

CHURCH AMALGAMATION:
A THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE AND PROPOSED MODEL

by

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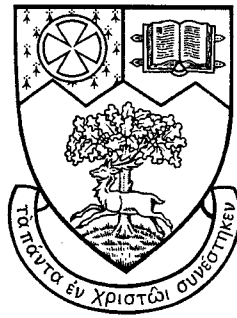
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ABSTRACT

Church Amalgamation: A Theological Rationale and Proposed Model

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It is a sad reality but there are more churches every year that find it increasingly difficult to maintain the ministry effectiveness that they employed in years gone by. These struggling congregations face the option of closing their doors, partnering with another church or agency, or merging with another church with the hopes of continuing a ministry presence in their community.

The merging or amalgamation of churches has been an increasingly popular option that many congregations are exploring but amalgamations are hard work and can be doomed to failure if the congregations involved do not discover the underlying theological reason why their churches failed in the first place. Churches fail when they stop being engaged in the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is God's mission in the world to establish his Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." The church is a community of people in mission for God.

Churches that are interested in amalgamation should consider following a model, like the one presented in this thesis, which focuses on understanding and fulfilling the mission of God within their context.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to wife Karen who has taught me more about being a follower of Christ than any other person ever has. It is only because of her constant encouragement, example, and prayers that I was able to complete this work.

I would like to thank my children Rebecca, Joel and Jessica and my son-in-law Peter for the incredible joy they have brought into my life and how they have encouraged me to keep learning.

The guidance of Dr. Lee Beach and Dr. Phil Zylla through this process and for their mentorship is not something that I take for granted nor will I ever forget.

A big thank you goes to the congregation of Niagara Orchard Community Church in Niagara Falls, Ontario. It is because of these people that I was able to continue my studies at McMaster Divinity School and it was our struggles at the start of the amalgamation process that led to the contents of this thesis.

I wish to thank *The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory* for allowing their congregations to be part of the research for this thesis. I also want to thank the leadership of *The Salvation Army* for the encouragement they give their officers to pursue knowledge.

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Introduction

The Need for a New Model for Church Amalgamation

A sad reality in Canada is that many Protestant churches find it increasingly difficult to keep their doors open and they face the unwanted choice of what to do when the church is no longer viable. The reasons why some of the churches find themselves in this predicament are as varied as the churches themselves; however there are a number of common reasons that contribute to the decline in the church that can be identified.

First, there is often a link between the life cycle of the church and its apparent decline. The typical life cycle of the church involves five stages: birth, development, plateau, decline and death. Those churches that are finding it difficult to remain open are either in the latter stages of decline or at the death stage of the life cycle. Second, there are often sustainability factors that are not being addressed that contribute to the church's decline. These factors may be problems with people, programs, finances, facilities or style of ministry which can have a cumulative effect on church health and lead to the church's demise. Third, the church may have theological issues that have negatively influenced the ministry of the church and thus contributed to its overall decline. The theological issues may involve a lack of understanding of the role of lay people within the congregation, or the place of women in ministry, to the congregation misunderstanding what their mission as a church should be.

When anyone of these realities is in place in a church, the congregation has some tough decisions to make. Do they continue doing things the way we have for as long as they can? Do they close the doors now and find a new place to worship? Do they make

changes to the way they are currently doing things? Do they collaborate with another congregation and share resources while remaining autonomous? Or do they amalgamate with another congregation and continue as a joint venture? This final option is one that is becoming increasingly popular and one that some congregations will choose because it seems like an easy way to maintain what they already have without having to close the doors. However, amalgamations are anything but easy and should not be entered into lightly or without adequate forethought and planning. Herein lies the problem; how does a church plan and prepare for an amalgamation? What are the steps that should be followed? What factors need to be considered? Are there resources available that will help the congregation work through the process for the best possible chance for success?

The purpose of this thesis is to deepen the theological rationale for church amalgamation and to propose a model for church amalgamation that will help guide congregations through the amalgamation process. In order to do this the thesis will consider the theological reasons for amalgamation, the reason for decline in many churches, the procedure of working together to determine mission, vision and goals, and how to work through details of property, assets, leadership, and crisis management.

An exhaustive study of all protestant denominations and their amalgamation practices is beyond the scope of this thesis, therefore this thesis will limit its study to one denomination – The Salvation Army in the Canada and Bermuda Territory. In seeking to develop a model that will help guide congregations through the amalgamation process, this thesis will be guided by the question, “*Is the current model used by The Salvation Army to amalgamate congregations perceived to be an effective model?*” Although this thesis will only consider the practices of The Salvation Army in Canada since 2000, the

conclusions and amalgamation model presented could be implemented by any church, regardless of denominational affiliation, considering engaging in the amalgamation process.

The congregation that is interested in amalgamation must be able to articulate the theological reasons for amalgamating. Many churches faced with closing their doors amalgamate with another congregation for strictly pragmatic reasons; they want to stay alive as a congregation in some form. However, this reason in and of itself is not a good enough reason to amalgamate. By articulating the theological reasons that are at the heart of the amalgamation, a way is opened up to examine the beliefs of the church as it relates to the dynamic interaction between gospel, church and culture. This is important because there is the possibility that the reasons for the church's decline may be exposed in its beliefs and, as Robert Schreiter states, their local theology may be "an occasional enterprise, that is, one dictated by circumstances and immediate needs."¹ Thinking theologically about potential amalgamations also has to be in the forefront of denominational leaders' discussions if the amalgamation process is to succeed.²

At the heart of the theological discussion involving amalgamations there needs to be a clear understanding of the reason why the church exists in the world. Salvation Army theologian Philip Needham clearly states what he believes to be the church's

¹ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 22.

² Often the decision to amalgamate congregations at a denominational level is done out of pragmatic reasons such as insufficient finances for the churches to survive or a lack of clergy to oversee all the congregations in the area. While these are legitimate reasons for a merger to proceed, they should not be the overall determining factor. The denominational leaders should look for any underlying theological reason as to why the congregations are dying. If the theological reason for the failure is not understood, then the amalgamated congregation may unwittingly adopt the faulty theology and in doing so jeopardize the ultimate success of the new church. This will be explored more fully later in the thesis.

reason for existence when he writes, “The reason is mission. The church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world.”³

Needham is not alone in this assertion. Newbigin believes that the church exists for mission and that mission is expressed in three ways, “in the proclamation of the kingdom, the presence of the kingdom, and the provenience of the kingdom. This threefold way of understanding the church’s mission is rooted in the triune nature of God himself.”⁴ Mission that proclaims the kingdom is ‘faith in action’ that announces God’s kingdom, which has been present over all of human history and over the whole cosmos, has come to a particular place and time in history. As Newbigin explains, it is the “acting out of the central prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to use: ‘Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven.’”⁵ However, it is inadequate to simply proclaim the kingdom with words because such proclamations only speak of a future event that we are hoping for. Jesus embodied the arrival of the kingdom of God so that the kingdom was no longer a distant expectation but it was wrapped up in this man from Nazareth. It is for this reason that the early church leaders used a different language than the language Jesus used. “(Jesus) spoke about the kingdom, they spoke about Jesus.”⁶ Mission expressed through the provenience of the kingdom is something that is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Newbigin states, “Mission is not just something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who himself is the witness,

³ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 52.

⁴ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 64–5.

⁵ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 39.

⁶ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 40.

who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey.”⁷

Eddie Gibbs states, “The term missional... draws attention to the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people.”⁸ Ronald Thiemann speaking of the church’s mission needing to be “beyond exclusivism and absolutism” asserts that, “the life of Christian discipleship is one of commitment to the neighbor in need. Knowing God as we do in Jesus Christ, Christians should be the first to acknowledge that God’s self-revelation, indeed, appears in some surprising places.”⁹ Hunsberger says that the church understands its mission through a twofold dialogue, “the dialogue the gospel of God has with us within our culture and the dialogue we then have representing the gospel among the others who share our culture.”¹⁰ Hunsberger’s statement is echoed by Posterski and Nelson who believe that the church must “cement together the importance of personal faith with the importance of social concern, of soul care with social care.”¹¹ A similar claim is also made by Alan Roxburgh when he writes that we need “communities of God’s people bound to one another because they have discovered the One in their midst who takes up their pain and gives it meaning in the larger call of a great journey toward a transformed and healed creation.”¹² If the amalgamated church is to succeed, it must be willing to adopt these principles of missional theology into the foundation of their local theology.

As already stated, churches fail for any number of reasons but often the reason for the failure can be seen in what the church deems to be important and what it considers to

⁷ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 56.

⁸ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 51.

⁹ Thiemann, “Beyond Exclusivism and Absolutism,” 128.

¹⁰ Hunsberger, “Acquiring the Posture of a Missionary Church,” 295.

¹¹ Posterski & Nelson, *Future Faith Churches*, 21.

¹² Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 129.

be peripheral in regards to their local theology. Loren Mead sums this up well when he writes “...in congregation after congregation, person after person, agency after agency, the one clear paradigm of mission stopped being clear. Mission, which had once been both a central rallying cry and basic assumption, instead became a subject of disagreement.”¹³ A better understanding of the local theology of the congregations wishing to amalgamate and what sustainability factors are not being met as a result of those beliefs will provide the information necessary for churches wishing to move ahead with the amalgamation. Congregations have to be fully cognisant of where they have failed so that they do not make the same mistake in the new venture.

Once a theological rationale for amalgamation has been established, the thesis will present a process that congregations can follow in order to determine the church’s mission, vision and goals. This process is important and cannot be done haphazardly or quickly nor can individual leaders and congregations short circuit the process by not allowing the Holy Spirit to foster a strong sense of spiritual and relational vitality. The words of Herrington, Bonem and Furr are a warning to not rush the process, “In a world that demands instant results, we want a process in which everything happens quickly. We pray a cursory prayer at the beginning of a meeting, we engage the process with all of the baggage of brokenness, and we ask God to bless us once we have decided what we want to do.”¹⁴

At the heart of the process is the leader who is charged with leading the congregations through the amalgamation. Careful consideration needs to be taken in

¹³ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 4.

¹⁴ Herrington, Bonem & Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 27.

determining who will lead because, as Alan Roxburgh states, churches in serious decline are,

“driven to recapture a lost sense of place and importance in their culture. They are beguiled by an ideology of growth, numbers and trends. Yet despite the effort, a great number of churches and denominations continue to lose members. In response to the fear and anxiety provoked by this trend, leaders turn to programs and methodologies that promise recovery and growth through marketing and measuring. Some leaders confess they don’t know what to do. They have little idea of the dynamics that get congregations into this kind of trouble in the first place.”¹⁵

Special attention will be given in this thesis to developing leaders that, as Gibbs puts it, “sense the priority of the Great Commission,”¹⁶ and are committed to not just merging two congregations but to make Christ followers who are engaged in the mission of the church.

The thesis will conclude with an amalgamation model that churches can use to help them through the process of amalgamation. This proposed model will be in an easy to follow format that will allow the churches considering amalgamation to thoroughly examine their current practices, and the operant theology that forms those practices, and encourages the new amalgamated church to have “mission” as their operant theology. If mission informs all the practices of the new church, then there is less of a chance of the new church suffering the same fate as the congregations that it was born out of.

Methodology

Local congregations that see mission as the essence of what they are about will be in a constant state of change as they continually respond to the context of their surrounding culture and dialogue with the Bible and church tradition. However, when our

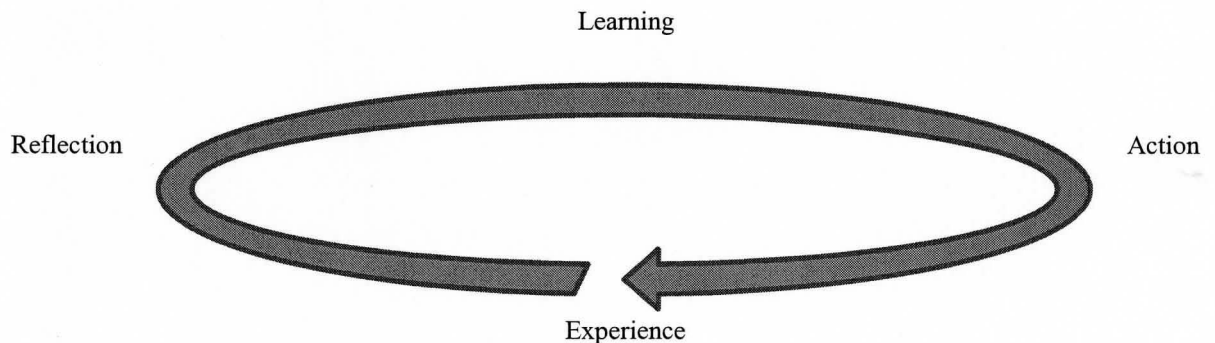
¹⁵ Roxburgh & Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 39–40.

¹⁶ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 83.

theology loses its social traction, then mission suffers as well. Theology is a practical proposition for these congregations as they seek a “deep connectedness of the Christian theological tradition and human experience.”¹⁷

This thesis will employ the “Theological Action Research” (TAR) methodology that has been developed by Drs. Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins. The authors offer a concise definition of TAR stating, “Theological Action Research is a partnership between an insider and an outsider team to undertake research and conversations answering theological questions about faithful practice in order to renew both theology and practice in the service of God’s mission.”¹⁸

TAR can be described as an Action-Reflection cycle with four distinct parts: Learning, Action, Experience, and Reflection.



Experience is articulated using an action research process and through the collection of statistical data. The action research process is “an approach to research rather than a particular set of methods.”¹⁹ The key characteristics of action research include: the research is context based addressing real life problems, a collaborative

¹⁷ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 13.

¹⁸ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 63.

¹⁹ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 36.

process between participants and researchers, an attitude to research that sees diversity of experience as an asset to the process, an expectation that the meanings derived from the research will lead to new actions and the expectation that reflection upon action will lead to new meanings.

The experiences of the participants are embodied in a text that is now shared for reflection by those involved in the research. This reflection on experience leads into the area of learning where themes are identified as being significant to the research. From these themes addressed in the learning stage the cycle is completed by making suggestions for renewed action and theology. Theology plays a key role throughout the TAR process and informs all stages of the action – research cycle.

Cameron, et al, set out five characteristic features of TAR that ensure the theological integrity of the methodology.

The first characteristic of TAR is that it is theological throughout. Theology cannot be something inserted into the process at the end when all the conclusions have been made, rather, “all material – written and unwritten, textual and practical”²⁰ have the potential of being ‘theology’. This means that the practices participated in and observed are themselves bearers of theology. The understanding that the practices of faithful Christian people express the contemporary living tradition of the Christian faith and this living Christian tradition as a way of understanding Christian practice is central to the TAR methodology. The theology that determines the practice of the congregation can be both implicit and explicit, what the authors call “theology in four voices,” and therefore a clear understand of these four voices is required.

²⁰ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 51.

The second characteristic of TAR is an understanding of theology in four voices. The authors assert that “the conviction that Christian practice is, itself, ‘faith seeking understanding,’ a kind of theology, leads to a properly complex view of theology.”²¹ The four voices overlap and are interrelated to each other so that TAR positions itself within this dynamic interchange. The four voices are:

1. Normative Theology: this is the theology that the practicing group names as its theological authority and can come from scriptures, creeds, official church teachings and liturgies.
2. Formal Theology: this is the theology of the academy – the theology of theologians. This voice offers a specifically intellectual theology that finds its practice in the exchange of thought in critical, historical and philosophically informed enquiry.
3. Operant Theology: this is the theology embedded within the actual practices of a congregation – “the faith carrying words and actions of believers.”²²
4. Espoused Theology: the theology embedded within the congregation’s articulation of its beliefs. It may be that the espoused theology is “less well developed than the actual practice; or that the relation between it and the actions carried out is not always clear or coherent.”²³

TAR enables normative and formal theology to question espoused and operant theology but it also enables the theological wisdom of practice to challenge normative and formal theology. This is accomplished through the conversation between the different voices throughout the process.

²¹ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 53.

²² Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 14.

²³ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 53.

The third characteristic of TAR is disclosing theology through a conversational method. This means that the research is done in such a way that there is a conversation between the researcher and the participating group and that the conversation is open so that all theological voices are heard – even when they might seem ‘strange or contradictory.’ “It is in these conversations that insights for renewed practice and learning arise, and are recognized.”²⁴

The fourth characteristic is TAR as formative transformation of practice. As a practical theological methodology, TAR needs to be challenged as to its potential to effect change. Practical theology brings practical transformation. By naming and recognizing the theological connections between the four voices, the theological embodiment at the operant level will be renewed. This happens because a language is discovered to give a name to the practices of the group. This language enables the necessary conversation between espoused and formal or normative theologies and it makes possible “a wider sharing of the meanings made real in practical Christian faith.”²⁵ This also contributes to the theological and spiritual formation of those involved by encouraging theological fluency and understanding through the sharing of their embodied theologies.

The fifth and final characteristic of TAR is that it is a method that allows practice to contribute to the transformation of theology. In a way distinctive among practical theological methodologies, “TAR claims not only to effect change of practice through theology, but also to effect change *through practice of theology*.”²⁶ That is to say, the

²⁴ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 58.

²⁵ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 58.

²⁶ Cameron, *Talking About God in Practice*, 59.

theology that is embedded in practice can offer fresh insights and new questions to articulated theologies and it can contribute and shape formal and normative theologies.

Using TAR, this thesis has developed in the following way.

Experience

Experience forms the research question, in this case, a problem facing the church – congregations faced with the decision of what to do when internal statistics deem that the church in its present form is no longer sustainable. Amalgamation is one of the options available to the congregation and the option that many churches have chosen. However, are these new amalgamated congregations any more sustainable than their pre-amalgamated forms? Do amalgamations work? More specifically, do amalgamations within The Salvation Army work? This thesis will draw on the experience of ten pastors²⁷ who currently lead amalgamated Salvation Army congregations in Canada. While the question, “Do amalgamations work?” is interesting and very pragmatic, experience looks to a deeper theological question “Why is the church unsustainable?” Are there certain characteristics that need to be present within a church in order for it to be sustainable? Are there theological realities that need to be adhered to for churches to be sustainable? The practice of the church needs to be examined to assess what role practice has in sustainability. Also previous attempts at amalgamation within The Salvation Army need to be examined to determine if amalgamation is a good option for the congregation under review. The four voices of theology and their role within the congregation needs to be understood to determine their influence in the sustainability of the church. Finally the role

²⁷ These pastors would be considered the “inside” group in the TAR methodology. The author of this thesis would be the “outside” group.

that the church plays in the amalgamation process and the role the denomination plays in the process needs to be investigated.

Reflection

Based on the experiences expressed above, this thesis will reflect on the question, “Why is the church unsustainable?” By reflecting on the experiences of the congregations, a better understanding of the sustainability of a congregation will be highlighted. Reflecting on the church’s practices will show what practices the congregations participated in and whether or not they contributed to the church’s problems. A reflection of the congregation’s experience of the four voices of theology will also highlight any theological deficiencies that are reflected in the practice or lack of practice within the congregation.

Learning

Insights gained from the experience and reflection stages will show areas affecting growth and sustainability within a congregation. With this information, a way is established to learn from the deficiencies and accentuate the positives. It is the contention of this thesis that a renewed focus on mission and a better understanding of the theological concept of *missio Dei* and its importance for the church will lead the amalgamated congregations towards sustainability in the future.

Action

Action is the final part of the TAR and as the name suggests the end result of experience, reflection, and learning is acting on the information to instigate change. To this end, the final chapter of this thesis is a suggested model to be used by churches considering amalgamation.

Disciplined thinking about congregational life is a fundamental task of church leadership and it is an undertaking that is theological in nature. By seeking a better understanding of how and why a church operates as it does, the church leader is able to, “engage in more critical theological inquiry into the nature of God’s activity in the world and [their] role in it.”²⁸ The TAR method of research and its use of the action research process of experience, reflection, learning and action and its employment of the four voices of theology (normative, formal, operant and espoused) permits congregations and their leaders to engage in an exploration of the church’s practices and the theology that relates to those practices.

Using the TAR method described in this introduction, the next chapter will examine ten Salvation Army congregations in Canada that underwent an amalgamation between the years 2000–2010.

²⁸ Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 16.

Chapter 1

Theological Action Research and Amalgamated Salvation Army Congregations

The Salvation Army from its inception has always been concerned with fulfilling God's mission in the world. William Booth, founder and first General of The Salvation Army, was responding to the concern of what to do with new converts to the Christian Mission (the original name of The Salvation Army) when he said, "They need to be brought to see that they are not only called to the adoption of sons, but to the work of servants – not only to feel the privileges of the Kingdom but to be actual co-workers for God in bringing others to share these blessings."¹ This missional mindset is part of the espoused theology of The Salvation Army to this day. General Linda Bond (elected January 31, 2011) expressed her vision for The Salvation Army using the three phrases: One Army, One Mission, One Message. One Mission is explained as, "Into the world of the hurting, broken, lonely, dispossessed and lost, reaching them in love by all means. We will emphasize our integrated ministry, reach and involve youth and children, stand for and serve the marginalized, and encourage innovation in mission."²

Although mission is part of the ethos of Salvation Army congregations, there have been times when mission and practice do not connect and congregations find themselves in a situation where they face closure. In some of these cases, The Salvation Army has chosen to amalgamate two or more congregations together as a way to extend the ministry of The Salvation Army within a community. The research conducted for this thesis focused on ten Canadian Salvation Army churches that have experienced amalgamation between 2000 and 2010.

¹ Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army*, 65.

² Bond, "Vision," lines 8–14.

The research was conducted using Theological Action Research (TAR) methodology and followed the guidelines established by Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney, and Watkins as essential for the TAR methodology.

Phase 1

The first phase of the TAR method is to gain an understanding of the organization and their beliefs.

Understanding the Origins of The Salvation Army

“While women weep as they do now, I’ll fight; while little children go hungry as they do now, I’ll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I’ll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor girl lost on the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I’ll fight – I’ll fight to the very end.”³ These were the words spoken by General William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, in his last public address at the Royal Albert Hall on May 9, 1912. These words show the heart not only of Booth but it is also the ethos of the organization he started in 1865

In 1865, William Booth, an itinerant Methodist preacher, was invited to hold a series of evangelistic meetings in the east end of London. He set up a tent in a Quaker graveyard and his services became an instant success. This proved to be the end of his wanderings as an independent traveling evangelist which he began in 1851. Booth is quoted as saying, “When I saw those masses of poor people; so many of them evidently without God or hope in the world, my whole heart went out to them. I walked back to our

³ Watson, *A Hundred Years' War*, 15.

home and said to my wife, ‘Kate, I have found my destiny!’”⁴ His reputation as an evangelist soon spread throughout London.

Booth’s followers were an enthusiastic group dedicated to fight for the souls of men and women. By preaching hope and salvation, thieves, prostitutes, gamblers and drunkards were among Booth’s first converts to Christianity; but it was never Booth’s intention to start a church from the converts. His aim was to lead them to Christ and to link them to an established church for further spiritual guidance. However, even though they were converted, churches did not accept Booth’s followers because of what they had been prior to conversion. So rather reluctantly, Booth started regular church services for those who came to faith under his ministry. Booth gave their lives direction in a spiritual manner and put them to work to save others who were like themselves. They too preached and sang in the streets as a living testimony to the power of God. This proved to be a dangerous activity as Railton recounts, “The enemy constantly displayed his hostility at the meetings held in the street. Dirt and garbage would be thrown at us and blows and kicks would come, especially on dark evenings.”⁵

In 1867, Booth had only 10 full-time workers but by 1874, the numbers had grown to 1,000 volunteers and 42 evangelists serving under the name *The Christian Mission*. Booth assumed the title of a General Superintendent of the Mission and his followers called him ‘General.’ Booth and the converts spread out of the east end of London into neighboring areas and then to other cities. One day as Booth was reading a printer’s proof of the 1878 Annual Report he noticed the statement, ‘The Christian Mission under the Superintendents of the Rev. William Booth is a volunteer army.’ He

⁴ Railton, *General Booth*, 56.

⁵ Railton, *General Booth*, 69.

crossed out the words 'Volunteer Army' and penned in 'Salvation Army.' From those words came the basis of the foundation deed of The Salvation Army which was adopted in August of that same year. Converts became soldiers of Christ and are known as Salvationists.

Booth and the newly named Salvation Army launched an offensive throughout the British Isles. At the first International Congress (convention) in June 1886 Booth told the delegates that "in the nineteen countries and colonies in which the Army's flag had been unfurled there were 1,552 corps (churches) and 3602 officers; that 28, 200 meetings were held weekly; that in building purchased, leased or erected by the Army seating was provided for 526,000 people."⁶

The work of The Salvation Army began in the United States of America in 1881 under the direction of George Scott Railton. Having completed his assignment in the USA, Railton was on his way back to London, England when his ship stopped in Halifax. As he walked around the streets near the dock, he stopped and began to preach on one of the street corners and became so engrossed in his work that his ship left for England without him. Since he was now stuck in Halifax for ten days, Railton used that time to preach the good news to all who would listen. The official work of The Salvation Army in Canada didn't start at that time, it began a year later when two Salvation Army immigrants, Jack Addie and Joe Ludgate, held an outdoor meeting in Victoria Park in London, Ontario one Sunday in May 1882. Soon they were holding regular meetings both indoors and out and "in the Booth tradition, Ludgate and Addie took their message right to the altar of sin – in London's case, a stretch of twenty two saloons known as Whiskey Row. They stuck to it through the hoots and jeers and curses of drunks until the

⁶ Sandall, History of The Salvation Army: Volume Two, 300.

town's biggest boozier, Whiskey Mason, joined the Army. Then scores of others crowded forward."⁷ The Salvation Army grew quickly and by the end of 1883, just one year later, "more than 200 corps and outposts were being worked by over 400 officers. During that year alone 20,000 persons had been recorded as having knelt at the penitent-forms of the Army."⁸

The International Salvation Army currently has more than a million members and serves in 124 countries.⁹ In Canada, there are currently 314 community churches, 817 active officers (ordained ministers), and The Salvation Army is the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in the country, serving over 1.8 million people each year, in 400 communities across Canada.¹⁰

Understanding the Beliefs of The Salvation Army

TAR seeks to understand the organization's beliefs by asking a series of questions aimed at disseminating the espoused theology and any normative and formal influences the organization perceives to be important. For the purposes of this thesis the following questions were used to explore these influences in the churches studied:

What are the aims of The Salvation Army?

This question is best answered by the mission statements of the organization which state: "The Salvation Army is an international Christian church. Its message is based on the Bible; its ministry is motivated by love for God and the needs of humanity.

⁷ Collins, *The Holy War*, 37.

⁸ Sandall, *History of The Salvation Army: Volume Two*, 260.

⁹ The Salvation Army, *Year Book 2012*, 29.

¹⁰ Salvation Army "Annual Review: Facts and Figures," lines 12, 30.

The Salvation Army exists to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.”¹¹

What are the values of The Salvation Army?

The official web page of The Canada and Bermuda Territory of The Salvation Army states the values of the organization as: “There are three core values of our faith – Salvation, Holiness and Intimacy with God. Rooted in these three values are the seven core operational values which guide all aspects of The Salvation Army in Canada & Bermuda.

Compassion: We reach out to others and care for them.

Respect: We promote the dignity of all persons

Excellence: We strive to be the best at what we do and a model for others to emulate.

Integrity: We are honest, trustworthy, and accountable.

Relevance: We are committed to the pursuit of innovation and effectiveness.

Co-operation: We encourage and foster teamwork and partnerships

Celebration: We give thanks by marking milestones and successes.”¹²

Are there any theological sources or church documents that are regarded as authoritative?

The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine has outlined and explained The Salvation Army’s articles of faith since it was first written by William Booth in 1881. The Handbook has undergone numerous revisions over the years, mainly to make the

¹¹ Salvation Army, “Mission and Values,” lines 1–5.

¹² Salvation Army, “Mission and Values,” lines 7–18.

document more “user friendly,” with its latest version being produced in 2010 under the authority of General Shaw Clifton.

The Handbook, while an answer to the question itself, also adds this, “For Salvationists, belief and action have always been intertwined. Our faith and practice are rooted in the bible, personal experience and the Christian heritage.”¹³ It also states, “Our doctrinal statement derives from the teaching of John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening of the 18th and 19th centuries.”¹⁴ The first doctrine of The Salvation Army reads, “We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by the inspiration of God and that they only constitute the divine rule of Christian faith and practice.”¹⁵

Are there any particular Christian thinkers/leaders that inform your work?

The Salvation Army adheres to Wesleyan theology therefore John and Charles Wesley’s work plays an important role in the life and teachings of the organization.

The General also has a great deal of influence on the direction of The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army Year Book informs us that the General is, “The officer elected to the supreme command of the Army throughout the world. All appointments are made, and all regulations issued, under the General’s authority.”¹⁶

Are there any examples of Christian practice that inspire you?

Stories of the “Old Time Army” are often told when describing the ongoing work of The Salvation Army. An example of this would be veterans of World War 2 making a donation to a Christmas Kettle in a local mall and recalling how the “Sally Ann” was

¹³ Salvation Army, *Handbook of Doctrine*, xvii.

¹⁴ Salvation Army, *Handbook of Doctrine*, xviii.

¹⁵ Salvation Army, *Handbook of Doctrine*, 1.

¹⁶ The Salvation Army, *Year Book 2010*, 14.

always there on the front lines with a cup of coffee, warm socks and cigarettes for the men. Many Salvation Army buildings also have artwork depicting scenes from Army history – a common scene is a repentant sinner kneeling at an overturned bass drum during an open air meeting.

Salvation Army publications also allow space in their magazines to highlight the work of individuals and certain ministry units as a way to inspire others on to good works.

Operant vs. Espoused Theology in Salvation Army Congregations

It is clear that The Salvation Army saw significant growth in a short period of time when it started its work on Canadian soil. The reasons for this exponential growth are worthy of further study to ascertain the effect the social, economic, political and theological influences of Canada in the 1880's had on the organization.

From the historical accounts of its beginning in Canada it is apparent that the early Salvationists' espoused missional theology mandated by Booth and their operant theology at a local level were so closely tied together that it would be difficult to differentiate the two. The words of a song found in The Salvation Army Song Book written by Evangeline Booth, the first female General of The Salvation Army and William Booth's daughter expresses the missional theology of the Army:

*The world for God! The world for God!
 I call to arms the soldiers of the Blood and the Fire
 Go with the Holy Bible. Its words of peace and life
 To multitudes who struggle with crime and want and strife
 Go with your songs of mercy, show Christ in loving kindness
 Make known the sufferings of the Cross, the sacrifice of God
 For behold! On a hill, Calvary! Calvary!
 The world for God! The world for God!
 I give my heart! I'll do my part!¹⁷*

¹⁷ The Salvation Army, *Song Book*, Song 830.

