesto.html>. All of the posts are accessible through links at the top of each post.

⁸⁶ For a supplemental exploration and evaluation of other contemporary church movements, see Edward Prebble, "Missional Church: More a Theological (Re)Discovery, Less a Strategy for Parish Development," *Colloquium* 46, no. 2 (2014), 226-237. See also Fitch, Kindle ed., location 433.

with the expectation that the world will be interested.⁸⁷ Believing that it is not possible for the church to know fully the destination at the end of its journey until it arrives there, they attempt to provide missional “signposts” to help keep the church moving in the direction of the mission of God. These signposts function very similarly to the hallmarks of the GOCN or the elements of the *Manifesto*.

As I try to evaluate whether the short-term mission trip to Costa Rica has helped the Kings Crossing church to become more missional, I have chosen to use Fitch and Holsclaw’s signposts as my main basis of comparison. This is in part because theirs are the most recent attempt to articulate a simple list that summarizes what missional principles are, and also because they have shown awareness of the greater preceding conversation that led up to their book. They provided an open-ended way of thinking about what missional can be. The guideposts provide hints of what things might look like, which aligns well with how I would evaluate the interviews with my participants. I evaluated whether their perspectives aligned with the signposts as hints of the direction that the short-term mission trip might be leading the congregation into a “missional frontier,” to use Fitch and Holsclaw’s term.

It was not the case that I observed every aspect of what people consider to be missional churches in my interviews. As a way of concluding this section on developments in missional theology, I will summarize below the missional themes in Fitch and Holsclaw that are most germane to my project. Churches living missionally will have great variety in their implementation and congregational life. Here are attributes of missional thinking that emerged particularly in this project:

⁸⁷ Fitch, 433.

Missio Dei

The mission in which we participate is fundamentally God's mission. The church must be looking, not only for what God has already done, but what God is presently doing. There is strong language of sending in scripture (John 20:21), where Jesus was sent by the Father, and now sends his followers into the world. We enter the world as participants in a mission that God leads, going ahead of us to redeem all of God's creation that is broken (Romans 8).

Incarnational Ministry

Just as God put on flesh in Jesus Christ, missional churches must be mindful of the flesh and blood lives of people around them. Churches living into God's mission to redeem creation will participate in acts of love, justice, mercy, and hospitality. The missional journey will be a journey into everyday life, becoming more aware of the people in situations that surround a church. Jesus was a mysterious blend of divinity and humanity, and it is for this reason that encounters with Jesus could be truly, meaningfully transformative. Churches should have an observable impact that helps to transform lives and relationships through the supernatural help that is provided by God's spirit who sends them.⁸⁸ Jesus was called *Immanuel* which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). It is the role of missional churches to be truly present in the lives of people around them, both inside and outside of the church. The church cannot assume a posture of waiting for the world to come to them, because God has sent the church to go into the world.

⁸⁸ Prebble, 239.

Witnesses to the Kingdom

In the New Testament, the term for *witness* is used six times as frequently as the term for *preaching* when discussing the gospel. Pointing to this, Guder urges that *witness is mission*.⁸⁹ Being witnesses of the power of the Kingdom is how the church connects the concrete needs of the community to the proclamations of preaching. The church lives within a worldview that calls into question all who govern human cultures without exception, looking through the lens of Christ's reign over all.⁹⁰ Fitch and Holsclaw highlight two things that characterize the witness of the church.⁹¹ First is that witness is characterized by a testimony that points away from oneself to the work of Christ among us. John the Baptist is a good example of this, professing that "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Second, witness is characterized by a shared life that embodies God's work among us. As the Kingdom of God continues to break through into the darkness that has encapsulated the world, the Church is there as a beacon; a witness to the light, and a proclamation of the light in the particular places and situations where the Church exists.

⁸⁹ Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 53.

⁹⁰ Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, 140.

⁹¹ Fitch and Holsclaw, Kindle Edition, Location 2091.

Prodigal Relationships

A missional church will practice welcoming those who are “other” than the dominant demographics of the church.⁹² Diversity comes with the challenge of stretching ourselves to make room for the “other,” but it also comes with the blessings of shared gifts and perspectives that would otherwise not have been included in the life of the church. Those outside of Christ are not merely lost souls to be saved, but precious children of God whose presence would make the church more than it can be without them. For this reason, as people encounter Christ through the Christian community, they will find opportunity for peacemaking and healing in their lives. The missional church movement mediates between the traditional soul-only focus of evangelical missions and the idealism of the social gospel, where humanitarian service is, more or less, its own end. Missional leaders seek to be conduits of God’s *common* grace to people first, in order to also be conduits to them of God’s *saving* grace.⁹³

A Higher Narrative Perspective

Missional churches should be, in Newbigin’s words, communities of hope.⁹⁴ Hope should be a distinguishing mark, because a missional outlook is immersed in the greater perspective of both God’s identity and God’s ongoing actions in the world. Missional churches will be thoughtful about the greater story of God’s mission, and therefore the part they are trying to play

⁹² Incorporating those other than us is not just a matter of God and humanity, but of humanity with other different races and cultures of humanity. For a refreshing perspective on this important concept, see John S. Connor, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Mission," *Missiology* 9, no. 2 (1981), 161-168.

⁹³ MacIlvaine, “What is the Missional Church Movement?,” 90.

⁹⁴ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 101.

within that mission. Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, as part of God's mission in Christ; providing humanity with a knowledge of God's heart and God's actions throughout the centuries, and therefore equipping Christians for Kingdom work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Newbigin expressed this concept beautifully:

An actual history, enacted at the specific times and places which form the background of the Bible, provides the clue for understanding contemporary history. As we face new opportunities and new dangers, we are the people who know what it is to cross the Red Sea on dry land, to be fed with manna in the wilderness, to return with singing from Babylon, to stand before the cross, and to meet the risen Lord in the breaking of bread. This is our story, and it defines who we are.⁹⁵

Because of the God-inspired way in which it came about, scripture is an authority within the life of the church, providing the larger context of our own story. Missional churches will have a deep love for scripture, and how it informs and inspires their own story as part of God's reign.

Trinity-Inspired Community

The Trinitarian teaching holds that God is mysteriously both unity and diversity. A missional church will think more in terms of the community than in terms of the individual, because a missional church is thinking in terms of Father, Son, and Spirit, and the various ways each person of the Trinity contributes distinctly to God's identity.⁹⁶ This Trinitarian way of looking at mission provided a helpful way to get beyond the dichotomy of the categories of

⁹⁵ Newbigin, 99.

⁹⁶ One of the ways a missional community will push against modernity is by rejecting the heavily engrained individuality so common in the West. See Charles Edward Van Engen, "Mission Theology in the Light of Postmodern Critique," *International Review of Mission* 86, no. 343 (1997), 438-441.

“church” and “mission” which had plagued the missiological conversation during the twentieth century.⁹⁷ An openness to the Spirit’s ongoing presence helps the community to think theologically about where God might be leading them next; moving toward an ultimate full reunion of God with all that God has created.⁹⁸

Key Developments in Short-Term Missions

Having looked at the ways that missional theology has developed in recent years, we now turn our attention to short-term missions. Despite the seemingly ever-increasing participation in short-term missions, the scholarly literature has largely been lagging behind.⁹⁹ Encouragingly, the amount of research available is increasing considerably in the last few years. Below is a categorical summary of the types of publications in the area of short-term missions.

The categories have developed somewhat chronologically. Initial concerns were in the area of basic principles for trip planning. As scholars began raising justified concerns about how short-term missions could be poorly executed and become harmful, literature sprang up that promotes better practices for inter-cultural encounters. There has also been an increasing number

⁹⁷ Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, 52.

⁹⁸ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 485.

⁹⁹ See Priest, et. al. “Researching the Short-Term Missions Movement,” 445. The authors lament that the short-term missions movement has been almost entirely divorced from scholarship, missiology, and seminary education. Youth pastors are generally expected to lead these efforts, but have not likely received any education in seminary for how to do so effectively. They call for the short-term missions movement to be much more prominent in scholarly research, as this is a huge component of the modern Christian experience in the West.

of case studies, both of going participants and receiving churches, and how these experiences have shaped them personally and also the communities in which they have worked.

‘How To’ Helps

The most easily accessible material related to short-term missions might be categorized as “how to” manuals.¹⁰⁰ Many books and articles center around how one goes through the logistics of planning a trip to a distant location, with time-lines and considerations for recruiting and training a team, as well as making arrangements for where the team is going. There is material specific to the pre-trip planning side of the trip, and there is material dedicated to following up after the trip to ensure, as much as possible, that participants do achieve personal growth through processing their experiences. Included within this framework is a desire to promote healthy ways of thinking theologically about what it is to be part of a short-term mission trip. All of these materials vary widely in terms of the level of scholarship involved in their creation.

Better Practices for Short-Term Missions

With the prominence of short-term mission trips, more and more researchers are asking questions about exactly what kind of effect these trips really are having on the participants and

¹⁰⁰ One fine example of a preparation tool is Anne-Geri' Fann and Greg Taylor, *How to Get Ready for Short-Term Missions: The Ultimate Guide for Sponsors, Parents, and Those Who Go!* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006). For a less contemporary example of earlier efforts at how-to guides, see David C. Forward, *The Essential Guide to the Short Term Mission Trip* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1998).

on the recipients. Are the effects lasting, or only temporary? Have the participants' behaviors changed in observable ways? Are those who benefit from short-term missions really having their lives changed?¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, short-term missions are particularly susceptible to waste, and if the needs of the recipients are not taken into account, they can even cause great harm to the receiving individuals and congregations.¹⁰² There is cost involved in international travel. In many cases, if all a mission team does is construction work or humanitarian aid, for the amount of money they spent to get to a third world country, they could have hired local workers and given a significant boost to the local economy in the receiving community. Doing this also provides a local church with a positive connection to their own community as the conduit for bringing business to the local economy. If all the intended activities of a mission team could be accomplished by local people at lesser cost and higher quality, mission team leaders must reflect deeply on the validity of their efforts, and on ways they could bless the receivers beyond providing amateur labor.

¹⁰¹ One of the early voices, calling for evaluations of the types of short-term missions opportunities is L. Blair Clark, "Separating the Wheat and the Chaff: Evaluating Short-Term Mission Opportunities," *Didaskalia* 5, no. 1 (1993): 63-68.

¹⁰² Kurt Ver Beek, "The Impact of Short-Term Missions: A Case Study of House Construction in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch," *Missiology* 34 (2006): 477-97. Ver Beek's article has been significant as a critique of short-term missions. He made a quantitative study of whether those who went on a short-term mission really gave more money to mission work after their trip than they would have given before they went. Ver Beek has challenged the notion that short-term mission experiences are really so transformative for people who go, claiming that the experience does not produce concrete actions. His conclusion was that over a 5-year period, there was no measurable difference in overall giving between those who had participated in the trip and those who had not. Likewise, he has expressed that the wellbeing of those in Honduras who received help from a short-term mission effort were not ultimately any better or worse off than those who had received no group.

Some short-term mission teams exude far too strong of a sense of entitlement in doing what they want, showing a total disregard for what is best for the receiving community.¹⁰³ If a receiving community does not know how many people to expect, what they are planning to do, or what they are bringing, it can be very difficult to prepare for the guests.

It is also easy for a team to buy into a poor narrative, especially in the context of trying to raise funds. When they send out letters, asking for prayers and donations, it is not infrequent to see statements implying that the team is going to “bring Jesus” to the other location, or to rescue the local church (in one week’s time!) from all their problems; making the need to go so urgent.¹⁰⁴

Those with a healthier understanding of God’s nature will know that God is at work in every mission field long before any missionaries arrive.¹⁰⁵ The local congregation in a third world country is just as much God’s church as an affluent sending congregation. In many cases, travelers can learn much from their Christian brethren in other cultures who receive them. Other

¹⁰³ For an excellent study of caveats, see Steve and Brian Fikkert Corbett, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...And Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009). One of the best helps from Corbett and Fikkert is an explanation of the differences between providing relief, rehabilitation, or development (99-100). So often, short-term groups travel with the intent to provide relief, when another option might be what is most needed. If a group has an ongoing commitment to a single location, it is prudent to think beyond providing relief for a group of people and to start looking for how the larger system can be changed which perpetuates poverty and injustice.

¹⁰⁴ See Brian M. Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012). Howell’s book is an ethnography that seeks to understand the ways that narratives are created among participants in short-term mission trips give meaning to their experiences. He explores several ways that a group’s self-described narrative and functional reality are sometimes not the same.

¹⁰⁵ Jesus himself invited people to follow him without letting them know where they would be going. Trusting that Christ goes ahead of us gives us the courage to walk with him into the unknown. See Leonard Sweet, *I Am a Follower: The Way, Truth, and Life of Following Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 124.

cultures will sometimes possess worldviews less individualistic, less materialistic, and more family-centered than what is common to Americans, and will therefore help to stretch the way American visitors look at their own life and blessings.

If traveling mission teams assume a posture of respect, they can gain meaningful practice in learning from another culture. It would be tragic for a person to go to the trouble of raising the funds to participate in the trip, and to share in the experience, but also to return home and make no meaningful changes to the way they inhabit and view the world.

One of the most significant voices in this conversation is Kurt Alan Ver Beek, a sociologist, presently at Calvin College. Ver Beek created waves in 2006 when he published the results of a study he conducted around mission work in Honduras following Hurricane Mitch in 1998.¹⁰⁶ His group had been part of the construction of new houses for those who had been victimized. He studied both the trip participants and the Hondurans who were recipients of the mission trip efforts. Ver Beek's research highlighted the potential for waste and abuse in efforts

¹⁰⁶Kurt Alan Ver Beek, "The Impact of Short-Term Missions: A Case Study of House Construction in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch," *Missiology* 34, no. 4 (2006): 477-95. Ver Beek's work has weighed heavily on me for several years. I completely fit the description of the people he was studying in this article. My first short-term mission trip was in 1999 to Honduras, where we built houses in communities struggling to recover from Hurricane Mitch. Some of Ver Beek's conclusions I took quite personally. Though I would acknowledge the validity of many of his concerns, I also know that my first missions experience, sloppy though it probably was in implementation, was one of the watershed moments of my life, and is the reason I am in ministry today. My life was profoundly shaped by the experience.

I have some misgivings about some of Ver Beek's measurements, such as the lack of increased giving over a five-year period. I was a college student five years after my first trip, and could not have increased my giving if I wanted to, due to a lack of financial resources. My changes were profound, but perhaps not measurable within the parameters of Ver Beek's research. I affirm Ver Beek's concerns about wastefulness in short-term missions and the potential for ineffectiveness in shaping a community in a short period of time. But my own experiences would prevent me from denying the potential value of short-term missions, even if only for those who go.

to help with things like home construction. The average home built in Honduras by an American team ended up costing \$30,000, when considering the total costs of the team. Had Americans sent money to charitable organizations who hired local workers to construct new homes, these could have been built for around \$2,000 each; a considerable difference. Likewise, Ver Beek was able to highlight ways the short-term trips could have been more effective, such as with building deliberate relationships with the local people.

Ver Beek's research has also been foundational for pointing out a stark contrast between qualitative and quantitative research on short-term missions. Many participants would say that their involvement in the trip had increased their giving at home, but the research into the actual donations to the missions organization who helped organize their trip indicated that they had not increased giving by more than 1%, nor was there significant change in the amounts of prayer and volunteering among those who had been trip participants.

