

“THE COMMUNITY OF GOODS: AN IDEAL WHOSE TIME HAS COME”

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis was born out of questions raised in a New Church Development setting about how best, if at all, to develop a piece of property. The community of goods passages, located in Acts 2: 42-47 and Acts 4:32-35, formed the theological foundation. Three congregations were visited and subjects interviewed in each setting. These settings all combined housing for senior citizens with a church sanctuary, so that the needs of the worshipping community, and the particular needs of a segment of the larger community could both be met. The assumption was made that Faith United, as the New Church development project is now called, might opt to erect something similar.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The community of goods passages in Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 4: 32-35 inform the reader that in the Jerusalem church, in the first centuries after the ascension, persons were willing to part with property to address need among the converts. These passages tell of a “unity of heart and soul” (Acts 4:32) that was shared among the first believers, and apprizes that the community “had all things in common”. The passages suggest a spirit of harmony and cooperation among the first followers of Jesus. One may wonder if the passages are speaking of an actual practice of charity, or whether the author has idealized the Jerusalem community. While the question of “real” practice or “ideal” practice fosters interesting debate, it may be impossible to prove with any degree of certainty. However, the passages will be used in this thesis as a foundation upon which to assess a potential application of the text within the present time.

This thesis will ask the question if it is possible in this day and age to relinquish property, title and ownership to address need within an urban community. The case of a particular new church development project within the city of Kingston will be the test case.

In 1989, Kingston Presbytery of The United Church of Canada made the decision to plant a new church community in the eastern region of the city of Kingston. This decision was made in response to an increase in housing in the area and was largely based on assumptions that a percentage of the new homeowners would become affiliated with The United Church of Canada and would support a church within the geographic area.

Four acres of land were purchased for a future church site, a minister called, and the work of developing a congregational base begun. Faith United, as the new congregation is now called, has gathered weekly in rented space since September 1989 and the property remains undeveloped. Over time, consideration of how best to use the property has surfaced at the level of the congregation and in the Presbytery. Should it be retained and developed, or should it be sold and the capital invested in the present ministry within the city?

The most recent statistics on membership in The United Church of Canada reflect the continuing decline within the denomination. This is not surprising, since many members of The United Church of Canada are aging and new persons affiliating with the church often do so as adherents, rather than becoming confirmed members.<sup>1</sup> Volume 1 of the Year Book and Directory for the United Church of Canada records the total membership within the denomination at 637,941 as of December 21, 2001. This reflects a drop of 2.01% from the 2000 year-end total membership of 651,002. This compares to a drop of 2.62% in 2000, 2.23% in 1999, 2.59 in 1998, 1.57% in 1997, 2.05% in 1996, 2.18 in 1995, and 1.30% in 1994. While membership decline is not unique to the United Church, the decline remains a concern and reflects society's changing attitudes towards denominational allegiance, the perceived need to become formal members, and the shifting support of the organized church generally.<sup>2</sup> The decision at the time of union in 1925 that brought the United Church into existence granted permission to each of the three participating denominations to retain property. As the Methodist, Presbyterian and

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics are available on membership and non-resident membership within the congregations.

<sup>2</sup> The United Church of Canada *Year Book and Directory 2002*, Volume 1 (Etobicoke: The United Church of Canada 2002), 5.

Congregationalist churches united into one denomination, each congregation retained its Membership Roll and edifice, resulting in “overchurching” in some areas. Quite simply, there are more church buildings and communities in the city of Kingston than are needed to service the United Church population.

The city of Kingston has fourteen United Church Congregations within its boundaries, and Faith is the sole congregation without a building of its own. Sharing an edifice has its strengths and weaknesses. Sharing certainly keeps the maintenance costs to a minimum but seriously impacts and even constrains our ability to initiate and maintain programs, which, in turn, influences our understanding of mission. Indeed, our mission seems to be defined more by our hosts than by our board and congregation because of limited access to the facility. The present and future vision of Faith United Church needs to be discerned, and her mission honed and owned by her membership. This vision will need to include discussion of the heretofore undeveloped property. As a theological foundation upon which to build, the summary passages on the community of goods located in Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 4:32-35 will be studied.

These passages describe a unity of heart and spirit among the first Christians in Jerusalem and recount a willingness among the converts to part with property to address need within the community. Curiosity over the passages continues to abound as students of the scripture ponder their historical, theological and cultural significance. Do these passages reflect the actual mores and practices of faith community in antiquity? If so, why do all references to the practice disappear after chapter 5?

This paper will include biblical and theological study of the summary passages referring to the community of goods in Acts with a goal to understanding their inclusion

in the text. It is the intention that this investigation will be influential in guiding Faith United New Church Development in making decisions about its mission and future. The second chapter of the thesis will include exegesis of the passages and their place within the two-volume work by Luke. Included in this discussion will be the influence of first-century Mediterranean antiquity on Luke the writer, and on the first faith community. When the modern reader encounters the Biblical text, two worlds intersect: that of first century Christianity and that of modern consciousness. Through contributions made by the social sciences, the modern scholar can discover the implicit meaning in Luke-Acts through exposure to the values, social structures and conventions of Lukan society. The modern student must remember that Luke was writing to a first-century eastern Mediterranean audience,<sup>3</sup> a culture and a time far removed from the present.

The third chapter will investigate the state of the contemporary church in this epoch of postmodernity and denominational decline. This chapter will take a serious look at the cultural issues that continue to confront and influence the church in the twenty-first century. The question of whether there is an application for the community of goods within this era of church history will be probed. The fourth chapter will introduce case studies of various congregations that have partnered and shared resources with local community agencies. Three United Church congregations located within the province of Ontario were visited, and four subjects interviewed in each location. As described more fully below, the interviewees were invited to share their recollections of the circumstances that led to the decision to erect other than traditional sanctuaries. Chapter

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<sup>3</sup> See John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 10; and Jerome Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), xi; and Bruce J. Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts" in Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, xi.

Four will also discuss the results of a questionnaire that sought to uncover details of each congregation's decision-making process. The use of a questionnaire as a research tool ensured uniformity in the questions posed to each interviewee.

The questionnaire was primarily intended to elicit three key pieces of information. The first was the circumstances that precipitated the decision to erect a new building; the second was the specific needs both of the worshipping community and of the wider, neighbourhood community, and the third concerned the actual decision-making process followed by the congregation. These questions all concerned the "story" and recent history of the congregation. A second purpose to the questionnaire was to consider any lessons and learning that had ensued from the decision-making and building process. To that end, questions relating to the effects of the decision on congregational growth and vitality were posed. These questions gave the interviewees the opportunity to share their personal opinions and reflections on the consequences of the decisions made within their respective congregations. The information shared by the interviewees has proven invaluable to Faith United Church, and would be equally helpful to any congregation that is considering erecting a physical facility that will also house other community agencies.

In terms of administering the questionnaire and collecting information, the incumbent minister of each local church facilitated the process of selecting the interviewees. After the permission of the minister to conduct interviews had been secured, a shortlist of seven possible subjects was requested. Each of the seven subjects was sent a letter of introduction and a copy of a consent form, as well as a copy of the questionnaire. Four subjects were randomly selected by the interviewer and interview times scheduled. The interviews (which typically lasted for one hour) were audio-taped,

transcribed, and examined for evidence of common responses and themes. In each congregation, the willingness of the minister, board, and interviewees to share their insights was essential to the success of the research project, and has been very much appreciated.

The very significant and influential role played by the incumbent minister during a time of transition and change was a common theme articulated by all subjects, and has become a pivotal learning for the interviewer. In addition, the survey has offered valuable insight into the effect that sharing a church with a community agency has on congregational growth and identity. Indeed, this study confirms how important it is that any congregations at a crossroads consider both the short- and long-term effects of decisions concerning their physical facilities. The results of the interviewing are set out more fully in chapter four, and the implications of the learning for Faith United are contained in chapter five. A copy of the questionnaire and the consent forms are included in appendices two and three of this thesis. Full transcripts of the interviewees that are quoted in this chapter are located in appendices five, six, and seven.

The final chapter is an application of the text as it pertains to Faith United, hopefully answering the question, “Can the summary passages of Acts 2:44-47 and Acts 4:32-35 inform the church of the twenty-first century?” In the concluding paragraph of his book on *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, John Gillman has written:

We began this book with an oft-repeated question from Luke’s two-volume work: “What are we to do?” After taking our reflective journey with Luke through the Gospel and Acts, the query remains before us and calls forth from us with ever-greater urgency a faith response. To see what we have as gifts to be shared rather than as things to be possessed is to strengthen bonds within the community of persons. To realize that who we are is more important than what we have is a significant first insight on the path to true freedom. What is at stake for us is

nothing less than our wholeness and salvation. What is at stake for the world is nothing less than the well-being and wholeness of the entire human community.<sup>4</sup>

I believe that the community of goods can be regarded as a faith response. I believe that the time has come for the church to give serious and theological consideration to relinquishment in response to the gospel.

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<sup>4</sup> John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 116-117.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Part I

#### A. Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

Most scholars generally hold that Luke-Acts is a two-volume work written by the same author,<sup>5</sup> and that Acts is the continuation of the story of Jesus after his resurrection and ascension. Acts tells the story of the birth of the church in Jerusalem and chronicles the spread of Christianity throughout the Gentile world. Its author is highly educated, well tutored in the scriptures of Judaism and well apprised of Greek ideals.<sup>6</sup> Much of our knowledge of the fledgling church community is gleaned from the pages of Acts. However, the contemporary study of the book has provided much fodder for scholarly debate. Curiosity abounds on how to interpret Acts.<sup>7</sup> Can it be considered primarily an

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<sup>5</sup> Most scholars hold the authorship of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles to be by the same hand. Henry Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 8; James J.D. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge: Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1966), x; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Daniel J. Harrington ed., Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 5 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 1; William Willimon, *Acts*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 1; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapid, Michigan/Cambridge, United Kingdom: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 3.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed synopsis on the character of the author see Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 52-55. Luke is described as highly educated, well acquainted with Greek and Hebrew culture, and highly committed to seeing the acceptance of Christianity by both the elite and the common.

<sup>7</sup> For a succinct rendering of the challenges in scholarship see Mark Allan Powell, *What Are They Saying About Acts?* (New York/Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), 108-110.



historical source or a theological one, or is it more representative of the historical novel?<sup>8</sup> To whom was Luke writing beyond the eyes of Theophilus, and what message was Luke intent on proffering to the world? Should his work be received, critiqued and understood only as some kind of historical account of the Christian church in its nascent state, or is it to be critiqued theologically? If it is at best historical record, then the contemporary follower of Christianity need receive it only for what it illumines of the pristine age of a new religion and faith. If it is more than history then it behooves the contemporary reader, informed by faith and history, to read it and glean historical and theological truth from the pages.

## B Acts as History

I. Howard Marshall has posed the question whether Luke is to be considered primarily an historian or a theologian.<sup>9</sup> Marshall suggests that the historian selects significant events from a larger mass of events. The historian makes the selection based upon a particular point of view, and there is no absolute reliability for the results attained by an historian. Historical conclusions are not like those of a mathematician. All historical reconstructions have an inherent element of uncertainty about them.<sup>10</sup> This is

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars of Acts have postulated that it is historiography, theology and literature. Hans Conzelmann has written that it is a work of literature where the author has been very intentional about crafting his theology. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel and Donald Juel, ed., Eldon Jay Lepp with Christopher Matthews (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xl and following; Luke Timothy Johnson suggests that Luke is writing an apologetic in the form of historical narrative defending the mission to the Gentiles, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 7; Richard Pervo suggests that Acts be considered an historical novel. In *Profit With Delight The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 12 the romance of the book is highlighted. Given that its accounts of shipwreck, travel to exotic locations, arrests, daring escapes, stonings, and trials makes it highly entertaining. Pervo argues that the history and theology are secondary to the drama of the story.

<sup>9</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970), chapter II, 21-51.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 22-24.

not to suggest that the historian has fabricated the story, but rather, the historian writes with subjectivity as well as objectivity. Biblical Christianity is basically concerned with historical fact and the communication of divine revelation.<sup>11</sup> Faith and history are not mutually exclusive, and both impact on the other. Christian faith is dependent upon historical event. The Christian faith is rooted in the Jesus of history. It is faith that attests to the resurrection as an act of God. The facts may be tested historically, but the ultimate decisions are matters of faith.<sup>12</sup>

The writings of Luke are indebted to the tradition of the Hebrew scriptures. He writes from a particular point of view, which traces the activity of God through historical events, thus proclaiming history as divine activity. This sets him apart from the secular historian.<sup>13</sup> It is to be assumed from the onset that a rational skepticism will be applied to the historicity of Acts, and at best the attempt will be made only to “find history in Acts and not place Acts in history.”<sup>14</sup> It is presumed that, since the Acts of the Apostles is a book within the canon of the New Testament, it ought to be scrutinized as a theological work, but this in no way precludes its dismissal as historical. Luke was writing in a

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<sup>11</sup>        *ibid.*, 33.

<sup>12</sup>        *ibid.*, 52. For the detail of Marshall’s argument between the relationship between history and faith, and the relationship between Luke the theologian and Luke the historian see chapter 2. See also Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts” in Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 250. Moxnes writes, “What complicates matters is that Luke does not write ‘pure’ history. In line with the writing of history of this time, there was no conflict between the ideal of true historical rendering of the past and the telling of the story with the purpose of influencing one’s readers. In this way Luke’s narrative is made transparent, so that it becomes relevant for his readers. Thus his description of groups and actors in Palestine at the time of Jesus is not ‘neutral’ but coloured by his evaluations.”

<sup>13</sup>        1. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, 56.

<sup>14</sup>        Mark Allan Powell, *What Are They Saying About Acts*, 95 It is not my intention to prove or disprove the scholars to whom I have turned for wisdom and guidance. The historical accuracy of the book is beyond the scope of this study to consider. I prefer to try and get a sense of what the author might be introducing me to in my place in history. I do not seek to discover a golden age in the history of faith, but rather seek to discover how the past may influence the present.

particular way about the rise of Christianity. For the purpose of this thesis, Acts is read as a theological rendering of history that tells the rest of the story of Jesus and his followers. It is Luke's recounting of salvation history. Luke is intent on telling the ongoing story of the saving acts of God in Christ, enacted by the Holy Spirit. The imminent and expected return of Jesus has been delayed and the gospel has been given to the Gentile. There is growing animosity between some Jews and the disciples. Luke is not advocating the rejection of the Jew, but is explaining how the good news has moved beyond Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

Luke is establishing that Christianity is a continuation of the salvific action of God. Great care is taken to root the new faith within the vicinity of the Temple in Jerusalem, although there is ongoing scholarly debate over whether references to Jerusalem are historical, political or theological.<sup>16</sup> Acts tells the story of acceptance and

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<sup>15</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xiv. Conzelmann suggests three epochs of salvation history: the time of Israel, the time of Jesus, and the time of the church. Each epoch is integrally linked to the preceding and carries it further. Luke is intent on establishing Christianity rooted in Jerusalem and Judaism, but ultimately rejected by the leaders of the synagogue, paving the way for the Gentile mission. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 17-24. Marshall suggests that Luke's purpose in writing was to explain a delayed parousia. The Acts of the Apostles was written to provide a new theological outlook in which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the ensuing Gentile mission filled the gap created by a delayed parousia.

<sup>16</sup> See Milton Moreland, *Jerusalem as the Place of Origins in Early Christian Imagination*, <http://www.gunnzone.org/constructs/moreland.htm>. This paper was downloaded as a part of an online course requirement on Luke-Acts (Theology 621 Luke's Gospel and Acts) that I was taking at Queen's University in the winter of 2001. Moreland writes that Luke's references to Jerusalem are symbolic. Moreland suggests that Jerusalem was a type of literary tool employed by Luke to ground his story in Jewish geography and myth, drawing on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost and using symbolic numbers from the Israelite past, i.e., the numbers 12 and 40. The lifestyle of the followers was patterned after ideals of virtuous living and friendship, demonstrating a pristine state of complete harmony. However, very quickly Luke introduces the "problem" of tension with the temple, and inevitable division within the group as the story of Ananias and Sapphira attest. Jerusalem, according to Moreland, was a social and political symbol that provided coherence to the group. Furthermore, Luke was not condemning Judaism but rather was intent on portraying Jesus as the means of restoration through repentance. Moreland suggests that the second volume was written very intentionally weaving together the culture of the Greek with that of the Jew, a testament to the literary and theological genius of the author.

rejection of Jesus and his Twelve Apostles<sup>17</sup>, and those who came to believe through apostolic authority. It weaves the story of how salvation came first to Jew and then to Gentile. God has not ceased to act in the world with the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but continues to be active in the world through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles then is both history as understood in antiquity, and theology. The contemporary reader will need to juxtapose faith and fact as the points of convergence and divergence as scripture is studied. For example, Luke is intentional in the book of Acts to set the story of the birth of the church in Jerusalem. The gospel of Luke ends with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and his parting command to the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). The anointing by the Spirit takes place in Jerusalem at Pentecost and is recorded in Acts 2:1-4. Pentecost is viewed as the birth of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

At Pentecost, Peter is empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the good news of Jesus and the disparate company in Jerusalem is enabled to hear in their own language the saving acts of God. In response to the powerful message proclaimed by Peter, the hearers pose the question, “What are we to do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter counsels that they

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<sup>17</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson has written on the literary function of possessions in Luke Acts. He writes of a prophet like Moses who is accepted and rejected. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, No 39, 1977), 121-126. Placing the theme of possessions within the context of story, Johnson argues that the theology of Luke is teaching about acceptance and rejection. Concerned less with history and more with theology, Johnson’s thesis is that Acts is the chronicling of the story of a prophet like Moses. Possessions become the outward expression of acceptance or rejection. The willingness to part with things is a display of unity, and also shows submission to apostolic authority.

should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus so that their sins can be forgiven, and the gift of the Holy Spirit received (Acts 2:38).

Implicit in the counsel of Peter is the requisite of response. In faith, the hearers are urged to repent and be baptized. Converts then devote themselves to apostolic teaching and fellowship, to breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:41). Later in the second chapter, the first reference to the sharing of possessions is recorded. Luke records two references to the sharing of goods in (Acts 2:45) and in (Acts 4:34). He also includes two accounts of believers offering the proceeds from the sale of property to the disciples. The first recounts the generosity of Barnabas in (4:36-37), and the second example is that of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The passages highlighting the willingness to relinquish property have been labeled summary passages. Summary passages are limited to the early chapters of Acts and provide the first glimpse into the interior life of the Jerusalem Church. They paint an extremely positive portrait of the early life of the community and may have contained an element of hyperbole,<sup>18</sup> as Luke wanted to convince Theophilus of the church at its best. Henceforth the passages will be referred to as the community of goods passages, or the summary passages.

### C. Luke's Use of the Summary Statement and Summary Passage

The summary statement and the summary passage are Lukan literary tools. The statement can be found throughout Acts and serves a multitude of purposes. It can conclude a preceding narrative, or divide and connect to indicate that the material is typical and ongoing. For example, Acts 2:42 is a summary statement: "They devoted

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<sup>18</sup> Hyperbole is defined as obvious and intentional exaggeration, an extravagant statement or figure of speech not intended to be taken literally. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House Inc., 1969) .

themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” The summary statement interrupts the progress of the account and gives the reader some information about the nature of the earliest church.<sup>19</sup> It follows the recounting of the baptism of the three thousand in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in response to the preaching of Peter (2:41). It serves to conclude the action of Peter and also acts as a summary explaining the ongoing behaviour of the converts who engaged in apostolic teaching, fellowship, the sharing of meals and prayer.

The summaries about the community of goods of particular concern for this thesis are contained in Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 4:32-35. Although very similar, the second one appears to build on the first, making the action of offering one’s possessions more concrete.

#### D. The Community of Goods Texts

##### Acts 2:42-47

42.) They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers

43.) Awe came upon everyone, because many signs and wonders were being done by the apostles.

44.) All who believed were together and had all things in common.

45.) They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

##### Acts 4:32-35

32.) Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

33.) With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

34.) There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

35.) They laid it at the apostle’s feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

<sup>19</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 23.

46.) Day by day they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts

47.) Praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

A cursory comparison of the two passages highlights several similarities. The apostles are mentioned in 2:42, 43 and also in 4:33, 35. Luke is clearly establishing the significance of the apostles in the Jerusalem church. The notion of selling of possessions and goods and sharing the proceeds is common to both 2:45 and 4:34, although the practice is enlarged upon in the second summary. The first summary makes reference to fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer (2:42) and these norms are not referenced in the second summary. The first summary refers to the membership possessing glad and generous hearts (2:46), and the second summary begins with the statement that the whole group was of one heart and soul (4:32). The willingness to part with possessions is more prominent in the second passage, referring to the practice in verse 32 and carrying the theme throughout the summary.

Luke Timothy Johnson argues that the summary passages be understood as literary tools.<sup>20</sup> He argues that Luke weaves his story about the acceptance and rejection of the prophet like Moses. Salvation has come to Israel through Jesus who is accepted as messiah by the people, but rejected by the leadership of Judaism. The Twelve Apostles become the means through which the message of salvation continues to be shared and the

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

apostles are likewise rejected by the Temple elite. This is why there is the story of apostolic healing in Acts 3:1 and the arrest of Peter and John by the Sadducees separating the two summaries. This narrative demonstrates apostolic power and authority, which is a fundamental theme in Acts, and also shows the ongoing skirmish with the leaders of Judaism.

For Johnson, the willingness to offer goods and property is a symbol of one's faith in Jesus. Acceptance of Jesus is exteriorized in renunciation. One is more than willing to concede private ownership for the sake of Christ. Rejection of Jesus is made known in clinging to possessions. Possessions, in Johnson's scheme, take on a symbolic role. For Johnson, the first summary marks the end of the halcyon days of community life. Acts 4:1-22 shows the schism between the apostles and the authority of the temple. Luke is paving the way to demonstrate the widening of that chasm within the Jerusalem community, culminating in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5. Luke has placed the two summary passages between the challenges to apostolic leadership from both inside and outside of the community. The Jerusalem community does not remain pristine forever, and the placing of the passages is highly intentional, according to Johnson, thus illustrating the juxtaposition of history and theology at the hand of the author. Luke is interpreting history theologically.<sup>21</sup>

Understanding the integral relationship between history and theology in Acts is fundamental to the study of Acts. Luke distinguished three stages in the transmission of the gospel tradition: the eyewitnesses who had accompanied Jesus, the ministers of the

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<sup>21</sup> See the editor's foreword in Frederick Danker, *Proclamation Commentaries: Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), vi. See also the "Introduction" in William Willimon, *Acts*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 6-7.



word who passed on their traditions (which included Stephen and the apostle Paul), and the “many” writers who incorporated those traditions. The first two groups function as authority for the third. Luke was not an eyewitness, a reference to the twelve apostles, and ranked among the “many”. The fact that Luke was compelled to write at all would seem to indicate that the works of the “many” were somehow inadequate. He intended to supplement them and through investigation of both the sources of his predecessors and also traditions that had come to him from other sources write his account.<sup>22</sup> The inability to name and locate these supplemental sources has been a matter of scholarly debate.

#### E. Sources

Luke gives no information on his sources. What has been postulated about his sources is the product of many years of intentional and critical research, as the pages of Acts have been placed under the microscope of form, literary and redaction criticism. Lukan specialists are also very quick to remind the reader that Luke often reworked his material, concealing his sources in his own unique editorial style.<sup>23</sup> There is no clearly identified “Mark” or hypothetical “Q”<sup>24</sup> to discern what in Acts is the redaction of the author, and that which can be located within tradition. Nonetheless, some assumptions

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Luke*, vi.

<sup>23</sup> Both Howard Marshall and Luke Timothy Johnson are quick to remind that Luke did tend to rework his sources. This conclusion is based on what is contained in the gospel of Luke, which is based on Mark and Q. Reading his gospel with an eye to Mark has clearly demonstrated his powers of redaction. However, this is not to suggest that the book of Acts be dismissed as fiction, or that it be concluded that Luke did not utilize sources. Howard Marshall writes that Luke has carefully concealed his sources beneath a uniform editorial style. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 37. Luke Timothy Johnson concurs with Howard Marshall that the unavailability of source material should not suggest that sources were not used. Johnson suggests that Luke gathered material from a variety of “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.” (Acts 1:2). Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 4. For a detailed history of source criticism in chronological order see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 24-34.

<sup>24</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3.

about Lukan sources can be made. It is assumed that Luke relied upon Mark and “Q”.<sup>25</sup> It is also assumed that Luke had access to “eye witnesses and servants of the word.” In the prologue to the Gospel of Luke, the author has written:

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. (Luke 1:1-4)

The reference to the “many” suggests that Luke is joining a succession of writers that have also written about Jesus. Luke distinguishes three stages in the transmission of the gospel. The first stage was that of the eyewitnesses who accompanied Jesus. This would include the apostles. The second stage was that of the ministers of the word who passed on their traditions. Included in this stage would be the apostle Paul, and Stephen. The third stage was that of the “many” who incorporated those traditions. Luke was probably an affiliate of the third stage. The fact that he felt compelled to write his two volume work would seem to indicate that, in his opinion, the works of the “many” were somehow inadequate. His intention in writing was to improve upon their work.<sup>26</sup> To that end, the author of Luke Acts investigated the history wrought by God “from the beginning”, making every effort to trace events to their origins. Further, Luke examined “all things” including the compilations of other sources, and also, traditions that had come to him independently of them. The author then studied the evidence before him, giving his readers the result of his careful research. Finally, he documented his narrative

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), vi.

<sup>26</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Luke*, vii.

in an orderly account.<sup>27</sup> The sources accessed by Luke cannot be proven with any degree of certainty. This is not to suggest that Acts is only the product of the theological imagination of Luke, but merely that his sources cannot be found and verified.<sup>28</sup>

The inability to locate sources has been a great catalyst for debate as scholars argue the extent to which some of the content may be idealized or historical. Indeed, the verses contained in the summary passages continue to foster debate about whether or not they refer to actual communal practice. Since no specific eyewitness to the sharing of property is named, scholars have debated whether Luke is speaking about an ideal, or actual, practice. Although a substantial number of influential scholars argue that Luke is writing about something idealized<sup>29</sup> rather than realized, there are those who suggest that a communal sharing of goods did in fact take place<sup>30</sup>. The notion of embracing a willingness to share all with one's friends is entrenched in the ideals of Greek friendship; it is also a visible sign of living in complete accord with the Law of Judaism. Deuteronomy 15:1-2 outlines the sabbatical year that is to occur every seven years.

During this year all debtors are granted remission of accumulated debt. Forgiving of the

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<sup>27</sup>        *ibid.*, vi.

<sup>28</sup>        Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3-5.

<sup>29</sup>        Those who view the reference to Community of Goods as ideal include Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* 24; Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles*, Translated by John R. Keating (New York/Ramset/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1967), 85-102; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 233; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 61; D.L. Mealand, "Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol.xxxviii, (1977), 96-99; Ben Witherington III, *Acts of the Apostles*, 156,162, 205 and following.

<sup>30</sup>        See David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz, Austria: Studiem Zum Neun Testament und Seiner Umwelt, 1982), 201-209, and S. Scott Bartchy "Community of Goods in Acts: Idealization or Social Reality," *The Future of Christianity: Essays in Honour of Helmut Koester*, ed., Birger A. Pearson; in collaboration with A. Thomas Krabbel, George W.E. Nickelsburg, Norman Peterson, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 309-318. Seccombe argues for an actual sharing of goods rooted in the interpretation of the Greek word *koinonia* as an outward expression of the ideals of friendship. Bartchy postulates that the community of goods was rooted in the client-patron relationship.

debt is a sign of living in accordance with the Law, and the purpose of the remission was to help alleviate poverty. The influence of both Greek and Hebrew culture is implicit in the notion of communal sharing.

Luke weaves together the cultures of Greece and Israel to proclaim his message of salvation. God continues to act graciously to save humanity through Jesus of Nazareth. Willingness to forgive debt as an act of faith and openness to sharing one's wealth and possessions with one's friends, are ancient ideals that were understood in antiquity by Greek and Hebrew alike. By portraying early Christian life as he did, Luke evoked a utopian tradition that everyone with a modicum of education would immediately recognize.<sup>31</sup> Implicit in the notion of sharing is the element of response. Whether rooted in the cultural ideals of friendship or in relation to faith, Luke records that some members of the Jerusalem community were willing to relinquish property to address need. The rhetorical question "What are we to do?" is answered, in part, in willingness to share one's resources. In devotion, the converts participated in apostolic teaching and fellowship, and lived harmoniously in community. The Greek word *koinonia* is often translated as fellowship and has many meanings. In order to understand better the relevance of fellowship in antiquity, some discussion of the word *koinonia* is helpful.

The interpretation of the word *koinonia* is particularly pertinent to understanding the community of goods passages. In fact, some scholars argue that Luke is really only referencing two practices of the first century church: apostolic teaching and *koinonia*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Pervo, *Profit With Delight*, 68.

<sup>32</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson *The Acts of the Apostles*, 58 suggests that although *koinonia* can refer to spiritual communion here it obviously refers to the sharing of material possessions. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160 quotes R. Pesch who has suggested that only two things are being listed in Acts 2:42: teaching and *koinonia*, with the latter being defined as breaking bread and prayer. Witherington goes on to suggest that wide parameters need to be placed on the notion of *koinonia*, concurring that it includes spiritual activities such as prayer, but also physical food or other goods in common.

According to the Greek lexicon of Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich,<sup>33</sup> the word *koinonia* can be translated four ways. *Koinonia* can mean association, communion, fellowship, and close relationship. It can also be interpreted as generosity and altruism, proof of brotherly unity and participation in and sharing in something. Luke's readers would be expected to give *koinonia* its widest interpretation, understanding it to include making contributions, table fellowship, and the general friendship and unity which is characterized by the community.<sup>34</sup> Drawing on the writings of Philo, David Seccombe argues that *koinonia* refers to the state of harmony, concord and friendship which should exist between persons. Such a spirit of harmony includes the sharing of possessions.<sup>35</sup>

With so broad a definition of the word *koinonia*, the practice of worship, breaking of bread and the sharing of possessions can find a niche as an outward expression of the term. If it is conceded that Luke is using the word *koinonia* to include breaking of bread, prayer and sharing then he is actually speaking about only two communal priorities: apostolic teaching and *koinonia*, and the latter includes the notion of the sharing of goods. Luke has used the word to convey to his Hellenistic readers "a point of genuine correspondence between Greek and Christian viewpoints."<sup>36</sup>

It seems that Luke has taken the term independently from the Greek realm to convey to his Hellenistic readers a picture of the early church, which they would understand and appreciate. He is seeking to commend Christianity, or perhaps the church itself, to people for whom *koinonia* was a supreme virtue.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Christian Literature* (1952), s.v. *koinonia*.

<sup>34</sup> David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 204.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 204-205.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 207.

Converts to the faith displayed gregarious and altruistic behaviour. The faithful are willing to share so that all might live in equality. The *koinonia* associated with the community of goods is a faith response to apostolic teaching, and proof of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. It is also indicative of the highest ideals of committed friendship.

To recapitulate, it is the contention of this thesis that Luke held that the Jerusalem church was committed to the teaching of the apostles and to *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is understood to include prayer, the breaking of bread, and the sharing of one's possessions in response to need. Rather than being concerned primarily with what is understood by the summary passages as a whole, the focus will be on the practice of sharing of goods in particular. The particularity of relinquishment will be examined as to whether it is a response that is intended to reflect the superlative cultural mores and norms of the day, or, as a faith response to the mandate of the gospel. The influences of first century Mediterranean antiquity on the community will be introduced. Culture has long been an influence on faith practice and the contemporary student of Acts must appreciate the cultural milieu of Luke and the first converts. The question as to whether a community of goods was practiced in actuality will continue to be significant, although ultimately it may be impossible to answer with any degree of certainty.