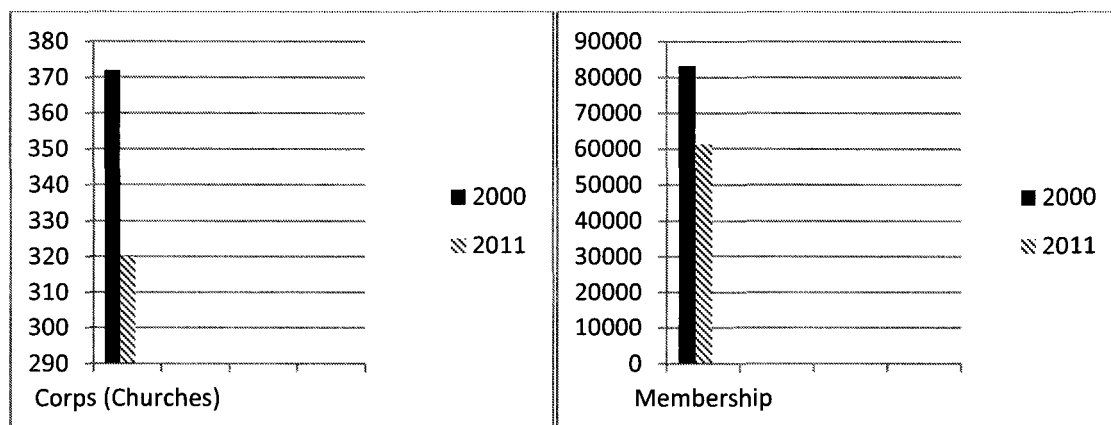
While this song may be sung in congregations across Canada today, the espoused theology of the song and the operant theology of the churches where it is sung is not as integrated as it once was. The song tells of Salvationists going into the world to engage in God's mission in the world and the result of this encounter will be people coming into a relationship with Christ. These people will then join the church and become a part of the "fighting force" of the church. As the mission spreads, the church also expands and grows and new congregations are developed where once there wasn't a church – this is what occurs when the espoused missional theology of The Salvation Army and its operant theology are interwoven. However statistics show that The Salvation Army in Canada is on a decline.

When the official statistics of the Canada and Bermuda Territory from 2000¹⁸ are compared with the official statistics from 2011,¹⁹ it shows a clear decline in total congregations and total membership.²⁰

¹⁸ The Salvation Army, *2001 Year Book*, 79.

¹⁹ The Salvation Army, *2012 Year Book*, 80.

²⁰ The statistics for corps/church include "corps" and "outposts." In 2000, there were 353 corps and 19 outposts. An outpost is a name given to a congregation that has not yet been determined to have "corps" status. In 2011, there were 314 corps and 6 outposts. The statistics for membership include three different groups: soldiers, adherents and junior soldiers. Soldiers are individuals who have accepted The Salvation Army's "Articles of War", a document outlining how the individual is to live a holy life while fulfilling the mission of The Salvation Army. An adherent is an individual who accepts the mission of the Army but has not signed the "Articles of War" and a Junior Soldier is a young person between the ages of 7-10 who has participated in a discipleship training class and is considered a junior member of a congregation. In 2000, the total membership in Canada & Bermuda was 83,245 - senior soldiers: 21,950; adherents: 56,045; junior soldiers: 5,250. In 2011, the total membership was 61,336 – senior soldiers: 18,229; adherents: 40,587; junior soldiers: 2,520.



Over this period, 2000–2011, there was a decrease of thirty-nine churches and a loss of total membership of 21,909. While undoubtedly there are Salvation Army congregations in Canada that are experiencing numerical growth, these statistics indicate that on the whole Salvation Army congregations are not accomplishing the task of congregations that William Booth described in the July 1876 issue of *The Christian Mission Magazine*. The article “How to Manage a Mission Station” was written before there were any Salvation Army congregations, but the contents of his message carried over to when the first corps were opened. Booth states,

“What is a Mission Station? To this I reply, that, as I understand it, it is not a building, or a chapel, or a hall; it is not even a society, but a band of people united together in mission, to attack, to christianise (sic) an entire town or neighborhood. When you reach the station assigned to you, if it has not been done already, you should take your stand in that hall, or theatre, or tent, and draw a line around the breadth of the population you can hope to reach, and make that your parish, and aim, with tears and prayers, and the trumpet-blast of the Gospel, to christianise (sic) every soul within it.”²¹

William Booth was a pragmatic individual and he intended his organization to be pragmatic as well. It was said of Booth, “In all things he was practical. He was averse to dreamy meditation, to mere mystical emotion, to indulgence in contemplation that would

²¹ The Salvation Army, “How to Manage a Mission Station,” lines 10–22.

put off action to meet the demands of spiritual duties to some future day. He lived in the present; here and now he sought something definite to be done in the soul affairs of the people he had to influence.”²² For Booth, his espoused theology and his operant theology operated as equals, and he urged those within The Salvation Army to have the same mindset.

Phase 2

The second phase of the research is to identify a research question about practice. The authors make the following observation about research questions, “There may be debate about whether the research question is sufficiently theological. Some are more obviously theological than others but greater theological awareness will often be developed as the research proceeds.”²³

The research question this thesis seeks to answer is “*Is the current method used by The Salvation Army to amalgamate congregations perceived to be an effective method?*”

This research question has been chosen so that the research elicits the responses from the individuals directly associated and affected by the amalgamation process. The perceptions gleaned from the research speaks to the experience of those associated with the amalgamation as to the overall effectiveness of the model employed by The Salvation Army in their circumstance.

Denominations are looking for ways to revitalize their congregations that have reached a plateau or are slipping towards death and amalgamations are one of the methods they are incorporating. The Salvation Army wants all of their congregations to be effective in fulfilling the mission of The Salvation Army and to accomplish this, the

²² The Salvation Army, *Companion to the Song Book*, 46.

²³ Cameron, *Talking about God*, 87.

denomination has merged congregations. The research question employed by this thesis seeks to discover if the method The Salvation Army has used to amalgamate congregations is seen to be effective by the leaders of those amalgamated congregations.

Phase 3

The third phase of the research is to determine how the research question will be answered. Part of this process is determining who the test subjects will be and how the information needed from them will be collected.

The researcher contacted The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territorial Headquarters and requested a list of all the congregations that had undergone amalgamations from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2010. The information received from this inquiry indicated that in the time specified there were nineteen church amalgamations affecting thirty nine congregations in the Canada and Bermuda Territory:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Number of Amalgamations</u>
Bermuda	2
Manitoba	2
Newfoundland East	2
Newfoundland West	3
Ontario Central	1
Ontario East	2
Ontario Great Lakes	4
Quebec	2
Saskatchewan	1
Alberta, BC, Maritimes, Ont. North	0

The researcher then contacted each of these nineteen congregations and asked if they would be willing to participate in a survey, as per the guidelines established by the Research Ethics Board of McMaster University²⁴, about their amalgamation experience. The researcher received ten affirmative responses from the current leaders of these congregations. These current leaders were contacted via a secure email server and presented with six questions about their amalgamation experience that they were asked to answer. The questions posed were:

1. In your opinion, what was done right during the amalgamation?
2. What would have you done differently?
3. To your knowledge, was there a clear process followed during the amalgamation?
Could you describe it?
4. In your opinion, what have been the long term effects of the amalgamation?
5. In your opinion, what were the challenges faced by the congregation after the amalgamation? Are there any ongoing challenges now?
6. In your opinion, how has the amalgamation shaped the congregation's identity?

These questions were developed and chosen because they seek to understand the experience of the church leaders of amalgamated congregations. The TAR method is an action reflection cycle that incorporates experience, reflection, learning and action, therefore the experiences of the leaders had to be discovered as a starting point for the research cycle.

The questions asked require the leader to offer their experience about the amalgamation process and the effects the amalgamation has had on the congregation. It also elicits from them thoughts about how they, as leaders, might have done things

²⁴ See *Appendix A* for McMaster University Research Ethic Board's approval letter.

differently. This helps the researcher to understand the leader's overall perceptions about the amalgamation process because if the leader had a number of negative issues with the process it shows an overall dissatisfaction with the method used.

Questions four, five and six ask for details about the current state of the congregation in an effort to understand if there is a congruency between the espoused and operant theologies of the new churches. If the new church has adopted a missional theological stance as a result of the amalgamation, then this would indicate that there was sufficient thought given to the theological issues that led to the demise of the host congregations and actions were taken to avoid a similar fate befalling the new congregation.

Phase 4

After the questionnaires were returned, the process of reading and organizing the data into readily identifiable themes commenced. To interpret the data, the researcher followed a set of questions suggested by the TAR authors as questions they use for reading data.²⁵ The following are the questions and the answers derived from the data collected.

How does the data help answer the research question?

It is apparent from the data that there was no discernible model followed for the amalgamations of these churches. Of the ten responses, only two indicated that they felt that there was a clear process that was followed. The data indicates that there were administrative procedures followed as it pertained to the transfer of funds and membership rolls and the use of existing buildings after the amalgamation. It would

²⁵ Cameron, *Talking about God*, 178.

appear from the data collected that the answer to the research question is, “No, the current model used by The Salvation Army to amalgamate congregations is not perceived as an effective model.”

This conclusion is based on the experiences of the leaders of the congregations that were amalgamated. The following are samples of the responses to question three, *“To your knowledge was a clear process followed during the amalgamation? Could you describe it?”* “There was not a clear process followed during the amalgamation.” “It appears no clear direction was given.” “Not that I could see.” These responses show that it was the experience of the church leaders that there was no discernible model that was used or process that was followed. The two respondents who indicated that there was a clear process followed did not describe the process that was implemented in their situation.

Is there anything that surprises/strikes you about the data?

There were a number of responses that the researcher found to be interesting. Although all of the amalgamations represented occurred because of financial concerns with the host churches and it was hoped that the merger would alleviate those financial burdens, such was not the case. Seven of the ten new churches indicated that they still struggle financially. One response stated, “Unfortunately we lost a lot of people from one of the congregations and that has had a financial implications.” Another response states, “The congregation is now fairly healthy, but finances have made it almost impossible to build or buy a church facility.” And also, “There are always challenges in ministry; the church is still financially challenged.”

A recurring theme that emerged was how the churches, prior to amalgamation, were not fully aware of the precarious state that they were in financially. One respondent said, “I suggest that the process would have gone smoother at the beginning if the people were properly informed that their church was not self-sufficient using firm data.” Another felt they could have reversed their financial situation without amalgamation if they had been informed earlier. Another response said, “I do feel that if the people were made aware of their situation much earlier they would not have been as blindsided with the huge transition.”

All of the amalgamations reported that they “lost people” as a result of the merger. The responses included, “Members of one of the congregations went elsewhere rather than staying with the course and joining the new congregation.” “There were very few members from the closing church.” “In the end there were only about 10% of the original congregations attending the new amalgamated church.”

Six of the ten congregations claim that an “us” and “them” attitude still resides within the walls of the church. One of the most striking examples of this is captured in the response, “The congregation’s identity is diffused and divided. This attitude has been reinforced by the manner in which the amalgamation was processed.”

Leadership also played a part in how the amalgamation was received and implemented. The data responses included these comments, “Duplicating leadership can also have their challenges; ‘that is my position and I can do it better.’ I believe that when you amalgamate two or more congregations there always seems to be a winner and a loser.” “Those managing the amalgamation were not skilled and knowledgeable enough to carry it through. This has led to a much weakened ministry output.” “It is a fair

deduction that DHQ was not giving strong oversight to this task.” “Neither congregation had leadership with vision.” “One thing that was done right is that the leadership of The Salvation Army chose pastors for the amalgamated church whose desire was to take the broken congregations and seek ways to connect them with the community. Eleven years later the church is a vibrant growing body of believers that seek new and creative ways to connect with community.”

The one piece of data that was most striking to the researcher was that all of the amalgamations were initiated by The Salvation Army without prior consultations with the congregations involved. From the data, all of the congregations were informed that they were going to amalgamate with “Corps X”²⁶ and given the timeline of when that was going to happen. It appears that not all of the congregations thought the amalgamation was a good idea at the time. An example of this is found in these responses, “Both corps involved in the amalgamation need not have been in this place if local and divisional leadership would have made the congregations aware of their need for change and the consequences of not changing.” “There was not much consideration for the previous congregation joining the current congregation. It was a drop and go, for lack of a better term.” “DHQ initiated the amalgamation. The churches felt that they were fine the way they were.”

What kind of beliefs and values are embedded in this data?

An observation that the researcher made from the data indicates that all the congregations followed the decision of The Salvation Army leadership even though they may not have agreed with the decision. None of the congregations indicated that they were given an option as to whether or not they wanted to amalgamate. This indicates to

²⁶ “Corps” is the term used by The Salvation Army to identify that it is a church.

the researcher that it is expected that Salvation Army leadership decisions will be adhered to no matter what.

Another observation from the responses to the questionnaire is that the congregations, after the amalgamation, were given no real direction as to how they could improve their future. One respondent indicated that it is just now, after eight years, that the congregation is finally working on a strategic plan for the future. They replied, “The ministry unit is now intentionally developing the policies, administrative, management and leadership foundations necessary for it to begin evolving into a sustainable and productive entity fulfilling its mission.” Another responded, “I believe both congregations involved feel like they are wandering in the wilderness.”

Another respondent indicated that when their sister congregation moved in they took over all aspects of the church and ran it the way they had always run their church. They wrote, “The other corps was closed and they took over our building and the current corps was asked to join the new corps.” This was a concern for the respondent because throughout the amalgamation process there was little input from the leadership of their church as to how the ministry of the new church was to be carried out.

Is there anything that seems to affirm the beliefs and values of the organization?

Although there does not appear to be a discernible model used in the amalgamation process, it is possible to see the core values of The Salvation Army at work. It can be argued that the core values of: excellence, integrity, relevance, and co-operation are at work in these amalgamations.

The Salvation Army claims that they strive to be the best at what they do which is their core value of excellence. By amalgamating congregations they are trying to improve the ministry effectiveness of those congregations so that they can be better than they currently are. It is the desire of The Salvation Army that all of their congregations be healthy and viable while striving to be all that God intends them to be. Churches that are facing closure have not met that ideal so amalgamation is one way to help the churches get back to a level of excellence that they have not seen in some time.

The amalgamations can also be said to reflect integrity because all of the mergers were done for financial reasons. The Salvation Army is very cognizant of financial issues as it relates to the use of public money. Their website states, “The Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code reinforces The Salvation Army’s commitment to high standards of accountability. The Code represents a set of standards to help manage and report charitable activities responsibly. By adhering to these standards, The Salvation Army is complying with generally accepted practices for soliciting and managing donor dollars.”²⁷ However, congregations do not receive public money raised by The Salvation Army; publicly raised money is used to “to serve more than 1.8 million people every year”²⁸ through their social work ministries. Salvation Army congregations are to be supported by the members of the congregation. So joining two struggling congregations actually shows accountability and the proper stewardship of limited resources.

The Salvation Army has dedicated resources to help congregations with ideas for relevant ministry. This indicates that it is their desire that all their congregations do whatever is necessary to make their ministry relevant in their context. There is a web

²⁷ The Salvation Army, “Fundraising Ethics,” lines 12–6.

²⁸ The Salvation Army, “Fundraising Ethics,” line 3.

page, saResources.ca, that can be accessed by all congregations and there is a Corps Ministries Department at the Territorial Headquarters with staff who can help congregations in a wide variety of areas and for all ages. A belief in the ongoing pursuit of relevance through innovation and effectiveness can also be reflected in amalgamations. The churches are amalgamated to prevent their closure so it stands to reason that The Salvation Army wants the new church to do whatever it can to not reach the same place again. They want the new church to be relevant within their community.

Finally, the core value of co-operation and the fostering of teamwork and partnerships are definitely evident in the amalgamations. Amalgamations are all about teamwork as two or more congregations seek ways to effectively merge their ministries. Part of the amalgamation is the sharing of resources which includes the partnerships each congregation has made with other churches and organizations within the community.

Is there anything that challenges the beliefs and values of the organization?

The researcher can identify two core operational values that appear to have been lacking in the amalgamation of the congregations being researched. Those two core values are compassion and respect. The data indicated that there were people who left the merged congregations because of a sense that they were not welcome in the new church. One response indicated that, "Some congregation members now attend different churches. Maybe because they were outcast of the family and not welcomed properly." The perception of the respondents is that the amalgamations were conducted in a very cold and uncaring manner which also indicates a lack of compassion. They speak of being "uninformed," "drop and go," "weakened in its trust," and a "dictatorial approach to management."

This perceived, or real, lack of compassion has fostered a lack of respect with some of the people within the congregations and amongst the congregational leaders. The data showed that there was a pervasive attitude of disrespect towards The Salvation Army leadership for their decision to amalgamate the congregations. Much of this dissent can be seen in comments about not being more involved in the process, such as “divisional leadership making the people aware,” “people were not properly informed,” “there was no buy in by the church,” and “there was no consultation and they waited until there was a crisis before acting.” Although The Salvation Army leaders probably had the best intentions in suggesting the amalgamations, the hierarchical leadership style of the organization added to the resentment because congregations believed that they had no choice in the matter.

Where do you see God in the data?

Of the ten responses, only two specifically mention being a part of God’s mission in their community. One indicates “A new vision was cast and presented to the leadership team and then to the members of the congregation. The vision was very intentional about being involved in God’s mission in the community.” The other comment said, “We have added about 55 new people since moving to this location. We still have some new people exploring and checking us out and while it has the appearance of some negative side effect we still believe it has been a good move from a kingdom perspective.”

Only two of the ten respondents thought about the theological implications of their amalgamation. The other eight responses were more concerned with the pragmatics of the amalgamation and did not give any theological rationale for their actions.

What learning might you be keen to draw from this material for the people involved in the organization?

From the data it appears that one theme is represented in all the responses – the need for better communication and communication that is done sooner in the process. The respondents wanted to be informed of their situations sooner and they wanted to have a dialogue about the process that was going to take place.

Also, there was no clearly defined amalgamation process that was followed from start to finish, at least not one that any of the respondents could articulate. Further to this point, while the perceived outcomes of the amalgamation was that the new churches would have an increased awareness of their mission and find ways to make that mission a reality, there was little indication that theological thinking played any part in the amalgamation process. The organization also needs to carefully consider the leadership selected to implement their amalgamations to make sure they have the necessary skills required to bring the process to a successful conclusion.

What actions would you be keen to take forward?

There is a definite need for an amalgamation model that is universal and easy to follow so that everyone can use it. This model needs to include the ability for the proposed congregations to interact with each other and Salvation Army leadership and to opt out of the process if they so desire. The proposed model also needs to address why the congregations were in a position of instability and to help them to effectively move toward sustainability.

The model needs to be theological throughout so that all involved will have a clear understanding of what the church should be doing and why. Congregations do not

form for financial reasons; they form for mission, specifically God's mission in the world. The *missio Dei* must be the reason that drives the congregations to greater outcomes than what they experienced before the amalgamation.

Phase 5

Having completed the data analysis and the early stages of reflection on the data, this phase begins the theological reflection on the research. The researcher reflected on the questionnaire data "in order to tease out the operant theology it disclosed."²⁹ As a result, six themes emerged: A Community Church; Commitment to Church; Stewardship; Theology of Change; Where is Mission?; and Theology of Leadership. The following are some of the highlights from the data that are related to these six themes around the subject of amalgamation.

A Community Church

The phrase "community church" was used by the respondents to either describe their church as it is now or how it is not a community church after the amalgamation. It appears that the desire that the new church be a transforming influence in the community is present in all of the responses but not all of the congregations have achieved the goal of becoming a community church. It is unclear what each congregation would consider to be a definition of "community church" and if that definition was constant across all of the amalgamated churches.

A clear understanding of what it means to be a community church is required. Is a community church simply a name that we give the church to make it seem friendly or does the term imply much more? Robert Lewis reminds us, "Every community has a

²⁹ Cameron, *Talking about God*, 113.

story. A unique story. And that particular context must be thoroughly understood and considered by any church wanting to make an impact on its community in a meaningful way.”³⁰ So to be a community church means that the church has an understanding of its context and, as Needham states, “the church is called into the world to celebrate God’s redemptive presence in the common life and to be a transforming fellowship through which he can demonstrate the power of God unto salvation.”³¹

It can be said that all churches are “community churches” in so far as they find themselves as part of a community. However, Posterski and Nelson tell us that many Canadian churches function “with indifference to the context around them and end up sub communities in their neighborhoods.”³² It is these churches that fail to realize that being a transforming influence in the community is exactly what the Gospel is all about and that it is “central to the Kingdom Jesus announced.”³³

Miroslav Volf asserts that an individual works for themselves, for the community and for God. It can be said that the church also works for the same reasons. So when Volf writes, “When we work for the well-being of communities, our work acquires a richer texture of meaning than when we work for ourselves. Our work can find its ultimate meaning when, in working for ourselves and for community, we work for God.”³⁴ We can translate that to be speaking of the church as well. Congregations that wish to be true community churches need to believe that they are called to God’s mission in the context in which they find themselves.

³⁰ Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 190.

³¹ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 36.

³² Posterski, *Future Faith Churches*, 182.

³³ Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 101.

³⁴ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 33–4.

Commitment to the Church

All of the respondents indicated that they had “lost people” as a result of the amalgamation. The reasons for people leaving the churches were varied but all of the reasons point to the people not wanting to commit to the church during the transition that is present in every amalgamation process. One response indicated that there was a “lack of buy in” by many people within his congregation pre-amalgamation and that those people eventually left the church, and in some cases they left The Salvation Army because of the amalgamation.

It is apparent that the espoused theology of The Salvation Army includes the importance of the church in the community as reflected by the fact that these churches were amalgamated rather than closed outright. In the book, *Servants Together: Salvationist Perspectives on Ministry*, we read, “Paul’s plea in 2 Timothy is to ‘Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus’ (2:3). The community of soldiers is prepared to endure hardship and to share that hardship in battle for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom. A community of soldiers is a community of commitment where we are prepared to give up ourselves, our own security and health, even our own lives to fight evil and win the battle for Christ.”³⁵ These comments suggest that the “soldier” in The Salvation Army should be committed to the church regardless of the hardships the church, and the soldier, are facing. Total commitment to the church was not evident in any of the churches in this research. Is this ideal unrealistic?

Eddie Gibbs’ research has concluded that, “Bureaucracies can no longer depend on the loyalty of congregations to maintain them.”³⁶ Gibbs believes that hierarchical

³⁵ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 25.

³⁶ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 73.

church structures, like The Salvation Army's, are finding it difficult to "maintain institutional integrity and to continue to recruit quality leadership."³⁷ He goes on to say that the hierarchical systems are tearing apart at the seams which require urgent repairs and patching to keep the system in place. But Gibbs is in agreement with The Salvation Army's understanding of commitment to the church. He writes, "The challenge facing the church is to move its members from a casual and contractual relationship to a covenant. A covenantal relationship entails a commitment to one another through thick and thin."³⁸

Volf adds to this with his comments about the ecclesiality of the church, "[t]wo conditions of ecclesiality emerge from the church's status as a congregation assembled in the name of Christ. First is the faith of those who are assembled. Without faith in Christ as Savior, there is no church. The second condition of ecclesiality associated with assembling in the name of Christ is the commitment of those assembled to allow their own lives to be determined by Jesus Christ."³⁹

While total commitment to the church is the preferred ideal it may be an unattainable goal in a culture that is accustomed to a smorgasbord of options to choose from.

Stewardship

All of the amalgamations reflected in this research entered into the merger to alleviate financial burdens and the possible closure of the church due to lack of resources. All of the respondents wanted to be good stewards of the finances of the church which they see as an important aspect of the church. This understanding that it is important to be good stewards with the resources God has provided caused some to be perplexed that

³⁷ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 71.

³⁸ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 152.

³⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 147.

the amalgamation did not have the desired effect of easing the financial burden. Some of the respondents believed that the individual congregations could have eliminated their financial concerns without amalgamation. Stewardship was not restricted to finances in the responses as some indicated the desire for proper stewardship of property as well. One of the amalgamations was between a church that was “people rich” but “building poor” with a congregation that was “people poor” but “building rich” and how it was appreciated that they could be good stewards in this way.

Many congregations want to contribute to the betterment of society and they see it as God’s purpose for their church, but they are stifled with limited resources to accomplish the task. These congregations have had to develop creative ways to fulfill their mission on a limited budget. Paul MacLean is the executive director of *Potentials*, a unique Canadian ecumenical centre for the development of ministry and congregations. He writes that a number of urban congregations faced with limited resources have addressed these issues and have refused to focus exclusively on their own survival. “They have engaged in serious discernment of their vision, reconsidered their assets, and entered into creative amalgamations with other congregations or partnerships with outside organizations.”⁴⁰

Maclean makes an interesting point as he outlines the path these congregations took on their way to better stewardship of their funds. He said the first item they addressed was a “serious discernment of their vision.”⁴¹ The congregations that MacLean was working with started by looking at their vision and discerning as to whether or not they were focused on what they saw to be their mission. Kennon Callahan writes,

⁴⁰ MacLean, “Can Religious Communities Contribute to the Health of the City?,” 59.

⁴¹ MacLean, “Can Religious Communities Contribute to the Health of the City?,” 59.

“Churches that have been effective in missional outreach have tended to identify very specific human hurts and hopes with which they have shared their principle leadership and financial resources.”⁴² By focusing on the church’s vision, it allows the congregation to see where their resources can best be used. Perhaps the church has exceeded their vision and is trying to do too much and therefore they need to focus on only one, two or three objectives. Callahan continues, “More often than not, the reason the congregation does not have enough money is that it has not effectively delivered substantive mission in that community. It has become preoccupied with maintenance and forgotten mission.”⁴³

It is only after a serious consideration of vision has occurred and the resources are evaluated that a plan to move forward can be established. It is possible that the church can survive with its limited resources by focusing their mission on specific and concrete goals. However, it may be necessary to explore other options, like amalgamation, to accomplish the mission of the church.

Theology of Change

The data showed overwhelmingly that the people did not like change. This was evident, as an example, in one response which commented that the new church kept all the programs from both congregations so they could minimize the change the people experienced. The dislike of change was also listed as a factor of why some people left the churches. It does not appear that many of the new churches changed the “style” of the church after the amalgamation preferring instead to keep the same style of worship and ministry that the people were used to in their churches prior to amalgamation. One respondent whose church did change the style of the church from a more “traditional”

⁴² Callahan, *Twelve Keys*, 1.

⁴³ Callahan, *Twelve Keys*, 111–2.

form to a more “missional” form made this comment, “People hate change. The changes were definitely difficult but in the end they discovered that change brought new life to their once dead church and that was exciting for them.”

Amalgamation is all about change and it can’t be avoided; therefore it has to be managed. An understanding of the theology of change will assist the leaders and the congregants through this difficult time. The congregation needs to see why change is necessary, what isn’t going to change, what must change and they need to see a picture of what the change will look like in the end.

Lynn Anderson suggest eight reasons why change is necessary: change or die, change to keep the new generation from leaving, change to keep pace with changing needs and opportunities, change in order to grow, change to effectively reach lost people, change to worship God in the heart language of the day, change to equip people for ministry, and change to maintain excellence.⁴⁴ Any one or a combination of all these reasons can help move a church to another level of mission effectiveness. Without an understanding of why change is necessary, change will not happen because the people will have no reason to change.

For change to be truly effective it must be approached theologically. Lynn Anderson encourages us to remember that “faithfulness to Jesus’ mission requires that we continually come up with new methods to restore people to God.”⁴⁵ Too many changes in the church tend to focus on how to please the people in the church and/or the unchurched in the community rather than on changes that seek to please God. In determining what shouldn’t change, Leith Anderson offers this advice, “The nonnegotiables are directly

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 36–43.

⁴⁵ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 65.

from God and everything else is negotiable. In other words, we should be willing to change the rules and traditions if that will fulfill the mission.”⁴⁶

For change to be truly effective in the church there must be “buy in” from the leadership and the congregation. A clear and concise vision of what the future will look like after the change process is complete will help the congregation follow through on their commitment to the process. It is imperative that the vision of the future is compelling because meaningful change may not occur if “the final description of God’s preferred future is not comprehensive enough.”⁴⁷

Where is Mission?

It was noted that while the responses gave clear answers to how the amalgamation process had affected the church, very few used language related to “mission” even though mission is an important part of Salvation Army theology. There was a lack of sharing how the experience was to improve the overall mission of the church and how the amalgamation was an opportunity to increase the church’s potential to advance the Kingdom of God. There seemed to be a concentration on how this amalgamation was difficult and the dislike of the process without seeing the possible benefits. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of understanding of mission amongst the congregations and the congregational leaders. The second chapter of this thesis addresses the theology of mission and its importance for the church.

Peter Wagner tells us “God wants his Kingdom to come, he wants to see our societies transformed, but he has determined to use us, his people here on earth, to partner

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 168.

⁴⁷ Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change*, 51.

with him in making it happen.”⁴⁸ Mission, specifically God’s mission, is the mandate of the church and needs to be central to all that the church does within its community. A lack of mission awareness by the church will lead to self-serving programs that signal the ultimate death of the church.

Theology of Leadership

The theme of the theology of leadership presented itself in three distinct ways. The first way revolves around the leadership of the congregations – both lay and clergy leadership. The data indicated that leadership made a difference in the amalgamation process. As a representative example, one respondent commented that a lack of good lay leadership and ineffective pastoral leadership contributed to the difficulties that the new church faced after the amalgamation. Another respondent commented that the right leadership, post amalgamation was the reason why the new church was thriving.

The second observation involves the leadership of The Salvation Army in general. All of the amalgamations were initiated by leaders of The Salvation Army and imposed on the various congregations. The congregations represented in this study are from seven divisions from across Canada (no Bermuda amalgamations were used) and across a ten year time span which indicates that there was a number of Salvation Army leaders involved in these decisions.⁴⁹ There are two issues with regards to Salvation Army leadership that is noted by the researcher. The first issue is the hierarchical leadership style employed by Salvation Army leadership that did not appear to be open to any input from the congregations involved in the amalgamations. The second issue is the perceived

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Dominion*, 137.

⁴⁹ It is not known by the researcher how many individuals were involved in the amalgamation processes in this study from Salvation Army Divisional Headquarters. Each decision would have been made by an executive board under the leadership of the Divisional Commander. The numbers of people on the boards vary between divisions and most divisional leaders spend no more than five years in their appointment.

“hands off” approach by the Salvation Army leadership post-amalgamation as indicated by the respondents. This imposition of a directive followed by lack of practical support to accomplish the directive was implied on almost all of the response sheets.

The final observation about the theology of leadership concerns the apparent disrespect of leaders stated and implied in the data. All of the leaders mentioned in the data – lay leaders, pastors and denominational leaders were in some form shown disrespect in their leadership roles. It appears that the operant theology is to have a distrust of leaders, especially denominational leaders.

From its beginnings, The Salvation Army has been a hierarchical structured organization and remains so to this day. However, society today has fragmented into a variety of subcultures and interest groups all with instant access to information from a variety of sources which has led to a questioning of traditional authority. Gibbs says, “Every institution has had to adjust to this new reality, including those that have operated in the past in a hierarchical and authoritative manner.”⁵⁰ As a result of this cultural change, leaders can no longer operate in a command and control manner, but instead Gibbs says that they “have had to learn how to communicate, debate and negotiate.”⁵¹ From the research conducted for this thesis, The Salvation Army leadership failed to communicate effectively and there was no debate or negotiation about the amalgamations that took place.