Following Ver Beek's work, there have been ongoing developments in the studies of short-term missions – most of which align with the concerns he began laying out in 2006. Specifically, these would address his call for more research on the recipients of short-term mission trips and for better goal-setting and accountability for the teams who go on the trips.¹⁰⁷ Below are some of the prominent works that have followed Ver Beek's first article.

¹⁰⁷ A fine example of this is Brian Howell's article, which warns specifically about the tendency for people to experience mission trips in a way similar to non-religious, cross-cultural tourism. Howell makes several suggestions for practices which can help avoid these pitfalls. Brian M. Howell, "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 206-11. See also Brian N. Ballard, "Mission Trips: Attend to the Planning and the Purpose," *Word and World* 33, no. 3 (2013): 284-86.

One of the first significant contributions included a follow-up chapter from Ver Beek himself, in the book *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right*.¹⁰⁸ The editor is Robert Priest, who has been a large part of the ongoing conversation about short-term missions standards and practices.¹⁰⁹ The book includes chapters under several categories: partnering short-term trips effectively with long-term mission works, working effectively with people of cultural backgrounds different to your own, forging ongoing friendships between sending and receiving entities, healthy practices for specialized ministries on short-term trips, legal issues and liabilities to consider in short-term trips, and strategies for promoting the greatest possible life-changing impact on people who participate in mission trips.

A second significant work is Corbett and Fikkert's 2009 book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...And Yourself*. It represents the largest first step in calling on mission trip leaders to treat with greater seriousness the vast resources involved in taking short-term mission trips. One of the ongoing, justifiable critiques of short-term missions is the amount of cost compared to the amount of good that has been accomplished.

¹⁰⁸ *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!*, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Robert Priest has been involved in studies of short-term missions, both as an editor and as an author. His works include: *ibid.*; Robert J. Priest et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology* 34, no. 4 (2006), 431-450; Robert J. Priest, and Priest, Joseph Paul, "'They See Everything, and Understand Nothing': Short-Term Mission and Service Learning," *Missiology* 36, no. 1 (2008), 53-72; R. J. Priest and B. M. Howell, "Introduction: Theme Issue on Short-Term Missions," *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 2 (2013), 124-129; Robert J. Priest, "Introduction: Short-Term Missions and the Latin American Church," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007), 7-18; Robert J. Priest, "Short-Term Missions as a New Paradigm" (paper presented at the Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission, Louisville, KY 2010).

This book provides substantive warnings about the dangers of conducting “mission” work without sincerely listening to the mission trip recipients. They provide helpful insights for mission trip planners about the kinds of work that can be completed, and about how not every kind of work is appropriate for every receiving location. For example, relief, rehabilitation, and development are three distinct stages of what a community could need in the wake of a disaster. Bringing relief supplies to a community who has healed to the point of needing development would be of minimal value. There are likewise great dangers to paternalism, where help is given but a community is not empowered or taught how to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

In addition to Fikkert and Corbett’s work, there have been other works that have continued to nuance important areas related to effective, culturally-informed practices for short-term missions. Some have been efforts at what might be called goal-setting, through setting organizational or denominational standards for mission trip practices.¹¹⁰ There have been two scholarly journals who have dedicated an entire issue to discussions around short-term missions: *Latin American Theology* volume 2, number 2 (2007) and *Missiology* volume 41, number 2 (2013). These included subjects such as: on the ground perspectives from missionaries who have received trips to their location, experiential reflections from those who have conducted trips, recommendations for better mission trip practices, and methods for creating better partnerships between both the sending and receiving entities.

¹¹⁰ Jenny Collins, "Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions," *Common Ground Journal* 4, no. 1 (2006): 10-16. Mark Woodward, "Standards for Short-Term Missions," *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 3, 1 (2012), accessed January 20, 2016. Laura Montgomery, "Reinventing Short-Term Medical Missions to Latin America," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 84-103.

Effects of Short-Term Trips on Going Participants

In addition to the more significant books and collections, several individual studies have been published about the effects of short-term mission trips on those who have gone as participants in the trips. One study has examined the role that short-term trips can have in helping to develop people's faith maturity and prayer.¹¹¹ Others have examined whether participants have shown an increase in giving or volunteerism in the time after their mission trip experiences, such as Beyerlein, Trinitapoli and Adler, who have found a connection between short-term mission trip participation and subsequent increased involvement in civic engagement at home.¹¹² Other research has examined participant's sense of identity with their sending organization, having gone on a service learning experience on behalf of the organization.¹¹³

Narrative Ethnographies of Travel Experiences

Brian Howell, an anthropologist at Wheaton College, has been an ongoing contributor in the study and practice of short-term missions.¹¹⁴ In 2013 he published *Short-Term Mission: An*

¹¹¹ Bryce Norton, "Changing Our Prayer Behaviors through Short-Term Missions," *Missiology* 40, no. 3 (2012): 329-41.

¹¹² Kraig Beyerlein, Gary Adler, and Jenny Trinitapoli, "The Effect of Religious Short-Term Mission Trips on Youth Civic Engagement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 4 (2011): 780-95.

¹¹³ Zac D. Johnson, "Alternative Breaks: The Impact of Student-to-Student Connections in Non-Classroom Service-Learning Experiences" (Doctoral Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Works from Howell include: Brian M. Howell, "Missions to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 206-11; Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience*; Jeff Haanen, and Howell, Brian, "Better Partners: How Can Short-Term Missions

Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience. This work looks especially at how trip participants speak about their experiences, and how the language they use helps to form their perception of the trip and what it means. Howell encourages trip leaders to push themselves outside of a simplistic view of the trip, and challenges them to begin asking more questions about the cities and contexts in which they are serving.¹¹⁵ What are the larger issues of economics and justice affecting the community that need to change over time? Though Howell writes as one involved in short-term missions, he has been a helpful voice, urging a higher perspective of the impact that these trips can have in transforming needy communities by drawing attention to the causes of social injustice and systemic poverty.

Perspectives of Those Who Receive Short-Term Teams

One of the largest, most conspicuous gaps in short-term mission studies until recently were the perspectives on short-term mission trips from those in the foreign places who had received mission trip teams.¹¹⁶ Ver Beek (2006) was among the first to produce anything in this

Best Advance God's Mission?," *Christianity Today* 57, no. 1 (2013): 79; Brian Howell, and Rachel Dorr, "Evangelical Pilgrimage: The Rhetoric of Short-Term Missions," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 30, no. 2 (2007): 236-65; Priest and Howell, "Introduction: Theme Issue on Short-Term Missions," 124-29; *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ A unique contribution to the ethnographies of how people talk about mission trips is Hancock's work, dealing with multiple missions organizations, and the assumptions they create in their participants for engaging with Islam on short-term mission trips. M. Hancock, "Encountering Islam in Short-Term Mission," *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 2 (2013): 187-201.

¹¹⁶ For a good example, see Martín Hartwig Eitzen, "Short-Term Missions: Latin American Perspective," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007), 33-47. Zehner has done similar work from a Thai perspective: Edwin Zehner, "Short-Term Missions: Some Perspectives from Thailand," *Missiology* 41, no. 2 (2013), 130-145. For a Peruvian perspective on the experience of having mission teams come, see Francisco Cerrón, "Short-Term Missions:

area, looking at the long term impact, or the lack thereof, of mission teams who went to Honduras to provide relief after hurricane Mitch. Ver Beek saw a lack of ongoing connections between the going trip participants and the people they sought to help. Correspondingly, this led to a lack of meaningful impact in growing the communities of faith, supposedly supported by these groups.¹¹⁷

In response to Ver Beek's call for further studies of the peoples who receive short-term trips, there has been some useful new research, particularly related to how ongoing relationships between the sending and receiving congregations can bring about positive, significant change.¹¹⁸ One of the great risks of a short-term trip is the lack of long-term connection and follow up. By sending entities focusing on individual locations with whom they partner for a number of years, they can produce more effective, lasting changes over time. Some of the best research in this area looks at a very successful partnership between ongoing short-term trips and the city of La Oroya, Peru.¹¹⁹ There had been ongoing issues with pollution and mistreatment of a small community in the mountains, and the ongoing involvement of short-term mission to this location provided a platform for long-term engagement and significant change for the community.

An Initial Assessment from Experience," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007), 21-32.

¹¹⁷ Ver Beek, "Impact of Short-Term Missions," 480-483.

¹¹⁸ For an overview of this increasing trend, see Matthew Woodley, "Church 2 Church: Congregations Are Trading Short-Term 'Love 'Em and Leave 'Em' Missions for Long-Term Partnerships," *Leadership* 32, no. 2 (2011), 64-65.

¹¹⁹ Hunter Farrell, "From Short-Term Mission to Global Discipleship: A Peruvian Case Study," *Missiology* 41, no. 2 (2013), 163-176. For another Peruvian perspective, see Marcos Arroyo Bahamonde, "Contextualization of Mission: A Missiological Analysis of Short-Term Missions," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007), 227-247.

Stephen Offutt has conducted studies in El Salvador and South Africa over a four-year period, and has made some encouraging discoveries about the effects of short-term mission trips in these locations. Offutt describes how the churches who have received short-term mission teams have shown an initiative to take similar trips, mimicking the groups who have come to help them, and therefore creating a sense of mobility among native Christians. Further, these trips have promoted friendships between churches that go across national borders.¹²⁰ Several other communities around the world have been examined more closely from a desire to help trip leaders be aware of the larger impacts they are capable of having beyond what can be accomplished in just a few short days or weeks.¹²¹

The Missing Piece

The directions of studies in short-term missions have developed in an order that is fitting for their purpose. With the greatest goal of short-term trips being to make an impact for Christ in a distant location, it has been important for new works to come along, giving tools for better organization and planning. Likewise, as described above, there are a growing number of resources available to help trip leaders be sure that their trips are of the maximum possible benefit, both to the receivers of the trip and to those who go on the trip. There is, however,

¹²⁰ Stephen Offutt, "The Role of Short-Term Mission Teams in the New Centers of Global Christianity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 4 (2011), 796-812.

¹²¹ Hermon is an example of a simple article calling for more impactful practices. Jason Hermon, "Short Term-Missions, Long-Term Impact," *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 3, 1 (2012), accessed January 20, 2016.

another important area of short-term missions that has thus far been neglected in scholarly research.¹²² This missing piece is the sending congregation itself.

The “how to” guides give explanations for matters such as fundraising, and inviting the sending congregation to support the trip monetarily and through their prayers.¹²³ There is also the occasional emphasis on following up and reporting well the events of the trip.¹²⁴ Gary Green of Abilene Christian University has produced a helpful guide for trip participants to strive for mature discernment of mission trip experiences to be used after the completion of the trip, with a goal of transformation at home because of the experiences abroad.¹²⁵

However, even with these resources, I have not been able to find academically credentialed research on what sorts of effects a mission trip can have on those who participate by

¹²² Greg McKenzie, "Framing the Current Short-Term Missions Discussion," *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 3, 1 (2012), accessed January 20, 2016. McKenzie does a nice job highlighting how various dimensions of short-term missions interact and affect each other. He lays out a list of eleven comparisons of things including benefits, both tangible and intangible, for the goer and the receiver, as well as the financial ramifications. Interestingly, he mentions neither existing research nor possible research directions that focus on the sending congregation.

¹²³ Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries.*, 128-31. This book is one of the first attempts to treat short-term missions at a scholarly level, defining terminology for different types of participants, and articulating a theology of short-term missions.

¹²⁴ Forward, *Essential Guide*, 183-185. Forward's spiral-bound book is a great example of the first round of instructional books, telling people how to work through the logistics of planning a mission trip. The emphasis is almost entirely on the going team itself, with very little about the sending or receiving locations.

¹²⁵ Gary L. Green, *Now What? Spiritual Discernment for Cultural Encounters* (Franklin, TN: Carpenter's Son Publishing, 2013).

sending, but not going. One small exception is an article by Mike Gibson called "Short-term Missions Transform Congregations!"¹²⁶ Gibson claims:

Enlisting, equipping, and sending people on short-term mission trips raise the *missional temperature* of a congregation. What begins as a slow and steady movement upward transforms a church one person at a time and will, in most cases, make an exponential jump that will lead to a culture change."¹²⁷

Gibson goes on to explain how people begin to see what they can do on the mission field, and are therefore convinced they can do the same at home. This, he believes, leads to budget increases for missions, and for opened eyes regarding the marginalized in one's own community. The problem with Gibson's claims is that he does not attach them to any documented research.¹²⁸

Craig Altmock's research is of a more credentialed nature, though his research on the sending congregation is more incidental than deliberate.¹²⁹ Altmock is the Senior Director of Operations at Let's Start Talking, a short-term mission program that sends people overseas to evangelize through Bible-based conversational English classes.¹³⁰ The bulk of Altmock's research is on people who participated in Let's Start Talking campaigns. Altmock does look at several

¹²⁶ Mike Gibson, "Short-Term Missions Transform Congregations!," *Missio Apostolica* 18, no. 1 (2010), 23-29. This is not a peer-reviewed journal.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 26-27.

¹²⁸ As this is not a peer-reviewed article, Gibson is merely doing what would be expected for the particular publication. It is not my intention to portray him as unreliable, because he can speak from his own experiences. However, his perspectives are only one person's opinions without any collected data to affirm his claims.

¹²⁹ Craig Altmock, *The Shaping of God's People: One Story of How God Is Shaping the North American Church through Short-Term Missions* (Fort Worth, Texas: Self Published, 2006).

¹³⁰ <http://www.lst.org/staff>

factors that represent changes in trip participants upon their return home, such as an increase in giving and involvement. He is thinking through the lens of how going participants impact their churches, and points to several positive occurrences, such as better-informed missions committees, more members willing to serve on missions committees after having gone on trips, and increased missions giving at a congregational level.¹³¹

An Opportunity: Why This Project is Needed

With the missional church movement and the short-term missions emphasis growing concurrently in the last several decades, there is great opportunity to study how one of these might affect the other. As missional leaders continue looking for new ways to invite their congregations into participation in the mission of God, it is worth considering how going on a short-term mission trip might serve as a sort of practice environment for missional living at home.¹³² When considering how to help a person become more focused on mission, experiential learning in formats like short-term missions have great potential benefit for this purpose.

From the angle of short-term missions, many who have invested their lives in mission work are rightly questioning the return on investment of these trips. With so much being spent to send short-term, non-professional missionaries into the field, what is the justification to continue these expenditures in light of the criticisms raised by scholars like Ver Beek?¹³³ In some cases, it

¹³¹ Altrock, 28-29.

¹³² David. A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 174. Livermore suggests strongly that mission teams should not be doing abroad anything that they are not also attempting to do at home. He uses examples of teaching English classes or working with children. Do not go overseas to do what you are unwilling to do for the needy persons within your own community.

¹³³ Ver Beek, "Impact of Short-Term Missions," 481-489.

may have been better to have sent money to provide relief, rather than people to provide amateur construction services. But with newer research on the benefits of building church-to-church relationships over time, and working for larger-picture good through the trips, there is increasing reason to continue short-term efforts from the perspective of the good they can accomplish, when well executed. At the same time, there may be more reasons to continue in addition to these.

Acknowledging those who have made valuable contributions in the areas of trip effectiveness for receivers and spiritual growth for goers, I wish to take a first step in asking the next important question: *Can a sending congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip help the congregation to become more missional? If so, in what ways?*

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Qualitative Research Methodology

To understand how missional growth occurs in a congregation as a result of its involvement in a short-term mission trip, a qualitative research methodology was employed. There are several reasons for this choice of methodology.

