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Tyndale University

Does God Call Laypeople to Preach in their Local Church?

An Exploration of Calling and Introduction to Preaching for

Laypeople in the Local Church

A Research Portfolio

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

Tyndale University

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Preparing laypeople to preaching in the local church**

The purpose of this research portfolio was to identify if God was calling lay people to preach in their local church and begin to equip them for that calling.

Sitting in the pews were people whom God called and gifted to serve the church in many different ministries; some were called to share his word through preaching. Through this field project, these individuals were identified, equipped, and presented with opportunities to preach God's word in their own setting. The two foci of calling and preaching were essential to answer the research question. Members of Massey Place Community Church interested in learning to preach were invited to participate in the study. Seven people responded. A six-week introductory course was conducted to teach about calling and how to prepare and preach a biblically-based sermon. We found that people were being called to preach, and four of the seven actively engaged as lay preachers. The question at the heart of this research project, "could lay people preach effectively in the Sunday morning service?", was answered in the affirmative; there were laypeople that God called into the role of occasionally speaking from the pulpit. Further to that, this significantly benefited the life and growth of the church and positively impacted the individuals who preached.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this research portfolio to my family, Jamie, Gavin, Caleb, and Ethan. They have supported, encouraged, and sacrificed for me to complete this program. Their willingness to be on this journey will be forever remembered, thank you!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My journey began with an early calling on my life from God to serve his church. I would not be where I am today without his continued blessings, strength, wisdom, and salvation. Everything I have done, has been done for his glory to help his church become what we know it can be. Thanks be to him.

Over the past fifteen years I have journeyed with Massey Place Community Church. I have grown with them as they have grown with me. I will be forever grateful for their willingness to support me through so many different chapters of life. From being my first lead pastor role, working with a staff, managing a church and some difficult personal health struggles. This church has been our church, where my boys have grown up and we have done life together. Thank you for your love and faithfulness.

I would also like to thank those who have been part of this journey. My friends who are in ministry with me, those who have retired and the many whose lives we shared for a short amount of time over various moves and new locations. You have helped to shape my view of church, ministry, God and family. Thank you.

Throughout my education my ministry has been impacted by several professors. Dr. Preston Busch, my first homiletics professor, who took extra time to help me find myself in my first sermons. Dr. David Ernst, who brought creativity to the table helping me to see the possibilities of ministering through preaching. Dr. Paul Magnus, whose time and dedication to my life will never be forgotten. Finally, at Tyndale University, Dr. Mark Chapman and Dr. Kevin

Livingston, who both gave of their time, talents, and lives to prepare me, not just to complete a degree, but to equip me for the ministry that God is calling me to. You were both instrumental in helping me and I valued all our time together at school, across the supper tables and in your homes. Kevin, for your extra help in the final stages of revisions and for helping me get this final project finished, Thank you.

Finally, my family has given so much for me to complete this program. My parents, Allan (because I know he is cheering me on!) and Sharon, and Brett and Cheryl, thank you for your encouragement and support throughout this program. Gavin, Caleb and Ethan, we sacrificed time together for residencies and schoolwork, thank you for your understanding. Jamie, you have been a rock, and encourager and supporter of mine for as long as I can remember. Thank you for everything... I love you.

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*  
(Ephesians 1:18,19a NIV)

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a pastor in a small church, a seminary student and researcher my worlds collided when tasked with preparing a relevant preaching based research project for the Doctor of Ministry program. This portfolio is the result of those three worlds colliding. Does God call laypeople to preach? If he does, will they preach? These questions became the heart of the research project which consisted of identifying those called to preach and equipping them to preach. Surveying, observing and evaluating the process while the participants became the research mechanism while simultaneously preparing the curriculum to teach about calling and preaching.

This research was met by questions and criticism by others in my cohort. “I would never do that” was the response from a student when I proposed this research project. Another said, “I would never let a layperson from the congregation stand up on a Sunday and preach.” I soon realized they were not alone in their views on laypeople preaching.

I received the same response from several pastors with whom I shared my proposed project. Their responses came from two different philosophies about preaching. First, there was one group who believe that the sermon was of utmost importance in the life of the church. As such, the preacher should be an “approved worker” (2 Timothy 2:15), someone who has been to seminary, studied

the scriptures in depth and been recognized by the church through ordination. It seemed like there was an undercurrent in these conversations which hinted that allowing a layperson preach lessened the office of the pastor.

Other negative responses came from a different negative angle. They commented that it was not so much about the theological training of the layperson but about the size of the church and the “polish” of their services. For example, one pastor of a church of around 1,000 attendees told me that he would never let anyone on their stage to preach before they had ten years of preaching experience and never a layperson, or even someone who had been to school, until they had proved their ability to preach over time. He did not explain where one should gain experience preaching, except to make it clear that it would not happen at their church. Some would not take it that far, but the reality for larger churches is that they have expectations about the quality of the sermon, and they also have larger staff teams to draw from. So, there may be a teaching pastor who does the bulk of the preaching, but they also have other staff who are trained to preach such as associate pastors, lead pastors, counselling pastors, youth and children’s pastors. Why would they ask or even entertain the idea of putting an unqualified and untrained layperson into the pulpit when they have other staff capable and willing?

### **Potential Research Benefits**

Despite the early objections to the premise of this research, that God calls laypeople to preach in the local church, I continued because there was another

side to the discussion. Not all churches require that preachers be ordained, not all churches have multiple staff trained and ready to preach, and there are many churches with small staffs or solo pastors in urban and rural settings across North America that could, and I argue, should use laypeople to supplement the preaching of their pastor.

There are multiple potential benefits to having people from the congregation preach in their local setting. They have an impact that other guest speakers do not have on the congregation. It was noted that when laypeople preach, members of the congregation sit up and takes notice, as they are “just like them.” They work in the same places, have the same experiences and live in the same place as “me.” There are fewer sociological hurdles to cross as the one preaching is someone just like them, someone who is usually sitting in those same pews. As a paid preacher, I was sometimes viewed as someone who does not live in the real world, like the rest of the church. My experiences were perceived to be different than those to whom I preached.

In addition to the immediate acceptance of the lay preacher it also opened doors for their own ministry in the church. Often the only time we hear laypeople speak within the church is when sharing their testimony. Allowing opportunity, with appropriate support and training, for laypeople to study, research, prepare and preach a message creates opportunities for the lay preacher to lead and teach in other ways. It became an act of discipleship where they engaged in deeper study of scripture and learned how to share their discoveries with others. It also

helped to reveal callings in their life and moved them towards leading in the local church in other ministries.

### **Struggles Preaching in the Smaller Church**

Having lay preachers may address a few common struggles within the smaller church, defined here as being under 200 in size (Canadian Small Church Ministry Centre 2022). In the smaller churches where I had served and consulted, there were weekends when the pastor needed to be away. It could be for holiday, sickness, conferences, training, study, bereavement, or a whole host of other possibilities. With struggles like financial constraints to pay for guest speakers, and no other staff who can preach, it often left the pastor with little time off and few options. Being able to plan for these days by filling the pulpit with a preacher from within the congregation opened many opportunities for Sundays when the pastor is away. There is also the potential that someone in the church was being called by God into pastoral ministry, but with no opportunity to express or explore that calling they might repress the call, ignoring what may be a God-given opportunity for ministry.

Growing up, I was accustomed to laypeople preaching on occasion in the church. My father was one of those people. I remember getting phone calls late in the evening on a Saturday night, finding out that the pastor was ill and my dad needed to prepare something to preach for him the following day. It was a rare occurrence for it to be last minute, although it did happen. More often, church lay leaders would preach when the pastor was on vacation or away for some other

reason. My understanding of this was simply that they needed to fill the empty pulpit while the ordained pastor was away. While this is true, I have realized that this practice has more value than just filling thirty minutes of sermon time on a Sunday.

My father would think about and prepare in advance for occasions when he might be called to preach. I have on my bookshelf an old concordance which was given to my dad by one of these pastors, with an inscription that encourages him to continue to use the concordance as he studies the word of God. How many laypeople use concordances when studying the Bible? Very few, but as dad strove to honour the invitation to preach, he grew in his own depth of biblical knowledge as a disciple called to preach in his local church, as a layperson. I know that he thought about the idea of ministry on occasion. He never took that path, but he did continue to serve faithfully in leadership and occasionally preaching as asked by various pastors over the years.

My context is Massey Place Community Church, and urban setting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We have a small, staff team all of whom work part-time including a worship pastor, a Spanish pastor and me as the lead pastor. I was responsible for the ministry of the English service and oversaw the work of our Spanish service and its pastor. Over the years at this church, we had a history of allowing others into the pulpit, usually retired pastors or church leaders. We also have had laypeople step into the pulpit, usually chosen based on their interests, passion and knowledge of certain topics. This would include my father-in-law who had an interest in Genesis and he spoke on several occasions related to this

topic. Another layperson spoke on Job and times of sorrow, and another spoke about the impact of mission trips. Our worship pastor, who had not taken any specific preaching classes in college preached about worship, an area that she was passionate about. Often these lay preachers stepped into the pulpit when I needed to be away. There have been some years in ministry where I would preach 48 weeks of the year, having only my holidays off. There were other years when I had experienced lay preachers from within the church, who have covered up to 12 sermons a year. The benefit of having these lay preachers has been tremendous. So much so that the church leadership team had stated in our guiding documents that we want to have “multi-voiced preaching” (Appendix Six). The intention of this statement in our vision documents was to ensure and motivate the leadership towards having others speak from the pulpit. I still did the majority of the preaching, but we saw value in hearing from others, especially laypeople from within the church family.

### **Other Opportunities Created through Lay Preaching**

Some lay preachers were recognized by the congregation for their ability to teach and lead in the local church. Several took on leadership/board positions, others started leading new small groups in the church. They felt a simple prodding from the Holy Spirit to step into this area of ministry and with some basic instruction, and encouragement from myself and other leaders, they have been blossoming into preaching and other ministry opportunities.

## Other Research and Thesis Papers

This research shows that there was a missed opportunity in the church when we ignore the calling of laypeople to step into preaching roles in their own local church. When looking for other research specifically into lay preachers within the local church there was little found. Two other Doctor of Ministry theses that came close were *A Guide to Help Laymen at Grace Reformed Baptist Church Teach Expository Lessons based on the Expository Preaching Model*. By D. Wayne Layton; and, *A Manual of Instruction to Teach Basic Expository Preaching to those Untrained in the Preaching Ministry*, by Timothy G. Rupp.

In the first thesis, Layton took individuals from his own church, Grace Reformed Baptist and taught them how to prepare and teach to others in the church using basic expository preaching methods. In some ways this was similar to the teaching I did over six weeks with my research participants but his focus was to have them teach Bible studies and Sunday school, not to preach from the pulpit.

In the second thesis by Rupp, I found the closest parallel to my own personal research. This paper focused specifically on how to teach laypeople to preach. In Rupp's thesis there was little time given to the merits of lay preaching or the question of whether God calls laypeople to preach and teach. I address both of those elements, along with preparing a six-week introduction to biblical preaching for laypeople. In his introduction Rupp mentioned his personal journey of being asked as a layperson to preach in his local church. He recounts how he was ill-prepared, but God used these early experiences to call him to seminary and

into full-time ministry (Rupp 2012, 8). From that early invitation to preach as a layperson he realized the need for simple education for those called to speak on occasion in their churches. His paper provided a process to teach laypeople an exegetical way to prepare to preach.

### **Overview of Why this Research Paper is Important**

My research addressed the question of whether God calls laypeople to preach or if preaching was to be reserved for ordained clergy. Assuming the answer is that God does call laypeople to preach, then what process would help them to prepare for preaching in their local church is it beneficial to the local congregation? Chapter two describes my own personal journey related to preaching, ministry and my passion for training those within the church to follow God's direction for their lives. This developed from my personal journey. I too started as a young layperson who got my first opportunity to preach at 15 years old. I was given the opportunity without any training! It began the process of uncovering my own personal calling into ministry. Not only did this shape my personal calling, it also shaped my beliefs about local church ministry. I always desired to include others in the ministry of preaching and ministry leadership. From summer students to pastoral interns from local colleges and laypeople within the church, my desire to develop ministry leaders stemmed from the early opportunities I was given.

My research was done at Massey Place Community Church (Chapter Three), where I was the Lead Pastor. This research project fit within the lay

preaching history of the local church and its denomination, The Be in Christ Church of Canada (BIC Canada). It also aligned with our vision and direction we were developing as a church. We were a church that recognized the calling and giftings of individuals in the church, including preaching from the pulpit. As these callings came to light, we equipped and encouraged them to develop their giftings to be expressed within the church. The church leadership and membership were both very receptive to having interns, summer students and laypeople step into the pulpit throughout the year. This was part of our ministry, to equip and encourage those around us. I too was one of those summer interns twenty years ago as I completed part of my college internship at Massey Place Community Church. My experiences helped to shape my future, and the church wanted to continue to change lives through involving laypeople, interns and students in ministry.

### **Focusing on Massey Place Community Church**

The research was specifically focused on the ministry of preaching at Massey Place Community Church. I began with the question, were there people in the church who felt a calling, or even a nudging toward preaching in our local church? Everyone in the congregation was invited to participate in a lay preaching research project. The leadership team, our governing board of elders, also brainstormed and came up with a list of people who they felt they should approach about taking the class, people in whom they saw potential. There were seven people who committed to the research. God was speaking to people in the church and calling them towards preaching. The research process consisted of six

sessions where calling was described, participants worked on discerning their own calling, training was conducted on how to study the Bible for preaching, and then how to write a sermon for the Sunday service.

### **The Teaching Sessions**

The six sessions involved an in-depth study of the book of Colossians. This included an introduction to scriptural exegesis, word studies, biblical concordances, and dictionaries. The participants learned how to diagram passages from Colossians and find the authors intended message. The next step was to learn how to apply that original message to our current audience when they preach. Appendix Two includes the full class notes that each participant received organized by weekly session.

### **Following the Formal Research Project**

A sermon series was planned to start one month after the end of the sessions. This series was a walk-through of the book of Colossians, the same text studied in the training sessions. I gave opportunity for each of the participants to preach, if they chose to, and offered as much support and input from me as they wanted. Three participants chose to preach on a Sunday morning during that series. This in and of itself was a huge success. There were more successes in our church that were spurred on because of this research, as will be seen later in the paper.

Chapter two explores my current understanding of preaching and teaching, and how gifts and calling are important aspects of preaching. Chapter three explores Massey Place Community Church and why I chose this church to do this

research at. Chapter four looks at the research process, detailing the reasons for the study, what was studied and what conclusions can be drawn from this research project. In the conclusion, I will look at the results of the research over the past two years, how it impacted me, the church, and I explored what I would do different if given the chance.

### **Key Definitions**

Each definition that follows is my own personal definition, how I define these words within this portfolio.

**Calling:** an urge, invitation, or prodding from God towards a particular vocation, ministry or purpose.

In this paper call, calling or called will most often refer to God's invitation to people to step into ministry in the church, or to fulfill a purpose by God in the church. I believe God calls people to many different vocations, ministries and purposes but in this project it will most often refer to ministry in the church, and often specifically to the ministry of preaching.

**Exegesis:** explanation and interpretation of a Biblical text.

**Gospel:** The good news that Jesus Christ came to forgive our sins and make a way for everyone to have a restored relationship with God. This gospel/good news is for all people in our families, communities and across the nations. The good news is all about what God did, is doing and will do, in, through and because of Jesus Christ.

**Hermeneutics:** The name given to the process of interpretation of a Biblical text geared for a contextualized audience.

**Laypeople:** a member of the church congregation who is not ordained to the ministry or paid for ministry.

**Preaching:** Preaching is proclaiming the gospel to all who will listen.

To expand on that definition, preaching is the proclamation of the gospel through partnering with God's work in the scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts, inform minds, challenge the souls of the preacher and the listeners and empowering both toward action through a growing knowledge of Jesus and what he is calling us to do.

In this paper, preaching will be referred to in the brief definition above, knowing that to proclaim the gospel involves everything in the expanded definition.

**Proclamation:** a public or official announcement or speech of great importance for the listener.

The difference between proclamation and preaching is that preaching would be a specific proclamation of the gospel.

## **CHAPTER TWO: PREACHING AND CALLING**

### **Introduction: Theological and Personal Reflections**

Within the confines of this chapter, I pull back the curtain and show others who God created me to be as a preacher. This chapter includes my theology of preaching and calling as well as my personal journey and experiences as a preacher of the word of God. These experiences shaped my ministry, education, and personality, bringing me to this point in my personal story. This is an introduction to who I am, how I had been shaped by pastors and preachers and how that shaped my calling and personal philosophy of preaching. This philosophy and calling shaped the subsequent research project as well.

As mentioned in the key terms above, I defined preaching this way: Preaching is proclaiming the gospel to all who will listen. To expand on that definition, preaching is the proclamation of the gospel through partnering with God's work in the scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts, inform minds, challenge the souls of the preacher and the listeners and empowering both toward action through a growing knowledge of Jesus and what he is calling us to do.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "Preaching is finally more than art or science. It is alchemy, in which tin become gold and yard rocks become diamonds under the influence of the Holy Spirit" (Lischer 2002, 53). There is a

great alchemy involved in the act of preaching, a mixture of the preacher's identity and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always at work preparing the hearts and minds of the hearers and the preacher for what the sermon will bring.

My own convictions about the act of preaching will be explored in depth. These convictions include understanding the calling of the individual to preach and how to handle the word of God appropriately when preaching.

## **Towards a Theology of Preaching**

### **Examples of Preaching Found in the Bible**

We not only preach from the Bible, we also read about people preaching in the Bible, and these sermons should influence how we should preach today. We can learn from those who preached like Jesus, Peter, Paul, Stephen, Joshua, the prophets, and many others. We learn from reading a biblical "sermon", like Peter's in Acts 2, that preaching is a verbal act, something that is proclaimed for others to hear. Peter speaks of Jesus through the telling of Jesus' story, while simultaneously showing us that a personal response and application are also involved. At the conclusion of Peter preaching to those gathered in Jerusalem they asked Peter and the disciples; "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 3:37-38). There was both explanation of who Jesus was, a teaching element and

then an application of that learning, to repent and be baptized. Having both these elements is important to act of preaching.

### **Parable of the Sower and the Seed**

In Mark 8 Jesus spoke to his disciples about what it was like to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. This parable about the sower and the seed tells us that the good news story will be received by some and not others. This is helpful for preachers today to understand. The act of preaching involves both a communicator and an audience. The preacher speaks out loud, proclaiming a message from scripture, but those who hear that message also play a part. They may be ready to hear and respond or they may be closed off to hearing that message. Just like the sower who sowed the seed on thorny soil would not have a good crop, the preacher who preached to those not ready to hear it would not see it take root in their minds, hearts, or souls.

Jesus was clear with his disciples that the message they would preach was a message of good news from God: "Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14,15). This good news message was the core of what Jesus shared (Gibson 2004, 55) and what the apostles and others shared. God has something good for the world, and they were to tell everyone about it (Acts 1:8).

### **What is the Good News Jesus Proclaimed?**

Jesus himself declared that he came to preach the good news at the beginning of his ministry. In Luke 4:14-21 Jesus was standing in the synagogue

unrolling a scroll of Isaiah and reading about how the Spirit of the Lord was on him. He was anointed to preach the good news. That good news was freedom, recovery, release, and a proclamation of favour. God was with them, and he was going to make things right again! Gibson quotes Vic Gordon a pastor and homiletics professor who wrote, "But Jesus' preaching is... about announcing good news about God. Jesus' preaching is about who God is and what God does... the gospel of the kingdom, or the gospel using any other imagery, is primarily about who God is and what he has done, is doing, and will do." (Gibson 2004, 55). The good news is all about what God did, is doing and will do, in, through and because of Jesus Christ.

### **The Good News is Now Proclaimed Through Us**

Jesus came to preach the good news, and he also called us to carry that same message. "Again, Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven" (John 20:21-23a). In this appearance of Jesus following his resurrection it is clearly seen that the disciples were sent and through the disciples we too become the sent people who are called to carry on Jesus' work. Romans 10:13-15 reminds us again, that people today are sent to preach the good news. The calling to preach the gospel did not end with the New Testament disciples. This belief in calling was key to my understanding of preaching and to the foundational basis of this project. Calling is also foundational to the scriptures and early church. Early followers of Jesus acted on this calling to go out and share the good news message about Jesus

with others. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus exhorts the disciples to "Go and make disciples of all nations". In the Gospel of Mark Jesus commands his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Just before Jesus ascended to the right hand of God he declares, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

That was what the first followers of Jesus did. "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:11). In witnessing to the Ethiopian eunuch Stephen experienced God at work through him by revealing what the scriptures say about Jesus (Acts 8:30,31). Preaching the good news is something that we must do because it is the only way people will begin to understand the good news of Jesus (Romans 10:14).

Jesus proclaimed the gospel in three different ways. Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling speak of breaking Jesus' ministry into three categories: teaching, preaching, and healing (Campolo, Darling 2010, 15). The same categorization appear in Gibson's work (Gibson 2004, 42). Each category will be explored, especially considering Jesus' use of each category with the masses and his disciples.

### **What is Teaching?**

There are many great things to learn from Jesus' teaching and he gives us great insight into the heart of God. Teaching (*διδασκω*) was supplemental to his preaching, good preaching would include teaching. Teaching can be differentiated from preaching in that it primarily informs, instructs or educates the

hearer. Throughout the gospels Jesus does this as he explains the Old Testament to his audience, and also when he instructs them on how to live rightly in the world.

Jesus gathered crowds and taught (*διδασκω*) them (Mark 2:13, Mark 10:1, Mark 12:35). These crowds listened and learned about the Old Testament, about God and about how God was doing a new work in their midst. The disciples were also gathered in these crowds, and they too learned from Jesus as he taught the scriptures. The Emmaus Road is a perfect example of Jesus teaching others, explaining to them truths from scripture that they had not yet understood (Luke 24:27).

Teaching was also part of what the disciples did. Paul commanded Timothy to continue teaching the scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16. Teaching is a gift from the Holy Spirit and is an essential part of what every church needs (Ephesians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30).

Teaching is biblical, and essential to the church and to the work of discipleship in the lives of Jesus' followers. But teaching could be defined as simply conveying information from one person to another. Teaching others focuses on learning, education, explanation and knowledge. To know and learn more about God and Jesus from the Scriptures is essential to our growth as Christians, however it is not the same as preaching. Teaching is valuable to gain knowledge, but it may not change the heart of a person at all. In 2004 I watched a live debate between a Muslim scholar and an evangelical pastor. The scholar was very knowledgeable in the Bible and knew many Christian doctrines. He also had

much of the bible memorized, but with all his knowledge he missed the heart of the scriptures, he missed having a relationship with God. He knew all about Jesus, but he had not yet experienced him or made a life-changing decision to follow Jesus. This Muslim scholar was taught information about the bible. However, when scripture talk about teaching there is more to it. Teaching does convey information but when conveying information about Jesus, it should also cut to the heart of the hearer. In scripture we see this as preaching, or proclaiming to someone the gospel message, which goes deeper than teaching. Preaching conveys new information, but it also cuts to the heart of the hearer.