Phase 6

Reflection leading to renewed theology and practice is the next part of the TAR methodology.

⁵⁰ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 96.

⁵¹ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 96.

It is the opinion of the researcher that there needs to be a concerted effort to revisit the theology of mission within each of the congregations involved in the amalgamation process. Such an endeavor will highlight the need for a critical reflection of the church's own understanding of its calling in the world. God's revelation of his kingdom and his mission in the world seems to be lacking in the operant theology of many of these congregations and has resulted in an uninspired approach to ministry. A renewed emphasis on the theology of mission will result in a reexamination of the global and missiological history of the church in light of Scripture and how The Salvation Army was shaped by these realities. Each of the congregations should agree with Harvie Conn when he states, "The mission of God is our concern; the global mission of the church is our life."⁵²

It is also apparent to the researcher that The Salvation Army needs to develop a model that it can use as a resource to help facilitate the amalgamation of congregations. This model should include components that seek to address the concerns described in the data collected from the amalgamated churches. These include a consultative process between the individual congregations and The Salvation Army leadership, a renewed emphasis on the mission of the church, the effective management of change and the importance of effective leadership to lead the process.

Conclusion

This research has followed the action-reflection cycle that is characteristic of the TAR method of research which involves touching on the four distinct parts of experience, reflection, learning, and action.

⁵² Conn, "Mission, Missions, Theology, and Theological Education," 26.

It has drawn upon the experiences of ten Salvation Army congregations in Canada that have undergone an amalgamation between the years of 2000-2010 through the use of a questionnaire. Those experiences then were reflected upon by the researcher and lead to learning from the formation of themes important to the research. From the themes addressed in the learning stage suggestions were made for renewed action and theology.

If the actions suggested by the researcher were followed, the cycle could continue by drawing upon the experiences of congregations that amalgamated with the new Salvation Army model and so on through the rest of the cycle. The two data sets could be compared to see if there is a difference in the outcomes of amalgamations pre-model and post-model.

Since the development of an amalgamation model is required for the action part of the reflection cycle, this thesis will offer a new model for church amalgamations to be used by The Salvation Army. The first section will address the theological deficiencies and stress the importance of the theology of mission. The second section will assess current amalgamation models to understand their positive characteristics, their negative characteristics and areas where they are similar. This will be done to gain insight and add to the awareness of the proposed model. The second section will also address the issues of leadership and change.

The final section will be the proposed amalgamation model that will be informed by all the information presented in the first two sections.

The overall success of the amalgamation model hinges on whether or not the participating congregations have a clear understanding of the concept of *missio Dei* and the mission of the church. As Hirsch and Frost have clearly stated, “the early church

understood that personal conversion implied the embracing of the *missio Dei* – the redemptive mission of God to the whole world through the work of the Messiah.”⁵³ This must be as true within the church today as it was in the first century if the to be sustainable. Therefore a clear understanding of *missio Dei* and mission theology is needed for congregations considering the amalgamation process.

⁵³ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 16.

Chapter 2

Mission – The Mandate of the Church

In the preceding chapter we considered the data of ten Salvation Army amalgamated congregations using the TAR method of research. In doing so we sought to understand the espoused and operant theology of *The Salvation Army* and how those theologies were expressed in the amalgamated congregations.

All congregations that are considering amalgamating with another church should have an understanding of the Kingdom of God and God's mission in the world so they can fully appreciate the direct correlation between God's mission in the world and the church's mission in their community. In this chapter we will explore the theology of mission with emphasis on the Kingdom of God, the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church. The chapter will conclude with a look at Salvation Army ecclesiology as it relates to mission.

Theology of Mission

The theology of mission is a disciplined study dealing with questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfill God's mission in the world. It involves reflection about God as it seeks to gain an understanding of God's mission, purpose, intentions, and God's plan for humankind in accomplishing his mission.

Theology of mission is a continuous task that seeks to guide the church in the proper direction in its response to the mission that it has been called to. Leslie Newbigin states that all of scripture is "concerned with the completion of God's purpose in the creation of

the world and of man [sic] within the world.”¹ This suggests that theology of mission is reflective and active in nature. Carl Braaten writes, “Mission is understood as the function of the Kingdom of God in world history.”² So to understand mission is to have an understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom of God

It is widely accepted that the central message of the teaching of Jesus is the Kingdom of God.³ However, nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus ever explain what Kingdom of God means nor do we have it recorded of any of the disciples asking what he means when he uses the term Kingdom of God. It seems that Jesus was using a term that was familiar to his audience and according to John Bright, this was indeed the case. He writes, “The Kingdom of God lay within the vocabulary of every Jew. It was something they understood and longed for desperately.”⁴

The Kingdom of God that the Jewish people were longing for was the reality of God’s rule over his people and the vindication of that rule at the end of history. “The concept of the Kingdom of God captures in a single phrase the divine intent to bring all things under his rule, to reconcile all things to himself, to restore that which is fallen and corrupted and to overthrow all powers in opposition to him and his reign of peace, joy and righteousness.”⁵

The Jews were waiting for a Messiah who would establish the Kingdom of God victoriously. They were God’s chosen people, summoned by God’s grace to be his

¹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 34.

² Braaten, *The Flaming Center*, 1.

³ See Needham, *Community in Mission*, 6; Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, 17; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 51; McLaren, *The Secret Message*, 94.

⁴ Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, 18.

⁵ Ott, Strauss, & Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 86.

people, obey his covenant law, and serve him alone. With this concept of a people of God, called to live under the rule of God, begins the notion of the Kingdom of God.

If God is the God of history who works in history, and if he has chosen a group of people to serve his purpose, then surely he will bring that purpose to its conclusion. If the people of God obey this covenant and serve God as he has commanded them, then at some point in the future God's kingdom will be firmly established. "Israel is to be the servant of God, by missionary labor and willing sacrifice to be the agent of establishing his rule to the ends of the earth; she is to bring people of all nations of the earth into the kingdom of God."⁶

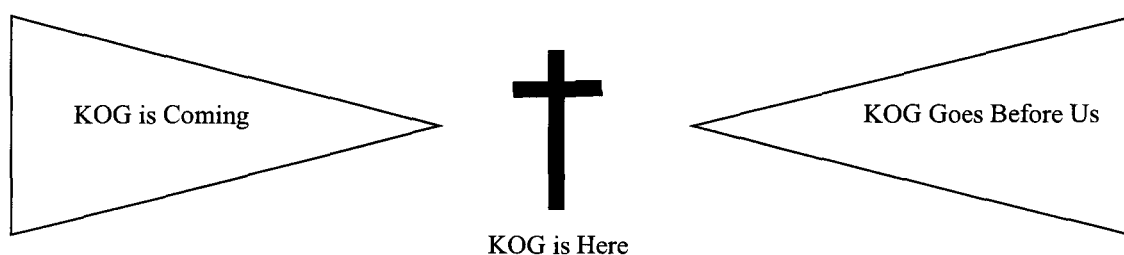
In the midst of God's chosen people are individuals that God uses in special ways to further his kingdom: Noah, Eber, Abram, Isaac, and Jacob are singled out as bearers of God's promise. Out of the twelve tribes of Israel, it is Judah that is chosen and within Judah the task falls to one family as the fountain of blessing. Eventually it is narrowed to one individual, Jesus, who comes to announce the Kingdom of God is at hand. The Kingdom of God is no longer a far off vision or dream it is a current reality that requires a decision as it confronts all people.⁷

Jesus shares the mystery of the Kingdom of God with his disciples and he tells them that not all people will comprehend its meaning. Jesus knew that the Kingdom of God that he was teaching about did not correspond with the Jewish understanding of what the Kingdom would be like and the Gentile listeners would have no comprehension of Kingdom ideology at all.

⁶ Bright, *The Kingdom Of God*, 156.

⁷ See Mark 1:15; Luke 10:23-24; Matthew 11:12-13; Luke 17:21.

By explaining the Kingdom of God to his loyal followers, Jesus is calling the few to share the Kingdom of God with many. The message that Jesus' followers are to share is a radical departure from what was orthodox teaching at the time. The new teaching of the Kingdom is the once eschatological Kingdom of God has become realized and eschatological, present and future at the same time. The progression of how the Kingdom of God was taught can be expressed in the following diagram:



This diagram also demonstrates how the bearers of the truth, those people that God had entrusted with the message of the Kingdom of God, decreased in number as the incarnation approached and that the number of people God entrusted with the message of the Kingdom increased after the resurrection. Therefore it can be said that “the Biblical story moves from the universality of the father’s creation, to the particularity of the son’s incarnation, death, and resurrection and then again to the universality of the Spirit sending God’s people into the entire world to proclaim the message of salvation and the coming Kingdom of God.”⁸

The theme of God’s people being sent out into the world to herald the coming of God’s reign through Jesus Christ is found throughout the New Testament and this mission of the church will continue until the fulfilment of God’s reign. A well-developed

⁸ Ott, Strauss, & Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 61.

theology of mission reflects on God's mission and on the church's response to Christ's gracious call to follow him until the completion of the mission.

Throughout the ambiguities of life and the tribulations of a violent world, the church has been guided by the idea that God is present and acts in love and redemption on behalf of the world. God is a God of mission. The mission of God is a mission of mercy and grace and extends beyond the individual to all communities, to all creation. All God's creation has been touched by this grace and is therefore awaiting transformation.

It is important to recognize that while the church has been permitted to take part in this mission that it is God's mission and it remains God's mission – the *missio Dei*.

missio Dei

The *missio Dei* is God's self-revelation as one who loves the world and is actively involved in and with the world. It is God's activity in the world to bring about his Kingdom; it is God's metanarrative in respect to humanity. This activity is God's mission in his undertaking to bring about salvation to a lost creation and seize it from the clutches of evil. "God is seeking to bring his kingdom, the redemptive reign of God in Christ to bear on every dimension of life within the entire world so that the larger creation purposes of God can be fulfilled – the *missio Dei*."⁹

To say that God is on mission is to say that the Trinity is on mission.

Trinity and the *missio Dei*

Trinity describes "God in mission" as always a God for others; namely, the whole of humankind, the world, and the entire creation. The Trinity is a communion in mission, empowering and accompanying the One who is sent to impact the world through

⁹ Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 85.

transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment. For the ongoing mission of God, the Father and the Spirit send the Son, the Father and the Son breath in the Spirit, and the Son and the Spirit reveal the glory of the Father to the far reaches of the universe.¹⁰ This sending, yet accompanying and empowering, this reaching out for others, and thus the acceptance of vulnerability in love, is characteristic of the Trinity. It is this love that unites the Triune God. This idea is highlighted by Millard Erickson when he states, “Love exists within the content as a binding relationship of each of the persons to each of the others. Indeed, the attribute of love is more than just another factor. The Trinity is three persons so closely bound together that they’re actually one.”¹¹

The Father and *missio Dei*

“According to the classical theological tradition, especially strong in the Eastern fathers, there is an order among the divine persons. The Father is the fountal source, the one principle, exercising what is called monarchy.”¹² While this thesis does not explore the order among the divine persons, it does seek to show the peculiar contributions of each member of the Trinity as it relates to the *missio Dei*. “In this Trinitarian history of the Kingdom of God each person makes his own contribution and has his own history both in relation to the world and in relation to the other persons. All three persons are interdependent in the work of the kingdom.”¹³

The biblical view of God’s mission in creation affirms a relationship between God and the world. God created the world from nothing out of his gracious will. Thus, the world is totally dependent on God who, as the source of all life, sustains, replenishes,

¹⁰ “The sending of the church is intimately linked to the sending activity of the Trinity. It is not by human authority, but through the authority of the triune God who, as Father sends, as Son Redeems, and as Spirit empowers.” Ott, Strauss, & Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 73.

¹¹ Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, 221.

¹² Dulles, “The Trinity and Christian Unity,” 75.

¹³ Olson and Hall, *The Trinity*, 101.

transforms, and renews life in the world. “Friedrich Schleiermacher described the universal feeling of ‘absolute dependence’ on God, and Rudolf Otto spoke of our ‘creature feeling.’ This is not simply a feeling about an event in the distant past called creation of the world. It is a sense of being dependant here and now, always and everywhere, on the power of God.”¹⁴

God has also shared his mission in creation with all people, created in his image to be his co-workers. Women and men, as God’s stewards, are accountable to God for the care of creation. God in grace also sustains the world by working within human institutions and societies. It is the vocation of those who confess God’s name to work in partnership with all people for the realization of God’s purpose of peace and wholeness. This includes work for justice, trust among peoples, responsible use of the earth’s resources, and the proper use of technology for human welfare. The message and reality of creation include also the promise that God will make all things new. The Trinitarian God, therefore, is calling people to participate in mission in creation, which even now, in the midst of evil, anticipates the coming consummation.

Transformation and justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, healing and empowerment, are the signs of the future of the world with God. Christians, in their own contexts, can strengthen these encouraging signs by living lives worthy of the mission God has called them to. They need to sacrifice the comforts of predictability and follow Jesus into the streets of the city; embroiling themselves in the broader social fabric of their communities. Followers of Christ seek to imitate his downward and outward trajectory – giving up their rights to serve others.

¹⁴ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 87.

Jesus and *missio Dei*

Jesus' life, suffering, death, and resurrection reveal God's unconditional love for the world he created. The birth of Jesus means the realization of the most central promise in God's mission: the sending of the Son into the world to save it. In Jesus, God became human in a particular place, time, and culture. He subjected himself to human conditions. He identified himself with people, entering into solidarity with anyone in need. In Jesus, God disclosed the original intention of creation and true humanity. The way of incarnation is a way of transformation and reconciliation which encompasses the *missio Dei*.

In identifying himself with the suffering of people and bearing their sins on the cross, Jesus Christ penetrated into the darkness of human existence and overcame the power of death. The cross of Christ also reveals God's way of solidarity with the excluded and oppressed, as well as a way of protest against injustice and oppression. In reality, in the depths of every oppression and exclusion, as experienced in context, is the crucified Christ. Volf states,

“The sufferings of Christ on the cross are not just his sufferings; they are the sufferings of the poor and weak, which Jesus shares in his own body and in his own soul, in solidarity with them. And since God was in Christ, through his passion Christ brings into the passion history of this world the eternal fellowship of God and divine justice and righteousness that creates life. On the cross, Christ both identifies God with the victims of violence and identifies the victims with God, so that they are put under God's protection and with him are given the rights of which they have been deprived.”¹⁵

Christ's resurrection is the single event that has deeply transformed the world because violence, death, and the terror that its finality brings no longer have the last word. Resurrection opened a new reality of liberation and hope for humankind and the

¹⁵ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 22–3.

whole creation. God is reconciled with humankind and creation through Christ's death and resurrection. God also opened up reconciliation between human beings and between humankind and creation. Moreover, Christ's resurrection reveals the true nature of things as creation itself takes on a new dimension. Every created thing, every moment and event, is pregnant with life-giving potentialities; nothing is allowed to have finality, even would-be "dead ends" are transformed into opportunities for mission. The way of resurrection is a way of transformation and empowerment.

The Holy Spirit and *missio Dei*

God's mission continues in the world through the Holy Spirit. Van Gelder states, "In understanding the *missio Dei*, we find that God as a creating God also creates a church through the Spirit, who calls, gathers, and sends the church into the world to participate in God's mission."¹⁶ The Spirit of God empowered the prophets, descended on Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, indwelt and empowered the first disciples, and sent and equipped the nascent church for its witness. In the same way, the Holy Spirit calls, sends, and enables all of God's people in every age, irrespective of gender and age, for participation in mission. Newbigin, when commenting on the role of the Holy Spirit in mission states "[mission] is continued through the presence and active working of the Holy Spirit, who is the presence of the reign of God in foretaste."¹⁷

It is the Spirit who gathers into one body a new family, a diversity of human beings, breaking the barriers of class, race, gender, and culture. It is not the messengers but the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and injustice, who arouses faith, and who renews God's people for mission, individually and collectively. In the power of the Holy Spirit,

¹⁶ Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 18.

¹⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 118.

the proclaimed Word reaches out and seeks to transform even those who are far from the reign of God – those who oppose, ignore, or distort the gospel. The lasting fruits of mission are the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit enables imperfect human efforts to become instruments of God's mission. The Holy Spirit equips Christians and the whole church with a diversity of gifts (1 Cor.12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4) and equipped with these spiritual gifts, they are able to proclaim the gospel and share the life described by the gospel with all peoples in every place. The Spirit makes the church, imperfect though it is, into a foretaste of the promised age to come.¹⁸

Mission and the Church

So God, in his mercy and grace, has chosen and equipped the church to participate in the *missio Dei* – a mission that will reveal the One who loves and is actively involved in the world.

This mission cannot be thought of as just one aspect of the church's existence, rather, it must be thought of as the essence of the church's life. If the very essence of the church is missionary in nature, then the church that ceases to engage in mission is not just failing to accomplish one of its mandates, it has ceased to be what it was called to be.

The church is a product of God's mission to bring together people from all nations, tribes, and languages. At the same time, the church is a people of mission, sent out into the world to manifest and proclaim the saving grace of God. The church in mission refers to the local assembly of believers participating in God's mission. The church opens itself to include different levels of fellowship, communion, and expressions and it also extends in time to include preceding and succeeding generations. Hunsberger

¹⁸ Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 134.

emphatically states, “Most simply and directly put, it is a church’s mission to represent the reign of God.”¹⁹ And Frost agrees when he writes, “We have known all along that the *raison d’être* of the church is mission.”²⁰

The Trinity, as a community of divine sending, has created a space for the church to take part in God’s mission, to be sent, empowered, and accompanied by grace into the end of the earth. “The sending of the church is intimately linked to the sending activity of the Trinity. It is not by human authority, but through the authority of the Triune God, who as Father sends, as Son redeems, and as Spirit empowers.”²¹ Receiving the church, with all its human frailty, into the divine missional communion shows the depth of God’s love.

The church’s participation in God’s mission, therefore, is a gift of God’s grace, a gift grounded in and flowing from the in-breaking reign of God in Christ. Created out of grace to be part of the divine communion, the church does not live for itself, but for God and for the world. Daniel Migliore in an essay on the work of Jürgen Moltman notes, “For Moltman the goal of mission rightly understood is not the reestablishment of Christianity as the imperial religion, not the universal rule of the church, and not the saving of souls from God’s judgment. Rather, mission is the invitation to life, the invitation to the future of God.”²²

The church that participates in the fulfilment of God’s mission is at that very same moment a clear and visible sign of God’s presence in that place. It is for this reason that congregations cannot abandon their obligation to participate in God’s mission in the

¹⁹ Hunsberger, “The Newbegin Gauntlet,” 15.

²⁰ Frost, *Exiles*, 126.

²¹ Ott, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 73.

²² Migliore, “The Trinity and the Theology of Religions,” 116.

world or de-emphasize theology of mission. Peter Berger contends when churches abandon theology²³ they “give up the intellectual tools by which the Christian message can be articulated and defended. Theology provides criteria by which Christian churches can judge themselves.”²⁴ It is the loss of an understanding of the theology of mission within dying congregations that leads to their un-sustainability as a church.

The church is a community which comes into being in response to the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the one in whom the Kingdom is realized. The church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world. “The church when it is true to its real calling, when it is on about what God is on about, is by far and away the most potent force for transformational change the world has ever seen.”²⁵ This purpose is carried out not by allying with the present world order but by proclaiming and demonstrating the life of the kingdom that is in Jesus and by calling the world to this radical new order. However, the church cannot understand its relationship with the world if it fails to understand its relationship with God and his mission. The early church understood that “personal conversion implied the embracing of the *Missio Dei* – the redemptive mission of God to the whole world through the work of the Messiah.”²⁶

Since participating in mission is not optional for the church, what does that mean for congregations that are not engaged in mission? Are they really the church? It has been stated, “There is no mission apart from God and there is no church without

²³ Berger is speaking of theology in general and not specifically about the Theology of Mission. We read in Bosch that theology has to be missionary or it is not real theology. “Theology, rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*.” And mission is the “mother of theology.” Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 494, 489.

²⁴ Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, 124–125.

²⁵ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 17.

²⁶ Hirsch and Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 16.

mission.”²⁷ This sentiment is shared by Georg Vicedom when he writes, “if the church disassociates herself from this concern of God, she becomes disobedient and can no longer be church in the divine sense.”²⁸ Ott, Strauss and Tennent claim, “the church is not to be understood as an organization with the mission; rather, the church’s very identity is mission. Mission and church are merged into one.”²⁹

Perhaps claiming that churches who are not involved in mission are not really churches is a bit harsh. It is possible that those congregations that have lost their missional focus have not really lost their focus on mission but rather for them mission work was always performed by professional missionaries and was not seen as the responsibility of the local congregation. In the Western world, mission has been perceived as something which is done overseas in places where the Gospel has yet to be heard or is still in its infancy. The role of the church in the Western world was to send missionaries and or resources to accomplish missions abroad.

If this is the case, the words of Loren Mead ring true when he states “the structures designed for one mission do not work in the new mission. The church upside down has not changed its heart. Its focus is still mission, but the mission location has changed.”³⁰ Mead goes on to claim that it is not only the local congregation that has been slow to recognize how mission has changed, local judicatories and denominations have also failed to recognize the change. There was a time in the past when denominational executives and bishops had central leadership roles in the mission of the churches. These bishops and denominational executives were seen to be the mission leaders and it was

²⁷ Cardoza-Ordani, *Mission: An Essential Guide*, 14.

²⁸ Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 6.

²⁹ Ott, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 197.

³⁰ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 59.

their responsibility to motivate, coordinate and focus the local church toward the mission tasks in far off lands. Mead contends, “The excitement and energy that led to building national structures for denominations was fueled by Christendom’s clarity about a far off mission. National and regional structures prove themselves by their ability to bring individuals and congregations to participate sacrificially in mission beyond their borders.”³¹ Mead warns that unless these local denominational leaders “are able to rediscover a central role in mission leadership, it is unlikely that they will again be as influential as they were in past generations.”³²

As the church participates in God’s mission, empowered by the Word and led by the Spirit in the way of Christ, it engages faithfully and purposefully with the challenging contexts of the twenty-first century. Engaging prayerfully with the challenges of its context, the church needs to deepen continuously its theological reflection on the different aspects and dimensions of mission. A continued theological reflection on the praxis of mission and on overarching missiological themes strengthens the church in carrying out its contextual mission.

Rethinking Ecclesiology in Light of the *missio Dei*

Over time the purpose and structure of the typical Canadian church tends to become Church-centred rather than mission centered. To this end we must, as Van Gelder has suggested, “rethink our ecclesiology and the role of the church in the world from the perspective of the *missio Dei*. We need to develop a mission shaped ecclesiology that takes seriously the Kingdom of God and God’s work in the world.”³³

The church that is inward focused is only concerned with what happens within the walls

³¹ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 38.

³² Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 38.

³³ Van Gelder, “Defining the Center – Finding the Boundaries,” 47.

of its building and takes no consideration for the plight of those outside the church.

When the church loses its missionary focus and concentrates solely on the comfort of and the ministry to its members, it is on the slippery slope towards instability and possible closure. The loss and decline in the church should be teaching us, among other things, that what we have been doing no longer works.

There have been numerous attempts by a variety of theologians to reframe ecclesiology in a way that is mission focused. This thesis will look at three such attempts.

Dietterich – A Worshipping People

Inagrace Dietterich claims that a “faithful and effective ecclesiology must begin with the vocation and destiny of the church that is discovered and actualized in worship.”³⁴ She then sketches out an ecclesial paradigm that states that it is through worship that individuals are shaped and formed into a people of the kingdom who are called and equipped to manifest life within the Kingdom of God. Her paradigm is composed of three parts: the people of praise, a particular people, and a kingdom people.

When she speaks about being the people of praise, she sees worship not as an exercise that is inward focused but rather the practice which enables Christians to see the world as the creation of a loving and forgiving God. She states, “In its worship the church rejoices in God’s good creation, acknowledges the fallenness and alienation of the world, celebrates the world’s recreation through the event of Jesus Christ, and in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit experiences the first fruits of the fulfillment of the destiny of the world in the eschaton. The worship of the church truly exists for the life of the world.”³⁵

³⁴ Dietterich, “A Particular People,” 363.

³⁵ Dietterich, “A Particular People,” 364–5.

The second part of her paradigm, “a particular people,” describes people with a distinct identity and vision. She believes that a theological understanding of community that unites the individual to the group can be seen in the doctrine of the Trinity. When God is perceived as being a dynamic community united in a reciprocal communion of life and work, Trinitarian theology becomes a relational theology that explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood, and communal life. “Within this perspective, participation in the community of faith symbolizes and actualizes participation within the communion of the triune God –human persons share in the life of God.”³⁶ So it can be said that Christians are particular people called and formed by a particular God.

The final part of the paradigm claims that the church is comprised of a kingdom people. As kingdom people the church has been entrusted with the good news of God’s kingdom inaugurated in Jesus Christ. The church’s mission is to invite all of humankind into a relationship with Jesus Christ: “to participate in the blessings of the kingdom, to celebrate the hopes of the kingdom, and to engage in the tasks of the kingdom.”³⁷ The church’s mission and God’s mission are the same. Dietterich believes that, “through the creation of a distinct community with its own deviate set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them, the church can offer the world an alternative to its patterns of social order. The mission of the Christian community is to be a sign, foretaste, and instrument of God’s reign.”³⁸

Frost & Hirsch - APEPT

The recent work of Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch offers another paradigm of ecclesiology being missional in nature. It is their belief that existing ecclesial models are

³⁶ Dietterich, “A Particular People,” 366.

³⁷ Dietterich, “A Particular People,” 367.

³⁸ Dietterich, “A Particular People,” 368.

not functioning well and that just tinkering with the existing models will not accomplish the desired results. They advocate a new ecclesiology that incorporates four aspects: missional, incarnational, messianic, and apostolic.

At the forefront of Frost and Hirsch's ecclesiology is that the future church will be a missional church that will "look vastly varied in its many different contexts."³⁹

Although missional congregations may not all look the same, they will all be incarnational. Frost and Hirsch believe that the Incarnation is a fundamental doctrine, "not just as an irreducible part of the Christian confession, but also as a theological prism through which our entire missional task in the world."⁴⁰

When Frost and Hirsch speak of the Incarnation they are referring to that, "act of sublime love and humility whereby God took it upon himself to enter the depths of our world, our life, and our reality in order that the reconciliation and consequent union between God and humanity may be brought about."⁴¹

An emphasis on the Incarnation and its primacy within the missional church has four theological implications concerning God's mission in the world, according to Frost and Hirsch.

1. Identification: The incarnation allowed God to identify with the entire human race. In an act of humility God takes upon himself all the conditions, limitations, each troubles, and doubt of humanity.

"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Phil. 2:6–8

³⁹ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 22.

⁴⁰ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 35.

⁴¹ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 35.

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.” Heb. 5:7–8

2. Locality: The incarnation was not a momentary theophany but was God actually dwelling amongst the people. They outline five ways the incarnation must define and change the way mission is done in any context.

First, the incarnation allows the church to engage in mission and become a “genuine part of a people group without damaging the innate cultural frameworks that provide that people group with a sense of meaning and history.”⁴² Second, incarnational mission will mean that the church will need to identify with the people group in always possible without compromising the truth of the gospel. Third, the church needs to have a “real and abiding incarnational presence among a group of people.”⁴³ This means that the congregation has to ‘live and hang out’ where the people they’re trying to reach live and hang out. Fourth, incarnational mission implies sending rather than attracting. Frost and Hirsch see many current models of ecclesiology as being attractional rather than incarnational in nature; the church wants people to come to them rather than go to the people. Finally, “incarnational mission means that people will get to experience Jesus on the inside of their culture and their lives because of our embodying the gospel in and incarnationally appropriate way.”⁴⁴

3. Messianic: The third aspect of their missional ecclesiology states that it is messianic in character. They believe there’s a need for the recovery of the messianic spirituality that is rooted primarily in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. “Only a

⁴² Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 37.

⁴³ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 39.

⁴⁴ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 40.

messianic spirituality offers us the resources to sacralise the ordinary and to make daily connections between heaven and earth.”⁴⁵ Frost and Hirsch believe the church needs to recover a worldview that awakens their deepest passions and gives it a redemptive framework to give meaning for their activities on God’s behalf – and that comes through the life and teaching of Jesus. They interpret Jesus life as being very attractive spiritually and that it didn’t repulse normal “sinners.” “We partner with God in the redemption of the world. We extend the Kingdom of God in daily affairs and activities and actions done in the name of Jesus.”⁴⁶

4. Leadership: The final part of their paradigm encompasses apostolic leadership. Frost and Hirsch believe that one of the most important aspects needed for new ecclesiology centered on mission is to have a leadership structure to sustain it. The structure that they propose is the fivefold ministry pattern they have called APEPT. “APEPT simply describes the five functions: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher.”⁴⁷ They define these terms as:

- Apostolic function –pioneers new missional works and oversees their development.
- Prophetic function –discerns the spiritual realities in a given situation and communicates them in a timely and appropriate way to further the mission of God’s people.
- Evangelistic function –communicates the gospel in such a way that people respond in faith and discipleship.
- Pastoral function –shepherds the people of God by leading, nurturing, protecting, and caring for them.
- Teaching function –communicates to revealed wisdom of God so that the people of God learn how to obey all that Christ has commanded them.⁴⁸

Although these functions are primary areas of ministry, they are not mutually exclusive. This means that a person who teaches can also lead someone to Christ and one

⁴⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 145.

⁴⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 115.

⁴⁷ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 166.

⁴⁸ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 169.

who operates apostolically may also pastor and teach. All these working together result in the equipping of the church to do the work of ministry and in the maturity of the body of Christ.

Needham – Community in Mission

Salvation Army Theologian Phil Needham in the introduction to his work “Community in Mission” states, “Every Christian generation needs an ecclesiology which is both faithful to the gospel as revealed in the scriptures and attentive to the particular historical context in which it finds itself. Each generation provides its peculiar challenges to the life and the mission of the church.”⁴⁹ Needham develops this Ecclesiology under six headings which he considers to be the essential realities constituting the church:

- Chartered by Christ
- Created by the Holy Spirit
- Called to a journey
- Commission for battle
- Encamped for renewal
- Committed to the future

Needham elaborates on these points by reminding his readers that Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God which he understood to be the establishment of God’s rule in all people. The gospel is the good news that in Jesus this Kingdom is now present and accessible and that all of history is moving towards the full realization of the Kingdom in the future, and that through faith in Jesus Christ all people can enter this Kingdom. This gospel is a starting point for the church. “The church is a community which comes into being in response to the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus the

⁴⁹ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 4.

Christ as the one in whom that Kingdom is realized.”⁵⁰ Since Jesus is the one through whom the Kingdom is entered and realized, it can be said that the church is a community which is chartered by Christ.

Although the church is established as a response to the Kingdom of God, the church is not the Kingdom of God. The church is community which receives and reorders its life in light of the Kingdom but the church is actually created by the Holy Spirit. Needham states, “it is the Holy Spirit who empowers a diverse group of converts to come together into a fellowship that lives redemptively and, by so doing, imitates and illustrates the Kingdom that has, in Christ. Nothing other than Holy Spirit power creates the church.”⁵¹ The church that the Holy Spirit creates has four characteristics: the visible expression of the peace that has been made in Christ, a community of shared life, a high level of participation in the fellowship, and simplicity of life. Needham says that the church is called to demonstrate the “interpersonal and social relationships which are the goal for all of humanity.”⁵² What the Spirit makes possible for the church, God intends for all mankind.