## Part II

### A. Community of Goods as Reality or Idealism

Scholars are divided as to whether the community of goods describes an ideal or an actual communal experience. Luke has employed the language of Greek friendship<sup>38</sup> and Utopia<sup>39</sup> to convey the message of communal harmony. The phrases that “friends have one soul between them” and “friend’s goods are common property” are attributed to the great Greek philosophers, namely Plato, Pythagoras, and Aristotle. The juxtaposing of heart and soul is also fundamental to Hebrew theology, well rooted in the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Ernst Haenchen<sup>40</sup> uses the second summary in 4:32-35 to demonstrate Luke’s subtle referencing of both Greek and Hebrew idealism. The use of the phrase “one heart and soul”<sup>41</sup> in 4:32 portrays the realization of the Greek communal ideal. In 4:34 the mention of a lack of need among the constituency demonstrates the fulfillment of the Hebrew ideal of Deuteronomy 15:4. “There will be no

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<sup>38</sup> David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Act*, 203. Seccombe argues that the references to *koinonia* in the passage refer to the Greek ideals of friendship. Rather than providing detailed descriptions of the organization of the community, Luke focuses on their unity and joyful sharing.

<sup>39</sup> See David Mealand, “Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV, 96-99. Mealand argues that the references to community of goods are a reference to Greek utopianism. In this article Mealand attributes phrases such as “one soul” and “friends have their goods in common” to Aristotle. These phrases are common throughout the literature on Greek Utopianism and can be traced back to Plato. Plato regarded community of goods as a feature of ideal society. This ideal, according to Mealand, was later attributed to Pythagoras, and from the Fifth Century before the Common Era was a constant theme in utopian passages of philosophers, poets, historians and the writers of romances. “In varied form Greek and Roman writers maintained that in some long vanished golden age, or in some ideal future state people had shared, or did share, or would share everything in common.” S. Scott Bartchy “Community of Goods in Acts” 310 cites Pythagoras In *De vita Pythagorica* 30.67 “For all things were common and the same to all, and no one possessed anything privately.”

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 233. See also John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 96.

<sup>41</sup> David Mealand, “Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV, 97 footnotes that Aristotle used the phrase “one soul”, but it is also read in Plato, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Philo, and Cicero.

one in need among you.” D.L. Mealand has suggested: “The writer of Acts seems to have seen the nascent Christian community as fulfilling the hopes, the promises and the ideals of both Torah and Greek Utopianism.”<sup>42</sup> The question that lingers, however, is does Greek and Hebrew idealism suggest that the sharing of possessions was never enacted?

Scott Bartchy<sup>43</sup> and David Seccombe<sup>44</sup> argue that Greek and Hebrew idealism need not necessarily preclude a sharing of possessions in actuality. Both argue that Luke uses the language of Greek idealism to describe what he believed had actually taken place among Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Seccombe argues that Luke is writing about actual practice rooted in Hellenistic ideals of friendship as understood by the word *koinonia*.<sup>45</sup> Bartchy draws on analysis of first- century Mediterranean kin groups and the relations between patrons in such groups, and their clients.<sup>46</sup> Bartchy suggests that the Jewish

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<sup>42</sup>        *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>43</sup>        See S. Scott Bartchy, “Community of Goods in Acts” in Birger Pearson, editor, *The Future of Christianity*, 312.

<sup>44</sup>        David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 201-209.

<sup>45</sup>        *ibid.*, 201-204. David Seccombe suggests that Luke would not use references to Greek pagan ideals, such as utopia, in his writing. Rather, the references to the sharing of souls and property between friends are rooted in ideal friendship. *Koinonia*, as employed by Luke, does not reference ideal society or a strict sharing of goods, but rather refers to the openness and sharing of friends. Use of the word implies unity and a spirit of joyful sharing. For Seccombe, the members of the Jerusalem community lived together in a spirit of unity and harmony in which property was willingly and joyously shared.

<sup>46</sup>        See also Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” in Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Acts*, 241-268.



Christians in Jerusalem lived as a “fictive kin group,”<sup>47</sup> a group, which practiced general reciprocity not based on blood ties.

Among the characteristics of a fictive kin group are loyalty and trust, truth telling, opening of homes to all in the fictive kin group, and an obligation to ensure that the needs of the group are met. Loyalty and trust<sup>48</sup> were key because in antiquity there was no understanding of the “kinship of all beings” or of “universal family.” Loyalty was to blood and kin alone<sup>49</sup>. Somehow the Jerusalem community transcended this norm in the name of Jesus Christ, extending to those outside of the kin group the same courtesy as blood relatives. Similarly, there was no social expectation to tell the truth to other than blood and kin. However, telling the truth in the Jerusalem community was a valued expectation as illustrated in the story of the consequences of the lies told by Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. The summary statements in Acts 2:46 and 5:42 refer to meetings

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<sup>47</sup> For a concise definition of “pseudo-kinship” of which the fictive kin group is an expression see Jullian Pitt-Rivers, “Pseudo-Kinship,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. D.L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 8:408-413. Pitt-Rivers suggests that there are three forms of pseudo kinship, which are not based on descent or marriage. The usage of kin terms, such as brother, aunt or uncle are ascribed to those not actually related by blood. They imply fraternity more than the relationship between siblings. There is fictive or artificial kinship, which references a type of “adoption” into community, and implies an equality of status as natural kinsmen. The final distinction is that of ritual kinship, and is expressed through blood brotherhood which involves the actual sharing of blood, or saliva, and can also include spiritual kinship instituted by rite, i.e., sharing the “cup of blood” and in baptism through godparenting.

<sup>48</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48-49. The authors list nine characteristics of the client-patron relationship, which include generalized reciprocity including the exchange of resources instrumental, economic, and political, i.e., exchange of support, loyalty, votes, protection for solidarity, and loyalty. The relationship was neither fully legal nor contractual, but based more on informal, though strong and binding, understanding. These relationships were entered into voluntarily, and could be abandoned voluntarily. This book offers insight into the Client-Patron relationships in ancient Rome, as well as a cross cultural perspective throughout the world. Generalized reciprocity is defined as giving assistance without specification of return obligation. A modern example is the relationship between a parent and a child where the parent raises the offspring with no definitive expectation of reward. See Bruce Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 102.

<sup>49</sup> See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome Neyrey, “Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts,” 37.

in homes for fellowship and meals. The final characteristic of the fictive kin group is rooted in the relationship between patron and clients, and Bartchy argues that Barnabas (Acts 4: 36-37) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) were patrons of the Jerusalem community.<sup>50</sup> Both patrons sold property and offered the proceeds of sale to the Jerusalem community, but with very different consequences. A more detailed analysis of these accounts will follow in this thesis. Implicit in the arguments of David Seccombe and Scott Bartchy is the influence of first century Mediterranean antiquity on the community in Jerusalem, and in the chronicling of Luke.

#### B. First- Century Mediterranean Antiquity

First-century Mediterranean antiquity was a culture of honour and shame<sup>51</sup>, and patronage<sup>52</sup>, and blood ties through kinship. Loyalty was extended as a matter of course to blood relatives, but all others were considered dishonourable. No one outside of the family of blood was trusted until and unless that trust was validated and verified.<sup>53</sup>

Honour is defined as the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes, and in the eyes of other members of the social group. In antiquity it was a type of social rating, which entitled a person to interact in specific ways with equals, superiors and subordinates.

Shame was understood as the loss of honour. Honour was *ascribed*, or *acquired*. *Ascribed honour* happened through birth, family connection or endowment. *Ascribed honour* could be bestowed by a person of note or power, such as a king or governor, and by God (Acts

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<sup>50</sup>        *ibid.*, 315-316.

<sup>51</sup>        See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," 25-66.

<sup>52</sup>        See Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 151-180.

<sup>53</sup>        Bruce. J. Malina and Jerome Neyrey, "Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts," 32.

2:34-36). God raised Jesus, who was utterly shamed in crucifixion, from the dead and then enthroned him at his right hand in heaven. *Acquired honour* was obtained through effort and included benefaction.<sup>54</sup>

Benefaction describes a relationship between two parties with an element of inequality and differences in power. In the patron-client relationship a type of reciprocity was practiced. In exchange for offering to the client some measure of economic or political resource, the patron received honour, loyalty, and expressions of solidarity in return.<sup>55</sup> These relationships were entered into voluntarily and could be abandoned voluntarily. North American society is universalistic with a central government and bureaucracy. In this type of society, citizens expect to have access on an equal basis to goods and services provided by the state. It is not based on race, gender or religion. In first-century Mediterranean antiquity a patron could provide a client with resources not readily accessible to all.<sup>56</sup> Honour and shame and the practice of patronage converge in the telling of two accounts of benefaction recorded by Luke in Acts. These accounts of sharing of resources capture the significance of loyalty, trust, and truth telling; honour and shame. The accounts are testaments as well to apostolic authority and *koinonia*.

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<sup>54</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Jerome Neyrey, "Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts," 25-29.

<sup>55</sup> Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 248.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 243.

## Part III

A Two Accounts of the Community of Goods Acts 4: 36-37 and Acts 5:1-11

There are two accounts in the book of Acts of those who sell property and lay the proceeds of sale at the feet of the apostles. One is the story of an individual, and the other recounts the actions of a married couple. The actions of the individual, Barnabas, and the action of the couple, Ananias and Sapphira, stand in marked contrast to one another. The action of Barnabas reflects a spirit of unity and selflessness, but the offering of Ananias and Sapphira is an example of benefaction gone utterly wrong. Again there is no scholarly unity on Luke's purpose for including them, nor agreement on the interpretation. There is significantly more debate on the passage concerning Ananias and Sapphira than there is on the faithful devotion of Barnabas.

## Barnabas

There is very little written about Barnabas. Some argue that Luke is introducing the reader to this Cypriot Jew who will later play a significant role in the life of Paul, acting as mediator between Paul and the Jerusalem church after his conversion.<sup>57</sup> Barnabas is key to Luke as one who can bridge the restored people of Judaism with those who will be chosen from among the Gentiles. The intentional literary styling of Luke may be at play, using the narrative about Barnabas as an introduction. Luke portrays Barnabas as completely submissive to the twelve and utterly trustworthy, which will be of greater significance when he defends a converted and contrite Saul of Tarsus. S. Scott

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<sup>57</sup> See James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 60; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 91; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 210.

Bartchy argues that more than an agent of introduction, Barnabas is a patron of the Jerusalem community.<sup>58</sup>

In Acts 4:36-37 the reader is informed that Barnabas sold a piece of land and offered the entire proceeds of the sale to Peter. His offering is even more magnanimous because there was no expectation that the property be sold, or that the entire profit be donated as an offering. Most of the disciples in Jerusalem had very few resources that they could share with others. Writes Bartchy, “what they could offer were their open homes, their loyalty and trust, truthfulness, a sense of a shared destiny- the benefits of living together as brothers and sisters in a fictive kin group.”<sup>59</sup> By bringing all of the proceeds of the sale to the apostles, Barnabas is demonstrating his truthfulness, openness, and solidarity with the kin group. The altruistic action of Barnabas may serve to demonstrate the unity of heart and soul that was present in the community. Little is disclosed beyond his name and his generous gift, but this in and of itself, serves to reflect more profoundly the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira which follows.

#### Ananias and Sapphira

After painting so rosy a portrait of the earliest Christian community, Luke tells the tale of benefaction gone very badly. Some argue that the motivation of Luke for including it is to teach that life in the Jerusalem community was not perfect.<sup>60</sup> As Satan came into the heart of Judas, so Satan came into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira. The second account is certainly more negative, but the prophetic power of Peter is

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<sup>58</sup> S. Scott Bartchy, “Community of Goods in Acts,” 315.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 315.

<sup>60</sup> Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 210 suggests that Luke is very intentional about stressing the positive side of the early church, although he does not shy away from the negative as 5:1-11 clearly demonstrates.

highlighted. Several scholars suggest that Luke was familiar with the story of Achan in Joshua 7.<sup>61</sup> However, there are differences. The significant difference is that Achan is stoned for stealing banned property that God had warned Israel not to take when seizing the city of Jericho. Ananias and Sapphira both drop dead when their deceit of withholding is exposed. Nonetheless the message inherent in the two stories is the same: misappropriation of possessions was an offence against the community and against God and required punishment of the most radical sort.<sup>62</sup>

The narrative is troubling for the reader. Clearly God watches over the purity of the community and exacts vengeance for its violation.<sup>63</sup> The fact that Luke is trying to convey something unique and powerful about the community is obvious. This is no mere collection of like minds, but a community with a unity of heart and soul. Clearly Ananias and Sapphira misjudged the community, and both are guilty of wanting to revel in the glory while minimizing the gift. Like Judas, this couple had Satan in their hearts; like Judas they broke fellowship by seeking something of their own. They did not recognize that they were lying to God and not mere mortals.<sup>64</sup>

The sudden death and consequent burial of Ananias is particularly troubling, made more so with the disquieting revelation that Sapphira was not informed of his passing or disposal. Ben Witherington cites J.D.M. Derrett<sup>65</sup> to explain why Ananias was

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<sup>61</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 92; Ernst Haechen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 239; and Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 213 all parallel the story of Ananias and Sapphira with that of Achan in Joshua 7.

<sup>62</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 92.

<sup>63</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240.

<sup>64</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 92.

<sup>65</sup> Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 217. I was not able to access the Derrett article.

treated so unkindly in death. When the hand of heaven has struck down an individual, the corpse was to be consigned rapidly and silently to the grave. The suicide, the rebel against society, the excommunicate, the apostate and the criminal condemned to death by the Jewish court were buried in haste and without ceremony, and no one was to mourn their passing.<sup>66</sup>

When Sapphira presented herself some three hours later, she was unaware that her husband's deceit had been discovered or that he had died and his remains disposed of. Peter gave her the opportunity to confess the actual selling price of the property, but she did not embrace the opportunity to speak the truth. As a consequence she, too, fell down dead.

#### B What Does it Mean?

Most readers find the story of Ananias and Sapphira harsh and unforgiving. Perhaps because it appears to be particularly harsh, it has captured the attention of scholars who are intent on unraveling its peculiar mystery. David Seccombe argues that Luke included the narrative to illustrate the notion that fear surrounded the primitive community.<sup>67</sup> The fate of Ananias and Sapphira inspires great fear in all that hear it (5:11). For Seccombe it makes little sense to interpret the story as a negative aspect of the sharing of goods. Their crime was the collusion to deceive and defraud the community, and this only makes sense if Ananias and Sapphira had declared the intention of offering the entire proceeds of sale to the community. In withholding some of the proceeds, they were embezzling funds from the community, and were undeserving of the public esteem

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, 217.

<sup>67</sup> David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 211.

and gratitude which their original action would have attracted. Their deception is equated with “lying to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3, 9).<sup>68</sup>

There appears to be no clear understanding of the motivation of Ananias and Sapphira for lying. Nowhere in the narrative is it made clear to the reader why Ananias and Sapphira pretended to offer all of the proceeds of the sale while retaining some. This question has been particularly engaging to Richard Ascough, who sees the answer to the question inextricably bound to the first-century Mediterranean social system of honour and shame, and the practice of benefaction.<sup>69</sup>

Benefaction was practiced in the public and private sector in Greco-Roman antiquity, taking many forms. An emperor could act as benefactor to his subjects who reciprocated with their loyalty. It manifested itself among friends with persons of equal status helping one another in times of financial crises. In this scenario, benefaction was understood within the boundaries of reciprocity, and the ideal of friends sharing in common. Benefaction also took place within a group setting. In exchange for offering some monetary gift to a voluntary association, a benefactor would receive public recognition and honour. Ascough argues that in the community of goods passages, Luke marries the two notions of benefaction among friends with benefaction practiced within voluntary community. The real sin of Ananias and Sapphira was in attempt. While

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 212.

<sup>69</sup> Article downloaded from the Internet as a part of an online course taken on Luke-Acts at Queen’s University, Kingston under Richard Ascough in the year 2001. The article was downloaded from the professor’s web site, but is footnoted in the body of the text as Richard Ascough, “Benefaction Gone Wrong: The ‘Sin’ of Ananias and Sapphira in Context” published in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*, ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michael Desjardins (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 91-110. In this article Ascough suggests that previous scholarly debates on Acts 5:1-11 have not included any reference to benefaction as a possible explanation for the sin of the couple, and the motivation for Luke in including the narrative. See also Bruce J. Malina and Jerome Neyrey “Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World,” 25-65, and Halvor Moxnes “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” 241-268.



honour was the intended result, it was the result of deceit. Their motivation was to receive greater glory than they deserved.

Clearly there are no easy answers to understanding the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira. The story does, at the very least, teach that the Jerusalem community was not exempt from the influence of evil. It does serve as a good example of apostolic authority, as Peter is able to see with the eyes of the prophet. He is able to recognize the deceit without apparently being apprised of the fact. It reminds the contemporary reader to have a purity of motivation when making an offering, for God can see one's heart. Although public adulation often accompanies benefaction, perhaps Ascough is correct in suggesting that the desire for honour may supersede the offering. The primary purpose for offering a gift is to address need and not for adulation.<sup>70</sup>

Luke may have wanted his readers to be well apprised of the power inherent both within the apostles, and at work within the community. He may have wanted to impart to his readership a respect for purity of motivation. One was not expected to part with property, nor made to offer any of the proceeds of the sale. The benefaction of Barnabas stands out as an extraordinary and exemplary gesture that stands on its own merit. By contrast, the action of Ananias and Sapphira calls into question motivation and sought after results. One's heart needs always to be in the right place when making an offering of any size to God. One must not lose sight of who is the recipient of the gift when making an offering, a truth which Ananias and Sapphira did not fully comprehend.

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<sup>70</sup> Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relationships and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 265. Moxnes writes: "The ideal, dramatically contrasted with the story of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), shows acts of benefactions to the needy, in particular, by disciples who can act as patrons to the community. But the distribution of goods is made by the apostles, who act as brokers. The donor-patrons do not receive any special honour or reward. Their gift is an act of service towards those in need, but it is not to be transformed into status for the benefactors. It does not give them a special honour, but is a sign of the spirit of unity within the community."

The question of motivation is an interesting one and may be difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. However, it would seem that at least this much could be concluded from pondering the accounts of Ananias and Sapphira, and Barnabas. First of all, both accounts demonstrate apostolic authority. Barnabas puts down the proceeds of sale at the feet of the apostles in a show of submission (4:37). Peter exposes Ananias (5:3) and Sapphira (5: 9) as frauds. Secondly, the accounts imply the influence of culture on the writing of Luke who has an understanding of both client-patron relations within a voluntary association, and the unity of heart and soul shared by friends. The practice of benefaction within antiquity finds a place in the Acts of the Apostles. Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira were willing to make a substantial offering to the church to address need. Thirdly, the generosity of Barnabas, and even that of Ananias and Sapphira, stand as examples of *koinonia*. The reader is not informed what, if anything, the apostles did with the deceitful offering of Ananias and Sapphira. Their sad story is a reminder to possess a purity of heart when making an offering, and also suggests that the Jerusalem community did not remain pristine for long.

#### C Summary of Chapter Two

If Luke is trying to convince Theophilus, and anyone else who reads his book, of the transforming power of the gospel to affect behaviour, then the community of goods passages are significant examples of communal life. The texts rely on the language of Greek ideals of friendship and utopianism, and this has led some scholars to conclude that the references are idealistic. Those who subscribe to this school of thought include Hans Conzelmann, Jacques Dupont, Ernst Haenchen, Luke Timothy Johnson, Howard

Marshall, David Mealand, and Ben Witherington III.<sup>71</sup> Two scholars argue for an actual community of goods.

David Seccombe and Scott Bartchy agree that the language of Greek idealism was used by Luke to describe actual communal practice.<sup>72</sup> The basis for both of these scholarly arguments is rooted in the influence of culture. Seccombe suggests that members of the Jerusalem community lived by the spirit of ideal friendship, which included a willingness to share their goods and property. Bartchy argues for an actual sharing of goods based in the client –patron relationship of benefaction. Drawing on evidence from cultural anthropology he has argued that the members of the Jerusalem community interacted with one another like members of a fictive kin group. Converts to the faith interacted together like members of a family, sharing their homes for fellowship, and even their goods to address need. Neither Bartchy nor Seccombe concludes that reference to Greek and Hebrew idealism should preclude an actual sharing of goods.

The genius of Luke as a writer is seen in his ability to weave together the stories and ideals of two cultures. His use of the word *koinonia* is engaging because of the breadth of possible interpretation. Included in the understanding of the word is the notion of communal association, generous altruism, unity and sharing. The first community in Jerusalem worshipped daily in the synagogue, shared communal meals, prayed together and held all things in common. Need was addressed by a willingness to part with property, and to offer the proceeds to the community. Such willingness would appeal to both Jew and Greek as fulfillment of their highest cultural ideals.

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<sup>71</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>72</sup> See footnote 30.

There continues to be a diversity of opinion on what is historical and what has been idealized within the Acts. It has become increasingly plausible that Luke idealized Jerusalem as the center of Christianity, and that Jerusalem may have been more symbolic than actual as the seat of the faith. Given that Jesus was a Galilean and that his first disciples were also Galileans, one can speculate as to whether the apostles would relocate to a new city to carry on the work begun in Nazareth. Luke was very intentional in his gospel to begin the story of Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem with Zechariah at the altar of incense. It is in the Jerusalem Temple that Zechariah is informed by an angel that he and his wife would produce a child. They were to name him John and he would be the herald of the Messiah. His gospel ends in Jerusalem with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and his command to the disciples to remain there until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Luke begins his second volume within the city of Jerusalem, commensurate with the Jewish holiday of Pentecost. In the closing chapter of his gospel in Luke 24: 46-49 Jesus says: "Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to raise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things. And see I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power on high."

It does seem that it was important to Luke the author to place his story firmly within Judaism, and Jerusalem is synonymous with Judaism. The references to Jerusalem may be more symbolic than fact-based and can be contemplated as evidence of the integral relationship between history and theology. Luke was concerned that his readers understand that the giving of the gospel to the Gentile was not an attempt to take

salvation away from Israel. Faith, historical events, and culture were all influences on Luke the writer. The story of the Jerusalem community as recounted by Luke tells of a community of believers continuing to maintain a Jewish identity and practice while integrating the tenets of Christianity and the influence of Hellenism.

The converts worshipped in the synagogue, and continued to observe the tenets and rituals of Judaism, gathering in homes throughout the week for Christian fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread. Many who live in modernity and postmodernity may have lost touch with the notions of sharing and interdependence. The whole concept of placing one's possessions at the disposal of one's friends may be foreign. Concern for self and posterity continues to be paramount in most family units. Even commitment to church property and edifice has assumed a kind of protectionism. Property is seldom relinquished; in fact, it is often retained as a testament to history and tradition. Indeed, the assumption made as foundational in this paper is that most church property will be retained at all cost. Not only is the Greek ideal of holding things in common a foreign concept, but also lacking is the unity of heart and spirit, even among congregations within the same denomination.

It is the underlying assumption of this thesis that the community of goods is a faith response. In faithful response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the modern day believer is quite capable of continuing to live by a spirit of *koinonia*. The language of Greek idealism need not be understood as rooted solely in antiquity. The spirit of *koinonia* can continue to influence the faith and action of the contemporary follower of Christ. Perhaps today, as in antiquity, the church community should be mindful of need both within the congregation and outside of the worshipping community, and also be willing to respond

by sharing and relinquishment. In response to the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the pilgrims in Jerusalem asked, “What are we to do?” That same rhetorical question needs to be asked by the contemporary follower in response to the circumstances of dwindling congregations and outdated buildings. What are we to do as ambassadors of the faith and as faithful stewards? What is the Holy Spirit challenging the contemporary church in North America to do in faithful response to the mandate of the gospel Jesus Christ?

The church of Christ has very humble and even meager roots. It began with the carpenter from Galilee who invited twelve ordinary men to come and follow. The mantle of office was entrusted to the eleven as their teacher and messiah was taken up into heaven. From humble beginnings has grown a worldwide religion that has continued to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and influenced by culture. Christianity in North America continues to experience metamorphosis, and yet, the same imperative to live as servants and to make disciples continues to be the mandate of the believer. The question “What are we to do?” may not be as simply answered as it was in response to Peter’s preaching. Nonetheless, the church is continually being called to wrestle with how best to meet the needs of the wider community.

Whether the community of goods was actually practiced or is reference to an ideal may never be known for certain. It may always be resolved as a matter of personal, yet scholarly, opinion. However, given the influence of culture on the compiling of the *gospel*, and the awareness of Luke of both Greek and Hebrew ideal in tandem with the practice of benefaction, it is not implausible to conclude that a sharing of possessions was practiced for a time. The gospel of Luke is filled with teaching on possessions. Followers

of Christianity are intended to be rich towards God. In the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:15 it is recorded “Take care and be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not exist in the abundance of possessions.” Later in the gospel, in the account of the rich ruler who is seeking to justify himself as righteous, are recorded words of Jesus that continue to call believers to accountability and responsibility. “Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). Even the account of the widow’s mite in Luke 21:1-4 teaches that followers are to act responsibly with their money and possessions.

The community of goods as recorded in Acts may be evidence of the agenda of the author to address need through relinquishment. Scripture, as the living word of God, still speaks to the believer, and influences the way a believer lives. The homiletical purpose of Acts is to tell the story of Christ and his new community in such a way as to encourage the emulation of the founder and his original successors. The writer of Acts is not merely chronicling a history of the past. Rather, the past becomes the platform from which to preach to the present.<sup>73</sup>

The church in North America may be able to embrace the community of goods as both ancient ideal and a way of being. As culture has continued to influence theology and ecclesiology, the church in North America has been disempowered. It may be time for believers to ponder the idea of surrendering possessions and ownership for the good of the many, and embracing relinquishment as a means of addressing wider need. Jesus said, “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals” (Luke 10:4a).” Again the challenging wisdom of John Gillman:

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<sup>73</sup> William Willimon, *Acts*, 5.

We began this book with an oft-repeated question from Luke's two-volume work: "What are we to do?" After taking our reflective journey with Luke through the Gospel and Acts, the query remains before us and calls forth from us with ever-greater urgency a faith response. To see what we have as gifts to be shared rather than as things to be possessed is to strengthen bonds within the community of persons. To realize that who we are is more important than what we have is a significant first insight on the path to true freedom. What is at stake for us is nothing less than our wholeness and salvation. What is at stake for the world is nothing less than the well being and wholeness of the entire human community.<sup>74</sup>

An example has been set for the church of the twenty-first century as recorded by Luke in the community of goods passages in Acts. I believe that the community of goods can be regarded as a faith response. I believe that the time has come to give serious and theological consideration to relinquishment in response to the gospel.

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<sup>74</sup>John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 116-117.



## CHAPTER THREE

“There was not a needy person among them for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.” This verse from the second summary (Acts 4: 34), rooted in idealism and practiced through the cultural norm of benefaction, is a faith response. As an outward expression of an inner faith, converts were willing to relinquish property to address need. The question to be reckoned with today is whether such a practice can be embraced by the believer again. The Christian believer and the Christian community continue to be influenced by the culture in which both reside.

This chapter will examine the contemporary North American church within the current cultural setting of postmodernity.<sup>75</sup> The status of the church will be examined through the lens of postmodernist culture, demonstrating just how influential culture has

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<sup>75</sup> Postmodernism is difficult to define. It is an area of academic study that emerged in the 1980s, appearing in a number of disciplines including art, architecture, music, film and literature. It is difficult to locate it temporally or historically, because it is not clear when the postmodern begins. Jean-Francois Lyotard is associated with the term. Lyotard argues that totality and stability and order are maintained in modern societies through the means of “grand narratives.” These are stories that a culture tells itself about its practices and beliefs. Lyotard argues that all aspects of these grand narratives, including science as the primary form of knowledge, depend on grand narratives. Postmodernism is a critique of grand narratives, which are seen to mask the contradictions and instabilities inherent in any social organization. Post modernism rejects grand narratives and favors “mini narratives” that explain local events rather than large scale global concepts. Postmodern “mini narratives” are always situational, provisional, contingent and temporary, making no claim to universality, truth, reason, or stability. <http://www.colorado.edu/Engl.2012Klages/pomo.html>. For detailed discussion of postmodernism see Lawrence Cahoone ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), Craig Van Gelder, “Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Conditions,” in George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 113-138, and Jean – Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) and Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

For the purpose of this thesis when the term postmodernism appears it will be a general reference to the time in which we currently live, which is an age of technology and mass communication. It will also carry the meaning associated with the term, which infers a time when universal truths and the supremacy of science and empirical knowledge are subject to interpretation. For the church of the twenty-first century, the challenge is how to preach its dogma and tenets of theology and faith in a climate where much is routinely questioned in the wake of postmodernism. For the church to have meaning to a generation of people that is more inclined to question than accept, postmodernism can be judged as a threat. However, it is also a phenomenon to be reckoned with.

been as a dominant force on religion. The current church situation in North America will be contrasted with the community of goods passages to see if these writings can inform an institution in transition.

#### A. The New Age

We are living in an age of globalization<sup>76</sup> and mass communication. Through telecommunication the world can witness history in the making. In the past fifty years television has evolved from grainy shadowy images in black and white to precise colour images. Movies can be rented at a local outlet and shown in the home on videotape or compact disc. There has been an evolution in audio from long playing albums to cassette and to the more compact disc. Computers are routinely used for academic and professional work. The Internet is gaining popularity as an expedient way to access information. Exploration of space has evolved from an era when capsules landed in the ocean to the time when space shuttles take off and land on airforce strips constructed to withstand the intense heat and velocity of the craft. Voice mail and automated services have replaced many operators and tellers, and universities are offering courses on line so that students living a distance away from an institution can take courses without having to

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<sup>76</sup> Keith Ward, "Convergent Spirituality," in Deborah Brown, ed., *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 47-48. Globalization as a concept has become part of the vocabulary as the world approached the twenty-first century. Technology and mass communication have made it possible to communicate instantly with any part of the planet, and to manufacture goods within different continents, providing access to a worldwide market. Globalization has had both positive and negative effects on humanity. It has certainly encouraged an awareness of, and appreciation for, multiculturalism. One can experience first hand different cultures and ways of life, which fosters an appreciation for the diversity of human life. It has made the marketplace in remote parts of the world a cheaper place to manufacture goods. The negative impact of the world wide marketplace is the power amassed by multinational companies who are driven by the profit margin. Goods are mass produced in other parts of the world by workers who may not receive a fair wage for their labour. These goods are then sold to richer countries to sustain a certain life style. The best interest of the poor labourer is not always uppermost. A further negative influence of globalization may be the homogenization of the world, as western culture dominates the world, i.e., McDonalds restaurants and hotel chains.

be physically present in the academy.<sup>77</sup> It is a different time, and the church is likewise being encouraged to embrace the available technology. Congregations increasingly are using web sites to promote the community, and audio visual aids are replacing hymnbooks and sermons. It is a new age. However, the advent of the “new age” began long ago, and has been a part of the evolution of humanity. The roots of the age of technology go back many generations, and are rooted in the rise of secularization that occurred in tandem with humanity’s quest for knowledge.

### B. The Rise of Secularism

Secularization<sup>78</sup> is defined as the movement in society from some sacred condition to successively secular conditions in which the sacred recedes. Secularization thesis refers to the process of increasing secularism and diminishing of the sacral.<sup>79</sup> The assumption may be made that the effects of secularization have been most keenly observed since the revolutionary 1960s, and the profound effect of this turbulent decade on history. However, the process of secularization can be traced back to the Middle

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<sup>77</sup> These opening paragraphs have not been gleaned from any written source, but are a brief summation of some of the changes that I have experienced in my lifetime to date.

<sup>78</sup> Bryan Wilson, “Secularization: The Inherited Model,” Phillip Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 11-14. Secularization is not to be confused with secularism, which is the ideology of those who wish to promote the decline of religion and to hasten the process of secularization. Secularization describes a process in the course of social development. Simply put, secularization is a transfer of power from a supernaturalist frame to one more empirical, rational and pragmatic, and rooted in the individual. The steady accumulation of empirical knowledge, and the increasing application of logic contributed to an alternative interpretation of life. Secularization need not imply the complete demise of religion.

<sup>79</sup> Phillip E. Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1.