### **What is Preaching?**

Preaching is not just conveying information, it is proclaiming the gospel in a way that is life-changing to the hearer. In scripture two of the more common Greek works used for preaching are *κηρυσσω* - to proclaim (Danker 2000, 542) and *ευαγγελιζω* - to bring good news (Danker 2000, 402). They are both used in the gospels when talking about preaching. Jesus and the disciples proclaimed a life-changing message to others. The passion and conviction that was conveyed through preaching about the good news of Jesus included teaching but went deeper into the hearts of those listening, calling them to change because of the new information they now have learned.

In Mark 1:4 we see John the Baptist preaching for life change, specifically for the repentance of sins. Jesus in Luke 4 says that he must continue to proclaim (preach) the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns (Luke 4:43). This is about proclaiming a message of repentance (Matthew 4:17) and preaching that

message to everyone who will listen. Jesus went around sharing that message, a message of repentance and good news to all, one that provided a healing of the heart and soul and sometimes of the physical body as well (Matthew 9:35).

If we understand preaching to be the act of proclaiming the Gospel then it necessitates the involvement of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). It includes the Spirit being involved in the preacher as they prepare the sermon and in the life of the preacher as they apply the sermon to their own heart and mind. The Spirit is also involved in the lives of those who will hear, preparing them for the sermon and helping them to hear and adjust their lives as God applies it to them. Preaching is about more than mere facts and figures; it is about the gospel, the good news message of Jesus and what he has done for us. When we are already followers of Jesus, preaching becomes part of God's ongoing work in our lives, to make holy those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). This work of growing in the work of sanctification and "while sanctification is God's work, the believer has a role as well, entailing both removal of sinfulness and development of holiness" (Erickson 1992, 315).

It is a well-known axiom that good preaching always involves teaching. On the other hand, good teaching does not always involve preaching. What they mean by this is that preaching must be a proclamation of the gospel, and it will always include teaching. It will convey new ideas, information or motivation to those listening. Teaching, on its own does not have to be about the gospel. A growing number of pastors are using the title 'Teaching Pastor' to signify that they are the ones responsible for the preaching or teaching each Sunday. There is also

scriptural precedent for using the two terms interchangeably to further complicate the conversation.

However, this distinction between preaching (as announcement to the unconverted) and teaching (as explanation, clarification, application, and exhortation to those already informed) even in New Testament times, was not always clear. Sometimes, people spoke interchangeably about the practice of teaching and preaching. Thus, whereas Matthew 4:23 declares that Jesus was "teaching in the synagogues;" Mark and Luke indicate that he was "preaching" (Mark 1:39, Luke 4:44). In Jerusalem, the same apostles who were "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" were at the same time "teaching the people" (Acts 4:2). Whereas the term preaching consistently refers to the message announced, the term teaching may have people as its object. (Waggoner 1999)

To bring clarity I believe that preaching, when done well, will include teaching, as it transforms our minds, but it is always done in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

The goals of preaching include formation, challenge, life change, and repentance. Teaching CAN include these things, but it is unnecessary to do so. Preaching must be more than just teaching. As Waggoner suggests above, preaching refers to the Gospel message that the preacher is conveying. Preaching is a sort of alchemy because there are so many elements that mix to become a sermon. One key element is the work of the Holy Spirit in the preacher's life and in the lives of those who are hearing the message.

### **God has been Teaching and Preaching Since the Beginning**

God has been using people to proclaim truths about himself since the beginning. In the Old Testament it started with the first words of Scripture written by the early Jewish leaders, which teach us about the redemptive work of God. They wrote about everything from the creation of the world, the history of the Israelite nation, wisdom and poetry and the books of the prophets who gave a

voice for God to speak to their generation. God has called and gifted people to preach. One example of God's calling would be Isaiah's own personal call in Isaiah chapter 6. The coal that touches his lips and cleanses him is followed by the call to be a messenger, the mouthpiece of God to his generation, to proclaim God's words for the people of his time. Isaiah's story begins with that vivid call, but when we read further in Isaiah we see that the people did not listen. Sometimes, even though the preacher is faithful to their calling to preach, it can fall on hard hearts (Matthew 13:4-7).

Similar calls are also present within the New Testament. From Peter's sermon to the people of Israel, following the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, through to the calling of Paul in Acts 22 where Jesus called Paul to be a light to the Gentiles, we see God at work, changing lives through preachers. The calling of Paul was an example of both a who God can call and a spiritual experience through a vision God gave. The apostle Paul went on to author many of the New Testament letters that we have today, writing down proclamations that impacted the readers of his day and through the work of the Holy Spirit impact the readers in our day too. These scriptures speak to the heart because they are bigger than just one man's words. They are good news, for all people, for all time as they tell us the story of Jesus, the one who came to save us all (John 3:16).

### **The Practice of Biblical Preaching as Proclamation**

The words "proclamation" and "preaching" are used throughout the New Testament. John the Baptist came preaching (*κηρυσσῶ*) in the desert (Matthew 3:1), Jesus was preaching (*κηρυσσῶ*) the good news of the kingdom (Matthew

4:23), the apostle Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching (*κηρυσσω*) (Acts 18:5). The same Greek verb *κηρυσσω* and its noun version *κηρυγμα* are translated to English in two variants, preaching (Goodrick & Kohlenberger 1999, 900), and proclamation (Goodrick & Kohlenberger 1999, 909). The New Testament writers used these Greek words interchangeably. He declared that he was here to proclaim (*κηρυσσω*) the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:19). Philip went to Samaria and proclaimed (*κηρυσσω*) the Gospel there too, and even angels are proclaiming (*κηρυσσω*) in a loud voice (Revelation 5:2). The Greek word we translate as “proclaiming” is defined as a verb in which someone is making an official announcement or public declaration, to “proclaim aloud” (Danker 2000, 543). In scripture preaching and proclamation are used interchangeably.

Johnson explores seven Greek verbs used in the New Testament to describe preaching (Johnson 2009, 76-100; also see Livingston 2017, session 2). Evangelize, herald, teach, exhort, prophesy, confess and witness are each listed along with the intended outcome of each. God speaks in each of these ways and God uses the preacher in any one of these ways. These seven verbs describe further what action or direction preaching can take.

Within scripture we see some who are called to preach repentance (evangelize), like Jonah who rebelled against his call at first (Jonah 1:1) eventually relenting and going to Nineveh (Jonah 3:3). Some were called to preach suddenly, like the disciples in Luke 9:2 where they are sent out to proclaim (*κηρυσσω*) the kingdom of God. Peter stepped up in the moment when God

moved in a large crowd in Acts 2. Sometimes God calls us to preach in difficult circumstances like Stephen (Acts 7) which cost him his life. Sometimes we share the good news to just an individual like Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8. Not everyone who is called listens. There can be rebellion like Jonah, or rejection like Moses (Exodus 3). But God can call whoever he deems right for each situation. Paul even shares the gospel with his jailers while in prison (Acts 16). All that is needed is someone willing to be used by God.

Sometimes the sermons were evangelistic in nature, like Peter in Jerusalem in Acts 2 and Paul to the Gentiles in Acts 17. On other occasions the proclamation would be less about believing in Jesus and more about how to align your life with his. The Apostle Paul's encouragement to Timothy to use scripture for teaching, reproof, and training (2 Timothy 3:16-17) speaks of the ways in which we can teach what the Gospel means for believers and how the gospel should change them.

### **Preaching Scripture Today**

We do not have Jesus in the flesh, or the original apostles making proclamations from the Temple Mount. Rather, we have individuals who are called by God to be his mouthpiece in this generation, to proclaim the good news to those they are with at this cultural moment in time. Sometimes we call these people pastors, preachers, evangelists, prophets, proclaimers or teachers. How does one discern a call? What does it look like to be called?

## **Towards a Theology of God's Calling**

### **My Personal Calling**

God's calling can come to us in many different ways. I personally had a 'feeling' that I would be in ministry. This feeling came in different ways. I had a desire to be involved in church, first serving and then leading. It felt like God was leading me forward, gently towards new ministries and opportunities to serve and lead even in high school. Throughout high school, when asked about the future, my response was that I would one day work in a church. I tried to walk away from that calling a couple of times but God, through my wife, helped me to come back to his intended path, to follow what I now recognize as his call.

I remember a few different times when people in church, or in our small group, would pray and prophesy over Jamie and me. They were given visions of us growing old together and a word from the Lord that I would be used for miraculous healings. Jamie and I are still together and I have seen people healed. However, I recognize it was God's hand at work in them and I simply was a witness. Since those prophecies have proven to be true, I would also trust his calling into ministry to be just as true.

Over the years I have often reflected on my own personal calling. I knew that God wanted me in ministry, but I did not know how or where until just before my third year of college. During that summer God clearly spoke to me. I remember it as an audible voice, but it was also confirmed through scripture, friends, and a change within my heart.

Up until this point I believed I was going to be a church planter. I had seen a few different styles of churches and structures of church leadership, which each had their own struggles. So, I felt like I would start my own church. In my mind, I would say, "then I can do it the 'right' way." However, I was only a young college student, and I now understand the limitations of my thinking. During that season when God spoke to me, he clearly called me to leave the idea of church planting behind and to work within existing churches. I clearly remember God saying, "I know my church is not perfect, but I am not done with it yet. I want you to help it become what I know it can be." God called me to help the church become better, to become more of who God knew it could be, to be someone who helped prepare his church for the day they would meet, face to face. This audible call of God changed my direction and path in life. Much like Isaiah, Paul, Abraham, and the disciples were called to a specific task, I was also called to follow God in a personalized way in my life, "to help the church become what it can be."

### **God's Call for Others**

This communication of God through an audible voice happened in scripture, in church history, and it still happens today, as evidenced by my own personal experiences. One call to preach came from God to Jarena Lee (1783-1850). She was a black woman living in Philadelphia. Jarena wrote:

Between four and five years after my sanctification, on a certain time, an impressive silence fell upon me, and I stood as if someone was about to speak to me, yet I had no such thought in my heart. But to my utter surprise there seemed to sound a voice which I thought I distinctly heard, and most certainly understood, which said to me, "Go preach the gospel!" I immediately replied aloud, "No one will believe me." Again I listened,

and again the same voice seemed to say, "Preach the gospel; I will put words in your mouth, and will turn your enemies to become your friends." (Lischer 2002, 76)

Jarena Lee became the first Methodist woman preacher fulfilled her calling to preach the gospel message. Even through the difficulties of being black and female in the 1800's she followed the call and began preaching to all who would listen.

This audible voice is only one of the ways God chooses to communicate with individuals. There are some who are led, as if they are being pulled or encouraged by the Spirit of God. Doors are opened for them to step into ministries. Others invite them into ministry and see God's hand at work in their lives. Then there are some who see God through dreams and visions. God uses dreams and visions to draw many people, especially Muslims, to himself,

I prayed to Allah, You know my heart. If there's something I must do, show me. 'That night Isa came to me in a dream. In my dream I could see someone trying to repair the speaker at the top of the mosque's minaret. And then I looked at the base of the minaret and saw a man there chopping it down with an axe. Then, as I looked closer, I saw that the man was me! Four times I had this dream. The next morning, I went and found the evangelist who had given me the Injil and asked him what this meant. He smiled and explained to me, 'you are going to win many sheikhs to the Lord.' So immediately I became a follower of Jesus. (Garrison 2014, 64)

A quick Internet search of Muslims who find Jesus in dreams and visions will bring up thousands of video testimonies about Muslims becoming Christians because of dreams and visions. I had two friends, both former Muslims, who shared with me their testimonies of how they began to believe in Jesus as the only true God. Both saw visions; one met a man in a white robe, surrounded by light

who spoke to him in a dream. What the man in white said he later came to realize were quotes from Ezekiel and Revelation.

God speaks in miraculous ways to some people and in a slow leading process with others, letting the journey of life change us. I have also experienced this. It is most notable when I take inventory of all the places God has taken me, as I saw the hand of God protecting, providing, and preparing me for whatever was next in my journey. It was often all about the experiences of life and how they shape us, change us, and prepare us for whatever situation God will bring us into next.

### **God's Calling of the Apostle Paul**

In scripture we saw how God worked within the Apostle Paul's life. Paul was called in a very dramatic way on the Damascus Road (Acts 22), but God's work in his life did not end there. Paul took time to be trained (Galatians 1:15-18) and he worked with others, like Barnabas. With age and experience Paul's ministry changed. The early churches he planted were established quickly; he was in and out quickly. During his later church planting, he spent time living with the church community, training, equipping and encouraging them. You can see the fruit of these church plants through the letters he sent back to each church. The content of each letter suggested to me that as Paul got older and more experienced, he became a better church planter. Neil Cole, in his book *Journeys to Significance*, follows the Apostle Paul's missionary journey through his ministry and compares the fruit and results of this ministry. In commenting on the third missionary journey, he says, "Although third-journey leaders may find they are

doing less ministry work and are more focused, leaders at this stage are actually accomplishing more through the multiplication of new leadership" (Cole 2011, 109). What he is describing is the fruit of experience. Paul has been down this road before. He had started many other churches and learned from those experiences. This time it was different; he did less and let God work more through his training of leaders. They did more ministry and furthered the kingdom of God more than he ever could. If we learn from our experiences, God will show us how we can have an even greater impact on our next journey! This same principle can be applied to our understanding of our own calling. With experience we gain clarity about what God called us to do. If we never step forward and try, we will never confirm if it is a true calling from God.

### **Experiences that Clarified my own Calling**

This was true in my own life as well. Thinking about my own call to preach, I saw how I had grown and changed based on my ongoing education and experiences. I learned from the first sermon when I was fifteen. I grew throughout college, learning and practicing in class, during internships and now speaking almost every Sunday for the past eighteen years. The learning and experiences have not stopped.

My preaching developed and changed through all these experiences. From the books I read, the friends and family with whom I have suffered through difficult life situations, through my own personal health struggles and raising three boys, my preaching changed. Experiences of life shape us and we cannot help but show those experiences through the heart of our preaching. These life

experiences deepened my understanding of struggles that people face, they helped me to relate to others better and softened my heart towards those in my congregation who hear my sermons.

In these experiences God speaks to us, helping us to have more empathy and understanding for others. It helps us to see the world around us from a different light. It also brings us to a new understanding of the scriptures as well. A personal observation would be the realization about how hard it would have been for God to give up his Son for us. I always thought this would be difficult, but I understood it in a whole new light after the birth of my own son. It changed how I perceived and understood God's heart because I now had some experience to compare it too.

With experience and education, I grew in my understanding of God. Having taken more than seven years of graduate level education, plus attending many conferences, and reading countless books, I recognized that I had been given an opportunity to grow. I realized that many others would never get the chance to participate in some of the experiences that I had. I also realized that the expectations God had for me would be greater than others. Those expectations have become part of the calling on my life, part of how I was to help churches to become who God knows they can be. This is done through teaching college classes, consulting with churches, supporting other pastors, mentoring of future leaders and also through this research project, training laypeople to preach in their local church.

## **Calling and Ministry of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

There is a great responsibility that I felt, regarding what God wants me to do with my experiences and education. I have compared myself to the Pharisees and Sadducees. I too know enough to just do the right things, talk the right way, and behave in a religious way, just like they did. Jesus, however, expected something greater from them. He expected that they would be able to see God within the rules and regulations they followed, that they would know the heart of the Father within the scriptures they memorized (Luke 7:30). Instead, scripture tells us that they knew it all, yet they missed the heart of the matter (Matthew 23:13). I don't want to miss the heart of the matter, the good news story of Jesus and what did for us.

## **Calling of the Disciples**

The disciples took another approach when Jesus called them. They left everything to follow him, to learn from Jesus as his disciples (Matthew 4:18-22). They followed, watched, learned, questioned, and confronted Jesus during this time. They all grew and changed, but the real fruit became evident after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. As they met in prayer, waiting for whatever would come next, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, filled them (Acts 2), and they began their own ministry. They began to fulfill their own callings. They preached, healed, served the sick and the poor, and they represented Jesus. They were his ambassadors to all the people around them (2 Corinthians 5:20).

## **The Calling of Jesus Followers Today**

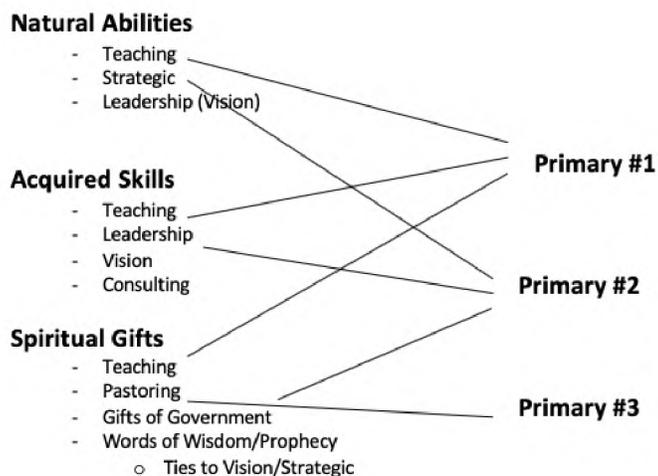
Just as the disciples were the ambassadors of Jesus in their time, the followers of Jesus today are his ambassadors in this time. Christians are God's representatives on earth, as though he was making his appeal through them (2 Corinthians 5:20). They are to be his witnesses on earth (Acts 1:8) to share (Philemon 1:6) and proclaim (Psalm 96:2) the salvation of God to all those around us. All Christians are called to bear witness to what God has done in our lives (Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15, Acts 22:15). Some are called to unique places of leadership called offices.

The apostle Paul mentioned five offices to which some will be called: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11-13). These people have a special role within the body of Christ, a special calling upon their lives to stand before the body and lead in the ways that God has gifted and called them. Some are called to be pastors, some are called to be teachers and with that calling there is a unique role that they play within the body of Christ. These roles involve leadership and communication. Pastors lead their churches through guiding, directing, teaching, and equipping which are all aspects of making disciples. Pastors will do this most consistently and broadly through preaching and teaching. God can speak through anyone, yet he consistently chooses to speak through those he has called to preach and teach his followers.

## My Calling and Gifting from God

I have been called to teach and preach, I have been gifted to teach and preach and I am learning how to do both better. This is something that was made very clear within my VENN Diagram (Appendix One) and through my reading of *Unlocking your Giftedness* (Clinton 1998). I find myself fitting well with their definition of a leader as one who has a “God-given capacity AND with God-given responsibility, who is influencing a specific group of God's people toward God's purposes for the group” (Clinton 1998, 14).

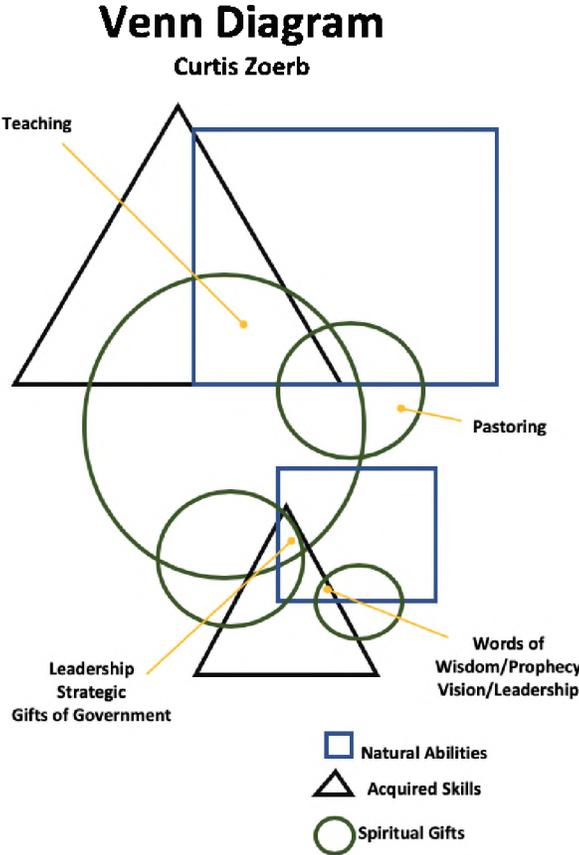
My VENN Diagram shows my top three spiritual gifts, natural abilities and acquired skills. Understanding the distinction between these three different categories helped me to understand myself and my calling better. Here you will see the top three of each category which are:



**Figure 1: My top three gifts, skills and abilities**

When doing the different inventories listed in the Clinton’s book, teaching was my top spiritual gift, natural ability and acquired skill. They defined teaching as, “a person who has the gift of teaching is one who has the ability to instruct,

explain, or expose Biblical truth in such a way as to cause believers to understand the Biblical truth” (Clinton 1998, 303). The other three primary abilities can be grouped into three similar primary categories. This is visually displayed on my VENN diagram below.



**Figure 2: My VENN Diagram**

I had been called by God and the church, been given the responsibility of leadership and the authority to preach and to teach in my local church. In my own calling I must rely on the gifts, skills and abilities that God has given me. I know that I am at the heart of who God has called me to be and what he has called me to do. For me this has meant that I have continued to grow in the areas of ministry

to which God has called me. This includes growing in my spiritual gifts, my natural abilities and continuing to expand my acquired skills through further education like this Doctor of Ministry in Preaching and Communication.

### **Called to Preach, my Story**

Part of my calling is to help the church become what she can be. God has worked in my life through many experiences inside and outside of the church. My story has been shaped by my family, the preachers I have sat under, the mentors in my educational journey and even those who have been critics in my life. The following stories help to show how my calling to be a preacher has been shaped by God through my experiences.

### **Growing up in a Small-Town Church**

I grew up as the oldest in a family of three on an acreage. My parents were heavily involved in our local church, the same church my father grew up in. If the church doors were open, we were there. My dad served on the board for many decades while also providing pastoral care as a deacon, for over forty years, until he passed away in 2019. I became involved as a youth helping with Sunday school and running the sound system for worship services.

### **Influential Preachers & Mentors in My Life**

My journey to become a preacher was shaped by the pastors and mentors I've had in my life. Following is a list of some of those who have impacted my understanding of preaching and calling.

Reverend Lloyd Griffith

The pastor who had the greatest influence on my childhood years was Lloyd Griffith. Lloyd and his wife Ruth were close friends with my parents and their children were the same ages as my siblings and me. We were very close as families for the eleven years Lloyd pastored in Delisle, Saskatchewan. Pastor Lloyd was there throughout my teen years, officiated at our wedding and was the pastor while my wife and I were volunteer leaders of the youth program.

The impact Lloyd had on my preaching was profound yet subtle. He was someone who met Christ as a married young adult and had a passion to see others come to know Jesus. This was seen through his passion for heartfelt change in people's lives. His evangelistic ministry was accomplished through personal relationships with those around him. His preaching was not overly energetic but it would keep your attention. I wondered what it was like for him when his kids were a little rambunctious. I recall some Sundays when my best friend, his son, would set the alarm on his watch to go off when his dad preached past 11:45 a.m., the time at which church was supposed to end. This never boded well for my friend... but he kept doing it anyway.

Growing up under Pastor Lloyd, there were two things that impacted my preaching. First, I do not remember him ever issuing an altar call; and second, how he changed after his educational sabbatical. There were times when I wanted to do an altar call in my ministry, but I struggled with how to do this because I did not witness it growing up. I have done this on occasion, but not being familiar with it, doing altar calls pushed me way out of my comfort zone. This was the

first preaching-related practice in which I realized I learned most of my preaching habits from my past experiences.