“The Church is a band of pilgrims who are called to separate themselves from the oppressive patterns of the present world order and to keep moving toward the possibilities which the new Kingdom in Christ offers.”⁵³ Needham uses the imagery of pilgrims to depict the church because pilgrims are literally people on a journey and that journey is often in foreign lands. The church is seen: as always moving, as articulating the tentativeness of the church’s relationship to the social structures and behavioral

⁵⁰ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 6.

⁵¹ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 14.

⁵² Needham, *Community in Mission*, 17.

⁵³ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 35.

patterns of contemporary culture, and as moving towards the future. Pilgrims are not tied to the structures and status quo of the society where their pilgrimage is taking place. They value flexibility and are not interested in investing their time in structures that stifle their spiritual creativity; they are always becoming. Needham sees the church as “God’s pilgrim people who are able to fulfill God’s purpose for them in the world because they are not paralyzed by investments in the oppressive patterns and entanglements of the present world order. They are people who are free to move as the Spirit leads.”⁵⁴ The Christian is a pilgrim on a journey from death to life, from darkness to light, but this journey while personal was never meant to be private. The church then is comprised of bands of Pilgrims who are called to move together towards a life that is led by Christ and empowered by the Spirit from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of God. It is important that the church keeps moving.

As this pilgrim church full of pilgrim people is moving it does so for one reason; the reason is mission. “The church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world. This purpose is carried out is not by allying with the present world order but by proclaiming and demonstrating the life of the Kingdom that has come in Jesus and by calling the world to this radically new order.”⁵⁵ Needham now changes the imagery from the church on a pilgrimage to a church at war. “The Church is an army which exists for the purpose of fighting every enslavement to sin, disarming the causes of human oppression, and overcoming obstacles to pilgrimage.”⁵⁶ Understanding the church as missionary army has implications. First the church cannot automatically identify itself with the world or with any particular culture or society. Second, there is no room for

⁵⁴ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 39.

⁵⁵ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 52.

⁵⁶ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 52.

passive membership, “Soldiers cannot only belong; they are either fighting or maintaining readiness for battle –otherwise, they are not really soldiers.”⁵⁷ Thirdly, the church must be both mobile and flexible. Today’s church must be ready, like the first century church, to follow the leading of the Lord. This following often requires new departures, new methods, structural changes, and shifts in emphasis since no two mission fields are the same. A church which is called to do battle must be ready to move out to new battlefields, to survey the terrain and adapt its fighting methods accordingly. “A church, on the other hand, which is committed to ritual battles on outdated battlefields and to the preservation of its own historical structures and methods for the sake of institutional survival, is a church that has lost its capacity to do battle – and hence its missionary purpose.”⁵⁸ Fourth, preparation for battle is the main concern of its internal life. This implies that mission is the dominant and controlling passion of the church and that every aspect of the church’s life is somehow contributing to mission in one way or another. Finally, since the church is an army involved in war, each member must be prepared to lay their life on the line in the fulfillment of the church’s mission. “The mission of the church is based on the gospel. The gospel is the good news announcement of the new situation in Jesus Christ, the Kingdom which is now reality because of his life, death and resurrection. The mission of the church, therefore, is to participate in that reality and give witness to it.”⁵⁹ Needham sees this happening through evangelism and

⁵⁷ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 55.

⁵⁸ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 55.

⁵⁹ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 62.

social action because both can be seen as facilitating the transformations which the reality of the Kingdom makes possible.⁶⁰

To continue the military motif as it relates to mission, no army can fight all the time; a time must be set aside for the troops to resupply, train, and renew their strength for future battles. To say that the church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world does not mean that there is less importance placed on the fellowship of believers that gather together. Needham states that, “The church is a gathered community in which the missionary people of God encourage one another’s spiritual growth and equip one another for mission.”⁶¹ The gospel that is preached to the world is the same gospel that forms the life of the believer. As the individual receives the gospel and is transformed by it he/she become the missionary people of God. These individuals then seek to fulfill the church’s mission in their community. The fellowship and the mission of the church are two parts of one whole –each needs the other for the successful fulfillment of the church’s mission. “Fellowship without mission dies of spiritual suffocation. Mission without fellowship dies of spiritual starvation.”⁶² To accomplish this, Needham lists two basic ministries that the church needs: the ministry of encouragement and the ministry of equipping. The local congregation that gives priority to mission must take special care to nurture itself and build the fellowship otherwise missionary vitality will be lost.

The final part of Needham’s ecclesiology concerns itself with eschatology. He believes that “the church is the eschatological community that prays for the coming

⁶⁰ Evangelism is concerned with personal transformation and is the announcement of the Kingdom’s presence in the invitation to citizenship within the Kingdom. Social action also announces the Kingdom’s presence but it is concerned with socio-economic transformation for which the presence calls. Both ways of witnessing are needed if the mission of the church is to be accomplished.

⁶¹ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 75.

⁶² Needham, *Community in Mission*, 76.

Kingdom and lives in the light of its dawning.”⁶³ The missional church is the church of the future whereas the traditionalist church is the church of the past. The congregation that no longer engages in mission settles for the preoccupation of maintaining traditions that have nothing to do with the purpose and calling of the church. “The church’s enduring tradition is mission; it is a dynamic tradition that challenges the church courageously to open itself to God’s future, as did the ‘cloud of witnesses’ who went before. The missionary church looks backward so that it can confidently step forward.”⁶⁴ The church is a community of believers who are committed to and moulded by God’s future; the church is a colony of hope in a world of despair. Only the church of the future can point the world towards a future, therefore, the future dominates the life of the church. What the church is at this moment in time can only be understood in relation to what it is becoming. What the church does at this moment can only be understood in relation to its future in mission. Needham claims that “the church is not called to live in the future but rather to let the future live in the present.”⁶⁵ The church is not called to cut off all ties with the past and rush headlong into the future but rather it is to claim the future as the fulfillment of what God has promised and made possible in the past. By doing this the church takes its future seriously and allows the future to shape the way its style and structure take shape.

The church of the future that is a colony of hope will see all their decisions and actions focusing on the culmination of the Kingdom of God. “In *this* Kingdom the church finds its hope, and therefore its security. In *this* Kingdom it invests all its resources. In *this* Kingdom it finds the worthwhile treasures of the heart and the strength

⁶³ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 91.

⁶⁴ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 91.

⁶⁵ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 98.

to divest itself of the corruptible.”⁶⁶ The church of the future overcomes cultural, social and economic barriers to fellowship in Christ by opening itself to the poor, opening ministry and leadership to women within the fellowship, and opening itself to children. The church of the future moves forward in mission with urgency, patience, and optimism. A church of the future calls for “missionary pragmatism that continually reshapes the structure of the church in preparation for the Kingdom’s coming.”⁶⁷

Needham provides the espoused theology of The Salvation Army as it relates to ecclesiology. He proclaims that Salvation Army congregations are to be missional in their “being” and “doing.”⁶⁸

If all Salvation Army churches adhered to this theology, there would be no need for any discussions about revitalization of churches or amalgamations. However, there are Salvation Army congregations that have failed to be true to their missional ethos and have not connected mission and practice which has resulted in some of those congregations knocking on death’s door wondering what to do next. For some of these congregations amalgamation will be an option that presents itself and the proposed model of this thesis will help the people proceed through the process in an organized and easy to follow fashion.

Conclusion

Mission must be at the centre of all endeavours the church engages in. For the purpose of this thesis, no church should enter into an amalgamation unless it has a

⁶⁶ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 99.

⁶⁷ Needham, *Community in Mission*, 110.

⁶⁸ “The mission of the church in the world is the servant people of God actively moving forward to the future of the world by giving themselves. They give themselves wherever their service can bring liberation and wholeness and thus witness to the coming Kingdom.” Needham, *Community in Mission*, 113.

thorough understanding of what mission is and how the church can engage in mission within their community.

The theology of mission is meant to guide the church in the proper direction toward the divine mission they have been called to. Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God and he sent his followers out to proclaim the Kingdom of God,

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'
Luke 10:8–9

God's people are sent into the world to announce the coming of God's reign through Jesus Christ; they were sent out during the first century and they are still being sent out in the twenty first century. The church is part of God's universal redemptive mission in the world.

Since God is a God of love (1 John 4:16; John 3:16; Titus 3:3–7) all of his actions and attitudes towards his creation are motivated by love. His love is the motivation of all his redemptive plans and activities. Therefore, the primary motivation for his redemptive love in the Old Testament is the same primary motivation of the universal Christian mission in the New Testament. The *missio Dei*, expressed through all three persons of the Trinity, is God's redemptive activity in a world that he loves. Allowing the church to participate in the *missio Dei* is God's love in action for the church and it is an invitation that should not be refused.

But how does a church that has not been faithful in their mission, and perhaps has no clear understanding of what their mission is, faithfully participate in the *missio Dei*? The three ecclesial missional models that were discussed in this chapter are excellent starting points and would move any church towards a truly missional mindset.

Dietterich's model focuses on what she believes to be the prime vocation of the church – worship. She believes that it is through the worship of a loving and holy God that people are prepared to enter into effective mission. The follower of Christ follows a three part path on their way to mission readiness. First, in worship they experience the vastness of God and his love and forgiveness which allows the person to see all that God has done for his creation. Next, the individual having experienced worship sees that God has a place for them in his redemptive plan for the world. Finally, as individuals gather they become a kingdom people that are entrusted with the Good News of God's Kingdom. It is the church's responsibility to share that Good News within their community.

Frost and Hirsch's missional model has many more "working parts" than Dietterich's model. They believe that it is not productive to add "missional" parts onto an existing ecclesial model but rather a whole new ecclesiology is required if the church seeks to accomplish its mission. All churches that follow Frost and Hirsch's model will have four distinct features: they will be missional, they will be incarnational, they will be messianic and they will be apostolic. Missional means that they will all look vastly different because each church is located in a different context and should reflect that context. Incarnational means that the congregation identifies with the context and is located in the context. Messianic refers to the emphasis on messianic spirituality rooted primarily in the life and teaching of Jesus. And apostolic refers to the fivefold leadership structure of apostolic leaders, prophetic leaders, evangelistic leaders, pastoral leaders, and teaching leaders. Each of these will help the church to accomplish its missionary task in the community.

The final missional model discussed was Needham's community in mission model. Needham's ecclesiology shares six functions he considers essential for the church. A church is: chartered by Christ, created by the Holy Spirit, called on a journey, commissioned for battle, encamped for renewal and committed to the future. Since this thesis is focusing on Salvation Army amalgamations, Salvation Army theologian Phil Needham's missional model will be used in the proposed amalgamation model.

To this point this thesis has studied the amalgamations of ten Salvation Army congregations using the TAR methodology. The data indicated a lack of theological rationale for the amalgamations represented. Next the thesis discussed the theology of mission as the purpose of the church and therefore the theological rationale that should be at the heart of amalgamating churches. Three different missional models were considered with Needham's model chosen for use in the proposed amalgamation model.⁶⁹

The following chapter will compare three existing amalgamation models to determine their strengths, apparent weaknesses and any synergy they have with each other.

⁶⁹ Needham's missional model was chosen because the proposed amalgamation model has been formatted for use by *The Salvation Army*. However, any of the other models discussed in this thesis or other missional ecclesiastical models not covered in this thesis, could be substituted within the proposed amalgamation model for use outside of *The Salvation Army*.

Chapter 3

Current Amalgamation Models under Review

In many communities churches are at risk and there is a need for them to ask the question “What is God calling us to do in this place?” This question is of great significance and is the core question for ministry. During the birth or redevelopment of a congregation this question can anchor the church with a growing sense of promise, hope, and enjoyment. This is also the question that congregations ask in a time of crisis such as when congregational viability seems to be threatened. Church consultant Alice Mann states, “Unless a congregation reconnects faith with context in a fresh and powerful way, no strategy, structure, or program will make much difference in its long-term viability.”¹

When a congregation that has seen their viability threatened seeks to answer the question of what God wants them to do in their community a variety of options are available to them. The congregation could continue their present ministry and their present location with the hope that their situation will turn around. The congregation could arrange to share facilities with another congregation alleviating some financial stress. The congregation could relocate their church to a growing area of the community with the idea of attracting new families. A congregation could also consider merging with another congregation or they could just close their doors.

Amalgamating two or more congregations can be a way to end the final chapter of those congregations and to begin life in a new congregation. Amalgamation should never be viewed as a last ditch effort to keep the struggling congregation open. Rather

¹ Mann, *Can Our Church Live?*, 62

amalgamation should clearly be the result of the congregations discerning what God is calling them to be and to do.

The merging of congregations might seem to be a simple matter of meeting together and working out some arrangements that will make them one church. The reality is that amalgamations are hard work that involves dealing with a number of underlying issues, emotions, and practical problems. Because of this, congregations investigating the possibility of merging should employ an amalgamation model that will help them through the process. In this chapter we will examine three current models available to congregations to determine the inherent strengths, weaknesses, and synergy between them.

Alice Mann – Pathways in Changing Times

The first model under consideration is by Alice Mann in a publication entitled “The Smaller Congregation –Pathways in Challenging Times” which gives five options that the smaller congregation should consider. The second option she lists is to “merge with other congregations.”

Mann articulates the various forms that a merger can take:

- Absorption –a congregation closes their doors and their assets (i.e. People and resources) are brought to a more sustainable congregation, “one with a more robust institutional life, more viable programs, and an atmosphere of vitality.”²
- Continuation merger –two or more struggling congregations decide to combine their efforts. This type of amalgamation is often prompted by the denomination because “from their regional perspective they can see how

² Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 13.

much it costs to maintain those separate facilities and staffs, and they can imagine what might be possible if the resources were pooled to build a stronger, more appealing program.”³

- Restart or rebirth merger –the emphasis in this type of merger is less on continuity with the past than on “creating something new, fresh, and different.”⁴

Regardless of what form the merger takes, Mann states there are seven steps to consider in creating an effective merger.⁵

The first step is to explore all other options first. Amalgamations bring dramatic and in some ways traumatic change. People will ask, “Why do we have to do this?” so the congregations involved need to make a list with as many options as possible available to them and explore each option with care before narrowing down the list. Some of the options Mann suggests including are: merging, clustering, moving to a new location, a change of clergy and lay leadership, closing the doors now, and continuing on the same path.

Step two is to assess our own strength and liabilities as a potential merger partner. If after careful consideration and deliberation the merger option is chosen, a careful Self-Evaluation needs to be conducted. The questions that need to be answered include:

- What is our financial reality?
- What kind of leadership is required?
- How healthy are the patterns and dynamics of our congregational life?
- What would a merger mean to current staff and lay leaders?⁶

³ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 13.

⁴ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 14.

⁵ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 16–19.

After an honest profile has been completed by each congregation, they can move on to step three which is to create a merger exploration committee. The purpose of this committee, in each congregation, is to “assess compatibility with potential partners and to bring back a recommendation about whether to start any formal merger negotiations.”⁷

The fourth step in the process is to negotiate the merger with each congregation having a negotiating committee. It is at this stage that guidelines for effective communication must be established (i.e. What will be communicated? When will it be communicated? How will it be communicated?) and the merger proposal will be created.

Step five is the discussion and deliberation of the merger proposal by each congregation. Mann encourages that the deliberation process should be very well defined with a:

- “A clear beginning, where the proposal is presented and explained thoroughly. This probably needs to happen several times as that as many members as possible hear directly from the negotiating team. At the same time, a full printed information should be circulated, so that the people who miss the presentations can see clearly what is being considered.”⁸
- A clear middle that Mann describes as, “a period of time when each congregation can live with the proposal and discuss it in an orderly way.”⁹
- A clear ending when a vote will be taken. The date for the vote, who will participate, and what the procedure will be should be established at the beginning. Also it is best for the participating congregations to deliberate

⁶ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 18.

⁷ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 18.

⁸ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 18.

⁹ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 19.

on the same day in order to ensure that each party reaches its own conclusion.

Setting a date for the change to take effect is step six. It is important to leave a period of time between step five and step six for both the emotional and technical work to be completed. At the emotional level, the congregations need a way to discuss and reflect upon the outcome of the deliberations and began the grieving/healing process. And all mergers there will be legal articles to draft and other kinds of business to be completed prior to the new church commencing.

The seventh and final step is to have a well-planned weekend of special events to celebrate and implement the change.

Alice Mann concludes by offering some final thoughts on the merger process. She says, “It helps to have one or more outside resource people working with the congregations throughout the process. And second, a merger proposal rejected is not automatically a failure. If a merger resolution fails in one or more congregations, there may still be significant forms of cooperation that can go forward, powered by the vision and the new relationships that have been established during the process.”¹⁰

Mariko Yanagihara – And Two Shall Become One

The second document to be examined is entitled “And the Two Shall Become One – a Resource on Church Mergers” written by Rev. Dr. Mariko Yanagihara for the Presbyterian Church USA. Dr. Yanagihara’s model involves the congregations interested in a merger to ask and answer a series of questions. He states, “I have come to the conclusion that church mergers are a lot of hard work, but they can produce fruitful results. A merged congregation can generate new life and energy toward spreading the

¹⁰ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 19.

message of Jesus Christ.”¹¹ However, this can only happen when everyone involved is willing to let go of their former identities and control and allow God to help reshape and form them into a new church.

The first question the congregation needs to answer is “Is church merger right for us?” Each congregation must take a hard look at who they are and what vision they have for themselves as a church. “The congregations also need to assess their motivation, readiness, willingness, and suitability for merger. All alternatives to merging should be explored.”¹² Yanagihara suggests that the following questions be asked by each congregation:

- Who are we now? This is to determine the history of the church, its hopes, dreams, and vision, its strengths and weaknesses, its financial situation, its current attendance at worship and whether there has been growth or decline over the years. It also forces the church to examine if they reflect the composition of the surrounding community.
- Why do we want to consider a merger? The congregation must clearly understand the reason behind considering a merger so they can determine whether or not the reason is valid.
- What characteristics do we have that would contribute to a successful merger? Each congregation is special in their own way and they have gifts and abilities that can be used in a successful merger. But other questions need to be explored pertaining to the nature of the congregation: Are we willing to take risks and be open to change? Can we share power,

¹¹ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 2.

¹² Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 3.

leadership, and decision-making? Are we spiritually and financially healthy? Can we be patient, flexible, and willing to compromise? Are we willing to form new relationships? Do we have enough time and energies to devote to a merger?¹³

- How compatible are we with the other church? No two churches are like even if they are in the same denomination. This should be a consideration in the merger process as they ask the questions: Are the churches theologically similar? What is the form and style of worship of the church? What expectations and members have other pastor? What kinds of programs exist in the church? Do the churches have a similar commitment to the denomination?¹⁴

The second important question that congregations must answer is “What alternatives do we have if we decide not to merge?” Yanagihara suggests that there may be other possibilities the churches may want to consider. These include, but are not limited to: sharing facilities, yoking with another church, moving, buying new property, changing leadership, closing, and changing mission focus.¹⁵

The third question asks “What should we do if we are interested in merging?” The answer to this question comes in three parts. First, a leadership team should be formed including equal representation of key leaders from both churches. Second, there needs to be initial exploratory meetings so that the congregations can be “involved in a spiritual discernment process to determine if they should merge with another congregation.”¹⁶ By

¹³ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 3.

¹⁴ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 4.

¹⁵ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 4.

¹⁶ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 5.

the end of this initial exploration congregations should have enough information in order to proceed or not proceed with the merger process. Thirdly, if the two churches in the merger are from different cultures then skills need to be developed for effective intercultural communication and interaction.

“What do we do now that we want to merge?” is the fourth question that needs to be answered. Once the commitment is made to merge by both congregations, a committee of people from both churches are needed to go through what Yanagihara calls a “Pre-merger laundry list,” to help congregations through this transition phase. The items on the laundry list include:

- New name –until a new name is selected, the congregation cannot change any of its legal documents.
- Mission and vision –formulate a mission statement for merged church, establish short term goals, and recommendations for post-merger planning and follow-up.
- Personnel –determine staffing needs for the new church, make recommendations regarding the funds needed for new staffing arrangement, and work on pastoral position changes.
- Facilities and property –locate and acquire new buildings if needed or make modifications or repairs the need to take place in current buildings before merger and inventory property and acquire or dispose of property as needed.
- Worship services –determine the time and number of worship services each Sunday, and reapply in order service, type of music, liturgy, and the

frequency of communion. Work on the plans for the last worship services as separate churches and the first joint worship service.

- Programs and classes –review and make recommendations regarding programs, fellowship groups, and classes.
- Finance –review financial policies and procedures of the merge church and create a joint budget.
- Administrative –set the date of the congregational meeting to vote on the merger, plans for the officers and determine nomination process for future classes of officers, restructure or eliminate other church committees as needed, and hire legal help is needed.
- Celebration –plan for worship service, program, meal, and publicity of merger.

The final phase of the merger process involves a congregational meeting to approve the plan of the union, a Presbytery meeting to dissolve each congregation and establish a new congregation, and a celebration to celebrate the new merger. There are a number of administrative loose ends that need to be addressed such as opening new bank accounts, new articles of incorporation, statement by domestic non-profit, tax related documents and notifications, review or modification of insurance policies, CCLI license, new bylaws, new stationary and any reporting needed for denominational purposes.

Yanagihara closes this resource with the following words, “Church merges are very humbling experiences. Whether we are expecting it or not, mergers challenge the very core of our faith. With the right kind of attitude, openness, flexibility, a good sense of humor and a deepening faith, mergers can be the beginning of an amazing journey. In

the midst of pain and frustration are many opportunities of joy and grace made possible through Christ!”¹⁷

Paul Drazen – Finding the Right Fit

The final model that this thesis will explore has been prepared by Rabbi Paul Drazen for The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism entitled “Finding the Right Fit.” Drazen believes that there are many reasons why congregations would consider the option to merge. These reasons include similar congregations that are facing similar issues of demographics and location and they wish to create a single more viable congregation. Another scenario is a weaker congregation joining forces with a stronger congregation as a way to continue the fellowship. A third possibility is complementary congregations with different strengths and challenges wanting to create a better and well-rounded community. He goes on to say, “Whatever the reason might be, merging congregations is a challenge.”¹⁸ Drazen’s document leads the congregation through five sections that need to be considered if they are interested in merging with another congregation.

The first section is entitled “A Valuable First Step” which addresses the most basic question: “Why are we considering a merger?” The congregation must answer this question before beginning a search for merger partner or if a partner has appeared. There are a number of reasons why a congregation might consider a merger as an option. For example, perhaps the congregation has become too small and it has become difficult to maintain it in a fashion that the members are accustomed to. Maybe the congregation is burned out or perhaps no one lives near the current location or there is a lack of a Jewish

¹⁷ Yanagihara, *And the Two*, 9.

¹⁸ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 2.

community in the area. Drazen says, “It is worth the time to do an internal review of each argument in favor of merging. Doing so either will foster a decision to work at keeping the congregation independent or confirm that moving toward merger is the best option for the congregation.”¹⁹

Once the rationale for the merger has been established the next item for consideration deals with “Congregational Culture.” The basic question that needs to be asked at this point in the process is “Are congregations similar enough – do they share enough at their core level –for the merger to succeed?” To answer this question, each congregation must conduct an in depth study of what is important to the membership. To discover what are the congregation’s strengths and weaknesses, the following needs to be considered: how the congregations complement each other, how they are similar, and how they are different. The final question in this process is “Can the members live with the differences?” If, based on the answers to the questions, it seems a merger could take place then a detailed merger agreement with timetables would be created. Drazen cautions that the congregations “avoid territorialism, avoid creating sides, and avoid creation or fostering of winner –loser feelings.”

As a merger proceeds there are a number of steps that need to be attended to; these are covered in the section called “Moving Ahead.” The congregations need to:

- Retain an accountant with no ties to either congregation to do a complete review of all the congregation’s finances.
- Retain an attorney familiar with mergers and non-profit organizations.
- Consider engaging the services of a mediator or counselor to help discussions move more smoothly when an impasse occurs.

¹⁹ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 3.

- Make the intent to merge formal by having both congregations pass an appropriate Intent –to – Merge motion.

It is important to have effective communication with the membership throughout the merger process. “Each congregation should identify a person who has not been on the merger team, is known to the membership and has a warm personality and a credible tone. That person should be ready to: tell the story of why we should merge, review the options and explain why some options were acceptable while others were not, and explain what would be involved in making the merger happen.”²⁰

A proper attitude is crucial throughout the process. Everyone should have a “we can work it out” attitude and should never say “no” when facing key aspects of discussion. “Be careful in speech. The Jewish world is a very small place. An off-hand or flip comment, even one said in jest, is likely to filter through the community.”²¹

The fourth section of the document is “Areas for Committees to Review” and it lists the practical items for the merger committee to discuss. This includes: governance and bylaws, name, personnel, operations, ritual, finance, programming, education, auxiliary groups, physical plant, and cemetery. Representatives must ask themselves and each other a series of “gut –level non –measurable but vital questions on a regular basis: Can we live with this? Does this feel right?”²² If the answers are yes, then it is worth the work to create a new entity.

The final section, “Looking Ahead – Making It Stick”, deals with what happens after the business of the merger has been completed. While the business may be

²⁰ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 5.

²¹ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 6.

²² Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 9.

completed, the work that must be done to assure a successful merger must continue for months and sometimes years.

The community needs to try and understand the sense of loss that will be felt by the members. When the new community begins it marks the end of the previous congregations and with this change there is a loss of dreams, even as new dreams are born. Rabbi Drazen paints a word picture to describe how a new congregation is a tiring joy when he says, “As any parent will attest, the joy of having a child comes with sleepless nights, physical exhaustion, frayed nerves, and hypersensitivity. The same is certainly true in the merger process. Anyone who has rebuilt the residence knows that remodeling is a difficult time. There is disruption while the work is done, and more disruption as you learn how to use the new improved model. The same is true when we make changes in our spiritual home. This is a time when feelings are tender. Everyone must work together to keep the merged congregation vibrant and viable.”²³

It is suggested that the congregation commission an official history that includes detailed information about the legacy of the congregations. The congregations should also have a series of getting to know you social events beginning as soon as a merger becomes formal and they should also have a series of educational programs to define and clarify the religious approach the congregation will be taking.

The merger committee and each subcommittee should meet at least quarterly during the first 12 months after the merger and every six months after that for least two years to review the following questions:

- What has gone as we had planned?
- What has gone better than we had hoped?

²³ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 10.

- What has not gone as we had hoped?
- What areas have we put aside that need to be addressed now?
- Have we been hearing rumblings from congregants who are not pleased with the merger?
- Have all transfers and updates of physical properties been accomplished?
- Are we seeing continuation of divisions by legacy congregation?

Rabbi Drazen concludes this document with these words, “Remember, even with the best of circumstances and perfect partners, merging congregations is a challenge; it will take longer than anyone assumed it would.”²⁴

The Strengths of Each Model

Alice Mann - Pathways in Changing Times

An aspect of this model, which is not found in the others, is Mann’s definition of the different forms a merger can take.²⁵ This is important for the congregations to understand as they consider amalgamation so that they both enter into the agreement with similar goals in mind. A congregation that believes that they are entering into a “continuation merger”²⁶ have different expectations than a congregation entering into a “rebirth merger”²⁷ and the two cannot merge successfully with such varying understanding of what the amalgamation will look like.

Mann also makes it clear from the outset that the churches contemplating a merger should explore all other options first before deciding on merging. Mergers are

²⁴ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 11.

²⁵ The three types of mergers are: absorption, continuation and rebirth/re-start.

²⁶ A continuation merger is when two or more struggling congregations decide to combine their efforts to build a stronger congregation. In this type of merger, negotiations often focus on maximizing continuity and minimizing change for the sake of the members.

²⁷ The emphasis with this type of merger is less on continuity with the past than on creating something new and different.

never easy and they require a considerable amount of effort and energy by the leadership and the congregation. It is inevitable that at some point in the process someone will inquire about the rationale for the merger so it is best to have thoughtfully and carefully considered all other options before deeming that the merger was the best option.

Another strength of this model is the emphasis it places on “self-examination” by the congregation to determine its strengths and liabilities as a potential merger partner. Mann states, “In the ideal case, you’ve already confronted the financial realities, and you’ve started to think about what kind of leadership you may need at this stage of your life together. Now there are some additional questions to consider, as you create an honest and balanced congregational profile.”²⁸ It is important that each congregation are honest in their evaluation and present to a potential merger partner an accurate representation of what the church is like. This means that each congregation must ask themselves some tough questions, such as: How well does the congregation handle conflict and change? How well does a congregation face difficult facts? How well does the congregation make room for the newcomer? How well does the congregation promote openness? Does the congregation maintain a healthy relationship with the denomination? The initial stages of the merger process produce less problems if each congregation provides as much information as possible about their strengths and weaknesses and what they bring to the potential merger.

The formation of a merger exploration committee is not unique to this model however the role this committee plays is important to the process. The only function of this committee within this model is to assess compatibility with potential partners and to bring back a recommendation about whether to start any formal merger negotiations. This

²⁸ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 17.

committee is not a decision-making body which insures that nothing will happen suddenly before the congregation has a chance to weigh in on the decision.

A constant theme throughout this model is the need for effective communication. Mann suggests that guidelines be established to determine what will be communicated, when it will be communicated, and how communication will take place. She notes that while there are certain things that need to be held in confidence, “the negotiations should not be a black hole that will provoke anxiety and suspicion.”²⁹ When the proposal was presented to the congregation everything should be explained thoroughly by the negotiating team; the information should be presented at several congregational meetings and in a detailed printed report.

An important part of the process that should not be ignored is a celebration event to mark the beginning of the new church. A well planned weekend of events at the start of the new venture is a wonderful way to begin a new phase in the life of the church.

Mariko Yanagihara - And the Two Shall Become One

The inherent strengths of this model are focused on each church gaining an understanding of their unique identity and church culture. Dr. Yanagihara emphasizes that each church should perform the Self-Evaluation by taking a hard look at who they are and what vision they have for themselves as a church. He also states, “The congregations also need to assess their motivation, readiness, willingness and suitability for merger. All alternatives to merging should be explored.”³⁰

Since each congregation has its own unique culture that must be considered in the merger process, compatibility is an issue. To determine their compatibility with potential

²⁹ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 18.

³⁰ Yanagihara, *And the Two Shall Become One*, 3.

partners, congregations should ask: Have the churches had positive or negative experiences with each other in the past? Are the churches theologically similar? What is the form and style of worship of each church? Do the churches share similar vision and mission goals? The answers to these questions begin to give a clearer understanding of how compatible the churches will be.

When the church is considering their strengths and weaknesses and the compatibility they have with another congregation, they should also list what characteristics the church can contribute to a merger. For example: Is the church willing to take risks and be open to change? Is the church spiritually and financially healthy? Are the people willing to form new relationships? These questions and the others that Yanagihara provides in this model are important because it gives each participant in the merger process an honest representation of what the other congregation is bringing to the process.