Ages.<sup>80</sup> Profound changes began taking place in western European culture in the fourteenth century.

The Renaissance,<sup>81</sup> which began in southern Europe in the 1300s and gradually spread northward, gave new life to intellectual and artistic pursuits. The Protestant Reformation focussed on the responsibility of individuals to shape their spiritual lives. Voyages of discovery expanded geographical boundaries and led to the establishment of colonialism and the evolution of the nation-state. Developments in mathematics and physics rejuvenated the concept of natural laws. Reason and observation increasingly became the tools for discovering truth, and the experience of the individual became a trusted variable in the pursuit of knowledge as the reasonable autonomous individual began to emerge. The Industrial Revolution formed the basis for an expanded marketplace and the requisite need for centers of trade and business and economic policy.

As the pursuit of knowledge increased, there was a commensurate growth in a type of counter culture movement to the empiricism of science, technology, and capitalism. While clearly a product of modernity, modernism<sup>82</sup> expressed different values from modernity placing emphasis on the subjective, emotional and the creative. The disciplines of sociology and psychology were birthed, and in the art world the schools of

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<sup>80</sup> See Christopher Kaiser, "From Biblical Secularity to Modern Secularism: Historical Aspects and Stages," and Craig Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," in George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*, 79-112. Secularization can be traced from the Middle Ages and has been influenced by the evolution of reason, individualism, and culture.

<sup>81</sup> For an in depth treatment of the Renaissance see Russell J. Major, *Civilization in the Western World Vol. 2. Renaissance to 1815* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 65-230.

<sup>82</sup> The label "modern", first articulated in nineteenth century sociology, was meant to distinguish the present era from the previous one which was labeled "antiquity." The modern era is associated with the European Enlightenment, which began roughly in the middle of the eighteenth century. Modernity is fundamentally about rationality and rationalization, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function. <http://colorado.edu/English/ENGL.2012Klages/pomo.html>

impressionism, expressionism and abstract expressionism evolved.<sup>83</sup> Reliance upon the supernatural for answers ebbed increasingly, and the significance of religion began a process of decline. In sum, once legitimate authority was dependent upon religious sanctions, and social control relied heavily upon religiously defined rewards and punishments. Faith defined true learning. Now all of these functions have been superceded. Authority is now established by constitutions, social control is a matter of law, and law has become increasingly technical, and decreasingly moral. Today there is a sharp line of distinction drawn between the notion of “sin” and crime. Revelation has become a distrusted source of knowledge, and there is a commensurate emphasis placed upon the value of doubt over faith. Critical skepticism has usurped unquestioning belief, and religion is no longer supreme.<sup>84</sup>

Secularization as a process has been influencing culture and religion for generations. Although some may argue that the Christian church has been weakened by the secularization process, and the current trend of mainline denominational decline has become a matter of concern for sociologists of religion, clergy and laity alike, secularization has not completely obliterated the church. Christian religion and faith praxis continues to be a force in the new age, despite the ongoing effects of cultural change. The effects of secularization are readily seen in the changes in modern, technological society that have been occurring at a rapid rate since the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>83</sup> Christopher Kaiser, “From Biblical Secularity to Modern Secularism,” 115-119.

<sup>84</sup> See Bryan Wilson, “Secularization: The Inherited Model,” 14-15. See also Reginald Bibby, *Unknown Gods* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 60-63

There has been a cultural change of epic proportion ongoing in North America in recent decades.<sup>85</sup> The definition of the family has changed, the birthrate has dropped<sup>86</sup> and the whole institution of marriage is different. People are choosing to marry later in life, and some couples are opting to not have children. There has been a steady increase of those who co-habitate and choose not to get married, and, more recently, the definition of marriage is changing to include committed partners who are gay and lesbian. The divorce rate has gone up, and it is not uncommon for a child to have parents and step-parents. The availability of contraception has proven helpful in delaying childbirth and is a contributing factor to sex outside of marriage.<sup>87</sup>

The power of the media<sup>88</sup> has grown with daily exposure to newspapers, books, radios, television and cinema. Television<sup>89</sup> and movies have grown more sexually explicit, and in recent years, some television programs contain nudity clauses<sup>90</sup> for the

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<sup>85</sup> See C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America: The Character of a Religious Marketplace," in David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 347-348. Mark Kinzer, "Christian Identity and Social Change in Technological Society," in *Christianity Confronts Modernity: A Theological and Pastoral Inquiry by Protestant Evangelicals and Roman Catholics* ed., Peter Williamson and Kevin Perotta (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1981), 18-36. Lyle E. Schaller, *It's A Different World* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 28-31.

<sup>86</sup> C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America," 347. "The cultural ethos of the 1960s affected churches in several ways. Changing values regarding divorce, birth control, age of marriage and optimal family size led to *additional* declines in the birthrate."

<sup>87</sup> Dean Hoge, "National Contextual Factors Influencing Church Trends" in Dean Hoge and David Roozen, ed., *Understanding Church Growth and Decline* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), 107-112. Child rearing was seen as less important in marriage in 1971. Attitudes towards extramarital sexual relations declined, as did reaction to homosexuality, and the practice of premarital sex increased. Divorce rates have accelerated since 1960. There was increased tolerance for abortion and the use of contraceptives.

<sup>88</sup> Mark Kinzer, "Christian Identity and Social Change," in Roozen and Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth*, 29. "Individuals deal daily with magazines, newspapers, books, radios, record albums, tapes, television, and the cinema."

<sup>89</sup> Much of this section has been observed by me and has not been drawn from any other source.

<sup>90</sup> Nudity clauses are a recent addition to the contracts signed by television actors where the actor may be called upon to perform a scene partially, or completely nude. This is relatively new for television, although not uncommon in major motion pictures.

actors. The use of expletives, once judged as inappropriate for television, are now included in the scripts of some programs with only a discretionary warning by the broadcasters. Western society has become increasingly materialistic due to ongoing technological advancement. Computers are getting smaller and can fit into the breast pocket, replacing the date book of yesteryear. Telephones have been freed from the walls and with cellular batteries are completely transportable. Women are completely at home in the workforce, and gender is less of a barrier to work. Cities have spread out into the suburbs. More and more persons have access to secondary and post-secondary school education. Society has become increasingly consumer-driven and there is choice everywhere.

The effect of education, mass media, materialism and consumerism has had a profound effect on those born after 1950. The postmodernist has been raised in a culture of individualism, privatism, pluralism, and multi-culturalism. Such a worldly exposure has influenced the choices that individuals make, including the choice to affiliate or not to affiliate with the church. Consequently, mainline denominations in particular have been declining in North America since the 1950s, and the study of church growth and decline has become a branch of study within the discipline of sociology. The sociologist of religion studies the changing trends in faith, attendance at services of worship, and all demographics associated with religion. Reasons for church decline are integrally linked

to the ongoing changes within society.<sup>91</sup>

### C. Factors Affecting Church Decline in the North American Church

Sociologists of religion have been studying the rise and decline of denominations in North America since the 1970s.<sup>92</sup> Churches were filled to overflowing following the Second World War and throughout much of the 1950s.<sup>93</sup> During the 1940s marriage rates climbed to record levels and the birthrate went up. Churches were planted in suburban areas, and religious programs were family oriented. During the radical 1960s observers noted a downward trend in church membership, and researchers posed questions as to the reasons for the trend. While there are no easy answers to the reasons for church decline, the influence of changing culture has been studied as a significant factor. Sociologists have delineated the study of church demographics into two concentrations: contextual factors and institutional factors.<sup>94</sup>

*Contextual factors* are external to the church, but present in the community, the society and culture in which the church sits. Study of the context includes examining the neighbourhood surrounding the church, and demographics in the congregation and in

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<sup>91</sup> C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America," 348. "Young adults, in particular were more likely to question the proper role of religious authority. The rising divorce rate, dramatic increases in labour force participation by women, as well as delayed marriage and child rearing were all linked to changing cultural values. Smaller families were not only considered to be more practical from an economic perspective, they were also considered a morally appropriate response to the "population explosion."

<sup>92</sup> See C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America: The Character of the Marketplace," 348. Hadaway writes that declining rates of membership affected all denominations in the 1950's and early 1960s. However, denominational leaders did not take serious note because membership remained substantial. Attempts to understand and prioritize declines did not start until the mid 1970s. See also Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987), 12. In Canada, in 1946 60% of Protestants claimed attending church. This figure dropped to 45% in the mid 1950s and stabilized at 25% at the time of publication of this resource.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, 347-348.

<sup>94</sup> David A. Roozen and Jackson Carroll, "Recent Trends in Church Membership and Participation: An Introduction," in Dean R. Hoge and David Roozen eds., in *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*, 39.



community. Included also in the contextual study of the church are the “social structural factors.” These include the changing role of women in society, birth rates, divorce rates and the changing role of community in the life of the individual. The church has little control over contextual and social structural factors. *Institutional factors* are internal to the church and are aspects of its life and functioning over which it has some control.<sup>95</sup> The operative word may be “some” control, as denominations sometimes set policy and polity to which some members of congregations take exception. Institutional factors include the level of strictness as a denomination, the commitment to social activism, and relevance.

Sociologists of religion have examined the church by studying the shifting cultural scene of the recent past and the effect on church membership. The factors included in contextual study are what might be labeled as “the norms” of postmodern, western society, and include the influence of higher education, and the effects of pluralism, individualism, privatism and anti-institutionalism.<sup>96</sup> As more adults are exposed to a liberal arts education there has been a ripple effect of increasing skepticism, liberalism and relativism. Tradition no longer holds the power that it once did, and individual freedom to choose for oneself has gained in precedence.<sup>97</sup> The rise in

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<sup>95</sup> See Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson, Donald Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries* (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 11-19.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 13-14. Privatism is defined as closely related to individualism and refers to the American residential patterns toward “lifestyle enclaves,” quasicommunities based on common socioeconomic characteristics rather than common histories. Lifestyle enclaves are retreats from public involvement, predicated on the assumption that individuals want privacy. Though persons live in proximity to one another they fail to develop interdependence or community. Privatism has fostered a utilitarian perspective on faith and church. Faith is good if it helps one achieve one’s goals. Goals, success, and enhancement have become superlative to tradition.

<sup>97</sup> Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods*, 148; Jackson Carroll, *Mainline to the Future* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 10.

individualism has weakened community life, and encouraged faith without community. Baby boomers do not necessarily equate faith with church affiliation. Dropping out of church does not necessarily imply a loss of faith. Rather, it may signify that faith can be successfully maintained on an individual basis.<sup>98</sup> This poses a challenge for the church.

A congregation needs to attract new members and affiliates to ensure its future, but some affiliates do not make the connection to the need for regular attendance. Unless the chasm is closed the church will continue to suffer further decline. At the same time, denominational leaders can take heart in the news that church absence is not equated with a lack of faith. Ecclesiology that is appropriate to the twenty-first century and new age evangelism may need to be considered and developed by denominations and church leaders. Understanding the changing cultural mosaic can help church leaders to work with the dominant culture to ensure that the church is also an agent of transformation. However, the growing distrust of institutions, which has also been highlighted as a cultural influence, can also be problematic for church growth. While contemporary society is not “anti-establishment” as it was in the 1960s, there is a growing distrust of authoritative institutions. This distrust has been compounded in the wake of allegations and charges of sexual misconduct within mainline denominations in Canada and the

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<sup>98</sup> Dean Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries*, 13. See also Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods*, 51, and Reginald Bibby, *There's Got To Be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians* (Winfield, British Columbia: Wood Lake Books, 1995), 19, and Reginald Bibby, “Religion in the Canadian 1990s The Paradox of Poverty and Potential,” in David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway eds., *Church and Denominational Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 278. Bibby makes it abundantly clear in his books that Baby Boomers still claim a denominational affiliation while seldom attending church regularly. Carl S. Dudley, *Where Have All The People Gone?* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), 12 also states that religious belief is not synonymous with church attendance or membership.

United States.<sup>99</sup> There continues to be creative tension between tradition and culture, and the church wrestles with the sacred in a secular age.

Secularization and social change have impacted on social norms and values. Traditional values have also gone through a metamorphosis throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup> Some couples choose to live together outside of the bounds of matrimony, and there has been an increase in the number of gay and lesbian unions. Couples are delaying marriage until careers have been established and this has had a ripple effect on the birthrate. Some are making the decision to not have children, while others are delaying childbirth. The development of contraceptives has enabled individuals and couples to control fertility. Families have become smaller in recent decades, and the divorce rate has increased. Women have entered the workforce, and many couples juggle the demands of two careers. Couples who both work outside of the home and who are raising a family find their time stretched to the limit. Even “keeping the Sabbath” has changed in recent years. Stores and malls were once closed on Sunday, but today there is Sunday retailing.<sup>101</sup> There is little to distinguish Sunday from any other day of the week, a further testament to the tension between tradition and change. It is a different age in which the church exercises ministry, and the mainline denomination has had to grapple

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<sup>99</sup> The United Church of Canada, The Anglican Church in Canada, and the Roman Catholic Church in Canada and in the United States have been engaged in legal battles over sexual misconduct among the clergy and abuses of native children in Residential Schools. Some of these court cases are ongoing, and involve millions of dollars in lawsuits and a serious loss of face for the denominations involved. See also Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 69-70.

<sup>100</sup> See C. Kirk Hadaway, “Church Growth in North America,” 347.

<sup>101</sup> According to the recent edition of *The Observer*, Nova Scotia is the only Canadian province to prohibit Sunday shopping. Stores were allowed to be open on the six consecutive Sundays leading up to Christmas, which apparently mirrors the practice in Prince Edward Island. According to the article churches did not react to the Sunday retailing because the store hours did not interfere with worship times. Others suggest that there was no reaction to the proposed change because many judge that there are more important issues to be concerned about. See *The United Church Observer* Vol. 67 No. 7, 8.

with how to live by the mandate of the gospel to make disciples in the wake of an evolving culture.

The changing status of women, the importance of basic human rights, and changing sexual mores have been particular areas of tension between church and culture. For example, The United Church of Canada was a mere eleven years of age as a denomination when it ordained its first woman, Lydia Gruchy, in Saskatchewan in 1936. Although women were ordained sporadically thereafter, in recent decades there has been a steady increase in the number of women ordained and entering Theological College. In contrast to this, the Roman Catholic Church has a strictly male priesthood and there has been opposition to the ordination of women by the current Pope, John Paul II.

A second example of institutional change within the United Church of Canada occurred in 1988, when the General Council of The United Church of Canada removed “sexual orientation in and of itself” as a barrier to ordination.<sup>102</sup> This action was viewed as an issue of justice and equality and mirrored the cultural practice of not excluding self-declared practicing homosexual persons from any career. However, many individual members of the church, and even entire congregations, took exception to the decision.<sup>103</sup> There was a grassroots backlash to the change, and an opposing group called The Community of Concern was established. Some Community of Concern congregations became “covenanting” congregations, which set them apart as opposed to the ordination of homosexuals. Other congregations became “affirming” congregations, setting

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<sup>102</sup> See The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the Thirty Second General Council* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1989), 95-112.

<sup>103</sup> Reginald Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 71 reports that between 1984 and 1990 the issue of the ordination of homosexual persons dominated United Church life. Following the adoption, about 25,000 members and 10 congregations left the denomination.

themselves apart as open both to the policy of ordaining gays and to calling an openly gay minister.<sup>104</sup>

A third example of institutional change within The United Church of Canada is the use of inclusive language. The language of the church, while still liturgical and theological, has been changed to be more inclusive in the wake of the feminist movement. In 1996, The United Church of Canada published a new hymnbook titled *Voices United*, which includes several contemporary hymns and also includes traditional hymns with inclusive language. The United Church has wanted to keep step with a changing culture while remaining true to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, some members and adherents of The United Church of Canada have not always agreed with the policy and polity of the denomination.<sup>105</sup>

This is not unique to the United Church as a denomination. Mainline Catholicism has captured the attention of historians and theologians, as the legacy of John Paul II is being chronicled in this the twenty-fifth year of his papacy. As this thesis is being written, the world is poised and anticipating the death of Pope John Paul II. Historians, theologians and faithful followers have begun to reflect on his papacy. Recent articles in the local paper have highlighted his legacy, and one editorial headline sums up his

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<sup>104</sup> Sydenham Street United Church, one of three large downtown churches in the city of Kingston, is an affirming congregation. The rainbow flag hangs in the chancel and has also been incorporated into the signage on the church lawn. A large number of gay couples attend this church, although it is not the only congregation where gay individuals and partners are welcomed.

<sup>105</sup> My own parents took exception to the ordination of self-declared practicing homosexuals. While they have stopped short of disassociating, they have stopped donating to the Mission and Service Fund, which is the national stewardship fund of the denomination. They no longer receive *The United Church Observer*, which is the national magazine of the denomination. They continue to donate to the local congregation by weekly envelope.

leadership: *Disciples and critics agree: John Paul has left his mark.*<sup>106</sup> This article suggests that the pope will be remembered for his conservatism. The conservative wing of the Catholic Church appreciates the certitude that has been reinforced. “There is no wavering on his part.” The more liberal Catholic has been disappointed about lifestyle choices and the constraints placed by the pope on liberal Catholic scholarship. “There is not the freedom of research there should be. A lot of doors have been closed.”<sup>107</sup>

Gwynne Dyer, in an editorial,<sup>108</sup> expresses the view that the current pope has reversed the transformation of the church that was begun in 1962 after Vatican II. Dyer highlights the state of the Catholic Church in 1978 at the time of the election of John Paul II. Dyer contends that ritual was taking a secondary place to spiritual commitment. In South Africa, bishops were taking a leading role in opposition to apartheid, and in Latin America the phenomenon of “liberation theology” was reconnecting the church with the impoverished peasant majority that had long been ignored. In the west, the old hierarchies were all under challenge, but especially the hierarchy of gender. Justice and equality were the operative themes. Dyer makes the connection between theology and culture keeping step with one another and each informing the other. However, he goes on to suggest that this has all come to a halt after twenty-five years under the leadership of John Paul II.

After twenty-five years of conservative rule the collegiality promised in Vatican II is dead, replaced with a top down rule of decrees of faith and morality. Liberation

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<sup>106</sup> Douglas Todd, “Pope Speaks Openly about Death,” *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, 16, October 2003, 14.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>108</sup> Gwynne Dyer, “Pope reversed church’s trend toward modernity,” *The Kingston Whig Standard*, 16, October 2003, 7.

theology has been crushed as heresy, and women are still constrained by tradition. Dyer quotes Hans Kung, one of the liberal theologians whose license to teach in Catholic institutions was revoked in 1979 by the Vatican:

The authority of the Vatican has waged an almost spooky battle against modern women who seek a contemporary form of life, prohibiting birth control and abortion (even in the case of incest or rape), divorce, the ordination of women and the modernization of women's religious orders.

Dyer concludes that given the fact that John Paul II has named two hundred and twenty- six cardinals, and these men hold his deeply conservative views, that the successor of John Paul II named by the College of Cardinals will likely be as theologically conservative. The trend towards Catholic conservative papal leadership may continue for yet another generation, and may foster ongoing tension between tradition and transition.

There are those who may argue that the decisions made by the General Council of The United Church of Canada to ordain women and homosexuals, and to modernize the language of hymns is going too far.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, there are those who may argue that the Roman Catholic Church has not gone far enough in its attitudes towards women.<sup>110</sup> The examples illustrate the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity.

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<sup>109</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 198. "In attempting to make an adjustment in light of what the leadership saw as theologically and culturally appropriate, the United Church received the accolades of some and the derision of many. Prophetic? Maybe. A sellout to culture? Maybe. The point is that in a liberal denomination flexibility is a two edged sword."

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 202 . Bibby writes that large numbers of Catholics simply do not or cannot reconcile official teachings with everyday life. A majority does not concur with the official position on sex outside of marriage, divorce, abortion and birth control. A percentage believes that the priesthood should include women and that priests should be allowed to marry. See chart on page 203 for the percentage table.

The church walks a fine line between accommodating the culture, or resisting.<sup>111</sup> Some may argue that extreme liberalism, like ordaining self-declared practicing homosexuals, has distanced the church from its moral and scriptural footings. Others may argue that a return to authoritative Catholic conservatism may distance the church from the lived reality of North American women and liberal Catholics. Both denominations have made institutional decisions to be accommodating of, or resistant to, the cultural milieu of twentieth century North American postmodernity. History will be the judge.

In sum, there has been a massive cultural shift since the 1960s.<sup>112</sup> The values of the 1960s have encouraged individualism and a weakening of respect for institutional authority.<sup>113</sup> There is increased tolerance for diversity. Freedom is now synonymous with choice and self-fulfillment.<sup>114</sup> People are living increasingly segmented lives.<sup>115</sup> Society has been transformed from communities to enclaves where people live together with little or no interaction. Neighbours do not necessarily know their neighbours, nor do they have work in common. Tradition is less and less important, and denominational loyalty is

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<sup>111</sup> See Jackson Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 30-37. While Carroll contrasts the extremes of Jerry Falwell's conservatism and New Age spirituality to delineate resistance and accommodation, I have contrasted the two largest denominations in Canada, The Roman Catholic Church and the United Church. The United Church has been very accommodating of the culture, while the Catholic Church under the current pope, John Paul II, has been resistant to cultural change. I remember that the papal visit to Canada in 1984 included a question and answer period with his holiness that was being televised. A middle-aged woman at a microphone began to make a case for the ordination of catholic women. The pope placed his hand in a pained way up to his eyes, and with a wave of his hand dismissed her question. I remember that pain to this very day, both that of the pontiff who did not want to deal with such a large issue and with the nun who felt a calling to the vocation of priest.

<sup>112</sup> Carl S. Dudley, *Where Have all the People Gone?* 115.

<sup>113</sup> Hoge, Benton, Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries*, 12-14, Roozen and Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth*, 242, C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America," 349.

<sup>114</sup> David Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, "Individuals and Church Choice," 242.

<sup>115</sup> Douglas Walrath, "Social Change and Local Churches," *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*, 250.



low.<sup>116</sup> The decision to affiliate with a church is made more on likes and dislikes than on denominational loyalty.<sup>117</sup> Baby boomers<sup>118</sup> are less likely to be involved in a church than were their parents, and the children of boomers are even less likely to be exposed to the tradition of faith community.<sup>119</sup> A consumer mentality has pervaded the realm of the sacred.<sup>120</sup>

While it is understood that it is a vastly different age in which the church currently sits, and sociologists have made explicit the impact of cultural factors on the decline of the church, the church leader must use the information to create communities of faith rooted in the new age. This is not to suggest that all tradition should be scrapped. Rather it calls for an intentional study of the place of tradition within the new age. The value of sociological study of religion in North America is that it has helped to define the society in which the church sits. The baby boomer has grown up exposed to many of the benchmarks of postmodernism: pluralism, individualism, the changes in family and in the roles of women are not new. However, for the contemporary church leader what is most pressing to understand and address is the influence of individualism on church affiliation and the challenge of anti institutionalism.

Increased individualism has produced a generation that values the freedom to choose. The church must try to discover ways to meet the need for choice among the

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<sup>116</sup> C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America," 351.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 351.

<sup>118</sup> Baby boomer refers to those persons born between 1945 and 1965 in the two decades following the Second World War. See Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 100.

<sup>120</sup> C. Kirk Hadaway, "Church Growth in North America," 349.

boomer generation, and to do so in a way that has meaning and integrity for the upwardly mobile and educated. The church has the opportunity to respond by recreating communities that can nurture the spiritual appetites of the churched and the unchurched. Changing culture and tradition need not be at odds, but should mutually inform the other. Rather than simply resisting culture or accommodating it, the church needs to wrestle with its understanding of sacred tradition and its mission to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19) The church of the twenty-first century must find a comfortable niche rooted in sacred tradition, while at the same time keeping step with an evolving and transforming world.

#### D. The Church in the Twenty-first Century

It is a new age and a new age invites a new understanding of tradition. This is not a new situation for the church. Christianity has always had to adapt itself and apply itself to a changing environment. In each succeeding historical epoch the church has been faced with the same endeavor to adapt and find an application.<sup>121</sup> Although change can be uncomfortable and disconcerting, change is not a new phenomenon to the church. Rather than despairing over the findings of the sociologist of religion, the person in church leadership can be grateful to the insights gleaned from this discipline.

The sociologist is not the enemy of the church, and, in fact, may play a significant role in the redefining of the church. The sociologist has spoken, and it is in the church's

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<sup>121</sup> Mark Kinzer, "Christian Identity and Social Change," 18. See also Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 1. Carroll quotes Karl Barth that there has never been anywhere an intrinsically sacred sociology of the church. The people of God exist in worldly fashion within the world.

interest to pay attention. Somehow the church must find a way to respond with integrity to meeting the needs of persons in a posttraditional<sup>122</sup> society. In a posttraditional age, tradition alone seldom tips the scales of decisions.<sup>123</sup> Posttraditional society refers to a time when tradition is no longer taken for granted or followed uncritically.<sup>124</sup> Persons will decide what is in their best self-interest and pursue it.<sup>125</sup> Quite simply, church leadership can no longer assume that the children and grandchildren of members and adherents will necessarily support the congregation on a regular basis. Neither is it assumed that persons of the same ethnic, religious and cultural background will become partnered. The church of the twenty-first century must integrate and respond to the changing needs within society and parishioner.

The concept of posttraditionalism may be threatening to the committed believer, but it need not be seen as synonymous with the disappearance of the church. Just as secularization has not resulted in the complete demise of the church, and individualism

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<sup>122</sup> Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 9-16. Jackson Carroll uses the term posttraditional to refer to the current time in the transformation of the church. *Mainline denominationalism is wrestling with the changing influence of tradition.* Tradition is no longer decisive. While the church is not completely posttraditional, nor will the church probably ever be completely posttradition, the faithful are weighing for themselves the traditions that will be maintained. Choice continues to be the operative word. No longer do individuals rely on longstanding tradition or their representatives to give directives. Rather the postmodern individual relies on personal intellect and experience to make decisions. Traditions are neither simply abandoned nor accepted uncritically. Traditions are weighed and integrated according to passion and reason, knowledge and experience.

<sup>123</sup> As a young girl not yet in secondary school I remember well my mother discouraging me from imbibing in strong drink, dating a Roman Catholic, and attending university. She feared that exposure to the new ideas of the academy would rob me of my faith. She believed strongly that university "was the ruination of our young people." Although I did not attend university directly after high school, I do have degrees from two universities, I married a practicing Roman Catholic and presented our children for Catholic baptism despite my ordination status, and I am a social drinker. Not one of these decisions was made to spite my parents, but rather was made because my values are not necessarily those of my parents.

<sup>124</sup> Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 25.

<sup>125</sup> The congregation of Faith United church includes former Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Anglicans, for example.

has not altogether quelled the need for spirituality in the human being, so weighing and prioritizing tradition need not be a threat. The current reality for the church is that it is viewed as a part of a thriving and competitive marketplace.<sup>126</sup> In Canada, religion has transitioned from religious commitment to religious consumption. Individuals feel the freedom to pick and choose fragments of belief. For example, some attest to believing in God but question the divinity of Christ. Others turn to the church for a rite of passage primarily relating to marriage, birth and death.<sup>127</sup>

While the committed church member and those in leadership roles within the church may react to this news as bleak, it is a reality with which the contemporary church must wrestle. Bibby urges Canadians to stop blaming culture for the decline in church membership.<sup>128</sup> Congregations have become more like religious clubs, ministering inward rather than outward. Historically, religious groups have been called to be communities where faith is experienced and also the vehicle through which faith is shared with outsiders. Concern for church growth has often been self-serving rather than a sincere attempt to address the spiritual needs in the wider community. Many congregations are homogeneous, and outsiders are not attracted to join.<sup>129</sup> The primary function of the local congregation, whether members are willing to admit to it or not, has come to be understood as meeting the needs of those already affiliated. This is a most

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<sup>126</sup> Bibby, *Fragmented Gods*, 80. Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 7. Hoge, Johnson, Luiden, *Vanishing Boundaries*, 204.

<sup>127</sup> Bibby, *Fragmented Gods*, 85.

<sup>128</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 295-297; Bibby, "Religion in the Canadian 1990s: Poverty and Potential," in *Church and Denominational Growth*, 290-291.

<sup>129</sup> This challenge is not unique to the church. I joined a community choir in October, 2003, that had been singing together since September 2001. There are many little enclaves in the group, and I still feel marginalized. It is a lonely experience, and I am waffling on continuing my association. I joined in the first place to expand my horizons and try to make friendships outside of the church community.

pressing issue with which the church needs to grapple if the congregation truly wants to make a difference in the wider community. It can be viewed as an opportunity for the local congregation to revise its mandate and mission in the community, and to reach out to both the initiated and to the uninitiated.

The church of postmodernity needs to replace the mindset of “congregational growth” for the sake of securing a future with a mindset of “faith sharing”. The goal of the church needs to be to minister to need and not simply to get persons in the pew. The church must begin to wrestle with how it can minister to persons who are more concerned with answers to questions than with church involvement.<sup>130</sup> This may mean that attendance at worship varies very little, but attendance in small groups and fellowship opportunities also demonstrates growth. Concludes Bibby in a rather scathing indictment:

Religious organizations that close their minds to new possibilities and new necessities will soon be relegated to history. Those that insist on remaining religious clubs, relying on recruiting the initiated and closing the minds to new possibilities will see their numbers dwindle as fewer and fewer Canadians opt for social clubs in the face of secular social competition. Religious groups that remain set in their old ways - feigning evangelism and outreach for the safety of their buildings, measuring success in terms of membership and finances - will likewise find that oblivion is not a great distance away.<sup>131</sup>

The sociologists have spoken. However, the sociologists do not have the final word. The church is a social institution, but it is also a theological institution, and the theologian and church leader also have a contribution to make on the state of religion in North America. The church must embrace the opportunities offered by posttraditionalism and go forward remembering.<sup>132</sup> Traditions will continue to be assessed and weighed.

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<sup>130</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 296.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 295.

<sup>132</sup> Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 74.

Worship times and styles may change in response to the needs of the community, but the mandate of the gospel will be preserved. The health and vitality of a congregation does not rest solely in meeting the budget, or in the size of the membership roll, nor even the numerical attendance on a Sunday morning.

While numbers and financial viability are important factors in church vitality, the size of the congregational roll is not the sole indication of congregational health. Furthermore, there are other kinds of church growth.<sup>133</sup> There are those who quip that mainline denominations are now the “sidelined” denominations. While this may be a painful realization, it need not be defeatist. Perhaps the time has come again for those in church leadership to embrace smallness and to use the marginalization of the church to its advantage. If the tradition of building large sanctuaries the size of a city block has had its day, then let the church consider relocation. If Sunday morning worship is an inconvenience for the member and the outsider, then the community can offer alternate times. Finally, if the needs of the religious consumer can be met through small group ministry without the obligation of church attendance and membership, the church must weigh what this may mean.

It may not translate into larger attendance on a Sunday morning, or even more dollars into the budget. It may mean that the need for traditional sanctuaries with stained glass, organs, choir lofts and fixed pews and pulpits have had their day. It may mean that

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<sup>133</sup> See Loren Mead, *More Than Numbers* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1993). In this book Mead writes about four kinds of church growth: numerical growth, maturational growth, organic growth, and incarnational growth. I, for one, have not stressed church membership in my current position in New Church Development. I prefer for persons to integrate slowly and comfortably at their own pace. Affiliates and members enjoy the same privileges. Only members are allowed to vote on matters related to pastoral relations, but the sacrament of Eucharist is celebrated at an open table and voting privileges at the annual meeting are extended to non-members. This serves to keep our Presbytery Assessment, which is based on resident membership, a little lower and takes the pressure off of newcomers to make a decision to join the church. This is functioning quite effectively at the present time at Faith United Church, Kingston.

the church can carve a niche in a strip mall, or in any non- traditional space. It may mean that a congregation does not own the worship space and that it rents sacred space in either secular or sacred places. It also might suggest that meeting the needs of the spiritual seeker in the name of Christ is once again paramount. For the church to continue to live out its ministry as the visible body of Christ in the world, church members and leaders alike will need to embrace marginality and change, and trust in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. The question, “what are we to do?” is pertinent in every generation and both the believer and the committed church leader will need to ponder this question in the wake of twenty-first century postmodernism.