The second thing that impacted me was watching Lloyd come back from a sabbatical in which he took a year-long study break and started a master's degree in biblical counselling. I recall the first few months after his return. He was a different man, a different pastor, and a different preacher. I remember his sermons having more depth, more passion, and more focus. As I reflected on this, I realized that this influenced my opinion of further education while preaching/pastoring. I too wanted to continue to grow, change and adapt in my own ability to lead, pastor, and preach. Over my eighteen years of full-time ministry, I never stopped taking classes, learning about God or fulfilling my own personal calling.

Lloyd also gave me my first opportunity to preach when I was fifteen. I believe that through his influence in the eleven years he pastored my home church, his faithfulness and consistency were valued by the people in the church and community. I once heard that a fancy meal might give you a memory, but a steady diet will sustain you for life. His preaching was what fed me as I grew up.

Sam Chaise

During the first two years of my marriage, while leading the youth ministry in my home church, my wife Jamie and I also sat on the leadership team of a Saturday night church plant in Saskatoon. This was led by one of my wife's pastors from her home church. This church was filled with young adults, was small-group-based, and grew vibrantly through the ministry of the small groups

and Saturday evening services. The friends we made there impacted our lives and changed the direction of our lives as we considered what ministry God might be calling us into.

The pastor of this church, Sam Chaise, preached very differently than Pastor Lloyd. The service started with 30 minutes of worship and announcements, then we had a 5-minute coffee break (in the middle of the service). Sam then got everyone's attention with a 'Top Ten' list of strange or funny things he came across that week. His sermons were always contemporary and story-based relying heavily on his worship leadership background. These messages connected well with the growing number of young adults who began attending the services.

Dr. Preston Busch

Following the ministry of Lloyd and Sam, I was influenced by my first college homiletics professor, Preston Busch. Preston was a student of Haddon Robinson and used his book, *Biblical Preaching* (Robinson 2001), as his homiletical bible. We were required follow the precise process for sermon development as laid out by Haddon. This course had a profound impact on me and my sermon writing process. I do not follow the exact steps laid out by Robinson's method anymore, but I do use his basic exegetical process to form a foundation for all my sermons. Even though Preston encouraged students to use Haddon's material, he also introduced students to many other preaching works and preachers of the past and present.

As my sermon delivery needed work, he encouraged me to read books like *Imagining a Sermon* by Thomas H. Troeger (1990), *Preaching with Passion* by Alex Montoya (2000) and *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* by John Piper (1990) to name a few. Preston also introduced me to the sermon tapes kept in the college library. As I found this mountain of material, I began listening to sermons from over the decades of various preachers. This significantly impacted my preaching, as I was introduced to the sermon classics like Jonathan Edwards's work *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. This particular sermon stuck with me. It was a dynamic, powerful, hellfire and brimstone sermon, but when I learned that Edwards preached while reading from his notes in a monotone voice, I gained another figure from whom I could learn as I worked on leaving the monotone preaching behind.

Edwards' style was plain and simple. His voice was low and calm, he seldom used any gestures, and he frequently kept his eyes on his notes or on the bell rope at the back of the church. His great strength as a preacher, however, lay in his clear and forceful argumentation. His logical presentation of biblical truths was nearly irresistible. (Vaughan 2000, 36)

Dr. David Ernst

David Ernst was another homiletics professor I had in bible college. I took his course "*Creativity in Preaching*." This opened my eyes to a broader view of preaching styles and the opportunity to be creative in your preaching while still keeping it biblically based.

Reverend David Wicks

I have been positively influenced by pastors I have worked with, like Dave Wicks, my first pastoral supervisor. He believed in me and helped me see the potential that I have as a leader and a pastor.

Dr. Paul Magnus

My master's program mentor, Dr. Paul Magnus, heavily influenced me. He not only taught me a lot about leadership within the church, but he also shared with me his journey and struggles. In one conversation, he said, "I have always struggled with preaching, but then one day I realized that it was like the Devil was holding me down. So now, before I speak, I literally shake him off, shake him off my arms and cast him to the ground. I am doing God's work, and the Devil has no place" (Magnus, 2018). While I was a student at Briercrest, Dr. Magnus was the school's president; he instituted a President's Chapel every Tuesday. If he was on campus, he spoke. It was a day that nobody missed as his preaching was powerful, inventive, and impacted all of us. I recall a sermon he did on sacrifice; he preached the entire sermon laying on his side while strapped to the top of a table saw. He was carried in on the saw and carried out on the saw, and you could have heard a pin drop the entire time.

Tyndale University

There has also been an influence on my preaching through the three years of continuing education through the Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale University. Chapel speakers during the week, Sunday field trips to other churches

and watching Dr. Kevin Livingston preach has also deepened my experience with how others preach God's word.

#### Other Preaching Influences

Other preachers I sat under, while attending a charismatic church while in Bible college or interning in a more traditional Brethren in Christ church in the Niagara region of Ontario, had different ways of preaching. Another summer I did an internship with two other pastors in two different churches over the summer months while in Bible school. Each of these pastors had their own gifts and styles of preaching, they helped me to see a small piece of the broader church and how different the preaching experience was in different church traditions and cultural settings.

Over the years I have listened to and watched many different preachers online or through DVD's. I have watched or listened to Bruxy Cavey, Francis Chan, Andy Stanley, Haddon Robinson, John Piper and others not to mimic them but to learn from their preaching styles and content.

I have also been influenced by many books, articles, conferences, and courses that I have taken. Like the Global Leadership Preaching Lab<sup>21</sup> (Global Leadership Network 2016) and a local pastor who started a preaching small group for pastors to learn from each other and grow together. These courses and groups have challenged me to continue to grow in my preaching abilities.

#### Critics

Critics have also had an influence on me. These critics took a piece of me with them because much of their criticism was directed at my preaching abilities.

However, these struggles caused me to reflect and focus on what God was calling me to do and who he was calling me to be. I gained a new understanding of my gifts, my calling, and a renewed passion for the work of preaching and communication. I was who God created me to be, not who anyone else thinks I should be. Their criticism pushed me to look at what God asked me to do. Was he calling me to preach and teach? I came to the firm conclusion that yes, God is calling me to continue to preach and teach. I was not called to mimic other preachers, but to become more of the person God created me to be.

All these individuals, books, recordings have had a significant impact on my identity, preaching, and philosophy of preaching. These people have shaped me into the person and preacher I am today. In this next section, bits and pieces of these influences inform my personal theology of preaching, which is influenced by those that have influenced me. God has used this to shape and mold me like a potter molds his clay (Jeremiah 18).

### **Experiences that Shaped my Personal Call to Preach**

In my early teens, I knew that I would work in the church one day. There was a little bit of rebellion during those years. But, even during those days when I would spend time with the rebellious non-churched crowd, and someone would ask about life after school, I would talk about working in the church. I did not know why or what that even meant, but I knew that God was pulling me somewhere.

In those years, I was given opportunities for ministry and leadership that shaped me into who I am today. I was fourteen when I went on my first mission trip. I went with Teen Missions International on a two-month trip to Australia. I knew no one else on the trip, but it changed my perspective on the global church, introduced me to other denominations and styles of ministry and showed me how big the world is.

### **Teen Years**

When I returned from that trip, I became involved in a drama team where I met my wife. We were both fifteen years old and travelled around with the drama troupe doing conferences and youth group events, teaching other teens about chastity and the importance of saving yourself for marriage. Through this drama group, Jamie (my wife) and I were challenged about our relationship and had to make some deep commitments early on. This experience pushed us to choose at fifteen between our relationship and our ministry. We decided that God wanted us to do both. The leaders didn't agree, so God led us to new ministries to be involved in.

I started my high school's first Inter-School Christian Fellowship group during these years. To do this I had to find supporters and build a case for this group, which then had to be presented to the school board. I vividly remember standing by myself as a grade 10 student defending the opportunity to have a Christian-based group in our school. One teacher, my math teacher, got irate and started yelling, "If we do this, then we will also have Satanists forming a group and sacrificing babies in the school." His argument was looked on as being as

absurd as it sounds. My request was accepted and we began meeting shortly after that, although math class was never the same again. This experience was something I often reflect on when presented with difficult conversations, or controversial sermon topics or scriptures. I realized that even if someone disagrees with what I presented, as long as I was being faithful to what God asked me to do, I should go ahead and remain faithful.

I became involved in leadership with my youth group and attended Jamie's church's youth group. We were involved in both churches throughout our high school dating years. We were invited back to my home church to lead the youth program following high school. We were just married, and I had found my first well-paying job and my mindset focused on providing for my family. We were struggling to find our place as a couple together in our new marriage, and because of my need to be a provider in my new marriage, I turned down the invitation to be youth leaders because it didn't provide financially. Thankfully, Jamie pushed through my hesitation, and we accepted that position, again changing the trajectory of our lives.

### My First Sermon

The first sermon I ever preached was for a Mother's Day service when I was fifteen. I found out that Pastor Lloyd was going to be away that Sunday, so I asked if I could speak. I do not remember much about my preparation, but I do remember standing up in front of our small rural congregation full of family and friends, people I had grown up with, preaching from Ephesians 6. I spoke boldly about how children should obey their parents. I remember the smiles on people's

faces as preached... as I looked back on that message I wondered if they were trying to hold back their laughter as I, one of rambunctious kids from the church, spoke about obeying your parents. In the end, they encouraged me and supported the message that I had prepared for that Sunday. Through this early experience I felt a desire to be in ministry and I continued to slowly head in that direction, getting involved in leadership in the youth group. I also started an Inter-School Christian Fellowship group at my high-school and participated in other preaching opportunities as they presented themselves.

### **Young Adult Years**

During those two years while we lead the youth group, I learned about leading Bible studies, speaking to youth, leading worship services, and occasionally preaching in our Sunday morning services. It helped me to see what was possible when I trusted in God and allowed him to work through me. During these two years, we also experienced struggles at this church. It was the first time I had upset parents calling me, the first time I worked with hurting children, and the first time I saw how some annual meetings could become heated with debate. I love my home church, but there was a mixture of joy and pain in those years.

During those same two years, Jamie and I were also invited to be part of a new ministry at her home church. One of the pastors was given the opportunity to start a Saturday night church called Nightsong. Sam Chaise pastored this small group-based church plant in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and he invited us to be part of his leadership team for this service. This experience opened my eyes to church planting and the power of small groups. It also became a support system

for Jamie and me through all the changes in our lives. We realized that we were not only creating life-long friendships, but God spoke to us about ministry, and we experienced the dynamic and powerful work of his Spirit in our lives.

### **College Years**

Following those two years, at the age of twenty-one, we headed off to Bible college. It was time for me to dive deep into learning about God. I did not realize how much I would also need to learn about myself. It was between my 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of school that God placed a call upon my life. It was clear and vocal, “I want you to help my church become what I know it can be.” Through this calling I realized that I would work with the local church, helping her to become what it could be, helping the church to reach its potential.

#### **My First Homiletics Class in College**

In the years that followed I grew in my leadership capacity and my speaking ability, or so I thought. In my second year of college I took my first homiletics course. We prepared our first sermon to be preached in front of our class and I remembered watching fellow students who spoke so eloquently. I worked hard preparing my sermon, and when it was my turn, I got up, stood at the lectern, and began. I had followed the steps given in *Biblical Preaching* (Robinson 2001), but what came out amounted to an impassive reading of a research paper in front of the class. I had spent so much time in the first year of school trying to learn how to research and study that I was not able to translate that into a document that engaged people when being read aloud as a sermon. As

I turned my stapled pages, I remember thinking to myself, "this is terrible, it is boring, no one's getting anything out of it, but I cannot quit now"!

The professor agreed with my summary feelings on that first sermon, but he spent extra time with me, helping me to understand how to write for the ear and not for the page. He helped me to see I was not the only one who needed a little extra help. I may not be as charismatic or as natural as some, but I am called by God to preach.

These two experiences shaped my initial understanding of continuing education and preaching. Through these two opportunities, and many others, I felt valued and encouraged as a developing preacher, and I felt encouraged by the professor who took extra time to help me understand my calling and help me develop as a preacher.

I took three preaching courses during my undergrad years. Each one helped me to put together different pieces of sermon preparation and delivery. Even after these three courses, I knew that I would need to keep working, studying, learning about myself, and grow in my ability to communicate what God had laid on my heart. These first courses laid a foundation for continued growth, one which I am still building upon.

### **Putting Together all the Pieces**

Through this self-reflection journey, I have realized that almost every volunteer position, secular job, work experience, internship and educational course fits into Gods calling on my life, to help churches reach their full potential. This is still what God calls me to do. I know that it may change in the future, but

I trust that God is using this time right now to lead me to whatever he has in store for me in the future.

I had also felt the calling to be a pastor who strives for a long tenure in the same location. This was something that Jamie and I had both felt as an important part of our ministry. God put this desire in our hearts to commit long-term to a church and we strived to obey that call. In more recent years I felt called to help churches develop leaders, develop a vision and work to become better at who God has called them to be. As my experience and education continues to grow, the calling to consult with churches or teach students may become more prominent.

In my first church after college, the senior pastor, David Wicks, made an observation about me as we were standing in the hallway outside our offices; “You have strong administrative skills,” he said, and I burst out laughing. I thought that was the funniest thing anyone had told me about me. However, he was 100% right. I did not see it, but he saw it within me. It was then that I began the journey to discover my abilities within areas of leadership and administration. Through his comment and new opportunities, after being called into a new church, I started to take classes in vision development, conflict management and leadership. In doing so, I discovered a sweet spot of ability, gifting and calling. This began my switch from the divinity track into the leadership track during my master’s program.

My new church affirmed this as I was invited to explore the potential possibilities of going multi-site. During these discussions it was affirmed that this was a sweet spot for me. It was a time of passion and excitement, planning,

vision, work, stress and enjoyment. However, almost one year into this process, it came to a sudden halt when I had a stroke.

### **Ministry Impact after having a Stroke**

Just a week after my thirtieth birthday, I had a series of mini-strokes. I was in the hospital for eight days while they tried to figure out a cause; but it remained an unanswered question. The stroke forced me off work for almost three months and significantly impacted my understanding of situations and emotions. I had to retrain myself to understand facial expressions, hear emotions in conversation and recognize the implications of my own words and actions.

When I returned to work, it was only part-time. During that first year back, I slowly stretched and re-trained my brain to figure out people's facial expressions, to understand their responses to my matter-of-fact statements and relearn how to prepare sermons that would connect with people. I never excelled in these areas, but the stroke set me back even further. I was always analytically driven, introverted, and drawn to spending time alone to work through a situation or problem. The stroke heightened those tendencies and made me oblivious to how my actions would be understood by other people.

I spent time interviewing people about how the stroke changed my life. In talking with a ministry colleague as well as my family there was agreement that I changed after the stroke. Those first years of recovery were hard. However, this experience had also changed my understanding of illness and struggle. When I interviewed Carlin Fehr, he said that I was more compassionate than before (Fehr 2018), that I was more understanding of people's situations and what that might

mean for their commitment to the ministry of the church. The only remaining impact of the stroke was a chronic migraine that I lived with all day, every day. I became more compassionate but it was also noted that I was sometimes less patient. That was a painful realization. Whether it was a change in personality or a result of living in chronic pain did not matter. That was not who I wanted to be, even though my family was extremely gracious about it (Zoerb 2018).

As I mentioned, the stroke impacted my personality, and it also affected my leadership style. I became a much quieter person, less self-assured and more likely to admit I did not have all the answers. Some of these changes were good. Having a stroke was an experience that has changed me, and an experience that I had no control over. It showed me that I was not alone, and I did not need to do everything on my own. I always leaned towards a team model of leadership, but that was even more true after the stroke. I knew there would be a better result when I worked with others rather than by myself.

### **How the Church was Impacted by my Stroke**

The church was impacted during this time as well. We were in the middle of a three-year exploration of completely redoing church as we knew it, and it all halted as I recovered at home for the next three months. Both the church and I were wondering if I would return. The honeymoon or grace period of being a new pastor was extended until about year five. The constant migraines resulting from the stroke continued, but I did not speak of it unless asked, but people could tell when it was a bad day and would sometimes comment on it. Those up and down days also hurt my productivity. I would say on good days I was working at

about ninety percent, on the difficult days maybe fifty percent. Again, this impacted the church, but the congregation was gracious, supportive, caring and encouraging. For that, I was eternally grateful.

### **How the Stroke Impacted my Preaching**

The stroke also had an impact on my preaching. When I woke up in the morning, some days were bad, some days were good. I did not know what each day would hold, and nothing specific seemed to trigger bad or good days. When I woke up on a Sunday, and it was a worse day, it would impact my preaching. When the migraine was worse, I talked quietly, but it still felt like screaming in my head. My voice had less emotion and variation and I was more monotone. The migraines also impacted my ability to think on my feet. I generally used an expanded outline, not a manuscript sermon. It was still about seven pages of enlarged notes for a thirty-minute sermon. If I used a word-for-word manuscript, I tended to get stuck while reading it, using even less emotion, and engaging less with the congregation. If I used a short outline, like a page or two, I lost my train of thought, so the expanded outline seemed to work just right for me at this point. For the research project, I committed to using Kenton Anderson's integrative preaching outline, which I did for over two years and found it easy to work with on good and bad migraine days.

Even though a stroke interrupted ministry, my personal life, and family life, I saw God at work. His calling on my life did not change. I have experienced God's grace at work, in my life, and I saw him working in the lives of those around me.

## **My Personality – Being an Introvert and a Preacher**

As part of this journey of self-discovery, I dove deep into my own personality. My personality profile classified me as an introvert. Yet, I was also called by God to preach. It seemed like there was incongruence between these two things, especially when looking at the world around me. There had even been a move towards ministers being extroverted as a requirement for job applications.

Evangelical churches often make extroversion a prerequisite for leadership, sometimes explicitly. 'The priest must be... an extrovert who enthusiastically engages members and newcomers, a team player.' Reads an ad for a position... A senior priest at another church confesses online that he has advised parishes recruiting a new rector to ask what his or her Myers-Briggs score is. "If the first letter isn't an 'E' [for extrovert]," he tells them, 'think twice... I'm sure our Lord was' [an extrovert]. (Cain 2013, 65)

My Myers-Briggs Type Indicator indicated I was an INTJ, and it has been the same for the past 18 years since I first did the scoring. I sometimes felt like I did not fit into the role I was called to be in. I have worked my way through it for the past twenty years and learned that I was supposed to be here, that this was where God wanted me to be, but I still got that feeling every time I was about to speak. I discovered that I was not alone in this feeling. Susan shared her experience, "I realize it's not true that I'm no longer shy; I've just learned to talk myself down from the ledge...but there's a split second that feels like I'm stepping onto a high wire" (Cain 2013, 119). Many introverts like myself learned to step out of our character like we are acting, but also learned that we could not stay there for very long (Cain 2013, 210). Susan Cain's book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that can't Stop Talking* (2013) helped me see that there was a place for me

within my calling as a public speaker, preacher, and introvert. In fact, it could also be rewarding. I was able to make a difference in the world and change lives, and I did not have to be or pretend to be someone I was not. God created me to be a preacher and that call must be continually protected.

### **Learning through taking a Sabbatical**

In 2014 I was able to take a five-month sabbatical. During that time, my family moved to Zambia, and I taught a few classes in a small rural Bible College in a village an hour's drive from the closest city. It was an amazing opportunity to see the world, work with future pastors, and have a break from the ministry we were in while giving my family the experience of a lifetime.

Personally, this was a time when the stress level was significantly reduced. I had twelve students and taught two Bible classes and an English class. It was fantastic to get just to spend time walking through scriptures with them. Classes took place from 8:30 am till 11:30 am then I was done for the day. I felt good during this time. I do not recall exactly what the migraines were like, but I know life was a little easier just because there was a lot less stress. Dr. Archibald Hart wrote about his sabbatical, saying,

My wife attests to the fact that after the third month of that sabbatical, I was a different person. Free of any race with time, I seemed more at peace. I discovered some of the new sensations I never knew and rediscovered some I had forgotten. I became more alert and attentive to the world around me. I even got to know our neighbours...

(Hart 1995, 44)

Perhaps I was not different person, but I felt more at peace, and I was not in a race with time. I spent time reading and exploring Zambia with my family. I think

stress plays a part in my overall health and with my migraines, but I am not sure how to deal with that yet, as stress is a part of life for everyone. However, I learned through this sabbatical that I was exactly where God wanted me to be. I was the pastor he wanted for Massey Place Community Church, I was the right husband and father for my family, and I was exactly who God designed me to be!

### **Would I Change Anything?**

The only thing that I regret over the journey that I have mentioned is the loss of energy because of the chronic migraine. Everything else, the stroke, church conflicts, and ministry, have made me into who I am today. Through all the things I have described from my journey, I can see God's hand guiding and shaping me as I moved through them. God has molded me for his purposes and shaped me for what he has in store for me in the days ahead.

I have been asked if I think that God caused the stroke. This is a difficult question to answer. I think I am a better person overall because of the stroke, definitely different, but I believe I am better. I have a new sense of compassion for people's trials; even if I have trouble reading their emotions, I feel for them in a new way. I understand what people are going through as I stand by their bedside in the hospital. I move slower; I am less driven and more patient with how the wheels of progress turn. So, if God caused the stroke, it changed me into who I am today. If God did not cause the stroke and it is just the result of a broken body living in a broken world, then he worked through the stroke to make me a better person. Would I like to be migraine-free? Absolutely! We pray for that regularly and believe that one day it will happen. Will I give up on my call

before that happens? Never. Many people have struggles of their own; this one happens to be the one that I bear.

### **My Definition of Preaching**

While developing my theology of preaching, I realized that there were many elements that I wanted to include in my definition to make it complete. Perhaps some of it could be assumed and left out, but I fear that if shortened, certain indispensable items would be forgotten. Preaching is an essential part of the scriptural narrative as it is how God communicates with his disciples and through his disciples with the rest of the world.

When including my experiences and convictions about calling, preaching, theology, and the work of God in our lives and the world, I have developed this definition: Preaching is proclaiming the gospel to all who will listen. To expand on that definition, preaching is the proclamation of the gospel through partnering with God's work in the scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts, inform minds, challenge the souls of the preacher and the listeners and empowering both toward action through a growing knowledge of Jesus and what he is calling us to do.

The art of preaching is like a sort of alchemy, a mixture of the experiences and personality of the preacher brought into harmony with the scriptures through the work of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, changes the heart of the one preaching and impacts the lives of those who hear the message. That impact is only made possible by the work of the Spirit in each person's life. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

speaks about the folly of the people without the Spirit and the judgement or discernment of people who have the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who helps us to understand or, to put it as Paul did, to have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Hence, it is a sort of alchemy, a mixing of human and divine experiences being brought to life by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit Works Through Preaching**

One of the ways I have experienced the Spirit at work in people's lives is when different people are impacted by different parts of a sermon. When hearing about what impacted them in that morning's sermon, I am often surprised by what they received from that message. Sometimes it is similar to what I thought would be the takeaway and sometimes it is entirely different, something I mentioned in passing or added last minute, or even something that just came out of my mouth while I was speaking. These occasions tell me that there is a dynamic reaction between the sermon that was preached and the people who hear it. Even a couple sitting side by side could be impacted differently while listening to the same message.