First, this project was intended to explore an area of research for which there are few if any existing hypotheses to be tested or contrasted. While previous work exists regarding trip participants and receiving congregations, there is not a substantial amount of literature studying a sending congregation, and therefore no pre-existing hypotheses to test. Quantitative research addresses a research problem or question by trying to understand what variables affect an outcome, often by comparing and contrasting variables.¹³⁴ Knowing that any pre-determined variables in this project would only be guesses, it was a better approach to allow people to discuss their perspectives in open ways, and allow the variables to reveal themselves through common themes in the interviews.

Second, this project is seeking to establish whether such a connection between mission trip involvement and missional development even exists. One of the hallmarks of qualitative research is that it is exploratory.¹³⁵ There is a definite need to explore the phenomena at a particular setting in order to cultivate generalizations in the form of hypotheses which can be tested in other settings. One of the possible outcomes of this project was the revelation that in

¹³⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Third ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2009), 99.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

fact, no connection exists between mission trips and missional formation. The need for this project is to ask whether such a connection exists, and if so, in what ways. Following the results of this project, there will be a section detailing future directions for research which builds on the hypotheses cultivated through this project.

Third, this research was going to involve the researcher's own perspectives as part of the findings, which would place it within the realm of phenomenological studies; a type of study considered to be a qualitative method.¹³⁶ The researcher would be going on the mission trip, reporting on the trip, and conducting the interviews for the project. In addition to what was shared in the formal interviews, there were other interactions outside of these which also provided some data related to this study, and phenomenological studies allow for similar insights to be included. Because no existing, measurable hypotheses exist in this area, phenomenological studies enable the researcher to define potential variables on the participants' own terms. They describe their perceived experiences, and collectively produce the themes which create eventual variables.

In order to establish the function of the mission trip in the life of the congregation, it would be necessary to engage in a process of social constructivism. Crotty defines social constructivism as such:

*"It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within and essentially social context. (Emphasis his.)"*¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 103-130.

¹³⁷ For a full discussion of how social constructivism works, see chapter three in Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 142-163.

The goal of this type of research is to rely as much as possible on the views of the participants being studied, which is considered a normal approach within qualitative research.¹³⁸ The research participants would all be members of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, and so all of the conclusions from the research would be specific to this social context, and the shared perspectives of the church members. Because the goal was to create a picture of what the entire church experienced, it was critical to allow a wide section of the congregation to speak for themselves, and to define outcomes based primarily on their perspectives.

Finally, it was clear that this project would move inductively, gathering information from the perspectives of the church members in order to formulate hypotheses based on their perspectives. Again, it is qualitative methodology that is to be utilized most commonly in producing inductive movements in research, trying to make sense of various perspectives shared within a particular context.¹³⁹

All of the needs of this project align well with the aims of qualitative research. The lack of existing hypotheses, the localized emphasis within one congregation, the necessity of allowing members to define the variables, and the type of participation of the researcher all are germane to qualitative research, and made it the obvious choice for how to approach this project.

Developing This Project

This study arose from my ongoing involvement in short-term mission efforts to Central America; particularly in Honduras and Costa Rica. As I began leading trips, I was greatly

¹³⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, 8.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

concerned with leading trips that would be genuinely beneficial to the receiving churches, and genuinely transformative for the sending churches; both for those who went on the trips and those who supported them through other means.

While the amount of research on short-term missions has been increasing, there are still many gaps; particularly in the studies of congregations who receive visits from short-term mission teams and in the studies of congregations who send short-term mission teams. Most of the research has been qualitative, and has centered around describing the experiences of those who went on the mission trips as participants.¹⁴⁰ Likewise, much of the research published about short-term missions has been to critique their tendency towards wastefulness and misallocation of resources, the amount of expense involved in sending untrained missionaries for only short periods of time, and the perceived lack of long-term impact as a result of short-term trips.¹⁴¹ Though I was aware of the subjectivity of my perspectives on the value of short-term mission trips, I also knew that I found myself called to full-time ministry, largely based on experiences from when I was a young person participating in a short-term mission trip. The impact of several of my experiences on me has been decades-long and significant.

Though a case can be made for a trip's impact on those who go on the trip, the question remains regarding what impact these trips have on a congregation who sends participants on short-term mission trips. The specific question which has guided this project is: How does a congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip help the sending congregation to become more missional? In light of this question, others emerge. When a cross section of the

¹⁴⁰ The most extensive work in this area recently is Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience*, Kindle ed., Location 168.

¹⁴¹ Ver Beek, 477-80.

congregation is interviewed, how do they perceive the short-term mission trip has impacted the congregation, if at all? What was the experience like for them? Even if they did not go on the trip, or did not have any family who went, did the congregation's involvement in sending still make an impact on them?

Research Settings and Background

The locations involved in this research are intertwined in varying degrees. As a minister new to Kings Crossing, this necessarily affected the experience of the mission trip, both for the sending congregation and for the churches we worked with in Costa Rica. To some of the groups in Costa Rica, we were known friends, but to Desamparados, we were entirely new. Because of the Kings Crossing church's relationship with the church in Desamparados, it made the trip especially meaningful for members who were able to help in that location. It also created some strange potential tensions between the two churches in Costa Rica, as one was my long time contact, and the other was the long time contact of Kings Crossing; neither of which had been partnering with the other in the past directly. Below is a description of the various congregations most directly impacted by the trip, around which this research is based.

Kings Crossing Church of Christ

The primary location of focus in this project is the Kings Crossing Church of Christ in Corpus Christi, Texas, where I began preaching in September of 2014. The congregation, at the time of this study, averaged a worship attendance in the mid-300s.¹⁴² Kings Crossing was

¹⁴² See Appendix F. One of the previous preaching ministers, David "Buck" Griffith, who has been at Kings Crossing since the late 1970s shared some of his records with me of

founded in 1956 through an extended tent meeting, and was originally known as the Windsor Park Church of Christ.

The church eventually purchased property in the northern end of Corpus Christi. During the 1950s and 1960s, the church grew to around 600 in attendance, due to an active program in personal work and evangelism. To promote people efforts to bring guests, they would even use awards to present to members based on the number of visitors they brought, the number of evangelistic home visits they made, and the number of baptisms that occurred because of their efforts.

Griffith says that some of the decline in numbers during the 1970s happened as sister congregations were planted around town, and members would go to help with the forming of the new congregations. Likewise, there was “forced busing” around the time that Griffith arrived in 1977, and many families moved out of the area to locations where there would not be busing and intermingling of children at the schools. With some of the struggles of the oil industry in the 1980s, businesses who had been located in Corpus Christi relocated their offices to larger population centers, such as San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas. Even though the church does not control commerce, the church was highly impacted through many prominent members having to leave the city due to their career opportunities elsewhere. Since the late 1970s, attendance has generally fluctuated between three hundred and four hundred.

One of the most formative programs in recent years has been Kings Crossing’s prison ministries.¹⁴³ Griffith has led the efforts in the prison ministry from their inception at Kings

attendance over the years. I have provided some visualizations of the information in chart format. All of the information pertaining to Kings Crossing’s past I am taking from his description of the congregation’s history in an email he sent me on July 15, 2015.

¹⁴³ <http://www.kingscrossingprisonministries.org/>

Crossing. The work has evolved both evangelism and a variety of twelve step programs to help people resolve problems with substance abuse, anger, family issues, and a variety of other felt needs. Many thousands of people have been converted through Kings Crossing's work in the prisons, and in their helping other congregations learn how to make similar efforts.

In 2002, Griffith stepped down from the pulpit role at Kings Crossing to focus exclusively on the prison ministry work. There are numerous members at the church who are involved in grading Bible correspondence courses with inmates, and who go and lead classes at the prisons. Likewise, there are a number of members in attendance who have previous criminal histories; most of whom were converted through the prison ministry. The blend of educated white-collar families with former prison inmates provides a unique demographic situation at Kings Crossing that is probably not typical of churches located in similar settings.

The other most formative experience in recent years was the congregation's building project. In 2006, the congregation made a bold move in relocating from the northern part of town, building a new building on several acres in the southernmost end of town, in a rapidly growing area. In total, the church was able to purchase twelve acres, right next to a large subdivision whose name inspired the congregation's new name; Kings Crossing. Though at the time of building, the area was mostly rural, things have already been shifting as the city is becoming more urbanized in the southern end of town.¹⁴⁴ The area around the church is generally white-collar and residential.

¹⁴⁴ One example of a significant change is a large movie theater going in at the end of the block where the church is located. This is a significant shift from farmland. Natalia Contreras, "Alamo Drafthouse Announces Plans for Southside," accessed March 8, 2016. <http://www.caller.com/news/building-our-future/alamo-drafthouse-announces-plans-for-southside-ep-837546266.html>.

During much of this time, Kings Crossing was involved in sponsoring some mission work, but they had never taken any mission trips as a congregational effort, other than a few college students participating in evangelistic campaigns with Abilene Christian University or the Aggies for Christ program at Texas A&M. However, in 2012, Gary Green of Abilene Christian University contacted Kings Crossing and invited them to send a team to visit their missionary, Ronald Martinez, in Desamparados, a suburb of San Jose, Costa Rica. Abilene had ceased allowing students to go on international campaigns because of liability reasons, and Gary asked Kings Crossing to consider jumping in, which they did. This was the first and only church-led experience with short-term missions that Kings Crossing had before the trip that was the subject of this research.

Desamparados Iglesia de Cristo

Kings Crossing began supporting Ronald and Nora Martinez around 1990. Ronald, a native Costa Rican, had been converted, and was interested in ministry. After he went through a preacher training school in Costa Rica, Kings Crossing took the role of being his full-time support. He has worked in growing a church in Desamparados, Costa Rica since that time. The congregation presently has a nice building with a two-story classroom attachment and kitchen. They have an active group of young adults, and around 150 members. Martinez's congregation is active in helping to plant new churches in other locations, and he has several people capable of preaching and teaching on weekends while he goes out to do evangelistic work in other communities.

Gary Green of ACU had been bringing annual campaign teams of college students down to work with Ronald for over a decade. Even though Kings Crossing had supported Ronald

financially for many years, they had never sent anyone to visit him. So at Gary's pleading, a team was put together in 2012, mostly of teenagers, who went to Desamparados. Green was not a participant on this trip.

Several interviewees indicated that there had been no fundraising, preparation, or reporting about the 2012 trip. Most team members indicated that the trip itself had very little organization. There were some construction projects undertaken at the church, and team members stayed in members' homes. Lodging conditions were varied, as were the maturity levels of those being welcomed as guests in the homes of people there; most of whom did not speak English. These factors resulted in mixed feelings about the trip, as well as about the possibility of another trip. There was not anyone to lead a second trip until I arrived at Kings Crossing in 2014. I had ongoing commitments to a location further south in Buenos Aires, Costa Rica.

Buenos Aires Iglesia de Cristo

Daniel and Maribel Chaves, together with their three daughters, moved in 2009 to Buenos Aires, Costa Rica to plant a new congregation there. They have been working with groups from various organizations for several years to help them with evangelistic campaigns including programs at local schools and Gospel meetings at their building. They have struggled greatly in making new converts, and the congregation is around 25 in regular attendance. The church is presently trying to relocate from their first location to a new piece of property they have worked on acquiring, closer to the downtown area.

I first became involved with Daniel Chaves in 2013, when I led a group from the Old Hickory Church of Christ, where I was the youth minister, together with a larger group from

Torch Missions, who were assisting Chaves. The following year, my wife and I took over as leaders of this trip. Our intent was to continue leading groups annually. Our move to Texas in 2014 has shifted the possibilities of us working with Buenos Aires as intimately, because of Kings Crossings' preexisting ties to Desamparados. Our intention over the next year or two is to gradually phase the Buenos Aires location out of our trips and to focus more on our own sponsored missionary.

The Chaves family receives their financial support from a small congregation in Illinois, for whom Nancy Riggan is the main missions contact. I have corresponded with her regularly about our ongoing efforts with Chaves, believing it works best for everyone involved when we are all aware of how the other congregations are assisting.

The 2015 Costa Rica Trip

In June 2015, I led a group of twenty-six Americans, including people from churches in Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, and Mississippi, to work with both of these locations. Our work primarily involved children's programs, evangelistic door-knocking, evening Gospel meetings, and some construction and clearing of land. It is this trip that provided the occasion for my research on the Kings Crossing congregation, as there were ten participants from the congregation on the trip, including my wife and me.

This trip provided opportunities for participants to travel to a foreign country, and to visit Christians in multiple locations. They worked to encourage the churches, and to strengthen the churches' reputations in the local communities through acts of service and compassion. It also provides unique experience for bonding with other Christians, since the majority of people on the trip did not know the others from the larger team outside of their own group.

Project Implementation

Because some of the people who went on the trip are part of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, I wanted to include their perspectives as part of the picture of how Kings Crossing was shaped through the experience of the mission trip. To implement a qualitative analysis, I decided to invite a variety of participants from the congregation, focusing on those I knew to be regular in attendance; at least two or more weeks per month. This would be necessary if their perspectives would be representative of an average, involved member of the congregation. In total, there were 23 participants in the interviews.¹⁴⁵

I wanted the majority of the research to come from those who did not actually go on the trip; assuming those who went might perceive a larger impact of the trip than the general membership of the church. I did include some who went on the trip so I could evaluate whether their perspectives were significantly different than those who did not go. Likewise, even if the trip has a larger impact on the going portion of the congregation, since all members are part of the same congregation, all perspectives maintain a level of value in the evaluation.

Regarding the make up of the participants:

- There were 23 total participants
- 11 were female (48%) and 12 were male (52%)
- 6 were between 25 and 40 (26%), 9 were between 41-55 (39%), 6 were between 55-70 (26%), and 2 were over 70 (9%)
- 19 did not go on the trip (83%), and 4 did go (17%)

¹⁴⁵ See Appendices A through E for the information and consent form, the interview forms, the guide to journaling, and the text of the reminder e-mails that I offered to send to participants.

- 16 did not go on the trip and had no relatives going either (70%), and 3 did not go, but had relatives who did (13%)

The shape of the project was that all participants were interviewed individually before the mission trip occurred. Following their interview for at least 6-8 weeks, participants were invited, but not required, to keep a spiritually-oriented journal and to receive email reminders to do so. After the trip reports had been given, there was a follow-up interview with each participant.

The first interviews consisted of four introductory questions, followed by four qualitative questions. The introductory questions were about gender, age, and whether or not the interviewee or their family members were going on the short-term mission trip. The qualitative questions were:

1. Please describe what you understand to be the mission of God. What all does this mission involve?
2. If you were telling the story of what God is doing through our congregation, what would the current chapter be about?
3. How do you believe God is trying to shape us through our present experiences?
4. What role, if any, do you believe the short-term mission trip to Costa Rica is playing in how God is shaping our congregation right now?

The second and final interview consisted of exactly the same four questions as the first interview. This provided opportunity to see how their answers varied from one interview to the next. Participants were invited to respond verbally to the questions at whatever length they felt appropriate, and interview lengths ranged from around 6 minutes to 35 minutes.