While the diminishing numbers may cause some to reflect upon whether the glass is half-empty or half-full, the declining numbers need not suggest failure, or an absence of God. In fact, Douglas Hall suggests that there is something quite providential at work in the reduction of once proud Christendom.<sup>134</sup> Rather than lamenting the passing of the “good old days” when the church was filled to capacity, serious and reflective stock must be taken of the place of the church in postmodern western society. In order for the church to have a clearer understanding of what it is being called to do and be in a time of transition and change it must critically assess where it has been historically,<sup>135</sup> where it is headed<sup>136</sup> and if it is possible for the church to change.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Douglas John Hall, *The Future of the Church: Where Are We Headed?* (Toronto: The United Church Press, 1989), 55.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>136</sup> Loren Mead, *Transforming Congregations for the Future* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1994), 25.

<sup>137</sup> Pamela Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church: Communities of Eros* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000.), 1.

### E. Where has the Church been and Where is it Heading and is Change Possible?

Any critical study of the church needs to take into account the life and message of Jesus, and the ripple effect that his life, death, and resurrection has on the believer.

Churches exist today because of Jesus.<sup>138</sup> The disciples and followers of Jesus, who want to keep the memory and message of Jesus alive, birthed the church.<sup>139</sup> The church is the key place where the memory of Jesus is upheld, and his teaching and encounters with followers is upheld. Memory of Jesus Christ is not simply retaining the memory of an isolated historical figure but includes remembering the relationships formed between Jesus and those who encountered him.<sup>140</sup> The primary text for remembering is the Bible. From the Bible the reader is reminded that Jesus was responsive to need<sup>141</sup> and questions. He taught in the open and was unafraid to challenge the chief priests and rulers of his day.<sup>142</sup> From very humble beginnings sprouted an empire. It started as a movement<sup>143</sup> within Judaism and became an institution. With institutionalization came increasingly formal traditions, and sometimes the good news of the gospel has been lost in the status quo of the institution. The church became increasingly difficult to distinguish from the culture.

For centuries the church has enthusiastically embraced the very temptations that Jesus eschewed. The church has been indoctrinated with a theology of glory and

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<sup>138</sup> See Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 25, and Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 41.

<sup>139</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 41-42.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 42.

<sup>141</sup> See Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 25-30.

<sup>142</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 44.

<sup>143</sup> See Bosch, *Transforming Mission* 50-51 and Carroll, *Mainline to the Future*, 60-64.



triumphalism, yet the very temptations shunned by Jesus were temptations to power and grandeur and success. In the wake of the decline of Christendom and that also of the mainline church in North America, the theology of glory must be replaced again with the theology of the cross, and the inglorious.<sup>144</sup> Christendom actually weakened the church. The church needs to come to understand and appreciate again a theology which finds strength in weakness and significance in "littleness," although this is easier said than done. Reginald Stackhouse, principal Emeritus and Research professor at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto wrote in an article in *The Globe and Mail* that the church requires only four things to live its mission: a Bible, water, bread, and wine. He went on to say that sometimes churches find that their spiritual identity becomes more clearly focused when temporal possessions are stripped away. The temporal death of a church may inspire spiritual resurrection.<sup>145</sup>

Stackhouse was writing in response to the crisis facing the Anglican Church in Canada following the settling of lawsuits against the denomination by Native North Americans who suffered abuses in denominational residential schools. The judgements awarded threatened the solvency of the denomination in parts of the country, and the very real threat of bankruptcy could force some dioceses to cease functioning.<sup>146</sup> Dr. Stackhouse reminds the church of its humble beginnings, and implicit in his wisdom is the belief that the church will survive. Indeed, the person of faith should not question the

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<sup>144</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 33-36.

<sup>145</sup> Reginald Stackhouse, *The Globe and Mail*, 4, September 2000, page 7.

<sup>146</sup> <http://cbc.ca/cgi-bin/templates/view.cgi?category=Canada&story=/news/2000/05/28/anglican>. There are 1,600 claims filed against the church by former students of residential schools who claim to have been physically and sexually abused as students. The Anglican Church says those claims which add up to the hundreds of millions of dollars could wipe out their 11 million dollar assets. In October 2001 Cariboo Diocese in British Columbia ceased to operate because it had to declare bankruptcy in the wake of paying legal fees. The coffers of Cariboo Diocese were drained by legal costs such that there was insufficient money to pay out any settlements.

abiding presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the world to continue to remake and renew. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine a liturgy and a church stripped almost naked of its former pomp and glory. Even the person of faith has difficulty letting go of the outward symbols of success, and for the worshipping community the church building is a significant symbol. Most contemporary North American Christians have grown up surrounded by hymnbooks, baptismal fonts, and Christian Education wings. To imagine a church using only the symbols of word and sacrament is a challenge. Indeed the more possessions that a church has amassed is currently taken as a testament to its history and success.

In this culture, owning has become integrally linked to worth, such that the more one has, the greater one's worth. The more worth is defined by having, the greater the reluctance to part with possessions. To consider relinquishment then introduces the possibility of diminishing one's worth. Indeed, even persons of faith have not been above living by the tenet that "we are what we have."<sup>147</sup> Possessions and identity are integrally linked, and it is not difficult to appreciate why people have trouble letting go. When one has nothing, a person becomes transparent.<sup>148</sup>

In conversations with members and affiliates of established congregations, there is often a degree of envy expressed over how much lighter the financial burden is for a

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<sup>147</sup> Christopher Levan, *The Dancing Steward: Exploring Christian Stewardship Life* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada Press, 1993), 55.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 55. Chris Levan tells the story of choosing to experience homelessness by leaving all of his property behind and living on the street for three days. He speaks of being cold and alone at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, having been thrown out of two donut stores and the lobby of a hotel. His clothes were dirty so he could not even access any public washroom. He describes coming to the realization of feelings of worthlessness, not unlike those experienced by Elie Wiesel in the concentration camps of the Second World War. When one is stripped of possessions and identifying marks, human creatures become like animals in the night, frightened, desperate, and empty.

congregation unshackled to a building. However, these same members and affiliates stop short of considering a similar sharing relationship with other congregations. There are three United Church congregations in Kingston within a three-block radius in the downtown core. These three congregations celebrate joint services together on Good Friday, and also throughout the summer months. Any talk of merger into one large downtown congregation is strongly resisted. Identity continues to be integrally linked to the longstanding tradition associated with a name, and owning and maintaining a building of one's own. Luke Timothy Johnson has written:

When the world is regarded as the means of worth, and when other people are defined as competitors for worth, and when the only way to measure the relative ranks of being and worth is by what we possess, then the only logical response to other human beings is expressed in the clenched fist. The fist seizes what it can, closes fiercely upon it, protects it rigidly, and threatens any that would open it. To relax the hand, to relinquish one's possession, to share means to diminish one's very being.<sup>149</sup>

The church continues to be seduced by power, success and grandeur. As scholars and statisticians have become aware of, and apprised the church of significant declines in church affiliation and membership, the implicit response has been to turn this around. However, churches must disestablish themselves from the dominant culture of consumerism, materialism, and an understanding of success rooted in the values of capitalism. Church communities must distinguish the gospel of the Crucified One from the values, pretense, and pursuits of society. The role of the church in the world is to be that of salt, light, and yeast.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 85.

<sup>150</sup> See Douglas John Hall "Ecclesia Crucis," *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*, 213, and Loren Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 52.

How simultaneously awesome and picayune the images of salt light and yeast can be.<sup>151</sup> How far the church has strayed from its humble beginnings when fishermen left their nets to follow, and people gathered to be made whole through the mystery of healing power and the transforming message of liberation. How Spartan is the inglorious in comparison to the glorious, and no small wonder that in a time of church decline some would prefer to look backwards rather than forwards. Yet simply looking backwards cannot answer the question: what are we to do?

Loren Mead and Pamela Dickey Young have wrestled with the question concerning the future of the church. Loren Mead, like Douglas Hall, also began by looking back to the history of the church, particularly to the examples of Jesus and his ability to respond to specific needs. According to Mead, the church must also respond to need with respect and integrity and transform persons into disciples.<sup>152</sup> For Mead, the task of the church is to bring good news to the pain of the world. The community of the church needs to be a safe place for persons to gather to be encouraged and enabled for ministry.

Pamela Dickey Young believes that the church needs to move beyond being a place where people serve and give. She focuses on human need and desire and suggests that churches need to respond to the human need for connection. She believes that the

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<sup>151</sup> From the birth of Faith United Church in July of 1989 until December 1999 the congregation was an aid-receiving congregation, applying for Mission and Service Grants through the local Presbytery. The first service of worship was held on September 10, 1989, and the first grant application was submitted to the October meeting of Presbytery. The first question asked was how long the ministry would need to be supported. Each succeeding year when a grant was requested there was increasing dissension in the court on whether or not the ministry should continue. Throughout the years that I requested and defended grant money, I was never asked if the gospel was being preached, if lives were being transformed, or how Faith United was making a difference in the community. I was only ever asked how many members were on the roll, and how many attended on Sunday morning. I learned very early in my calling to Church Development that the bottom line was the imperative for the institution.

<sup>152</sup> Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 30-45.

human person seeks to flourish in relationship with all of creation. To flourish is to live as fully as possible and touches all aspects of life: the search for meaning, material well being, and emotional growth. To flourish is to live with a balance of harmony and intensity in one's life and in the world.<sup>153</sup>

Pamela Dickey Young and Loren Mead both assert that the church of the future needs to be inclusive and welcoming. Dickey Young cites the need for the church to be inclusive of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation and unwilling to condone groups that oppress. Mead writes that the worshipping community is a place where strangers can meet on common ground without fear of ostracism.<sup>154</sup> Both Dickey Young and Loren Mead suggest the need for the church to be open to sharing. Mead takes this to mean the sharing of resources with those who live in scarcity. Dickey Young places larger parameters around the idea of sharing to include the exchange of questions, answers, and ideas as between educators and students. Implicit in this is to provide what people are seeking, and to struggle with what it means to be Christian today.<sup>155</sup>

Mead writes that the church will be a community that will engage and resolve conflict. Dickey Young writes that the church of the future needs to cease viewing itself as the sole arbiter of truth and goodness. The congregation must be willing to think and rethink and grapple with issues of belief and action.<sup>156</sup> God is not static but continues to interact with the world through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. As the world continues to evolve and change, so will the church. No single set of questions or answers

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<sup>153</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 13.

<sup>154</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 88; Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 48.

<sup>155</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 89-93; Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 49.

<sup>156</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 88; Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 49-50.

will address for all time what there is to be said about God, and the church needs to be a place of lifelong engagement with the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. There will be conflict, because change often produces conflict; but if maintaining relationships is important, hostilities will be overcome.

Both Mead and Dickey Young see worship as an opportunity to draw people out and provide opportunities to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It can be evocative and sensual, incorporating music and drama. It affords the time, place, and space for symbol and ritual. It offers a place to balance the historical with the contemporary, presenting the best of preaching, teaching, and sacrament in word and action. In worship, the congregation can act out and celebrate through ritual the gifts freely given through God's grace.<sup>157</sup> Both Pamela Dickey Young and Loren Mead concur on what the church of the future needs to be about, even if they begin from very different places. Implicit in both is the need for the church to be authentic and inclusive. Implicit also is the need for the church as the body of Christ to be empowering and equipping. For Mead, followers are to be equipped to exercise ministry. For Dickey Young, the empowerment comes through a flourishing relationship with God and one another in community. Pamela Dickey Young, Loren Mead, and Douglas Hall all argue that the church has a future. However, the future hinges on the laity and the ordained being honest about the recognizing that the church exists on the margins of postmodern society.

It is time to cease building the future of the church on the crumbling foundation of Christendom.<sup>158</sup> This may call into question many of the long held traditions of the

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<sup>157</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church*, 108-119; Loren Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 50-52.

<sup>158</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 56.

established church, including salaried, full time clergy, permanent and single use sanctuaries, Sunday services, hymn singing, tax exempt policies, and pension and medical benefits.<sup>159</sup> The church of modernity and postmodernity has been concerned primarily with the very things that Jesus shunned - wealth, power, prestige, and a very human and earthly understanding of success. As Christendom spread, the inglorious was replaced with the glorious, and the gospel and church took on a triumphalist attitude. It became difficult to distinguish between the values of the culture and those of faith. The power of the gospel can be rediscovered in small, caring communities and in authentic relationships rooted in Jesus Christ, but the glorious will continue to entice and seduce. Relinquishment of the values associated with the glory and success of Christendom will continue to be challenging, and perhaps even impossible for some congregations. Letting go is not easy.

#### F. To Have and Not to Have.

While some Christians may take exception to the notion, religious tradition has forged a link between possessing and morality. Possessions have become synonymous with virtue and success, and poverty is synonymous with immorality.<sup>160</sup> Possessions are seen as evidence of God's blessing. Conversely, being dispossessed is a sign of God's curse. There is a connection between riches and righteousness that is rooted in Hebrew scripture. The initial assumption made in the book of Job is that health and wealth are associated with God's blessing, and that poverty is God's curse. In John 9, the example of

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<sup>159</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 82; Mead, *Transforming Congregations*, 17-23.

<sup>160</sup> Levan, *The Dancing Steward*, 70-71. On page 71, Levan alludes to the panhandler on the street, begging for money to exist. Often these persons are judged and dismissed by the more well to do. Says Levan, "If you have nothing you are suspected of immoral living habits: bad budgeting, laziness or substance abuse."

a person blind since birth is used to couch the theological question about who was responsible for “the sin” that resulted in his blindness.<sup>161</sup> The attitude of God being like a “celestial Santa Claus, a Divine Being” who knows when you have been naughty and nice is rooted in wisdom logic.<sup>162</sup> God of the balance sheet keeps track and rewards or punishes with tangibles. This is known as retribution thinking, or, in Reformation thought it is referred to as “faith” or “works” righteousness.<sup>163</sup> Some members of the church have not moved too far beyond the thinking, even if unknowingly.

Faith United Church has been labeled a “failure” as a church for two reasons. First, the congregation is numerically small, and, second, the congregation has made no concrete plans to date to develop the four acres of property that have been purchased by Presbytery for a church building. A small membership list and undeveloped land do not spell success. While not having a building does keep the budget down, it seriously limits the ministry of the congregation. Faith United may be championed by some at times as the way of the future, because sharing resources makes good economic and stewardship sense in a time of cutbacks and limited funding. However, the voice of Faith is often silenced if other congregations are encouraged to

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<sup>161</sup> The assumptions about blessing and curse are still heard even today. In 1997, my husband and I lost our then 12-year old daughter to a very rare form of liver cancer. The question that I am still asked most often is how her diagnosis and death affected my faith in a benevolent God. The assumption being made most often is that her illness would cause a crisis of faith - as if God selected her out of the millions of potential candidates to be the one that would be stricken. The notion of a suffering God is still quite foreign, and good things are still synonymous with God’s blessing, and bad things associated with punishment.

<sup>162</sup> Levan, *The Dancing Steward*, 75.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, 75-76.



consider a similar arrangement of sharing.<sup>164</sup>

Letting go does not come easily in the church, despite the fact that it is integral to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nicodemus is told to be born again (John 3:3), the rich young ruler is advised to sell all he has and give to the poor (Matthew 19:21), and the disciples are challenged to leave their nets and follow Jesus (Matthew 4:19). The path of discipleship begins with letting go,<sup>165</sup> and still the church struggles with the idea of letting go. Buildings are kept at all cost, and even Reginald Bibby responds to church decline by offering a church growth strategy.<sup>166</sup> While the reminder of Reginald Stackhouse, quoted above in footnote 140, about the simple needs of the church may give one pause, it demands much of the believer. It may be asking too much of the postmodernist to sacrifice comfort and familiarity and relinquish ownership of a building, and it cannot be understated that to exercise ministry in borrowed and rented space also has its challenges. A building of our own and the accompanying autonomy of ownership often looks attractive. It is not easy to be a have not, even on the “inside” of church membership.

Faith United Church may be dubbed a failure by some because of its small size and seeming lack of vision to build. However, the time for taking action may be on the

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<sup>164</sup> In March of 2001 concern was raised by the then chair of Presbytery over the number of part time ministries within United Church congregations in the city of Kingston. A morning workshop was held, and a consultant brought in to facilitate a process where a vision for the future might be honed. Every congregation in the city had lay representation present, and most of the clergy were in attendance as well. Members of congregations discovered many common concerns and realities. A follow up meeting was planned for May that was poorly attended, and a subsequent meeting garnered little response. At the final session I made the suggestion that congregations within geographic regions of the city might meet together to see what resources could be shared, and programs run cooperatively. This was not received with much support, and to my knowledge nothing further has changed.

<sup>165</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 16.

<sup>166</sup> See Reginald Bibby, *There's Got to be More* (Winfield, British Columbia: Wood Lake Books), 1995. This book outlines a strategy for seeking out and integrating into the congregation, affiliates who identify themselves with the goal of integrating them into the congregation. No particular page reference is cited.

horizon. Faith United need not feel like a failure because of a small, but constantly growing membership. Rather, Faith can learn from Douglas Hall and embrace smallness. Faith United is in the position of being mission minded more than maintenance-minded. While all congregations are engaged in an ongoing struggle to balance postmodernist thinking and realities with the roots of Christian tradition, Faith United is free from many of the traditions associated with owning a building. Faith may yet decide to build a building, but it will not be tied to the traditional understanding of church sanctuary. In keeping with the wisdom of Hall who has called into question single-use buildings and other outdated practices of Christendom, Faith is limited only by imagination when it comes to building. The disestablishment of Christendom must include the detriumphalization of the Christian faith and theology.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, Faith United need feel no obligation to erect a cathedral, or even to be solely responsible for the erection and upkeep of a facility. One of the ways that Faith can relinquish in order to meet need is to relinquish sole ownership of a facility, and form partnerships.

The needs of Faith United are very small, and, as such, do not require access to an entire facility seven days a week. Faith is in a position to partner with another church, or several community groups, to address need in the wider community. Having always shared a facility - first the local school, and more recently the local Anglican church - this congregation is not at all averse to forging partnerships with other faith groups, and community organizations.<sup>168</sup> Neither is Faith United concerned primarily with numerical

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<sup>167</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 58.

<sup>168</sup> Loren Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1996), 26.

growth. Affiliates are not pressured to become members,<sup>169</sup> and there are no restrictions to affiliates. There is an open communion table and no one is denied access to the sacrament. Faith has come to fully appreciate the importance of choice in the life of the secularized individual. Encouraging people to participate in the worship and fellowship life of the congregation is more important than church membership.

Faith United Church as a community understands the importance of being sensitive to the expressed needs of the consumer.<sup>170</sup> While some may find this language a little distasteful, rites of passage offer the church community an opportunity to minister. Perhaps the unity of heart and spirit in the era of postmodernism can be displayed when a congregation is willing to meet an expressed need without seeking some sort of return on investment. A person in need of a particular rite of passage may cross the threshold and keep crossing it if the minister and congregation are open to giving with no thought of receiving in return. At the same time, if the person does not return until a similar need arises in the future, the community must not feel jaded or used. The example set by Jesus is that of one who went about doing good - transforming lives without condition - and persons followed him because of it. This, too, can be a stumbling block for the established church. Fees are routinely charged for the use of the church for weddings, and funerals. The spirit of reciprocity has also found a comfortable niche in the offering plate

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<sup>169</sup> See Carl Dudley, *Where Have All the People Gone?* 118-119. Dudley suggest that membership definitions need to become more flexible designating new believers as “friends of the church” or seekers, and questers. Implicit in this is openness to outsiders who may cross the threshold for worship or programs, but may not be as concerned about being placed on the membership roll.

<sup>170</sup> Faith United made it a practice from the birth of the congregation that no reasonable request would be denied. Weddings, funerals and baptisms are performed without the expectation of membership, or regular affiliation. While it continues to be the hope that persons will continue to cross the threshold and become involved, it is not made an expectation. We continue to sow seeds of compassion and trust that God will bring the seeds to fruition in God’s good time.

on Sunday morning. Persons will give as long as there is something in return: this can take the form of the tax receipt for offerings,<sup>171</sup> which is one more example of the challenge faced by the church called to live by the theology of the cross.

It may be a stretch for some to embrace the wisdom of Reginald Stackhouse as the norm of the church, but he reminds the church of what is intended to be paramount in the life of the church: word, sacrament, and pastoral care. If Reginald is correct, there is a spiritual hunger in most individuals that needs sating, and there is a need for community. The church can respond to these needs in the outsider, as well as for the committed member, or the church can continue to deny the decline of Christendom. Congregations can attempt to rebuild Christendom, or even simply carry on as if nothing has been learned from the sociologists and other observers.<sup>172</sup> The church can relinquish traditions that no longer have a place in the life of postmodernity and sort out what is central to the faith.<sup>173</sup> This may call the church leader to grapple with new terms of reference like “worship center,” or it may challenge the church to become even more intentionally apostolic. It may call into question particular traditions of the church which should not surprise or threaten, for as Karl Barth has reminded, there has never been anywhere an intrinsically sacred sociology of the church, for the people of God exist in worldly fashion within the world.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Levan, *The Dancing Steward*, 116.

<sup>172</sup> See Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 24-32.

<sup>173</sup> Dickey Young, *Re-creating the Church* 19, writes that Christian believers need to sort out what is central to the tradition and what is peripheral; what can and does change with the historical time and geographic location and what cannot be compromised. It is precisely the task of Christian theology to present an understanding of the Christian faith for its own time and place.

<sup>174</sup> Carrol, *Mainline to the Future*, 1.

While scholars have been reluctant to state *de facto* what the church of the future may look like, implicit in their work is the assumption that the church needs to change before it disappears altogether. The marginalization of the church may be its greatest asset and opportunity. Persons of faith are still being called to follow the way of the cross and to be more in the world than of the world. Relationship with Jesus Christ is still fundamental to the faith and is expected to influence the life of the believer. The changing norms of the culture will still influence religious attitude, and both the local congregation and the denomination will wrestle with how to respond to changing times. Sometimes action will be resistant, and at other times policy and polity may be accommodating of the culture. There will be reaction among the faithful, as well, in response to congregational and denominational policy. The culture will influence the life of the faithful, and the life of faith will influence the culture. The invitation to relinquish or to hold fast will continue to engage, and the answer to the question “what are we to do” continues to invite a response in action. Is there a willingness among the faithful to relinquish once again in order to address need within the congregation, and also within the surrounding wider community?

#### G. The Community of Goods in Postmodernity

It is a far different time in which the contemporary church exercises its ministry. This is a time of globalization and mass communication. It is a time of religious pluralism and cultural diversity. It is a time of individualism and fragmentation. Persons live and work in different areas of expanding cities, and often keep the two quite distinct. One’s friends are not necessarily one’s co-workers, and one’s neighbours are not necessarily one’s friends. Community evolves around common task and interests, like bridge clubs

and sports teams. The population is more highly educated<sup>175</sup> and increasingly mobile. It is a time of tolerance, choice and freedom. It is a very different time from when the author of Luke-Acts wrote that the community was of “one heart and soul” and property was relinquished to address need.

The community of goods is steeped in Greek idealism,<sup>176</sup> and Luke was well apprised of Greek culture. Perhaps he included these passages to describe the goodwill of the Jerusalem community. Whatever his reasons for including them, the community of goods passages take on new meaning when considered in context with Douglas Hall’s writing on post Christendom, and Chris Levan and Luke Johnson on the power of possessions to control. Possessions help to define the person. The more one has, the greater the worth of the individual, and the tighter the clinging. To relax the hand, to relinquish possessions, and to share is to diminish one’s very being.<sup>177</sup> So the church and the believer hold on tightly to preserve the self and the community. Outdated expensive buildings are maintained at all cost, because to close them or to amalgamate or move into a smaller space seems like losing, and North American society does not laud losers.<sup>178</sup> Relinquishment becomes synonymous with failure, and Christians do not concede readily

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<sup>175</sup> My parents did not complete high school. Of my five siblings, I am the only university graduate, although two siblings attended community college and work in the health care field. My three daughters are in grade 8, 10, and 12 and all are planning to attend university. Total post-secondary enrolment increased more than six-fold between 1951 and 1975. University education showed the fastest rate of expansion in the 1950s and early 1960s while non-university institutions experienced the greatest growth in the second half of the 1960s. This reflects the fact that in the early years, the non-university sector consisted mainly of teacher colleges, technical institutes and nursing schools. The most significant expansion occurred after community colleges were established across the country in 1967 and 1968 in response to the need for broader post-secondary educational opportunities than those available at the time. See <http://www.statscan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectionw/sectionw.htm>.

<sup>176</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 119-122 for a succinct rendering of Greek idealism, utopianism, and friendship.

<sup>177</sup> See Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 85; Levan, *The Dancing Steward*, 53.

<sup>178</sup> Hall, *The Future of the Church*, 34.

to the seeming failure of the body of Christ. Indeed, the fear of failure can encourage believers to hang on to what they own without vision in order to continue to retain.

Faith United Church has four acres of property that have been purchased by Kingston Presbytery for a future church site. The land has sat undeveloped since 1989. The congregation currently rents space in the local Anglican church for Sunday services. Most meetings of the board and gathering for Christian nurture take place in the homes of church members. While some hold that this arrangement is quite sufficient, others see it as restrictive and confining. No plans have been laid thus far to develop the property held in trust by Kingston Presbytery, and there is no “unity of heart and soul” among the membership of Faith United Church about developing the land.

When the research for this thesis was begun, the assumption was made that it would not be possible to justify one more United Church edifice in the city of Kingston. In March of 2001<sup>179</sup> a church consultant facilitated a visioning workshop in Kingston Presbytery. In April the facilitator sent a report of the workshop to the Presbytery. Included in that letter are the following observations.

First, there is a high degree of focussed dissatisfaction in this material. People know that there are large issues to be addressed and think they need to be addressed now. . . Second, although many of the congregational issues named by participants are common to other parts of Canada, Kingston has the distinctive problem of too many United churches. The rule of thumb for starting one new United Church congregation where none exists is a base population of 50,000 to 60,000. Kingston I believe has a population of 120,000. This too high density of United Church congregations is your context and contributes to the dissatisfaction felt at the consultation.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>180</sup> See appendix 1.

Hearing from a church consultant that Kingston has too many United Church congregations already makes it even more challenging to think about developing the land. However, while it is conceded that there are more congregations than what the population demands, all but one are doing the very same things. These churches may differ in size and location and constituency, but only one “church” is both a senior’s housing unit and a congregation. Kingston may not need one more traditional United church sanctuary, but there are a variety of needs in the city that Faith could help to address with the right facility. The new church does not need to limit itself to the immediate area surrounding the property, nor even to the express needs of the assembled congregation. In this age of mobility the needs of the city can be considered.

In his telling of the story of the birth of the church, Luke weaves a story of committed response. In response to the apostolic teaching of the disciples, persons were converted and baptized. Faith is a response to the teaching of Jesus Christ and the power of the resurrection. Luke describes the Jerusalem community as grounded in apostolic teaching and *koinonia*. As has already been stated in initial pages of this thesis, the Greek word *koinonia* has a broad and sweeping definition. What has been interpreted as fellowship by many translators of Greek, can also mean association, communion, fellowship, and close relationship. It can be understood as generosity and altruism, proof of brotherly unity, and participation in and sharing in something. If the church of postmodernity were able to reclaim this powerful word in all of its sweeping inclusiveness, the mission of the congregation could be equally as inclusive and far-reaching. *Koinonia*, in the fullness of its definition, encourages wide parameters on the theology of mission. It may be difficult for a long established congregation with a



building to maintain and a history in a neighbourhood to relinquish its place in the community. However, there are congregations that have taken this very risky step as a means of addressing need.

There are stories of church communities with long histories in sundry communities that have found themselves having to vacate the premises, or to consider rebuilding in the wake of a tragedy. In hearing the story of the circumstances that brought other congregations to the point of decision, the options that were considered and the learning gleaned, Faith United Church can begin to anticipate a future. Given that the city of Kingston already has more United Church edifices than it realistically needs, Faith United, should it decide to build, could opt to build something other than a traditional sanctuary. Furthermore, should the property be developed, it could be to meet the needs of more than one congregation or group. To that end, United Church communities that opted to build multi-purpose, multi-use structures were toured, and members interviewed. It is the stories of their journey that are now shared.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Congregations often find themselves at the crossroads of decision.

Circumstances change within the congregation or in the wider community where the church is located. Changing demographics, the problems associated with aging buildings and transitioning neighbourhoods can all impact on the life of a particular congregation. Sometimes the situation calls for re-examination of the mission of the congregation, and the immediate and long-term future of the church needs to be reassessed. Such was the case for three congregations in the mid to late 1960's and in the early years of 1970.

### A. Case Studies of Three United Church Congregations

Congregation A is located in Northern Ontario and has a long history dating back to 1883 when the first Presbyterian congregation was established. This was followed by the arrival of the Methodists in 1884.<sup>181</sup> Churches were built and then rebuilt to meet the changing needs of the community.<sup>182</sup> The two congregations enjoyed a spirit of co-operation and joined together for services of worship to mark church anniversaries and other occasions. However, at the time of the formation of The United Church of Canada in 1925, the entire Presbyterian communion did not opt

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<sup>181</sup> Graeme S. Mount and Michael Mulloy, *A History of Saint Andrew's United Church Sudbury* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1982), 1-3.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 3, 21. The Methodist erected their first building in 1886, and a parsonage in 1889. The Presbyterian Church built a church before the close of the decade. The Methodists replaced their building on a new site in 1908, and the Presbyterians did the same in 1910.

for formal union, and this remnant formed a new Presbyterian congregation.<sup>183</sup>

Following church union, the former Methodist and the former Presbyterian congregations retained their own buildings and rolls. By 1927, it was impossible for the former Methodist congregation to continue to maintain its own building and the two communities joined together under one roof in congregation A<sup>184</sup>

Under very capable leadership, congregation A thrived throughout the ensuing years and saw a significant part of its mission as a “builder.” Seed money and loans were made available to other United Churches for the erection of church edifices, and money was also raised to help establish a university. However, by 1962, the building that had been constructed in 1910 was showing signs of age and stress. In 1964, some pieces of plaster fell as the congregation was exiting the building following a service, and by 1968 it was considered unsafe for occupation. The minister closed the facility and moved the congregation into a gymnasium. There followed an epochal time likened to the wandering in the wilderness, worshipping in other church buildings and a movie theater while deciding on a future. The congregation wrestled with decisions about the venue for a new building, and also the type of structure to be erected. Whether to re-build in the downtown or in the expanding area of a growing city needed consideration, as did the nature of the building - a traditional sanctuary or something different. At the Annual Meeting in 1971 the building committee reported:

The more the matter was considered, the more we tended to the view that present and future trends in church and community raised serious questions about the

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<sup>183</sup> There continues to be a Presbyterian Church in Canada today because congregations were given the freedom to participate in church union, or opt to remain Presbyterian. Those who felt strongly that church union was not in their best interest as individuals and as a congregation were given the freedom to vote according to their conscience and faith.

<sup>184</sup> Mount and Mulloy, *A History of Saint Andrew's*, chapters 3 and 4.

validity of any building that would simply be a re-statement of traditional church design, or that would even up-date such design.<sup>185</sup>

The decision was made to build a multi-purpose high rise building downtown that would include seniors housing, commercial business for revenue, a sanctuary and church offices, plus a Day Care Facility. The incumbent minister was committed to building “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cathedral”<sup>186</sup> in the heart of downtown, a space that would meet a variety of needs. Congregation A is believed to be the first United Church congregation in Ontario that merged a worship center, seniors housing and commercial business into a single facility. The vision is to be applauded, but as the first such venture there has been significant learning from some of the mistakes made. Those who have been inspired by congregation A have the benefit of both their vision, and also insight gained from their mistakes.