Having studied preaching for the past twenty-one years, I have been in awe of how the act of preaching brings people to meet Jesus. How they were then drawn into a relationship with a father who makes an eternal difference and were moved by the Spirit of God. There is a supernatural power at work when a preacher preaches. I have seen the Spirit alive and at work in my own life, through preaching, reading of scripture and through the people of God.

## **Conclusion, Who I am Called to be**

I am called to be a husband, father, pastor, leader, preacher, and child of God. Over the past few years, I have discovered anew that I am exactly who God wants me to be, and I am exactly where God wants me to be. I am called to teach, preach, lead, pastor and help the body of Christ move toward its greatest potential. I am called to help churches become who God sees them to be and to help people become who God sees they can be.

I have suffered physical pain, chronic pain and the rejection of people close to me within ministry. This has helped shape me into the person that God is calling me to be. So today, I can declare along with Paul, "We rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4). All this has shaped me into who I am today.

Today, I am also a preacher, called to teach about Jesus and preach his good news message. Preaching is the proclamation of the gospel through partnering with God's work in the scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts, inform minds, challenge the souls of the preacher and the listeners and empowering both toward action through a growing knowledge of Jesus and what he is calling us to do.

My personal preaching identity has been formed by the work of the Spirit through my journey to date. Through this, I can boldly declare that I am doing what God has called me to do, and I am where God has called me to be. God may call me to something different, perhaps at another church one day or possibly to

teach new pastors again. Whatever the future holds, I am confident that God is also shaping me now for what he has in store for me tomorrow.

### **CHAPTER THREE: MASSEY PLACE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

My calling to Massey Place Community Church has helped it to grow, change and move towards the future God has called it to. As lead pastor during these past fifteen years God has use me as a catalyst to train people into leadership, to share the gospel and baptize new believers. This research project further advanced the church through training new lay preachers and also bringing new leaders into the church. This project not only helped us to see how God was calling me, it also help to identify how God called others within our church to step forward into his plan for their lives.

I became the pastor at Massey Place Community Church on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Over these fifteen years, the church and community changed dramatically. Some of the historical influences in the church remain, but with many new people, there are new stories that shape who we are as well. I will begin by describing our church's history as a member of the Be In Christ Church of Canada. Then we will look at the local ministry context, the Massey Place neighbourhood and the city of Saskatoon. Finally, we will explore the congregational dynamics of Massey Place Community Church. Based on these three contexts (denomination, community and congregation) I will outline my preaching strategy as the congregation's Lead Pastor, and introduce the questions that drove my research project.

## **My Church's Theological Tradition**

The Be in Christ Church of Canada, formerly the Canadian Brethren in Christ Church, has a long and rich history. Our denominational roots trace back to the early 1770's in the Susquehanna River valley in Pennsylvania (Wittlinger 1978, 1). As the Anabaptists fled persecution throughout Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries many settled in the religiously safe state of Pennsylvania. One of these groups was impacted by the travelling revival speakers who shared a Pietistic view of the Christian faith. They began to grow in their understanding of faith as they held these new ideas and compared them to the scriptures that they held so dear. During this time a group began to gather beside the Susquehanna River and they became known as the River Brethren. This was the start of what later became the Brethren in Christ denomination (Wittlinger 1978), In Canada we are now called the Be In Christ Church of Canada.

## **The Four Theological Streams**

There are four theological streams that are the foundation of the Be In Christ Church of Canada's denominational theology and core values. Anabaptism, Pietism, Wesleyanism and Evangelicalism ([beinchrist.ca/about](http://beinchrist.ca/about) 2022). Each of these streams has influenced our theology, which in turn impacted our denominational preaching style. These theological streams are not unique to the Be In Christ Church, but they inform the journey of the Be In Christ denomination.

## **Anabaptism**

The Anabaptism theological stream, rooted in the radical Reformation tradition and the writings of Menno Simons, placed a heavy emphasis on the simple truth and authority of scripture, and especially on the words of Jesus. We do not hold Jesus over and above scripture, but we believe that the Old Testament points to him and the rest of the Bible speaks about him. There is an emphasis on being separate from the world, believer's baptism & pacifism (Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling 1999, 9 & 76). Anabaptism is the foundation of the Be in Christ's theological history (Sider 1999, 62).

## **Pietism**

Pietism combines an emphasis on biblical doctrine with a focus on personal piety and living active and obedient Christian life. Pietism opened our ancestors' minds to the need for a personal relationship with Jesus that should change how they lived. Through this new understanding of our faith, application-based preaching began to develop within our churches.

The sermon rose to new prominence and controversy in the Pietist and revival movements of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.... Pietists and revivalists were particularly concerned to produce effective sermon. They focused attention on the religious disposition of the preaches and introduced innovative forms of pulpit oratory and new occasions for preaching... (Eijnatten 2009, 173)

and,

The tendency of the following [sic] Pietist preaching towards a simple, applicable interpretation of Biblical texts, and its thematic alignment towards decision, conversion and rebirth as well as its strong pull towards ethical instruction.... As a result, sermons help to deepen and strengthen one's faith. They help to keep converted believers on the way of sanctification. (Eijnatten 2009, 66)

This Pietistic influence has shaped the Be in Christ Church since its inception with the focus on practical application being an important part of the weekly sermon. Former executive Director of the Be in Christ Church, Doug Sider, mentioned the historical emphasis on applying the sermon to those listening being an extremely important part of who we are and how we preach across our various churches in North America and globally (Sider 2018). In the early 1900's this was visible through the call to simple dress, uniform clothing and communal living. As the years progressed the denomination has moved our theology of simplicity away from clothing towards a more inward application of our hearts, minds and actions (Sider 1988, 243).

### **Wesleyanism**

It was around the 1870's when individuals in the Brethren in Christ began talking and writing about the Wesleyanism holiness movement (Wittlinger 1978, 2028). The movement began to shape the denomination with discussions around perfectionism or entire sanctification of the individual. Wesleyan revival speakers travelled through the colonies preaching to everyone who would listen. They came into the Susquehanna River Valley and preached among the "Brethren" who were influenced by their passionate words. As their theological understanding grew with the addition of Wesleyanism teaching, their understanding of the work of the Spirit deepened. This influence has carried through till today, as evidenced by our denominations ten core values (Be In Christ 2022). These values help to explain who we are and who we want to be. The very first core value of the denomination comes from these Wesleyan roots,

"Experiencing God's Love and Grace: We Value the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit" (Be In Christ 2022). The belief in the power of the Holy Spirit influenced not only our theology but also our worship practices and our belief that in preaching, the power of the Spirit works in both the preacher and in the listener. Believing that the Spirit is alive and active and working within the preacher be they professional or volunteer, and in the lives of those hearing the sermon.

### **Evangelicalism**

The movement known as evangelism began in October of 1757; with the ordination of Thomas Haweis in Oxford (Hutchinson and Wolffe 2012, 1). However, in the mid 1800's with the formation of the Evangelical Alliance (Hutchinson and Wolff 2012, 2) that evangelicalism spread across Europe and North America. It was this movement that further influenced the Brethren in Christ denomination to take its preaching of the gospel message outside the church and spread across North America and around the world. Late in the 19th century a decision was made at an annual denominational meeting that a heavy emphasis should be placed on reaching the lost. The first tent was purchased in 1892 to preach the gospel with its first evangelistic meeting to be held in Abilene Kansas (Wittlinger 1978, 172). As this passion grew, dozens of tents were purchased for travelling revival meetings. Missionaries began moving out from the home settlement areas in the Niagara region of Ontario and from Pennsylvania. Three hundred people began a journey to settle in Kansas in 1879 (Kimmel 2007, 1). The first missionaries left North America heading for Africa

in 1897 (Kimmel 2007, 3) and more moved from Niagara to Saskatchewan in 1906 (Sider 1988, 166). A decision was also made to become part of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1947 (Wittlinger 1978, 476). Part of the move was driven by economics, but with that move there was a deeply held belief that they had a story to share with the world, the good news story of Jesus Christ.

### **The Be in Christ Church in Recent Years**

In recent years the influence of these theological streams has been less noticeable. With 320 churches across North America this smaller denomination does not have a lot of opportunities for denominational-specific training. There is only one denominational college, Messiah College, located in Pennsylvania. It is a well-respected school, but due to distance and cost, difficult for most Canadian young adults to attend. Many of the pastors across the Canadian Be in Christ church have been trained within various Canadian Bible schools. Some pastors also came from other denominational backgrounds, having sometimes worked for many years within their previous tradition before transitioning into one of our churches.

This has created a cross-pollination of theological thought, preaching practices and forms of sermon delivery. I have been influenced by this cross-pollination. I enjoyed working in my first Be in Christ Church as an associate under the senior pastor, Dave Wicks. Dave spent his first 23 years of ministry in the Apostolic Church of Pentecost. His background, experiences and style helped me to see a broader picture of the church and see more of what preaching looks like in other traditions. Having this cross-pollination helps the Be In Christ

Church to remain humble, recognizing that we are but one part of God's larger global church.

### **Preachers of Influence in the Be in Christ Church Today**

What preachers have been most influential in our denominational tradition? When reading, searching, and asking around about who within our Canadian denomination would be a large figure in preaching everyone pointed to Bruxy Cavey. It should be noted that it was only after completing my interviews and research for this portfolio project that I became aware of Bruxy being asked to leave The Meeting House and losing his Be In Christ ordination and credentials. However, I believe that his influence on the denomination and in my own life warrant his inclusion in this portfolio.

Bruxy Cavey was raised in a Pentecostal church and learned to preach there. For a time Cavey served as a Baptist pastor, and then transitioned to serve in the Be In Christ Church. This left me questioning to what extent Cavey's theology and practice was rooted in the be In Christ tradition. And yet he has been the most influential current-day preacher in our tradition."

There are no large historical figures with whom to compare him. We have been a quiet movement, working behind the scenes for many years. Bruxy, however, made a big splash across the Canadian church scene. From listening to many dozens of his sermons and hearing him speak at denominational gatherings Bruxy talked about being closely aligned with the Be In Christ values and the historical understanding of who the denomination is called to be. I was often impressed at his ability to draw people to Jesus, make application for the listener,

explain the work of the Spirit, and describe who the Be In Christ history and theology. He was not shy about our history and even one time brought a horse and buggy onto the stage when he talked about the Anabaptist roots. He was humble and submitted to the authority of the denominational leadership while praising them before his congregation. All that to say I think he was the first well-known communicator outside of our small circle of our churches. He would have been known as someone who helped shaped our denomination and shaped our style of preaching within our denomination, however now he will be remembered for something else.

Bruxy Cavey had an influence on my own preaching and sermon development. He also had an influence on Massey Place Community Church as I used his sermons for small group discussion material, for Sunday school classes and also in place of a live speaker on the occasional Sunday morning. I have listened to more than sixty of his sermons and have tried my hand at some of the things he did within his services. In the past, I held a live question and answer times at the end of my sermons, which he did every week. I made weekly sermon notes modelled after the handouts Bruxy used at The Meeting House's church. I referred people to different series, especially on hot topics such as pacifism, gender issues and marital issues like divorce and remarriage. We also tried to start an evening coffee house using Bruxy's video sermons as the primary teaching. The Meeting House gave us a contract for the free use of their sermons for as long as we wanted. His influence on me was broad and deep.

For these reasons, I decided to interview Bruxy (Cavey 2018) to learn more about preaching and the influences on his own life that helped develop his preaching style. What I found interesting were the similarities between us. I know that I pastor a church of one hundred, not seven thousand, and I was bald, and Bruxy looked more like a long-haired hippy, but the similarities in our stories were striking, and I believe that is why I had such an affinity for his preaching style.

Bruxy was an introvert, just like me. His introversion was extreme, as described in my interview with his assistant Keturah Duncan (Duncan 2018). Bruxy explained how he would retreat away from crowds and preferred to be alone. He also spoke about the anxiety he still experiences every Sunday as he steps near the stage. I have all those same feelings. When questioned about how he developed as a speaker, he talked about how he acted in plays in high school, and so did I. He spoke about how he had opportunities to lead youth programs early on, and so did I. He also talked about how these experiences helped him as he started public speaking because he would think of it as an act. My personal experiences mirror his very closely. Bruxy went on to say that he found preaching harder than acting, and it was still challenging for him. He said, "It is harder because when you are preaching, you are putting yourself out there" (Cavey 2018). It is not an act, you are partnering with the Holy Spirit while simultaneously opening yourself up to the congregation, and it becomes very personal. He even used Moses as an example of someone God called to public speaking even though it was not one of his gifts. That is precisely how my

testimony starts; Moses is the biblical character I too resonate with most. I had the same arguments with God that Moses had in Exodus 3. My objections ended a little sooner than Moses', and God has not sent me an Aaron to speak for me... yet. With all that I learned about Bruxy through the interview, I was given a glimpse into his history and mind. This also shed light on my past and caused me to reflect on my journey. In light of the recent revelation about Bruxy and his ministry I have reflected on his influence on my past. I came to the conclusion that he had influenced me significantly, in ways that honor the tradition of the denomination and in ways that have impacted my preaching style and process. His failures do not negate the past influence he had on me, or the research in this portfolio.

There have been other preachers with the Be In Christ Church who have been influential in the past, but none of the stature of Bruxy Cavey. The majority of the pastors in this denomination have served their congregations faithfully over many years, not to make a name for themselves, but to preach the gospel message where God called them to be.

### **The History of Massey Place**

Massey Place Community was a neighborhood of 3,885 people (Saskatoon Neighborhood profiles, 2016, 158) within the city of Saskatoon. The neighborhood began in 1962 with construction of the church manse and the church building being the first and second structures built respectively. The church was in the center of the community across from a small strip mall and a

public school. There was a 67.6% homeownership in the community, with the majority of that being in the 823 single family houses (Saskatoon Neighborhood Profiles 2016, 159, 160). In addition, there were 457 multi-unit/apartment suites. This home ownership rate is slightly above the home ownership rate of the rest of Saskatoon, which was at 66.3% (Saskatoon Neighborhood profiles 2016, 9). This means there were more homeowners in Massey Place than in the city's overall average. The community was hidden in a corner of Saskatoon. Many residents of Saskatoon have never heard of it, and most would not be able to tell you where it is. It was shaped like a triangle and bordered by a freeway and two main thoroughfares. There were no major businesses, no restaurants (except a small run-down bar) and hence there was no reason to go into the community unless you were visiting someone who lives there.

The community was a haven for young families raising their children in its early years. The public and separate schools were filled with children and bursting at the seams. I was told that the public school had twelve portable classrooms added to accommodate the number of children in the community in the '80s and early '90s. By comparison, today, they have empty classrooms with dwindling enrollment.

### **Changes that Hurt the Community**

In the community's glory days, the houses were owned by young families and their children played outside and in the central park together. However, as those families grew up and moved on, many of those houses were turned into rental units. During the late '90s and early 2000s, the housing market in

Saskatoon was depressed. Prices were much lower than in other parts of the country, and many homeowners decided to rent out their homes instead of selling. During these years, the community shifted from a community of homeowners to a community of renters, specifically low-income renters. It became a challenging place to live, one of the worst communities in Saskatoon for violence, gang, and drug activity. There was a very high number of rental houses and suites with a minimal number of homeowners. When I moved to Saskatoon in 2008, my realtor did not even want to show us homes in the community because “you would not want to raise a family there.”

However, through a rapid increase in the value of houses and a police project in the community, the neighbourhood changed within months. House prices in Saskatoon changed from an average of \$140,400 in 2005 for a single-family home to a peak of \$329,500 in 2015 (News & Updates, Saskatoon realtors’ website, 2019). The jump in prices started in 2007 and continued into 2008, with housing prices doubling within that year. These changes played a part in the history of Massey Place because all the people renting out their old family houses could make money from selling them. It was a seller’s market.

As people were selling their rental properties, the police service, in partnership with supporting agencies, including Child Protective Services and the RCMP, did a series of raids in the Massey Place neighbourhood. One police officer told me they raided over twenty private rental houses and three apartment buildings. Room by room, they went through the buildings taking people into custody and finding safe places for children.

Both events, the selloff of rental houses and the police special project, shifted the neighbourhood from a high-needs low-income rental community to an average Saskatoon neighbourhood once again. There were, and still are, low-income families. There is still crime, but it is no longer overrunning the community. Members of the community can support each other and live well within this community together.

### **Recent Changes that Revitalized the Community**

As the housing prices rose and rental houses were sold, there was an influx of young families and new immigrants who moved into the neighbourhood. In 2006 the mother tongues in the community were English, Ukrainian, German, French and Arabic (City of Saskatoon 2006 population data). By 2017 the top five mother tongues changed to English, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu and Spanish. The English count also dropped by 211 in those 11 years. There were 2,675 who had English as their mother tongue out of the 3,885 living in the community in 2016 (Saskatoon Neighborhood Profiles 2016, 159).

What did this mean in everyday life in our community? It meant that the people in our community were writing a new history. Over the past fifteen years I have seen the community slowly work its way out from the “worst neighbourhood in the city” banner it wore. Some young families purchased houses in the community because of the lower prices compared to other neighbourhoods. These prices are lower due to its previous poor reputation, but many were looking for a place to start their own new families, and they chose the Massey Place community because of its quiet homey neighborhood feel. We also saw the

community come alive, with people from many countries now calling Massey Place their home. You can walk into any elementary classroom, and you will see students from all over the world represented in each grade. Our public-school hosts aboriginal round dances while also explaining what Ramadan is in the school's monthly newsletter. The neighbourhood has become a diverse community where people are learning how to live together.

### **The City of Saskatoon**

The community of Massey Place was just a microcosm of the city of Saskatoon, a city of 271,000. English, Tagalog, Mandarin, Urdu and French were listed as the top five first languages across the city. The percentage of single-family dwellings was a little lower across the city at 53%, almost a split between the single-family homes and multiple suite buildings (Saskatoon Neighborhood Profiles, 2016).

Massey Place was an older neighbourhood with many residents new to Canada, so there was also a lower average income level compared to the city's average. While in the city of Saskatoon, 10.6% of tax filers earned over \$100,000, only 2.9% of Massey Place residents hit that benchmark (Saskatoon Neighborhood Profiles, 2016, 160). On the other end of the spectrum, 74.8% of Massey Place residents earned less than \$49,999 annually. Compared to the city's overall average at 61.2%, there is a substantial difference at just over 13% of the residents earning an income in that lower tax bracket. This was a result of the

community being an older neighborhood, where the homes are cheaper, making it more affordable for those with a lower income level.

### **A city split in two by a river**

The city of Saskatoon is divided by a river. People will refer to themselves as living on the east or west side of Saskatoon. There are stereotypes that people believe based on the location of their homes. The east side was perceived to be wealthier and safer, and the west side was poorer and rougher. Though not factually true, the perception remains. Massey Place Community Church was located on the west side of the river.

Having reviewed the larger context of the Massey Place neighbourhood within the city of Saskatoon, we now turn to the history of Massey Place Community Church.

### **The History of Massey Place Community Church**

Massey Place Community Church was planted by the Brethren in Christ Church of Canada in 1962 (now known as the Be In Christ Church of Canada). Planting pastor, Ron Lofthouse, was commissioned out of Ontario and moved with his family to Saskatoon to start this church. During their first year they shared a home with the family pastoring a church in Delisle, Saskatchewan, a 30-minute drive west of Saskatoon. At that time, they constructed a home for the Saskatoon pastor adjacent to the site that would become Massey Place Community Church. Moving into the house in 1963 they began a Sunday school, which they ran in their home until the church basement was ready later that year.

The church building was constructed within that first year, and the congregation was officially established.

### **The Church Began to Grow**

As the community grew, so did the church. It grew to about 80 people during the first pastor's tenure. When the third pastor (Doug Sider) began in the early 1970's things began to change. The community was growing by leaps and bounds, and the pastor had established the church as the 'community church' in the eyes of the community. They had a system of invitation for community families, and they welcomed many new families. They knocked on the doors in the neighbourhood, and through their efforts, God added daily to their numbers. By 1978 they could no longer fit into the original church building, so they borrowed money and built on an addition tripling the size of the original building.

This little church in one of Saskatoon's newest neighbourhoods quickly became known as one of the most exciting churches in Saskatoon. New families regularly came through the doors of the church from a variety of sources: a door-knocking program and other forms of church-wide outreach; personal invitation; stories people had heard about the church; and the pre-school that the church started. In the late 1980's Massey Place Community Church became the largest church on the west side of Saskatoon, growing to an attendance which peaked at just over 500 on a Sunday between two Sunday morning services. There was even a season of ministry where they had baptisms every Sunday.

In the early 1990s, the senior pastor felt that the church needed a new building and that it should move to the east side of Saskatoon. They would build

a new facility on the edge of a newly developing neighbourhood. But there were concerns. The church was still paying off the mortgage they had for the previous addition. Further to that, the leadership did not consider those who lived in the area and others who did not want to drive across the city to attend church.

The church was not going into this move blindly. They knew what ministry on the east side of the river was like because they had planted a church across the river in the area surrounding the University of Saskatchewan. Some families from the mother church had gone to help plant this new church. So, the senior pastor at the time felt that selling the existing building in Massey Place and moving to land that they had acquired on the east side of Saskatoon was a good and timely move. They planned a building big enough for the original church and the church plant to come together, believing that this would be beneficial for the church's future.

### **A Vote that Changed the Future of the Church**

The decision to move came down to a membership vote, and on the day of that vote many people who had not attended regularly but were still members turned up to cast their vote and the motion to move failed by 1%. Fifty-one percent of the people voted against moving the church. The church remained in its original location in Massey Place. The senior pastor, a strong leader and evangelist, had previously told the church's leadership that this vote would also be a vote of confidence in his leadership. Within a short while of the failed membership vote he left the church. When he left, many church congregants left the church too. A few months after he resigned as the pastor, he took an associate

role at a large church on the east side of Saskatoon, and more people left and followed him. After a few more years passed, he moved to Ontario to be closer to his family. The church struggled under its new senior leadership, eventually dwindling to an all-time low attendance of 30 people while still carrying a \$150,000 mortgage remaining from the 1978 expansion on the old building.

### **History Impacts Ministry**

When I first moved to this church, I met people in the community who “used to attend Massey Place Community Church.” Some attended other churches in the surrounding neighbourhoods and others had quit church altogether. This history shaped the hearts and lives of many in our congregation when I first arrived. This history and the debt we were carrying also seemed to hold us back from truly becoming the church that God was calling us to be. Initiatives we would propose or ministries we would want to try were all held against a backdrop of debt and desire for low risk. This was part of our history, but things have changed in recent years.

### **Ministry Impacts Vitality**

There were eighteen people who had been attending long enough to remember the history mentioned above. Interestingly, of these eighteen people, eight of them were from families that went to the east side to be part of the church plant in the early 1990s in the university area. They already had the heart for spreading beyond the original building. Also, these eight people lived close to the original church but chose to drive across the river to help with the church plant. This plant did not succeed, and when Massey Place Community Church began to

decline, they moved back to the main church to help there. These long-time members also held many places of volunteer leadership in the church. The influence they had on the churches ministry is significant.