Yanagihara believes that the congregations should have similar ideas about mission and vision. The model's process includes a review of the history, mission goals and vision of the church before the merger, and affirmation of the theological basis for merger, the formation of a mission statement for the merge church, the establishing of short term goals for the merge church, and the development of recommendations for post-merger planning and follow-up. Although this model points to the need for a theological basis for the merger, at no point does the document explain what that basis should be.

Paul Drazen - Finding the Right Fit

The first question that needs to be answered by all congregations considering a merger is: "Why are we considering a merger?" This question should be answered before

beginning a search for a merger partner or if a potential merger partner has approached the congregation with the hopes that an amalgamation can take place. “It is worth the time to do an internal review of each argument in favor of merging. Doing so either will foster a decision to work at keeping the congregation independent or confirm that moving towards a merger is the best option for the congregation.”³¹

This model seeks to understand congregational compatibility through consideration of the congregation’s unique culture. In trying to understand if the congregations are similar enough for merger to succeed, each congregation must undertake an in depth study of what is important to the membership. The detailed list of questions that this model suggests the congregation answer to determine compatibility can be grouped into three categories: religious style, leadership, and social interaction. The strength of this part of the model rests in the questions it asks to determine if the congregations share enough at their core level for merger to succeed.

A clearly defined method of communication is evident throughout this model and the places importance on making sure the membership is fully aware of all that is happening throughout the process. The better informed the members are of the decisions taking place will lessen the conflict that this change will bring. The model suggests that each congregation should “identify a person who has not been on the merger team, is known to the membership and has a warm personality and a credible tone. That person should be ready to: tell the story of why we should merge, review the options and explain why some options were acceptable while others were not, and explain what would be involved in making the merger happen.”³²

³¹ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 3.

³² Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 5.

Another strength of this model is the thoroughness and detail it provides regarding the business requirements of amalgamation. This includes a follow up plan that states that “at least quarterly during the first year after the merger and every six months after for least two years, the merger committee and each subcommittee should meet.”³³ The topic for discussion within these meetings is about how well the merger is going and how problems identified by the membership are being addressed.

The Weaknesses of Each Model

Alice Mann - Pathways in Changing Times

It has been noted that the self-assessment component of this model is one of its strengths. However, at no point in the self-assessment process is there an indication of where the congregation might be in the church lifecycle. This is a weakness because it is easy for the congregation to fool themselves into thinking that the church is better off than it is. Also, there is no system in place to assess the mission effectiveness of the congregation. Of all the questions that this model suggests the congregations ask, not once is the question posed “How did the church get to this point?” The congregation answers questions concerning how the health of patterns and dynamics within the congregation are at this moment in time but the model doesn’t require them to ask why they are unsustainable at this time. If the congregation does not fully understand how they got to the place where they need to consider merging with another congregation they risk repeating the same unhealthy patterns in the merged congregation.

Mann claims that this model is “trying to help congregations achieve effective and mission-oriented mergers.”³⁴ She suggests that the merged congregation is mission-

³³ Drazen, *Finding the Right Fit*, 11.

³⁴ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 15.

oriented when: the merged congregation has a fresh sense of identity and purpose, all the people are telling a new story about themselves, the merged entity is taking a clear stance in addressing demographic and cultural challenges, and the congregation is already doing some things together that neither congregation ever did before. Mission-oriented success can be symbolized by a new name that captures the new intention and the new commitment of this faith community. It is clear that this model does not require the congregations to study “mission” or what mission would look like in their context which can lead to a very weak understanding of what effective mission is in the church.

This model should have included one more step in the merger process to deal specifically with the follow-up plans that determine the status of the amalgamation three months, six months, one year, and up to five years after the start date. The reasons why the congregations amalgamated should be revisited on a regular basis to ascertain whether or not those goals have been met. A critical self-assessment similar to the one conducted at the beginning of the process should be scheduled within the first two years of the new venture.

In the introduction to this model, Mann states, “When churches face new economic pressures, they sometimes consider merging.”³⁵ This is the only reason presented in this model for why a congregation would consider a merger. This does not take into consideration the fact that some churches may have the necessary resources to keep their doors open but are still seeing declining numbers in mission ineffectiveness. Again this model fails to identify the key issues that have led to un-sustainability and which need to be reversed if the new merger is to be successful.

³⁵ Mann, *The Smaller Congregation*, 13.

Mariko Yanagihara - And the Two Shall Become One

Similar to Alice Mann's model, this model fails to take the congregation through the journey to discover why they are in the current state they are. Part of the honest self-assessment that is required of each congregation should be a section where each church analyzes their attendance statistics prior to the amalgamation. It should be noted when the decline in attendance started and the possible reasons for that decline should be examined.

In the section dealing with compatibility of the merging congregations, this model suggests the following question be asked, "Do the churches share similar vision and mission goals?" In the section "Pre-merger Laundry List" there is the recommendation to formulate a mission statement for the merged church. The question needs to be asked, "Is it a good idea for churches with similar mission and vision statements to merge?" Assuming that the failure to accomplish pre-merger mission and vision led to the unsustainability of the congregations, what benefit is there to merge with a like-minded church. It would be imperative that the formulation of new mission and vision statements for the merged church in no way be similar to their pre-merger versions.

Paul Drazen - Finding the Right Fit

Since this model deals with the merging of Jewish congregations, there are some areas which may seem weak in the Christian context but that may not be so in the Jewish context. An example of this would be the use of mission language which is present in the other two models but is absent from this model.

This model encourages the participants to find an amalgamation partner that is as similar to their own congregation as possible. This is to ensure that the merger will not

unduly affect the membership of the participating congregations – the merger will still be a challenge, but with less conflict. This model is more concerned about the members they have than with the members they will gain through the merger.

Synergy between the Models

There are some similarities between the three models that should be noted. It is interesting that the first thing that each amalgamation model encourages is to explore all other options to merging first. Each of the authors made it very clear that any other option is preferable to merging. The reason for this is because they did not want the merger to become the “magic potion” that is seen to save the church from certain death. There are many options other than merging that may be a better choice for the congregation in the context they find themselves in. They also did not want the congregations to see the merger as a “last chance” for the church; there are no other options and this is our church’s only hope for survival.

Another common feature between the models is the insistence on the completion of a comprehensive congregational assessment prior to engaging in a merger process. Having a clear understanding of the church’s strengths and weaknesses is a necessary starting point to assure the congregation that the decisions they are making have been done with all the necessary information needed. The congregational assessments also show what each party has to contribute to the merger and the areas that are lacking for successful merger to take place.

Each of the three models emphasized the issue of communication. All of them stressed the importance of keeping members of the congregation well informed of all decisions taking place. Of equal importance was the communication each of the

congregations was to have with the denominational representatives responsible for the district. Each denomination has guidelines and rules that must be adhered to when congregations consider merging and it is necessary that they be included in all discussions to ensure that all procedures are properly followed. Denominational representatives are also excellent resource people to help the church accomplish their goals.

In addition to seeking the help of denominational representatives, each of the models proposed the use of professionals outside of the congregation to help in the process. Engaging the services of lawyers, accountants, and congregational consultants will help to avoid problems a congregation may not be equipped to deal with and to troubleshoot when conflicts arise. There can be no conflict of interest claims if these professionals have no connection with the congregations considering merging.

Ending the merger process with a celebration was another commonality between the models. Starting the new merger with a weekend of special events, guest speakers, and good food was seen by all the authors as an excellent way to begin a new venture.

Conclusion

These three amalgamation models have shown that there is more than one way to successfully guide a congregation through the amalgamation process. While each had their strengths and their weaknesses, it is their similarity that is most telling. All of the models expressed the difficulty in amalgamating two or more congregations and the need for those considering merging with another congregation to explore all other options first. Also each congregation should complete a comprehensive self-evaluation to gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as a church. Effective communication

was stressed by all three models as was the need for a celebration to mark the beginning of the new venture. It was also important to the three authors that skilled professionals be utilized in areas where the congregation has no expertise. This will make the process move more smoothly.

With every new beginning there is also an ending. Each of these three models expressed concern about what would happen to the existing leadership in the merger process. When two congregations join to become one it is often the case that one or both of the existing clergy are not retained as leaders of the new congregation. It takes a leader with a certain skill set and an understanding of culture to successfully navigate a church amalgamation. Unfortunately the pastors of dying congregations seldom possess the leadership skills necessary to effectively lead an amalgamated congregation to its fullest potential.

The next chapter will discuss the important role that leadership plays in the amalgamation process.

Chapter 4

Leadership in a New Cultural Landscape

In the last chapter we compared three current models for church amalgamations to discern what their apparent strengths, weaknesses and similarities are. The authors of the three models all conceded that amalgamations are hard work and that they require a certain type of leader with a specific set of leadership skills if the amalgamation is to have the greatest chance for success. Amalgamated churches need, as Gibbs says, “missional thinkers and apostolic leadership.”¹ This chapter will outline the issues facing the church today and the leadership characteristics that are required to effectively lead in today’s context.

Church service attendance and personal religious commitment has declined since the 1940’s in Canada, and it is only going to get worse. According to Reginald Bibby the projection of weekly church attendance in Canada will drop to around 15% by 2015.² The demise of local congregations is not necessarily because of unintelligent leadership, unforeseen events or a lack of trying to make things work, although these things may be a contributing factor. What is often at the heart of many church sustainability issues is an inaccurate perception of current reality among the church’s leadership and/or congregants.

The reality that they cannot perceive is based on the fact that the culture and society in which we live today is not the same as the culture of the 1940’s when church pews were full and the church was the centre of the community. By living in yesterday’s

¹ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 24.

² Bibby, *There’s Got to be More*, 17.

reality, church leaders look for ways to engage their current reality with programs and systems that are from a bygone era and discover that they have little success engaging their current community. This false reality also assures them that the church still has a prominent place within the community and has an influence on the culture of that community. When confronted with what is really happening in their neighbourhood, the church must make a decision on how to proceed by either continuing on the path they have set for themselves or trying to change.

The Current Cultural Landscape

The era when the church and society shared the same values has come to an end. While the church may hope and pray for a return to the ideals of Christendom, it is not going to happen. Michael Frost explains Christendom as “the name given to the religious culture that has dominated Western society since the fourth century.”³ It started when Christianity moved from being an underground movement to becoming the state religion under Emperor Constantine. Over time Christendom became the metanarrative for all of society as Christianity became an official part of the established culture. “The net effect over the entire Christendom epoch was that Christianity moved from being a dynamic, revolutionary, social and spiritual movement to being a static religious institution with its attendant structures, priesthood, and sacraments.”⁴

However, the world has changed and as Tim Keel asserts, “We know, and I believe *have known* for quite some time that the world has changed. Before we ever

³ Frost, *Exiles*, 4.

⁴ Frost, *Exiles*, 5.

became aware of the notions of post modernity, globalization, post colonialism, and a hundred other ‘posts,’ we knew something was changing.”⁵

With the fall of Christendom has come a new era – a post-Christendom era where the metanarrative of Christianity’s effect on culture is no longer viable. Unfortunately in the church many of the systems and structures are ill-equipped to deal with the new environment and the challenges it presents. Church leaders now find themselves in a culture where the church no longer is as influential as it once was and it is increasingly antagonistic towards them. Today’s society believes, according to Eddie Gibbs, that “there is no metanarrative to inspire people, no explanation of everything, no meaning or purpose to life awaiting discovery at either the cosmic or the personal level.”⁶ This is not saying that there is no room for the church in the world today but only that the church’s participation in our current society must be done on society’s terms and not the church’s terms. As James Smith reminds us, “The exclusion of faith from the public square is a modern agenda; postmodernity should signal new openings and opportunities for Christian witness in the broad marketplace of ideas.”⁷ Smith also issues this warning to the church, “We must be careful, however, not to continue to propagate that witness in modernist ways; by attempting our own rationalist demonstrations of the truth of the Christian faith and then imposing such on a pluralist culture.”⁸ So what is the church to do? Craig Carter suggests that, “The church of Jesus Christ must renounce Christendom

⁵ Tim Keel, *Leading from the Margins*, 226.

⁶ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 24.

⁷ Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 73.

⁸ Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 73.

and seek to live as a pilgrim people bearing witness to the kingdom of God and proclaiming the resurrection hope of the gospel.”⁹

We are at a place in its history where the cultural changes in society and a new season in the life of the church are colliding in what Phyllis Tickle describes as the “Great Emergence.” She defines the Great Emergence as a phenomenon that affects every part of our lives. “In its totality, it interfaces with, and is the context for, everything we do socially, culturally, intellectually, politically, and economically.”¹⁰ Tickle believes that the church at this time of great emergence is also in a period of drastic change which she likens to a “rummage sale.” She explains what is happening to the church this way, “to understand what is currently happening to us in twenty-first century North America is first to understand that about every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale. About every five hundred years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at that time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and growth may occur.”¹¹ From its beginning to today, the church’s five hundred year rummage sales look like this: First Church – first century; Monasticism – sixth century; Schism – eleventh century; Reformation – sixteenth century; Emergence – twenty-first century.

There are consistently three results that come from these rummage sales. First, a new, more vital form of Christianity does indeed emerge. Second, in the course of birthing a new expression of faith and practise, there is a refurbishment of the previous expression of organized Christianity. Third, there is a period of growth and the spread of the faith into new geographic and demographic areas. Tickle uses the example of one

⁹ Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 103.

¹⁰ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 14.

¹¹ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 16.

such rummage sale, the Reformation, to explain these three results of church 'rummage sales.' She states, "the birth of Protestantism not only established a new, more powerful way of being Christian, but it also forced Roman Catholicism to make changes in its own structure and praxis. As a result of both those changes, Christianity was spread over far more of the earth's territories than had ever been in the past."¹²

Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby has been tracking the church in Canada for almost forty years and has stated, "People observing the Canadian scene between 1960 and 2000 were virtually unanimous in viewing organized religion as being in irreversible decline. Things were bad and would only get worse."¹³ This was seen to be true because secularization had seemingly taken place in much of Protestant Europe and in Catholic countries such as France and Italy and a similar scenario was believed to be unfolding in Canada. But Bibby's research has discovered that it is too soon to write the obituary for the church in Canada. His research indicates, "Today, about 3 in 10 people across the country attend services at least one a month (about 20% weekly, 10% monthly), and about another 3 in 10 once to a number times a year. The remaining 4 in 10 indicated that they never attend a service."¹⁴ These numbers do not represent a significant statistical difference from fifteen years ago. This has led Bibby to conclude, "We awake today, not to a secularized Canada, but to a polarized Canada. A solid core of people continues to value faith; but a growing core does not. A significant portion remain in the middle, something like the 'politically undecided', dropping in and not dropping out."¹⁵ He has

¹² Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 17.

¹³ Bibby, *A New Day*, 4.

¹⁴ Bibby, *A New Day*, 9.

¹⁵ Bibby, *A New Day*, 10.

also stated, “The research indicates the so called market conditions for religious groups seem excellent.”¹⁶

Focusing on the youth of Canada, statistics show that, “More than 8 in 10 teens say they have raised the question of the existence of God or a higher power. Only about two thirds (67%) have concluded ‘it’ exists.”¹⁷ Studies also show that, “while 7 in 10 teens identify with religious groups, only 2 in 10 attend services weekly or more, just over 3 in 10 monthly or more.”¹⁸ When teens were asked to respond to the statement, “I’d be open to more involvement with religious groups if I found it to be worthwhile,” 38% of teens who attend religious groups less than once a month agreed with the statement and 67% of teens who attended monthly or more agreed with the statement.¹⁹ To this Bibby commented, “So much for the widely held notion that today’s teens want nothing to do with organized religion.”²⁰ From all indications from Bibby’s research, there has never been a better opportunity for the church in Canada to make an impact in the lives of Canadians.

The cultural landscape is one of change and flux as postmodernism asserts its dominance over Christendom and the church is undergoing a shift in structure and praxis. In the midst of all this change in culture are Canadians who are not hostile towards the Gospel message but in fact are open to a spiritual dialogue if they see it as relevant to their lives. Frost and Hirsch have noted, “We have become increasingly convinced that what the church needs to find its way out of the situation it’s in at the beginning of the twenty-first century are not more faddish theories about how to grow the church without

¹⁶ Bibby, *Millennials*, 176.

¹⁷ Bibby, *Millennials*, 166.

¹⁸ Bibby, *Millennials*, 178.

¹⁹ Bibby, *Millennials*, 181.

²⁰ Bibby, *Millennials*, 181.

fundamentally reforming its structures. The church needs a revolutionary new approach.”²¹

Issues Facing the Church

It is not difficult to compile a list of issues that the church is facing today, the difficulty lies with making a concise list that is generic enough to encompass a wide variety of churches.

Hauerwas and Willimon characterize the church today as *resident aliens* living in “a society of unbelief, devoid of a sense of journey and adventure.”²² For them the issues facing the church is how church people with a sense of belief, journey and adventure interact with and influence a society without these things.

Bibby believes that there are four issues that churches face in today’s culture: structural issues, product issues, promotional issues and distribution issues.²³

The structural issues that the church faces include: the reliance on volunteers to accomplish its work seriously jeopardizes organizational efficiency, the coordination between national bodies and local congregations making implementation of programs difficult, time and energy wasted on internal issues rather than focusing on ministering to those outside the church, and the negative perceptions of the church in the eyes of many Canadians.²⁴

Historically, according to Bibby, religion has had a voice in three important areas, God, self, and society. “Ideally, the three themes are interwoven, with God first and

²¹ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 6.

²² Hauerwas & Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 49.

²³ Bibby, *There’s Got to be More*, 38–39.

²⁴ Bibby, *More*, 38.

foremost, giving the other two themes of self and society a unique tone.”²⁵ The product issues facing the church revolve around the fact that many Canadians do not have an emphasis on God having an impact on their lives. If God is irrelevant to their lives then so is the church. “Canadians young and old value nothing more highly than relationships.”²⁶ But they do not associate an enhanced social life with what the churches have to offer.

The church is also not very good at promotion. Most people do not know what goes on inside church buildings and church advertising is usually limited to the “church pages, read by church people who are looking for their churches.”²⁷

The distribution issues the church faces can be characterized as having a warehouse full of product but never shipping it anywhere. Bibby says, “It seems clear that much alleged ministry to Canadians is being done from the safety of sanctuaries.”²⁸ Also, many congregations have become preoccupied with making sure that the needs of their members are being met and “lay ministry means nothing more than getting involved in running the church.”²⁹

Bibby believes that the church needs to clarify their position on each of these issues if they are going to minister effectively in a new world because “churches are well positioned – indeed probably best positioned – to respond to the central God – self – society requirements of Canadians.”³⁰

²⁵ Bibby, *More*, 38.

²⁶ Bibby, *More*, 38.

²⁷ Bibby, *More*, 39.

²⁸ Bibby, *More*, 39.

²⁹ Bibby, *More*, 39.

³⁰ Bibby, *More*, 40.

Bibby's analysis of the church in Canada actually extends to faith groups in general, so when he comments that there are four issues that the church must contend with, he is including all religious groups in that category – both Christian and non-Christian faith groups. Church consultant Loren Mead focuses on three issues the Christian church must contend with during times of change – structure, leadership and personal resistances.³¹

Structure

Mead contends that the systems we have inherited from the Christendom paradigm provide stability and predictability and had the ability to “hold settled communities steady on a distant unchanging goal. Flexibility was discouraged and uniformity encouraged.”³² These systems do not work very well where there is evidence of new growth or experimentation with new forms of ministry is taking place. Bill Hull adamantly states, “Bureaucracy is eating the heart out of the church. Necessary decisions take far too long. Proposals for change are dead on arrival, killed by committee analysis and micromanagement. Structure can be our best friend or our worst enemy. In many cases it has become our mortal enemy.”³³

The structures that many churches have in place today worked well in the past which is why they are being held onto today at the local church level and the denominational level. Form should follow function but in many congregations this is not the reality. Form leading function is a guarantee for irrelevancy over time and leads to the creation of a structure that must be overcome if effective change is to occur within the church.

³¹ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 60–63

³² Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 60.

³³ Hull, *Can We Save the Evangelical Church*, 102.

“In every area of life it seems that there are historically top-down organizations that are having to adapt and evolve; that have realized that the only way that they can survive is to transform themselves from monolithic, flabby, grey institutions that do not and cannot respond to the realities on the ground, into conjunctive, devolved, bottom-up, adaptable networks that are trim, agile and flexible enough to face and meet the ever-changing challenges of the fast-moving post-Enlightenment world.”³⁴

Leadership

Mead believes that our current structures have produced leaders who are inadequate for the task of engaging the post Christendom culture. He states, “The dependency system fostered by the Church of Christendom remains a barrier to building a church for the future. The hierarchical arrangement that grew in the institution through its life was a response to the worldview of its leaders. These reinforcing systems contain unhealthy structures.”³⁵ Gibbs expands on this when he writes, church leaders must be “less positional and more relational than in previous generations. This shift is particularly hard to digest for older and more traditional pastors who were told during their seminary years not to make their friends in the parish.”³⁶

Leaders who are operating out of a hierarchical system see their role as permission granting and delegating; for these leaders, leadership means control. Having control over all aspects of the church’s ministry stifles creativity in others and deprives future leaders the opportunity to grow and mature through learning new ways to do things and through failure. The result, according to Gibbs, is that the church finds it

³⁴ Brewin, *Signs of Emergence*, 95.

³⁵ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 61.

³⁶ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 69.

“increasingly difficult to maintain institutional integrity and to continue to recruit quality leadership.”³⁷

Another aspect of leadership that the church is facing today is the fact that the old paradigm leadership is too slow in this new era. Even when they see the need for change and want to change it often takes them too long to act upon their convictions. In this new cultural paradigm leaders must be able to turn on a dime in a new direction at any moment. As Leonard Sweet states, today’s speed isn’t doing what you have always done only faster, rather “it is doing faster than ever before things you have never done before.”³⁸

Personal Resistance

There is an old saying that states, “The only person who likes change is a wet baby.” Resistance to change is a common experience inherent to everyone. Mead compares this resistance to change to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s stages of grief where the person experiencing change in the church deals with denial, depression, bargaining, and anger.³⁹

Every person responds to change differently – some have no problem accepting change and others will fight it to the end. Lynn Anderson gives an outline of five levels of change tolerance: pioneers, early adapters, late adapters, laggards and refusers.⁴⁰ The pioneers and the early adapters are the least resistant to change and are the people who normally initiate the change. Late adapters make up the largest group and will support change once the early adapters do. Laggards do not like change and won’t change until

³⁷ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 71.

³⁸ Sweet, *Carpe Manana*, 87.

³⁹ Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, 62. It is interesting that Mead leaves out the last step, “acceptance,” in his Kubler-Ross grief list.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 152–154.

the new way has become the norm and then they will join the group. Refusers make up about eight to ten percent of a group and they are unlikely to change no matter what.

Dan Southerland offers this advice for dealing with those who will not change, “Don’t get so trapped behind the lines with those who refuse to march forward that you forget to lead those who are on the front line in the midst of the battle. Keep on leading.”⁴¹ Don’t allow the laggards and refusers to set the agenda of the church or else the necessary changes will not take place.

Consequences of Not Facing the Issues

The church that decides that it is unwilling or unable to face the issues that are intrinsic to the culture they are situated will experience “a slow death caused by aging, atrophy and irrelevance.”⁴² At some point they will have to discuss the issue of the sustainability of the congregation in its present form and make decisions they feel are best for their context.

While some congregations may not want to deal with the issues that are facing the church, other congregations will see the need for change and will try to improve things while at the same time trying to keep the status quo. This approach will have limited success according to Hunsberger who writes, “tuning the engine and trying harder will not change the growing malaise in the churches or their increasing experience of being finally and firmly ‘disestablished’ from the roles of importance we thought we had in the larger society.”⁴³ Frost and Hirsch echo this statement by saying, “We must stop trying to

⁴¹ Southerland, *Transitioning*, 125.

⁴² Keel, *Intuitive Leadership*, 90.

⁴³ Hunsberger, *Sizing Up the Shape of the Church*, 334.

rejig the paradigm.”⁴⁴ Doing the old things faster or in a slightly different way may be comfortable but it will not produce lasting change.

Leadership and Change

If lasting change within congregations is to take place it must begin with the leadership of the church because much of what will or will not happen within the church will stem from the leader. Pollster George Barna has stated, “For any movement to have a lasting impact, a strong visionary leader must be set in place.”⁴⁵ Leith Anderson asserts, “The leader wants the ball. He’ll take the risk. He’ll make the shot. He’ll excel amid adversity.”⁴⁶ Harvard professor John Kotter adds, “Successful transformation is 70 to 90 percent leadership and only 10 to 30 percent management. Yet many organizations today don’t have much leadership. And almost everyone thinks that the problem here is one of *managing* change.”⁴⁷ However, Alice Mann’s research has revealed that only about 5 percent of professional church leaders have the gifts and skills necessary to effectively lead transformational ministries.⁴⁸ The problem is that most church leaders believe that they have the leadership ability to guide the change process and they “underestimate the gap between their level of preparedness and the requirements of change leadership.”⁴⁹

Leadership Characteristics Required for the Amalgamated Congregation

Professor Eddie Gibbs reminds us that, “yesterday’s styles of leadership will not be adequate for the opening decades of the 21st century.”⁵⁰ He makes this claim because the future is too unpredictable for the predetermined parameters inherent in long term

⁴⁴ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 14.

⁴⁵ Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 61.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 193.

⁴⁷ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 26.

⁴⁸ Mann, *Can Our Church Live*, 110.

⁴⁹ Herrington, Bonem & Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 14.

⁵⁰ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 34.

planning.⁵¹ He goes on to say, “Yesterday’s solutions and procedures may not provide an adequate or appropriate response to the present challenges.”⁵² The problem that long time leaders face is not learning new insights and skills, but in unlearning what they consider to be tried and true.

The new leadership styles that are necessary for the twenty-first century are the styles that are necessary for the church amalgamation. A new leadership style is required for the new church – old leadership styles will lead the church back into the situation that led it to having to merge with another congregation because the leader will default to that which provides them with a sense of security.

According to Brad Powell, to successfully go through a change in the church the right leader is needed and the right leader “will always embrace some nonnegotiable characteristics.”⁵³ Powell’s list of nonnegotiable characteristics is: calling, character, competence, confidence, courage, commitment and continuous growth.⁵⁴

Calling

The desire to have or fill a position is not a good reason to want to lead change. “The right leader believes to the core of his being that God has brought him to lead for such a time as this.”⁵⁵ While a calling is not necessary to lead, it is essential for the right leader. Pastor Donald Schaeffer shares this truth when interviewed by Thom Rainer, “I had several opportunities to leave, but I knew God called me here and I wanted to stay

⁵¹ A similar comment is made by Frost and Hirsch, “Every denomination and religious organization does long range planning. Ironically they do long-range planning as though the future will simply be an extension of the present... As a result, we are chronically surprised by change. In the future we can no longer afford this luxury. *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 22.

⁵² Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 35.

⁵³ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 125.

⁵⁴ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 125–148

⁵⁵ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 125.

and see the work through. I never sensed God calling me away from here.”⁵⁶ When ministry is nothing more than a career for professional clergy it is very easy to leave it behind when problems and crisis arise.

Leaders who are effective change agents see the challenge of leadership as a life or death struggle for the church – and they are prepared to suffer trying to save it. As Brian McLaren says, “God’s leaders are always faced with criticism, threats, misunderstanding, and unfair treatment. There is no way around it: church leadership has always been less a career than a calling.”⁵⁷ If God is genuinely calling a leader to transition the church, that leader will be driven from within to do it, regardless of the cost.

Since this thesis is using *The Salvation Army* as the subject of its research, leadership within *The Salvation Army* should be considered as well. *The Salvation Army* believes that, “Some leaders are responsible for providing the vision and inspiration that the church so sorely needs. Without them, the work of God fails through lack of a vision to meet a contemporary need.”⁵⁸

Amalgamations are not an easy process; it takes a considerable amount of energy and drive to see it through to completion. And while all Salvation Army officers have felt a calling of God on their lives to become ministers with the Army, this generalized calling is not all that is required to be a leader of a successful amalgamation. Calling to be an officer in *The Salvation Army*, while initiated by God, comes for different reasons for different people. Some officers gravitate towards administration duties, while others tend to focus their ministry in social services, or public relations or church work. While many

⁵⁶ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 37

⁵⁷ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 116.

⁵⁸ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 62.

feel they are called by God to these ministries but the calling to be a leader of an amalgamation goes beyond the calling to church ministry.

The appointment system of clergy in *The Salvation Army* is different than the calling system of clergy incorporated by most denominations. The appointment system allows the denominational leadership to appoint clergy to various ministry units as they see fit. The appointment system, however, is not conducted in a vacuum. The giftedness, experience and goals of the individual officer are considered along with the needs and expectations of the ministry unit determined to receive a new leader. In the end the desired outcome is the appointing of an officer to a ministry unit that is a good “fit” for both parties. While that is the ideal, there are times when this is not possible. The reasons for this could be that there is not a suitable fit for a particular officer or ministry unit, a lack of personnel to fill all the positions available, a personal issue that requires an officer to be in one location rather than another, and the list can go on.

The problem arises in amalgamated congregations if a leader is appointed to that ministry who does not feel that they are called to a revitalization role. Yes they feel called to church ministry but they may be ill equipped to faithfully accomplish the task set before them in an amalgamated congregation. To be truly effective, the officer appointed to an amalgamation must feel that they are specifically called to such a task. Of course calling is not the only characteristic required of leaders in an amalgamated church.

Character

For Powell, a leader’s character includes authenticity, right motivation and integrity. He states, “Character is essential in church leadership for two reasons. The first is that a leader without character will disrupt the church. The second reason is just as

critical. People won't follow a leader without character for very long."⁵⁹ Tim Keel tells us that when God works within a leader who is wholly available, "an integrity emerges that cannot be manufactured."⁶⁰

The wrong motivations of the leader will appear when adversity is encountered. The leader who is motivated by the desire for "bigger and better" will not adjust well if the change brings about the opposite effect. As well, the leader who is initiating change so they might get their own way and establish their personal idea of ministry may question the validity of their position once a crisis is encountered. Character is what grounds the leader against the personal attacks change will bring.

The Salvation Army would call this "spiritual leadership." Spiritual leadership involves "a lifelong pursuit requiring humble self-acceptance, intense personal honesty, confession of short comings and sin, a guiding vision to advance the Kingdom of God, a deep care for others – and above all, love for God and a desire to please him above all others."⁶¹

The character of the leader plays a vital role in the amalgamated congregation because of the increased conflict and criticism that comes with being a change agent within the church. The leader of the amalgamated church must nurture the spiritual life of the congregation while at the same time call into question any practice that might weaken its spirituality. They have to maintain program and service while at the same time eliminating any program and service that does not fulfill the church's mission in the community. It is tempting to fulfill these imperatives as a task master without being the

⁵⁹ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 130.

⁶⁰ Keel, *Intuitive Leadership*, 233.

⁶¹ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 62.

kind of leader that God has called them to be – leaders who demonstrate integrity and love in all that they do.

The leader in an amalgamated congregation has to contribute to the lives of the people under their care. People involved in an amalgamation are hurting and feeling a sense of loss and grief. The last thing they need is a pastor who cannot feel what they are feeling. They need a leader who builds community, who helps others use their gifts and abilities for the glory of God, who encourages others release their creativity, and who shows them a vision of God's future for the church and their place within that future.