Several members of the congregation with memory of the circumstances leading up to the decision to rebuild were interviewed. Since there has been the passage of thirty years since the erection of congregation A, some information is sketchy at best. Nonetheless, there is a pride taken in the vision and the ensuing history of that lived vision. The questionnaire has gleaned insight into the process taken to make a decision, and the ensuing learning, positive and negative. The willingness of the subjects to participate is valued and appreciated, and the wisdom of their insight most beneficial. The leadership and congregation are to be commended

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<sup>185</sup>        *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>186</sup>        *ibid.*, 99. On October 25, 1970 the Reverend Charles Forsyth preached a sermon titled “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cathedral” that outlined his vision. He is quoted, “In short, at the heart of downtown, let us achieve a “space” that will truly be a humanizing center - a place of worship, of cultural activity, and of community dialogue. Congregation A is still referred to as “The cathedral of the north” by several of the folk interviewed.

for their willingness to risk entering the uncharted waters, and other congregations are now, and will be, the beneficiaries of their risk-taking.

#### Process of Decision-Making: Identification of Needs

When the building was condemned as a hazard there was a change in leadership. The incumbent at the time had the wisdom to move the congregation out of an unsafe building and into safer surroundings, However, this individual did not believe that he possessed the requisite gifts to erect a new facility. This is a significant learning. Ministers need to be reasonably clear on their strengths and weaknesses in ministry. However, the needs of the congregation must not be lost or compromised either. There is agreement that a certain kind of ministerial personality is needed to see to the enormity of detail that a large building project involves. This personality must be strong and convincing, and enabling. At the same time, the leader of a congregation in transition must also be pastoral and affirming, able to shepherd the congregation from the one figurative pasture to a new one. This pastoral responsibility was not entirely in evidence throughout the process of discerning a vision. Although no one had anything but admiration for the gifts of the builder of congregation A, there is a feeling that the pastoral and spiritual needs of the congregation came a distant second on a list of priorities. This insight will be expanded upon in the following section on learning.

Congregation A, at the time of decision making, was a downtown church and the decision to remain downtown was made early on in the process. Rather than re-locating to the expanding areas of the city, congregation A made the decision to remain situated downtown and to have a ministry in what was a thriving part of the

city at the time. Within the congregation at the time were a number of older persons who would soon be faced with the possibility of relocating from their home to an apartment. The idea to incorporate housing within a church edifice was to meet the needs of a percentage of the congregation, as was the decision to include a commercial component within the complex. At that time, much of the business and cultural activity of the city was located in a vital downtown core, and the vision of making available commercial space and a Day Care center in the hub of the business district was wise. The YWCA leased part of the building and the revenue from the rent of apartments and business were anticipated to provide the requisite finances to repay the costs incurred from building. The sanctuary was also envisioned as a multi-purpose venue, suitable for worship and also for concerts and plays. At the time, there was no available cultural venue in the city other than a hockey arena. A sanctuary/concert hall could also meet a variety of wider community needs.

Memory is sketchy at best about a particular theological premise to undergird the vision. However, this is not to suggest that it was lacking altogether. Historically, the members of congregation A were “builders of the faith”, and they saw bricks and mortar as the symbols of their faith in action. Building the faith was integrally linked to their sense of mission, and raising money within the congregation to help build a university plus other community churches had been a significant part of their understanding of stewardship. There may not have been a scripture verse or parable that was their guiding principle, but they had a rich history of turning dollars into tangible visible symbols of their faith. Building was quite synonymous with their understanding of theology and mission.

The option to build a traditional sanctuary was not given much consideration, although there were, and are, those who would have preferred this. The problems associated with revenue tied so intrinsically to occupancy have become a reality to the membership. As commercial tenants moved out when the malls of suburbia became more lucrative, and the downtown changed from being the “hub” to becoming the “has been” of activity, vacancies have increased and the ensuing financial shortfall has become an ongoing concern.

#### Learning From Congregation A

The leadership, members and adherents of Congregation are to be commended as visionaries and risk takers. Having made the decision to build other than a traditional sanctuary and to partner with housing and commercial tenants, they opened the eyes of the wider church to a new concept of church. However, being the first can also mean that mistakes are made out of inexperience, and the congregation discerning a vision to build can address the shortcomings that have come to light.

Church growth has been negatively affected by the decision to build a multi-purpose facility in a downtown core. Parking is a huge problem both for tenants and for those affiliated with the church. The building is situated on a main street in the downtown with metered parking as the only option. Although availability of a space is easier to find on a Sunday morning for worship, it can be a challenge throughout the day during the week. An elderly person who drives to church, or a young family with small children, can find walking a few blocks a deterrent to choosing congregation A as a church home, especially when other churches located in

neighbourhoods usually have parking lots on the church grounds. Parking is also an issue for occupancy of the tower.

The assumption was made that seniors would no longer drive a car after relocating to a senior's apartment, and parking facilities were not included in the original plan. The reality is that many senior citizens continue driving well into their eighties, and the lack of adequate parking has affected occupancy rates, as those with cars do not lease an apartment. The assumption that members of the congregation would move from a home to an apartment in the tower has not materialized. This is due, in part, to inadequate parking, and also because of the size of the apartments.

The units are quite small, and are not suitable for one moving from a home with a lot of belongings. *An able bodied senior in good health, moving from a home to an apartment, requires a significant amount of space for personal belongings.* The units are simply too small for those who are seeking to downsize from a home, and are more suitable for those of limited means and possessions. This, too, has had a ripple effect on church growth. As more and more units have been made available to those on fixed and limited income to address the vacancies, fewer and fewer tenants are members of the United Church. This can also lead to tension between the tenants of the tower and the members of the congregation. *The tenants view the tower as their home and have all of the concerns for property that any homeowner has.* The members of the congregation view the complex as their church property and, thus, believe that all members and affiliates have access to the church facilities. The Sunday school is located on the third floor of the complex, and children often use the elevator as a means of transport. Some tenants in the tower take exception to young



children tying up the elevator, and running through the halls of complex. This, in turn, affects the children and their attitudes towards seniors and to church.

One final and significant oversight that could not have been anticipated when the plans were being drawn up was the changes to the downtown. It was vital in the early 1970's and was the place of commerce and for shopping. As in many cities, many of the businesses and the stores have relocated to malls for convenience and accessibility. Although there was a commercial component to the original plan, with revenue from rents directed to mortgage and debt retirement, Congregation A has had significant trouble keeping commercial tenants. The Day Care never materialized, because the city opened up a Day Care and directed financing towards their own Day Care rather than to Congregation A. The YWCA moved in during the first few years of operation, running a gymnasium and offering bedrooms on one of the floors of the tower. This tenant also relocated to a different space very early on.

#### Identified Losses to the Project

While there is still a remnant of pride in those interviewed for having a vision that was new and different, there are some identified losses to making the decision to integrate housing, commercial tenants and a church congregation. There is an ongoing struggle with church identity. This has been described in sundry ways by several interviewees. One mentioned the tension between being builders of buildings and institutions, and builders of the faith. For a once thriving congregation that saw its mission as integrally linked to erecting structures now faced with declining numbers and financial shortfalls, it is very difficult. Their mission has been compromised by circumstances, some of which were beyond their control. There are

limited resources available now, and their financial future is less stable. There are no new building projects to invest in, and there are occupancy issues in the tower. Those who felt that their spiritual needs were relegated to the bottom of a list of priorities continue to experience the tension between church and place.<sup>187</sup>

It is difficult to recognize congregation A as a church because there is little to distinguish it as such from the outside. Sometimes people walk past it several times while looking for it, because it looks more like a place of business and a residence. In tandem with this, other United Church congregations also have difficulty “pigeon-holing” the congregation. It does not fit into the “traditional” mold, despite the fact that it is a program church like most other churches, offering Christian nurture to the membership. It is perceived from within and without as a program church housed within a corporate structure. It is seen as “the cathedral of the north” by some, and others see it as a congregation housing a people of faith. The membership has lost the vision of being builders, but has not yet crafted an understanding of who they are as a congregation. Congregation A was once the minister to the elite within the community, and now it is ministering to those who are far from elite.

#### The Greatest learning from the project

As the first congregation to envision a facility erected to the glory of God and with a mandate to meet a diversity of needs, Congregation A deserves a place in the annals of history. Furthermore, the church can learn valuable lessons from the experience within Congregation A. Several assumptions were made about the long-term viability of the downtown core that have proven inaccurate. As the downtown

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<sup>187</sup>

See appendix 5.

has changed, so have the housing needs and the needs of business likewise transformed. The need for parking was not given ample enough consideration, and neither were the space requirements of the elderly given wide enough perimeters. Senior citizens are living longer and are healthier, and enjoy a diversity of activities and pastimes. Apartments that are large enough to house comfortably furnishings amassed over a lifetime are needed, as is room enough to entertain. The assumptions made about the needs of seniors have not proven entirely accurate.

Congregation A has also experienced some learning over the need for good administration, so that the apartment complex and the church can be kept distinct. The relationship between the two continues to be unclear. The congregation understands that it owns the tower that contains the apartments, but many of the apartment dwellers have little or nothing at all to do with the church. This has caused some confusion and tension, and is seen by many as the root of many of the financial problems that the congregation has to deal with. Rent has not been commensurate with expenses, and there is also the problem of maintenance on a thirty- year- old building. The future was planned on assumptions that have not panned out, and the facility cannot be easily retrofitted to address the changing needs of an altered downtown, and a different kind of tenant

Some are quick to link the challenges of the present to the incumbent minister at the time of the building. He was forceful and visionary and many agree that the project would probably not have evolved without the strengths, and the political and ecclesiastical connections of the individual. While he is not blamed or condemned for the *problems that now preoccupy and confuse the congregation, some members of the*

congregation today reflect that what was lacking at the time was a pastoral component to the ministerial leadership. When a congregation is in transition and making decisions about its future, “whole” leadership is needed. A person with particular strengths and skills is needed to get a project launched and to allay the concerns that the people may have about their ability to see it through to completion. However, the visionary also needs to be sensitive to people’s needs and to the difficulties that change brings. Even when change is embraced, and a new and different future envisioned, there could still be tension because everything is so different. A leader who is sensitive to the worries that change can birth is fundamental to congregational ownership of a project and ongoing commitment to it.

The minister who is called to develop and build a church from the ground up using brick and mortar must be visionary and strong, but also sensitive and pastoral. Some members of Congregation A would agree that the leadership at the time of decision was dynamic and convincing, but not perhaps as pastoral as the project required. It was a building project with two faces: the face of the building, and the faces of the members of the congregation. As one interviewee opined: The minister gets to move onto other challenges and to other settings, but the people are left with the legacy.<sup>188</sup>

### Congregation B

Congregation B is located in southern Ontario and has Methodist roots dating back to 1823. A large edifice had been constructed in 1912 to replace an older one, and this building housed a congregation of several hundred. It became a United

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<sup>188</sup>

See appendix 5.

Church in 1925 at the time union, and has enjoyed a place of prominence within the city ever since. In September 1969, an electrical fire in the wiring started in the dome of the church and the entire edifice was consumed. The congregation was offered space in several church structures in close proximity and began to worship in an Anglican Church across the street from the burned edifice. A committee was named to recommend to the congregation the future direction that would best suit the needs of the worshipping community and the wider community.

The minister at the time suggested that there were five options to consider at the onset. Rebuild the church as it was, which was virtually impossible with the small amount of insurance. Amalgamate with another congregation, which would have compromised their congregational identity. Disband and disperse, which would have resulted in bringing an abrupt end to the history of the oldest church community in the city. The option existed to replace the church with a more modern facility, which would have met the needs of the congregation, but may not have addressed the identified needs of the wider community. The final option was to build a revenue-bearing complex complete with church facilities, Sunday School and Christian Education, and space allotted for other uses of benefit to the wider community.<sup>189</sup> The congregation overwhelmingly accepted the fifth option, which gave direction to the planning committee. The decision was made to build a revenue-bearing complex, which could provide residential, commercial, and retail accommodation.<sup>190</sup> Sod was not turned until October 1974.

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<sup>189</sup> Desmond Little, *First Ventures* (Hamilton: First Place Publications, 1988), 4.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

The congregation continued to gather for worship in the Anglican Church and held their meetings in church and community space. Initially, the committee was reluctant to develop and own the building, and a buyer was sought. The hope was that the developer would erect the edifice and allow the church to rent space within the new facility. However, when a developer was found, there was fear that the proposed lease agreement was expensive, and the congregation could face possible eviction within five years. This was more risk than the congregation was willing to take, and the decision was eventually made to develop and maintain ownership of the land as a congregation.<sup>191</sup>

At this particular time, The United Church of Canada was in dialogue with The Anglican Church of Canada discussing church union.<sup>192</sup> The clergy and membership in the two congregations thought that their joint relationship could serve as a test case for the wider church. The two communions began to gather together for joint services of worship, with the two clergy sharing in leadership and the conduct of services. One week, the United Church minister would preach, and the Anglican would officiate as liturgist. The following week the roles would reverse. This relationship continued for several years. When the church union talks came to an end and the decision was made by the two denominations to remain separate and distinct, congregation B continued to share the Anglican facility until 1980, when circumstances changed yet again.

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<sup>191</sup>        *ibid.*, 11-15.

<sup>192</sup>        See John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* Updated and Expanded Edition. (Burlington Ontario: Welch Publishing Company, 1988), 156, 239. The Anglican Church began discussing the possibility of Church Union in 1943. The Anglican community withdrew from union negotiations in 1975.

A United Church congregation one block up from Congregation B listed their building for sale and approached congregation B about a merger. This particular congregation was unique in several ways. First of all it had been a Congregationalist church prior to church union in 1925 and, as such, was allowed to retain the deed to the building.<sup>193</sup> In the years leading up to union, and in the first decades following church union, the congregation was vibrant but often financially strapped. The congregational membership plateaued between 1935 and 1945, and a fire in the sanctuary in 1957 destroyed the interior of the church. The church was restored with insurance money, and hope was high that the congregation could be revived. In the early years of the 1960s, an ethnic congregation hoping to share the worship space approached the congregation. The ethnic congregation was constituted in 1965, and the two congregations, although separate in formation and constitution, shared a positive working relationship.

About this time the membership in the non-ethnic congregation began to decline and the costs for maintenance began to rise. Bonds were cashed in to cover expenses, and the roof and furnace were in need of major repairs. The congregation did not have the requisite financial resources to cover costs for ministry and maintenance and agreed to enter into a relationship with a committee of the judiciary. In exchange for offering the deed to the property and a small sum of annual rent, the judiciary paid the insurance, caretaking, and maintenance on the building. In return,

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<sup>193</sup> At the time of Church Union, the deeds of property were relinquished to the new United Church of Canada, with the exception of some Congregationalist Churches. See Ralph Pawson, *Growing Together: A History of First-Pilgrim United Church* (Hamilton: First-Pilgrim United Church, 1998), 83.

the judiciary committee was given space for offices. This arrangement continued until April 1973.

The congregation was able to meet its budget under this arrangement, but it required a great deal of effort on the part of the congregation to fundraise, which led the two congregations to consider sharing one minister. Given that the one congregation was ethnic, conducting services in another language meant that a minister proficient in both English and the second language would need to be called. A bilingual minister was called to serve the two congregations in 1973. The two congregations continued to experience financial and numerical decline throughout the rest of the decade, and in 1975 the judiciary wanted out of the financial arrangement so that it could relocate to a different facility. In 1976, the judiciary returned the deed to the congregation. The two congregations continued to struggle and by 1980 realized that their future was suspect and the process of discernment that led to amalgamation was begun.<sup>194</sup>

Congregation B moved out of the Anglican Church and shared in joint services with the sister congregation in space within the seniors' apartment building. The decision was ultimately made to renovate the vacated church edifice and to use that sanctuary for services for the newly formed United Church congregation. 1984 saw the completion of this process, and the amalgamated congregation has continued to worship together under a revised name in the sanctuary one block up from the apartment complex. The ethnic congregation continued to meet at a separate time

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<sup>194</sup> See Pawson, *Growing Together*, 36-46, and 83-89.



until 1985, and after that it was absorbed into the English congregation.<sup>195</sup>

Congregation B is unique in having a revenue-bearing complex separate from the church where members gather for worship, fellowship and Christian nurture.

#### Process of Decision Making

One interviewee summed up the process of decision-making as simply being reactionary. Circumstances presented and a response was requisite, and these sum up the process and the evolution of the project since inception. Following the fire a future direction needed to be decided upon. A local congregation of a different denomination in close proximity to the site offered the use of their building for services of worship, church related programming, and meetings. As there were union talks ongoing at the time between the two denominations, it seemed providential to join together. When their largest tenant opted to withdraw from a lease in 1980 for a substantial amount of money, the space was transformed into a large office space and a government agency moved in. The settlement provided the requisite funds to retrofit the space from a grocery venue to an office space, and the new tenant provided an ongoing source of revenue.

The arrangement of sharing the space with the Anglicans was successful and may have continued had the United Church congregation that was housed in a building that exceeded their need and resources not approached Congregation B about a merger. Congregation B moved out of the Anglican Church and joined with the new partner in space in the revenue-bearing facility. When the church belonging to the

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, 54. Services were conducted in German at 9:30 a.m. in the shared worship space until June 1985. When the German speaking minister left, he was not replaced with a German speaking minister. The ethnic congregation no longer had a separate identity and integrated into the English service.

partner failed to attract a buyer, the decision was made to invest some money into the church edifice and for the newly formed amalgamated congregation to use this as their church home. This, in turn, freed up more space in the complex that could be used for rental purposes and to generate income to meet the budget.

Several changes have been made to the structure that have made the space more suitable for the occupancy. As in Congregation A, the apartments were found to be a little small. The balconies in Congregation B were enclosed, and this provided a little extra living space for the tenants. Space vacated by the church and tenants has been transformed into assisted living space. Occupants that require some assistance no longer need to move into a nursing home to have their needs addressed. Assisted living means that tenants can receive the help required for hygiene, receiving medication, and meals. A dining room has been added so that seniors unable to prepare meals, and those preferring not to cook for themselves, have a healthy alternative. The meals are balanced and nutritious and provided at a reasonable cost. The addition of the assisted living is seen as the inspiration of the current building manager. It has also had a direct impact on the occupancy rates and the rental revenue as more occupants are able to stay longer in the tower. Rather than transitioning to another venue, tenants are able to remain within the housing structure owned and operated by Congregation B.

The needs of the tenants are constantly being addressed. There is now a cleaning service available for occupants who may prefer that their light housekeeping be done by the more able bodied. A chapel has also been opened on the sixteenth floor so that services can be conducted by area clergy within the complex so that

aging seniors do not need to navigate the streets or the weather outside. A community minister has been hired by the foundation of Congregation B to provide word, sacrament, and pastoral care for the residents, as well as sundry programs to keep the hearts and minds of the residents alive and alert. An exercise room was opened when a resident donated exercise equipment, and it is available to the occupants for exercise.

The building has been retrofitted in other ways. When the original plans were drawn up, there was provision made for a small common room on each floor so that residents could mix and mingle. The hope was that the tenants would not simply remain in their apartments, but would form communities and groups. These small areas were not furnished, but over time as residents left behind pieces of furniture and replaced the old with the new, sundry pieces of furniture were placed in the common areas. However, it was noticed that the common space was not being utilized in the way that the original visionaries imagined. Residents were not choosing to congregate together in the areas, preferring to stay in their apartments. These spaces have since been transformed into studio apartments and made available for rent.

Congregation B has continued to assess the changing needs of their constituency and has responded by tailoring the vision to meet changing needs. Each change may indeed be a reaction, but the needs of the seniors within the tower continue to be addressed in a way that has integrity, and also ensures occupancy and sufficient revenue.

### Identified Losses and Learning

Church growth has been affected by the decision to build other than a traditional church structure. Initially, the losses could be attributed to some people simply opting to find a congregation closer to home. As a downtown church, many members needed to drive to worship. After the fire, when the congregation was meeting in the Anglican Church, the decision was made by a few to transfer to a neighbourhood church closer to home. Most of those interviewed attributed the initial losses to the ripple effect of change. Others became concerned that the church was going to become known as a “senior citizen’s church”.

All interviewees concurred that the congregation had declined, but no one was willing to attribute it entirely to the moves after the fire. One person commented that the Anglican Church, which had been their church home after the fire, had closed soon after the decision was made by Congregation B to amalgamate with another declining congregation. This person also added that the community that was merged with had been experiencing a crisis of human and financial resources and had made the decision to abandon their edifice. Two factors were outstanding for Congregation B which may have bought them more time for awhile. First, Congregation B was the largest United Church congregation in the city at the time of the fire, and second, Congregation B made some wise decisions with the insurance money after the fire.

When the decision was made to build a revenue-bearing structure with seniors housing the land was offered in lieu of rent. Much of the \$750,000.00 in insurance money was invested and available for use by Congregation B. Had the building not burned down in 1969, the membership of Congregation B might have faced a

different crisis of increased maintenance costs and declining numbers that has been the reality in so many downtown churches. To quote the subject:

Given the three churches on that corner, two declined all on their own and we would have been next. We just had more bodies. The old building would have gone. It would not have come to a crashing halt in 1969, but in 1979 it would have.<sup>196</sup>

This same subject also commented that the congregation has continued to dwindle over the years, and that there has not been an influx of new families. Most congregants today are those who were members at the time of the fire, and they are becoming quite elderly. The younger members and congregational affiliates are the sons and daughters of longstanding members. These people remain affiliated out of loyalty to their parents and to the congregation, although it is increasingly difficult for those under the age of fifty to find a comfortable niche within a senior's housing development partnered with a congregation. If the decision was ever made to vacate the church edifice and return to worshipping again within the space in the tower, at least one interviewee would opt to leave. To quote this subject:

To be fair there is not much left for me. It just seems hard for me to think of starting somewhere on my own. Once my mom and dad died, I thought it would be a downer coming here, but then, at least, I know the people. I have known them all of my life. Sometimes I wonder, what am I doing there? I think that the decision would be made for me if we ever went back to the tower. I would try it for awhile, and then when I watched everyone come down on his or her walkers- and not to be mean- I might have thought, "This is not for me."

### Greatest learning

The need for a strong and unified board was stated as a key learning. When a congregation is going to risk putting up an edifice that is different, the congregation

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<sup>196</sup> Subject number 4 is a highly educated professional who is a long time member, having attended the church as a child, and continuing an affiliation after the deaths of both parents. See Appendix 6 for the full interview.

needs to believe that the board has the best interest of all parties involved. Concern for the tenants must be a high priority, but not at the expense of the congregation who want their future as a congregation also to be a matter of high priority. The board needs to be attentive to the present and future needs of the congregation, and in the case of Congregation B, this includes concern for tenants housed in apartments, but also the congregation housed in a separate and distinct church building. As the congregation faces a less certain future because of diminishing numbers and increased costs for maintenance and ministry, the wisdom of maintaining two sites will become increasingly significant. The tension between the church and the place will continue to be an issue of congregational identity. A move into the seniors' complex may contribute to Congregation B being viewed as a "seniors' church." Remaining in the church down the street from the senior's complex may be expensive, and may not encourage church growth. Indeed, the board of the church and the tower will need to be discerning as the future is anticipated.

Congregation B stands as a good example of adaptability, even if the adaptability is rooted in the reactionary. Rather than being content to have the needs addressed in the mid - 1970's continue to dictate the ministry of housing, the building manager and the board have continued to address the needs of the tenants. This has had a positive effect on occupancy of apartments. A depressed market in the city has contributed to vacancies of commercial tenants within the complex, and the issue of relying on commercial revenue in these building projects is a concern. Other groups and congregations pondering a similar venture are counseled to weigh heavily and adroitly the reliance upon commercial tenants. While Congregation B has reacted

wisely to the changing needs of seniors as they age, and has provided assisted living *units for tenants requiring more care, empty commercial space continues to be a challenge to address.*

Finally, it was stated again that a congregation must be sure beyond reasonable doubt that a combination church-housing-commercial venture is what is truly desired. Ministers come and go but the congregation remains. When a congregation enters into a partnership with another agency or institution the membership wonder if the relationship is one that all parties will feel good about forever. The partnering of seniors' housing with a church community does not *necessarily foster church growth or even strong congregational identity. Indeed the needs of the congregation can sometimes become a lesser priority to occupancy and the changing needs of seniors. This can actually have a negative effect on growth as younger families make the decision to attend a church where the needs of all age groups are primary, rather than the needs of seniors. At the same time, a congregation that has assumed responsibility for seniors on fixed and limited income still needs to attract younger persons who are employed and earning an income to meet its budget.*

#### Congregation C

*Congregation C is located in Eastern Ontario and has a Congregationalist history dating back to 1880. It has always been a small congregation and has endured and survived problems associated with location and size. It is situated in what has traditionally been labeled the "north end" of the city, and has sometimes been aligned with other congregations, sharing a minister to keep costs down to a minimum. Though it has never been considered a large or particularly wealthy congregation, its*

membership is devoted to the ministry of Jesus Christ and also to preserving its own identity. In the closing years of the 1960s the church and manse had deteriorated to the point of needing replacement. The minister at the time was committed to addressing the needs of the wider community and suggested tearing down the church and manse and erecting geared to income housing units for families. The decision was ultimately made to address the needs of a specific age group, and housing for people aged 65 and older became the vision.

The community struggled with some opposition at the time, most of it coming from one individual concerned about property values going down if a senior's residence was built. Each barrier that this individual put up was eventually removed through the efforts of the congregation and through the efforts of two committed lay women in particular. From the beginning, two needs were identified and have remained as equal and high priorities ever since- affordable, safe and comfortable housing for seniors and a church home for Congregation C. From the onset, there was no question that the congregation would be a tenant in the edifice having space for worship, Christian nurture and fellowship. A small 41- unit building with six floors was built and dedicated in November 1975, and Congregation C has ownership and oversight of the entire lower floor.

The congregation continues to be small, and very few of the tenants are affiliated with the congregation.<sup>197</sup> Most members drive to the complex for meetings and for worship. The congregation has had inspired leadership, but always on a part-time basis. The previous minister had a career as a professor within the local

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<sup>197</sup> In all three of the venues the majority of tenants are not affiliated with the United Church.



university and provided services of worship on a Sunday morning, but very little pastoral care. The incumbent also has a vocation at the university and provides services of worship on weekends. The congregation cannot sustain full time ministerial leadership at the present, or for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, the congregation is content to have a safe place to gather as a community for worship and also takes pride in the outreach that is ongoing to senior citizens.

When the project was being planned there was strong support for the idea from local politicians in City Hall, but also in the Provincial legislature and in Ottawa. The elected representatives were forthcoming with financial support. CMHC offered a 50 -year mortgage, and the city agreed to freeze land taxes at \$25.00 per unit throughout the mortgage period. A normal tax bill for a similar property would be \$39,000.00, but the taxes for the housing project built by Congregation C amount to a paltry \$1050.00 per annum. This has proven most beneficial, as rental costs for market rent can be kept low. This housing development has no occupancy challenges. It is located on bus routes, and there are convenience stores within a short walk where tenants can pick up necessities. The congregation also owns a small house behind the complex, which houses the church and management offices, and also provides revenue from a contained rental.

#### Identified losses

This congregation also has discovered that senior's housing is an impediment to church growth. Since the complex is required to be non-denominational, despite its United Church affiliation, only 6 or 7 residents attend services of worship on a Sunday. Initial plans for a Sunday School never materialized because of an absence of

young families and a lack of able-bodied teachers within the congregation. Land by-laws at the time of construction contained specific requirements for green space, which has reduced the number of parking spaces available for the church community and tenants. There are only fourteen parking spaces available on the property behind the complex, and two or three spaces are lost during the winter months when snow accumulates.

For a time, the church space was made available to the Association working with the Developmentally Delayed. However, problems arose when some of the young people began accessing the elevator. As in congregation A, some residents took exception to the young people roaming the halls of the complex, expressing concern both for the safety of the young people and also concern for the well being of the tenants. There is a tension between the housing units and the congregation. Over the years, the congregation has had to install alarm systems, video cameras, and other security features for the safety of the tenants.

The congregation is quite elderly, and congregation C is identified as a seniors' congregation by many. The mean age of the congregation is quite high, and it is becoming an increasing problem to staff the foundation board with the requisite number of United Church members required by the terms outlined for a church sponsored housing corporation. The United Church of Canada insists that a majority of board members on a housing board be members of The United Church of Canada. This continues to be a matter of consternation to the congregation and to the building manager who has said:

When faith agencies are involved with housing it is supposed to be at arm's length. The question is what is arm's length? If you are going to use the United

Church name, then you need to abide by their rules, i.e. their insurance (coverage). But the city and province want to use their insurers. And when the United Church sends out a policy statement on something, it is generally written in such general terms that it doesn't mean squat. There is some advantage to being a small, faith-based organization, but you really have to work hard to keep your good name, and to keep your name in the community. If you have a passive board, it is very interesting.

<sup>198</sup>

### Greatest learning

There will be increased issues for any group that contemplates erecting a multi-purpose edifice that includes housing. In the wake of the Ice Storm that ravaged Eastern Ontario in 1998, and the health concerns brought to light after SARS<sup>199</sup>, new concerns have arisen. Most housing units have very few front line staff, and residents within these complexes are supposed to be able to look after themselves and vacate a building in an emergency such as a fire. However, of the forty- one tenants in the facility in Eastern Ontario, twenty tenants have been identified as being unable to walk the stairs to safety in the event of an emergency.

Each complex is supposed to have an Emergency Planning Process. Residents that would be unable to walk the stairs in the event of the elevator being out of service need to be identified. Living in an age of litigation, The United Church of Canada has become quite concerned about the possibility of lawsuits and is seeking to establish Administrative Standards for church/housing projects. The challenge for building managers is when persons who have never visited the projects compile

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<sup>198</sup> This subject has a long association with senior's housing and understands it from a theological point of view, as well as from a political point. See appendix 3.

<sup>199</sup> SARS is an acronym for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, a highly contagious epidemic spawned in China in the spring of 2003. Passengers on an airliner that landed in Toronto, Ontario brought the disease to the Greater Toronto area where it spread throughout the city. There were several deaths in both the medical community and in the wider community. Fear of the epidemic affected tourism in Ontario throughout the summer of 2003 and has changed forever the flow of traffic within hospitals.

Administrative Standards at the denominational headquarters far away from the housing projects. It is impossible to assume the ease that any congregation may have securing the permission and the funding to build a multi-purpose facility in the future, when churches are afraid of lawsuits and are reeling under the weight of exorbitant insurance premiums. As one interviewee expressed, housing was the big issue in the 1970's. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the issue will probably be those "aged boomers"<sup>200</sup> and the unavailability of elder care."<sup>201</sup> The need will continue to be there, and the church may be willing and able to respond. However, the requisite financial resources and the soon to be proposed Administrative Standards may make building a multi-purpose facility an even greater challenge for the church of the twenty-first century.

### Conclusions

These three church communities are to be commended for their vision and their understanding of mission. When circumstances dictated that a new church home needed to be considered, the overwhelming response was to meet a variety of community needs. Although there were those within each congregation at the time that would have preferred to build a traditional sanctuary, there were those that saw the mission of the congregation to the wider community as paramount. Each of the three congregations opted to incorporate their congregation into a new vision of church. Although one, Congregation B, has had worship space located other than in

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<sup>200</sup> In the two decades following World War II (1945-1965) there was an increase in the birthrate. These two decades have been labeled as the baby boom by sociologists. "Aged boomers" is a reference to those born during the earliest years of the baby boom.

<sup>201</sup> Quoted by a subject in Congregation B. See appendix 6.

the facility for most of the history since rebuilding - their original vision was to meet the housing needs of seniors. While there are both similarities and differences to the circumstances of each, all three projects wrestle with similar challenges. These challenges include issues related to leadership, administration, church growth and identity, and ongoing understanding of vision and mission.