### **Ministry During Difficult Years**

Massey Place Community Church changed along with the community. During those challenging years in the community, the church was focused on being a beacon of light. They had regular volunteers who served at our local public school. They tried various ministries from helping people study for their grade twelve equivalence exams, holding fitness classes for older adults, hosting community meetings in the facility and conducting many other outreaches. The most significant ministry before I arrived was a Tuesday night kids club. This club met in the church and at a neighbouring apartment building. Each week children in the neighbourhood came for games, bible stories, crafts, and snacks. The club grew so large during these years that it became unmanageable for the limited number of volunteers. More and more children were attending without enough volunteers to manage the crowds. When I arrived at the church, this Tuesday night children's program had been stopped for just over a year. When I had suggested some children's programming, it was quickly shut down, and I saw a look of panic across the volunteers faces. They had worked hard at providing a safe place for these children to meet Jesus, but it had completely burned them out. Those children came from the surrounding apartments and houses, but I was told that they never met any parents, not once. During this time with the Tuesday night kids club, Massey Place was the roughest neighbourhood in the city. There

were many children in the rental houses and apartments, but there was very little parental supervision. The perception was that all these children were from low-income, low-involvement families. The children came to the church when they wanted and went home whenever they wanted. Some would be seen wandering during school hours or late into the evenings. This was an excellent outreach for our community but difficult for the church to manage and staff.

### **Changes Began to Take Place**

Some children's ministries slowly started as the community began to shift with new families moving in. One of the significant differences that spoke to the changes in the community around us was that these children all came to the church with their parents. We did not have a single child show up without a parent. In the earlier children's club over sixty children showed up without a single parent connected to the church or interested in where their children were spending their time. In 2007, after the jump in house sales and the police raids, the community dramatically shifted. This shift in the neighbourhood of Massey Place took place the year before I arrived at the church and continued for the first two years of my tenure. The community changed around us, and the church also began to change during that season.

### **Being Community-Minded**

Massey Place Community Church always had a strong interest in being community-minded. People in the community referred to us as the "community" church, or rather "their community" church. We were a gathering place for community events, political polling stations, neighbourhood meetings and served

as a venue for funerals and the occasional wedding. The commitment to the community remained high within the church, but this did not always translate into action. There are seasons of connection and interaction filled with quiet lulls. Looking at this historically, the church's struggles in the 1990s and the drop in attendance showed only one side of the story. The congregation also had a bigger heart for ministry than there were hands to do the work. Another change was the number of people who live within the community boundaries itself. By 2019 there were just four families who lived in the same neighbourhood as the church. Some had lived there and moved to new communities, and others attended the church because of the invitation of family or friends but drove from other communities in Saskatoon. The congregation was spread from one home west of Saskatoon to another home east of Saskatoon; the furthest homes are separated by 100 km. This considerable distance in home location affects people's ability to serve within the local community of Massey Place itself. We wrestled with this difficult question: do we encourage people to engage in the community of the church or with their own neighbours in the communities in which they live? So far, we have tried to balance both areas as places to invest our time and resources.

Over the fifteen years I have been at the church, some of the faces in the pews have changed. We had those same eighteen individuals who were attending before my arrival mixed with new faces cycling through the church with an overall average of sixty-five in attendance, year over year for our English service. We have had some old faces leave, people who moved away from Saskatoon and others who were looking for a new church. But, there were just as many new

faces who came and joined as they searched for a church community to be part of. This held the Sunday morning attendance steady over these years.

### **Changing Make-up of the Church**

There have been changes in the make-up of our church family over these years, with a shift towards a younger demographic in the regular attendees. Those who have left were long-term members and were in a later stage of life with older adult children. The families that came and stayed are families with children who still live at home. While it is not positive that we had lost individuals and families, it was positive that we have been able to gain young families, as that was who we are targeting with our programming and services.

Another change was that the majority of our current church members do not know the history of our church. They do not know that at one point the church was over 500 people or that it dropped to a low of 30 people in the late 90's. They also do not know that for more than 30 years we struggled under a debt that we had trouble managing. This change in the historical memory of the majority of the church opened up new doors. Some were excited to try new things again—people who want to grow and were willing to risk in new ways. Our longer term members remain here because they believe in the church, its mission and its future. They, too, dreamt about the church growing once again, and they brought a great balance to the ideas and proposals of the newer families, using the experiences they had gained to not repeat the struggles of the past.

## **Struggles of the Church**

One of the changes we struggled with was evangelistic leadership, specifically leadership geared for growth. In the days of the remarkable growth of the church in the 1980s, they were leaders who would regularly go door to door within the community, inviting people to church. There was a culture of invitation created by leaders who lived that out in their daily lives. Most of those attending here for the eighteen years or more have told me about a personal story they had in which someone from the church, often the pastor or a lay leader, personally invited them to church. This personal invitation was influential in their decision to start attending the church. Our current leaders did not have the same gift of invitation. Of course not having the “gift of invitation” by going door to door does not excuse members from inviting people to church. (We do invite people.) However, with changes to our culture and community, knocking on doors as an evangelistic strategy is not received as positively. Along with the differences in the gifting and personalities of people in leadership, there was now a need to discover a new kind of outreach that will work for the church today, not in the former glory years of thirty years ago.

The outreach that would work today may not include knocking on doors or the rapid growth that happens when a community is built around the first church in a new subdivision, but there was still an opportunity for growth. Our community, the city and the country have changed over these past thirty years.

## **Strategies for the Future**

With changes in community's demographics and ethnicity, along with the economic changes, the old ways of reaching the community did not work in the same way. One of the changes was in the people who requested rentals for our facility. We rented out our hall and kitchen to people from the community. We saw this as a straightforward way we can at least let people know we are here. Then while they were here, they could also see inside our church building and posters advertising services, and ministries while in the building.

Generally, speaking, the people who had come to our church are people who had connections with others who were already in the church. We were all part of the same ethnic group with little interaction or influence with the variety of people who were living around our church building. This was a topic that the church has talked about a little in the past, but we have not yet come up with a firm plan to address this in the future. If God called us to be part of this community and to be a light in our community, then we must figure out ways to reach those living in this community. This type of missional living with a neighbourhood focus is not easy to do, especially when the majority of the members of the church live outside the community. This is an opportunity for growth; we just need to figure out how to best reach our community in a meaningful way. We had been working through a two-step approach with our leadership to address this. First, we worked on our ability to assimilate newcomers, or as Larry Osborne calls it, our 'stickiness' (Osborne 2008). How to keep the people who walk through our doors? Secondly, (and simultaneously) we

have worked on reaching into the three different communities of influence we have: our families, our neighbours near our homes, and our neighbours near the church building.

This involved changes to our church's ethos, who we are and what we do. I believed that God had given the church precisely who it needed for this next step in God's plan for us. We had the right people with the right abilities to lead us forward. Knowing how to best move forward and having the courage to step forward are things we continued to work through and act on.

### **My Influence on the Church's Future**

I realize that I had a significant influence on our church's future. I believed that God had called me to this church for this season. I was also aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I believed that God had brought me to this place to help them grow in the areas that he gifted me to lead in. For example, I described my preaching style as a "teacher/preacher," meaning that I include a lot of teaching when I preach. I talk about the text, walk through it exegetically, uncover the original meaning and discover what that means today for us (the homiletical purpose), presenting that scripture in light of the gospel message of Jesus. I knew that I did not preach with the same visible passion of certain evangelists or have an altar call at the end of every sermon. That was not who God called me to be. Knowing my areas of weakness allowed me to improve and grow in those areas that I needed to. I worked hard to be more engaging and more outwardly passionate while preaching. Yet, I also knew that I did not need to

pretend to be someone else while preaching, yet I could be better at being me.  
God called me to this church because he wanted me here.

I had found the old adage to be true, that in time churches will take on the personality of their pastor. This seems to be true at Massey Place Community church as well. The people attending at Massey Place Community Church are here because of the friendships they had made and the sense of community that they have. They came to learn about Jesus and grow in their faith. However, they were also here because there is some connection to my leadership and preaching style. Preaching does not keep one in a church, as Thom Rainer mentions in his research-based book *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Rainer 2001), but it is something that attracts one to a church. So, over the past twelve years in this church, I have heard that some initially came to the church because of a sermon or sermon series that I had preached and they connected with my leadership style and preaching. Others have left and have told me (or others) that they did not connect with my preaching style. It helped us see that the church slowly begins to shape itself around its leaders, especially those with a visible role in the ministry.

These changes are one of the ways I have shaped this congregation's identity, personality, and ethos. It was natural and often goes on behind the scenes, unnoticed. However, it does need to be mentioned because to be fully honest about the shape of this church, my role and my influence had to be noted. I would go back to my earlier statement: God had given this church exactly who it needed for this moment. I was here because God wanted me here as the Lead Pastor at Massey Place Community Church at that moment in time.

In addition to reflecting on the past and commenting on the present, we had been seeking a vision for the future. In defining what God was calling us to do as a church we have developed a guiding document (Appendix Six). We had written it to be a public document that we gave to church members, but there are key pieces of our vision hidden within. Patrick Lencioni would call these “strategic anchors” (Lencioni 2012, 114). These three anchors were our church, our homes, and our community. We then developed these three broad categories, bringing more focus and clarity.

### **Strategically Looking at the Future of Massey Place Community Church**

In our church we wanted to focus on our Sunday services, specifically gearing it toward reaching young families and helping them to grow as followers of Jesus. One of the steps we took towards fulfilling this focus was to have multiple voices preaching on a Sunday morning. The leadership team had affirmed the value of hearing from different people during our Sunday services. They had found that variety creates interest for the new visitor and it brings in a new perspective in both the style of preaching and the content, all within the theology and vision of the church. They also found that it provided opportunity for the me to spend time in other areas of ministry, visitation, administration or rest. The goal was to make our Sunday services life-giving through worship, sermons, music, and an engaging children’s program.

We were committed to deepening relationships within our church family in our homes through life groups and bible studies, which provided the

opportunity we needed for prayer, fellowship, discipleship and leadership growth. Within these groups, people build deeper community, learn how to support one another, pray for one another, and grow in their capacity to lead and teach.

In our church we reached new young families. While we provided opportunities for other new young families to connect with those in our church through outreach events and provided a safe environment for people to invite their friends, families and children.

### **Our Vision**

Our vision was to be a church striving to Love God, Love People and Make Disciples (Appendix Six). We did this through showing our love for God in corporate worship on Sundays. We showed our love for people through our community and fellowship ministries. We made disciples through developing new leaders and volunteers for our ministries on Sundays, in our homes and outreach in the community.

This strategy was the basis for the ministries we had invested in over the past six years. It helped to shape what we choose to spend energy and resources on. It also gave direction to how we designed our preaching and teaching strategy as a church. The design of the preaching program was done by me, as the lead pastor. However, it was informed by the needs of the congregation, the strategic anchors that we had developed, and coordination with the leadership team. It is with these influences that I develop my preaching calendar.

## **Our Preaching Strategies**

I had been preaching full-time at this church for the past fifteen years. Over this time, I continued a pattern of preaching in series, which were usually planned three to twelve months ahead of time. The series vary from a walk-through of books of the Bible to topics or areas of interest for those in the congregation. Preaching in pre-planned series has the added benefit of looking at the overall preaching calendar for events, holidays and topics that should be covered in various seasons of ministry.

One example would be cultural holidays like Mother's Day or Valentine's Day. There were some years where I planned specific sermons based on these days, like "Leaving a Godly legacy to your children" on Mother's Day or a four-week series on relationships around Valentine's Day. Planning also allowed us to prepare around the church calendar. Advent, Lent, Easter... these seasons of biblical history helped us to tell the stories of scripture that are important to our faith. Over the years this has led me to plan series like "Deadman Praying," a series which led up to Easter focusing on the priestly prayer of Jesus in John 14-17. This series connected with people because it reminded them how special these chapters are as a record of the last time Jesus was with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. What Jesus prayed was of utmost importance to him and, accordingly, should be to us as well. This series led right to Good Friday and Easter and helped us to focus on the significance of this act of remembering what Jesus did for us.

The leadership and staff teams and I decided what themes are important for continued growth and discipleship. I had done sermon series on Biblical views on finances, marriage, spiritual disciplines, community, evangelism, questions about the faith, hot topics, and even mental illness. Each sermon on these topics were Biblical and exegetical in nature, not what one might typically think of as a “topical” sermon. It is just the way that I distinguish between a verse-by-verse exegetical sermon, walking through a text or portion of scripture and a sermon that came about because of the desire to talk about a specific topic.

Sometimes there were last-minute changes to a sermon schedule. This could be because of international crises like September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Or it could be simply because of the opportunity of a guest speaker, which came up after the schedule had been set. When designing our schedule, we can be flexible in how we proceed with it week by week. Another last-minute change may be in the area of illness. It has only happened on a few occasions in my past fifteen years here, but sometimes there could be a last-minute illness that would prevent me from being able to speak on a particular Sunday.

### **Our Values for the Preaching Ministry**

When preparing the schedule we also wanted to include the values we have determined are essential to us as a church. One of those values was to “having a multi-voiced approach” to our Sunday services, which meant that we want to include others to help throughout the service. From reading scripture, to sharing the announcements to preaching. We found that people in our setting value hearing from different preachers throughout the year. I am the primary

preacher; as lead pastor in a church of our size, I am responsible for preparing and planning for preaching throughout the Sunday services. Yet that does not mean that I need to be the only one who preaches in our Sunday services.

### **Multi-voiced Preaching Strategy**

When we developed the vision document and identified our strategic mission anchors, we discovered that the church valued a multi-voiced approach to preaching. During this season, we had a volunteer leader who was a retired pastor. When he was attending the church, he volunteered to preach about once a month. The congregation realized that having this other voice allowed us to learn and grow in different ways than hearing from the same voice each Sunday. Some people had a preference for one preacher over another, but they also expressed that they appreciated the variety that it brought. This allowed me as lead pastor to have extra time to prepare sermons, work on the preaching calendar and spend more time on other responsibilities. The sermons prepared by any preachers were all planned as part of the preaching calendar, so the themes and topics we desired to cover were still part of the overall direction we wanted to head as a church.

About five years ago the volunteer who helped with the preaching left the church. This left a large hole in our preaching ministry. As we continued to talk about preaching as leaders, we continued to value the opportunity to hear from different people from the pulpit. Hearing from these other voices had multiple benefits. It engaged the different learning styles in the congregation. It allowed those listening on a Sunday to hear from a variety of people and hear messages from other vantage points and styles of presentation. In addition to the listeners'

benefit, those who spoke from our congregation grew in their knowledge of scripture and found it personally encouraging when they spoke in a Sunday service.

In addition to being beneficial on a Sunday morning, it was also beneficial to me as the lead pastor. Preparing for sermons takes me anywhere from 8-16 hours a week. When there were weeks with other people are speaking, it allowed me to have extra time to get ahead on future sermons, plan series or do one of the other responsibilities of my position like visitation, counselling, or discipleship. Having a pool bigger pool of speakers also created more options for when I was away. Lay leaders were also brought into a discipleship role as they engaged in a different kind of Bible study to prepare a sermon. Having others who spoke to the congregation proved to have many benefits.

We had several options as a church in planning for these other voices. They could be guest speakers from our denomination, which usually happens once a year. We could also find local pastors or speakers to come in from outside our church. In the past, we have had people from our local Christian counselling office, camp ministries, para-church ministries, missionaries or other pastors who do itinerant preaching.

### **Pursuing the Possibility of Lay Preachers**

Our leadership team also wanted to pursue one other category, speakers from within our congregation. This included people like the retired pastor who used to attend, but it goes broader than that as we would include others who have limited or zero vocational ministry training. These would be people who had

been disciplined and grown in their faith through the local ministry and who felt like God may be calling them to preach with the congregation. These individuals from the church became part of my preaching strategy and became the focus of the research I have done for the Doctor of Ministry program.

Some of my pastoral colleagues would shy away from having a layperson preach from the pulpit on a Sunday morning. Massey Place Community Church has a historical, theological and contemporary connection to the use of lay preachers. Historically the Be In Christ Church of Canada used laypeople for all local gatherings and churches. As E. Morris Sider describes in *We have this ministry: Pastoral Theory and practice in the Brethren in Christ Church* (Sider 1991), they had a small group of lay leaders who would preach each week in their local meeting house. For larger services, they had a bishop who oversaw a larger geographical area of churches. The bishop would be the overseer who would be called in for baptisms, communion and other larger meetings. The practice of having lay preachers is also more common with Anabaptist churches. With a theological emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, it would be proper to give an opportunity to other believers to teach and share in their local church. There is also a history of having laypeople speak from the pulpit at this church. Men and women from the congregation are welcomed by the church to share testimonies of what God is doing in their lives and prepare full sermons, which they would preach on Sunday mornings before the congregation.

What I found encouraging over my fifteen years in this church was that there was such a warm-hearted and grace-filled welcome to laypeople who take

that step into the pulpit on a Sunday morning. We had a great congregation who welcomed those who are less polished in their preaching but speak from their heart about what God gave them to share. I find that these laypeople also had an instant connection with the listener because they are “one of us.” They are looked at differently by those sitting in the pews; they are not the paid minister hired to preach, nor are they an outside “pinch hitter” who has been called in to drive home a message. They are just one of the people, filled with courage and passion, taking the risk of putting themselves out there to preach. This congregation has warmly received everyone who has stepped into the pulpit as a layperson.

### **Planning the sermon schedule with lay preachers in mind**

Who will speak on any given Sunday is important to consider when preparing my preaching strategy and calendar. I have to consider the Sundays I will be away for holidays or other events. The first step would be, who do we have that we could ask to speak on those days or during a particular topic or series? The lay preachers are usually asked to fill in on the pre-determined topic in the schedule. They do not usually get to choose their own sermon topic. There are certain individuals whose passions are in different areas of scripture or topics of faith. One individual who had spoken in the past was passionate about the book of Genesis and overseas mission work, so it makes sense if those are the sermon topics being addressed to approach him first about stepping in one of those Sundays. By placing people where they have passion and experience, we are setting them up for greater success.

### **A Real-life Example of How This Looks**

With a little bit of the background into the strategy around who may preach, let us walk through one of the past seasons and how it looked from a preaching standpoint. I organized a sermon calendar based on the time of year, the needs of the congregation and the opportunities we had with others who could speak at the church. I had planned a series on Colossians and Psalms over the winter months, an Easter series following the scriptural stories of Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Jesus' ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. I had lay preachers from the church body who spoke during the series on Colossians and Psalms. Following Easter, I had scheduled some time away in May, and a guest speaker from outside the church and another speaker from inside the church shared during those two weekends. Moving into the spring, I planned a series on Spiritual Disciplines. We were focusing on a different discipline each week, where we see them found in scripture and how we can practice them today. We then did a summer series built on individual messages so that if you were away a week, you did not feel like you missed something the previous Sunday that you needed to understand that week. That summer, we had a series on Biblical people, one-off sermons on people like Joseph, Ruth, Lydia, and John the Apostle. Over these summer months, we had guest speakers from inside and outside the church as I took some holidays with my family.

The sermons that we planned were developed with guidance from the leadership and staff and based on the congregation's needs. When planning for the months or year ahead, I also consider the congregation and what they need for

their next steps of discipleship and growth based on the demographic we have along with the past sermons and small group topics we had covered.

### **Sermon Topic Considerations**

With a young family demographic, including several families and young adults who are new to faith, I will always explain who or what we are talking about in a sermon. An example would be when talking about the people of Israel and the Passover. First, I would not assume that they know what the Passover was, nor would I think they know who Moses was. It is a delicate line to balance on when preaching to new and mature believers, but I believe in erring on the side of inclusion for the new attendees. I found that this makes everyone feel at ease. I also would not assume that the mature believers understand everything we talk about either.

An example would be the theology of sanctification, which is important to our denomination, a topic on which I had done an entire series. It is an example of one word I explained every time it was mentioned; some people may remember, but most find the reminder helpful. I believe that every sermon should be accessible to those who are new to the faith and capable of discipling mature believers at the same time. It should also be noted that there is a sliding scale of how that looks, with some sermons being deeper and others being more introductory in nature. Hopefully all the sermons were encouraging to those who listen.

## **The Church and Research Context**

Considering all these factors, here is a brief introduction to my research project, shaped by the context of the denomination, community and church where I serve. The project was done at Massey Place Community Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I have been the Lead Pastor there for the past fifteen years. We have gone through many changes, challenges, and crises as a church family during this time. One of the constants had been the need for consistent and Godly teaching through it all. Over these years, we have come to the understanding that even with a great preacher, there are occasions where hearing from another person and listening to a different voice from in the pulpit brings a refreshing spirit to the congregation. In our vision and mission document, we have stated that in our Sunday service, we “value a multi-voiced approach that will focus on young families and growing followers of Jesus” (Appendix Six). We crafted the first version of the vision document when we had several lay leaders who were also competent preachers, and one was a retired pastor. The value of hearing different voices still stands even though some of these individuals have moved on from the church to other ministries. My desire and the desire of the leadership team was to move the aspirational value of having multiple voices who could preach and teach on a Sunday into actual practice.

This research project moved us toward achieving this visionary statement, through adding a multi-voiced preaching team to the Sunday services. It allowed us to focus on growing individuals from our church, whom God has gifted and called to step into a teaching/preaching role. Massey Place Community Church

was a church of 100 attendees on an average Sunday, with sixty people who attended our English service and 40 at our Spanish service. Even though both services were invited to participate, all seven participants were regular attendees of our English service. This was likely due to two factors: a short time frame from final research ethics board approval to the introductory night (seven days) and that I did not regularly speak in the Spanish service. I oversaw their pastor and service but did not regularly attend their service.

Massey Place Community Church was like a loving family. We had people from all walks of life and all areas of Saskatoon. One of the strengths we noted is the grace with which people in our congregations came alongside people stepping out into new ministry opportunities. Our church had a history of laypeople speaking from the pulpit in a Sunday morning service. During my years as a pastor, we had had five regular attendees who had preached from the pulpit on occasion, in addition to student preachers who came to us as interns from various colleges. The lay preachers stepped into the pulpit with little formal training or mentoring, and preached very effectively. None of these five participated in the research project.

The congregation had always responded well to the messages delivered by laypeople. They viewed them as “one of their own”, someone who was usually sitting in the seats beside them but has now stepped onto the stage. The congregation received these messages by these lay preachers differently. As numerous congregates said, “when a lay preacher speaks it feels like they “know” what was going on in my mind, they are just a regular person like me”. Those

who preached also shared with me that they are personally encouraged by stepping forward to preach, they felt God working in them through the preparation and proclamation of the sermon. Additionally, people encouraged them following their message.

Having laypeople who shared from the pulpit also fit well within our denominational distinctives, the Be In Christ Church of Canada. In our Anabaptist roots the preachers were always laypeople, until the mid to late 1900s. In the early 1900's they elected laypeople from within the congregation. They choose up to seven men of good standing from within the church and hold an election. Those with the highest number of votes were given the title of minister (Sider 2019, 81). John Gilmore recalled his father, uncle and brother-in-law and nephew all being ministers within his home church of Wainfleet when he was younger. They were all laymen, all chosen from within the church. All of them also worked full-time outside the church and shared their local congregation's ministry roles and responsibilities (Gilmore 2021). There was an "understanding strongly affirmed that all members are ministers, related personally to God and caring for one another.... they promoted the view that God calls individuals into the ministry" (Sider 1991, 44). We learned from the early days of the Brethren in Christ Church (now Be In Christ) that the office of minister was given to laypeople, from the church in whom others saw potential. Some took further education from the denomination or formal education through colleges in later years. They would also elect an area bishop who came to the meetings for

communion or baptisms, but the regular ministry of the word was done through lay leaders from within the local church.