My arrangement of the order of the questions was intentional. I wanted to make the interviews be open to their interpretation, without trying to steer them toward commenting on

any particular factor that they believed to be part of what God was doing in and through our congregation. My questions began open ended, and gradually shifted to more specific. I was deliberate not to specifically ask about the mission trip until the last question. I wanted them to be able first to name what factors they saw as most influential in how God was shaping Kings Crossing, and if they did not see the mission trip as a factor on their own, I did not want to sway their viewpoints.

This approach is in line with Thumma's recommendations for conducting interviews with congregation members for research.¹⁴⁶ Thumma suggests allowing the person being interviewed to begin with a broad question, allowing them to define on their own what they see as the most significant factors related to the issue you are discussing. This allows the interviewer to gradually move to questions of a more specific nature, moving on to more pre-determined topics without forcing the hand of the interviewees.

Initially, I had considered never asking about the mission trip at all, but by putting that question at the end, I could still see both their own initial responses with no prompting, and then the responses they would give regarding the mission trip specifically when they were prompted to talk about it.

But looking at their views regarding the short-term mission trip was only part of my focus. I was looking specifically for instances where their theological thinking about mission might be strengthened as a result of our congregation taking part in the mission trip. My strategy

¹⁴⁶ See Scott L. Thumma, "Methods for Congregational Study," in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman et al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 203-06. Thumma walks through numerous things to consider when conducting interviews regarding the people selected, how to communicate with them in preparation for the interview, the locations ideal for such conversations, and how to formulate questions for best results.

for analyzing the responses was to read through them in light of key missional themes and see if any of these themes emerged as especially prominent in connection to the mission trip. My logic was that if the mission trip helped to evoke impulses in the congregation that align well with missional principles, I could point to specific ways in which participating in a short-term mission trip can help a congregation to become more missional.

The Researcher's Role and Potential Influence

It is without a doubt that my participation in this project as the researcher influenced the experience of the participants. As a first level of influence, I am the preaching minister of the congregation involved, the Kings Crossing Church of Christ. To the extent that I am a visible part of the congregation, the things that I value and speak about will be visible to the congregation. Second, I am the leader of the mission trip. Anyone wanting to go on the trip would have to work with me and through me to be able to participate. In all events related to the mission trip, I was an active participant.

It is also significant that prior to my research, I had been the preaching minister at this congregation for under one year. My predecessor had been nearing retirement, but when he had a significant accident, it diminished his energy levels and ultimately lead to an earlier retirement for him. Due to his worsening health prior to my arrival, there was a large amount of anticipation in the congregation for me to get started. Of the interviewees, 61% alluded to the excitement about my presence at the congregation, and to my personal impact as a new minister there, even though I never asked any questions related to myself.

Though these things do not mean that the mission trip was only effective because of my newness, it is important to view the effects of the trip in the context of a new minister, leading

the trip, in a time period that was widely viewed by the congregation as a time of transition. Any number of major efforts I could have chosen might have been perceived as exciting and impactful. At the same time, based on the responses of the research participants, there are some aspects of having a short-term mission trip that are unique in how they impact a congregation, compared to any other type of new projects I might have implemented.

Defining Key Terminology

As it relates to the people who participated in the interview process, it will be helpful to clarify some of the language that will be used to describe them. One aspect that I have tried to avoid here is to refer to people who went on the trip as “participants” and those who did not as something other than participants. Part of cultivating a missional view of the church is believing that everyone is connected, and what affects one affects everyone else, to some extent.

It has been my contention that even though the way in which people participate may vary, everyone who was an active part of the sending congregation is in some way a participant in the trip. Various types of involvement could include those who listened to the presentations about the trip, those who followed our postings on social media, those who showed up or contributed to our fundraising efforts, and those who set aside time to pray for our team while we were overseas.

Beyond this, there are different dynamics that can affect the way one perceives the trip, connected to their personal situation. Some examples would be whether they went on the trip or not, and whether they had family who went on the trip or not. Different types of categories have been relevant in different ways throughout the analysis of the interviews. The following

definitions of categories are not exclusive from each other, but this is the terminology that will be used to refer to some of the different interview participants in the analysis below.

- **Interviewees.** For my purposes, this is a general way of referring to anyone who was a participant in the interview process, and who completed two recorded interviews with me as part of this project. All other categories can fall under this umbrella, as everyone described in the analysis below was interviewed for the project.
- **Going Participant (GP).** This is a standard way to refer to someone who physically went on the mission trip to Costa Rica.
- **Mission Team or Trip Team.** This is how I will refer to everyone who physically went on the mission trip collectively. Even though there are many people who were active participants in our planning and fundraising, I am designating the mission team as only those who actually went on the trip. So this is a blanket term for referring to all going participants.
- **Sending Participant (SP).** This term will be used broadly to refer to anyone who is part of the Kings Crossing church who did not physical go on the trip, but had even a slight level of involvement in the trip, whether through praying, observing reports, donating funds, or actively showing up and helping at fundraising events. Any member of Kings Crossing who did not go on the trip, but participated in the interview process will be called a *Sending Participant*.
- **Family Going Participant (FG).** This term means that the person interviewing did have immediate family going on the mission trip. Interview participants felt varying levels of closeness to the actual team of people who went. Though the level of personal friendship with team members may have affected their interest in the trip, I did not attempt to

measure whether or not interviewees felt close to the team members. However, there is a significant level of involvement from the families of the going participants. A \$100 deposit was required up front when team members submitted their applications. The group made collective efforts at fundraising, but whatever amount was not covered by group efforts, the individuals' families were responsible for paying in order for the team member(s) from their family to participate. In many cases, the family paid or donated the deposit, as well as a large portion of the total trip costs, which ended up being \$1,700 per person. It was also the expectation that team members or representatives from their family must show up and work at fundraising events in order to share in the proceeds of the events. A commitment to go was as significant for the GP's family as it was for them. The families of the team members were especially involved in sending off and receiving the team before and after the trip. Most indicated that they were in frequent prayer for the team, and were watching online updates with great interest. Even though being a GP is probably the mostly likely scenario for a person to be impacted by a short-term mission trip, being the family of a GP is potentially very impactful; probably more than for the average sending participant without family going. Also, it is important to note that within this category, one can be both a GP and a FG participant. Some who went on the trip also had family members who went on the trip.

- **No Family Going Participant (NFG).** This term refers to anyone who participated in the interviews, who was not related to anyone who went on the mission trip. This represented the key demographic of interest in this study. Though GP and FG participants were included in the overall group of interviewees, it is specifically those who were sending participants with no family going that have been generally neglected in studies of short-

term missions. Sending participants with no family going are uniquely important to the study of how mission trips do or do not affect the larger congregation. They do not have family obligations that draw them into fundraising events or obligate them to make donations. They do not have to participate in fundraising events, nor do they have to choose to show up and listen on Sundays that reporting is going on about the trip. Theirs is a perspective that comes purely from being a normal member at the church. Any changes or impacts that they experience as a result of Kings Crossing having a mission trip going on are especially significant for this study. However, it is also important to note that one can be both a NFG participant and a *going* participant. Some team members did not have any family going on the trip, and went by themselves. In reporting findings that are significant in connection to these attributes, I will clarify whether the NFG participant is one who did or did not go on the trip; whether they are a no family going, going participant or a no family going, sending participant.

CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section contains an analysis of the responses given by the interviewees, including both their first and second interviews. Based on the interviews, there are certain times and places where the members of the congregation believe they were significantly impacted by the short-term mission trip. I will describe these below. This will be followed by descriptions some of the key missional characteristics that emerged in the interviews as reflections of the mission trip's impact.

Times and Places of Impact

Preparing for the Trip

When I first began participating in short-term mission trips, the aspect I liked least was fundraising. I was concerned about the way I might come across, asking other people for money. Over time and with experience, I learned that many people unable to go on short-term trips find joy in supporting opportunities for others to go and serve through mission trip opportunities. I do not have statistical data to point to, but speaking from my own experience in fundraising for short-term mission trips, many of the largest single donations I receive are from people who had previously gone on similar trips, and tell me verbally, or occasionally in notes they include with their checks, that they want to see others able to have the same experiences that they had.

I will comment more on this below, but one of things that surprised me in my research was how very positively many of my interviewees commented on the fundraising events. Where my fear had been that they would seem burdensome, it was through the fundraising events that

people felt the strongest connection to the trip. It allowed them to be part of helping it to happen, and any positive stories we reported, they were able to feel as if they had taken part in them.

In preparation for this trip, we tried several different types of fundraising events. The most popular format was that we would work out an agreement with a local restaurant, and on a certain night, we would invite members of our church to eat there, and the restaurant would give us a percentage of the proceeds towards our trip. My team would be there in matching shirts, serving, cleaning tables, and greeting our patrons. It was a palpable feeling of excitement for all of us to look around the restaurant and see a vast majority of people there were church members who had come to support us. One FG sending participant commented:

We had a goal. We had to raise money. That provided a way for people to be involved and to have a stake in it. That was good because it created excitement. I saw excitement. It was neat... to see you people at the restaurant, but I was there! I saw the people who were there doing this, but I saw that and said, I'm there with them! Not physically, but in prayer and that kind of stuff. I think that was good. I saw people respond to that. I saw people respond to the fundraising projects that we did.

In addition to fundraisers at restaurants, we organized a congregational chili supper. People brought pots of chili and competed in a taste contest, and we were completely overwhelmed by people donating items for us to use in a silent auction. In total there were more than fifty items donated, and the chili supper event helped us raise over \$3,000 toward our trip costs. Again, the success of these events were due to the congregation showing up and participating.

On The Trip Itself

A commonly held assumption about short-term mission trips is that they are of greatest value to those members of a congregation who actually go on the trip. It is undoubtedly a contributing factor to why most of the first publications about short-term missions have been

geared towards enhancing people's experiences, or at least understanding the experiences of those who have gone. My research has produced no reason to question the validity of this assumption. Those who have the experience of going will speak with confidence about the potential impact the experience can have on a person. One of my going participants, reflecting on his experiences on the trip, said:

I personally just think that every child needs to experience it. I think every parent needs to try to scrape up the money and send their kid on a mission trip at least once in their life. Because it will change that way the child sees the world. It will change the way they know Christ. It will change the way they understand what the mission of Christ is. It's more than going to church and having a youth day. You know? It's bigger. It's bigger than Kings Crossing. It's bigger than Texas. I think that as Christians we need to start thinking more globally.

For those on the trip, my daily schedule included group devotionals every morning and every evening, where we would talk about various subjects related to the trip. Devotionals generally lasted thirty minutes or less, and often invited participation from each member to share their thoughts about a central idea. For example:

- What is one way you are going to challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone tomorrow for God?
- Where did you see Jesus present in another person's life today?
- Now that we have been gone a week, and you might be getting a little homesick, what is something life-giving for you that keeps you motivated?
- What is something about the Christians here that has been different than what you were expecting?

I did not attempt to collect data related to my team members and the devotionals, because the focus of my project is the effects of the trip on the whole sending congregation. But I have

observed in the trips that I have led, the more time we allow for reflection and refocusing through margins of time in the day, the more unified the team has been in their operation and attitudes. By allowing space where experiences can be processed proactively, there is less of a need for negative venting or complaining.

Social Media and Online Reporting

On the trips I have been part of, we spend most of the trip practicing what we call a technology fast. Though I do not take up people's electronic devices, we have strongly encouraged people to use the opportunity to live differently. We do not watch the news in the hotels, nor do we correspond with people on social media. Instead, we encourage people to build relationships, both among the team and with the locals, and to practice spiritual journaling, in a guided journaling folder that we provide to the team members.

However, believing it is a helpful way to keep people at home connected to the events of the trip, I take responsibility for posting daily updates online. By keeping all the updates in one place, Kings Crossing's Facebook fan page, it makes it easy for concerned family members to know where to check and be sure that everything is going well.¹⁴⁷ As we have sufficient internet connections, we will stream happenings live, such as group devotionals or gospel meetings at the churches. As of now, this has seemed to be the best possible way to keep the sending congregation feeling connected to what is going on.

I never asked any specific questions about social media in my interviews, but four of my NG interviewees brought them up and mentioned that they had been watching the updates online

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.facebook.com/kingscrossingcoc>

with interest. Here is how one NFG, NG participant commented about the experience of seeing the daily updates on social media:

Hey, we're sending family members over there and we're seeing the results come back immediately, not seven months later, oh that's what they did six months ago. We're seeing it immediately. We saw the impact as you're there, we saw the pictures on Facebook. With social media now you see the impact right as it occurs. Oh ok, that's where they are; that's what they're doing. Then you see pictures of the kids...it's a huge impact, and it's helped bring people back to what we're truly about.

The impact of social media postings was non-existent on those who do not use social media. Two of my older interviewees without Facebook accounts remarked on how they wished they could have known what was happening on the trip while we were there. This highlights the need to think about providing updates through means more accessible than just Facebook, for those who do not use it.

Reporting After The Trip

Upon returning from the trip, I spent the next three Sundays emphasizing concepts related to the mission of God, and to our recent mission trip. The first Sunday back I spoke more generally on the church as God's mission; that the Great Commission preceded the "founding" of the church in Acts 2, and that God had a mission before God had a Church.

The second Sunday I gave a full report of Desamparados and the Martinez family. I told the story of how our church came to be Ronald's supporting congregation. I described a typical Sunday in Desamparados; what was similar or different than our way of doing things. I also talked about some things Ronald had been working on behind the scenes. The third Sunday was

a trip report, where I described the events of our trip, showed video clips of us singing kids songs with children at the schools, and highlights of trip participants serving in several ways.¹⁴⁸

I chose several significant people that we encountered on our trip, and tried to tell their stories a little more in depth. I concluded with giving specific things to pray about that I knew had been weighing heavily on the two preachers in their settings. Several of the interviewees commented that they had enjoyed the reports, and found them informative and inspiring. One said:

I especially liked the way you did the follow up, where you didn't immediately tell how the trip went. You had videos prepared, and described those people's lives. You went way into their life.

Journaling

There have been others who have studied the effects of short-term missions on the spiritual growth of participants.¹⁴⁹ In this project, the primary focus is on how the short-term mission trip helps a sending congregation become more missional. Because I wanted participants to be paying more attention to the movements of God in our church than they might normally, I requested that each of them make an effort to journal regularly throughout their participation in my project.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ There are video clips available at the Kings Crossing Church of Christ's Facebook Fanpage under the Photos and Videos section. <http://www.facebook.com/kingscrossingcoc>

¹⁴⁹ Dennis Horton, et al, "The Effects of Short-Term Missions on Mission Team Members" (paper presented at the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion--Southwest, Dallas, Texas 2011). See also Norton, "Changing Our Prayer Behaviors," 330-338.

¹⁵⁰ Though my emphasis is on short-term missions, Beard has provided a helpful overview of spiritual formation practices in the missional movement. Chris Beard, "Missional

As a gift for participating in the project, I gave each participant a nice journal and pen for them to use. I made it clear that I would never request to see their journal or ask them about their comments; those were to be entirely private for them. I provided them with an information sheet telling them what sorts of questions to think about as they wrote in their journals.¹⁵¹ I also gave every participant the option of receiving a weekly email from me that just reminded them to make an effort to journal.¹⁵²

In my concluding interview, I did not ask them to bring their journals, I did not inquire whether they had done the journaling or not, nor did I request to see their journals. But in response to the four standard questions I asked, several of them brought up their efforts to journal as a positive part of the experience for them. In total, five of the twenty-three (22%) brought up their journaling without being questioned about it. One said:

I can tell you the journal, what you didn't talk about this time, I did well at first, and I followed the instruction, three times a week. I did scramble after the first three weeks a few times. But especially to go down the bullet points of what I was looking to add in the journal, it kind of became my daily journal of what's going on, and kind of what's in your heart at the time. I would say it's a good experience and it definitely keeps you Christ-centered, if you are looking at what to put down and how God's working in your life. I don't know if with my personality if I can do it as daily, or three times a week, but it is nice to have, and I still have the journal. I think it helped me be more mindful. I think I could go down to a week and enter stuff. I definitely centers your mind on Christ, and in a way, I think it might play a role where you are looking for opportunities. But everyone's different, but other people are not journal people. I have not been in the past, but I'm trying, and I still have it, and am carrying it around, and hope to read through it one day to see what I've left in the past.