Competence

If you are going to lead, then you need gifts and abilities that lend themselves to leadership. Powell believes the two gifts needed are leadership and communication.⁶² While some leaders are blessed with being good leaders and good communicators, there is hope for those who are not. Rainer states, "I am convinced that many of the (leadership) traits can be learned and sharply honed."⁶³ John Kotter agrees with this in his comment, "In the most commonly known historical model, leadership is the province of the chosen few. Although I too once believed this, I have found that the traditional idea simply does not fit well with what I have observed in nearly thirty years of studying organizations and the people who run them. The older model is nearly oblivious to the power and potential of lifelong learning."⁶⁴

It is important that leaders recognize their personal gifts and seek ways to enhance their effectiveness. "Supportive line management, good mentoring and effective training

⁶² Powell, *Change Your Church*, 131.

⁶³ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 65.

⁶⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 176.

will help (Salvation Army) officers develop relevant skills.”⁶⁵ The clearest biblical pattern for the gift of leadership is Ephesians 4.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Eph. 4: 11–13

Here Paul speaks of the risen Christ who gave some to be “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers” for the purpose of building up the church. The variety of gifts is carefully described but not all leaders are blessed with all these gifts.⁶⁶ Together they describe the various functions that are desirable within the leadership of the church. Frost and Hirsch offer the following definitions of what they call the “five foundational leadership functions,”⁶⁷

- Apostolic Function – usually conducted translocally, pioneers new missional works and oversees their development
- Prophetic Function – discerns the spiritual realities in a given situation and communicates them in a timely and appropriate way to further the mission of God’s people.
- Evangelistic Function – communicates the Gospel in such a way that people respond in faith and discipleship.
- Pastoral Function – shepherds the people of God by leading, nurturing, protecting, and caring for them.
- Teaching Function – communicates the revealed wisdom of God so that the people learn how to obey all that Christ has commanded them.⁶⁸

According to Ephesians 4, all these gifts of leadership were used to “enable the members of the church to fulfill their calling the ministers and servants of the gospel. It is this enabling function that is so important in the leadership of the servant church.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 90.

⁶⁶ See 1 Corinthians 12:28.

⁶⁷ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 169.

⁶⁸ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping*, 169.

Confidence

Confidence is closely linked to the calling of the leader. The leader must believe that they are the right person at the right time doing the right thing. “If he [sic] doesn’t, the leadership will be marred by hesitancy, insecurity, and doubt.”⁷⁰ People would rather not change than follow a leader who is not confident in where they are going and why they are going.

If calling implies the “pursuit of a God-given vision, a task within that vision and a community to fully share it with,”⁷¹ then confidence is the belief that God is going to accomplish that task. The leader of the amalgamated church needs to summon the congregations under their care to dream God’s dream for the church, to have their lives transformed, and to share in the *missio Dei*. The leader needs to keep the larger vision of what the church can become as the dominate force of their work. If at any time they waver in their confidence that God will accomplish his task with the church, they will lose the confidence of the congregation.

The key to confidence for the leader in the amalgamated church is not in their ability but in the faithfulness of God. True confidence is rooted in the understanding that you can do nothing in and of yourself. God’s character and promise are the only factors that the leader’s confidence is built upon.

The leadership we are advocating is a calling. The leader must know the caller and discern the call. In this sense, the leaders are like sheep that know the shepherd’s voice and responds to his guidance and care (John 10: 14-16). They trust the voice and inevitably the voice asks them to brave the unknown with confidence that the shepherd

⁶⁹ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 60.

⁷⁰ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 135.

⁷¹ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 102.

goes with them. This is what leaders of amalgamated churches are called to do, and this call requires that the leader have courage.

Courage

Linked with confidence is courage. Significant changes are almost always difficult so you must be confident that you are doing the right things but you must also have the courage to do the right things. “Godly courage stems from calling and confidence rather than arrogance and stupidity.”⁷² Barna adds, “A true measure of a leader is the type of risks that a person takes. A great leader evaluates the anticipated risks, considers the plausible outcomes of each and pursues those that provide the greatest potential for success.”⁷³

A major reason why people lack courage is their fear of failure. Courage is simply “the ability to ‘hang in there’ five minutes longer.”⁷⁴ The leader’s courage is what keeps them composed in times of turmoil and gives them the ability to make better choices in tough situations. “As leaders courageously take risks, exercising faith and assuming responsibility, they and the people around them grow together.”⁷⁵

Let us be clear where this courage originates. The courage we are talking about is not a personality trait that some people possess by nature; it is the extraordinary courage from those we least expect it. It is the courage that comes from God when he asks the leader to do an unexpected thing, to go against the safe course, and to risk failure.

The Bible shows models of courage that were often extraordinary. “It is the gift given to Gideon when God calls him to leadership (Judges 6:15–16). It is the gift given to

⁷² Powell, *Change Your Church for Good*, 141.

⁷³ Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 66.

⁷⁴ Engstrom, *The Making of a Leader*, 117.

⁷⁵ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 137.

the prophet Amos, a common herdsman, who, without any institutional backing whatsoever, stands alone against the political and religious power structures with only a divine call and presence to steady him. It is the gift given to the apostle Paul, who braves beatings, assassination attempts, hostile religious councils, and powerful governors because Christ is finally all that matters to him.”⁷⁶

The love of God and the love of others is alone the source of true courage. Perfect love, and it alone, casts out all fear (1 John 4:18); this includes the fear of failure. The leaders needed for the amalgamated church is one who will continue to allow the love of God to change them. They need to be so taken by God’s love that it will drive them to take risks and put their lives on the line for it. Their example of courage will inspire those within the congregation that are fearful of change to try new things for God.

“Sometimes the courage will be prophetic: risking being ostracised for speaking the truth in love. Sometimes it will be priestly: suffering with those who suffer, or even in their stead. Sometimes it will be missional: expanding the boundaries of mission into a new territory. Always it will be compassion-driven.”⁷⁷ The courage of the leaders necessary to lead amalgamations is not only the fruit of God’s supportive presence, but also comes from a disciplined life.

Commitment

This is not the leader’s commitment to God or their commitment to the church per se; it has to do with the leader’s commitment to see the change process through to the end. “Transition needs a leader who sticks with it through thick and thin.”⁷⁸ Rainer makes a good point when he says top leaders “are willing and want to have long term ministries

⁷⁶ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 104.

⁷⁷ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 118.

⁷⁸ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 144.

at one church.”⁷⁹ Change is a long process and cannot be done in a short time. Leaders committed to the change process have a long term view of ministry and “are ever persistent in moving the church forward. But they know that three steps forward are often followed by two steps backward.”⁸⁰

Commitment is forged by “the life focus and strong purpose of those who discipline themselves to major on the essentials and painstakingly discern God’s leading.”⁸¹ Without self-discipline the leader will wander aimlessly and their time will be absorbed by lesser pursuits so their commitment to the task will wane.

There are many issues in an amalgamation that will present themselves as being of vital importance but ultimately will sidetrack the process. The leader needed in the amalgamation is one who will give clear direction amid growing distractions. The leader must be committed to making sure that first things get first place; sometimes that means giving up the lesser for the more important. This type of commitment is a non-negotiable for pursuing a calling. The leader, “will set missional and ministry priorities and live by them.”⁸² It keeps them focused on what is of ultimate importance in their work for the church.

Continuous Growth

The only way a leader can ensure that they are keeping up with the ever changing culture is through a commitment to continuous learning and growth. Powell warns, “Church leaders need to continue learning because they become less and less in touch

⁷⁹ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 56.

⁸⁰ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 56.

⁸¹ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 105.

⁸² Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 118.

with the way life is for those outside of the church and faith. As a result, we can start living in a bubble of irrelevance without knowing it.”⁸³

This does not necessarily mean that the leader has to enrol in all sorts of courses and seminars. John Kotter lists five habits that support lifelong learning for the leader.

They are:

1. Risk taking: willingness to push oneself out of comfort zones.
2. Humble self-reflection: honest assessment of successes and failures, especially the latter.
3. Solicitation of opinions: aggressive collection of information and ideas from others.
4. Careful listening: propensity to listen to others.
5. Openness to new ideas: willingness to view life with an open mind.⁸⁴

All of the leadership qualities discussed do not develop on their own, especially in a world that does not encourage them. “In the (Salvation) Army of the 21st century, initiative in mission comes from leaders who initiate their own personal and vocational development.”⁸⁵

We live in a world of ever new stimuli and endless distractions that may tempt us to lose the focus of our calling. The world we live in is one of increasing complexity and change that may stretch our ministry capacities. It is easy to fall into mediocrity as the church attempts to do more than it is capable of accomplishing. The leader required for the amalgamated church is one who is always learning because it is the learner who will be prepared for the challenges the church will face.

⁸³ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 146.

⁸⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 183.

⁸⁵ Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 124.

Gibbs offers this advice to the leaders necessary for amalgamated churches, “In order to lead in today’s fast-changing world, leaders must not project an aloof, know-it-all image.”⁸⁶ Leaders need to know what they don’t know and readily acknowledge that they don’t know – but they need to learn what they don’t know if it will increase their ministry effectiveness.

Some may argue that any church leader can lead an amalgamation from start to finish and to that I would disagree. For the amalgamated church to have the best chance at success there must be careful consideration given to the leader chosen to accomplish the task. Not all leaders are created equal so the best leader for the amalgamated church is one who has a certain set of leadership skills that will help him/her lead the church to a new place. But the leader needs to be aware that the road to that new place is not very smooth and is fraught with dangers.

Challenges of Leading Change

Opposition and Change

Anyone who has tried to do something for God has faced challenges. There will always be opposition for the person who leads a church through change. The leader can be assured that opposition will come from those who do not understand the change and from those who do understand the change but don’t like it. There will be opposition from those who have a stake in what you are trying to change and there will be opposition from those who are just contrary to any change. The inability of the leader to effectively deal with opposition can and will derail the change process. Dan Southerland tells leaders that there are two things to remember when leading change: expect opposition and keep on track.

⁸⁶ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 43.

Expect Opposition

If you expect opposition to be a part of the process of change, you will not be surprised when it occurs. Using the Book of Nehemiah as a guide, Southerland says that we should expect five different kinds of opposition as we initiate change within the church: apathy, anger, ridicule, criticism, and fighting.⁸⁷

Apathy

The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors. Neh 3:5

Some people just will not care about the vision the leader has for the church. These people are neither for the vision being presented nor against it, rather, they have no interest in it.

Anger

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. Neh 4:1

There will be some people who will be angry with the leader and the reason is quite clear as described by Anderson and Miller. They claim, “Consciously or unconsciously we develop goals in our lives and proceed to live according to a plan to achieve those goals. When something or someone comes along and prevents us from achieving our plans, we get mad. We see that person or event as making life more difficult for ourselves, so we react in anger.”⁸⁸ The leader of the change has prevented some people from achieving their plans for the church and therefore they get angry at the leader.

Ridicule

⁸⁷ Southerland, *Transitioning*, 113–116.

⁸⁸ Anderson & Miller, *Getting Anger Under Control*, 45.

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews. Neh 4:1

Ridicule comes in various forms like mocking, making fun of, putting down, and being sarcastic. “One form of ridicule that is popular today is name calling. You better expect some ridicule.”⁸⁹

Criticism

“What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” Neh 4:2–3

Some people are going to be critical of what is being done to their church. Of these five, criticism is the one that leaders will face most often. Gibbs says, “In any context criticism is an inevitable price of leadership. Leaders are the most visible targets for all who are frustrated and disgruntled.”⁹⁰ Ted Engstrom says that all leaders face criticism and the inability to handle it will “impede his and the group’s progress towards a common goal.”⁹¹

A leader cannot please everyone and they cannot please anyone all the time. Criticism is going to happen so leaders might as well be criticized for doing the right thing. “Leaders survive criticism only when they are convinced of the rightness of their course of action.”⁹²

Of course some criticism is legitimate and should be handled with understanding and concern. Leaders have to create space for the questions and positive critique that

⁸⁹ Southerland, *Transitioning*, 115.

⁹⁰ Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 184.

⁹¹ Engstrom, *The Making of a Leader*, 96.

⁹² Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 185.

come from those around them because those insights can make them a better leader and improve the process. But for all the constructive criticism that comes there always is destructive criticism that can become so widespread that it leads to the outright rejection of the leader. As J. Oswald Sanders has said, “Often the crowd does not recognize the leader until he has gone, and then they build a monument for him with the stones they threw at him in life.”⁹³

Fight

They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. Neh 4:8

Southerland warns, “If you think your opposition will go away without a fight, think again. There is a fight coming.”⁹⁴ At some point in the course of the amalgamation process you can expect someone to stand up “on behalf of everyone” and essentially say that the leader is doing everything wrong and that the church needs to go back to the way it used to do church. You can expect it.

Those leading change should expect opposition, but they should also continue on the change process.

Keep on Track

Opposition in all its forms can be a distraction and has the potential to drain the leader of all physical, emotional and spiritual strength. Once the leader gets off track, the whole process is in jeopardy of being derailed. The leader must remember their calling when opposition hits and believe that they are doing God’s work in God’s time with God’s resources.

⁹³ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 121.

⁹⁴ Southerland, *Transitioning*, 116.

Business leader John Kotter adds to this when he says, “After watching dozens of major change efforts in the past decade, I’m confident of one cardinal rule: Whenever you let up before the job is done, critical momentum can be lost and regression may follow.”⁹⁵ Getting off track and slowing down or stopping the change process causes the changes to stop and the process is very difficult to get going a second time. The leader should liken the change process to pushing a heavy boulder uphill – it is tough and takes a great deal of effort to accomplish. But if for some reason the group stops pushing the boulder, it naturally will want to return to its original place. It is very difficult to convince people to push the boulder again when it is rolling downhill.

To extend the metaphor a little further, the leader has to make sure that they are pushing the “right boulder” up the “right hill.” Getting off track includes shifting priorities midway through the change process. This is not only counterproductive it may cause the congregation to question what the real goal is and whether or not they agree with the change of direction. The leader in the amalgamated church needs to stick to the path of change and not waver towards the path of least resistance.

Conflict and Change

In the midst of change, leaders can expect to see the best and worst of human nature displayed. Change is an emotional venture and so it is logical to assume that people will respond emotionally and conflict will occur. In fact, “change does not happen without conflict.”⁹⁶ Hetherington, Bonem and Furr’s research has identified two types of conflict that leaders can experience as they lead a church through the change process.

⁹⁵ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 133.

⁹⁶ Hetherington, *Change*, 7.

Life-threatening Conflict occurs when the congregation loses sight of the vision that God has for their church. This happens when the people are “more concerned with their own comfort than the achievement of God’s plan.”⁹⁷ *Life-giving Conflict* is a “deeper understanding and commitment that grows out of a significant disagreement.”⁹⁸

The skill to effectively deal with conflict is a skill that leaders of change must hone because as Douglas Walrath asserts, “conflict that is not attended to immediately is like a neglected infection, and sooner or later it will engulf the entire organization.”⁹⁹ Leith Anderson adds, “Adversity is when we need great leaders. We can muddle through the good times all by ourselves, but we need great leaders to get us through the tough times.”¹⁰⁰

David Brubaker conducted a study on change and conflict in the church with one hundred congregations in the United States of America. An overview of his findings indicated that most congregational fights tend to focus on leaders and changes to structure and culture highly correlate with conflict.¹⁰¹ Using Acts 6 as a model, Brubaker offers a way to effectively manage conflict in the church.

First, “Leaders need to move towards conflict, not away from it.”¹⁰² Leaders who learn to move toward conflict discover that they have opportunities to resolve the issue when those issues are relatively small, rather than having to deal with the issues when they are out of control.

⁹⁷ Herrington, *Change*, 8.

⁹⁸ Herrington, *Change*, 9.

⁹⁹ Walrath, *Leading Churches Through Change*, 122.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 192.

¹⁰¹ Brubaker, *Promise and Peril*, 37.

¹⁰² Brubaker, *Promise and Peril*, 108.

Second, “The identified issue is almost never the issue.”¹⁰³ In Acts 6 the allegation from the Greek speaking minority that their widows were being overlooked during the daily food distribution. The issue, however, was much deeper than the distribution of food it likely was the alienation of the Hellenist Jews in the early church since all significant leadership was held by Aramaic speaking Jews. Murmuring and complaining was the only way to express their displeasure with the situation. Leaders need to look below the stated issue to see if there is a bigger problem lurking beneath the surface.

Third, “Involve the ‘complainers’ in solving their identified problems.”¹⁰⁴ The apostles recruited members of the murmuring minority to address the problem which led to the new role in the church of deacon. Brubaker adds, “Conflict is often a crisis, but it is also an opportunity. Much depends on our attitude towards conflict.”¹⁰⁵ A bad attitude about conflict presupposes that the episode will end poorly while a good attitude can lead to a successful resolution. Not only does attitude play a part in conflict management, but so does our conflict management style. The three main styles¹⁰⁶ of managing conflict are:

Nonconfrontation Style

This style tries to side step conflicts when they arise. This can either be a weakness or strength. It is a weakness when the individual always avoids conflict and disagreement or shies away from topics of dispute. They could be likened to the picture of the ostrich with their head in the sand believing if they can’t see it then it isn’t there.

¹⁰³ Brubaker, *Promise and Peril*, 109.

¹⁰⁴ Brubaker, *Promise and Peril*, 109.

¹⁰⁵ Brubaker, *Promise and Peril*, 109.

¹⁰⁶ There are a variety of conflict management styles but all of them tend to originate in these three. For examples of other conflict styles, see Gangle and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 236–243.

Conflicts handled in this way will only grow larger and will require more time and energy to resolve. However, there are times when avoidance is a legitimate way to manage conflict. “If the conflicting issue does not merit the energy being expended, then nonconfrontation becomes the wiser choice.”¹⁰⁷ A bulldog can beat a skunk in a fight any day of the week, but it just isn’t worth it. It is the wisdom and experience of the leader that will determine when they should engage in conflict and when to avoid it.

Solution Style

“The solution style seeks to meet the opposition at the midpoint of differences.”¹⁰⁸

The ideas and concerns of all the parties involved are listened to and considered in an attempt to settle the disagreement. This style often involves give and take by all the parties involved. While this is often seen as the best way to handle conflict, there are times when it is not. There may be times in the church when not all voices should be heard, for example “not all parties should contribute to a solution if the issue involves orthodox versus unorthodox doctrine.”¹⁰⁹ There may be occasions during the amalgamation process when a leader cannot consider all the other opinions being offered, especially if those opinions will derail the amalgamation process. In these cases another conflict management style is required.

Control

The control style “dominates arguments until the other person understands his or her position.”¹¹⁰ Again there are inherent weaknesses and strengths with this model. It becomes a weakness if this is the only style an individual uses to resolve conflicts with a

¹⁰⁷ Gangle and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 234.

¹⁰⁸ Gangle and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 235.

¹⁰⁹ Gangle and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 235.

¹¹⁰ Gangle and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 236.

‘my way or the highway’ attitude. This leads to a very closed and domineering environment that does not encourage growth and creativity. It is strength in issues that require someone to make the tough, but right choice. Issues of church discipline would be an example of when this style would be appropriate. If a believer is caught in a sin, God expects that we restore the individual (Galatians 6:1-5). We cannot restore them to the fellowship in a Christ-like manner if we are nonconfrontational with them, hoping that the problem will go away or resolve itself. We cannot fulfill our biblical duty if we use the solution style to address the problem then agreeing that they can sin some of the time. The only way to handle this conflict is by showing what the Word of God says about their conduct and adhering to it without wavering.

Conflict that is managed effectively can empower the congregation to solve the problem and keep the church on track to achieving its goal.

Time and Change

Change can sometimes be perceived like having to take bad tasting medicine – do it quickly and get it over with. However, change is a process and often it is a very slow process. The transformation of an existing congregation is never a quick or easy process. “A realistic figure for comprehensive transformation might be five to seven years or sometimes longer.”¹¹¹ Brandt and Kriegel advise, “When you push too hard or too fast for change you get diminished quality, poor communication and zero innovation.”¹¹² Powell agrees by stating, “Transitioning a church is like turning a huge ship. It requires a long

¹¹¹ Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change*, 12.

¹¹² Brandt & Kriegel, *Sacred Cows*, 289.

intentional turn. When you attempt to turn too quickly, the odds are that it will end in disaster.”¹¹³

The reason why so many change initiatives fail falls at the feet of the leader and their rush to accomplish the change. Leaders who are part of the amalgamation process need to think long term and accept the fact that the process will take years to complete. John Kotter has this to say about who he calls outstanding leaders, “Driven by compelling visions that they find personally relevant, they are willing to stay the course to accomplish objectives that are often psychologically important to them. They will also take the time to ensure that all the new practices are firmly grounded in the organization’s culture.”¹¹⁴

Too many leaders tend to think like managers rather than leaders. Kotter says, “Because of the nature of management processes, managers often think in much shorter time frames.”¹¹⁵ Managers see anything that needs to be accomplished this week as short term and anything that will take a year as long term. They focus on the end of the timeline so they can declare victory; stop the change process and move on to the next managerial task. To people who have a managerial mindset three years can seem like a very long time. Without the right leadership in place, for the amalgamation, who see that change is a process that takes significant time and effort, change stalls and the *missio Dei* is left for others to do.

¹¹³ Powell, *Change Your Church*, 121.

¹¹⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 144.

¹¹⁵ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 144.

Strategy for Leading Change

While there are many good books that outline various strategies for change, the basis for this strategy comes from the story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt found in the Bible.

The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. Exod 2:23–25

From this passage it is clear that the Israelites wanted change and so God called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. What God was asking Moses to do was to facilitate the change of an entire race of people – economically, socially, politically and spiritually. Generations of learned behaviours and accepted customs were going to be overturned. Slaves were going to become free, the oppressed were to be liberated and a new way of life as a nation was to be developed. It was a very large and daunting task to be sure, but Moses employs a strategy for change that enables him to accomplish the task God has called him to do.

Moses' Change Principles

Principle 1: Show the need for change.

Kotter says, “Establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gaining needed cooperation.”¹¹⁶ Complacency to change will always be at a high level and transformations usually go nowhere because few people get interested in the change process. People will find a thousand reasons why the change is unnecessary or wrong.

The account of the ten plagues found in Exodus 7–12 is the description of the principle of showing the need for change. Moses actually had to convince not only the

¹¹⁶ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 36.

Israelites for the need for change but also the Pharaoh. “Visible crises can be enormously helpful in catching people’s attention and pushing up urgency levels. Conducting business as usual is very difficult if the building seems to be on fire.”¹¹⁷ To be sure, the plagues created a visible crisis that got all of Egypt’s attention since the plagues had an effect on the Israelites as well as the Egyptians.¹¹⁸

Many churches are dead or dying these days. They have stopped being effective partners in the *missio Dei* and haven’t reached new people with the hope of Christ in a long time. These congregations are getting older and smaller every year and although the people inside the church are often sincere in their love of God and their church, it offers nothing of value to those outside the church’s walls. They need a sense of urgency to awake them to the fact that things need to change before there is nothing left of the church.

The congregations interested in amalgamation need to have it communicated to them, in a way that they understand that there is a need for change. Forcing an amalgamation onto a church by the denomination, while has the desired effect of showing the need for change, is not communicating with them effectively. Showing the congregation the statistics of the attendance over a ten year period, the number of new converts, the youth programs in the church and the finances will communicate to them the need for change.

The purpose of showing the need for change is to discredit the old system of doing things and we see that Moses didn’t stop until the old system gave away. Moses

¹¹⁷ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 45.

¹¹⁸ The Israelites were not exempt from the plagues of water turning to blood (7:14–24), frogs (7:25–8:15) or gnats (8:16–19) and they were only exempt from the death of the first born if they followed the Passover guidelines (11:1–12:36). They were exempt from all the other plagues but they would have seen the effects of each calamity.

never tried to solve the problems the Israelites were having on account of the plagues because the problems were actually helping to tear down the old system.

Principle 2: Mark the ending of the old system.

Moses marked the ending of the old system in dramatic fashion by crossing the Red Sea and leaving Egypt behind them (Exodus 14:26–28). All of their previous lives were now on another continent and a new chapter was about to begin. As Lynn Anderson puts it, “Leaving Egypt is like running the bases; you can’t steal second without leaving first base.”¹¹⁹

Although the ending of a system that Moses used was pretty abrupt, Anderson suggests several ways that a leader can celebrate the ending of an old system that are more gentle in nature including acknowledging their losses, compensating for their loss, communicating a vision of what is to come, getting people involved in the change process, copious amounts of communication, showing how values will remain intact and providing closure to what is ending.¹²⁰

The problem that the leader of an amalgamation will have is the possibility that the new church will not leave the old behind. Part of the amalgamation process is determining what each church has to offer to the amalgamation which means each congregation will bring with them items from the old system. It is entirely possible that one congregation will move into the building of another which means one congregation never had to leave home. The challenge the leader will face is marking the end of the old when so much of the old is still visible. A decision of what to do with any of the old

¹¹⁹ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 184.

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 184–187.

items that are hampering the amalgamation process will have to deal with as the problem arises

Even though the amalgamation will bring with it items from the old system, the leader still needs to mark an official end to the old churches and a start to the new congregation.

Principle 3: Deal quickly with complaints.

Quickly deal with complaining and murmuring is the third important principle for leading change. “The reality of any transition is that it is harder on some than on others. That is simply the nature of transition. The very nature of change means that it is going to feel unfair to someone.”¹²¹ Moses knew this full well and experienced opposition to his leadership right from the beginning – starting with his own opposition! (Exod 4:13) As each event occurred when the people complained, Moses was quick to deal with the issue (see Exod 15:25; 16:9; 17:4; Num 16:1–50).

Larry Osborne has written this sound advice, “Listen and respond to resisters. Rather than see them as adversaries to overcome, see them as advisers. Their resistance is not always a nuisance; it can be useful. Like pain in the body, it lets us know when something is out of adjustment.”¹²² Moses experienced complaining by the people when they were lacking a vital item, such as food and water. He also faced personal attacks and criticism of his leadership from Korah and his followers (Num 16) and by his brother and sister (Num 12). Each time Moses met the criticism and grumbling head on. “We manage conflict more productively when we address it early with all parties focusing on the

¹²¹ Southerland, *Transitioning*, 133.

¹²² Osborne, “Change Management” in *Leadership Handbook of Practical Theology*, 191.

problem to be solved, working hard to surface as many creative alternatives as possible.”¹²³

There will be complaining throughout the amalgamation process and the leader should expect it to be there. Addressing problems early is like putting a fire out when it is little more than a spark. However, if you fail to deal with the little spark, pretty soon you have a five alarm fire on your hands that is much more difficult to extinguish. The best way to put out a fire is to enlist more people into the fire brigade.

Principle 4: Get others involved in the change process.

Dr. Henry Brandt is quoted as saying “Your leadership position requires meeting the demands of growth. Growth requires change and sharing the work through delegation. Neglecting or ignoring this principle jeopardizes both your personal ability and your church’s ability to minister effectively.”¹²⁴

Every church has people who shape the opinion of others. Sometimes these people are leaders in the church but some may hold no leadership positions at all. The leader must convince these people that change is needed and solicit their support in moving the process forward. Anderson makes this point clear when he says, “The way to change an organization is to identify and persuade the primary informal leaders of that organization and they will convince everyone else.”¹²⁵

Those who are subordinates perform better when they feel that they have the leader’s support, but they will not perform if they feel that they have no real authority to make decisions. “The people’s capacity to achieve is determined by their leader’s ability

¹²³ Gangel, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 263.

¹²⁴ George, *Leading and Managing Your Church*, 117.

¹²⁵ Anderson, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, 177.

to empower.”¹²⁶ Sydney Finkelstein, commenting on bad habits of leaders states, “Executives with all the answers trust no one. Only they can be relied upon to make the final call on any issue where the answer is not obvious.”¹²⁷ As a result the venture ultimately suffers because the business can only go as far as the ability of the leader to lead it alone.

The amalgamation process requires the support of people from the congregations that are affected. Some are needed as part of the beginning process and leadership teams, some are needed for negotiating items that will part of the new church, and others will be needed to organize the fellowship events that will be planned. The more people that are involved in the process, the less people are sitting around trying to figure out where they can start fires of discontent. The leader of the amalgamation needs to be willing to delegate tasks to capable people within the congregation. There is too much to do alone and it increases the likelihood of congregational buy in.

Principle 5: Allow people to share their ideas and concerns.

Although the leader of the amalgamation has the best understanding of the big picture involved in the amalgamation, individuals from the congregations may have some very good ideas on how to best accomplish the goals the leader has set out. They may also have legitimate concerns about the direction the leader is going that can help the overall effectiveness of the process. Good leaders encourage and seek input from others.

Jethro saw that Moses could not keep up the pace of seeing people morning till night and that it was not good for Moses personally and it wasn't good for the people either (Exod 18: 13–26). Jethro understood that the leadership structure that Moses had

¹²⁶ Maxwell, *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, 126.

¹²⁷ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail*, 226.

adopted was stifling and undermining God’s plan for His people. Kotter comments, “Whenever structural barriers are not removed in a timely way, the risk is that employees will become so frustrated that they will sour the entire transformational effort.”¹²⁸

As Lester Meyer states, “The will of God for the life of the people comes to be known in more than one way. It is not only communicated in moments of divine revelation to the designated leader. It also emerges from the good judgement of those who can offer counsel for the tangible occasions of life in the community.”¹²⁹ By giving people better access to the decision makers, problems were handled more rapidly and the people were more satisfied. It also allowed those gifted men, who could have become his critics had Moses continued alone, to become his allies in facing a common challenge. As well, “Moses laid the groundwork for effective leadership after his death.”¹³⁰

Principle 6: Resist the urge to rush.

“Everyone knows that in the desert Moses led the Israelites on a path with many detours. The book of Exodus states that God deliberately advised against a direct route, which we can take to mean that the children of Israel had a few things to learn along the way.”¹³¹ The people wandered in the wilderness for forty years, which most people would agree is a long time for the change process to take hold. Change takes time and nothing good can come from rushing the process. Kotter says that until changes “sink down deeply into the culture, which for an entire company can take three to ten years, new approaches are fragile and subject to regression.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 107.

¹²⁹ Meyer, Lester, *The Message of Exodus*, 110.

¹³⁰ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 139.

¹³¹ Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father*, 24.

¹³² Kotter, *Leading Change*, 13.

Amalgamations take time. Ideally there should be at least a year of preparation by the congregations involved before the amalgamation even is made official. Then there is at least another two years after the official start of the new church when the congregation will continue to work on mission and vision and gain an understanding of how they can best participate in the *missio Dei* within their community.

Rushing the process will only lead to problems in the future, so the leader needs to remind the people (and themselves) that the amalgamation can be likened to a marathon rather than the hundred metre dash.

Principle 7: Leading change requires a certain type of leader.

This principle is best illustrated this way. A specific set of skills is needed for successful white-water rafting. “Anyone who decides to pilot the raft based exclusively on experience with other types of water craft has made a serious mistake.”¹³³ This does not necessarily mean that a new leader is required every time change is needed, but it does mean that the leader has to adjust their leadership style to fit the circumstance.