The values and history of Massey Place Community Church led the leadership and me to believe that God wants us to move forward with a multi-voiced approach to preaching. However, how could that look in a smaller church? How would it work? Does God want that? Does God call lay people to preach? All these questions were stirring in the back of my mind as I approached this research project—wanting to discover if our vision would work.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANSWERS THROUGH RESEARCH**

### **Introduction**

While pastoring over the last seventeen years, one of the questions I was often been asked was about calling. How do we understand calling? How do we know we are called? Or specifically, I feel called to do \_\_\_\_\_, how do I know that call is real? For this research project, I explored calling and gifting; specifically, laypeople being called into preaching. Does God call laypeople to teach or preach in a public setting? If so, how do we know who is called, and how can we help prepare those who are called to teach and preach? This research matters because it will help answer the questions that people in my congregation have. How do I know if I am called and what do I do next?

Choosing to research the calling and gifting of laypeople in the ministries of preaching takes a small slice of the questions we might have about the broader categories of calling and gifting. Still, this focused approach fits with the aims of the preaching research project.

### **Fear of Public Speaking**

Public speaking was one of people's biggest fears, so much so that even the Mayo Clinic has articles devoted to overcoming the fear of public speaking (Sawchuck 2017). The famed Dale Carnegie speaking course has been running since 1912, teaching how to overcome the anxiety of public speaking (Carnegie

2020). The fear of public speaking for those called by God to step forward into this area of ministry may stunt their spiritual growth if that fear stops them from following that calling. Focusing my research into this single area of ministry in my local church, Massey Place Community Church, allowed me to see if calling can overcome the common fears of public speaking when combined with education and encouragement. Teaching and preaching in the local church are areas of ministry that I found needed attention. We found that God called laypeople to step into this area of need within this church. Further to that, I propose that other small churches would also benefit from people equipped to teach and preach (Ephesians 4:11,12).

### **The Field Research Project**

Through this field project, seven individuals self-identified with an interest to learn more about preaching. I then created a six-week training course, which was administered to those individuals. Then they had an opportunity to put their training into practice with opportunities to preach on a Sunday morning.

Evaluation of this project was done through two identical surveys (Appendix Four) at the beginning and conclusion of the training to assess changes in the participants' understanding of calling and willingness to preach. A personality profile assessment and spiritual gift inventory were used to help participants discover more about themselves. Following the course and final survey, I did a follow-up interview with six of the seven participants. Finally, each participant was also given an opportunity to preach a Sunday morning sermon in our local church.

This project had the full support of my church's leadership. Together, we noticed that it helped our church grow in preaching diversity and leadership development. It developed the gifts and willingness of regular church attendees to step into new areas of ministry in which they were previously hesitant to participate. This was only a six-week course. However, it was the first step to developing each participant's calling and expanding their understanding of teaching and preaching within the church. This research project was intended to be an introduction to preaching to laypeople within our congregation, and simultaneously to help participants explore and identify their unique callings.

Even though it was just an introduction, the leadership team believed that this training opportunity met one of the values of practicing our community hermeneutic while it also met different needs in the church (see the discussion of our community hermeneutic below). It also answered the questions the participants were having about being called by God, which is why they volunteered for the project. By identifying and training individuals from within the church to step into teaching/preaching roles, we equipped people to provide for the church's ministries in the days ahead. The men and women trained were more confident in these public ministries, which eased the load that I carry as lead pastor. It also allowed laypeople to step into some of the positions of leadership, preaching, and public speaking, which was part of my regular role as a lead pastor in a smaller church.

## **Identifying the Research Participants**

Identification of the participants came through congregational correspondence in our weekly bulletin, verbal announcements, and notification made through our church-wide email. All three included the same description of the research project and training opportunity.

Have you ever thought about public speaking? Maybe doing a little teaching or preaching? Do you feel God calling you to step forward in this way? Do you want to learn more about yourself and what is involved in preparing a sermon? Pastor Curtis is doing a participatory research project which will help you to understand God's call to teach and preach. If you are interested in participating in this project, please come to the information night on Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm at Massey Place Community Church. If you have any questions, please talk to Pastor Curtis or our leadership team chair, Ross K.

The leadership team members also identified key people within the church in whom they saw potential and encouraged them to attend the introductory information night to decide whether they wanted to participate in the training. We had seven individuals sign up for the research project and course. There were no minors, even though I had the Research Ethics Board approval for them. There were also no current leadership team members who took the training. However, two individuals became members of the leadership team after the conclusion of the research.

This research showed that the participants had grown spiritually and through them the church was also impacted by their new understanding of calling and preaching. It shaped the church in a new way for the next part of our journey as a community of believers. It helped the church understand the Be in Christ theology of the community of believers and that scripture is best understood when

we explore it together - shaping the church's future preaching and teaching ministry.

### **Our Community Hermeneutic**

This value of hearing from and learning from the community was something that we continued to practice, and it was part of our community hermeneutic. That community hermeneutic had its roots in our Anabaptist heritage, but it was simply understood to mean that we value the input of all believers in our community. It was the belief that the Spirit can work through each believer as God chooses. This was seen when interpreting scripture, through prayer, in bible studies or in community gatherings. The Spirit can speak through a seasoned pastor or the newest believer in the community. The church believed that the Spirit of God spoke through anyone. However, the experiences and maturity of the church family helped them to know how to understand and apply what the Spirit was saying through the individuals in our community.

Massey Place Community Church was a community of believers that were ready, practically and theologically, for this type of research project. Having laypeople preach on a Sunday morning might not fit with every church, but it was beneficial for us in the past, and the church's leadership wanted this practice to continue. This was confirmed through the individuals interested in learning about teaching and preaching. Even though every layperson who had previously spoken in church was approached by someone from the leadership team and encouraged to attend the information night, none of them were able to join the research project. Two mentioned that the night chosen for the course did not work for them. All

seven of the participants had never preached while I had been at the church. All seven participants joined the project to learn and grow and several actually preached in church after the course was over.

### **How the Project Addressed Needs within the Church**

This project simultaneously addressed several needs within the church and it moved us closer to our value of having a multi-voiced preaching ministry. It provided individuals with training regarding understanding God's calling and their spiritual gifting and then offered an opportunity to put this into practice in the local church. I also saw this as helping our ministry as a small church. It provided others who could be scheduled on occasion to preach which also provided rest/relief for me.

### **Models and other Resources: Where Were we Going?**

I entered this Doctor of Ministry program to grow in my capacity to preach in order to fulfill the calling and ministry God has laid on my heart. Part of my personal calling was to disciple people and help them to discover who God was calling them to be. All of us were called into a relationship with God (1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 1:9). Further, we were also called into various ministries and given different gifts through the Holy Spirit, which enables us to do what God is calling us to do. Based on personal conversations with some in my church, there were people who felt God was calling them to a teaching and preaching ministry, but they were either not comfortable or felt ill-equipped to step into that ministry. This issue could be common across the church in North

America, but my research focused explicitly on Massey Place Community Church as a case study.

I placed a high value on the office of the pastor and the role of preaching, yet I believed that people may not be using their God-given gifts in teaching and preaching because they were fearful or unclear about their calling. If what I had found at Massey Place Community Church was true, it would also be true elsewhere. If there were laypeople, called by God to preach in their local church who are not following that call we end up with people who are not fulfilling their life calling, and churches who are missing out on the opportunity to learn from fellow congregants or even with churches struggling to fill their pulpits.

When churches struggle, pastors often struggle too. Two years of living through the Covid pandemic have seen a marked growth in pastoral stress and burnout, according to church health researches. Barna's recent survey suggested that 38% of pastors are seriously considering quitting.

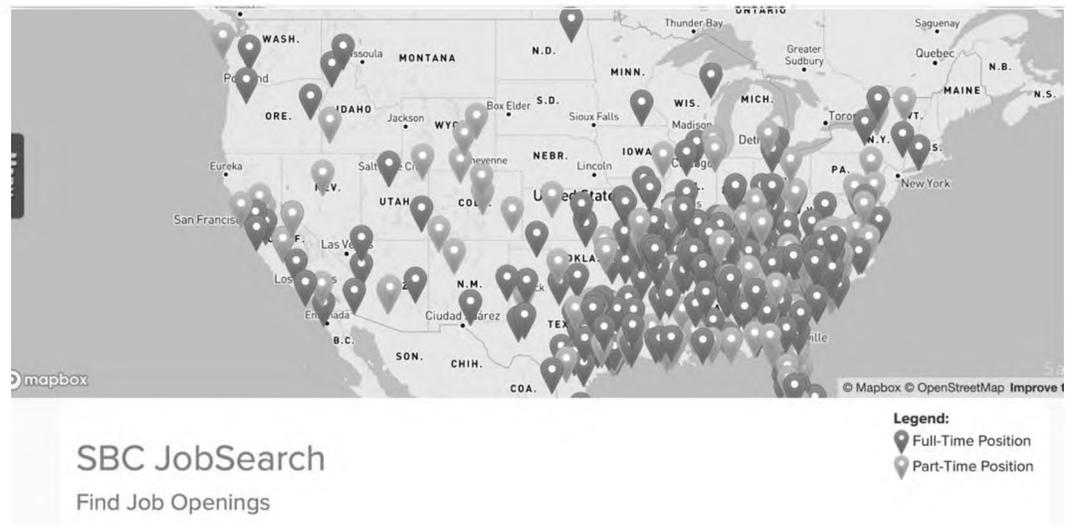
We started seeing early warning signs of burnout among pastors before COVID... with initial warning bells... in 2017... along with intense congregational divisions and financial strain, an alarming percentage of pastors is experiencing significant burnout... This is a growing crisis for church leaders..."

(Barna Nov 16, 2021).

The research project that follows directly addressed some of the stress placed on pastors in smaller churches that leads to burnout. When given the option for rest, rejuvenation and relief from preaching it gave me time for all my other responsibilities as well as time to find rest. It lowered one of the leading

reasons for pastoral burnout and resignation in my ministry following the research project.

The number of pastors leaving churches created a scenario where there were hundreds of empty pulpits across various ministries in Canada and the United States. The Southern Baptist Convention had 445 job postings as of April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020. There was a searchable map on their website that looked like this:



**Figure 3: Map of all the Open Preaching Positions in the SBC**

Every pin drop on the map was a church looking to fill a pastoral position. In Canada, the Christian and Missionary Alliance churches listed 62 jobs on their website (Christian and Missionary Alliance, 2020). These were just two examples of how denominations were struggling to fulfill their ministry positions. This was even before the arrival of Covid. If Barna's survey mentioned above was correct, these numbers could be dwarfed by the open positions and pulpits following the pandemic.

I do not believe God desires to have empty pulpits spread across the nation. I do believe he has called people to step into these pulpits. This research project provided a small glimpse into what was possible when we seek to meet these challenges from a lay leader level.

Massey Place Community Church was set up perfectly to do this research project. As mentioned in chapter three, the denominational values and history not only allowed for lay preachers; they encourage it. The leadership team desired to have more voices speak from the pulpit throughout the year and there was the support of Tyndale University as they guided this research project.

I was not suggesting that just anyone should be allowed to speak from the pulpit on a Sunday morning just to fill that space. I did believe however that God had called people to be there. This research project found those who were called, explored that calling and began to equip and encourage them to step into that calling.

Through this project, I identified and equipped as least some of those believers in my setting. For clarity, this 6-week course was not a training program for pastors but rather an introduction for laypeople who wondered if God was calling them to take the first steps towards a ministry of preaching and teaching as laypersons.

### **How my Personal Philosophy of Preaching Impacted the Project**

This research project was something that I had seen a need for within our church over the past fifteen years. With my studies in leadership and preaching, I had come to see the potential with fresh eyes. Working with these volunteer

preachers developed my understanding of being called by God and my personal philosophy of preaching.

Many books shaped my personal philosophy of preaching, calling, spiritual gifts, and ministry. *Unlocking Your Giftedness* (Clinton & Clinton, 1998) significantly shaped my understanding of spiritual gifts and calling on a personal level. It became a reference work while teaching about spiritual gifts during the 6-week course.

Two books shaped the teaching around the act of preaching, from the discovery of the text through to presenting the sermon. Haddon Robinson's, *Biblical Preaching* (Robinson 2001), had the most significant influence on my preaching and preparation style. I used Robinson's method of breaking down a biblical text and searching for the big idea as my foundational practice when preparing for a sermon.

The second book that informed my teaching about the act of preaching was Kenton Anderson's *Integrative Preaching* (Anderson 2017) I made use of Anderson's integrative model as the final stage of sermon preparation, how to prepare for delivery. This model was visual, with a split page formation which helped the participants visualize the sermon better. This split page model develops the preaching outline into a single page form ready to be preached. In our final interview, two of the participants mentioned that Anderson's worksheet helped them to understand how to put the sermon together (Appendix Three).

## **Project, Methodology, and Methods**

### **How Did we get There? What did we Find?**

This project began with our church's leadership team's approval and then approval from Tyndale's Research Ethics Board (REB) on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (Appendix Seven). Following those approvals, we invited the congregation at Massey Place Community Church to an informational evening. There was notice made in our printed bulletin, our church-wide email and verbally from the pulpit on Sunday morning. Six people came to the information evening and one more, who could not attend the evening, read through the written explanatory documents and decided to join the project as well.

Out of these seven, there were four females and three males. All were between the ages of forty and sixty years old. All seven were regular attendees of our English service on Sunday mornings. All were married, all had children, and four had grandchildren. There were two married couples who signed up to take the course together. I had Tyndale's REB approval for youth to take the course, as several youth previously showed interest, but they were all previously engaged for the nights of the training course and unable to attend. All seven of the participants had never preached while I had been at Massey Place Community Church during the past fifteen years. When asked about why they signed up for the course, participant four said they "felt led to take the course," while participant five said that if they could spend his life doing one thing, it would be "speaking publicly, teaching or acting." Participants four and five expressed a personal desire to get involved in this project, in their words "they felt a pull" to

participate. They later discovered that this pull was actually the beginning of God calling them to take the course and preparing them to become lay preachers in the church. These two participants have preached in the church since the course.

### **The Course Schedule**

The course took place on six consecutive Tuesday evenings, starting at 7 p.m., and we were usually finished around 9:15 in the evening. All the classes were held at Massey Place Community Church in our library, around tables shaped in a square. Each evening we took a short ten-minute break partway through the evening. Participants two, six and seven each missed one evening. All printed materials were made available to them at the next session.

Four of the seven participants were church members, and the other three had been regular attendees of the church for one, three and five years, respectively. One of the participants was on the church's payroll as a part-time custodian. I did give direction to her, but there was no coercion; the invitation to the information night was given to the entire congregation. She responded to that invitation on her own.

As lead pastor of the church, I oversaw all the ministries of the church. Inherent in my position was a certain amount of authority that I held. Each of the participants knew from the approved script I read that there was no pressure from me to participate, and they also knew that they could withdraw from the research at any point in the six weeks.

## **Research Methodology**

This project started with a multi-faceted problem of struggling pastors, empty pulpits and laypeople's unanswered callings. To address these problems and to achieve these stated goals, I decided to use a multi-method research approach. It was flexible enough to meet the time constraints and demands of this research problem while it allowed for the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. There was limited use of some action-based research during the project. However, with the initial time constraints proposed it was limited in nature. I also gathered data from church statistics, participant data and individual surveys and inquiries. In the two years since the initial research project we drew some conclusions based on how it has impacted the church, especially during the pandemic.

## **Data Collection Methods**

The data collected included church statistical data, spiritual gift inventories from each participant, a ten-question survey done before the first class and following the last class and then a closing interview with each participant. This data was collected through soft and hard copy submissions. All data was entered into Excel datasheets and an online program called Dedoose. This is an online application used for gathering and analyzing mixed methods research, which was exactly what I was doing. Through Dedoose, I collected, coded, and analyzed the various data points and gathered answers to the question proposed in this paper.

The final interviews were recorded and transcribed into complete transcripts (except for participant two, who did not do the final interview and participant four, who could not meet in person, so they answered the questions via email). This additional data was then added into the same online program to be analyzed.

Another area of data collection was the church's records. Demographic data was collected, including addresses, ages, membership status and attendance. This was then added to Dedoose to become part of the final research data.

This approach was almost exactly what Sensing described in his book *Qualitative research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. He asked, "What if the congregation desires to develop a ministry program or activity, implement a curriculum, develop people for more effective leadership, or evaluate a current practice"? (Sensing 2011, 61). This multi-method approach was needed to address the questions of calling and preaching within our congregation.

I also took the advice of May Clark Moschella in *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice*. In chapter four she described how to care for the relationship between the pastor and congregation (Moschella 2008, 86). As their pastor, who also happened to be researching the congregation, there was careful attention paid to the methods and questions used in the research. The aforementioned approval of the leadership team was an important part of this process. I will describe later the details of how we acknowledged the power dynamics between the pastor, staff and congregation in the research.

## **Limitations of the Research Project**

The research project was designed to be short, concise, and limited in nature. This was to help garner the best response from the congregation. I found that people usually agreed to short studies or groups; six weeks fit within the regular practice of all our small groups and Bible studies. Another reason was to fit it within the confines of the timeline given through the Doctor of Ministry Program; it was necessary to keep it concise. It was also limited to the availability of those who could attend on a Tuesday evening; two other individuals said they wanted to participate but could not because of the chosen dates for the classes. It was also limited by the time we had together. I called this a taste of preaching or a steppingstone into teaching and preaching, as there was minimal time to teach, learn and practice over six two-hour sessions. Participants three and seven noted in their final interview that there was so much material that we could have spread the course over months. Participant four commented that it would have been nice to work through one text from beginning to completion and then see it preached on a Sunday morning. I adapted my preaching schedule and added the passages we looked at to the preaching calendar in the following months, so they ultimately got to see these passages preached, but it was after the official research project was completed. They each had the opportunity to preach in that same series based on the scriptures we studied in the class. These factors limited the learning and outcomes of the research.

Another limitation of my research is the demographics of the participants. All participants came from very similar places in life, within twenty years of age,

all married, all with children, and two of whom were couples. It would have been helpful for the research to have a broader age range and have some different demographics, such as age, stage, ethnography, or life experiences.

One of the key benefits for three of the participants was the discussions about scripture and preaching that happened during the course, or as participant five said, “the discussion after the discussion on the instructions.” The discussions we had around the content of the course was very helpful. They benefited from it being an interactive teaching course; I taught and we talked and worked through the various sermon preparation steps each week together on texts from Colossians. They also mentioned that they did not realize how much work, research and time went into a weekly sermon.

The participants reflected the majority of the congregation; they all came from reasonably similar backgrounds, ethnicities, and stages in life. The seven participants represented 11.6% of the average attendance of 60 on a Sunday morning. Despite the encouraging number of participants, it would have been helpful to have a broader age demographic, ethnicity, and marital status.

### **Topics of the Research Project**

Due to time limitations, we were only able to introduce the three main topics of gifting, calling and preaching/teaching. Each of these topics could have filled their own research project. However, I thought it was important to introduce each of these areas to help people potentially discern whether God may be calling them through their gifts or strengths into a teaching or preaching

ministry in the church. To do that, all three of these topics needed to be introduced into our discussions.

In Appendix Two, a complete package of material I developed for each of the participants can be found. The teaching was done through instruction, discussion, and implementation. A significant aspect of the project was the use of the New Testament book of Colossians as the key text for the six weeks. I used this text to show how to read a biblical text for teaching and preaching, and how that differed from reading it devotionally. We used the Colossians text to practice the exegetical steps taught by Haddon Robinson in *Biblical Preaching*. This allowed us to bring the biblical text into the hermeneutical process used to prepare for preaching on that text. It gave the participants an understanding of how to select a scripture, exegete that text, understand the original intention, and develop a current-day application. The final step was to put this into a format useful for preaching on the text. For this last step, I taught the integrative model created by Kenton Anderson (Anderson, 2017).

### **Survey Details**

The participant surveys were administered at the beginning of the project and taken again after the final class was completed. The before and after survey/questionnaire contained ten identical questions. This was done to help assess whether there were any changes over the six weeks. Questions 1-5 were from an article “6 Questions that help you identify your calling” by Jamie Rohrbaugh – used by permission (Rohrbaugh 2019). I developed questions 6-10 to focus on the rest of the goals of this research.

The surveys included the following questions:

1. If you could spend the rest of your life doing or talking about one thing, what would that be?
2. Your life experience has rendered you an expert at something. At what are you an expert?
3. What do you love?
4. What do you hate?
5. What makes you feel alive?
6. What would you consider to be your spiritual gifts?  
A Spiritual Gift is a special ability or aptitude that God gives us to accomplish his mission in our world. There can be a single or variety of ways God gifts you.
7. Do you ever feel like God has given you something to share with others?
8. Have you felt like God wants you to teach others?  
This could be to individuals or groups, children or adults, Sunday School classes, Bible Studies or preach a sermon.
9. Has anyone ever told you that you should 'share that with others?' If so, what did they say?
10. On a scale of 1 – 10, would you stand up and teach a group?  
1 = Never  
10 = Easy/no problem

These ten questions were chosen to focus on the various goals of the project, focusing the first five questions on calling, and then question six to gain a baseline on spiritual gifts, while seven through ten helped me understand their motivation and willingness to speak publicly.

The final interviews were narrative in nature, allowing for each discussion to develop around the key points that each person found meaningful or what they perceived to be lacking in the classes. Eight basic questions shaped the

discussion. The discussions lasted from twenty-five minutes to fifty-five minutes. These questions were open-ended to encourage further discussion about the course, its value, and their willingness to preach or teach in the future. The interviews were shaped around the following basic questions, but they flowed freely through the process.

1. What did you think about the training class?
2. What did you learn? (about Preaching? Personality? Spiritual gifts? Calling?)
3. What was helpful to you? What was not helpful?
4. Would you consider teaching/preaching in the future?
5. What would you like to preach or teach about? (What would excite you to speak about?)
6. Do you understand your spiritual gifts better?
7. What do you believe your calling is? (What are you called by God to do?)
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **During the Course**

Each session involved teaching as laid out in Appendix Two and discussion surrounding that night's topics. The discussions were peppered with people's unique personalities as some became animated in their discovery of new information while others remained more introspective in their responses. Some were quick to ask questions and jump into the discussion, while others were more

reserved, but everyone participated and everyone shared at various points in the course.

The discussions about calling were harder than I expected. To define calling and how people experience that calling seemed to be difficult to convey. For some of the participants it was the first time they had thought about being called, that God had something uniquely for them to do. Two of the participants stated they were there because they felt God nudging or pulling them to step forward and possibly preach one day, even though they did not know how and were fearful of the idea of preaching. One participant put it this way, “I guess before I would have never thought that I would (preach), but now... it peaked my interest... I guess it’s like anything, you will never know unless you do it” (Participant Interviews 2019). This participant did begin lay preaching in the church following the research project.