### Leadership

Any building project requires strong, committed leadership. The persons entrusted with the responsibility of crafting a vision and bringing that vision to fruition must be organized, and not readily given to discouragement. The individual or individuals need to be articulate and capable of communicating an idea. It is also helpful if the individual has political connections. In the case of Congregation A, the leader at the time had political connections, having served for a time as an aide to a Member of Provincial Parliament. As a result of these connections, the individual was able to apprise the congregation of grants and loans available for funding. In the case of Congregation C, the political support of the City Council, and the representatives in Provincial and National Legislatures, also helped with getting the requisite permission and funding for the project. The tax break, negotiated with the city at the time of building, has continued to serve Congregation C well. Rents have been kept low, and the complex has had little trouble with occupancy. Some tenants of limited means are willing to pay the market price for rent in that particular facility, because the rent is still lower in this building than in any other non-profit facility in the city.

<sup>202</sup>While not all leaders had political connections, the leaders were able to convince

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<sup>202</sup> See appendix 7.

political representatives of the value of the project to the wider community, which, in turn, helped to remove some barriers in the planning and execution.

While it cannot be overstated that the leadership in a congregation contemplating a building project needs to be organized and strong, it is extremely important that the leadership is caring and pastoral. When a congregation is faced with the possibility of erecting a church edifice that bears little resemblance to the traditional church sanctuary, it can be disconcerting. The membership is often concerned with losses of identity and membership that may ensue when the mission of the church seems to be changing. This is a matter of vital importance to longstanding members within a congregation that opts to build a housing complex instead of a traditional sanctuary. The members of the congregation may have their understanding of church community challenged when the mission of the church is concerned with other than its own needs. The concerns of these individuals need to be heard, and the person expressing such concern should not be devalued because of their questions about the purpose of the church.

In Congregation A, there is a feeling that the concerns of those who questioned the wisdom of combining housing with a congregation were neither heard, nor taken seriously, by the congregation leader at the time. Some would argue that the leadership was so strong that any voices of dissension would readily be silenced. There are some in Congregation B that lament, on occasion, the loss of a parking lot when that space was developed into housing. At the same time, these same individuals are reluctant to complain too loudly lest they be judged as selfish. Said one subject, "People still whine about giving up the parking lot. I'll never forget the

day that the minister proposed it. Everybody voted for it; he was so passionate. You were pretty crummy if you weren't going to give away your land for housing.”

The leadership in a congregation undertaking a development or a re-development project must be pastoral, and, if not able to allay a congregant's fears, at the very least be prepared to give the dissenters a legitimate hearing. Ministers come and go, and the congregation usually remains. The membership needs to own the project and must feel positive about the edifice. After all, it will be their legacy long after the visionary has moved on.

The leadership in these situations is of fundamental importance. In most cases the vision would never have gotten off the ground were it not for the passion and *commitment of the leadership*. However, in some cases, the membership felt as though their spiritual needs were not given the same priority as the building. This can add to the potential for tension between the complex and the congregation. This tension can increase when there are occupancy woes that inflate the debt and leave the congregation with an uncertain future.

To suggest that the leadership in a congregation needs to be organized gifted and visionary as well as pastoral and caring and patient may be to suggest the need for a minister who can be all things to all people. There would be very few, if indeed any, candidates who possessed the “whole” package. Therefore, a congregation in transition may consider calling a person to the ministry of building. This may be a contracted position, and it would be the responsibility of this individual to help the congregation discern the needs and devise a plan. Although the incumbent minister would have input and share in the oversight, the *primary responsibility of the*

incumbent leader would be as the minister of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. There would not necessarily be the same potential for conflict of interest if the dissenters could discuss their concerns with the one who is not identified as the author of the vision. The incumbent minister could offer pastoral care to those who were particularly concerned over an unfolding vision and could also act as liaison with the one contracted.

The congregation in transition requires ongoing pastoral care especially during a time of change and upheaval. It may be easier for the needs of the congregation to be met if the leadership role of building is not merged with that of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. There will be serious budget implications if a salary and benefit package becomes a part of the plan throughout a contracted time. However, to expect the minister of word, sacrament, and pastoral care also to be in charge of a building project could be as catastrophic as placing new wine in old wineskins, causing the skins to burst and resulting in the loss of the wine (Matthew 9:17). The new wine belongs in a new and unused skin. The task of bringing a vision to fruition needs to be kept separate.

The church of the twenty-first century may need to respond to a very different set of community needs, and the members of a congregation may not completely understand the changing mission that is born through the new vision. The challenge of the leadership is to continue to be able to identify and address the needs of the faith community, and the larger community. This may be more adequately addressed by having a minister contracted to do the assessing of needs within the congregation and



also in the wider community. This is a ministry quite separate from that of word, sacrament and pastoral care.

### Church Growth and Identity

These two components impact on one another. As a congregation becomes more strongly identified with seniors or geared to income housing, it has a negative impact on church growth. These congregations do not attract young families in the same way that neighbourhood and more traditional church communities do. These churches may offer many of the same programs as more traditional congregations. Congregation A and Congregation B both have Sunday Schools and Bible study groups, and congregation B has recently hired a Youth Worker, who works fourteen hours a week. However, Congregation A faces a most uncertain future as the housing continues to operate at less than full capacity, and Congregation B recently held a congregational vote, asking the membership if there was a preference to vacate the churchly edifice and return to worshipping within the housing complex. This is to address the budget concerns of a dwindling congregation and the costs of maintaining a separate church edifice for worship and Christian nurture. Congregation C is made up almost entirely of mature members, many of who have been associated with the congregation for many years. There is an active UCW (United Church Women) but no Sunday school. Many in the wider community consider Congregation C a seniors' congregation because of the senior's housing.

The identity of Congregation B has been less compromised because of the separate church edifice. This offers a fairly concrete distinction between the housing development and the congregation. The seniors housing, programming and ministry is

seen as distinct from the congregational ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care, however, it is expensive. Furthermore, there are those that prefer to keep the two ministries quite separate. Even among the membership there is concern about being considered a “seniors’ church.” The desire to keep the housing ministry and the congregational ministry separate influenced the vote. For the time being, the congregation is able to keep up two separate and distinct edifices and programs, although for how long is questionable.

Each of the three venues has come to realize that partnering a congregation with a housing project for seniors affects church growth. Each community has also come to realize that not all of the tenants are affiliated with the denomination, and previously held assumptions about occupancy and church affiliation have not worked out. Very few of the tenants have become church members, and apartment size and parking inadequacies continue to impact on occupancy. More and more of the tenants in each of the three complexes are affiliated with other faiths, or claim to have no faith. The congregation of the twenty-first century that is considering partnering a church with a housing project needs to make different assumptions about occupancy and church membership. The congregation may still rely upon full occupancy to meet a budget that would include both repaying a mortgage and financing a church ministry. However, the tenants cannot be relied upon to participate in the life of the congregation. A strong and vital congregation that is distinct from the occupancy will help to foster a separate church identity.

Congregation B has been better able to preserve their identity as a program church by having a distinct worship space down the street from the housing complex.

This may not be possible for all congregations that partner with housing.

Congregation A is located on the second floor within the facility, and Congregation C has complete ownership of the basement within their housing complex. However, Congregation C is strongly identified with seniors, and Congregation A is struggling with occupancy that is increasingly drawn from those on social assistance. This congregation is struggling to understand who they are as a congregation, once ministering to the elite, and now no longer seen as elite. Their resources have dwindled and they are no longer in a financial position to offer seed money for building projects. Their mission has now changed and a new vision may be requisite, but it is difficult to let go of the past. The challenges associated with maintaining church identity when a congregation partners with a housing development have shed light on the need for these communities to have an ongoing vision that helps to discern the mission of the congregation.

#### Ongoing Vision and Mission

Each of the three congregational settings found themselves in dire and controlling circumstances. Destroyed and decaying buildings dictated that something new needed to be done. Each of the three congregations made the decision to erect an edifice that would meet the needs of the congregation and also those of the wider community. Needs within the wider community were identified at the time, and a plan devised to meet those needs. However, times and circumstance have continued to evolve and change, and not all of the communities have been as adroit at responding to the changing needs. Congregation B has been the most successful at continuing to respond to identified needs.

One of the most significant insights learned from this setting has been the ability to adapt to new situations as they evolve. Those interviewed are quick to respond that “everything was reactionary”, or things simply evolved. The changes that have been put into place were not a part of the original plan or vision but has evolved as a type of ongoing vision. To have some kind of adaptability has proven expedient. Retrofitting the building to allow for a government tenant provided ongoing revenue for a number of years. Seeing that the area designated for common space on each floor was being underutilized prompted the decision to turn the space into studio apartments for rent which had a positive effect on revenue. Recognizing the need for assisted living has meant that tenants requiring assistance for day to day functions can remain in the complex longer, rather than having to move to a nursing home.

This has proven symbiotic as occupancy remains constant, and the needs of the aging are being met. A dining room has been put in so that those unable to cook for themselves can get regular, nutritious meals. The addition of a small chapel, and utilizing both the Community Clergy person<sup>203</sup> and other members of the clergy has meant that spiritual needs of the tenants can be met on an ongoing basis. Tenants need not affiliate with the United Church, and other clerics can use the chapel for services for their denominational affiliates. This alleviates the need for seniors to leave physically the premises for worship. The assumptions about the size of apartment that a senior might need have also been addressed. The balconies have been removed and

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<sup>203</sup> The complex has created a paid position for a United Church cleric to act as minister to the residents. This individual is referred to as the “Community Clergy” and is not to be confused with other clerics from the wider community who also exercise a ministry within the facility.

the area enclosed, thus allowing for more space. One interviewee commented on how this extra space has been utilized by the tenants for computers, sitting areas and plants. All of these changes have become a part of an ongoing vision to meet the changing and evolving needs of the tenants, which has impacted on occupancy.

Congregation A continues to struggle with occupancy and have made some changes to their building. The significant change has been the decision to increase the number of units available for geared to income. While occupancy has been addressed, the debt has not been addressed as significantly. The challenge faced by Congregation A is the changes to the downtown core. These changes were not anticipated and are not easily addressed. As the downtown changed and more and more businesses moved away from the downtown core, Congregation A has had difficulty renting the commercial space within the complex. Since the plan to pay the mortgage was highly dependent on the revenue from commercial rents, the congregation has faced an escalating financial shortfall.

The changes to the downtown are have affected occupancy as well. The parking inadequacies dictate that the complex is situated on bus routes, and that grocery stores are located within an easy walk for tenants. Congregation C is situated on a main bus route and there are variety stores in the vicinity of the complex for the purchasing of staples. Congregation C does not rely upon commercial tenants for revenue. The wisdom of incorporating a commercial component into a housing project/church facility must be debated. When the meeting of a budget is inextricably tied to rent and businesses opt to move out of a complex, the congregation is left with a revenue shortage. Although the idea of incorporating revenue bearing commercial

enterprise with housing can be lucrative, it is also very risky. If the community needs change, and the businesses re-locate to other areas of the community, the church community can be left with overwhelming cash flow problems. The changes within the wider community can make it increasingly difficult for the church community to rent the commercial space.

If a church community today makes the decision to erect a multi-purpose multi-use building, the planning must include some speculation on changing needs within the community surrounding the facility and within the wider community of the city. Although it will not be possible to predict with complete accuracy the precise changes in the demographics that may evolve over time, the church community must anticipate change. Adaptability needs to be a part of the plan, and long-term leases negotiated at the time of construction. Rather than be dependent on the changing tide of business, perhaps a better partner might be with groups within the arts community. If the church opts to erect a sanctuary that resembles a theater, complete with appropriate sound and light, the space can be utilized by theater groups, music ensembles and artists. These groups may prove to be less volatile as a partner than commercial business.<sup>204</sup>

Any multi-purpose multi use facility that is erected will require expert management. The best form of management for a large complex was not always considered as a part of the original vision, and some congregations have found themselves scrambling to react to unexpected change. The relationship between the

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<sup>204</sup> This is an assumption that is being made, and no research into the existence of a church/theater/ arts center has been done.

congregation and the complex must be clearly delineated, and an outside manager rather than the called minister should probably be responsible for the complex.

### Administration

Each of the three settings where interviews were conducted came to the realization that separate management for the housing complex was necessary. Each of the three venues hired managers after realizing that there needed to be a separation between the church community and the occupancy of the housing complex. Each of the three venues has a board that is mandated by the denomination to be comprised of a majority holding membership within The United Church of Canada. The housing complex and the congregation are linked together, and at the Annual General Meeting of the congregation, there is a report made to the congregation.

The style and type of administration varies in each of the venues. In Congregation A, a Management Firm was hired to address the issues of occupancy. One interviewee volunteered that the first agency did not have the best interests of the congregation in mind and was replaced. The second agency has proven more adequate, and building managers have helped to address the occupancy shortages. However, the most serious challenges that confront Congregation, are increasingly beyond their control. The changes in a once vital downtown core could not have been anticipated, and as such, vacancies continue to be a problem. It is difficult to rent the *commercial space when the Central Business District has changed, and this continues* to leave some members of the congregation concerned with financial viability.

The relationship between the congregation and the complex was not made distinct enough as part of the original vision, and this has left some members

wondering about the relationship between the “space and the place.” Congregation A, like Congregation C, has space within the complex for worship. Congregation A also has office space, and a place designated for Sunday school. The residents that are not affiliated with the congregation are not always supportive of the children using the elevator to get to their Sunday school venue. The occupants of the complex in Congregation C have raised a similar concern. There is sometimes tension between the congregation and the tenants. The tenants do not like children “running through the halls of their home.” The congregation wants to remind the tenants that the congregation owns and operates the building. This is an issue not easily addressed to the liking of all concerned, and this lesson is particularly significant for a congregation that is considering marrying a church community with a housing project. Congregation B does not have the same issues, because their church is housed in a separate building down the block from the complex.

The manager of Congregation B has deep roots within the United Church and also a long history of working in housing. He is credited by many in the congregation with reacting to possible negative issues with a positive reaction. The needs of the *seniors within the complex continue to be of primary concern, and the building is being altered to accommodate the needs of the increasingly frail.* This has meant that there does not need to be as significant a turn around of tenants. Rather than vacating the complex when nursing care is required, tenants can move to floors designated for assisted living. This, in turn, makes apartments available for the more able bodied.

Congregation B has had some struggles with renting the commercial space, and more so in recent years when the market has been more depressed. However,



space vacated by government offices has been retrofitted and utilized to continue addressing need. Congregation B has also invested their financial resources wisely. *Much of the insurance money was retained and invested following the fire.* The congregation gathered in a neighbourhood church for services for some years, and made their decisions to rebuild slowly, and intentionally. The minister and board of Congregation B have been very careful to ensure that the needs of the congregation and those of the tenants in the complex are given equal consideration. Retaining ownership of the development and offering the land in lieu of rent has given long life to their insurance money. They have been able to erect other housing developments for families and had the resources to remodel the church that they now occupy. Their resources may be depleting and their congregation getting smaller, but they still have the most options available to them. They have the option of moving back into the complex for services.

One interviewee from Congregation B was quick to credit the board of the complex.<sup>205</sup> *It is highly functioning and comprised of United Church people with particular gifts and expertise. A strong board with a clear mandate is key to the success of a project combining housing and a congregation. However, the needs of the congregation must not be lost as the needs of seniors are addressed .* Congregations housed within a seniors' complex have been made to comply with changing safety standards. Security systems and lights have been added, and living in

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<sup>205</sup> This subject has a history in the community as a successful businessman and has been affiliated with the church for his entire life. He has since retired from business, but brings his business and boardroom acumen to his faith community.

an age of litigation, the denomination has recently become concerned with developing Administrative Standards.

Congregation C is a small unit compared to Congregation A and B. However, the current Building Manager of Congregation C has expressed concern that half of the occupants would be unable to vacate the facility in an emergency without the use of the elevator. Given the high-rise of Congregation A and Congregation B one has to wonder about the safety of the occupants in the event of a fire. If the church and politicians at all levels of government become concerned with litigation in the wake of a disaster, the future of shared facilities may be in jeopardy. The need may continue to be there, but the ability to meet it may become increasingly mired in red tape and compromised further by high insurance premiums. The church contemplating a building project in partnership with other agencies will need to engage in thorough and ongoing investigation into church and governmental policies.

### Summation

Congregations have found themselves at the crossroads of decision. In the case of the congregations interviewed for this study, circumstances had dictated that a replacement facility be erected. Each of the congregations is to be commended for honing a vision that was not completely or uniquely self - serving. The hope was to identify and meet the needs of a congregation and the wider community. Each of them were faced with making decisions in the early 1970's when housing was beginning to surface as a pressing need within many cities. Each decided to erect facilities that would house seniors, as well as individuals of limited means, and to incorporate a space for the congregation.

From these congregational stories several significant lessons have been learned that can influence a church community today considering a building project. First of all, it is important to consider the needs of the local congregation, as well as the needs of the wider community. Gone are the days when a worship center alone can be justified. Integral to the visioning process is a diagnostic analysis of the area surrounding the building site. Said analysis must highlight what currently exists in the area, and what is envisioned in the city plans for future development. In so far as it is possible, the present, future, and long - term needs of the community must be considered. Hopefully so detailed an analysis will help to anticipate future trends and enable the congregation to respond to changing needs.

Leadership is of fundamental importance. The minister of a congregation in transition needs to be organized and visionary, but equally must be sensitive and pastoral. Change is never easy, and members of a congregation embarking on a building project need to be inspired to embrace the vision; they must also be made to feel as though their concerns and worries will also be taken seriously. It may be that the incumbent minister of a pastoral charge embarking on a building project possesses the organizational skills and the pastoral skills “to be all things to all people”. However, it may be in the best interest of the congregation to hire a person whose task it is to oversee all aspects of the building project. This frees up the incumbent minister to perform the responsibilities associated with word, sacrament, and pastoral care and not feel conflicted. Hiring a separate overseer of the building project also means that the incumbent is not associated with the building, i.e., “it is not their building.”

The congregation that partners with others in a building project must be willing to share in all aspects of building ownership. This will probably mean that a separate building manager will be hired, and a combined board of the facility organized. Each of the partners will have representation on a combined board, and each will have a separate and distinct board to oversee their own organization. Each partner will need to commit up front to the long - term commitment and viability of the project, and the consequences of breaking a lease and placing the project in financial jeopardy. The management of the facility will be intentional about ongoing assessment of the changes in the community within the facility and also the changes ongoing in the surrounding wider community. The congregation and partners need to engage in a process of ongoing visioning so that changing needs continue to be met. In the spirit of Acts, the very foundation of the project must rest upon solidarity of purpose and unity. “Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” (Acts 4:32)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### APPLICATION FOR FAITH UNITED

The introduction to this thesis concluded with a quote from John Gillman. It offered a response to the rhetorical question, “What are we to do?” located in the latter part of verse 37 in the second chapter of Acts. That quote is repeated here in the opening paragraphs of the final chapter.

After taking our reflective journey through the Gospel and Acts, the query remains before us and calls forth from us with ever-greater urgency a faith response. To see what we have as gifts to be shared rather than as things to be possessed is to strengthen bonds within the community of persons. To realize that who we are is more important than what we have is a significant first insight on the path to true freedom. What is at stake for us is nothing less than our wholeness and salvation. What is at stake for the world is nothing less than the well being and wholeness of the entire human community.<sup>206</sup>

To view possessions as gifts to be shared rather than things to possess can be freeing, although the propensity to cling is more commonplace. Rather than clinging to things as symbols of affluence and success, resources can be offered for a greater good. Rather than the individual or a mere few benefiting from having, the good of a greater number can possibly be addressed; however, this is easier said than done. The church of the twenty-first century has the opportunity to reassess what is most important to the body of Christ. Some may conclude that traditional buildings and ritual are paramount. Others may begin to re-evaluate the mission of the congregation and choose to be a part of re-creating a different understanding of Christian community. The question, “What are we to do?” is a significant one that congregations should be asking with regularity. The needs of the community are

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<sup>206</sup> Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 116-117.

always changing, if only subtly, and society seems always to be in a state of ongoing transition. There will not be a definitive answer to the question for all time.

The question, “what are we to do?” is particularly compelling for the Faith United, New Church Development Project. Unlike established churches that have a building to maintain, Faith United rents space in a local Anglican Church and has flexibility and freedom to move. Faith is also fortunate to have time to contemplate the future because to date, the relationship between the two congregations has been amicable. Our present and future will continue to hinge on human and financial resources available, and also on our sense of mission. Faith has four options. These include (1) continuing on indefinitely as it has, renting space and keeping the budget manageable for a small congregation; (2) dialogue with the host church or another congregation about shared ministry; (3) retain the property for future development and (4) sell the property and use the revenue for ministry in the city. Each of these options has positive and negative consequences.

#### A. Shared Ecumenical Ministry

Other United Church congregations have dared to think outside of the box, and there are ecumenical shared ministries that bring together two or three denominations into one congregation. One such congregation is found in Slave Lake Alberta, an amalgamation of United, Lutheran and Anglican communions into one congregation. Ministers over the years have been called from each of the denominations, and the church owns all of the service books and hymnbooks from each of the denominations. The liturgy rotates weekly so that the ritual of each of the denominational partners is being maintained. The people of Slave Lake are certainly to be commended for their

ecumenical spirit; however, these types of arrangements are more common in isolated and small towns that would find it a challenge to support more than one congregation. Such a model may eventually become more the norm in urban and suburban congregations, and certainly Faith United is in a good position to consider a shared *relationship on a trial basis*.

Faith is currently housed in a local Anglican Church in the eastern geographical area of the city of Kingston. Neither the Anglican congregation nor Faith United is running at capacity, nor the relationship can best be described as symbiotic. The small amount of rent that Faith pays monthly for the use of the sanctuary helps to meet the Anglican budget. Fees are also collected for the use of the sanctuary for weddings and for the use of the hall for fellowship ventures and fundraising. Faith United gathers in the sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. and tries to vacate the hall by 10:30. The Anglican community moves into the sanctuary at 10:30 for an 11:00 o'clock service, followed by fellowship in the hall. Each congregation oversees a separate Sunday school, Bible study and governance of the congregation. Until recently, there has been no discussion of moving towards sharing in ministry, and there has been no formal suggestion that talks begin. However, on 23 November 2003, the current rector informed the incumbent minister at Faith United that at a recent vestry meeting, desire had been expressed about sharing together in ministry.

At this point in time, neither formal nor informal discussions have taken place between the respective ministers, councils, or congregations. Neither has it been communicated why the suggestion was made at the vestry council. Sharing some of

the tasks of ministry could serve to address the burnout experienced by the laity when human resources are stretched thin, necessitating that key lay people assume several leadership roles. Sharing might also alleviate some of the time demands experienced by clergy. Since both congregations offer Bible study, the responsibility of leadership could be shared between the two communions. Despite the differences in the liturgy, it might also be possible for the two congregations to celebrate joint services of worship throughout the summer months. The success of this would depend upon the receptivity of the laity in both congregations to the idea. Participants would need to embrace the differences that exist between the liturgical styles of the two communions, and this cannot be taken lightly. The differences between the two liturgies are quite pronounced, with the Anglican liturgy considered “higher church” than The United Church of Canada.<sup>207</sup> The single most important consideration in a church cooperative is the enthusiasm for it, and the commitment to it by the persons involved. Without enthusiasm and commitment little can be accomplished.<sup>208</sup>

While sharing in ministry might help to address the burnout of clergy and laity, it could also serve to create it. Much staff time can be spent putting out the little fires of discontent, and at the expense of church growth and outreach.<sup>209</sup> If the sharing

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<sup>207</sup> I recently used the sanctuary at Saint Mark’s for a wedding. The altar guild had arrived to dress the altar for the Sunday service just as the wedding was about to begin. The volunteers opted to sit in the balcony while the wedding was taking place. At the conclusion of the service, one dedicated laywoman drew my attention to some wax that had dripped onto the altar cloth from candles placed on the altar by the mother of the bride and also a small burn mark the size of the head of the match. The wax and burn mark was very distressing, and the volunteer announced that she was not comfortable with the altar cloth being used for the service on the following day. She removed it with a flourish. I volunteered to take the cloth home to wash it, or to replace it altogether. Both offers were unaccepted, and I was left feeling as though my hand been caught in the cookie jar.

<sup>208</sup> Lyle Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), 121.

<sup>209</sup> Lyle Schaller, *The Small Church is Different* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 175.



of ministry proves to be more problematic than fruitful and is cancelled upon evaluation, the relationship between the partners could become strained. Another major consideration with this option is the effect that it would have on congregational identity. Faith United could become increasingly integrated into the identity of Saint Mark's Anglican at its own expense. However, the biggest deterrent to investing in Saint Mark's as a partner is the physical structure of the buildings.

Saint Mark's is a beautiful structure with fine acoustics. It is an esthetically pleasing space in which to worship; however, the facilities of Saint Mark's are woefully inadequate. With the hall separated from the sanctuary, children need physically to leave the sanctuary to attend Sunday school. The hall is also of limited space, such that only one event can take place in the hall at a time. The washrooms in the hall are also inadequate, and the sanctuary is not equipped with restroom facilities. The hall is equipped with suspended light fixtures, which make the space impossible to utilize for most sports. Young persons enjoy playing teams sports like volleyball and basketball and both are impossible in this venue. When young people have been desirous of youth activities, Faith United has had to rent the space in the school gymnasium adjacent to the church. A further deterrent to partnering with Saint Mark's is the restricted access to the hall.

The church hall is used in the early hours of most evenings. When Faith negotiated access to the hall, it was limited to one evening a month on a Thursday evening after 8:30 p.m. This time slot, while appreciated, is considered too late for the Board to meet or for a study group to convene. It is also not frequent enough, as study groups usually convene weekly, and it assumes that there would only be one small

group ministry operating at a given time. If Faith United hopes to minister to a variety of needs both within the congregation and outside of it, the congregation requires access to space on a regular and ongoing basis. While the space does not need necessarily to be owned and operated by the congregation, the local congregation does require space to exercise its ministry. States Lyle Schaller, “For the local church to accomplish its purpose, it needs adequate tools, and one of these is suitable physical facilities.”<sup>210</sup>

The facilities at Saint Mark’s are restrictive and limiting, and seriously impede the ministry of Faith United Church. While sharing a building has been financially rewarding for both congregations, it has constrained the ministry at Faith and has also defined our mission. The ministry of Faith United Church is limited primarily to Sunday morning worship. If Faith United Church is going to hone a vision and a mission, it must be able to access a facility with regularity and offer programs that meet the needs of those inside and outside of the church. Faith has the option of merging with another congregation with a larger facility or erecting a facility.

Church cooperatives and mergers often take place in response to limited and dwindling resources within small church communities. These arrangements can be very fragile, and are sometimes viewed as granting dying churches a little longer life. When the primary or sole motivation for merger is survival, then death of the congregation is merely being postponed.<sup>211</sup> In order for a merger to be successful it usually requires a new vision, and the conscious effort on the part of leaders and

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<sup>210</sup> Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future*, 123.

<sup>211</sup> Terry Foland, “Merger as New Beginning,” in Beth Ann Gaede, ed., *Ending With Hope: A Resource for Closing Congregations* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002), 66.

members not simply to continue to do things as they have always been done. Unfortunately, the new vision has not always been a part of the negotiations. The simplest version of the church cooperative is two church parishes served by one minister.<sup>212</sup> However, in the latter half of the twentieth century church cooperatives changed to issue-centered ministries,<sup>213</sup> such as the partnering of seniors housing with a congregation as reported in the previous chapter.

For this type of cooperative venture to succeed two vital requirements are needed: a leader who can bring the vision to fruition, and alternate sources of funding. Successful partners in this type of cooperative venture might include a housing corporation, a private school, or a day care facility. The partner provides funding through particular means, for example, mortgages issued by the federal government in the case of housing, tuition for a private school, or user fees for a day care facility.<sup>214</sup> In the interviews of the three venues for the preceding chapter, the expressed need for strong leadership was stated in all three examples. The alternate sources of funding through insurance and low tax assessment have been integral to the success of two of the three housing complexes (Congregations B and C). The failure of the funding from commercial rent has had a serious effect on the third example (Congregation A).

Faith United is not in a position to bring very much to the bargaining table if a merger is given serious consideration. To merge with another congregation within the

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<sup>212</sup> Schaller, *The Small Church is Different*, 171.

<sup>213</sup> Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future*, 121.

<sup>214</sup> Schaller, *The Small Church is Different*, 171-172.

city would probably result in the loss of identity for Faith United. Since this New Church Development does not have a visible identity associated with a building the loss of identity would be a significant sacrifice. The congregational name could be appended to the existing name of an established congregation, and the membership of two congregations rolled into one larger membership, but the unique character of Faith United would be lost. A further loss could be the loss of a ministry position within Faith United Church.

If the congregation was to merge with an existing congregation and access its building and programs, there may be insufficient funds and work to require the services of two professional clergy persons. One of the two may be declared superfluous. It is quite possible that if such a merger took place that two persons trained for ministry could be expected to leave their respective positions so that a fresh new face might be called to the ministry of the new congregation. The merger could help to provide a more secure future for two struggling congregations within the city, but may incur other types of losses.<sup>215</sup> It goes without saying that no one can be forced to attend a particular church and that worship and church affiliation is a matter of choice. The church membership in both partnering congregations may take a degree of exception to the change. Again this was the experience in congregation B after the fire, when several families made the decision to attend churches closer to home after the fire destroyed the building.

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<sup>215</sup> In a telephone conversation with Tom Broadhurst, Information and Statistic Coordinator for The United Church of Canada on Thursday April 1, 2004 I asked if there were any statistics kept on congregational growth or decline following amalgamation. He responded that this particular demographic had not been charted, and that most information was anecdotal.

The positive side of church merger may result in Faith United having more regular access to a building for programs, nurture, and fellowship. The number of chairs in a person's living room would no longer limit participation in programs. There could be visibility attached to the name of Faith when appended to the name of an existing congregation with a building. A vision and a mission within the local congregation and in the wider community would be so much easier with access to a building. On the negative side, a church merger may result in some members opting not to move to the new location, and could also occasion the loss of one, and possibly two, positions in ministry. A further negative effect of the merger could be the challenges in honing a shared vision for ministry between two diverse congregations.

While all of these considerations can give one pause, the truth of the matter is that congregations, like the human beings that build and support them, are not immortal. Congregations have a life cycle: they are born, grow, may get sick, can recover, and will age, and eventually die. Death may come quickly or slowly after a long period of illness, but death will come.<sup>216</sup> The losses incurred by Faith by merging with another congregation may bring life, for good or for ill, to another *similarly declining congregation*, and might be a sincere demonstration of self-sacrificing *agape* love. This is a decision not to be taken lightly, and it offers the opportunity to evaluate just how tightly this community clings to the few possessions that Faith owns.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the question "what are we to do" is a very complex question to answer. To remain invisible within Saint Mark's Anglican

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<sup>216</sup> Keith Spencer, "Assessing Congregational Viability" in Gaede, *Ending With Hope*, 19.

Church is limiting and constraining. To merge with another congregation is a possibility that could result in significant gains and losses. The third option to consider is developing the property purchased for a building. However, like all of the options, this, too, has its positive and negative sides and does not proffer an easy or clear-cut answer to the question, “what are we to do?”

### B. Developing the Property

As long as Faith United Church refuses to consider selling the property or *developing the property, the future does not need to be considered.* The congregation can continue to gather in rented space and have a ministry that is almost exclusively inward looking. The needs of those who gather on Sunday morning can be viewed as primary, and the reason for Faith’s existence neither questioned nor challenged. However, to confront the future in such a way is void of vision and avoids altogether the most fundamental question for the congregation: what is God calling us to do? This question is not often asked as decisions are based on finances, attendance at worship services, and, in some cases, the limited availability of clergy.<sup>217</sup> Tension can be rife in any congregation that seems to be at odds with between what the Lord is calling the church to be, and what the membership would like their church to be.<sup>218</sup> The core question for ministry is what is God calling us to do in this place.<sup>219</sup>

In order adequately to meet the needs of persons inside and outside of the church, access to space is paramount. While ministry can certainly take place over a

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<sup>217</sup> Ellen Morseth, “Discerning God’s Calling,” Beth Ann Gaede, ed., *Ending With Hope*, 4.