Business professor Sydney Finkelstein offers these three qualities that leaders need during times of change. First is flexibility. The ability to move with the change process is what it means to be flexible. He states, “many CEO’s on their way to becoming spectacularly unsuccessful accelerate their company’s decline simply by reverting to what they regard as the tried and tested.”¹³⁴ Change moves things in different directions and requires the leader to move with it – many times into unknown and uncharted areas. Throughout the amalgamation process there will be well intentioned people who will suggest returning to the tried and tested way of doing church. The tried and tested does

¹³³ Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change*, 14.

¹³⁴ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail*, 235.

not always work in the new frontier and so new ways must be developed. When the Israelites found themselves with the Red Sea on one side and the advancing Egyptian army on the other, they thought they were doomed because they had no boats to cross the water (Exodus 14). God provided another way, one which no one would have dreamed of – cross through the sea rather than ride on top of it. Moses trusted God and all passed through to the other side.

The second characteristic needed is adaptability. Flexibility allows you to move in new directions that change takes you but you must be ready to allow those changes to be the new reality. Finkelstein writes, “In company after company, the managers had every opportunity see the important changes that were coming to their industry. The relevant change in business conditions was foreseen and discussed – and then disregarded.”¹³⁵

The leader of the amalgamated church has to be adaptable for the simple reason that no two congregations are the same and no two amalgamations are the same. What has worked in the past will not necessarily work in the future so be ready to change. Another consideration for the necessity of adaptability is the context that the new church will find itself in. Each community is different and so the ministry the church is involved in may not look like anything that has been previously done or planned for.

Finally to effectively go through the change process a leader must be teachable. “In a world where business conditions are constantly changing and innovations often seem to be the only constant, no one can have all the answers for long.”¹³⁶ A clear example of this truth in action seen in Moses life is when his father-in-law Jethro came to visit and offered him advice. Moses accepted instruction and it made him a better leader.

¹³⁵ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail*, 4.

¹³⁶ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail*, 224.

The introduction of new situations that change brings means that leaders are often faced with challenges that they have no prior experience in dealing with. The leader must be willing to learn and grow throughout the change process.

The Salvation Army offers its leaders some excellent advice as it pertains to being lifelong learners. They suggest that, “focused leaders for the 21st century will also have good mentors.”¹³⁷ For the leader of the amalgamated church, a mentor who has gone through the process would be advisable. The mentor will help the leader to gain clarity about their calling and their temptations to ignore it. The mentor will also help the leader to assess themselves and set worthwhile spiritual, personal and vocational goals and the mentor will keep them accountable to those goals.

Conclusion

The fall of Christendom and the emergence of post-modernity has created a new landscape for the church where a new way to navigate is required. For the church, nothing appears as it once did; the metanarrative of Christianity no longer has the same effect on culture as it once did. The church is entering into a land they once dominated as foreigners and strangers and they are finding it difficult to respond to the changes. It is clear, however, that the church that does not respond to the changes going on around them will find that they are considered irrelevant by their community and eventually they will cease to exist. What the church needs are leaders who are able to guide the church through this new era.

In light of these challenges, plus many others we discussed in the previous chapter, it is abundantly clear that church mergers will take strong leadership in order for them to occur effectively. The willingness to embrace the leadership principles outlined

¹³⁷ The Salvation Army, *Servants Together*, 125.

in this chapter will be important for the leader tasked with the job of merging two or more congregations because the process of amalgamation will test even the best of leaders.

With an understanding of the theology of mission, leadership, and change as well as an appreciation of other amalgamation models, in the next chapter we will consider a model that can be used by The Salvation Army in future congregational amalgamations.

Chapter 5

A New Model for Church Amalgamations

The TAR methodology employed by this thesis utilized the four practices of experience, reflection, learning, and action to research amalgamations within *The Salvation Army* context. By entering into dialogue with pastors of amalgamated churches so that they could share their experiences of the amalgamation process and reflect on the pros and cons of that process, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the process used by *The Salvation Army* to amalgamate congregations in decline. The researcher then added to this conversation by looking at other models of amalgamations that are used by congregations outside of *The Salvation Army* for the purpose of seeing the similarities and differences with the model used by *The Salvation Army*. As an additional part of the learning phase of TAR, the theology of mission, the *missio Dei* and the Kingdom of God were explored along with the type of leadership necessary for a successful amalgamation so the researcher could fully appreciate the theological reasoning for amalgamations and the leadership characteristics necessary for those who endeavour to amalgamate two or more congregations.

Having completed the experience, reflection and learning phases of TAR, the final phase of action requires that the information gathered in the first three phases be used to develop a renewed theological activity that can be used by the participants to increase the effectiveness of their program. In this thesis the action is the development of an amalgamation model that will assist congregations considering a merger.

The merging of two congregations is a complex process since there are pastoral, spiritual, and practical aspects to the process. The goal is the creation of a new congregation with a combination of people and resources which provides an increased capacity for spiritual growth, the spreading of the gospel, and for missional effectiveness.

When an amalgamation occurs it affects the lives of everyone involved. The merging of two or more congregations elicits a number of questions and requires considerable adjustment by those affected - both laity and clergy. For the congregations involved, this time of change requires patience, vision, and prayer.

It is important to note that the amalgamation process is comprised of two distinct and separate tasks that must be handled with great care. The first task is the merger of the people and the second task is a merger of resources. Both of these tasks can be accomplished concurrently but they must be done independently of each other because both parts require considerable energy and time. The two congregations need time to blend so that they can begin the process of discerning what this new church will look like and discovering the mission to which God has called them. Time is also required to develop a strategic plan for the new church. The practical preparations of what should be done with the church buildings and their contents can easily distract the congregations from the important task of getting to know each other.

The research for this thesis indicated that there was not a clearly defined model followed to help the congregations through the amalgamation process. The responses from the surveyed congregational leaders indicated “that there was no clear process followed during the amalgamation” and that “it appears no clear direction was given” to

the congregations during the amalgamation. The lack of an amalgamation model perhaps contributed to some of the problems the mergers faced post-amalgamation.

In this chapter we will turn our attention to a proposed model that addresses the task of merging the people and the resources of once separate congregations effectively. As a way to make this model easy to understand the following acronym, UNITE, will be used to identify the various tasks that need to be completed throughout the amalgamation process.

This model differs from other amalgamation models in these ways.

First, UNITE uses a logic model as a method for evaluation and planning. The logic model will be used by the congregations considering amalgamating to evaluate their mission effectiveness and program evaluation. The logic model will also be used in the new church to help in planning programs that revolve around the mission of the church.

Second, the UNITE model is theologically focused. The evaluation process does not consider the financial situation of the churches considering merging, only their ability to fulfill their mission. A church that fails to fulfill its mission is a church that will be inward focused, aging and in financial trouble at some point in its life. The logic model being used is also theological throughout, meaning all the activities of the church will be evaluated against the *missio Dei*, God's kingdom coming and God's mission being accomplished through the "being" and "doing" of the congregation. The congregation will also receive theological instruction on what mission is – specifically the mission of The Salvation Army.

Third, the UNITE model has an evaluation component that the new church is to engage in on a regular basis. This evaluation will help them to adjust the course they are

on, make some things better or remove those things that are hampering the church accomplishing God's mission in their community. The evaluation process will also help the congregation prepare for the annual inspection that *The Salvation Army* conducts with all their ministry units.

UNITE: A Model for Church Amalgamation

The acronym UNITE will provide a way for those participating in the amalgamation to follow the process in an organized manner. UNITE is comprised of five distinct and separate parts that include: Understand, Negotiate, Integrate, Together, and Evaluate.

U – Understand

The beginning of this amalgamation model requires that the congregations involved in the amalgamation process undergo an evaluation that will endeavour to determine the current state that the church is in.

This is a necessary step based on the research conducted for this thesis. The research indicated that the congregations did not have a clear understanding of the precarious state that their church was in. Evidence for this is found in the following responses: “Both of the corps involved in the amalgamation need not have been in this place if local and Divisional leadership would have made the congregations aware of their need to change and the consequences of not changing.” “I would suggest that the process should have gone smoother at the beginning if the people were properly informed of why their church was not self- sufficient with firm data.” “[The church] leadership did not conduct a self-assessment of the corps’ members, programs, or community to discover why the corps needed to close its doors.”

So the first priority in the amalgamation process is the need for the congregations to honestly answer three questions:

1. Why do we want to amalgamate with another congregation?
2. What has contributed to the situation where amalgamation is being considered?
3. What is the mission of the church?

As each congregation meets to answer these questions separately they will gain a better understanding of the current state of their church and it will help in determining the future direction of the new congregation.

The answer to question one will help to shape the direction of the new congregation for good or for ill. As was seen earlier in this thesis, all of the churches that were studied answered the question “Why do we want to amalgamate with another congregation?” the same way, they had no choice. All of the congregations in the research had the amalgamation of their church forced upon them by the denomination and so they never had the opportunity to answer this question honestly. Many of the leaders indicated that the congregation didn’t want the amalgamation to take place but they felt they had no choice in the matter. Obviously this is not the ideal way to begin the amalgamation process because it can lead to the people distrusting the denominational leaders and resenting the new members of the amalgamated church.

By trying to answer the first question it is possible that a secondary question may be asked: “Do we want to amalgamate?” If the congregation strongly feels that they do not want to amalgamate with another congregation then they should go no further in the process. The work involved for successful amalgamations is hard enough without one of

the groups disinterested in the process; therefore that congregation should find another method to revitalize their church.

For the congregations not interested in amalgamation, Alice Mann provides a spectrum of choices available to congregations who find themselves at a crossroads in life. She suggests,

“Relocation to a new site. A dramatic transformation involving one or more of the following: a) the congregation makes a significant change in the style or schedule of its worship to reach a broader population. b) The congregation moves from one size category to another, but often from family (attendance 0-50) to pastoral (51-150) or program (151-350). Changing size requires a major shift in the congregation’s culture. c) The makeup of both membership and leadership circles shifts markedly and economic level, race, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, age, or place of residence. d) The congregation adopts a significantly different model of ministry and leadership, one that does not involve a resident, seminary trained pastor. Sometimes characterized as “total ministry,” this option applies particularly to congregations in isolated communities. A parallel development (launching a new worshipping congregation on your site while maintaining a separate chaplaincy to the existing members and their familiar style). Part time clergy, yoked or cluster ministry, or hospice (planning a holy death that will virtually honor the past – and perhaps be still legacy on another ministry that can carry forward your congregation’s central faith values).”¹

For those congregations that are interested in amalgamating the answer to “Why do we want to amalgamate with another congregation?” can act as a benchmark showing the thought process of the group at the beginning of the process as compared to the carefully and theologically thought out expectations at the end of the process. For example, the answer to the question “Why do we want to amalgamate?” might be “For financial reasons,” or “To be better stewards of our resources.”

The research for this thesis indicates that the amalgamations occurred because at least one of the congregations involved was in a position of being financially unviable if the amalgamation did not take place. The survey garnered the following responses:

¹ Mann, *Can Our Church Live*, 62–63.

“DHQ initiated the amalgamation that arose out of one congregation needing a new and bigger facility as well as the other congregation not being financially viable.” “[The corps] had seen a significant drop in attendance over the years and was having a hard time meeting their financial obligations.” “The leadership of [the corps] had an understanding of the situation they were in – a dwindling congregation, struggling financially and in danger of shutting the doors.” “Both corps could not have made it by themselves. The sharing of resources will make it possible for a new corps to be replanted in the future.”

Financial considerations are not legitimate reasons to merge with another church. This is where UNITE differs from other amalgamation models.

Other amalgamation models list financial concerns as a legitimate reason to merge congregations but it isn't. Two congregations with financial difficulties that merge will become one church with financial difficulties. This fact is evident in the research conducted when we see the following responses: “Unfortunately we lost a lot of people from one of the congregations and that has had financial implications.” “The [new] congregation is now fairly healthy, but finances have made it almost impossible to build or buy a church facility.” “The church is still financially challenged.”

Why is the church in financial trouble? That is a question that should be answered well before an amalgamation is considered. The reason for all financial problems in the church can be linked to a lack of income. The way to increase income is to increase the number of people who attend the church. The more people that attend a church, the more income, normally, they have. The church that is engaged in the *missio Dei* will be engaged in their community and will attract people to their ministry and the church will

grow. Lack of growth and lack of mission can be linked together. At the end of the UNITE process the congregation will look and see that although they wanted to amalgamate for financial reasons that the theological reasons that they discovered through the process will actually speak to the reason why the church was in the financial difficulty that led to the amalgamation.

The second question the church needs to answer is “What has contributed to the situation where amalgamation is being considered?” To effectively answer this question, the church has to engage in a self-study that will expound on their current situation. The Salvation Army offers their congregations a choice of four different health assessment tools: Natural Church Development, Logic Model for Program Evaluation, Congregational Life Cycle Assessment, and Ministry Fitness Check.

The Institute for Natural Church Development under the leadership of Christian A. Schwarz surveyed one thousand churches in thirty two countries to determine if there were principles producing healthy church growth that was independent of denomination or theology, country or culture, leadership style, size or ministry model. The research discovered that there was a framework were eight characteristics that were critical components of the life of healthy, growing churches. They were: empowering leadership, gift based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Natural Church Development (NCD) “is a *set of principles* – a way of thinking about church growth. Growth should be about quality (health) and not just quantity (numbers). In fact NCD suggests that quality should take priority over quantity

in church growth.”² NCD offers churches the opportunity to engage in serious self-reflection on their strengths and weaknesses and how they might better understand what has brought them to the place that they are now in.

A logic model is both a method for planning and a visual way to organize and communicate the connections between parts of a program. One of the benefits of a logic model is that it allows users to picture an entire system and the resources that they use. “For program evaluation, a logic model presents program information and progress toward objectives and goals in ways that inform, advocate for a particular program approach and teach program stakeholders.”³

The development of a logic model involves a multi-level representation of what happens within a program. The beginning of a logic model requires that the participants make a list of all the activities associated with a particular program that produce positive change in the program participants (rather than such things as administrative tasks). The second layer of the logic model is recording the short term outcome objectives which are the immediate benefits or changes that are expected as a result of the program activities. Following the short term objectives is the long term outcome objectives. These are different than the short term objectives in that they have a broader significance than the short term outcomes. The last layer of the logic model is the program goals that reflect the organization’s mission statement or mandate. The final step of the logic model is creating “program logic”⁴ by connecting the boxes with arrows showing how an activity is connected to a short term objective, a long term objective and finally to the goal.

² Natural Church Development, *Natural Church Development: An Introduction for Churches*, 4.

³ Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 2.

⁴ Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 5.

“Whenever you draw an arrow from an activity to a short-term outcome objective or between outcome objectives you are making a statement about the theory and logic of your program. Your arrows can be thought of as your ‘validity assumptions’ or the assumptions you make about ‘what causes what, and why’ within your program. These assumptions also refer to the necessary conditions that need to be present for the link to be considered valid. Validity assumptions can be determined from: research literature, knowledge of best practices in the field, personal experience and common sense and logic.”⁵

The Congregational Life Cycle Assessment is a resource that will help a congregation better understand where their church is on a life cycle diagram. The participants are instructed on the seven life cycle stages represented on a bell graph – dream stage, plant stage, formation stage, stability stage, maintenance stage, crisis stage, and closure. Following the instruction on the life stages the participants are asked two questions: “Where would you place your congregation on the life cycle diagram?” and “Why have you placed it there?” These questions are intended to spur on conversation about what this mean for the church, the implications involved and possible next steps. For the congregation willing to do the work, it is possible to return to an earlier stage in the life cycle. The congregations are reminded, “In each of these stages, prayer, willingness to work together and passion for the mission can enable us to do great things as we partner with God in the work of the kingdom.”⁶

The Ministry Fitness Check was developed by Outreach Canada and is a diagnostic tool that is part of their eight to ten month congregational Vision and Renewal Process. The goal of the Ministry Fitness Check is to produce a preferred future and a five year action plan for the congregation. Outreach Canada’s web page claims, “The Ministry Fitness Check is a confidential questionnaire given to church members during a church service. It is designed as a communications and analysis tool for churches. Using

⁵ Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 5.

⁶ Watson, *Congregational Life Cycle Assessment*, 5.

the Ministry Fitness Check, church leaders can get a clear picture of how their church people view the church in terms of organizational planning & leadership, evangelism, discipleship, worship, prayer and more.”⁷

The preferred evaluation tool recommended for the UNITE amalgamation model is the Logic Model. The Logic Model offered by *The Salvation Army* is a very effective tool to evaluate social services programs but is found lacking when it is used to evaluate church programs. The area where the logic model is weak is in theology, so some refinements to the logic model presented by *The Salvation Army* are required to address this deficiency.

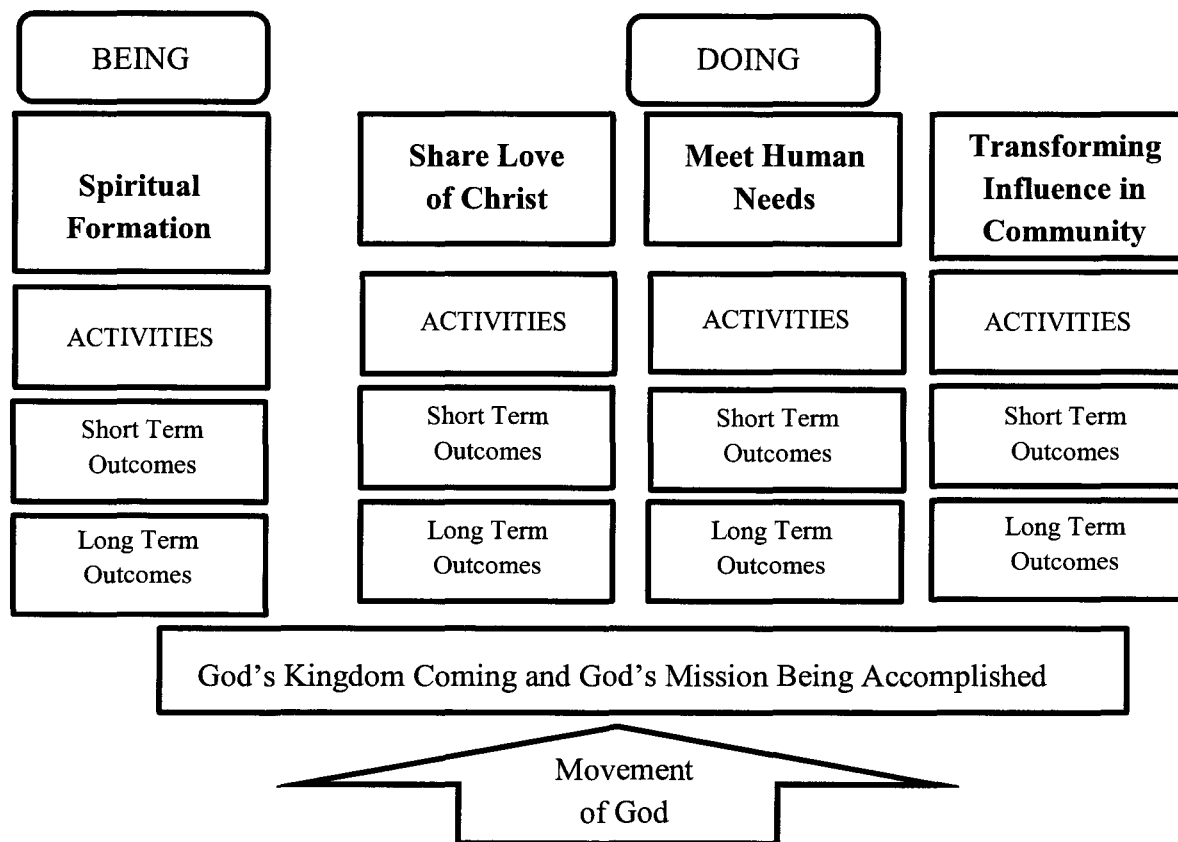
Rich Janzen and David Wiebe have authored a paper that addresses the use of logic models within faith-based organizations. In “*Putting God in the Logic Model: Developing a National Framework for the Evaluation of Faith-based Organizations*,” Janzen and Wiebe state, “Put simply, faith rarely shows up on a program logic model or in other descriptors of a program’s theory of change.”⁸ Recognizing these limitations when a logic model was used for the program evaluation of a Mennonite Brethren initiative “Regenerate 21-01,” Janzen and Wiebe believed that they could adequately conduct an effective evaluation that also took faith into consideration. They write, “The logic model can be divided into two main parts: activities and outcomes related to ‘being’ and those related to ‘doing.’ These two parts reflect the two main endeavours Christians are called to follow: *being* transformed into closer likeness and unity with God, while faithfully *doing* the work of God’s kingdom on earth.”⁹

⁷ Outreach Canada, *Ministry Fitness Check*, lines 1–4

⁸ Janzen and Wiebe, *Putting God in the Logic Model*, 6.

⁹ Janzen and Wiebe, *Putting God in the Logic Model*, 10.

Using Janzen and Wiebe's baseline logic model¹⁰ as a guide, the following is an example of how a logic model can be used to evaluate congregations interested in using the UNITE Model for amalgamations.



The logic model can give the congregation a picture of what they have done well and areas where they are lacking. The activities that are to be commended are those that can be linked to short term outcomes and long term outcomes and ultimately linked to “God’s Kingdom Coming and God’s Mission Being Accomplished.” Areas that need to be examined are those activities that are an end unto themselves.

The second part of the logic model is outcome measurement. “Outcome measurement is the regular, systematic tracking of the degree to which program

¹⁰ Janzen and Wiebe, *Putting God in the Logic Model*, 11.

participants experience the benefits or changes intended. It is the ability to measure whether a program makes a difference in the lives of participants. Measurement has to do with detecting change.”¹¹ The framework for outcome measurements consists of six parts: objectives, research questions, indicators, where will we get the information, what data collection tools will be used, and data analysis.

Referring back to the logic model, objectives are the short term and long-term objectives that came from the activities listed. From each one of these objectives, a research question is formulated to assess the accomplishment of each outcome objectives. Objectives and evaluation questions lead to a variety of indicators which are observable bits of information that are used to determine how you will know whether the outcome objectives are being achieved. Once there are some clear questions and good indicators for each of the questions the next thing to do is to develop a plan for gathering the information. Part of gathering information will be to determine what data collection tools will be used to accomplish the task. For the final stage of outcome measurement, data analysis, Harris offers this advice, “It is important to read all of the data and basically try to organize it where possible. Remind yourself that you were only trying to gather certain things. Review your original questions and refresh your memory about the questions you originally planned to answer through the study. This will help you stay focused when the data seems overwhelming. Begin summarizing and coding your data. Be conscious of research questions, but be open to emerging patterns. Generate themes. Begin writing. Plan the structure of the report, using both original research questions and your set of themes.”¹²

¹¹ Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 9.

¹² Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 11.

The evaluation planning can be organized as follows¹³:

Objective	Research Questions	Indicators	Where will you get the information from?	What data collection tools will we use?	Data Analysis
<i>Outcome objective from logic model</i>	<i>May refer to success in meeting objectives or other questions stakeholders feel the evaluation should address</i>	<i>Things you can observe that will help you answer this question</i>	<i>Who will you speak to? How would you access existing information?</i>	<i>Given what is written in the columns to the left, what method or methods are most effective and efficient?</i>	<i>How are you going to make sense of the data you have collected?</i>

By this point in the logic model the evaluation of the congregation should have an answer to the question “What has contributed to the situation where amalgamation is being considered?” The logic model has delineated the activities of the church by breaking them down into two categories “Being” and “Doing.” Under these two categories are the headings of spiritual formation, share the love of Christ, meet human needs, and transforming influence in the community.¹⁴ The congregation would then have a list of activities as they relate to each of these headings and objectives deriving from these activities. The whole logic model is undergirded by the movement of God and the coming of his kingdom and the accomplishment of his mission. Any activity that cannot be linked to the accomplishment of God’s mission can be seen as a contributing factor to the situation that has led to a possible merger with another congregation.

An example of this process may look this:

¹³ Harris, *Program Development and Evaluation*, 12.

¹⁴ These headings are based on the official mission statement of The Salvation Army, “*The Salvation Army exists to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.*”

DOING

Transforming Influence in Community**Activity:** Sunday Morning Worship**Short Term Objective:** *Offer a life changing worship experience to the community.***Long Term Objective:** *Being a place of grace where people enter into and strengthen a relationship with God*

The next step is the outcome measurement to see how effective this congregation was at accomplishing these objectives:

Objective	Research Questions	Indicators	Where will you get the information from?	What data collection tools will we use?	Data Analysis
<i>Offer a life changing worship experience to the community</i>	How many people from the immediate community attend Sunday Worship?	New people in the worship service	Ushers Greeters Pastor Sunday School teachers Statistics	Interviews SAMIS ¹⁵	The collected data should indicate if they are new people from the community
<i>Being a place of grace where people enter into a relationship with God</i>	How many converts have we seen this year?	Number of people using the mercy seat or Holiness Table during the altar call	Pastor Mercy Seat counselors Sunday School teachers	Interview SAMIS	The data collected should indicate if there are people making salvation decisions

¹⁵ SAMIS is the data collecting software used by The Salvation Army in the Canada and Bermuda Territory

If at the conclusion of the outcome measurement this fictional congregation discovers that they have no people from the community attending their weekly worship gatherings and/or no new converts, then they can conclude that their Sunday Worship has failed to accomplish the goal of extending God's kingdom and being engaged in God's mission.¹⁶ It is apparent that there is something about the worship service itself or other activities that the congregation participates in that has caused a disconnection between the church and the community and the result is this church failing to be a transforming influence in their community.

The underlying theological reason for this failure to influence the community is a lack of emphasis on the *missio Dei*. This congregation is not engaged in the missional work of God to which they are called to and it is this lack of engagement that has led to the congregation's demise. Therefore the lack of mission is the answer to the question, "What has contributed to the situation where amalgamation is being considered?"

The information gleaned from the logic model indicates where the deficiencies of not engaging in the mission of God are within the church and this information can be used to address those deficiencies as the church looks toward a strategic plan for the amalgamation.

The third question that the church must answer as it seeks to understand itself is "What is the mission of the church?" While the logic model proposed above indicates that the mission of the church is "God's kingdom coming and God's mission being accomplished," in reality the church may have a different understanding of their mission. While the church's normative theology, formal theology and its espoused theology all

¹⁶ This does not reflect on the importance of the weekly worship to those who attend on a regular basis or the effect that worship has on the individual's spiritual formation. It is only an indicator that they have failed to meet the objectives that they established for the church.

may claim that accomplishing the *missio Dei* is at the heart of the church's practice, their operant theology may be quite different. The church must be able to express what their operant theology actually is.

In the example of the church used above, it is apparent that their operant theology does not align with their espoused theology because their espoused theology says that they are to "*exist to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.*" As the example shows the church failed to be a transforming influence in their community therefore they possibly have an operant theology that is at work within the congregation that supersedes the normative, formal and espoused theologies present within the church's cognizance. This operant theology may state that it is the responsibility of the church to meet the needs of the current congregants over and above meeting the needs of those outside of the church. Such thinking would definitely explain why the church had failed to add any new people from the community into their fellowship even though their espoused theology said that they wanted to be a transforming influence within their community.

It is possible that if the congregations interested in amalgamation had engaged in the discipline of understanding the theological reasoning for their activity at an earlier time in their life cycle that they would not find themselves in the position of having to merge with another congregation in order to survive. They could have identified the areas where they were not engaging in the Mission of God and made the necessary changes to assure that they were actually accomplishing the mission of the church. While the reasons given for the need to amalgamate often are of a pragmatic nature around the issue of

finances, the real reason for amalgamation is theological – the church’s normative, formal, espoused or operant theology was not practiced.

While the congregations are conducting their self-evaluations, a separate committee comprised of members from each congregation as well as a representative from *The Salvation Army*¹⁷ could begin the next stage of the UNITE model by negotiating the various aspects of the amalgamation process as it relates to the new congregation and the distribution of assets.

N – Negotiation

According to Gangle and Canine, all negotiations have at least three sequential steps: “the demand or proposal from one party; the evaluation of these by the other party; and the concessions and counter proposals by either party.”¹⁸

The negotiation process can be a difficult experience for all involved because of the investment the people have in the various aspects of their church. It is difficult to see things that have meant so much to you and your family put aside and not cherished in the same fashion that you cherish those items; this church building that is being put on the real estate market is where you were married and your children were raised. When a congregation is amalgamated it is in effect ending that congregation’s mission in the world and for that reason records and artifacts take on an extra special meaning.

Negotiation cannot be handled in a haphazard manner if the amalgamation process is to prove successful.

¹⁷ Often this person would be the Area Commander. This individual is tasked with the responsibility of overseeing all Salvation Army activity within a certain geographic area. The Area Commander is directly accountable to the Divisional Commander who is ultimately responsible for all Salvation Army ministries within the Division. A Division is a larger geographic area. There are nine divisions in the Canada & Bermuda Territory.

¹⁸ Gangle & Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 214.

Terry E. Foland identifies six issues that he deems to be “knotty details” in any merger and that this thesis considers to be the basis of negotiations in the UNITE Model. The six issues are: lay leaders, staff, identity, location, name, integration.¹⁹ As the amalgamation committee meets to negotiate, the following items need to be thoroughly discussed and agreed upon. The order of the following explanations is not indicative of the order that they should be discussed during the negotiation process as the order they are discussed is not of great importance to the process.

It is not the role of this thesis to resolve these issues, just to present and help inform the categories.

Lay Leaders

The research for this thesis indicated that lay leadership during the amalgamation was an issue that some of the congregations had to address. One of the comments made said, “Duplicating leadership can also have their challenges, ‘that’s my position and I can do it better.’” Another congregation commented, “The leadership of the new corps is dominated by the people from [corps] and they drive the agenda.” One of the comments received praised the lay leadership, “There is a strong core of lay leadership which has sustained and is one of the foundations upon which to carry the present adjustments noted.”

Each congregation will have people who are involved in the life of their church and perhaps hold a commission²⁰ indicating their ministry within the congregation. The situation that may arise is if there are two people who are commissioned for the same

¹⁹ Foland, “Merger as a New Beginning,” 71–72.

²⁰ Within *The Salvation Army* certain lay leaders can be “commissioned” leaders, similar to non-commissioned officers within a country’s military ranks. These commissioned lay leaders are generally leaders of a particular ministry within the church.

ministry in their respective congregations and the decision of who will (if any) hold the commission in the amalgamated congregation. Or perhaps there is an individual who holds a commission for a particular ministry but is not being considered for that ministry in the new congregation. These are issues that need to be discussed and addressed before the new congregation holds their first meeting.

There are of course many options to deal with issues involving lay people. The first is that all commissions are revoked and it would be the decision of the new leadership team of the church to determine what commissions, if any, are issued. The second option is to allow the commissioned individuals to decide if they want to continue in their role within the new church. Another option is to have joint leadership of certain ministries or a leader and assistant.