Another commented:

Something that I was thinking about when I was journaling, that my prayer life is not very good. And I was thinking that the journaling is not exactly...I mean...I guess you

Discipleship: Discerning Spiritual-Formation Practices and Goals within the Missional Movement," *Missiology* 43, no. 2 (2015), 175-194.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix C.

¹⁵² See Appendix D.

could take it as a form of prayer, and it's better than not praying. So I'm thinking that I'm going to try to continue it.

Though the scope of my project was not to study the effects of journaling and self-examination on my participants, I believe there is good opportunity here for future study. It was clear that for several, these exercises were impactful. As it was only the interviewing participants who were invited to journal, and not the whole congregation, it is not possible to know the full extent of this practice's impact on the larger congregation.

Types of Impact

Above I have described the *times* and *places* where the most significant impact occurred. But impact alone does not substantiate my research hypothesis, that short-term mission trips can help congregations become more *missional*, specifically. Below I will describe the collective ways in which the above experiences shaped the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, based on the viewpoints of my interviewees.

I have analyzed their comments through the lens of missional theology, looking for overlap between areas in which they have perceived change, and areas which are typically categorized as missional ways of thinking and being. Though I let them know in the interviews that I was curious how they were thinking about the mission of God, I never gave them any lists or information regarding missional theology, nor did I request that they speak to the various categories of missional thought. I kept my questions open ended, and allowed them to talk at whatever length and on whatever subjects they deemed most appropriate. As they commented, there were several themes that continued to rise to the surface. Below I will begin with broad strokes, laying out the larger movements, and following this, I will connect them to the key missional signposts that chapter two highlighted.

Imaginings of New Missional Possibilities

One of the things that amazed me most about my interviews with sending participants is the number of them who started brainstorming about new possibilities for our church in response to the mission trip. One of my interviewees, a NFG sending participant over 70, spent a sizable portion of her interview brainstorming about ways our church could enhance our commitment to missions and to each other. As she thought and shared, some of her ideas included:

- Having more deliberate prayer services for the mission work, both before the team leaves and while they are away
- Doing more to integrate the younger children at church in their class settings with supporting the mission effort and teaching them about our missionaries
- Have the returned team prepare a meal in the style of Costa Rican cuisine, and invite people to come share and reflect more on their part in the mission to “get more involved”
- Following up with the Martinez family in Costa Rica to learn more of their needs, and working together to meet their needs

Another NFG sending interviewee felt inspired by the happenings of the trip to look for new ways to serve people nearby:

I know you didn’t only show pictures of people. You talked about them and made them more like people than just photos. Making the awareness...it’s not just feeling like I have to go to Costa Rica to do these kinds of missions. I can do these things in my own community and look for opportunities. And be aware that there are those opportunities.

In total, 68% of NG participants either shared new ideas, or commented on how the mission trip was producing fresh ideas and fresh focus on mission among our congregation.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Thirteen of nineteen NG participants shared these ideas and perspectives.

As an eschatologically-driven ecclesiology is a frequent theme in missional theology, future tense thinking is a close companion of imagination. It is not a large leap to speak of a church with an active imagination about God's possibilities for them in relation to missional thinking. Even though talk is cheaper than action, thinking must precede action, and the mission trip experience created significant imaginative space for how Kings Crossing could live more fully into God's mission.

One surprising source of confirmation for this idea came from a handful of people who were not participants in my interviews. Consistent with other critics of short-term missions, these few members at Kings Crossing would grumble about the time and expenses of sending people overseas to participate in mission work when, in their judgment, there is an inadequate amount of mission work happening locally. One used several opportunities to scold me for "wasting" my time on missions in Costa Rica when, in their mind, we were not "doing anything" in Corpus Christi. Though I would dispute the validity of their perspectives, there is merit to the impulse that drove their complaints.

It is significant that *even for those who refused to take part in events supporting the mission trip*, to be at Kings Crossing with all the energy surrounding the trip, the strongest impulse in their mind was, "We can be doing more for God's mission." Despite the fact that they would rather we participate in God's mission at one location to the exclusion of the other, they still confirmed that mission inspires more mission. Their imaginations, however bent against the trip, were inspired nonetheless to be more missional.

Enhanced Feel of Community

Drawing from Trinitarian theology, as I have explained previously, missional churches will be pulling back from typical American individualism, and will show a stronger sense of communal identity through the bond of Christ. As I interviewed people, I never expressed any such descriptions of missional theology that I was seeking, but the communal aspect emerged as one of the strongest and most consistent responses I received.

In total, 78% of the interviewees made strong statements about how they saw God at work through the strengthening of relationships among the members of Kings Crossing in connection to the mission trip. One interviewee noted how they had not actually known many of the people who were going participants on the trip, but their participation in preparing for the trip still helped them feel more connected to the broader church community:

I thought the activities that were done for the fundraising to get people involved...I don't know the group very well that actually went, but we participated in some of the fundraising events, and to see the enthusiasm and the power that people were connecting to...that's refreshing. The events we went to I thought were very well attended; it was much broader than just the group that was going, and it's that type of event that I think will help build for the future; whatever events we go to. So, I think it's good.

These perspectives about community were not just a matter of increasing the number of existing surface-level relationships, but a deeper reflection on how the community of God works together in bringing others in to connect to the community, in ways not possible for a single individual:

(God) has a way of putting things in your path and people in your path for reasons. You may not know why at that point, but some day you'll look back and say, "Now I know why I met that person, because he knew this person who said the right thing to the right person in the right place." That is in life and with jobs. Your Christian walk. Saying the right thing and the right time to the person. You may not be the first person who's supposed to say it, but God wants you to say it and have a third person and a fifth person and maybe the seventh person who finally says it and lays it on their heart and gets them to realize that that's what I'm here for.

Multiple participants made comments on the congregational buy-in to the trip and the unifying effect it had on the congregation. From my own perspective as an organizer of the various events, I noticed often people sitting with and meeting other members of the congregation they had not known before, or at least had never spoken with before. As participants in the fundraising events spanned all demographics, it provided cross-generational contact that is easily lacking when church members might otherwise be organized by their families or peer groups. As a summary of the trip's impact on the congregation's relationships and sense of missional identity, here is a statement from one interviewee statement, who was a NFG, NG participant:

God's at work more than ever before. We're starting to see it and it's exciting. When a church is growing, life is different. When a church is kind of humming along, it's a place. Right now it's not just a place. It's a church. We are the church. That's where I see us going. We're growing, and this mission trip is key to it.

Missional Signposts at Kings Crossing

Building on the idea that missional theology is still a work in progress, and that there are certain directional elements that are emerging as key parts of missional theology, I described several of these elements in chapter three. Having looked at the *times* and *locations* of impact related to the trip and to the general *types* of impact made by the trip experience on the congregation, I wish now to talk about the missional elements I described as being germane to this project, and to show how the findings described above have aligned with the directions generally considered to be missional by leading missional thinkers.

Missio Dei

The interviewees spoke at length about the flow of history, and how God is interested in saving the people who are lost through the missionary efforts of the church. In the section below, I will talk about this aspect in particular, how it was not possible to discern much change between the first and second interviews, as the ways in which people defined the mission of God remained basically the same. Even so, the mission trip provided participants with an opportunity to break the normal routines of church life and to contemplate what it might mean to get more deeply involved in the mission of God. I quoted one NFG, NG participant above who described his conversations with his wife about getting more involved in the trip as going participants, but speaking also about what opportunities are at home that need to be accomplished as part of God's greater mission. Though I cannot substantiate that this mission trip changed people's definition of what God's mission involves, there was more conversation going on in the congregation about mission as a result of the trip, and awareness of missional opportunities is an important step in embracing the mission.

Incarnational Ministry and Trinity-Inspired Community

There was an abundance of comments from interviewees about the need to start thinking more about mission opportunities, both abroad and at home. Missional theology has excelled at calling people to think more contextually about how God might be sending them to serve through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. One NFG, NG participant invoked Trinitarian ideas as he spoke of how God was trying to work through Kings Crossing:

The way I see things with church is that one of the most important things we do is that we are the light of the world, we are the salt of this earth, we are preserving society, and I think that our interaction with the community through our work is a huge part of what

God is doing... So they are preserving society in that way, but the living water, the Holy Spirit is coming through the lives of those people.

With increasing discussions about what it should mean to be the church in our own community, prompted in response to the mission trip, it seems that short-term missions are a natural fit for helping people imagine what it means to become Christ's representatives to the community around us.¹⁵⁴ This will especially be the case when all participants are invited to contemplate what it means to serve incarnationally in another place, as a way to practice how we should serve our own community.

Witnesses to the Kingdom

One of the areas that livened people's imaginations about being witnesses to the Kingdom was in the fundraising efforts. There was excitement in each of the restaurants where we went to raise funds for the trip. Numerous people in those settings commented on how excited they were to have our church in a public setting, open about our commitment to serving in foreign missions. Several talked to me excitedly about people who asked them about our church, and about how they had an opportunity to share some about their faith with people who asked. The sense of togetherness at such efforts promotes the idea of a shared life that embodies God's work among us as witnesses to what God is doing.

¹⁵⁴ Corbett provides a refreshing perspective on how a church can strive to be a missionary in its own community, and the practices he suggests are very much in line with the calls of missiologists for better contextualized short-term missions practices. Ian Corbett, "The Theology of Mission in Contemporary Practice," *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2010), 117-121.

Prodigal Relationships

The strongest location in which the participants reflected on prodigal relationships were through the stories told in the reporting about the mission trip. The presentations included numerous stories of individuals, their journeys to faith, or their deep struggles in life.

Interviewees were quick to connect the value of learning other people's stories to becoming more aware of the community around us and what people's lives need God's intervening.

Experiencing prodigal relationships internationally can open a church up to doing the same thing nearby. One NFG, NG participant reflected on how the mission trip might gradually shift Kings Crossing's focus on what needs to happen in the local community:

It's interesting to me to think about how the mission trip could affect the entire congregation. ...If we are going to be a mission-oriented congregation, then the things we do for a mission in Costa Rica could very well be the same things that we use for a mission here in this community. ...You can't do everything, but what does God want us to do? If we want to be a foreign-oriented mission church then that's good, but then how do we take that stuff and use it here also?

One other area in which prodigal relationships took on a tone of both *given* and *received* hospitality was a vendor fair fundraiser that occurred. Local small businesses were given the opportunity to purchase booth space at the event at our church, and the mission team worked at bringing in both church members and people from the community to come shop at the vendor fair, which benefited the mission trip. The experience was powerful for making connections with local people.

Thinking contextually about Kings Crossing, the community is mostly white-collar, and not in need of handouts or financial assistance. But it became clear at several of the fundraiser events that the community was hungry for a good cause to support. Numerous vendors and

shoppers, not members of the church, were excited to be part of supporting the work, and feeling connected to what we were trying to do in service to God. Several team members commented to me excitedly about the opportunity to talk to many of our guests about matters of faith.

In the past, most of what Kings Crossing would call “outreach” would involve community fair events and giveaways. It was very different to be receivers of the community’s hospitality and support, and it helped open eyes to where God might be at work outside of our own circle in ways that we would not have perceived without our openness to strangers in the community who responded to the call to help in God’s mission.

Higher Narrative Perspective

In the interviews, it seems that most participants, when invited to think about the bigger picture of what God is doing, were glad to reflect on God’s activity in working in and through Kings Crossing. One going participant reflected on how she perceived the mission trip’s impact on the congregation:

I think it made them look at God’s kingdom in a bigger way. A bigger picture of God’s kingdom. Sometimes we get pretty narrow-minded about our congregation, but it’s a worldwide kingdom, and a worldwide battle going on for the lost.

Her views were consistent with the general consensus that one of the main points of value in any mission trip was the change in perspective that people would experience.¹⁵⁵ Most frequently, this comment occurred in the context of young people learning to appreciate their blessings when compared to people of lesser financial means. But beyond this, a mission trip is nothing if not a shift in perspective. All participants commented on aspects of God’s mission

¹⁵⁵ For an example of this type of reasoning, see Paul Borthwick, *Youth and Missions: Expanding Your Students' Worldview* (Wheaton: Victor, 1988), 21-35.

they had been thinking about in connection to the trip, and it seems that the added prompting of personal journaling helped enhance this aspect. Referring both to this quote, and to several others above, it is clear that a mission trip invites people to look at their own local setting from a much different perspective; specifically from the missional way in which God views the opportunities that surround them.

Findings Less Supportive of the Hypothesis

One area that my findings that was not fully supportive of my hypothesis was in how people defined the mission of God. As I described in chapter three, missional theology refuses to create a firm dichotomy between saving souls and meeting temporal, material needs of people. In 2014, I had a phone conversation with Brian Howell, following a reading of his book *Short-Term Mission* (2013). Asking for suggestions in how I might approach my project, he had suggested looking for ways that people talk about what mission is. Because many short-term mission trips are largely humanitarian in scope, could the perspectives gained from a short-term mission trip help people to include language about feeding the hungry or serving the poor as “mission” in the same sense that saving souls is “mission”?

The first question of each interview was the broad invitation to define the mission of God, and “what all do you think the mission of God involves?” Though I got a variety of responses, most all of them centered around God’s desire to save souls, and for us to ultimately help with God’s work in saving souls. This would not be contrary to God’s mission, but from a missional lens, this would not be all of it, either.

As I compared first and second responses regarding how one should define God’s mission, there was no change in the basic way people defined the mission of God, nor were

second interview responses particularly more nuanced than first interview responses to the same question. Though people seemed to be thinking much more actively about how to participate in God's mission, they did not provide evidence that they were thinking more holistically about what mission could involve, aside from saving the lost.

This is an area that would be fruitful for future research. It is also notable that on my mission trips, our work is much more evangelistically oriented. Because our work is more about teaching Bible stories and inviting people to the churches, I had less to say in my communication about humanitarian serving in poor communities because it was not a primary component in my trip. It would be profitable for a leader of a trip with a more humanitarian slant to conduct similar research, and upon reporting, to see if a humanitarian emphasis in the trip would be more impactful in broadening people's definition of the mission of God to include such things.

Properly Assigned Value to the Trip

One of my concerns for the project was the difficulty of discerning how much impact on the congregation could be attributed fairly to the mission trip. Were the impacts they perceived really because of the mission trip, or because of some other factor? As I have described above, part of how I tried to determine this came from the order and content of the questions I asked. Participants were not asked about the role of the short-term mission trip until the fourth and final question.

In the earlier questions, I asked them what they thought the mission of God was, and how God might be at work both in and through Kings Crossing at the present time. These were deliberately open-ended questions to avoid slanting their stream of thought in any particular direction. I tried to structure the interviews so that for the first three questions, they might

feasibly say nothing about the mission trip. This would not mean it had zero impact, necessarily, but it would diminish my credibility for pointing to it as a major component, regardless of how they answered the fourth question which was specifically about the trip.