<sup>218</sup> Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future*, 31.

<sup>219</sup> Spencer, “Assessing Congregational Viability,” in Gaede, *Ending With Hope*, 18.

cup of coffee in a donut shop or living room, and weddings can be performed at golf courses, cottages and sundry places not remotely “churchly,” and Bible studies can be successfully conducted in common rooms of condominiums, there is a frustration in being homeless. To have a church home means that Sunday school curriculum and supplies can be placed on a shelf rather than piled into plastic bins for transport. To have a church home suggests that services and programs could be offered at times convenient for the participants. The choir has a place to practice and to store music. Equally as important is that the needs of a larger constituency can be met if space is available.

While not being shackled to the maintenance of a building can keep the budget to a minimum, it has proven to be more of an inconvenience than a convenience. The Annual Meeting for the congregation must take place in a separate space, because time has proven that the best attendance at this meeting is guaranteed if the meeting takes place after a Sunday service of worship. Since Faith does not have access to Saint Mark’s following Sunday worship, the congregation has gathered in large living rooms and more recently, in a hotel. While there is a positive side to this as the church symbolically moves out into the community to conduct its business, it continues to be a deterrent for some to participate. Young parents do not feel comfortable taking their children into someone’s home out of concern for property and noise. The time allotted for services of worship can also be an inconvenience.

While many members and affiliates of Faith United Church like the 9:00 a.m. service, the early time slot is a deterrent for those who like a more relaxed start to their Sunday. The time of the service is non-negotiable because of the long-standing

tradition of the 11:00 a.m. service at Saint Mark's. The host church takes the traditional times for services on Good Friday and Christmas Eve. Faith United does not gather for a Good Friday Service and commemorates the Passion of Christ on Palm Sunday. If the Passion is not read on Palm Sunday, then the congregation celebrates the Triumphal entry and the Resurrection a week later without travelling to Golgotha. While constituents are more than welcome to attend other services in other churches, this is a decision made for the congregation because of circumstance. A similar circumstance occurs on Christmas Eve, when the Faith community has the choice of 4:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. for a service that will not interfere with the Anglican community gathering at 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

While it may be difficult to justify the cost of building a church for the sake of convenience, the frustration of "fitting in" to another's agenda cannot be dismissed. A building project can easily become a dictator of a different sort, as finances, programming, and community access become issues. A building project is also exhausting of energy and resources. At the same time serious analysis of congregational purpose, programs, resources, and need often reveal that a congregation should consider a building program.<sup>220</sup> It continues to be a challenge for Faith United to state a definitive purpose for its life. As long as Faith is limited to the ministry that it can exercise from Saint Mark's Anglican Church it can avoid effectively answering the question of what God is calling the congregation to do. Whether the congregation begins to vision a building project or not, the time is ripe for the membership to consider the purpose of the congregation, what it stands for,

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Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future*, 124-125.



what it hopes to bring to fruition, and the conditions it intends to establish in the community and world by its presence.<sup>221</sup> To that end, the membership must at least step outside of Saint Mark's Anglican Church and take a look around the wider community in which it exists.

To consider developing the land is both exciting and frightening. It would be expensive, and for this reason alone may not be given serious consideration by the community as an option. In fact, there are those that readily dismiss and eschew any conversation about developing the land. On the positive side, developing the land would give Faith United visibility. It would provide the congregation with access to a building with regularity and convenience such that services of worship and programs could be offered when the congregation wanted them. It would be possible to meet both the needs of those who prefer an earlier service and those who desire a little later service. *The two services could be bridged by an extended coffee hour so that the two groups could still meet together.*

A building would provide space for the choir to meet and practice and also for small groups and committees to assemble. Services of worship on high holy days, such as Christmas and Easter could be scheduled, and an alternative weekday or evening services of worship offered for those who prefer to remain at home on Sunday mornings. The building could be built to address sundry needs such that children and youth may be able to *gather for sport and recreation. Space could be provided for an office for the minister and for a church secretary, so that the minister's home would not need to double as a church office. Church records and*

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<sup>221</sup> Roy D. Phillips, *Letting God: Transforming Congregations for Ministry* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 1999), 41-42.

registers could be stored more safely. The building could be made available for meetings of the judicatory when Presbytery gathers and could also be made available to the wider community for use.

The negative side to building would be largely financial. The cost of erecting and maintaining a facility would have a significant impact on the budget of the congregation. Even the style and nature of the building could be a source of disagreement. Since there are already thirteen traditional United Church sanctuaries in the city of Kingston, it would be difficult to justify one more. It follows that something multi-purpose would be given greater consideration. Those members who appreciate stained glass windows and fixed pews may be uncomfortable with the notion of a church facility that does not look churchly. Indeed, there could be dissension within the congregation over the decision to vacate Saint Mark's Anglican.

Yet another possible negative consequence to building is the possibility of the facility becoming a "graven image". Maintaining a building has a direct impact on the budget, and financial concern can readily smother the concept of stewardship. Access to the facility may become limited to those that can "pay" their way, and "user fees" become commonplace. The notion of ministry can slowly be usurped by the bottom line. Like the Children of Israel wandering in the desert, homelessness can deepen one's reliance upon God for survival. Once the Promised Land is attained, the relationship with God can change. Once the congregation becomes a master of the space rather than a tenant, relationship to the facility can change. The challenge of the clenched fist of ownership can take precedence.

Again there can be gains and losses to developing the property. A building can be both freeing and constraining. The congregation with unlimited access to a facility is better able to meet the needs of both those inside and those outside of the community. *Services of worship and programs can be offered with ease of convenience, and the building made available to other groups and agencies.* The negative side of building relates to the cost of maintaining a facility, and the power of the status quo to control the ministry.

There are clearly no easy answers to the question, “What are we to do?” Each option offers positive and negative effects. To take no action leaves the congregation without vision or a clearly defined sense of purpose. To merge with another congregation could provide access to facilities and offer hope to a struggling congregation, but result in the death of Faith United. To build a facility of our own could provide *visibility, identity, and opportunity for ministry, but could also result in financial stresses and the power of the status quo.* Still the question engages and requires an answer that is rooted in discernment. What is God’s intention for the immediate and long-term future of Faith United Church? The answer to the question will require study and prayer and integrity of heart and mind.<sup>222</sup> It will require effective leadership and the commitment of the leadership and membership to discern what it is that God is calling Faith United to do, and be.

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<sup>222</sup> Morseth, “Discerning God’s Call,” 3. Morseth writes about the process involved in spiritual discernment when seeking the answer to the question of God’s will. She writes, “People engage in spiritual discernment not to argue for a desired outcome, nor to debate a matter in order to win. We engage in spiritual discernment to prayerfully seek God’s yearning in an important matter. The practice of spiritual discernment does not provide a swift prepackaged solution, nor does it allow for a quick decision among a few good options. It does, however, allow significant time for pondering God’s intentions. The practice calls for integrity of heart and mind, and significant time for study and prayer.”

### C. Where to From Here?

Before a decision about the future of Faith United can be made, the congregation will need to be stirred to a point of curiosity about the reason for the existence of Faith United. The congregation has not been encouraged to ask questions about its present or its future. This is due in part to the need for the congregation to recruit members and grow. New Church developments are particularly fragile, especially in the early years of life. These congregations lack the stability of history and tradition that serve to ground more established churches. The new church needs time to allow the roots of history to take root in the community. At the same time, the new congregation is hesitant to plan too far ahead because the future is often suspect in a new church development. The new church in the initial stages of start-up is dependent on outside funding through mission support. The future of mission funding is often difficult to predict. The result of this tenuousness has meant that Faith United has been concerned primarily with the present, and not the future.

Life is still precarious for Faith United, but the time is ripe for the congregation to discern its mission. Although funding and congregational size will continue to be issues of concern, it is time for the congregation to begin to ask some questions. This venture will require sensitive and inspired leadership, and the willingness of the congregation to own the ministry of faith. This will involve risking on both the parts of the clergy and the laity. The minister will need to encourage the congregation to assume greater responsibility for its present and its future. More than staffing committees and simply charting a course for the future, Faith United will need to be concerned less with mere maintenance and embrace a mission.

The role of a congregational leader, in addition to the pastoral responsibilities of preaching, sacrament, and pastoral care is a threefold responsibility. First, to assist the congregation in gaining an understanding of its particular situation and circumstance; second, to assist the congregation in crafting a vision that is faithful to God's purpose for the congregation; and third, to enable the membership to embody the vision in the corporate life of the congregation.<sup>223</sup> The congregation of Faith United has not been encouraged to assess honestly its place in the local and wider community. This is due in large part to honouring the fragility of the new congregation.

A new congregation can be conflict-ridden because there are not "deep roots" of longevity. There is the additional challenge of the congregation being comprised of those with little or no church experience and those from sundry denominational backgrounds. A new church needs time to put down figurative roots and develop a sense of congregational identity. The decision on the part of the minister to go particularly placidly initially may have contributed to the seeming absence of vision and understanding of mission among the membership. This needs to be addressed, and a vision honed and owned. Vision has been defined as the image of the world as it should be, and mission is the role that the congregation assumes in bringing that vision to fruition.<sup>224</sup>

Faith United Church may still be in a precarious position, but it is an enviable position nonetheless. The roots in the community are deep enough that the

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<sup>223</sup> Jackson Carroll, "Leadership and the Congregation," in Nancy Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 171-173.

<sup>224</sup> Phillips, *Letting Go*, 43.

community is neither bound by tradition nor as vulnerable to conflict, while at the same time unfettered by history and the pressure to do things a certain way. There is no single tradition that Faith would argue is cast in stone. The congregation is truly free to simply exist as it always has or to begin contemplating its future. Furthermore, Faith United is also the recipient of wisdom and knowledge gleaned from other congregations in transition that have made the decision to re-create a different vision of ministry. Faith continues to be challenged by slow growth, due in part to invisibility from having no physical edifice that acts as a billboard and limited financial resources. Having existed in rented space since its creation in September 1989, Faith is not averse to sharing space, nor seeking the support of others. While there are positive and negative consequences to every option, Faith United is not without options.

The needs of Faith United are very small. The congregations needs a space to gather on Sunday morning for worship, and it needs access to a facility for programs, including Sunday school, Bible study, choir practice, committee meetings, and small groups. The worship space should be multi- purpose so that it can be used for other creative and artistic pursuits.<sup>225</sup> If the facility is equipped with sound and lights, then it can be utilized by theatre groups for plays and concerts and also used by artists for art shows. Space in the basement area could be utilized as a gymnasium so that young people can play volleyball and basketball.

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<sup>225</sup> Faith United already has a reputation for offering fine musical concerts. Our major fund raiser each year is a concert in December with professional singers and actors from the Stratford area and Toronto, who put on a musical evening complete with Broadway show tunes and seasonal Christmas selections. Sound and light need to be rented. Should a building be erected it would be equipped with the sound and light requirements for concerts and stage productions.

On 15 February 2004, the minister of Faith United Church was approached by a member of the congregation who teaches in a small private school. The Mulberry School teaches children from kindergarten to grade four with the motto “Head, heart and hands.” The curriculum is rooted in both academe and the arts. Children spend a portion of the day in the creative arts of writing and painting. This school is also located in rented space and has had to relocate once. A large donation has been made to the school by a benefactor to build a school. The parishioner confided that the price and availability of land has been a huge hurdle to date and inquired about the possibility of accessing the four acres belonging to Faith.

The option of partnering with a small private school is very appealing. The staff and students would use the space during the day. The congregational needs on a given weekday would probably be quite minimal, with the minister and staff accessing an office. Depending on the design of the building and the other partners that invest in the development, it would be possible to have a community center of activity. Faith United does not have much that can be offered on a negotiating table other than four acres of land and a willingness to share in the responsibility of building and maintaining an edifice. Even the issue of governance and ownership can be negotiated. While the Presbytery will have some input and possible reservations about a congregation cooperating with several partners to address a variety of needs, the addressing of need is paramount.

Faith United has been in borrowed and rented space for almost fifteen years. While the willingness of Saint Mark’s Anglican Church to share their building is not to be dismissed, sharing the space has narrowed the congregational vision and sense

of mission, and constrained the ministry. Being in rented space has alleviated the financial burden of Faith United to the point that some members of the community refuse even to consider the possibility of developing the property because it will make demands of the congregation that some would prefer to avoid. Perhaps it is time for the members of Faith United Church to grapple with what it means to “claim no private ownership, and to hold all things in common.” (Acts 4:32)

#### D. What Are We to Do?

Faith United should risk stepping outside of Saint Mark’s Anglican Church and engage in a community study, seeking out the visible and invisible people who are ignored, marginalized, or simply out of sight. Faith United needs to choose a ministry focus and then craft a vision and mission.<sup>226</sup> The membership needs to grapple with the question, what is God’s yearning for us? Faith United needs to exist for more than just the few persons that gather on a Sunday morning. Faith United needs to view itself as the hands and feet of Christ in the world today, and those hands of Christ need to be open and outstretched in blessing.

Perhaps a unity of heart and soul can be experienced in the twenty-first century when a small new church development project relinquishes the notion of possessing and embraces solidarity of sharing. Rather than developing the property to meet the mission needs of a small, but growing congregation, the property should be developed with partners so that the needs of the many can be met. The needs of Faith United Church are really quite small. The community needs a place to gather for worship on Sunday mornings and needs to have space for meetings and Christian

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<sup>226</sup> See Carl Dudley, *Basic Steps Towards Community Ministry* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2001), 1-4.



nurture. Beyond these scant hours in a week, the edifice could be used by the wider community to meet the spiritual, cultural, and familial needs of the constituents of the city of Kingston, and to God indeed be the glory.

As this thesis has been under revision in the summer of 2004, the minister has been approached by the owners and developers of the property adjacent to the four acres owned by Faith. The Project Manager of this acreage envisions a community development that will meet a variety of needs in the boundaries of Kingston East, including ice pads for hockey, soccer pitches, horse shoe pits, and shuffle board for seniors, and park area for children. The plan also includes commercial space available for rent. While nothing formal or concrete has been proposed Russell Stacey of R.J.S. Consulting is putting together a proposal for consideration by the Board of Faith United Church. Perhaps the initial response to the question, "What are we to do?" is to be prepared to listen to what our neighbours propose, and then to grapple with whether or not there is a niche for a United church presence within their vision. At the very least, Faith United must have a vision for a future that extends beyond Sunday morning.

It may ever be a matter of opinion and conjecture whether the community of goods was actually practiced in antiquity. More scholars opine that the reference was to an ideal rather than an actual practice. What is paramount is the unity of heart and soul and the willingness to act in faith. Christian faith is a response to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The church continues to live as the visible presence of his body. People will continue to gather together in community to celebrate worship and sacrament and to band together during times of transition and change. Culture and the

changing times will continue to inform theology. Members and adherents of religious communities will continue to respond to the gospel by offering time and talents, and talents will be used to address need. As the needs of the local congregation continue to transition, and the needs within the surrounding community also change, the church will need to respond in faith and action.

Once, according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, persons of faith were moved by the gospel to relinquish property and possession to address need. Some congregations today are making the decision to relinquish ownership of costly buildings so that ministry can continue to take place in more affordable surroundings. Faith United may relinquish exclusive rights to a piece of property in exchange for the privilege of sharing a facility and having a home. Our possessions are gifts to be offered for the greater good of all, and the question that Faith United needs to answer is “What are we to do?”

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

When this thesis was in its initial stages three assumptions were made. The first assumption made was that the research would conclude that the property should be developed rather than sitting idle. The second assumption made was that the property would be developed in tandem with partners with the mandate to address wider communal needs. The third assumption made was that the development would include seniors housing both to provide income, and to address the needs of an aging population. To that end three such church/housing projects were visited. The result of this research was the conviction that a church/housing project would not be in the best interest of Faith United. However, the commitment to develop the property and the addressing of wider communal need continue to be high priorities. The question “What are we to do?” beckons an answer.

The interview process that was a part of this research was very enlightening, and several tangential insights were gleaned. The need for strong and committed leadership that is quite separate and distinct from the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care became very evident in a church community that is considering a major building project. When the minister of word, sacrament, and pastoral care is associated too closely with the development project, there can be a rift in the pastoral relationship with members and affiliates within the congregation who might have particular reservations about the building project. These concerns may not be shared with the minister for fear of hurting the feelings of one associated with the new

building. Therefore the first step that needs to be taken by the people of Faith is to engage the services of an outside facilitator for a workshop on visioning.

The members and adherents of Faith United need to ask the question, “What is it that we are being called to do in Christ’s name?” If the decision is made to develop the property then a business plan will need to be drafted with the specifics of financing and an agenda for building created. If the decision is made to carry on for the time being sharing the building at Saint Mark’s Anglican Church, then a reasonable time frame needs to be agreed upon. The current arrangement, while cost efficient, is very limiting. It lacks vision and has limited the ministry of Faith United. While there are no guarantees that church growth will necessarily follow if a building is erected, at least two significant variables will be addressed. Faith United Church will have visibility, and the congregation will be better able to initiate programs when space is available.

The second priority for the membership of Faith would be to investigate the wider needs within the city of Kingston. A copy of the Official plan for the city of Kingston should be viewed to discover the priorities that the city wants to address in the immediate and long term future. It may be discovered that the four acres of land can be offered as a potential site for a particular need highlighted by the city planners. If the Faith community is serious about addressing wider need, then those needs must be discovered.

Yet another possibility for Faith is to engage in dialogue with potential neighbours that are honing a vision for their acreage that abuts up to the property purchased for Faith United on Highway 15. It may be possible for Faith United to

offer four acres in return for space in a facility that would meet our needs for worship, fellowship and teaching. While nothing may come of this, it affords us one more possibility to meet personal needs, plus address a variety of needs within the city. Perhaps this has been the greatest learning: a congregation is limited only by the confines of imagination. Tantamount to this is a deeper awareness of relinquishment. It may be very difficult for members of Faith United to consider relinquishing ownership of land and buildings and harder still to consider a relationship where no one claims any private ownership. Indeed, this is contrary to many of the norms of the day. Having and owning is empowering, and sharing is very risky. However, Faith United has lived its history to date sharing space with others. Indeed there is precious little else that Faith brings to the bargaining table save four acres of undeveloped land and the potential to relinquish ownership.

While erecting and maintaining a building is an expense that ought not to be taken lightly, the expense must not entirely diminish the vision. God continues to be active in the world through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, and God's servants may just take the form of Project Managers and visionaries that share a dream of meeting a variety of diverse needs in the Eastern region of the city of Kingston. Faith United Church may be in a position to offer land in exchange for worship space. Faith United may be called upon to model the open hand that is willing to relinquish private ownership and to hold in common a facility that meets the physical and spiritual needs of a wide constituency. Faith United Church, in tandem with other partners of vision, has the opportunity to share a heart and soul and to offer our lands and possessions to address need our own needs for space and the

needs of the constituency of Kingston. Faith United can answer the question “What are we to do?” by embracing and building upon the wisdom of John Gillman. “To see what we have as gifts to be shared rather than as things to be possessed.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 116-117.

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## APPENDIX ONE

Bruce Hutchinson  
Chair, Kingston Presbytery

April 26, 2001

Dear Bruce,

Thank you for the opportunity of working with the group of United Church congregational leaders from Kingston and area on March 31. I have compiled a report from the consultation based largely on the written material generated by the participants. For the most part the participants were quite articulate about the issues facing their congregations, and so I haven't felt the need to offer much in the way of interpretation apart from my organization of their comments into "Themes and Issues." I would, however, like to make three comments.

*First, there is a very high degree of focused dissatisfaction in this material.* People know that there are large issues to be addressed and think they need to be addressed now. My estimate is that this group is well along the way to taking the next steps in a change process and will feel frustrated if the process is stalled. I think the high turnout on Saturday was an indication that there is congregational support and interest.

Second, although many of the congregational issues named by participants are common to other parts of Canada, Kingston has the distinctive problem of too many United churches. The rule of thumb for starting one new United Church congregation where none exists is a population base of 50,000 to 60,000, and Kingston I believe has a population of about 120,000. This too high density of United Church congregations is your context and contributes significantly to the dissatisfaction felt at the consultation.

Third, the level of structural and programmatic change that the consultation indicated is necessary cannot be achieved internally. The way forward is very complex and needs to be carefully managed. I think the consultation was clear, if not unanimous, that the next step is to work at a vision. With this directive in mind, I have proposed a vision planning process to be managed by Potentials. We have used variants of this process in a number of settings and have confidence in the results.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call me.

Yours sincerely,

Paul MacLean

## APPENDIX TWO

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to discover the factors that contributed to your community deciding to erect other than a traditional church sanctuary, and the ensuing learning.

**Theological Foundation:** Acts 2:44-47, Acts 4:32-34

- 1.) **What were the circumstances that triggered the decision to build a new facility?**  
*Tell me the story of this edifice.*
- 2.) **What were the most important needs that the facility had to accommodate?**  
*What was most important at the time?*
- 3.) **How did you investigate the needs?**  
*Did you use census tracts, or perhaps a congregational questionnaire?*
- 4.) **Did the congregation have a particular theological foundation that you are aware of?**  
*I.e. a scripture passage, a Christian value, a vision/mission?*
- 5.) **Did you consider more than one option?**  
*Was this your only plan?*
- 6.) **How did you reach consensus as a congregation?**  
*Did you use focus groups, Official Board, perhaps congregational meetings?*
- 7.) **Was it easier to get approval or funding because you were a church?**  
*Or were there obstacles because it was a church?*
- 8.) **Has this facility affected congregational growth?**  
*Do people travel here to worship? Is the ministry mostly for the members of the congregation?*
- 9.) **Do you perceive any losses or negative consequences of the building project?**  
*Do you think that you have compromised anything?*
- 11.) **What would you describe as your greatest learning?**  
*Would you do anything differently if you had it to do over again?*
- 12.) **Do you have anything further to add?**

**Thank you very much for your willingness to tell me your story. I truly appreciate the time that you have given me, and I wish you and your church God's richest blessing as you continue to live as Christ's servants.**

## APPENDIX THREE

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by the Reverend Nadene Grieve-Deslippe, Doctor of Ministry candidate in the Divinity Department at McMaster University, Hamilton. The results will be included in the doctoral thesis. The purpose of the study is to discover the factors that contributed to your community deciding to erect other than a traditional church sanctuary, and the ensuing learning. The findings will aid other congregations that are contemplating church development.

You are being asked to participate in an interview and the questions will recall the story of your congregation from the time that a decision to build needed to be made. I am particularly interested in the decision making process. The interview will take about one hour. With your permission the interview will be recorded and transcribed.

The risks are minimal but the benefits for other congregations will be great.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. You have the right to review the transcript, and the tapes will be destroyed upon successful completion of the thesis.

You can choose to participate or decline. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequence of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB) If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact

MREB Secretariat  
McMaster University  
905-525-9140, ext.23142  
E-mail [mrebsec@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mrebsec@mcmaster.ca)  
Fax 905-540-8019

**Signature of Research Participant**

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Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

**Signature of Investigator**

In my judgement, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possess the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

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Signature of Investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX FOUR

## McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)

c/o Office of Research Services, MREB Secretariat, GH-306, x 23142 e-mail: srebus@mcmaster.ca

## CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Application Status: New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addendum <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> REB File # 2003 085				
TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: <i>The Community of Goods: An Ideal Whose Time Has Come</i>				
	NAME	DEPT./ADDRESS	# EXT	E - MAIL
Faculty Investigator(s)/Supervisor(s)	K. Morgan	Divinity Rm243a	24095	morgankr
Student Investigator(s)	<i>N. Grievé-Désippe</i>	<i>139 Greenless Dr. Kingston</i>	<i>549-4320</i>	<i>nadene.grievé-désippe @sympatico.ca</i>
The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The application protocol is approved as presented without questions or requests for modification.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	The application protocol is approved subject to clarification and/or modifications as appended or identified below.			
COMMENTS & CONDITIONS:				
Reporting Frequency:	Annual Date:	Other:		
Date: <i>June 13, 2003</i>	Dr. C. Riach, Chair, REB: <i>Craig Riach</i>			<small>hrreviewformalcertificate.fm</small>



**APPENDIX FIVE**

July 9, 2003

The Minister' Name,  
The Name of the Church,  
The Street Address,  
City, Province,  
Postal Code

Dear:

My name is the Reverend Nadene Grieve-Deslippe and I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Program at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton. I am the minister of a growing *New Church Development* congregation within the United Church of Canada situated in Kingston, Ontario. We currently share a building belonging to a local Anglican congregation but own some property to develop at a possible future date. We are interested in hearing the stories of congregations that chose to erect multi-purpose facilities. The findings will provide a valuable source of information and insight that will assist us in forming a strategic plan.

I am looking to interview 4 members of your congregation who are able to recall the story of your present facility from inception to completion and beyond. Your story will be of influence to our congregation as we endeavour to discern what it is that we should be erecting, if anything at all.

Participation will be voluntary, and participants can decline to answer any question. The interview will be taped and then a transcript typed up and analyzed for inclusion. Neither the name of your church or the identity of the interviewee will appear in print. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be conducted at a time and place of the candidate's choosing.

If you were willing to assist me I would appreciate you approaching 6 or 7 potential candidates and apprising them of my request. The names of the willing participants would then be sent to me and I will contact the potential candidates with a letter of introduction and a consent form. Willing participants can contact me.

There may be no personal or direct benefit from participating in the study to the participants save to know that your congregational history may influence a congregation in transition. There is no risk attached, and participants can withdraw at any time. Research findings can be made available to the participants upon request.

This research has been reviewed by and received clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board and questions or concerns can be addressed by contacting:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat  
Telephone 905-525-9140, extension 23142

The Reverend Doctor Ken Morgan  
Administrator Doctor of Ministry  
McMaster Divinity College  
905-525-9140 Extension 24095

Sincerely,

The Reverend Nadene Grieve-Deslippe  
Faith United Church, Kingston  
613-549-4320 Office  
613-548-8399 Home

## APPENDIX SIX

*(Transcribed from recorded interview within congregation A.)*

### **Q.) The story**

- A.) I was 23 years old- living part time in Sudbury and part time in Toronto finishing university. The decision to rebuild was triggered by discovery of quicksand underneath the church foundation. Our beautiful church was being condemned and a decision had to be made. I was relatively young at the time, compared to those who were making the decisions at the time. I was kind of on the periphery of some of the decisions being made. But I know that the choices that were being made were to build something visionary; to move into a completely different area or to build a traditional church on the same spot. Interestingly enough without leadership at the time the people made the decision to move to something visionary and then looked for somebody to do that. Which I always thought at the time- I was about 21 or 22 when the decisions were being made and I always thought that that was an interesting thing.

### **So the vision came from the people.**

Yes that was my sense; that was my sense. And then they found the person to build... so a person then - our Minister at the time, Stanley MacQueen, knew himself very well, knew that that was not the place that he could then be, so he left us and we found somebody who would move us in some kind of direction. Now the details - I am a little fuzzy about at that point - the details around whether it was Dr. Forsyth. who actually guided us to the senior's tower concept or if the concept had been born out of the people but I know that what came out of the people was let's do something different, let's be creative.

### **That's great!**

Well it's kind of the history of Saint Andrew's we were builders and I think to some degree it is what is causing a great deal of frustration right now because there is a mix of people at one level who are builders of buildings and at another level there is a whole group of people who are builders in spirit. That exists right now.

### **There is a tension there**

Yes there is real tension and I think that is part of the root of it because the people who conceived not building a traditional church again made decisions about building other churches, building the university. So they were builders of things as their form of witness.

*Subject then segued to the losses and consequences.*

I think one of the losses and consequences around some of this is when seeking out a person who would guide us through the process, the person who was chosen was clearly a builder of things again and not necessarily a builder of people and so there was that whole notion continued to be fostered then. What do people do who have faith is to build. And that is not to suggest that that was something that was negative or bad, it was just the way it was. It was just the way that people perceived their mission, as a downtown church was to build buildings for opportunity.

**Q.) How was the mission/ needs assessed?**

A.) I don't know. I know that my involvement at the time I was taking ECE at Ryerson and I know as part of the complex that one of the things that Dr. Forsyth perceived is that it needed to be a place for the young and the old. The tower was built for the seniors but the space right underneath the church space is garage and a barbershop and a collection of offices which include the MS office and offices such as that - that area in there was built as a day care. So when the building was originally designed and structured, that area was designed to meet needs of little children. And that part I know really well because I was in dialogue with Dr. Forsyth through that whole process because the intent was that I would come to Sudbury after I graduated to work in the Day Care Center in the church. And so Dr. Forsyth would call me frequently to say what do you think about- what should we do with the space, and I remember thinking that was so cool because you have the young and elderly mixed together and it is such a wonderful opportunity for really cool programming. Now in the end the funding for the Day Care was not available so it never opened. But it was very much a part of the original scope.

**Q.) Ahead of its time, ground breaking; how were the needs investigated? Dr Forsythe? Also the commercial component...**

A.) Now that I can't speak to I am not sure. It seems to me that it made sense that the commercial component was going to be one of the sustainers for dollars because the commitment to Sr. housing that was affordable, Day care - Day Care is not inexpensive to run - and so the church would have been needing to be putting dollars into that too. So there were 2 missions there that were going to cost money. However way you looked at it the breaking even was going to be difficult. I am not sure, I can't speak to this but there was a sense as I grew and... John and I were married in 1973 - first wedding - in the new building - kind of neat. We were back in Sudbury within a year and a half and I was very much a part of that early transition and right onto Council. Dr. Forsyth didn't waste any time contacting people and saying we need you to do. You just did. There was a power that was directed by him. Even if you wanted to say no you just didn't have the sense that you could say no. He was a very interesting man. And so my sense is that he drove a tremendous part of it. There were certainly other very powerful people like Joe Bishov who was an incredible part of that history and I think that there was a small team of men who drove that - under Dr. Forsyth leadership - really drove the vision. And actually I think created, let's not build a traditional

church, let's build something and Dr Forsyth and that team really drove that and created the picture part.

**Tell me about the downtown- it is not on the questionnaire was there business did it make sense to have Day Care - drop - go to work?**

Yes the funding wasn't available for the Day Care because at the very same time the City built a Day Care. And the two were in very close proximity. Funding for Day Care was difficult a long time ago - it still is - it grew easier and now it is becoming very difficult again but it was in an era when the city made the decision to put it in their own center and the result was that there wasn't the funding available.

It was a pretty thriving downtown at that point. It isn't any longer. Although there is great attempts to try and do something about that but the idea was then that the downtown core was such a thriving area that the elderly would not have to walk very far to do any of the things that needed to do.

**Q.) Theological basis**

A.) I didn't have a sense of that but that is not to say that it wasn't there but I didn't have a sense of that. I sensed a tremendous amount of conflict- now, I sensed it and as I have heard people stories I realize how real that conflict was. And I think that in part it was because the leadership that was chosen was a building leadership. A builder of things rather than people. And I know that there were a tremendous amount of stories full of hurt and over needs that had not been recognized and in the process of building. It is actually one of the things in hindsight you look back on and if you are heading into a building project like that you need a person who is very good at both.

It was tough for my peers as well (to go to a non-traditional building) because we grew up in that old building where we knew every inch of that building. It had a beautiful square bell tower that we used to sneak up into on old rickety stairs all of the time. It was our church. It was our home. We spent almost every night at the church with the CGIT, Explorers, Choir, youth - we were there all of the time and it was just an incredible transition. Particularly for my peers who had gone away to university and every time you came back things had changed yet again in the building. It just wasn't even like you had a lot of power and control over where things were headed.

**Q.) Other options?**

A.) Given that the congregation had decided to build something alternative and the requisite leadership was called, it was difficult to turn back. Dr. Forsyth It became his mission. It was interpreted then as the reason for the call, and I think that what

happened then was there were other things that kind of got brushed aside for awhile And those are things that are really hard to pull back again, I believe. And I think are at the root of our struggles at the present time. When things are going along extremely well and you don't have to worry then I think it is easy to move ahead, But when you begin to struggle with things - money being one of the struggles - you start to make decisions around what should be without a real clear sense of who you are it is very difficult. And I think we lost some of that in - I think we lost the big picture of who we were as a church and focussed by people who knew how to focus in a direction. My understanding of this is probably very different - if Joe Bishov were here and you could talk to him the picture would be a very different picture of the glory and what meant being a person of faith building that and I guess that is one of the interesting things about a story.