There may be a resistance of lay leaders to making any real changes that are necessary for an amalgamation to work successfully. The current lay leaders will need to have a high level of commitment to the new mission and vision or they can sabotage the process. Foland states, "It is important for the core lay leaders of the congregations considering merger to do some team building and dreaming together, so the threat of their own loss as leaders can be minimized."²¹

Staff

Unlike other denominations that use a call system to hire new clergy to a church, *The Salvation Army* uses an appointment system to move their ordained ministers to different ministries. For this reason the new congregation has very little say as to who the new pastor(s) will be. It is possible that one of the current pastors may indeed become the pastor of the new congregation. This is especially likely if the amalgamation is between

²¹ Foland, "Merger as a New Beginning," 71.

an established congregation and a congregation that is scheduled to close where the established church's pastor would remain and the pastor from the closing church would be reassigned. However if the amalgamation is between two struggling congregations, a new pastor will likely be appointed to the new church.

Although the amalgamation committee does not have much say in the appointments of the pastors to their congregation, they can ask for pastors that possess the necessary leadership skills to make an amalgamation have the best chance for success. These leadership skills have been outlined previously in this thesis.

With a representative from *The Salvation Army* headquarters as part of this committee it can be assured that the needs of the new congregation as it pertains to the individual(s) selected to be the pastors have been clearly expressed to the Personnel Secretary²² at Territorial Headquarters and that careful thought and prayer will be given when the selection transpires. The pastor selected to lead the new congregation should be made aware of the situation by his/her superiors as soon as possible so that they can prepare themselves for the transition. Leading an amalgamation takes a particular gift and skill set, similar to a church planter, and not every pastor is endowed with the necessary gifts and skills. For example, in the Evangelical Church in America "only about 5% of rostered church leaders have the gifts and skills necessary for the role of mission developer. The term 'mission developer' is applied both to pastors selected to start new congregations from scratch and to those identified to lead transformational ministries."²³ If a pastor is chosen who perhaps lacks some of the skills necessary, they should be given adequate time to improve those skills.

²² The Personnel Secretary is an Executive Board Member of the Territorial Headquarters Staff with the overall responsibility of all Salvation Army personnel moves and appointments.

²³ Mann, *Can Our Church Live?*, 111.

Staffing issues could also extend to paid administrative or janitorial staff and their place in the new church. While it is not likely that congregations with financial issues could afford hired staff, all staffing issues should be handled by *The Salvation Army* human resources personnel to assure that all legal procedures are followed.

Identity

Identity is how the individual congregations see themselves and how that understanding will change with the new church. If the issues of identity are not dealt with, there will always be an “us” versus “them” attitude permeating throughout the church.

As stated previously in this thesis, the research indicated that six of the ten congregations that underwent amalgamation claim that there is an “us” versus “them” attitude present within the new church. This attitude is especially prevalent in congregations where a weaker church merged with a stronger church. One response expressed it this way, “Both congregations see the amalgamation more as a closure of [corps] than a merger of two congregations leading the [corps] members to feel like they are just visitors.”

Attached to identity can be various objects within the church building such as a piece of furniture, stained glass or in Salvation Army churches – a Salvation Army flag (or several flags) with the name of the church embroidered on it. Therefore it can be expected that each group will bring items that carry a special meaning to their constituents to be used in the new church building.

For the amalgamation of the various congregations to be successful, they must see their identity attached to the new church and that new identity must be “sufficiently

compelling to overcome the powerful forces that seek to maintain an identity.”²⁴ The amalgamation committee will need to find ways to appropriately recognize the contributions of the merging communities while at the same time laying the ground work for the identity of the new church.

Location

Where will the new congregation worship? Any plan for amalgamation will need to carefully consider the emotional ties that people have towards the place they have called their church.

Any discussions about buildings and property must be directed through *The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters*. All property and buildings that are used by Salvation Army ministry units, including churches, are the possession of *The Governing Council of The Salvation Army* and cannot be bought or sold without their consent.

The amalgamation committee does still need to address the location where the new church will meet. There are several options available including:

1. Using one of the buildings from the amalgamating churches. This option can be both positive and negative. The good part is that there is a readily available site to move into. The negative side of this option is that one group will always feel like outsiders in the new church. Additional negative side effects include: the location may not be easily accessible for all people, the site may be in a neighbourhood that has had a bad experience with the current church, or the site may be in an area that has been redeveloped by the city and no longer contains any residents.

2. Selling both buildings and use the revenues from the sale to build or purchase a new facility. The positive aspect of this plan is a new church home for a new church.

²⁴ Foland, “Merger as a New Beginning,” 72.

Possible negative outcomes include the inability to secure adequate property in a suitable area and not having sufficient funds to build a new worship centre without engaging in a capital campaign.

3. Sell both buildings and secure a suitable space to rent until the new church has the ability to support itself financially.

Alice Mann makes an astute observation that should be considered by the amalgamation committee as it discusses location. Mann claims, “Everyone needs to understand that the resulting congregation will probably end up with no more members than the largest congregation going into the plan.”²⁵ This is important to consider because it is often believed that joining of two congregations with double the income of the church, but such is not the case if the actual congregation does not grow significantly through the merging of the congregations. It will also take some time for the new church to attract people from the community who will be regular contributors financially. This means that the committee should carefully consider their financial situation prior to settling on a location.

Name

Foland is correct when he writes, “The name of the church communicates who these people are collectively. The name might reflect the history of the merged churches or communicate something about the new vision.”²⁶ The very process of choosing a new name for the church can be a channel for putting some closure on the past and building commitment for the future.

²⁵ Mann, *Can Our Church Live?*, 67.

²⁶ Foland, “Merger as a New Beginning,” 72.

The naming process is one of the things that all the people from the congregations can have a part in. It is possible for every person to give a suggestion for a name of the church, the amalgamation committee can narrow the choices and then a vote can be taken by all the people to determine the new name.

Don't underestimate the significance of the name to the people who will attend. Names are important.

Integration

The UNITE Model has a segment that deals with the integration of the people into a unified body of believers. This section deals with the amalgamation committee's need to negotiate the integration of the various programs, policies and procedures, and possessions into the life of the new church.

Each congregation will have programs that they feel are an important part of what it means to be a church. Often these programs have less to do with the significance they play in the life of the church and more to do with the relationships they foster. Foland warns, "Fear of losing intimate connections can block movement toward a new church."²⁷ The decision must be made to which programs will be eliminated, which will remain and those that will be combined. The deciding factor for some of these decisions can be obtained from the logic model that both congregations completed as part of the UNITE process. It should be easy to determine which programs were effective in expanding God's kingdom and advancing God's mission by analyzing the results of the outcome management portion of the logic model. Those programs that were effective should be considered to continue while those that were ineffective should be discontinued or revamped in some way to make them effective.

²⁷ Foland, "Merger as a New Beginning," 72.

The integration of policies and procedures should be easier to accomplish if both congregations are from the same denomination. Since this thesis is dealing with amalgamations within The Salvation Army, the new church would follow the existing policies and procedures as outlined by The Salvation Army for congregations.

The integration of possessions can be more difficult. As has already been said, certain items carry importance for a congregation and can become a stumbling block in the negotiation process. The amalgamation committee would be best to think of a marriage in this case where there are two people with two homes marrying. The couple needs to determine what will be put into the new house that does not have the room for two living room sets or two dining room tables. How that is decided will vary from couple to couple and so it will vary from church to church. Compromise is the key in these situations and in the end it really doesn't matter if you have two of some items.

The negotiation process will take several meetings over several months but the positive outcomes of these meetings will significantly enhance the chances of a successful amalgamation and strengthen the chances of a smooth transition to a new church.

I – Integrate

This segment of the UNITE Model deals with two different aspects of integration that must occur. First, there is the integration of the two congregations so that the people can spend time together and get to know each other prior to the formal start of the new church. Second is the integration of mission and practice in the actions of the people. This will be accomplished through teaching conducted in both congregations prior to the official amalgamation.

Integration of People

The research for this thesis indicated that all of the amalgamated churches lost people through the process. Some of the responses were particularly telling. When asked, “How has the amalgamation shaped the congregation’s identity?” the response was, “I don’t think it has because most did not stay within the congregation or the Army in fact.” Another commented that, “In the end there was only about 10% of the original congregation attending the new amalgamated church.” One responded, “There are very few congregation members from the closing church.”

Based on the fact that there is a loss of membership during the amalgamation process, a second committee, separate from the amalgamation committee, should be formed from members from each congregation. The purpose of this committee is to plan a variety of events that encourage the two congregations to interact with each other in an attempt to make each congregation feel that they are a part of the new venture. These events should be casual social gatherings and formal worship that are held on a regular basis. The details of how often the events occur is at the discretion of the committee but a monthly event (either social or worship) should be considered.

There are some guidelines that this integration committee should adhere to. The events should be well planned out and well-advertised with the intention that all people are invited. The location of the events should vary between the areas closest to the current church buildings. If an event is held in or near one building one month, it should be held at or near the other building the next month. Look to do as many multi-generational events as possible but it is not unreasonable to have separate youth events or separate senior events (as examples) as well. The combined worship events should not just be a

show case of the host congregation, but rather a worship experience where there is participation by members of both congregations.

It is the aim of these gatherings to help the people get acquainted with each other so it is the responsibility of the integration committee to encourage this interaction. The committee will know if they have succeeded if the people move from an “us” and “them” posture to a “we” attitude.

Integration of Mission & Practise

The research presented in chapter one of this thesis indicated that a majority of the amalgamated congregations did not consider the theological implications of their merger. Of the ten responses, eight congregations never mentioned being part of God’s mission in their communities. The researcher sees this disconnection between mission and practice as the underlying cause of the congregations’ failure to be a transforming influence in the community.

The details that emerge from the logic model will show the congregations that there is a serious disconnection between the mission of the church and the practise of the church. If the new church is not to suffer the same fate as the churches that amalgamated, there has to be an integration of mission and practise.

Researcher Alan Klass did a review of major factors affecting church vitality and he discovered that regardless of size or social context, the churches most likely to grow share four characteristics:

1. See themselves in mission beyond their current membership.
2. Have lay and clergy leadership which share that vision.
3. Are flexible in methods of communicating and unchanging message in a changing world.

4. Are action-oriented. They are not willing to be limited by challenges of size, language, availability of resources, or criticism of others.²⁸

It is the desire that the new church share these characteristics as well, but the individual congregations may not be able to exhibit the first two characteristics so they must be taught to answer the following questions with confidence: What is mission? What is God's part in mission? What is the church's part in mission? How can our church participate in God's mission? The following guidelines should be followed by each congregation to ensure that all people gain a better understanding of what it means to "be in mission."

Using Salvation Army theologian Philip Needham's work, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology* as a text for this teaching, the congregational teaching will consist of six sessions based on the chapters of the book.

Session 1: A Community in Mission is Chartered by Christ

Main Idea: "The Church is a community which comes into being in response to the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the one in whom the Kingdom is realized."²⁹

Session 2: A Community in Mission is Created by the Holy Spirit

Main Idea: "The Church is a fellowship created by the Holy Spirit in which goals who have responded to the Kingdom of God through faith are empowered to live redemptive lives."³⁰

Session 3: A Community in Mission is Called to a Journey

Main Idea: "The Church is a band of pilgrims who are called to separate themselves from the oppressive patterns of the present world order and to keep moving toward the possibilities which the new Kingdom in Christ offers."³¹

²⁸ Mann, *Can Our Church Live?*, 26.

²⁹ Needham, *Mission*, 6.

³⁰ Needham, *Mission*, 14.

³¹ Needham, *Mission*, 35.

Session 4: A Community and Mission is Commissioned for Battle

Main Idea: “The Church is an army which exists for the purpose of fighting every enslavement to sin, disarming the causes of human oppression, and overcoming obstacles to pilgrimage.”³²

Session 5: A Community in Mission is Encamped for Renewal

Main Idea: “The Church is a gathered community in which the missionary people of God encourage one another spiritual growth and equip one another for mission.”³³

Session 6: A Community in Mission is Committed to the Future

Main Idea: “the Church is the eschatological community that prays for the coming Kingdom and lives in the light of its dawning.”³⁴

It is the intention that at the conclusion of these sessions that the united congregation will be able to say these words of Needham to describe their old congregations: “The congregation that has lost its mission is the congregation that has found maintenance, and the preoccupation with the maintenance of traditions undermines the real value of ecclesiastical tradition, which is the preservation of the purpose and calling of the church.”³⁵ And it is the intention that the united congregation will be able to attest to this; “The church’s enduring tradition is mission; it is a dynamic tradition that challenges the church courageously to open itself to God’s future.”³⁶

The integration segment of the UNITE Model is intended to last the entire length of the amalgamation process until the formal start of the new church takes place.

T – Together

This is the official start of the new church. The self-assessments of the understanding phase are a distant memory; all the negotiations have taken place and the

³² Needham, *Mission*, 52.

³³ Needham, *Mission*, 75.

³⁴ Needham, *Mission*, 91.

³⁵ Needham, *Mission*, 91.

³⁶ Needham, *Mission*, 91.

people are better acquainted with each other and have a well understood connection between their normative, formal, espoused and operant theologies. All that is left to do is to celebrate the new church.

This part of the UNITE Model has its genesis in the three amalgamation models discussed earlier in this thesis. Each of the authors of the comparative models (Yanagihara, Mann and Drazen) encouraged the new church to have a time of celebration to mark the end of the amalgamation process and the birth of a new congregation.

To make this celebration special, a committee of people should come together to handle the planning of an entire weekend of events to mark the occasion. There are endless possibilities of what could take place during the celebration festivities but some guidelines should be considered by the celebration committee.

Make the celebration an opportunity to invite community members into the new church. This means having activities that would attract people who may not normally attend “church” activities. If you are inviting the public, then make sure that the events are as well planned as possible and well-advertised.

Consider inviting Salvation Army representatives to the weekend festivities, especially those who had a direct impact in the planning and implementation of the new church. Ask the Divisional Commander if the division would like to purchase and present the new church with a Salvation Army flag with the name of the new church embroidered on it. This helps to solidify the new identity of the church and recognizes the important part the division played in the amalgamation process.

Make sure that there is a photographer who records the entire event and that all the members of the congregation receive a digital copy of all the pictures for their

personal files. These pictures can also be sent to the divisional office to be used in newsletters and advertisements and the pictures should also be sent to the Editorial Department at THQ for use in their publications.

The celebration time should be something that the people of the church and community will talk about for months and years to come.

E – Examine

The final part of the UNITE Model is to have a two-fold examination occur.

First, the leadership of the church need to look back at the amalgamation process to determine what was done right and the things that may need to be reassessed. This examination should be done at three months, six months and twelve months after the official opening of the new church.

Some of the items to be aware of in this examination include:

1. What part of the process went well?
2. What part of the process did not go well?
3. Are there any lingering effects from the areas that did not go well? How can these issues be addressed now?
4. Are there any issues with an “us” and “them” attitude within the church?
5. How are the current and former lay leaders handling the transition? Is there anything the current leadership can do to alleviate these concerns and help with the transition?
6. Are there any issues that are related to the use of items from the old churches?
7. Have there been any expressed concerns about the amalgamation from members of the congregations?

There may be other questions and concerns that are specific to each congregation that should also be addressed by the leadership of the church.

The second part of the examination segment requires that the leadership of the church review the connection between mission and practice on an ongoing basis. There should be a bi-monthly check in to make sure that the activities of the church are endeavoring to fulfill the mission of God in the community. These meetings should continue on a bi-monthly basis for one year following the amalgamation. After the first year, the church should review mission and practice on a quarterly basis. This will be helpful when preparing for the annual inspection conducted by *The Salvation Army*.

For the evaluation of the connection between mission and practice to be as comprehensive as possible, the church should make use of the logic model presented earlier in this thesis. By making use of the logic model the church maintains the continuity of using the same evaluation model at all phases of the process and it is a very effective tool to track outcomes.

Conclusion

In the coming days some churches will come to the point in their life cycle where they will have to make the tough decision of whether to close their doors forever. It is a decision that no church leader wants to make so they will look for viable options to keep their congregation going through the tough times. One option that will be available to them is amalgamating with another congregation. However, amalgamations are hard work and they take time if they are to be done effectively. They also require a process that the church can follow to make sure they give the amalgamation the best possible chance of success. The UNITE Model for Church Amalgamation is one such model.

Unlike other amalgamation models, UNITE is a theological model that seeks to get the new church to engage in the *missio Dei* within their community. From the very

beginning of the process to the end, the amalgamated church using the UNITE Model will be seeking to understand what their mission is and how they can live missionally within their context.

Mission effectiveness has always been part of the ethos of *The Salvation Army*, from its humble beginnings in London, England's East End to an organization that is currently ministering in one hundred and twenty four countries. It is the aim that all ministry units within the Army to be missionally engaged with the context where they find themselves.

When Salvation Army congregations lose their missional focus and fail to connect in a relevant way to their community, often the result is a diminished ministry, an aging congregation and financial hardship. If such situations are not rectified, the result is always the closure of the church. The closure of a church is never a pleasant undertaking and one that is avoided as long as possible by trying to find ways to revitalize the dying congregation. One revitalization option that The Salvation Army has employed is the amalgamation of two or more congregations. However, when amalgamations have occurred, there has not been a common model used to help the congregations through the process of merging with another corps.

The UNITE Model for Church Amalgamations is a resource that can be used by *The Salvation Army* for the merging of congregations because: it speaks to the missional ecclesiology of the organization, it helps to identify areas where the mission of *The Salvation Army* needs to improve within the corps, and it encompasses the organization's core values of salvation, holiness, and intimacy with God as well as the operational values of compassion, respect, excellence, integrity, relevance, co-operation, and

celebration. The UNITE Model also incorporates Salvation Army missional teaching to help shape the ministry outcomes of the new congregation.

The amalgamated church that has used the UNITE Model will discover that they have a new understanding of God's mission in the world and the church's part within that mission. The new church will open with a heart for their community and they will have a mission that they wish to accomplish from day one. Although two or more congregations have merged, it will feel like one family because they have taken the time to get to know each other prior to the opening of the new church. And through ongoing self-examination of their programs and activities to determine missional effectiveness, the new congregation will not be faced with having to close its doors.

Conclusion

For the congregation, the pastor and the denomination the closure of a church can feel like an utter failure. They may feel like they have failed to protect the bride of Christ from death; a death that they had an active part in bringing about. The good news is that God has plenty of experience dealing with human failures. In fact, he is pleased when we approach him with a broken and contrite heart and he extends his grace to cover our failures.

The decline in a church's membership does not necessitate the closing of a church because there are many options available to every congregation that wishes to see their church become a vibrant expression of God's presence in their community once again. This thesis has explored just one of those options but it is hoped that it has shown that amalgamation can be a viable option for congregations in decline.

The Salvation Army congregations that were part of this research have shared that although the process used in their amalgamation journey was not perceived to be an organized model, they are still active in ministry. Perhaps if a better model of amalgamation was implemented at the time of their mergers there would be evidence of all of the congregations thriving as transforming influences in their communities. However, the only way to determine if that is possible is to compare these churches with future amalgamated congregations that used an amalgamation model which helps the congregations address the theological problem that led to their demise – a lack of focus on accomplishing the mission of God in their context.

It was the purpose of this thesis to show that the theological reasons for amalgamation are to be considered if the amalgamated congregation is to not just to

survive but thrive as a church. The failure of congregations to fully appreciate and be engaged in the *missio Dei* within their communities pre-amalgamation will translate to a similar fate befalling the church post-amalgamation if they do not rectify this theological deficiency.

To understand the *missio Dei* is to understand that God has a purpose, a mission. That God is triune means he can send himself on this mission, and that God includes us as the church in his purposes, he can so send us as well. The task of spreading the Kingdom of God includes the spread of peace, justice, salvation, healing, freedom, liberation, and many other terms we could add to speak of both the physical and spiritual benefits which flow from the extension of God's rule and reign. The *missio Dei* then necessitates a conception of a Trinitarian God with missionary intent, who engages us as participants in his mission for the salvation of the world. Implied is some balance between the spiritual and physical effects of salvation and the application that the purpose of the church is the full participation in the mission of God.

The amalgamation model presented in this thesis seeks to bring two or more congregations together with a focus on the mission of the church. The purpose of this model was to provide an easy to understand resource to be used by The Salvation Army during the amalgamation of congregations. The acronym UNITE provides a way for the congregations to follow the process in an organized manner. The UNITE Model is a radical departure from any model currently used by the denomination for the purpose of merging corps. This model encourages the open communication between The Salvation Army and the congregations being considered for amalgamation. As a way for this to occur, the UNITE Model suggests that one year before the proposed merger is to take

place that the congregations involved be informed of the possibility of amalgamation and the start of the UNITE Model. It is possible that the congregations will only complete the “understanding” section of the model and decide that they do not wish to amalgamate. It is suggested that they be allowed to do so and hopefully find another way to bring vitality back to their congregation. Another departure from other amalgamation models is that the UNITE Model is a theological model rather than a practical model. Other models deal with the practical aspects of the merger but fail to understand the theological reasons for the merger. Financial concerns are not an acceptable reason for an amalgamation, whereas to be effectively engaged in mission is a legitimate reason to join with another church. The new church must understand what its mission is and find ways that they can be actively involved in accomplishing that mission within their community.

The UNITE Model allows the congregation to see the areas of their ministry that have not been missional in their focus pre-amalgamation and encourages a missional mindset in all areas of ministry post-amalgamation. The model also shows that amalgamations are a long process that requires the participants to be engaged fully in the process if successful outcomes are to be expected.

The UNITE Model will be made available to The Salvation Army Corps Ministries Department at Territorial Headquarters in Toronto, Canada. This will happen after the model has been formatted in such a way that it can be used in a teaching environment. In its current form (chapter 5), the model may be difficult for some to use as a teaching document that others will readily understand. The contents of each section will need to have teaching notes included to ensure that the same material is being taught to all who use the resource.

Once this model has been approved for use by The Salvation Army, it is the expectation of the author that the model can be used by the local leaders of the next corps that are scheduled to amalgamate. The model is not Canada specific, but it is Salvationist specific which could make it a resource other Salvation Army Territories around the world could use as well.

The Salvation Army's operational values of compassion, respect, excellence, integrity, relevance, cooperation and celebration should be seen throughout the amalgamation process and most definitely in the life and actions of the new church that seeks to advance the Kingdom of God while engaging in his mission in their community.

Appendix A



McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)

c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB Secretariat, GH-305, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Application Status: New Addendum Project Number:

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

Church Amalgamation: A Theological Rationale & Proposed Model

Faculty Investigator (s)/ Supervisor(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
L. Beach	Divinity	23502	beachl@mcmaster.ca
Student Investigator(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
M. Puddicombe	Divinity	905-357-4179	mike_puddicombe@can.salvation

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:

- The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.
- The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.
- The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below:

COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.

Reporting Frequency: Annual: Other:

Date: Chair, Dr. Br. Detlor:

Appendix B

The following data is the responses gathered from leaders of ten Salvation Army congregations that have undergone amalgamations between 2000–2010.

1. In your opinion, what was done "right" during the amalgamation?

- The offices and programs as well as the site Thrift Stores in all locations were kept operating.
- I know that the church plant was told it was moving the officers and that they were closing the church. There does not seem to be any type of process to keep it open. What they said to the congregation was that our current church was taking over the corps rolls and assets.
- Communication to both congregations done well even though it was not received well.
- Review and choosing of new location.
- New location has great visibility and accessibility.
- The sharing of resources.
- One thing that was done right is that the leadership of The Salvation Army chose pastors who desired to see that the church was more than just a building but it is the people who take the broken congregations and seek ways to connect them with community.
- The Army met with the congregations to discuss the process of closing down and the reason why they had to close.
- It has caused us to think about community.
- Good communication between divisional leaders and the corps people

2. What would have you done differently?

- The amalgamation occurred 8 years ago. I arrived last August (7 months ago). From what I see nothing was done administratively nor program wise as per amalgamating and functioning as one ministry unit. Only the bear basics were addressed in order to maintain a kind of status quo. This means the amalgamation was never resolved and the expected letting go and healing of loss were not intentionally embraced and supported. Therefore:
 - deposit and capital accounts were not amalgamated. Rather they remained in a standing arrangement with no adjustments in names etc. and not activity, i.e. they have not been attended to and the awareness of their existence became lost by the local leadership.
 - Statistics were not amalgamated, therefore when annual reviews occurred one site would be overlooked and not accounted for in preference for the dominant site.
 - The name for the Ministry Unit was changed to that of the dominant site. A bit later a new name was given that was even more exclusive to the dominant site. It provided no illusion or reference in the renaming sites nor did it indicate the nature of the ministry in this other sites. This produces mistrust and tensions resulting in resistance and animosity between the personnel of the program centres. Therefore, records, registers, reviews, accounts and procedures were not coordinated, not

supportive nor efficient. Rather they exacerbated wastefulness in time, money and dignity. This issue around the inadequacy of the ministry units name has been resolved with a new name that now reflects the region rather than a community. Acceptance of this and the intentional effort to unite as one administration respecting the distinctiveness each site has to offer is moving forward in a reasonable manner.

- I am not sure I can answer this except that there was not much consideration for the previous congregation joining the current congregation. It was a drop and go, for lack of a better term.
- Wanted buy in from both congregations.
- Both of the Corps involved in the amalgamation need not have been in this place if local and Divisional leadership would have made the congregations aware of their need to change and the consequences of not changing
- There was no discussion with DHQ prior to the corps being informed of the amalgamation.
- The whole process was initiated by DHQ and forced upon the congregations in a relatively short period of time. It should have taken more time.

3. To your knowledge, was there a clear process followed during the amalgamation?

Could you describe it?

- It appears no clear direction was given. If it was, then the guidance was ignored or those managing the amalgamation were not skilled and knowledgeable enough to carry it through. Also it is a far deduction that DHQ was not giving strong oversight to this task.

- Not that I can see, besides handing over the corps rolls.
- The process was clear and after selling of both properties the joint congregation moved into a rental space until the new property became available.
- There was not a clear process followed during the amalgamation. One Corps was closed and the other Corps took over their building and they were asked to join the new Corps.
- Both Corps were closed and both congregations were asked to join the new worship setting
- There was really no process to bring the two congregations together.
- There was a process but the people didn't understand the process. They were given time lines but the people thought if they could beef up the music then they wouldn't be closed. Or if they called old members to invite them back, but it was a little too late. The decision to amalgamate was made by the leaders of the organization and the new pastors took several months to wade through the brokenness to see the potential and create a direction that could move the people forward.
- Once the new vision was cast by the pastors, a clear and tangible process for change and direction was presented to the leadership team of the church and the congregation. This vision was very intentional and sought ways to enter the community and be in the world. It was a long journey of teaching and direction but the end result was worth all the obstacles.
- There was no clear process.
- If there was a process, we didn't know what it was.

- We were informed that another corps would be joining us at our location.

4. In your opinion, what have been the long term effects of the amalgamation?

- A much wreaked ministry output; independent actions and decision making by personnel; an inability to resolve challenges by agreement and consensus; a dictatorial approach to management; no effective strategic planning i.e. any initiatives and planning was done without consultation and without communicating the plans to others. this resulted in surprise initiatives and behind the doors activities (i.e. the left hand not knowing what the right was doing); no competency nor advancement in meeting the changing landscape of community trends, character, and demographics; a congregation composed of aging members with very little entry of young families other than those who were born into the fellowship.
- There are very few congregation members from the closing church. They now attend different churches. Maybe because they were the outcast of the family and not welcomed properly.
- Members of one of the congregation went elsewhere rather than staying with the course and joining the new congregation.
- Both Corps could not have made it by themselves. The sharing of resources will make it possible for a new Corps to be replanted in the future.
- In the end there were only about 10% of the original congregations attending the new amalgamated church. Many people drifted away to a church in their local community and others hope that one day the new pastors will leave and the church will return to what it once was. I suggest that the process should have gone

smoother at the beginning if people were properly informed of why their church was not self-sufficient using firm data. Eleven years later the church is a vibrant growing body of believers that see the new and creates ways to connect with community.

- The members of (CORPS)¹ feel like they are just visitors at (CORPS). Both congregations see the amalgamation more as the closure of (CORPS) than a merger of two congregations.

5. In your opinion, what were the challenges faced by the congregation after the amalgamation? Are there any ongoing challenges even now?

- The ministry unit is now intentionally developing the policies, administrative, management and leadership foundations necessary for it to amalgamate and begin evolving into a sustainable and productive entity fulfilling its mission and formulating its vision. Now, this is a slow process that requires attention first to relationships and trust building. It also requires leaning the skills necessary to function as a group rather than as independent personalities and departments. Evolving into a purposeful, healthy self-identity and mission vision must be stimulated with some wisdom. The administrative pieces have to evolve parallel to these. Also the financial base has to be restructured into a recovery plan stretched over 2 to 3 years. It is a large task. If it works through, then the ministry unit will expand in its ministries to the region it now is responsible for. If the process flounders, then the ministry unit will have to close in the near future because of shrinking officer personnel and a depleting financial base. However,

¹ The names of the corps have been removed to assure the confidentiality of the participants.

this ministry unit does have a viable future if it comes through the other end properly amalgamated.

- There are not any ongoing challenges to this day. I believe that whenever you amalgamate 2 or more congregations there always seems to be a winner and a loser. Someone loses their pastor, building, style of worship, so on. They are asked to join this other church family who already know who each other are and the way they worship. Duplicating leadership can also have their challenges, "that is my position, I can do that better".
- Getting into the neighbourhood surrounding us and becoming a community church in its fullest sense.
- The congregation is now fairly healthy, but finances have made it almost impossible to build or buy a church facility. One of the congregations has lived 10 years without such a facility and is still hoping to build one. This has made it hard to connect with the community around the numerous temporary worship settings.
- A full building has had an impact on the outreach activities since many people feel the church doesn't need to grow anymore.
- People hate change. They hate doing anything different from what they feel comfortable doing and the amalgamation meant that nothing would ever be as it once was. They struggled with the new music, making friends with people who don't believe in Jesus and they really didn't like sitting in different chairs from week to week. Changes were definitely difficult but in the end they discovered that change brought new life to their once dead church and that was exciting.

- There are always challenges in ministry. The church is still financially challenged and that brings a big part of effort to make the bills.

6. In your opinion, how has the amalgamation shaped the congregation's identity?

- The congregation's identity has been defused and divided. There has been a historical rivalry between the two main communities in which the primary sites have been located. This attitude has been reinforced by the manner in which the amalgamation was processed. However, there is a strong core of lay leadership which has sustained and is one of the foundations upon which to carry the present adjustments noted above. The congregation has been weakened in its trust and resolve for a healthy future. The ministry focus has moved heavily toward the traditional community services associated with The Salvation Army. This was an easier avenue to lean into than working on the congregational ministries, for fellowship and outreach ministries require group management skills and relational maturity and a contextually relevant self-identity.
- I don't think it has because most did not stay within the congregation or the Army in fact.
- Unfortunately we lost a lot of people from one of the congregations and that has had financial implications. However we have added about fifty five new people since moving to this location. We still have some new people exploring and checking us out and while it has the appearance of some negative side effect we still believe it has been a good move from a kingdom perspective. Also most Salvationist transferred to other SA or other churches not all a bad thing.

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