My assumption was that people who went on the trip would readily point to the trip as a large part of what God was doing at Kings Crossing, because it would have been a profound experience for them. As expected, all of them did without being prompted. But in response to the first three questions, 38% of the interviewees, who were NFG, NG participants, brought up and spoke about the short-term mission trip without being prompted to do so as an impactful part of their experience in our congregation. Most commonly, they would refer to the parts they could be physically connected to, such as the fundraising events or the trip reports. In the quote below from one NFG sending participant, observe the connection he makes between the mission trip and how God is shaping Kings Crossing. Observe also the move from overseas missions to a stronger focus on mission to our community that occurs in his thought process:

I think he's trying to shape us toward more of a mission-guided church. This first mission trip I've had more involvement with the fundraising part of it than I had with any other point. I think the church has had the same involvement. We've had more events center around this trip, so there's more of a buy-in from the church. You hear people talking about it. The other trips I had no idea we even went. I only knew it because I knew our youth minister and I knew they were going. This time I have people I go to church with, I talk to, I'm involved with. I see it. There's a lot more involvement this time. Now it's in my thought process. I'm talking to my wife saying, "Do we want to do this? Is it something that God wants us to do? Do we want to think about it and pray about it?" Never before would we ever have thought about going. But now we see the other kids that they can get along with the other children; there are other families, it's not just adults, there are families going. I see a lot of that in it. We are moving towards more of a mission trip. Not just a mission trip overseas. We need to start following ourselves being a mission within our own community. Because we've got neighborhoods popping up right around us. We've got thousands of people starting to move in, and it's prime property for growth, and it's mission work. True mission work within our own community.

Part of the value of this particular comment is that it highlights another truth about short-term missions: *It is entirely possible for a congregation to send a group on a short-term mission trip that makes almost zero discernable impact on the sending congregation, missional or otherwise.* The trip that a previous group took at Kings Crossing was quickly planned, barely communicated, organized with little involvement from the congregation, and completed with no follow-up reporting. Even though the people who went spoke highly of the experience, the trip failed to provide much impetus for missional changes among the rest of the sending congregation.

Though it may seem self-evident, it is important for a church to understand that *if you want a short-term mission trip abroad to make an impact at home, the sending congregation must have multiple connection points to the planning, providing, and processing of the mission trip experience.* If all fundraising occurs privately by the going participants, and little occurs to tell the stories of the people and experiences on the trip, there are no occasions for the sending congregation to have their missional imaginations awakened or shaped.

Because of what the non-going participants said about the trip when asked, but even more because of what they said about the trip when they were not asked, I can affirm that the mission trip was a significant factor in how God was shaping and working through Kings Crossing Church of Christ during the time of my project. But I must affirm with equal emphasis that it was only because of the level of involvement that the congregation had in the experience that this impact could and did occur.

Stating The Hypotheses

As I described the reasons for using a qualitative approach to research in chapter four, a primary purpose in doing this was because there have been no formal hypotheses published in

connection to how a short-term mission trip affects the sending congregation, spiritually, socially, missionally, or otherwise. It is necessary, then, to formulate a theory about how exactly a short-term mission trip experience can and will impact a congregation.

Above, I have described the *times* and *locations* where significant impact occurred. Following this, I described the *ways* in which people believed the mission trip was impacting the congregation. Finally, I took the perceptions of how the trip was impactful, and aligned them with several key elements of what is widely accepted tenets of missional theology. Based on research at the Kings Crossing Church of Christ, and based on the explanations I have given above of what it means to be missional, in response to all of this, I form the following hypotheses to be evaluated and tested in future research:

Hypothesis 1:

If a congregation participates in a short-term mission trip, and if this congregation makes efforts to involve the whole church in the preparation, sending, receiving, and sharing in the reported experiences of people who go on the mission trip, the congregation will become more missional in how they think about the way in which God is at work in the world, and the part their church is to play in God's larger story.

Hypothesis 2:

If a congregation participates in a short-term mission trip, and if this congregation makes efforts to involve the whole church in the preparation, sending, receiving, and sharing in the reported experiences of people who go on the mission trip, the congregation will become more missional in their relationships within the church, with a greater sense of shared purpose.

Hypothesis 3:

If a congregation participates in a short-term mission trip, and if this congregation makes efforts to involve the whole church in the preparation, sending, receiving, and sharing in the reported experiences of people who go on the mission trip, the congregation will become more missional in the way they perceive their role within the community around them, and with how they experience hospitality as part of the community, both in giving and receiving.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Applying Principles in Local Congregations

Congregations participating in short-term missions have several vantage points at which they can promote missional thinking and practices. Commonly, existing material about short-term missions speaks of the importance of three major phases of the trip: (1) preparing to go, (2) time during the trip itself, and (3) follow up after the trip.¹⁵⁶ Below are suggestions for promoting missional development within the sending congregation through their involvement in the short-term mission, categorized under the three phases mentioned here, with a few preliminary reflections about the leaders of such trips.

Consider the Leader

In order for communities to have a more missional narrative, the leaders of these communities will need to help them envision a better story, into which they can live and find meaning.¹⁵⁷ The leader typically has much control over the shape of the trip. There are always unforeseen circumstances on trips, such as flight cancelations or inclement weather. But much of

¹⁵⁶ See the extensive discussion of the “process trilogy” in Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries.*, 127-49. This book was a large step forward in defining specific terminology for future study, and provides meticulous suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of trips for those who go and those who receive especially.

¹⁵⁷ Story is the way in which a congregation views, understands, and explains itself in relation to both its history and its surroundings. Larry A. Goleman, *Finding Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change, Narrative Leadership Collection* (Herndon, VA: Rowaman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 5.

the effectiveness of the trip for changing both the sending and receiving community can come from the way the leader shapes the purpose and meaning of the trip.

The leader must exemplify the greatest level of love and respect for the people their team is going to serve. This is demonstrated by planning well in coordination with the receiving community. Communication should be open, and by the leader verbalizing that this is taking place and why, the whole team learns the practice of listening well to the receiving community.

Before, during, and after the trip, the leader should be inviting the participants, the senders, and the receivers to share in conversations about what it means to participate in God's mission. No aspect of involvement should be minimized, because no gift from God, used in the service of God is an insignificant thing.¹⁵⁸

Likewise, the leader should be careful to articulate a viewpoint that the team is going to work in conjunction with God and the community, and not as a rescue effort, as if God had never been there prior to the group's trip. God is working to reconcile all things to himself, and if the group understands its trip as a participation in the mission of God, it adds long-lasting significance to what they are doing. The leader must push participants to think deeply about how what the team is doing on the mission field can become a more regular part of how they live in their own community.¹⁵⁹ God's story is not only about what happens far away, but also about what happens close to home. Though some ideas sprout up on their own, inspired by

¹⁵⁸ Matthew 10:42 indicates that even a cup of cold water given because of Christ will be acknowledged and rewarded by God.

¹⁵⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 8. Many churches that formerly thought of themselves as agents of Western Christianity are suddenly being confronted with the need to think as missionaries to their own culture, which has largely abandoned them.

experiences, a leader has the power to verbalize healthy ways of thinking about the *missio Dei*, both locally and abroad. The ways in which people experience and understand a short-term mission trip has much to do with the way in which the leader leads them to do so.

Preparing to Go

Allow for times of prayer during team formation.

Inform the congregation when the process of seeking participants to go on the trip has begun. Invite everyone to be praying that God will raise up the right people for the task, and that God will begin preparing opportunities, both abroad and at home. Prayer is especially important just before the team leaves for the trip. It is a powerful experience to have the whole team gathered in the front of the assembly, and to invite pastoral prayers for blessing, strength, and courage for the team members. This reminds the congregation of the upcoming trip, and it also reminds the going participants that they represent the larger body of Christ.

Preparatory events can involve all members of the congregation.

Fundraising events for the team can provide opportunities for intergenerational friendship over a common mission. Fellowship meals or silent auctions where members are invited to prepare food and donate items will give all members an opportunity to participate, directly helping to make the trip possible. When the team makes progress towards fundraising goals through these events, the collective celebration of the success can be a cohesive, positive experience for the whole congregation.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ On my blog in 2013, I shared a compiled list of ideas for how mission teams can go about raising funds in ways that involve the congregation. For anyone seeking ideas, here are a few: <http://marksadams.blogspot.com/2013/12/planning-and-fundraising-for-short-term.html>

Dovetail preparation for the mission trip with other ministries at the congregation.

Sometimes it might be necessary to create a new ministry for this purpose, but often it is possible to work with things that are pre-existing. For example, many congregations are involved in annual summer church camp programs, and many of these programs involve crafts. If the mission trip involves programs for children, one of the church camp craft options can be to work on assembling packets of whatever the mission team will be distributing. Similar things can be done in Bible classes, where children are invited to assemble or donate items that will help with the mission trip. This can also be done at the adult level, depending on the type of work to be accomplished by the mission team. If there are larger things to be packed, sorted, or assembled, why not invite more participation? In some instances, this can be a sort of outreach to the larger community outside of the church, inviting them to participate in God's mission through collective acts of compassion for the poor or disadvantaged. Allow non-members to donate or help assemble items to be taken to needy areas on the trip.

Practice for the trip in ways that enhance local outreach.

Beyond items for donation or construction, this approach blends well with other sorts of ministries, such as drama or puppets. Some churches are involved in youth leadership training programs. Some examples of this are Leadership Training for Christ or Lads to Leaders. Rather than developing programs and rehearsing them solely for a competition, invite the training participants to help create the dramas or puppet shows to be used on the mission trip. Beyond this, these preparations can be taken to places, such as local orphanages, and presented to them as preparation for the trip. It will be powerful for the young people preparing the skits and presentations, even if they are not going on the mission trip, to see that their efforts are being

used in God's work in other places, and that they possess the ability to make an impact with their talents in the name of Christ.

During the Trip Itself

Utilize technology to keep the trip in front of the sending congregation.

There are obvious limits to this possibility, because many places where mission trips travel may not have available internet access. Likewise, some places that are hostile to Christianity might be scrutinizing communication to the point that it would not be safe to use this sort of approach. Even so, technology continues to improve around much of the globe, and many short-term teams will have access to the internet while traveling. Making regular posts to social media is a helpful way to inform the sending congregation, and all other interested parties, what is occurring on the trip. Updates can include summaries of the happenings of the day, images from efforts in action or gatherings for worship, or even streaming live events as they occur. People who access and share such postings on social media can help promote much greater awareness of the trip as it takes place. One caveat: It is important to limit the number of people or locations where these postings are taking place. If all participants are on social media much of the time, they can easily miss out on the experience of being present in the other culture. It is better to pre-determine what the strategy will be for sharing, and to limit it to very few people who take responsibility for it.

Have designated times and/or locations where the sending congregation gathers to pray for the effort.

Even if the sending congregation has limited or no ability to be connected to participants during the trip through technology, there is still great benefit to having the congregation gather to

continue in prayer for the trip as it goes on. It can provide a strong sense of connection to the trip, even for those not there. But it is also a source of comfort and encouragement, both for the team, and for the members of their family at home who might be experiencing anxiety to have a loved one in a far away place.

After the Trip

Allow prominent time for a formal presentation to the congregation about the trip.

This is critical if the mission trip is to be a source of encouragement and challenge to the sending congregation. If the sending members have had much buy-in before the trip occurs, they will be increasingly curious to know what happened as a result of their combined efforts with those of the going team members. This presentation should not be rushed; nor should it be overly delayed in terms of when it occurs. But a clear presentation with highlights of what was done, where it was done, and whom it involved will likely be well-received by those who helped to make the trip possible.

Some of the strongest favorable comments I received about my own trip reporting have been my efforts to tell the stories of specific people involved from the trip. They enjoy learning about the people whose lives were impacted as a result of the trip, and about some of the specific struggles that Christians have dealt with in their own contexts. As our congregation sponsors a missionary in Costa Rica whom we visited, they were glad to hear more, both about the life of the congregation, and some of the work that has occurred as a result of special contributions we have collected in the past.

The strongest critiques of my own presentation were that it was mostly my own. Several of my interviewees expressed a great desire to hear about the trip from other going team

participants; especially the younger team members. They wanted to know how their perspectives had changed, and what had made an impression on them.

Create opportunities for asking questions and less-formal discussion with team members about the trip.

Some of the strongest impressions from the reporting of my trip occurred when people, of their own initiative, invited some of our trip participants to join them for lunch or supper after church, and then talked with them about their experiences. The unfiltered access and unrestricted time allowed for a better depth of conversation. In the future, there may be benefit to having a class setting where all team members have microphones for the purpose of interacting with the church members who are interested enough to attend such a gathering. Often, team members express anxiety about the trip, and participating in mission work, especially if they are untrained or inexperienced. Those who are able to report positively about how they believe God had used them, despite a lack of knowledge or skill, can be a source of encouragement and empowerment to those thinking of taking more action in the context of the sending congregation. The testimony that “God used me, and it was not as hard as I thought it would be,” is a healthy motivator for promoting more action at home.

In summary, it is helpful to try and practice at home whatever kinds of missional activities are to be embodied on the trip. The trip should not be thought of as the primary event, so much as it is a fresh opportunity to practice being the kind of people that Christians desire to be all the time. Whether going or not going on the trip itself, everyone can benefit from utilizing new opportunities to practice living missionally.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the area of short-term missions, there is ample need for continued research. Even with the increase of material available to aid mission trip leaders in conducting their trips with better practices for cultural sensitivity, these types of literature need expansion into the various categories of short-term trips that exist. Groups with humanitarian or medical visiting purposes will benefit from research that helps them sort through the issues and red tape involved in practicing medicine in foreign countries. Evangelistically-oriented groups need continued research into how their short-trips can fit into the larger picture for a community's long-term good. There is also opportunity to examine how multiple churches can partner both with a receiving congregation and with each other, and the ways in which this can affect all groups involved.

The specific scope of this project is to study the affects of mission trips on the congregations who send, and in particular, on the members of these congregations who do not physically go on the trip. This entire category is virtually untouched. Even the hypotheses that I have been able to put forward due to my project will need to be evaluated and recreated in other settings.

Limits of This Project

Before laying out future directions for study related to this project, it is worth highlighting some areas of this project that should undergo revision before a similar project is implemented. The first of these would be the time parameters involved. In approaching this study, my belief was that the mission trip could be a catalyst for missional change, and I believe the findings of my interviews confirm this. However, the design of my research anticipated that it was the ten-day trip from June into July that would be the primary locus of impact.

With this assumption in mind, I arranged the two interviews with each participant to be before and after the trip; generally allowing around two months or more in between the interviews, during which time the mission trip would occur. Were I beginning this project again, I would move the first interview back before the first congregational fundraising event had taken place. If the only thing known about the mission trip was that it existed as a plan, it would provide the researcher with a better ability to picture a true before-and-after perspective on the total trip experience, from planning to reporting.

The reason for this is that it was clear from the first interviews that significant impact from the mission trip had already been taking place through the congregational events. The fundraisers in various restaurant locations and several different efforts at the church building had provided significant opportunity for buy-in from the congregation in the events surrounding the trip.