Discussions about spiritual gifts were aided by a spiritual gift inventory created by Peter Wagner (Wagner 2012). They each completed the questionnaire as part of the initial paperwork I handed out at the introductory evening. We talked about their top spiritual gifts on the first evening class. This allowed us to jump right into discussions about gifts from God. Some were shocked by their gift mixes; some had done these types of inventories before. One participant said, “I don’t see my gifts yet, I know you do, but I don’t yet see it” (Participant Interviews 2019, this was his first spiritual gift inventory and he had trouble seeing how the gifts on his inventory matched with what he felt about himself. We shared our gifts with the group and gave feedback to what we saw in each

other too. This was a good confirmation for some participants, as the discussion in class confirmed their spiritual gift inventories. For those who were familiar with their own spiritual gifts, the course deepened their understanding, one participant said, “I (understand) it a little bit deeper... there was a lot more detail that I hadn’t really considered” (Participant Interviews 2019). We also talked about how spiritual gift inventories are helpful, but God can call anyone, with or without a spiritual gift, to do whatever he desires. The Apostle Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, he writes about how God can call us and often he calls the weak to shame the strong.

Each night we took a chapter of Colossians and applied what we were learning about exegesis, scripture analysis, diagramming scripture, applying scripture or sermon outlining to that text. It was interesting to note that most of the participants did not realize how much research and work went into each sermon. One participant shared, “There is a lot that goes into the process of preaching... it’s much harder than people realize, it’s a lot more work” (Participant Interviews 2019). A sample of what we talked about in exegeting a passage looked like this (Appendix Two – week three teacher’s notes).

What do we need to look at to prepare to teach about this text?

- Language of the text
  - o Definitions, lexicology, syntax...
  - o Use of various translations
  - o What to do with differences
- Background of the text
  - o Who wrote it / Who was it written to / what was happening in their lives at that time / in the culture / in the world
- Literary & literature forms

- Genre / sub-genres / archetypes (images/patterns/models)
- Narrative/poetry/prophesy/gospel & acts (sub-genres in gospels ie: parable)/epistles/apocalyptic

What do we bring to the text?

- Our own pre-suppositions & history
- Our own theological presuppositions

Cross focused – Integrative approach

- Picture – Problem – Point – Prayer
- Inspire – Engage – Instruct - Convict

These were the steps that we talked about taking when first looking at a text of scripture. What kind of language is used? What verbs? Who was there? What do we know about the background? What type of text is it? How does our culture differ? How are we the same? Following the completion of these steps we would then begin to open the resource books or other support material we have.

They were very interested in the commentaries, word studies, Bible dictionaries and concordances, with some borrowing books to take home with them. I was very pleased by their engagement with the course during the two-hour class and with what they read and prepared from home. There was no requirement to do anything outside of the class, but some wanted to dig deeper, to further understand the resources and the letter of Colossians.

Each of the participants also got to know the others in new ways. This created new relationships among those participants. They all regularly attended the church on Sundays but they were not all part of the same social groups. Learning and growing together, while being willing to share of your own story through the discussions on calling and gifting helped to create stronger bonds in the participants of the group which continued following the end of project as well.

One participant shared that they, “felt that the variety of people and their different gifts and interests made the discussions and class more engaging” (Participant Interviews 2019).

### **Following the Six-week Course**

After completing the course and the final interviews, there was an invitation to participate in a Sunday morning service through teaching, preaching or speaking/reading from the stage. In January of 2020, I scheduled a six-week sermon series on the book of Colossians into our Sunday morning preaching schedule. Each participant was given the opportunity to practice what they had learned. The invitation included a range of opportunities from reading scripture right through to preparing and preaching an entire sermon. Participants three, five and six all responded positively, but the timing did not work out for participant six. Two months after this course, two participants prepared and preached their own sermons to our congregation on a Sunday morning during the Colossians series. Since then, four of the seven have preached their own sermons on a Sunday morning. This was the first time that any of them had ever preached a sermon, and they received excellent encouragement from the congregation about their sermons, letting them know that they delivered a sermon that touched the hearts and minds of those who heard it.

### **Timeline of Events**

Below is the timeline of events, as they happened:

**Chart 1 – Research Timeline**

Date	Event	Details
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September 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	Leadership Team meeting	Final approval for research
October 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	REB approval confirmation	
October 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	Introductory Meeting	Introduce the research project and hand out waivers and initial surveys
October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	Hand in surveys to me	Hand in: Spiritual gift inventory, personality type, and 1 <sup>st</sup> survey
October 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> Class session	Self-awareness – understand who we are. Discussion on spiritual gifts & personality types. Discussion on how this awareness impacts preaching and teaching
October 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class session	Deciphering God’s call & Introduction to reading the Bible in preparation for teaching or preaching. How to select a passage to focus on.
November 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class session	How does your personality help or hinder public speaking? Introduction to bible study tools and interpretation of scripture passages
November 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	4 <sup>th</sup> Class session	How do you discover new spiritual gifts? How to arrive at an application to modern life from an ancient scripture

November 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	5 <sup>th</sup> Class session	Can spiritual gifts grow? Study of basic expository sermon forms, how to bring it all together into one teaching topic/sermon.
November 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	6 <sup>th</sup> Class session	The role of the Holy Spirit and prayer in biblical preaching & Public speaking basics, how to prepare yourself to preach or teach in front of actual people. Hand out follow up survey
January 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2020	Final follow up interview completed	

**Figure 4: Timeline of Research Project**

**Research and Power Dynamics**

Throughout the research project, I remained the lead pastor for all seven participants. As previously mentioned, there was a power dynamic in play whenever I lead anything in the church. I was hired and empowered by the church's leadership and our denomination to lead these individuals. This involved all regular aspects of ministry, teaching, discipling, encouraging, and even disciplining when necessary. This aspect of my role could potentially lead a participant to put more weight on my requests than they otherwise might. As a researcher and pastor, I implemented the following guidelines to avoid this.

There were written and verbal announcements made to the entire congregation in a general invitation to participate. The verbal announcement was read by a member of our church leadership team during the Sunday morning

service. There were also several people that the leadership team approached individuals in addition to the announcements. The leadership team recognized a potential for a preaching or teaching ministry in these persons. I heard about these conversations at a leadership meeting but did not participate in the discussions or the invitations made to them. The members of the leadership team approached these individuals and encouraged them by letting them know that they saw something in them and that they should consider attending the informational evening for more information. At the introductory night, I read the Tyndale REB-approved script and then simply answered any questions. I then handed out the material (waiver, 1<sup>st</sup> survey, personality test and the spiritual gift inventory). I suggested that they take it home, read the information, pray about it and bring the completed documents back to me on Sunday if they wanted to proceed. I stressed that there was no pressure, that their decision to attend or not would not affect their ministries or my studies. Some were concerned that I needed a certain number of people, or I would not “pass,” and they wanted to help me out. No one joined just to help me pass. They all expressed a desire to participate of their own accord. There was one individual who was not able to attend the introductory evening. I gave that person the script (Appendix Five) I read at the introductory night, the first set of materials and told her they could ask any questions. Seven people (six from the introductory night plus one other) filled in the required documents and brought them to me.

Although there was a power dynamic, discipleship was part of my role at the church, and this research project included some very purposeful discipleship.

This project met a recognized need in the church while also fulfilling a requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program. I recognized that I was both pastor and researcher and that the project chosen was also beneficial for the life of the congregation and suitable for the individuals involved as well. It was also approved as a discipleship ministry of the church on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at a regular Leadership Team meeting. We discussed the potential research project and what I was working on for my portfolio. The leadership affirmed that this was a good and beneficial project for the church to support. They recognized that it would meet the vision of having multi-voiced church services and would also help to grow stronger disciples in the church. We strove to make sure there was no pressure or feelings of obligation to participate. On the first night of the classes, I reminded them that there was no obligation and that they could stop at any time should they want to, with no penalty from me or the church's leadership.

All classes were conducted in the same location in our church library. This was where we regularly held small group meetings and bible studies, making it a neutral, consistent, and safe location. The in-person follow-up interviews were done at the location of the participants choosing. One couple chose their home, three other participants chose the church, one did the interview through email, and one never completed the final interview.

## Findings, Interpretation, and Outcomes

The data came from various sources, but the majority of it was compiled using Dedoose. Below is a table documenting all data sets that I collected from the church and participants, and how it was collected and analyzed.

<b>Data collected</b>	<b>Date collected</b>	<b>Type of Data</b>	<b>Analyzed</b>
Church statistics	August 2019	Demographic	Excel then pertinent data added to Dedoose
Spiritual Gift inventory	October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	Top 6 spiritual gifts	Documented and added to Dedoose
Personality profile	October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	Jung/Myers Briggs typology profile	Documented character personality profile and added to Dedoose
1 <sup>st</sup> Survey	October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	10 questions about calling, gifting and public speaking	Collected online using survey monkey and also on paper. Made into a word document and then added to Dedoose
2 <sup>nd</sup> Survey	January 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2020	10 questions about calling, gifting and public speaking	Collected online using survey monkey and also on paper. Made into a word document and then added to Dedoose
Final interview	January 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2020	8 questions about the course, material and changes	Personal notes, audio recording and email. Transcribed into word and then added to Dedoose

Invitation to participate in sermon series	January 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Yes or no invitation	Email and verbal communication added to Dedoose.
Actual participation	April 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Physical participation	Documented and added to Dedoose

**Figure 5: Data Collection Timetable**

**Review of Data**

From these various data sets, I interpreted multiple points of pertinent data and discovered some shortcomings in the data collected. I will now give an overview of calling and the spiritual gift mixes of the participants.

**Data Regarding Personal Calling**

Did this project help the participants to understand their calling better? The quick answer is maybe. This was one area where I would change the questionnaires in the future, to make them transparent and include scriptural references and definitions for calling, gifting, and preaching. In my decision to use the five questions from Jamie Rohrbaugh, it left the answers too broad and open-ended. I initially thought that it would be easier to understand. Perhaps if the questions followed week two with our discussion about God calling us, I would have received different answers. I learned from these responses that a reply to a question like “If you could spend the rest of your life doing or talking about one thing, what would that be?” will receive many different answers. I received the following: playing chess (same on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> survey), Christmas, teaching, acting, public speaking and helping people in marriages. These questions would have been better used in a discussion about how to discover your

calling. We could have had a conversation about their understanding of calling. Not one of the participants used the words called or calling in any of their initial surveys, however in the final interview, several mentioned aspects of their calling.

There was, however, a slight shift in the responses to the second survey. Participants one and five moved from an inward-focused answer to outward-focused answers. Participant one concluded in the second survey that “they would want to spend the rest of their lives telling people about God” (Participant Interview 2019). That is a big step towards discovering potential calling, but because of the weaknesses of wording in my survey, it was not a clear connection when answering the question about calling. In the final interviews I tried to clarify their thoughts on calling through our discussions. One of the couples who participated together has had a strong calling on their life to help other couples through marital struggles. This calling was affirmed once again for them throughout the process of the course. Another participant said, “But now I am not sure that God only wants me to be that stagehand; maybe I need to get out from behind the curtain and let people see me. This is something that has been on my mind since that class” (Participant Interview 2019). This participant put this conviction into practice in the months that followed the project, not by preaching a sermon, rather they began to lead worship as part of our worship team. They had been singing for a while, but they began helping to lead between songs by reading scripture and also leading in prayer. These were small steps, but they are examples of areas where the participants were actively seeking and were willing to try new things, opening new doors to see what God might be asking them to do.

The participants were not all able to articulate their calling clearly, but out of the seven, three said they would preach, with two preaching on a Sunday morning in the series on Colossians that followed the research course. The three that said maybe they would preach have all stepped into more significant roles on the worship teams or leadership team. Since the course in 2019, during the past two years, four of the participants have preached during a Sunday morning service, this was a direct result of the research project.

One participant said no, they would not speak publicly. This participant, however, did not engage in the same way as the other participants in the course. Their willingness to preach or teach responses on the survey started at one out of ten and remained at one on the follow-up survey. I believe they were willing to attend and participate in the class because they were attending with their spouse; they would not have come alone. With that said, to have six people exploring the move into more public speaking, teaching, and preaching roles in the church was a fantastic success for our church and spoke clearly to the question “Is God calling you to teach or preach”? They may not have answered it in a survey, but they have lived it out in their actions.

### **Reflecting on Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts can be defined as “a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God’s grace, for use within the context of the Body” (Wagner 2012, 33). We found that the gifts identified through the assessment tool were given to these individuals for use within the church to help the church in their own unique way. For many people,

unless their gifts are identified, fostered, and they are given an opportunity to be used, they would not be used, and they would miss part of God's unique plan for their lives. When we identified the gifts of the individuals, six of the participants had gifts related to teaching, leadership and wisdom. These are all gifts that could be used by God if he called them to preach.

The Clintons, in their seminal work *Unlocking your Giftedness*, addressed this from their own experience; Bobby Clinton wrote about how he grew in his understanding of his gift of teaching through education, opportunity, and the work of God's people in his life (Clinton & Clinton, 1998, 57). When laypeople within our church are given an opportunity to understand, uncover and grow in their spiritual gifts, this gives them an opportunity to find their unique place in God's plan for their lives. The participants also found out that their unique gifts would help the local church grow. The Clintons' work showed us how our natural abilities, acquired skills, and spiritual gifts worked together in concert with one another.

Not all natural, learned, or gifted abilities would be the same. They could be very different, but God used each of these abilities within the local church to help it grow and better reflect God's kingdom on earth. This also brought us to the idea of calling. Does God always give spiritual gifts when we are called to a particular ministry?

The spiritual gifts that God gave to each believer may be indicators of calling, but they were not necessarily indicators of a calling to teach or preach. In fact, not having the right 'gift' could also hold someone back from answering a

call from God because they are not ‘gifted’ in that particular area. We talked in class about how spiritual gift inventories are helpful but not the final word on how God may use us. Spiritual gift inventories were good indicators of areas of gifting in which you had already served but are not great for those areas where you have never tried to serve. The Clintons wrote,

Discovery of spiritual gifts flows out of ministry experience. Small group activities allow for ministry experience at a most basic and non-threatening level. Usually spiritual gifts cannot be determined prior to ministry experience by taking tests since most tests are based on experience and not symptoms of gifts. (51)

We discussed how you may never know what God asked you to do or gifted you to do if you are unwilling to step out into ministries you have never previously tried. This was true of the one participant who stepped onto the stage to preach during this project. They had always served behind the stage but tried their hand at proclaiming God’s word and leading publicly and did an excellent job! They discovered a gift that they did not know they had.

We did a short course on calling, gifting and preaching help people to step into these roles and perhaps even behind the pulpit? The answer was yes. Six of the seven stepped forward, four of them preached from the pulpit on a Sunday morning, three moved into public leadership in the church. For each participant these were new areas of ministry they had not participated in before. One of the participants who preached from the pulpit in the first months following the course had indicated on their final survey that they would “probably not preach.” However, when given the opportunity to preach in the Colossians series, they were the first to respond with a “Yes.”. Actions spoke louder than words,

especially considering none of them, on their surveys, said they were willing to preach. The surveys and participant responses showed how they responded at that moment. However, following the preaching class they stepped forward and answered the call.

**The Spiritual Gifts of the participants**

The next question I explored was “Does spiritual gifting or personality strengths indicate who God might call to teach or preach?” The answer was interesting when we took a look at their top spiritual gifts.

Looking at Figure 6 below, there were twelve gifts identified by the participants. It shows each participant’s top three gifts, with one participant having a tie, giving them four gifts. The colours represent the ranking of the gift. The top gift is marked in (blue), their second-highest ranked gift (orange) and their third highest-rated gift (grey). As an example, two participants had knowledge as their second-highest gift, and one had it as their third-highest gift.



**Figure 6: Top Three Spiritual Gifts**

Certain gifts are normally linked with public preaching and teaching, including teaching, wisdom, exhortation and knowledge. Two of the participants had teaching as their top spiritual gift. Three had wisdom, one had exhortation, and another three had knowledge in their top three spiritual gifts. When looking across the various participants, we found that participants five and six have both teaching and knowledge listed in their top three gifts. However, even participants with gifts like teaching or exhortation still felt nervous about being asked to speak in front of people. In this case, most participants were hesitant to step into a public role in the church, even though they had identified their gifts on the survey. Having the gift wasn't enough to convince them to start teaching publicly.

Individuals could be gifted and even called by God into public teaching or preaching roles, but if they were being held back by fear or anxiety, they may never give it a try. One of the participants had served many people who were in need but had no desire, and I believe no calling from God, to teach or preach in the church.

As we look at this next chart, we can see each participant's top three spiritual gifts.

	#1 Gift	#2 Gift	#3 Gift
Participant 1	Wisdom	Giving	Missionary
Participant 2	Service	Knowledge	Wisdom
Participant 3	Wisdom	Intercession	Exhortation
Participant 4	Administration	Mercy	Giving
Participant 5	Teaching	Knowledge	Service
Participant 6	Teaching	Administration	Knowledge

Participant 7	Hospitality	Missionary	Helps
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**Figure 7: Participants Top Three Gifts**

### **Results of the Research**

Even with its weaknesses due to my question design, the data shows that if given some training, encouragement/mentoring, and an opportunity to preach or teach, there were individuals who discovered a gift and calling to proclaim God’s word to others. They may not become full-time pastors, but that was not the intent or the goal of this research. The intention was to see if there were people in the pews in whom God had placed a calling to help in the ministries of teaching and preaching in the local church, and I have concluded that there are. By taking this first step, our research questions have been answered, some new voices have been encouraged to be preachers in our local church, and some have stepped forward and engaged in the activity of preaching. Some now have a stronger understanding of exegesis. And six persons now feel better equipped to lead studies on the Bible, whether from the pulpit on Sunday or in small groups in their home during the week.

The process results are summed up with the following thoughts from the participants final interviews, they said, “I don’t think I will be preaching a sermon.” Yet this participant was the first to sign up to preach on Colossians and chose the very first sermon of that series. God was at work, calling people to preach in Massey Place Community Church!

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

The fundamental question that began this research was, “Should laypeople preach in the local church”? My conclusion after this research is yes. Laypeople can and should preach in the local church, and further to that, I believe that God calls laypeople to preach in their local church. One of the illustrations used in scripture of the local church is that of a body, 1 Corinthians 12. In this passage we read about different parts, but they all work together to form one whole body. The ordained preacher/pastor is one of these parts, but that should not exclude laypeople from being welcomed into the pulpit on occasion either. In Ephesians 4 the apostle Paul goes into further detail and lists 5 offices of leadership in the church. Smaller churches often struggle to fill all the offices without laypeople stepping into those roles. Through this research and the following years since completing the research, I have found many valuable benefits to having lay preachers within the church.

### **Conclusion and Implications - What was Learned?**

This project was birthed out my desire to see people in our church equipped and encouraged to step into ministry roles in the church. Our leadership team identified the goal of having multiple voices who could preach on a Sunday morning. As a church, we could not afford to hire other outside voices, and we

felt that even if we could, it would neglect the people God has already brought to us. As leaders in the church, we chose to look within the church to see what God might be up to. These two opportunities seemed to fit well together: answering the questions of whether God would call and equip laypeople to preach/teach and whether they would step forward if given some training, encouragement, and opportunity. This became the beginning of my research project.

Through the planning process, I made some errors in the questions used on the surveys. I would also tweak some of the teaching done in the class portion of the program. This tweaking would not affect the research but would help to move the class and discussions along more smoothly. We got where we wanted to go but took a longer route when studying the text and preparing it for teaching and preaching. Regarding the survey questions, if I were to write those questions again, I would include a definition of what it means to be called by God and then simply ask: Has God ever called you to do something? Is he calling you to try teaching or preaching? This would make it a lot easier to answer the research questions about individual participants' understanding of their calling to preach or teach in the local church.

Upon reflection, the research could have been made more robust with further data. For example, having multiple data points would add a certain "triangulation" (Sensing 2011, 72) to the research would have given me a stronger argument for the desire for multiple voices preaching from the pulpit. I could have added surveying the congregation about lay preachers in our church before and after they spoke. This would have added another data point to the research.

We knew the church leadership desired to have multiple voices, including lay preachers in the church. Prior to the project we had a congregational planning meeting utilizing Lencioni's *The Advantage* approach to vision and mission planning (Lencioni 2012). In that meeting, we created a guiding document for our church (Appendix Six), which expressed the desire for multiple preaching voices. This document showed the support of the leadership team and congregation to train lay people to preach. Having data from the congregation at large on their response to the lay preachers would bolster these statements. In addition, having the time within the research parameters to survey/poll the wider congregation as to the effectiveness of lay preachers would also support the conclusions of this paper. However, neither of these areas were included in the research parameters.

Even with those shortcomings, I received answers to each of my questions. Yes, God was calling laypeople to teach and preach in my church. Yes, God had gifted individuals for the preaching ministry in my church. Yes, when given a little training and encouragement, they will step forward and give it a try. Although this was not part of my research or project, the training material would be suitable for use in other church settings, and it could be an excellent course to uncover calling and gifting and move people towards preaching and teaching in their local church. I believe that laypeople in other churches would respond in the same way as they did at Massey Place Community Church.

In the ministry at Massey Place Community Church, there were other questions that we could ask. Was God calling people from within our church to

answer the call to other ministries in which we have needs? Prayer ministries? Care ministries? Children's ministries? If they were given some training and encouragement in those areas, would they feel more confident to answer that call on their lives? We saw this happen when looking at the calling to preach and teach. Could it to be the same for other areas of calling and ministry?

When I think about my dad's ministry as a lay leader who was occasionally called on to preach, along with my own experiences as a layperson and now in ordained vocational ministry, I see how people respond to lay preachers in a new light. They are not there just to "fill in"; rather, people sit up and take notice when a layperson moves from the pew to the pulpit. There is someone just like them, someone who works in the "real world," who has the same struggles, hurdles, and opportunities as they do. Someone who has the same fears, especially of public speaking, yet there they are, in the pulpit. The congregation automatically resonates with the lay preacher as one of "us." That lay preacher has a quick connection to the congregation because they are already accepted as part of the church family; they are known by those listening. Often, they have lived life with others in the congregation, possibly for many years or even decades longer than the ordained preacher. There is an instant connection between the lay preacher and the congregation. This connection gives a sense of validity to the lay preacher's words, illustrations, and applications within the sermon. This connection draws the lay preacher and listeners together.

In addition to the immediate connection to the listeners, there is the benefit of spiritual growth in the person preaching. I have observed in my own life that I

learn best when preparing to teach. This was true among those who prepared to preach in our local church. They dug deep into scripture and sought both wisdom and spiritual guidance as they prepared to speak God's word to their local church family. Over the six-week course, the participants often commented that they did not realize that so much research went into each sermon. They were both impressed and concerned as they wondered if they could do the same amount and deeper preparation. In the end, they engaged in the research and found that they too grew personally while preparing to speak. The personal growth and spiritual development of laypeople who stepped into a preaching role was significant in the life of the church. In my setting, I considered this one of the ways that I disciplined laypeople, helping them find and develop their calling and ministry opportunities, including preaching.

Following the end of the official research project, I planned a sermon series based on the book of Colossians. This was the scripture we used for study throughout the 6-week training course. The scripture was used to illustrate how to do the exegetical work of studying a particular passage and then move from the biblical text to a homiletical idea that could be preached on. We broke down the book into sections, selected key themes, practiced doing word studies and then illustrated how to outline and develop a sermon from those texts.