### **Funding**

Those were questions that were easy questions in the time of the building because funding could be found and there was never will we find it, there was just We will! And for a lot of the people who were very instrumental in that building process with Dr Forsyth they had a very rich history with Dr. Lautenslager who was also a minister of St. Andrew's who was a builder. And so well trained by then to just say that it will be there and so the mindset was "It will be there" That is what is expected. You are expected to give to this first. Give to build the university first. Give to build these churches first. Give to build the place first and people did because it was part of their faith direction that the church came first.

### **Consensus? Project owned?**

Absolutely. Without a shade of a doubt

### **How happen?**

I am not sure. I was away the church had moved across the street to the theater. While that whole thing was occurring even though I wasn't home it was very strong. I knew what the church was doing and I knew why the church was doing it. That was conveyed very clearly by the people who guided me and were a part of my understanding of faith because the Sunday School teachers were the ones who sat on the board. Even though I wasn't around a whole lot I knew really. So I think very definitely that there was a consensus that this is what we do and so this is a good thing. This is a good direction to be going in.

### **Funding easier?**

I don't know. *(I alluded to the connections of Dr. Forsyth and the interviewee concurred that this was true)* And people like Joe Bishov were pretty high up in their fields of employment through Inco etc. and they would have known very clearly where to go to get dollars. But other than that I can't speak to.

## **Congregational Growth**

I think there is perhaps for my generation there is a fair degree of loyalty. If you choose to follow through with church recognizing your faith in that way then St. Andrew's was the only choice. Any of my peers who are still in the city and still attending church are at St Andrews. And I think it is loyalty. It doesn't matter how far you have to drive. Even though the face of it has changed tremendously, St Andrew's is a very strong part. So that has affected congregational growth. The changes in the tower in terms of over the time span what people in a sociological perspective become comfortable with in terms of where they want to live has changed. And so while the early vision was that the tower would be a residence for St. Andrew's people who move from their homes is no longer a reality because the apartments are too small. People can't go from their homes to a very small space. There needs to be some kind of an intermediary thing and so the phase of the tower feeding the congregation has changed dramatically. The tower now houses people of all faiths and people of no faith and so that feeder in is not a reality any longer. That is of course something that is going to affect congregational growth. Demographics just generally of people attending church have affected it as well.

People who are going to be attracted to a downtown church are going to come for very specific reasons I believe which include more than just taking your family to worship. If that is what it included primarily there are still a large number of churches- you could choose your community church. The draw to a down town church with no parking which does not speak to the comfort of a neighbourhood church - the draw of a downtown church is different but I am not sure that we have figured out the draw yet because the tower - the concept of a tower and all that means - is seen very differently and it is not visionary. It is what you do. You meet the needs of your community. So

We haven't quite figured it out. We are in a very transitional phase right now that is scary, because you know what you have and the building directs a lot of who we are and yet it is just a building. How do you go beyond that excitement of 30 years ago to a new excitement? That is the challenge in that whole process.

## **Negative consequences**

The negative is as times change decisions that other congregations in our area are making about ways to sustain themselves - sustaining maintaining growing are very different visions and decisions so we are still alone in making those decisions I think part of that is there is an isolation with the rest of the United Church community in our city. *Don't fit in the traditional mold.* Seen as different. A program church like everyone else living in a corporate structure in part imposed by the building that we live in and so our needs are different to some degree. Our solutions will be different. Part of it is that we are in the north and we

almost stand alone even though we don't want to be alone. Conflict between the "cathedral of the north" verses we are just a church just a people of faith like any people of faith. Only we come with a different look. That is a loss that I hope we can break some barriers down around, but visually we are different and so the perception. We are different and other congregations see us as different. Even though we may have lost the sense that we a builder, we are not quite sure what we are now other people still us that was as the Cathedral of the North in the congregation too.

Not unique to the church. We live in unsettling changing times and we don't know what lies around the corner.

**Vision short sighted in terms of apartment size and underdeveloped downtown; malls could not be predicted 30 years ago**

People stay in their homes; want to die in their homes. This is the kind of conflict that has been born. The kind of person who lives in the tower is different than what the vision was of whom would live in our tower. And for a number of people it is very difficult because just the whole scope of the mission. I might sound a little skeptical and perhaps negative but I think it is real. You are no longer ministering to the needs of the elite, which I think St. Andrew's saw itself at one time. You are ministering to folk of our city who are seen as far from elite: native people, fixed income. There are now people in our building who are subsidized by the city. A very different kind of person from the vision and for a number of people it is very difficult. And people are looking for solutions. It means that there is a conflict around the kind of solutions and how to fix it. And so there is a group of people who want to "fix" it and a group of people who want to "change" it. Create a new vision, and there is a tremendous source of conflict around it. Some of the pain around the early part in the building in terms of spiritual needs and other needs that were not met by the builders are resurfacing I think. But we are still one congregation so it is a tremendous challenge to move in a new direction with a "fixed" building because it is fixed. You could change the inside of it the structure is there- I find it quite interesting when I sit in meetings and people will say, "In 2 years St. Andrew's will cease to exist - we don't have enough money - which boggles my mind because I think that we have lots of money - compared to other churches who really have no money - we have lots of money. We still have a lot of people who give... When I am feeling very brave I say, "So? So what if our mission is not to continue to be in this space. What if it is something else that is unique and different? I just tell that because we have got this real spectrum of people who believe in that 30-year-old mission to those who say "So what if we have to meet in a school basement again?"



## **Greatest learning**

Things are not going to remain the same. You can never predict where you are headed, but you have to be open to the fact that you are not going to be in the spot that you were 5 years ago - certainly 30 years ago - That leadership needs to be whole leadership. That while it seemed to have been smart to have a person with tremendous skills and strengths in a certain area you can't let the other side go too. You need the whole package. You need a visionary who is sensitive to people's needs and the difficulty that change brings. Even if you embrace change that tensions and difficulties exist because it is change. You need someone who doesn't just say, "Oh get over it. You need someone who is sensitive to what that all means. And it is difficult.

*Subject shared a personal experience of the tension between pragmatic and spiritual leadership.*

I have heard many stories like that since.

Greatest learning is that you have to have that whole person. That person who is sensitive to the spiritual needs of the people if you are building that vision that mission of where you want to be otherwise you are doing it not because you are a business. You are doing it because you are a people of faith. That means something different than building the newest Trump tower in NYC. It is different. And if we are not careful, you lose it.

## APPENDIX SEVEN

*(Transcribed from taped interview in congregation B)*

### **What were the circumstances that triggered the decision to build a new facility?**

Well, the church burned to the ground and my stepmother, Mildred, her father had been the minister for 20-30 odd years and he preached his last sermon at the end of June. We had a huge do for him - my dad was in charge of his retirement party - and then our new ministers were a clergy couple and they were coming from Thunder Bay. They had just been in the church once - I don't know if they had even preached their first sermon. I think they had their little induction service on a Thursday and the Sunday was to be their first Sunday and the church burned to the ground. So we had this huge lot in the downtown core, and what do you do with it? First United had been a beautiful huge building with lots of meeting rooms and a giant pipe organ. And a few years before they had just renovated the Sunday School because in those days everybody went to Sunday school. I would be in a class with 10 girls my same age and my brother would be in a class with 10 boys his same age. That was the 60s and there was a chapel in there for small services, a gymnasium in the basement with basketball hoops. There was a bowling alley. That was one thing that I remember as a kid when your parents came to the church for a meeting they would bring the kids and the kids would come and play in the gym. They had a tennis club. It was a big going concern. It was probably the biggest United Church in the city.

*So it burned to the ground and the decision needed to be made. Build another one with a gymnasium and a bowling alley, or do something different?*

So I got on the committee simply because they didn't have any youth, but I wasn't on the committee when they started. When I went to my first meeting and my brother and I alternated, we were 14 and 16 something like that, and the decision had already been made. I remember going to my first meeting and asking that question. Well it sounds like you have all decided. I remember they had a meeting one-day and every member of the congregation was given a survey and in one box there was the question, "Do you want to rebuild the church as it is?" Another one was donate the land and everyone go his or her own way. Another one was build a smaller more practical church for the future on the property. But when I got to me first meeting I remember being surprised that they were already looking into- they seemed to be moving away from rebuilding. Even though we had all this space the future seemed to be moving away from building great big buildings I really don't have enough knowledge to know if church membership was starting to decline already. I know we redid the Sunday School a few years before - not many years before- but they must have realized that you just could not rebuild to that size.

*There were other large United Church congregations downtown.*

Oh yes. There are too many United Churches downtown. There are too many Anglican and too many Presbyterian as well. In one part of city not far from the site of the church that burned, there are two United churches within walking distance. Because one had been Presbyterian- *overchurching*.

### **How did you investigate the needs?**

*I think the older members of the congregation may have more knowledge and memory of that. I do remember being concerned that there be no gymnasium- just for fun stuff. My one memory is that we just sort of evolved according to what the trends were.*

*So the leadership was thinking, "let's not put up a traditional sanctuary."*

No they talked about it but this is what I think happened was and I think that all congregations have to learn that clergy leave and things change, so the very next Sunday we had no place to go for the clergy couple's first service. The Anglican church across the street invited us so we went at 9:00 o'clock and they went later. And at the same time coincidentally, the United Church was negotiating with the Anglican Church about church union. And they kept thinking that if the denominations are going to join we could be the experiment church. So within a short period of time we stopped meeting separately and we began to meet together. One communion with a common cup and the next time it was sitting in your seat United Church style. One week the United church minister would preach and the next the Anglican would preach. I think that our organist finally prevailed because theirs was older and retiring, but it looked like the two churches were going to unite, but then in time those talks seemed to fall apart. And I don't know the chronology about this but somewhere along the way the clergy couple up and left with no warning. We got a new clergyperson, the Reverend Charles Forsyth who had come from up north, and again any talk about evolving has a lot having to do with who your clergy are. The clergy couple, I think, were all for uniting with the Anglicans. Sure enough, Reverend Charles Forsyth comes and is all gung ho about a ministry of housing because he had just left a church with that vision. The next thing you know we're leaving the Anglican Church and we went back into the seniors building and we turned it into a church at some point.

*And now you are out again.*

And again, it is evolving. Again things happen and you react. Everything is a reaction. If I had anything to say to anyone it is that everything we did was reaction. We had a fire and we reacted. The Anglicans invited us over, there were talks going on; a ministry of housing, and then a sister United church was folding and they listed their building for sale. They came over to us. And then what happened? No one wanted the building. It sat there. There were no offers to purchase. So somebody said, that building is sitting empty, why don't we meet there altogether. Maybe we can

build something great there. So then we used our money to fix up that building. Now if there had been a purchaser, then we never would have gone. We would have just stayed in the seniors housing. So then, again, it is all reactionary because this past year when we had another big discussion about going back to First Place - total reactionary. What happened was our largest tenant - The Ministry of Defense or Veterans Affairs something? that paid \$75,000 in rent, pulled out, and we had a gigantic space and once again we are reacting. What do we do about this space? There is no rent money coming in; it is going to hurt First Place. So committee gets formed and people start lobbying, let's go back. But what will we do with First - Pilgrim again? We'd be either selling it, or turning it into housing, or giving it away. So again if it weren't for that tenant pulling out and a lot of things. And we gave a lot of land away at one point for subsidized housing. Our parking lot. Again that was Charles Forsyth's thing - housing- and that is what they call it our ministry of housing.

*Very similar to Congregation A.*

People crab about the minister behind their back but are usually amenable to doing what the minister wants. Some people do crab about the loss of parking, but there is a great deal of pride taken in the housing units. If you have a funeral at the church there is no place to park. The one we owned was behind the church and you came along a little walkway.

*And people are living longer and driving longer. You could not have anticipated 30 years ago people still driving into their 80's if they are able. If we develop, perhaps a smaller building but with more parking.*

Did the congregation have a particular theological foundation that you are aware of?

### **How did you reach consensus as a congregation?**

Most people went along with things. You always lose people when you move. We moved from the church to the Anglican church. And from the Anglican church back to the seniors housing. And now back to a church down the street. Now the biggest test would have been if we had gone to the tower after this last round of questions, which was last year. The people were very polarized over that and that is the first time I remember. How polarized can you be when your church burns to the ground? You have got to do something, but this was a move based on an opportunity - there was an empty space. So we stood to lose a lot of people whatever we did over that.

*Well it went to a majority and majority rules and people will have to be comfortable with the decision for now. And it also something that can be revisited too.*

I remember people in my age group being afraid that we were going to be a Senior citizen's church. And that was the fear, that we would be in this building that housed

seniors and we'd be the church part of it, and how would you ever encourage young families to come out? That was our concern - unless they belonged to the people who lived in the tower- children and grandchildren - how would you ever get new people to come out? We stood to lose several young families.

*That is one of my questions about how congregational growth was affected.*

### **Has this facility affected congregational growth?**

We have declined a fair bit, but I don't know if it had anything to do with all of the moves. We have to remember that before we came to this building we met in a traditional church building, and they couldn't keep it up any more. The Anglicans that we had been meeting with, once we stopped meeting there, they declined and eventually the church closed. Both the Anglican Church and the church down the street benefited when we joined with them, and I hate to be crass, they benefited from our fire money. We had insurance money and because we didn't apply it all to a new building-I guess we donated the land in the first place but I don't think that we paid for the building- I think that CMHC paid for the building. When we went to the Anglican church we were able to do some decorating and some fixing up. The same thing when we merged with the church down the street. We were able to do some fixing up. The same thing if we had gone back to the tower last year. You can't just turn it from Veteran's affairs to a church without spending a ton of money. And we live on that money now. So given the three churches on that little corner, 2 declined all on their own, and we would have been next. We just had more bodies. The old building would have gone. It wouldn't have come to a crashing halt in 1969 but in 1979 it might have.

*So it doesn't have the reputation of being a "senior's church". It is different for you having Pilgrim church.*

We are across the street and a bit but it is our church people who are on all of the committees. I don't know what will happen when the group all dies off. A lot of people my age are not on the church committees. Younger people are teaching Sunday school or on finance.

Most of the young people who attend the church are like me. They are the products of parents who went to the church. They are not young people who have come out from somewhere. They are all somebody's daughter or son.

To be fair there is not much left there for me. It just seems hard for me to think of starting somewhere else on my own. And once my mom and dad died, I thought that it would be a downer still coming here but then at least I know the people. I have known them all of my life, many of them. Sometimes I wonder why I am going there? I think that the decision would have been made for me if we had gone over to the residence. I think I would have tried it for you, and then I would have watched

everyone come down on his or her walkers, and not to be mean - but I might have thought it is not for me.

**Do you perceive any losses or negative consequences of the building project?**

People still whine about giving up our parking lot, but I'll never forget the day that C.F. proposed it everybody voted for it he was so passionate. You were pretty crummy if you weren't going to give away your land for housing. Again that was probably reactionary, because that was a time when probably everything government was housing. You know, now everything on the news is healthcare cuts. There seem to be certain topics that grab a decade.

When you and I are in our 80s it is going to be those aged boomers and no elder care. Probably.

In the 70s housing and geared to income housing was big. Subsidized housing.

**What would you describe as your greatest learning?**

I think a big learning experience for me is that throughout it all our major decisions were just reacting to something that had happened. Right up to Veteran's Affairs. Our decisions were not 100% forward thinking. Just what are we going to do about this?

*If I had another learning it is to remember that clergy come and go - Charles Forsyth announced that he was quitting suddenly - and we lost the clergy couple the same way - no one knew they were going. I have learned that when you get all involved in the current clergy's project - the clergy go- and you have to remember that the congregation will remain long after the minister moves on. Is this something that we are going to have forever and feel good about.*

Another thing is huge differences between the needs of age groups. Younger people did not want to go to the senior's residence - they were pretty adamant about it. It is very hard to balance the needs, and you still need to attract those people who have jobs, and income.

## **APPENDIX EIGHT**

*(Transcribed from a taped interview in congregation C)*

### **What were the circumstances that triggered the decision to build a new facility?**

In my understanding is that back in the 60s the congregation was finding having buildings - the church and the manse - were deteriorating, and a number of people were moving away and the aging population of Kingston had a large number of seniors that didn't have formal housing so we started brainstorming ideas and came up with the concept of incorporating a church in a housing project. At that time there were a lot of urban studies looking at growth development and community needs in Kingston and senior's housing was one of those issues that we thought we could address.

### **How did you investigate the needs?**

When you talk to people who were around in that period and read the history, North Kingston literally had people living in shacks with dirt floors in Rideau Heights, which is where some of the first public housing was built. But for the immediate area there was nothing that was designed specifically for seniors, so people like minister A and minister B had always been involved in the community saw models. Originally it was going to be a larger building and families were included, but that got shot down because there was local opposition in the neighbourhood. So the compromise was funding restrictions that decided what we have today.

### **Did the congregation have a particular theological foundation that you are aware of?**

I can't speak to that, but I am sure that minister B spoke to that and I have read his sermons that he did around that time and I wouldn't want to speak to it (further.) *Sure, that is an interesting point that you make about using the sermon time to teach the theological foundation during a time of transition.*

I have known Minister B for about 25 years, and as soon as I heard he was involved and got to know him better, you could tell that he was a visionary type of person and always looking forward and bringing new ideas, and I am sure. And I think from reading the minutes I came across comments where there was some opposition; the traditional, "why do we do this?" because at that point it was a three point charge and church politics, to tear down a church and the manse, that was very radical in that period of time. To carry that vision through and to get people involved in that took a lot of campaigning and a lot of leadership. And there other people, E S and M B - two lay members- and they lived in the area, and as you probably heard a lot of local politicians Flora Macdonald federally and Keith Norton provincially and George on city council they all played a vital political role. And most of them if you scratched deeply, they were involved in some sort of faith community. That was their way in public office

### **Did you consider more than one option?**

I think the original idea - Minister A used the expression a "village concept" - which was family housing, but I think when they had pressures to cut back because of cost. They figured that it was easier to service a particular age group, and at that time 65 was the definition of seniors so that was the decision, to focus on that. A lot of the new housing projects they are either are all adult-which basically means age 16 up. The whole age issue today - what is a senior and whether it should be a seniors only building is a very politically loaded issue. Here we have chosen age 65 - we used to use 60 - except people who are under 65 can challenge the human rights - so if you don't want to be challenged and there hasn't been many challenges -.

*So it still continues to be very political.*

I have been involved in housing for 23 years with the corporation and 20 years an administrator, and I have been involved with volunteer housing groups, and some of the same issues keep going around, but now with all of the downloading it is more intense because it is right at the local level. This whole issue they have now, seniors buildings where people have a bias - the cascading age - take 65 plus first, then the housing agencies want to take people 60 - 65, and then 50 up. But if somebody came in say at 50, and they had a partner at 40, then you are opening the door on somebody else.

*As soon as you set a precedent then things can change.*

Yes. It is a very complex issue.

### **How did you reach consensus as a congregation?**

Not involved at the time. No project is easy to get consensus. I am involved with another group in town that is trying to start another housing project with seniors and it is the same thing. You just have to keep plodding and struggling because the whole "NIMBY" syndrome takes over Not In My Backyard is always going to be there. That was part of this project.

In this city housing develops in certain patterns and most of the housing was concentrated in the far north end. And there has been nothing in the eastern part of the city except for private seniors' retirement residence. The population density is growing, and some people may choose to want to live there, but even people who choose to live here will say, "It is not close enough downtown to the hospital." So location- from our perspective with marketing and everything this has got ideal location.

*Can you tell me more about that.*



Well, it is on a bus route. We used to have 2 bus routes but now we just have the one. There are small variety stores around here but most of the housing project - the city has one out in the suburbs - there is no bus route, there is no stores. It is attached to a chronic care institution and they thought it appealed to people who had country roots and wanted to live out there. But what happens if the family are living in town and they just can't go walk - and if they are a senior with a car, as soon as they lose that ability to drive themselves- they are stuck there. That was often the tradeoff when public housing was built. Middle class neighbourhoods didn't want it, and often middle class neighbourhoods didn't have the land for the zone density, so they stuck it out in the suburbs. And it is coming back as an urban planning issue - it is coming back to haunt because a lot of places in the fringes that have them - distance from the shops make them hard to rent. If you can't rent them all of the time there are market rent losses, and right now the city, the taxpayer in general have to absorb those rent losses. Whereas here, we have never in 29 years - any rent loss that we have had is just because we take a month or so to get an apartment ready when it is vacant but as far as rent arrears with seniors, it is not an issue. We have never had to evict somebody in 29 years and I can't recall ever having any rent arrears... And that is another thing, generally speaking another uniqueness of our project is a mixture of market and rent geared to income. My feeling is that mixed income housing projects are better than just all subsidized. You get more social problems usually concentrated in a building where everybody is subsidized. Because of the fact that you can't pay market rent is a sign of a lot of other things (in a person's) life so it has worked out well.

*How many geared to income?*

The original model was no less than 10 geared to income and no more than 21, and the rest were what is called market rent, and what that means is a maximum that the board sets. A ruling came down from the province 2 years ago fixed at 15 so we have 27 at market and 15 at geared to income. So the city - it has changed so radically - but it used to be that when you had a rent geared to income vacancy, the landlord had option of taking one of every two referrals off their own list and an overseer board managed the geared to income list. So if you had a geared to income vacancy you would call them up and give them the details, and they would give you 2 or 3 names. If they couldn't fill it then you would take it off your list. And if you stayed within that range of 10 - 21 they wouldn't bother. But if you deviate from that, or want to deviate from the fixed number - 15 in our case - then you have to get permission of the service manager to make that change, because they do long range projections of what subsidies they are going to be paying you and they have to make sure that it is consistent. A lot of the housing projects that have mixed family and are in undesirable locations, they have a hard time filling the buildings and sometimes even sometimes even places that have 2 and 3 bedrooms sit vacant for quite a long time. I was on the Housing Authority Board back in the 90s and it shocked me as a private citizen to see how much the rent arrears were. At that time the rent arrears at the end of the year would be written off by the province by the taxpayer. Now they have to be covered by the taxpayer of the city.

If you read the paper about a week ago you would have read the stats on the amount of money they have to put into capital reserve repairs for the buildings. And when they downloaded the provincial housing agencies - unlike the private - they didn't have replacement reserve funds. So they have awful high repair expenses and rent arrears expenses. Generally speaking the private mixed ones in a good location for seniors - if they kept their reserve funds up -, they are probably quite well off. And we are among those few people. We could have probably expanded over the years because a lot of these houses were available, but the board never had any interest because you have to have the right mix of people on board when you are starting to get things going. And then when it is in the stable stage it is pretty - not too many surprises - but if you want to engage in re-development then that is a different type of board that you need to have. And generally speaking, people get into the status quo mold and that is the way they want to stay. And that in the United Church as you probably know in Hamilton they have started several years ago OUCH is the acronym. Organization of United Church Homes and this has come about for many different reasons especially because when the UC got involved with housing groups 25 years ago they provided the name and some funding. But they were basically hands off. Now in recent years with lawsuits of different types, now they are establishing administration standards and supposed to be support services. It is as a church based organization our reporting responsibilities are now just to the city of Kingston and for them to hear that we have connection to the United Church - well to them that is interesting, but we tell you how to do it. And you have got to be very careful when you have a church based organization because as a housing group you can't be seen as holding back - a housing project for your own faith community. And some people don't understand that and we have been approached over the years by people who wanted to start a housing project but they wanted it just for their own members. The only way that you can do that is to run it as a condominium or a private club- because if you get any government money it is open to everybody.

### **Was it easier to get approval or funding because you were a church?**

Again, ours has so many unique aspects to the funding. First CMHC at that time in the 70s were giving non- profit charity organization 50 year mortgages most mortgages today are 25-30 and sometimes they are less. The province gave us grants and CMHC gave us forgivable loans as long as it was operated as a non-profit. The City gave us one of the rarest tax agreements that exists in the province. Because we are a private, non-profit charitable organization and we have a mission to service seniors, and as long as we have a mortgage the land taxes for apartments are frozen at \$25.00 per unit. A normal tax bill for that building would be \$ 39,000.00. We pay \$1050.00 a year. So some of the new housing agencies are incorporating themselves as charities and back then, again because of the goodwill created by Keith Norton and Flora Macdonald they helped convince the city that this was a good deal because back then there was a need for housing but the city did not want to get physically involved with all of the complexities of running their own housing project. Whereas today they

have their own housing projects. Most of the housing projects in municipalities are run as private and non profit so there are a lot of models out there but our particular church based one because we have the frozen tax grant it saves the market rent tenants in 2003 dollars about \$83.00 a month. A one bedroom apartment in the city is about \$600.00 and I forget if that includes utilities. In our building we have bulk meter so we decide what we figure the utilities are going to be and we factor that in to the rent. So the grants that we got from the province were for the first 15 years and they would be if a grant was \$400.00 and there was a sliding scale that was maximum in the first year and it filtered out. The theory is that as your market rents go up and the tenants pay more each year that the subsidy to the tenant- which is the difference between what the tenant pays the market rent will also go down because you figure that incomes will go up but of course that is not happening with the low income tenants. Funding for the rents for the tenants are based on 30% of the gross income and there is a huge manual that describes all the regulations about what is and is not included. For seniors basically if somebody had \$1200.00 income (rent) is 30% of \$1200.00 plus 30 dollars. If that calculation happens to be less than the market rent- right now rent is \$450.00 a month- then the difference between what the tenant pays and the market rent is called a rent subsidy and it is paid to us on a monthly basis. I submit a monthly report with all the tenant names, income, and what the market is and what the subsidy is based on difference of the two. So that becomes the cheque that we get and each agency does a similar report. For seniors it is straight 30%. We have some seniors who have chosen to pay the market rent because where they are they don't like the place, and today seniors are fiercely independent and they could qualify for rent geared to income but the waiting list is a factor. If they can get into a place like ours where the market rent is the lowest in the city, and it is a well - respected building for some of these people will choose to go on the market list. Whereas rent geared to income we basically have to through a complex application procedure and for some seniors who don't have family to help them with the documents it is very stressful.

*No problem with occupancy then.*

Generally no. The process of getting a geared to income - I have one vacancy right now- you call up the Housing Registry and tell them you have a vacancy available on such and such a date. They give us a list of people who have said that they want to move into our building and then you start calling them. Are they willing to show up for an interview and are they willing to take it with the terms? We are subject to very rigid conditions about how we check a person. Must be 65. Have good rental history- no rent arrears. The biggest problem we have here is restricted parking. Because when the building was built the bylaws were that you had to have so much acreage for green space so much for parking and the ratio used to be 1:4. You had 42 units and we have about 14 parking spots and in the winter we lose 2 or 3. So when we go to advertise and there is a feeling that low-income people don't have cars. Even the market tenants back then. But people are living longer, they are healthier and they walk more. So people come in and they want space and we can't offer it. It is not uncommon but that adds a bit of complexity when you are trying to rent. But the

geographical location- once people get to know - we don't advertise much- word of mouth. Once a year we get a rush of people leaving and we register with different agencies whereas others are advertising every month.

Buildings are built and they have a life span but they cycle of where people want to live and what happens. There have been communities in Chicago where they have torn down public housing and have had to re-locate. And the public housing in this community is the oldest and it has the highest per capital improvements. So big decisions have to be made in Kingston. Kingston is becoming a very popular retirement area and Flora Macdonald in 1999, in the year of the senior, pointed out the need for a variety of transitional housing. People who were institutionalized and are now living in the community.

People have to be able to look after themselves in the event of a power outage and the ice storm. There is few front line staff. Residents must be able to look after self and get out of the building in an emergency. Fire? I am supposed to have an Emergency Planning Process. I would lose those who could walk the stairs if the elevator went out. Of 42 residents I probably have 20 who couldn't walk the stairs. As a staff person, I am not trained in medical social work. You don't know what the issues of all tenants are. Things arise. SARS So for board members these issues are overwhelming.

Congregations are aging and it is harder to get board members. We have 4 people who are close to 80. And that is another complexity when it is a United Church of Canada charitable organization, legally, my understanding is that the Manual says that the majority of the board members need to be United Church people. Now, having said that, depending on who is on the board, and whether they have attachment to the church if any, they think, "Well nobody is going to tell us what to do. We are private." And the United Church of Canada could lose a lot of their credibility and even their assets if they can't find members within their faith community to support these charities that are doing front line work for the National Church. In my view it hasn't been until they started to have thoughts of lawsuits that they suddenly have started to wonder where these housing agencies are. They are spread all throughout Canada and many of them are long term care. I have voiced some concerns at National Office that it is fine to say that you are going to establish Administrative Standards, but you can't have these standards decided at a National office when these agencies are working in a provincial political environment. And you can't say that the standards set up for long term care are appropriate to a small private 50 unit housing operation operating only in a city. It is operating within a city and a province and they just don't get that. And so it is interesting to see what will come out of OUCH. Everybody is trying to protect themselves from lawsuits and operating agreements that we are about to sign is basically protecting the city. Everything is worded to protect the city. So the rights of the owners are very limited. So as long as you accept government money you are under the thumb.

### **Has this facility affected congregational growth?**

Member since 1978. I was intrigued with the fact that a church that actually tore down a church manse. That was something not in my experience. Joined church in 1978 In 1980 asked to be on the Board of Directors.

No growth. Most people drive to church- 6 or 7 of the 42 tenants attend the church. Congregation has a history of being small. Declined in the 60s. Even in the 1800s it was small and there was much debate about whether to build or not to build. Many members live in the suburbs. On a good Sunday there are 30 people out for services. How long the church will last I think the fate will be decided in the next three years. Everyone is comfortable with our new minister. We always have a problem finding an organist so we have had to be inventive- use taped music.

*Those challenges are the same most everywhere.*

Yes.

We have got these building and we have these demographics and we have got these expenses and at some point push comes to shove whether its respect for holding on for the transition period.

No set term of office in a church. Little turnover on a church council. It is a weakness and a testament to one's commitment that someone will stay for 60 years. In an organizational sense you don't have a process to replace so you don't get new ideas and if you can't recruit that is also a testament to organizational issues that need to be addressed. How do you get from an old model to a new model without alienating your volunteers? The whole volunteer movement is going through shifts: the numbers, expectations legal liability of volunteers. We live in interesting times and the church, unfortunately lags behind.

### **Do you perceive any losses or negative consequences of the building project?**

*Church and project become merged*

At certain points in the church history we have had the minister sit on the board, and depending on who that person was, it was either a passive or an active role. And sometimes there was more division than positive influence. The fact that the church is a tenant of the housing corporation and many of the same people move from a church council meeting to a housing corporation meeting creates all sorts of interesting conflict of interest- the new buzz word- when faith agencies are involved with housing it is supposed to be at arms length. The question is what is arm's length? People are talking about, but nobody wants to stick their neck out far enough to get it addressed. You have to respect that a lot of these housing agencies would not have come into effect if not for the goodwill of the volunteer. Some agencies use a community - based model. If you are going to use the United Church name then you

need to abide by their rules i.e. insurance but the city and province want us to use their insurers. And when the United Church sends out a policy statement on something it is usually written in such general terms that it doesn't mean squat really. What they do in Queen's Park and locally are different. The women of the church own and operate the laundry facilities and they collect all of the revenue. In other housing agencies the laundry revenue goes back into the housing corp. The city sends out forms and asks for the revenue from the laundry and I say there is none. There is some advantage to being a small, faith-based organization, but you really have to work hard to keep your name good, and keep your name in the community. If you have a passive board... it is very interesting.

**What would you describe as your greatest learning?**

I would do it again and how I would do it and how the legal board would do things are two very different - you have to have partners. The way I see it the way the secular world is going you will see more and more pressure put on churches with large real estate holdings that aren't using them for multi-purpose. Having a building that is used for a church service and a few side things - you have to do something more creative.