In my mind, interviewing before the trip itself was sufficiently “before” any impact would have taken place. But in reality, my first interviews were after the initial points of impact. While I would not say that it was not worthwhile to conduct the two interviews for each person, I did not perceive in the conversations a “before and after” type dynamic that I was anticipating. In my coding and analysis of the interviews, I spent much effort trying to discern what changed for people before and after the mission trip, but it was a somewhat dry source of information. There were not significant differences in perspective between the first and second interviews regarding how people defined the mission of God, even though I believe there were some missional impulses evoked through the total experience. Most of the differences between first and second interviews can be accounted for simply by their acknowledgement that the trip had been completed, and that the reports about the trip were well-received and impactful. Because the first

interview ended up occurring during the middle of the overall mission trip experience, from fundraisers to final reports, it did not create as much of a contrast between the two conversations as I had hoped.

All of this is *not* to say that there was no benefit to having conducted two interviews, rather than just one after all of the events related to the trip had occurred. Most of the interviewees began recognizing quickly that the questions had remained the same, and seemed interested in having a second chance to define and clarify their viewpoints. Likewise, there was benefit to the process of having the participants journal about where they had been seeing God at work. Their perceptions about what was going on was heightened because of the direct invitation for them to be paying attention to what they were seeing. It *is* the case that those who journaled regularly indicated that the practice was beneficial to them in their spiritual growth, and was therefore to be credited in some degree to their perceptions about how God was at work in Kings Crossing. Having participants journal would be one of the other elements of this project that is worth repeating. They kept thoughtful reflections between their first and final interviews, and having these to review before the last conversation was a good practice for gaining their accurate insights. Likewise, timing the final interview until after all trip reporting was concluded provided a nice ability for people to look in hindsight at the over all experience.

Another limit of this project is that it is fundamentally about the *ideas* expressed by members of the congregation and the way they understood how God was at work in and through the Kings Crossing Church of Christ. Due to the limits of time and the exploratory nature of this project, there still remains the missional *praxis* of the Kings Crossing church to be studied. There were many ideas expressed about how the trip inspired, educated, and involved people, but there was no component of this study to follow up on what practices developed in response to the trip.

To provide more thorough evidence of a mission trip's ability to help a congregation become more missional, other efforts will need to document the concrete practices that develop in the wake of this and similar experiences.

Regarding limits of this particular project, even in making these suggestions, it would not have been possible to implement them on this particular project at Kings Crossing. There were still classes and learning forums going on for the Doctor of Ministry program at Lipscomb, even as signups and fundraising had already begun for the 2015 Costa Rica trip. Having only a few months to formulate the project, receive approval, and conduct the research, there would not have been time for the more drawn out version of this research that I have suggested here in the time frame within which I was working. With more time, there is still ample opportunity to explore this theme of short-term missions and missional formation at a local congregation.

Further Research Opportunities

For those desiring to conduct studies with participants of mission trips who are primarily sending participants, rather than going participants, the opportunities are numerous, and virtually untouched. To begin with, it would be helpful to contrast the various ways that congregational understandings of mission are affected, depending on the type of mission trip being conducted. Even though my interviewees' definitions of the mission of God were not especially altered, it is also the case that the type of trip we conducted was in line with the pre-existing definitions of the mission of God; specifically, to work at bringing the lost to Christ in hope of salvation. A church participating in home construction or well-drilling in poor communities, volunteering with an orphanage, or medical missions in deeply impoverished regions, for example, might provide the congregation with a more nuanced view of what mission can involve. If the trip itself centered

around the material needs of the receiving people, how might that affect the understandings of the sending congregation about what the mission of God involves?

Another opportunity for research is to compare the impact of a first-time effort, such as the one I led, to an ongoing effort in which a congregation has been participating for several years. Admittedly, there is a certain amount of excitement that goes with having a new leader and a new effort into which people are invited to participate. As has been detailed previously, there is an increasing amount of research showing that deliberate partnerships between churches over time can affect significant, lasting change for the congregations and communities receiving the support. But what about the sending congregation? Once people are aware of the general types of things happening on the trip, and in preparation for the trip, do they become numb to the effects? Does a mission trip experience have ongoing impact from year to year when the congregation is invited to be involved in the process, as they were at Kings Crossing?

An inescapably significant part of this project in the results of the interviews was that having the new preacher also as the trip leader contributed to the impact of the trip. I would strongly advocate for ample trip reporting to maximize the contact with the congregation about the experiences of the trip. But it would be interesting to see if a congregation responds differently to the experience of having a mission trip with a different leader promoting and reporting other than the preaching minister. As the influence that I had as a new minister was a regular theme in the responses from the interviewees, it would be worth investigating whether the normal role of the person leading the trip is impactful in how the trip is received, and in what ways.

Part of the premise of my project was to not teach the congregation about missional theology explicitly, to be able to see if some of the ideas central to missional theology would

emerge on their own in connection to the trip. As I believe my research has demonstrated that this will happen naturally through a church's involvement in short-term missions, there is good opportunity to study how a congregation is affected by a mission trip in a context where missional theology has been taught often and clearly. Some churches with missional leaders would already be very familiar with many of the concepts included in this study, and another researcher could compare and contrast their findings with my own in a setting where missional theology has already been embraced as a central part of the church's identity. How will a church experience the missional dimensions of a short-term trip if they actively know for what ideas they should be looking in the experiences connected to the trip?

Most of this project's impact on the congregation was through the invitation for people to help with fundraising, and to hear reporting after it was over. Of course, those with social media access could stay in touch with the work of the team as it was ongoing, but this did not include everyone. Another opportunity for research would be to compare and contrast the different types of congregational involvement in the trip and see how those affected the various types of people involved.

For example, if members of the congregation were invited to help prepare or assemble items to be given away or utilized in the programs of the trip, would those who helped assemble these items gain a different understanding than those who helped in ways that were purely monetary? Likewise, do those who contribute financially to the trip have a different level of interest or a different type of experience with the trip going on than those who do not contribute financially?

Beyond this, there is an opportunity to highlight the spiritual nature of these trips, and the view that God is at work in and through the congregation through their efforts in missions. If a

certain group of people were gathered to pray with regularity, specificity, and sincerity as an aid to the trip, how might support through a spiritual discipline like prayer change a person's experience of the trip in ways that physical labor support or monetary support did not? Though all of these elements are likely to be blended in some degree for a congregation, it would be interesting to form case study groups committed especially to certain elements and see what differences manifest.

In a similar line of thought, one of the great potential benefits of mission trips is the opportunity they provide for people to practice a more missional way of living while they are on the trip. The goal of this is to see significant change at home as a result of what is occurring abroad. If a congregation were to implement missional efforts at home of a very similar nature to what would be taking place on the trip as a form of trip preparation, how would this specific type of preparation affect the congregation? If a church were not going to do anything on a mission trip that they were not also doing at home, in terms of the ways they are serving the poor or the lost, how would this change a congregation's understanding of mission?

Chapter Summary

In concluding this project report, I will summarize what has been done in this dissertation. The first chapter lays out a framework for the potential value of this study. There is a description of the current trends of both short-term missions and missional theology in the greater Christian community, and there is therefore good reason to explore how these two prominent movements can help and inform one another.

The second chapter provides the theological underpinning of the project; that God is a sending God, and the church exists to fulfill God's mission. Special consideration is provided for short-term missions, and how in Paul's own ministry, he did not privilege himself because of his

credentials, but followed Jesus' own example in using people that the world would consider unqualified to further the important work of the Kingdom of God.

The third chapter is a literature review that begins with the current status of the ongoing conversation about what it means to be missional. Elements of a missional church are given which have been most germane to this project's findings. Next, the existing literature about short-term missions is described, followed by a description of the important missing piece in studies of short-term missions: the sending congregation. The information here grounds why this project is so important.

The fourth chapter describes the method of research used in this project, the settings connected to the mission trip to Costa Rica and their significance, and the way in which the project was implemented. After highlighting the researcher's own role in the project, key terminology is given to help understand the interpretations of the interviews for the project.

The fifth chapter is the analysis of the interviews. Times and places of impact are key for missional leaders to know when and where they can make a large impact on their congregation. The types of impact explain how this can be done. Missional ideas serve as a lens for evaluating the kinds of feedback received to suggest, finally, three hypotheses for how involvement in a short-term mission trip can help a congregation become more missional.

The sixth and final chapter provides suggestions for leaders in local congregations for how to maximize the effectiveness of their short-term mission efforts in bringing about missional formation in their congregation. There are also descriptions of the abundant opportunities for future research in the ways in which short-term mission trips can impact sending congregations.

Conclusion

These are a few suggestions of what is undoubtedly a wide array of possibilities. In studies of short-term missions, beyond the initial “how to” guides, there has been a helpful advancement of materials that advocate for better practices in ways to maximize the benefit of these trips for the people who are receiving them. It is now time to begin similar efforts at home. While being responsible for good planning and communication, and showing culturally-informed sensitivity to the people to be served, it is also important to ask how to make sure that a mission trip, in its disorienting, reorienting nature, is making the most possible impact on the congregations who send. The millions of people sending and going on these trips represent a slice of Christianity that is too big to ignore, and is an opportunity too important to neglect.

This project is one of many similar efforts that are needed to discover the best practices to harness the formative power of short-term mission trips to help western churches awaken their missional imaginations. If we were to partner with God, here and now, and shining demonstrations of God’s coming Kingdom, what is it that God would have us do *next*? Short-term mission trips will not be the panacea for all missional shifts that need to occur, but as this project has demonstrated, they can play a significant role in bringing missional formation to the local congregation.

APPENDIX A INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT THESIS — MARK ADAMS

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the effects at Kings Crossing Church of Christ (KCC) resulting from the congregation's involvement in a short-term mission trip to Costa Rica. This study is being conducted by Mark Adams, a Doctor of Ministry student in the College of Bible and Ministry at Lipscomb University, under the supervision of Earl Lavender, a faculty member of the Hazelip School of Theology. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you are a member of the KCC. Please read this information and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discern the narratives and themes of how KCC's involvement in a short-term mission trip affects the congregation's understanding of how God is at work within and through the congregation. Approximately 20 people are expected to participate in this research.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be requested to participate in a total of two interviews, and in a weekly practice of self-examination and journaling for 6-8 weeks in between the interviews. The two interviews will last approximately 30 minutes each, and will be audio-recorded. You will be encouraged to review your journal entries before the second interview, but these entries will not be collected or read by the researcher or anyone else on behalf of this project. Your journal entries will be for yourself only, unless you should choose to share them with anyone else.

The first interview will be to understand how you perceive God to be at work recently in the KCC. The practices of reflective self-examination and journaling will help you to be more attentive to where you perceive God's activity in your life and among the church. You will be encouraged to reflect on your life, using the *Guide for Self-Examination and Journaling* provided, to write entries in your journal a minimum of three times per week during the time in between your interviews for 6-8 weeks, during parts of the months of May through July 2015, depending on when you have had your first interview. The second interview will be an update from your first interview, looking for how you have seen God at work since the time of the first interview, and specifically for how the KCC has been effected by its participation in the short-term mission trip to Costa Rica.

Mark Adams will contact you personally to schedule times and locations for your interviews which fit comfortably in your schedule and location preference, allowing for your maximum comfort and confidentiality.

Risks and Benefits:

The study has minimal risks. It is possible that as you reflect on happenings within your life and the KCC, if some of these are negative memories it may be uncomfortable for you, producing emotions like sadness, guilt, etc. There will be some regular time required to participate in journaling, which may add a slight amount of stress to your week because of some time required for writing down your thoughts.

The benefits of participation may include:

Increased thinking about God's work in your life and the KCC may help you to be more perceptive of God's presence. Such reflection may also help you feel a stronger sense of

identity with the KCC. Your thoughtful record of God's involvement in your life through journaling may provide you with helpful insights about yourself and in what ways you have experienced personal change over a 6-8 week period.

Mark Adams will provide you with a journal and writing utensil which will be yours to keep, unless you have other items for these tasks you would prefer to use.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. Audio recordings (in the form of digital audio files) will be stored in password-protected files on Mark Adams' personal computer. Mark will finish analyzing the data by May 2016, and will then destroy any identifying information that can be linked back to participation.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this research study is purely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relationship with the Kings Crossing Church of Christ in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mark Adams at mark.s.adams@gmail.com (email) or 615.618.9755 (cell phone). You may ask questions now, or you may contact Mark, or Mark's supervisor Earl Lavender at a later time. Earl Lavender's contact information is earl.lavender@lipscomb.edu (email) or 615.966.5834 (work). If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. Roger Weimers, Chair of the Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board (roger.wiemers@lipscomb.edu).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study, and agree that my responses will be audio-recorded.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B
INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Initial Interview Questions
Kings Crossing Church of Christ 2015**

This will be a recorded interview. All of the Purpose section will be read aloud. The Demographic Questions will be asked specifically as given. The Qualitative Questions represent general directions for the interview, and the interviewer may slightly alter wording or order to best facilitate the conversation. The Follow Up question regarding email reminders for journaling will be read aloud.

Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to understand how members of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ understand the mission of God at this time. After a period of at least 6-8 weeks, we will conduct a follow up interview to see how your perceptions may have changed, as well as to understand how the Kings Crossing Church of Christ's participation in a short-term mission trip to Costa Rica might contribute to any of these changes. As it pertains to Mark Adams' Doctor of Ministry Project Thesis, the demographic information in this first interview will be used to accurately understand the makeup of those participating in the research. Your responses to the questions in this interview may be used anonymously along with the anonymous responses of other participants to create a picture of what members of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ are thinking and perceiving about the mission of God.

Though you have signed a consent form to participate, I want to acknowledge again that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and that you may cease participation at any time without any negative repercussions for your relationship with the Kings Crossing Church of Christ. Thank you for your assistance in this project!

Please respond verbally to all of the questions, and your answers will be recorded. Before we begin, if you have any other questions, please feel free to ask at this time.

Demographic Questions:

1. Gender M F
2. Age 21-24 25-40 41-55 55-70 Over 70
3. Are you going on the mission trip to Costa Rica this summer, June 22-July 2nd? Y N
4. Do you have any relatives going on the mission trip to Costa Rica this summer, June 22-July 2nd? Y N

Qualitative Questions:

Please describe what you understand to be the mission of God. What all does this mission involve?

If you were telling the story of what God is doing through our congregation, what would the current chapter be about?

How do you believe God is trying to shape us through our present experiences?

What role, if any, do you believe the short-term mission trip to Costa Rica is playing in how God is shaping our congregation right now?

Follow Up Question:

In the *Information and Consent Form*, it was explained that you are encouraged to begin journaling now for the next 6-8 weeks, using the *Guide for Self-Examination and Journaling* provided to help you get started. I am encouraging you to journal at least 3 times per week. The benefit of this practice is to help you be more aware of how God might be active in your life during the time of this research project. On a completely optional basis, I want to offer to send you an email once per week to help you remember to be journaling, as it is an easy practice to forget if it is not your habit. If you choose to receive these emails, you may still opt to stop receiving them at any time.

Would you like to receive an email reminder once per week until July 11, 2015 to help you remember to be journaling?

Y N

Thank you again for your participation in this project!

APPENDIX C

GUIDE TO SELF-EXAMINATION AND JOURNALING

GUIDE FOR SELF-EXAMINATION AND JOURNALING

The Practice of Self-Examination

The purpose of self-examination is to reflect on recent events in your life and your response to these, particularly where you see a connection between your experiences and your faith. It may be helpful to begin with a couple of minutes of quiet prayer, calming yourself to help focus your thoughts. Following a short period of silence, the following questions can be used as a prompt to help you decide what to write in your journal.

1. Recently, what in my life has felt good and *life-giving*?
2. Recently, what in my life has felt frustrating or *life-draining*?
3. Where have I perceived that God might be involved in my life recently?
4. How might God be trying to shape me or my church through these experiences?

The Practice of Journaling

Journaling is a helpful way to continually record smaller descriptions of your life so that in hindsight, you can perceive larger movements in your experiences over time. For this study, you are encouraged to journal with an added spiritual emphasis where possible. At no time will Mark Adams ask you to submit your journal, nor will he or anyone else read your entries other than you in connection this study. Within two or three days of your final interview, you will be encouraged to read over your journal entries to refresh your mind about your thoughts and experiences during the duration of this study.

You will be provided with a blank journal, in which you may write in any format of your choosing. You can journal as often as you would like, and there is no maximum number of entries you may complete. But for this study, it is requested that you make a sincere effort to write entries in your journal **at least three times per week**, following a brief period of self-examination each time, as described above. Likewise, there is no maximum length to how long each journal entry can be, though one full page per entry might be a good length for the sake of having a thorough record for yourself.

It may also be useful to **include the date** on each journal entry at the time of your entry so that you can better perceive your experiences over time as you go back to review your thoughts and experiences.

After the Study

After you have completed your voluntary participation in the research project for Mark Adams by completing your second interview, your journal is yours to do with as you please.

APPENDIX D

TEXT OF OPTIONAL EMAIL REMINDERS

Hello,

Thank you for participating in Mark Adams' research project at the Kings Crossing Church of Christ. At your request, I am writing to encourage you to spend some time this week reflecting on your life and experiences, and recording your reflections in your journal. My hope is that you can do this at least three times per week.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and therefore much appreciated. If you no longer desire to receive a weekly email reminder, or if you have any other questions about the project, please reply to mark.s.adams@gmail.com and inform him in what way he can assist you.

Have a wonderful week, and thank you again for your participation.

Best regards,
Mark Adams

APPENDIX E

CONCLUDING INTERVIEW GUIDE

Final Interview Questions Kings Crossing Church of Christ 2015

This will be a recorded interview. All of the Purpose section will be read aloud. The Qualitative Questions represent general directions for the interview, and the interviewer may slightly alter wording or order to best facilitate the conversation.

Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to understand how members of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ understand the mission of God at this time. As it pertains to Mark Adams' Doctor of Ministry Project Thesis, your responses to the questions in this interview may be used anonymously along with the anonymous responses of other participants to create a picture of what members of the Kings Crossing Church of Christ are thinking and perceiving about the mission of God.

This is your second and final interview. At the completion of this interview, unless the researcher requires a small amount of clarification for some of your responses, you will not otherwise be contacted again about this project. At the completion of this project, approximately May 2016, all of the recordings of your interviews will be destroyed.

Though you have signed a consent form to participate, I want to acknowledge again that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and that you may cease participation at any time without any negative repercussions for your relationship with the Kings Crossing Church of Christ. Thank you again for your assistance in this project!

Please respond verbally to all of the questions, and your answers will be recorded. Before we begin, if you have any other questions, please feel free to ask at this time.

Qualitative Questions:

Please describe what you understand to be the mission of God. What all does this mission involve?

If you were telling the story of what God is doing through our congregation, what would the current chapter be about?

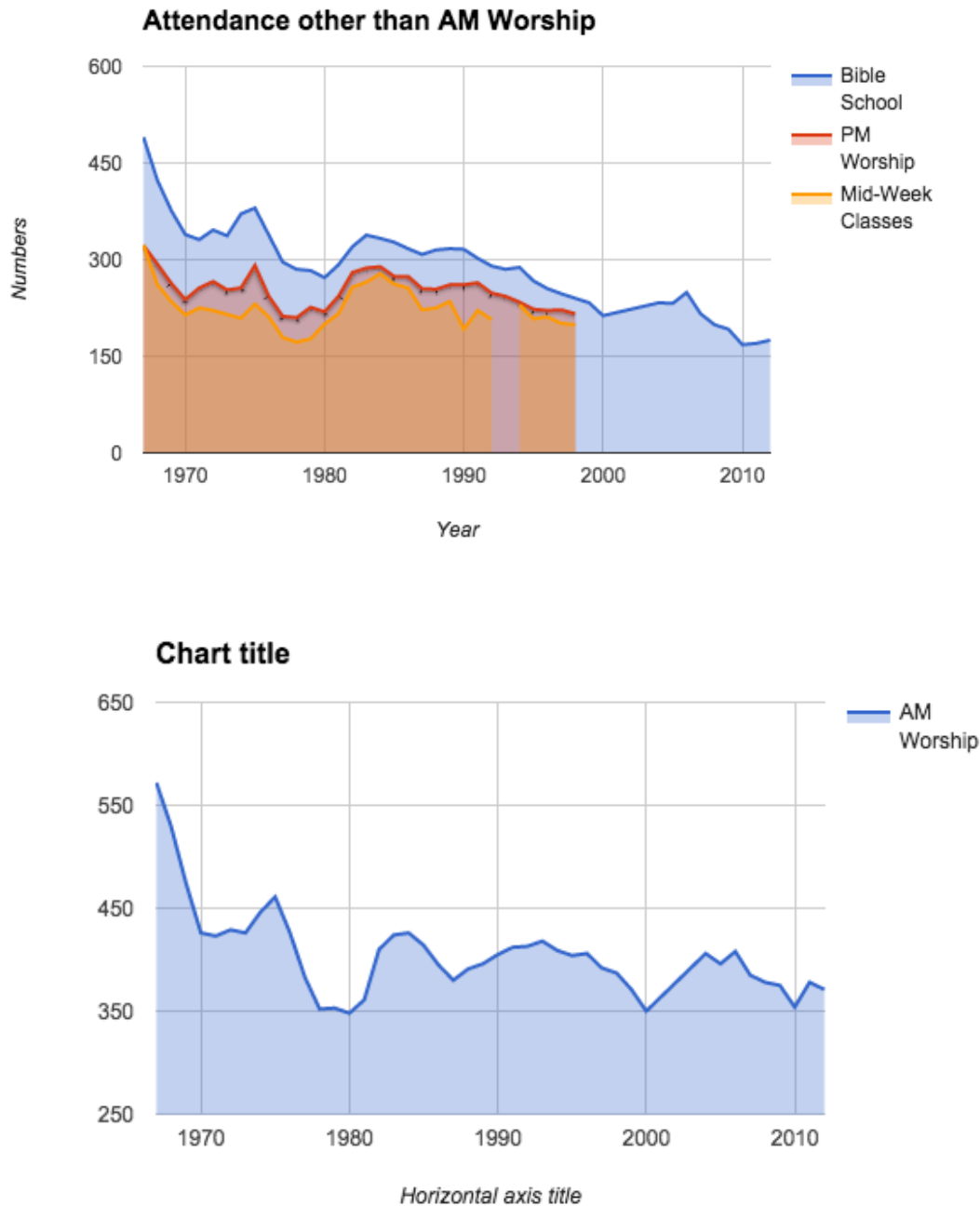
How do you believe God is trying to shape us through our present experiences?

What role, if any, do you believe the short-term mission trip to Costa Rica is playing in how God is shaping our congregation right now?

APPENDIX F

KINGS CROSSING STATISTICS

Attendance and growth statistics over the years at Kings Crossing, shared in an email from July 11, 2015 by David “Buck” Griffith, one of the previous pulpit ministers at Kings Crossing who is still a minister on staff, focused on prison ministry and 12-step recovery programs.



APPENDIX G

FULL TEXT OF *MISSIONAL MANIFESTO*

Missional Manifesto

In 2010-2011, a group of church leaders led by Ed Stetzer and Alan Hirsch collaborated on a statement to define what they meant when using the term “missional.” The result was the Missional Manifesto, reproduced here in full.

Preamble

God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. The concept missional epitomizes this idea. This manifesto seeks to serve the church by clarifying its calling and helping it theologically understand and practically live out God’s mission in the world today. Although it is frequently stated “God’s church has a mission,” according to missional theology, a more accurate expression is “God’s mission has a church” (Ephesians 3:7-13).

One of the goals of theology is to safeguard the meaning of words in order to uphold truth and articulate a biblical worldview within the community of faith. Redeeming the integrity of the word missional is especially critical. It is not our intent (or within our ability) to define words for others, but we thought it helpful to describe and define how we are using the term—and to invite others to do the same. A biblically faithful, missional understanding of God and the church is essential to the advancement of our role in His mission, and thus to the dynamism of Christianity in the world.

It is first necessary to be clear about what missional does not mean. Missional is not synonymous with movements attempting to culturally contextualize Christianity, implement church growth, or engage in social action. The word missional can encompass all of the above, but it is not limited to any one of these.

Properly understanding the meaning of missional begins with recognizing God’s missionary nature. The Father is the source of mission, the Son is the embodiment of that mission, and mission is done in the power of the Spirit. By nature, God is the “sending one” who initiates the redemption of His whole creation. Jesus consistently spoke of Himself as being “sent” in John’s gospel and subsequently commissioned His disciples for this same purpose (John 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). As the “sent” people of God, the church is the instrument of His mission (John 20:21).

A strong foundation in the gospel, obedience to Christ, and posture to the world are critical components to both individuals and churches living missionally. A missional community is one that regards mission as both its originating impulse and organizing principle (Acts 1:8). It makes decisions accordingly, believing that Christ sends His followers into the world, just as the Father sent Him into the world.

The Church, therefore, properly encourages all believers to live out their primary calling as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) to those who do not know Jesus. The ministry of reconciliation is applicable to both its native culture and in cross-cultural ministry throughout the world. In this sense, every believer is a missionary sent by the Spirit into a non-Christian culture activating the whole of his or her life in seeking to participate more fully in God's mission.

Missional represents a significant shift in the way we understand the church. As the people of a missionary God, we are entrusted to participate in the world the same way He does—by committing to be His ambassadors. Missional is the perspective to see people as God does and to engage in the activity of reaching them. The church on mission is the church as God intended.

Affirmations

With this in mind, we affirm the following:

1. Authority:

As a revelation about the nature of God, we can only truly understand the mission of God by what is revealed through the Scriptures. Therefore, our understanding of the *missio Dei* and the missional church must always be directed and shaped by, and cannot be contrary to, God's revealed Word in scripture.

2. Gospel:

We affirm that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked with compassion upon humanity made up of people who are more sinful than we will admit and sent Jesus into history to establish His Kingdom and reconcile people and the world to Himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, gave His life as a substitutionary death on the cross and was physically resurrected thereby propitiating the wrath of God. Through the grace of God, when a person repents of their sin, confesses the Messiah as Lord, and believes in His resurrection, they gain what the Bible defines as new and eternal life. All believers are then joined together into the church, a covenant community working as "agents of reconciliation" to proclaim and live out the gospel.

3. Kingdom:

We affirm that the gospel is the good news of God's Kingdom. The Kingdom is the active and comprehensive rule of God over His whole creation. The sovereign reign of God brings righteousness (right relationships with God, others, and creation), restores justice, and brings healing to a broken world. The Kingdom of God has been inaugurated but is still "not yet." It will not be fully revealed until Jesus returns. The church, birthed in the wake of the Kingdom, serves as an agent of the King in the "already and not yet" of the Kingdom by proclaiming and spreading the gospel and living out its implications.

4. Mission:

We affirm that the *missio Dei* is the mission of the triune God to glorify Himself. God does so in this world by redeeming sinful humans and, in the future, restoring corrupted creation. The Father sent the Son to accomplish this redemption and sends the Spirit to apply this redemption to the hearts of men and women. Included in God's mission is the *missio ecclesia* whereby He

empowers the church for witness and service that leads to witness. Believers are called to share the gospel with people so they can come to know Christ. Moving from God, through the church, to the world, God's redemptive work results in people of every tribe, tongue, and nation responding in lifelong worship of God. Ultimately the *missio Dei* will encompass all of creation when God creates a new heaven and new earth.

5. Church:

The church is a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God, birthed by the gospel of the Kingdom and tasked with the mission of the Kingdom. The church is a covenant community of imperfect but redeemed believers living in our world. Followers of Christ do not live out their mission in isolation, but rather the Spirit of God enfolds believers into local Christian communities, i.e. churches. It is in and through such community their mission in the world is enhanced.

6. Christocentric:

We believe that Jesus is the center of God's plan. By extension, the church as the body of Christ is the primary medium of God's mission to His world. We affirm that while God's work and presence is not limited to the church, nonetheless the proclamation of the gospel of Christ comes through the church and believers everywhere. Members of the church, living by the power of the Spirit, are being conformed into the likeness of Christ in their attitudes and actions.

7. Disciple-making:

We believe that discipling of the nations is the essential aspect of the mission of God (Matthew 28:18-20). The gospel calls people to respond in faith and repentance to the good news of the Kingdom in and by the gospel's power. The maturing of believers is inherent to the work of the church ushering those who place faith in Jesus from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:28). This means the church trains its members to be leaders in deeds of justice and ministry to the poor, as well as to live out the implications of their faith in business, the arts, in politics, the academy, the home, and in all of life. As the church makes disciples, it equips them to bring their faith to bear on every area of their lives, private and public.

8. Duality:

We believe the mission and responsibility of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. From Jesus, we learn the truth is to be proclaimed with authority and lived with grace. The church must constantly evangelize, respond lovingly to human needs, as well as "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7). By living out the implications of the gospel, the missional church offers a verbal defense and a living example of its power.

9. Universality:

We believe God's mission, and thus the mission of His people, extends to every people, nation, tribe, and tongue; to persons of every gender, age, education, social standing, and religious persuasion (or lack thereof). Thus a missional church will intentionally embrace diversity locally and will cross social, cultural, and geographic barriers as agents of the *missio Dei*. God's mission furthermore universally encompasses every aspect of life: personal, familial, social, cultural, and economic. This is grounded upon the universal authority and lordship of Jesus Christ.

10. Application:

We believe the mission of the church continues in multiplying and maturing the followers of Christ (discipleship), increasing the number of congregations (church planting) dedicated to God's Kingdom (living under His lordship), extending God's fame throughout the earth (worship), and doing good in the name of Christ (works of mercy). Because we believe these things, we are compelled to action. We urge God's people to align around the lordship of Jesus, the missional nature of His church, and the reality of His Kingdom. We invite the body of Christ everywhere to see people and the world through the lens of God's Kingdom, to live holy lives as Jesus' disciples, and to intentionally represent Him together as the church. We affirm that Jesus was sent to fulfill God's purposes in the world through His perfect life, substitutionary death, and physical resurrection so that redemption could be made available to us. With Christ as our focal point, His Kingdom as our destiny, and His Spirit as our empowerment, we accept the privilege and joy of His mission.

Missional Manifesto Framers

Ed Stetzer – President of LifeWay Research

Alan Hirsch – Founding Director of Forge Mission Training Network

Tim Keller – Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

Dan Kimball – Teaching Pastor of Vintage Faith Church

Eric Mason – Lead Pastor of Epiphany Fellowship

J. D. Greear – Lead Pastor of The Summit Church

Craig Ott – Associate Professor of Mission and Intercultural Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Linda Bergquist – Church Starting Strategist, California Southern Baptist Convention

Philip Nation – Director of Adult Publishing, LifeWay Christian Resources

Brad Andrews – Lead Pastor of Mercyview Church

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