Although the sermon series was not part of the official research project, I offered an opportunity for those who participated in the research to take a Sunday to preach on one of those sections from the book of Colossians. Out of the seven participants, two preached during that series. It was a fantastic opportunity to

walk alongside both of them as they put into practice what they had learned during the course. They were not left alone to prepare and preach, I helped as much as they needed for each aspect of the sermon preparation, including reviewing their sermons before they preached. Another exciting benefit over the past two years since the research was completed was that laypeople from the congregation made up the majority of the preachers during a three-month sabbatical. To date, four of the participants in the research have preached on a Sunday morning. Three of them have taken up leadership roles on our governing board. The others have continued to engage in small groups and regular ministries in the church. We have also had three other laypeople preach on Sunday mornings who did not participate in the initial research project. These three added to the team of volunteers who felt called and were beginning to feel equipped to preach and teach in various church settings.

The curriculum that was developed for this research project has the potential to be used over and over again. In the future, I could lead a similar teaching project in other churches using the same curriculum. During the follow-up interviews three of the participants referred to their binder of documents, illustrating the value they found in the teaching material.

This research project brought together two key thematic questions. Does God call laypeople to preach, and will laypeople feel confident enough to preach and teach in their local church? These themes or questions became the research project's focus, and both were answered with a resounding yes. God does call laypeople to preach in their local church. It may not be every Sunday, but there

was a spiritual benefit to both the lay preacher and the congregation when a layperson steps forward in this way. As I worked with these participants, each of them felt nervous and unsure, yet they believed God was leading them to take this step of faith. Laypersons are indeed called, and will step forward if given the opportunity.

We did not just open the pulpit up to anyone in the church; instead, through and exploration of calling and a practical introduction to sermon preparation, we discerned certain persons who might preach. I read through their sermon manuscripts, which also gave them confidence that they were not making erroneous comments. They also knew that they had the support of the church leadership, which encouraged our multi-voiced approach to Sunday services. The congregation had always welcomed our lay preachers and encouraged them when they stepped into the pulpit. One of the participants developed a devotional blog using Facebook where he reflected on scripture and God's work in his life. The research questions were answered and there were positive results in the church because of this project.

I can see two areas of further development. Firstly, the six-week introductory course could be used in other churches to introduce calling and preaching to laypeople in different settings. This would broaden the research and help us to see if the results would be similar in other locations. If the same results happened in other settings, then these churches could be blessed in similar ways to Massey Place Community Church through the impact of a wider and diverse local preaching team of lay preachers. Secondly, I would like to develop some

next steps for those who took the first course. This could further deepen the lay preachers understanding of homiletical techniques and scriptural nuances. This could include instruction on preaching parables or how to preach from the Old Testament prophets. There could also be further teaching on public speaking techniques and effective sermon evaluation.

There would be some changes I would make to the course should it be done again. I would re-evaluate the use of the preaching system by Kenton Anderson (Appendix Three). I included this because it was part of a courses we took in the Doctor of Ministry program, and I was using it during my own personal preaching each Sunday. I used it every Sunday for about two years, and I found it easy to use once I got used to it. I have found that design of the one-page form was hard for lay preachers to use. Those who preached took full sermon manuscripts to the pulpit with them. Knowing this, I would no longer use the Integrative Preaching model and spend more time helping them effectively use manuscript sermons. I believe this change would free up time in the course, allowing more opportunities to dig deeper into the other aspects of exegesis and homiletics.

I would also include the opportunity for participants to preach after the end of the course. I would not require them to speak, but would encourage them to speak, if God was calling them to do that. However, it did work well to walk through the steps of exegesis and homiletics using a set scripture and then follow that two months later with a sermon series so that they could see the whole process from beginning to end. Concluding with an evaluation of their sermons in

an individual and group setting could also add another element of development for the entire process.

### **What is Next for the Preaching Ministry?**

What is next for the preaching and teaching ministries at Massey Place Community Church? I will continue to providing discipleship and mentoring opportunities in preaching and teaching. Opportunities will be given to those who have spoken before and those who have taken the class who feel called to preach. I will work alongside them, helping them grow in this area and encouraging them to follow their calling. We now have new voices who could preach to our church family from within. They may not be prepared to do this regularly, but if each of them can preach once or twice a year, this will provide an excellent opportunity for our church to experience God working through laypeople and give me a chance to develop them and their gifts while providing a window of rest and relief for my own spiritual well-being.

I am finishing this research project encouraged by the outcomes. God is at work in the people of Massey Place Community Church.

The research implications, should they be proven valuable in other settings, could also impact the ministry of smaller churches across the country. Over the past two years, I have had no personal stress while looking for people to speak on Sundays when I need to be away or take a weekend off. I took a sabbatical, and lay preachers spoke 10 of the 14 Sundays I was away. When I returned, the church was encouraged by their ministry of God's word. It has also

lessened the financial burden on the church as these lay preachers volunteered their time. This could be a huge benefit to other smaller churches as well. This gave me as pastor the ability to take holidays, further my education, attend conferences and have a sick day without worrying about who will fill in the pulpit.

This research project does not solve all the struggles in smaller churches. It does help address further development and discipleship of those who are feeling called to step into preaching in their local church. I have found that by addressing the fear of public speaking through equipping and encouraging them they will step forward and follow that call.

Personally, this research has inspired me to explore my own distinct calling to teach and equip the church and help the church become what God knows it can be. I feel led to further teach/train laypeople to speak in the local church and further explore the calling to teach new ministers of the gospel. Since this research project, I have been able to teach one course at a local Bible college and had a couple of opportunities to guest lecture in their preaching class. I very much enjoy these opportunities and believe that I could do more of this in the future. Teaching and equipping laypeople and new pastors is becoming part of my calling to impact the church.

This research project opened doors for ministry in our local church and revealed a personal calling to teach others how to preach. Where this will take me or the church in the future, only God knows!

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX ONE: VENN DIAGRAM

### Natural Abilities

- Teaching
- Strategic
- Leadership (Vision)

### Acquired Skills

- Teaching
- Leadership
- Vision
- Consulting

### Spiritual Gifts

- Teaching
- Pastoring
- Gifts of Government
- Words of Wisdom/Prophecy
  - Ties to Vision/Strategic

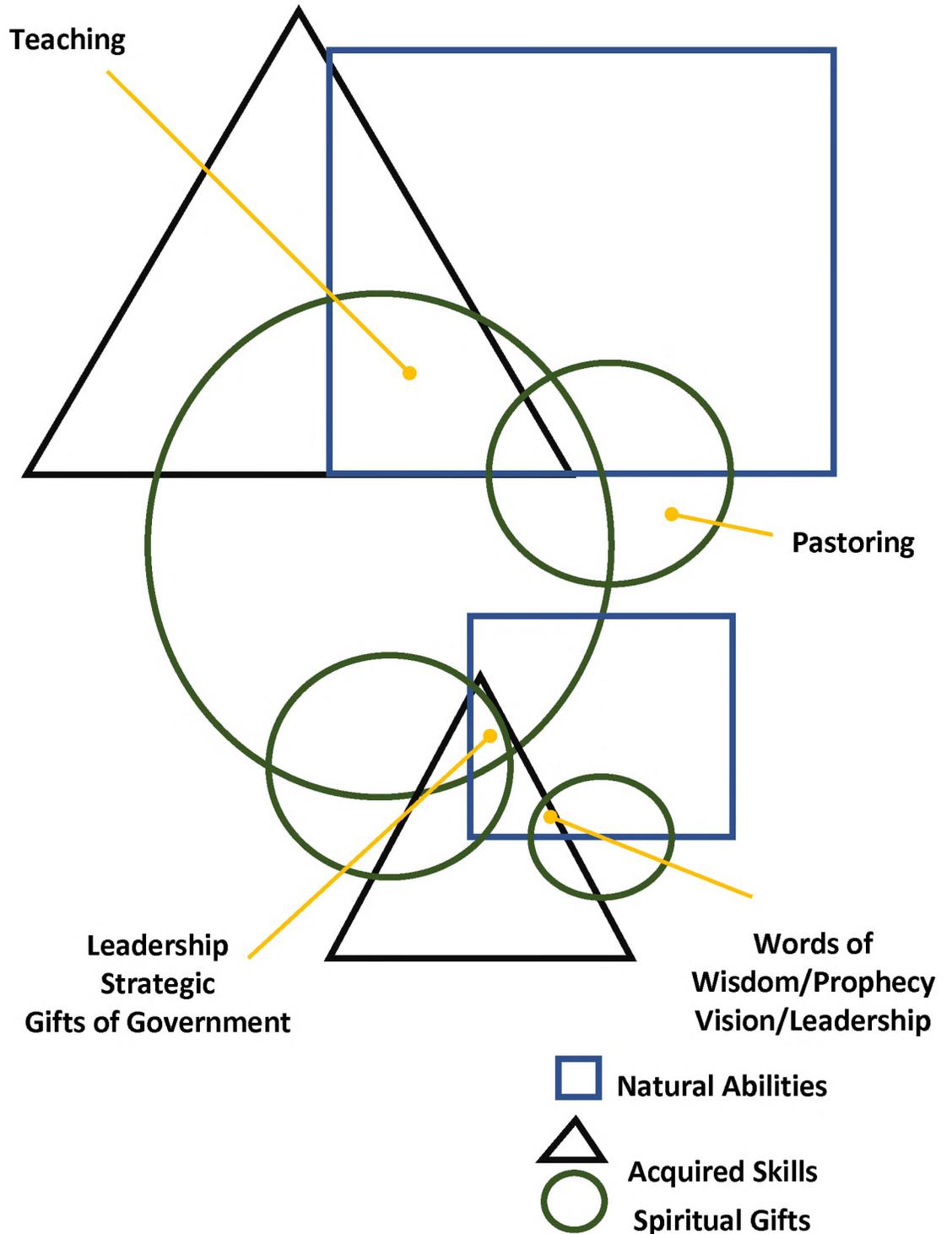
Primary #1

Primary #2

Primary #3

# Venn Diagram

Curtis Zoerb



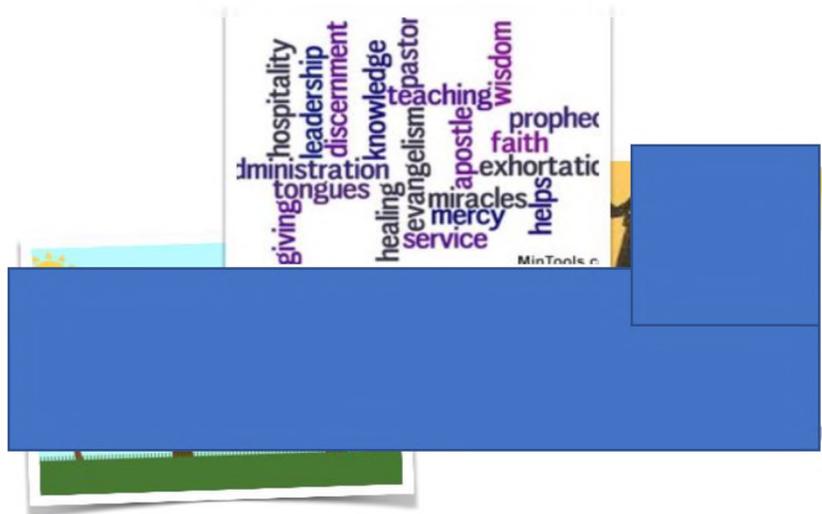
## APPENDIX TWO: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum developed for the six-week course taught in November 2019.

Binder cover

# Teaching & Preaching

First steps in discovering a call



Contained within this Handbook are various work sheets and information for our six-week journey to discovering call and exploring what teaching and preaching looks like at Massey Place Community Church.

(Mintools 2019)

## Preparing God's people to preach God's word

Tuesday October 15 <sup>th</sup> -	Informational evening, introduce project & goals. Hand out materials and survey's
Sunday October 20 <sup>th</sup> -	Complete/hand in surveys and inventories to Pastor Curtis.
Tuesday October 22 <sup>nd</sup> -	Week 1 – Self-awareness – discussion of Spiritual gifts & personality types. Talking about how this impacts teaching and preaching.
Tuesday October 29 <sup>th</sup> -	Week 2 – Introduction to reading the Bible in preparation for teaching or preaching. Selection of a passage.
Tuesday November 5 <sup>th</sup> -	Week 3 – Introduction to Bible study tools and interpretation of scripture passages.
Tuesday November 12 <sup>th</sup> -	Week 4 – How to arrive at an application to modern lives from an ancient scripture.
Tuesday November 19 <sup>th</sup> -	Week 5 – Study of Basic expository sermon forms, how to bring it all together into one teaching topic/sermon.
Tuesday November 26 <sup>th</sup> -	Week 6 – Public speaking basics, how to prepare yourself to preach or teach in front of actual people! - Hand out follow up survey
Sunday December 1 <sup>st</sup> -	Return follow up survey to Pastor Curtis
Tuesday December 17 <sup>th</sup> -	Final group session for those interested in hearing some preliminary results or to answer any questions about the project/research.

December (anytime between December 1<sup>st</sup> and December 15<sup>th</sup>) – one follow up interview with each individual. I just want to seek greater clarity about the training and how it may have helped (or not helped) you.

In the weeks following the sessions, there will be opportunity given to those who want to practice preaching or teaching.

## Week One: Handouts

### Interpreting Your MBTI/Jung Typology Results

(E) Extroversion	(I) Introversion
(S) Sensing	(N) Intuitive
(T) Thinking	(F) Feeling
(J) Judging	(P) Perceiving

(Johnson 1999).

## INTJ (Introversion, Intuition, Thinking, Judging)

I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven.  
Ecclesiastes 1:13

Curtis

Have original minds and great drive for implementing their ideas and achieving their goals. Quickly see patterns in external events and develop long-range explanatory perspectives. When committed, organize a job and carry it through. Skeptical and independent, have high standards of competence and performance—for themselves and others.

Trap: Being lost in thought - need to remember to be mindful of other people and situations.

### Contribution to the Spiritual Community

- Envisioning systems to create a better world.
- Breaking new ground, shifting paradigms, and changing the way people view things.
- Designing or adjusting strategies and structures for future needs.
- Thinking and acting independently from traditional or outmoded ways.

### Leadership Style

- Being a force for change by virtue of the power of their ideas
- Challenging self and others to work toward a compelling future.
- Developing conceptual designs and models
- Seeing patterns and systems which solve complex problems.

### Common "Confessions"

- Reluctant to share real self with others
- Wanting to find answers to everything that interests or concerns them
- Not feeling as competent as they'd like
- Expecting other to 'see' the future as they do

### Order of Preferences

1. Intuition
2. Thinking
3. Feeling
4. Sensing

### Preferred Environment for Service

- Spiritual coaching and direction
- Teaching, especially adults
- Long-range planning and strategy development
- Finding new approaches with wide ramifications for traditional ministries

### Possible Spiritual Helps

- Spiritual direction to address specific issues
- Intellectual study, dialogue or debate on matters of faith, especially with experts
- Contemplation, reflection and meditation
- Silent or directed spiritual retreats.

These are two sided folded cards, created by me, used a 'table tents' each week to help us remember who we are and how we are different from one another.

(Kise, Stark and Hirsh 1996)

(Johnson 1999)

## Week One: Teaching Notes

Why - Binder

History & purpose

Go over types - chart on board

Hand out Table & Characteristics & interpreting your MBTI type

Leadership Styles & Relating - Leadership preferences (2 handouts)

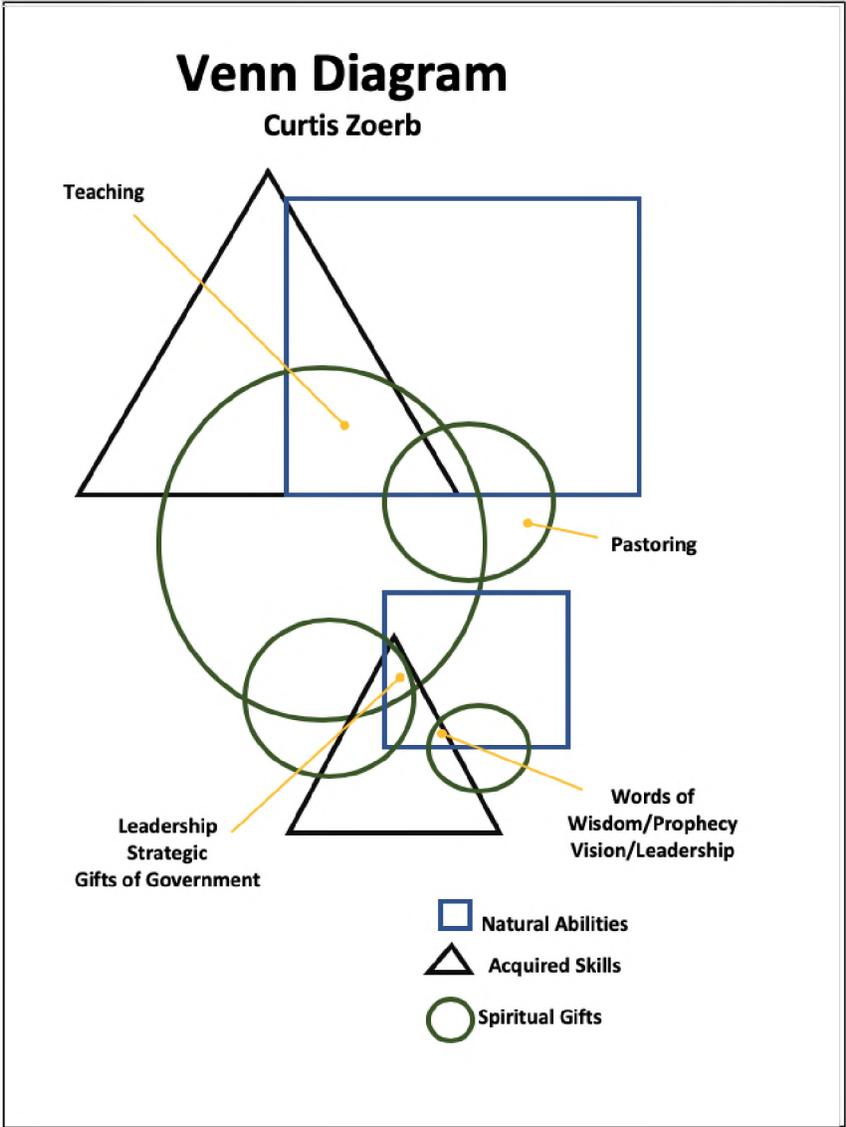
Using your type & influencing leadership (2 handout)

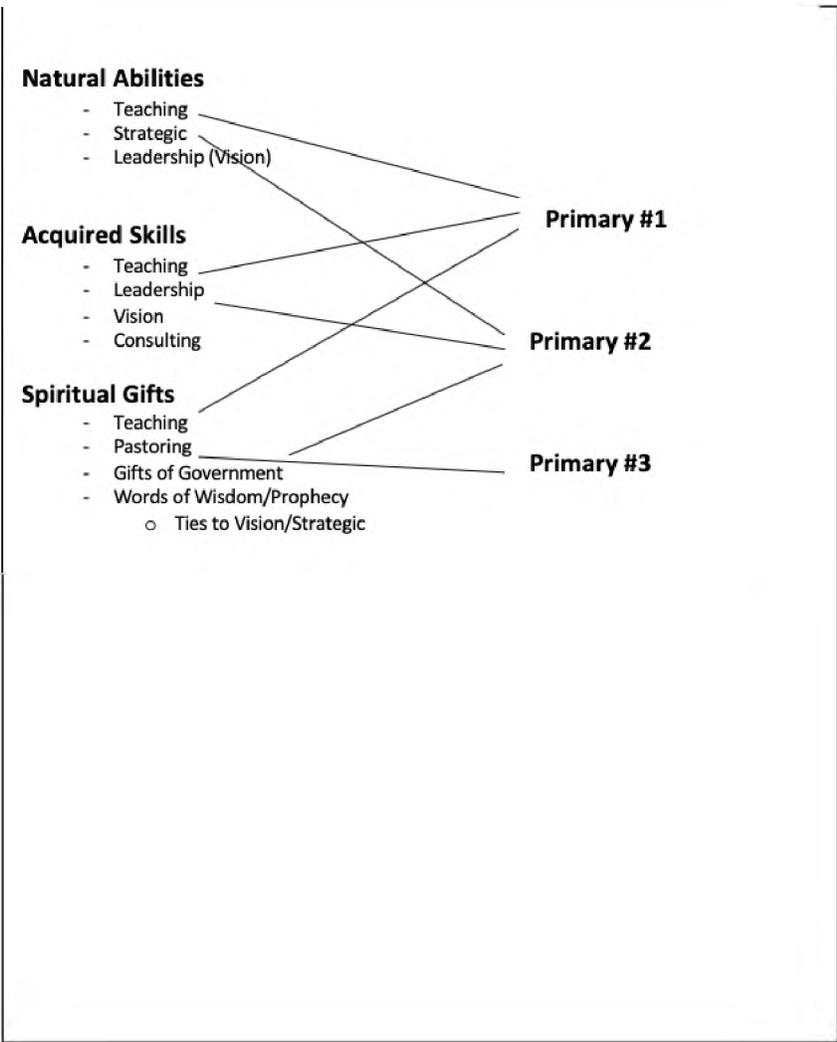
**Spiritual Expression/development (1 Handout)**

**Finally**, when looking at personality type, always remember:

- ✓ We can all do everything—type tells us about our preferences, not our abilities.
- ✓ None of the preferences exist in isolation. Type is dynamic and “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”
- ✓ People often say they behave differently in different situations. The best guide to your preferences is how you behave in situations where you feel most natural and at ease.
- ✓ Type is useful for gaining understanding and self-awareness and for personal development; it should not be used as an excuse for doing or not doing anything, or for criticizing or typecasting others.
- ✓ Type is probably inborn, but its expression is affected by a person’s personal circumstances, life stage, culture, upbringing, etc

My personal Venn diagram listing spiritual gifts, natural abilities and acquired skills used as a teaching tool/illustration. This helped to show the participants that God works in all three ways in each person.





## Week Two: Handouts

(Desiring God Interview 2015)



**Interview with John Piper**   
Founder & Teacher, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)

**Audio Transcript**  
*We get so many questions from listeners who are wondering about God's calling for their lives. Whom should I marry? What field should I pursue in school? What job should I take? Where should I live? And of course, where should I be serving in ministry? Glenn, one listener, asks, "Pastor John, how do I know if the Holy Spirit is calling me to international missions?"*

### Deciphering His Call

Let me start by saying that that is the right question. The reason I say that is because a student just asked me two days ago whether I agreed with Hudson Taylor's comment that no one needs a call to go into missions, but only a call to stay. In other words, should everyone be planning to go to the unreached peoples?

I said to this student: I don't agree with that. I don't think that is the biblical pattern. It may have some things to commend in terms of compassion and proportion, and we should listen to those things, but biblically I can't support it.

Regularly, God called his prophets, not the other way around. God does not say that all men should plan to be pastors unless they are called not to be pastors or elders. Rather, he sets up patterns of assessment and assumes that relatively few — just the needed number — will be led into the office of pastor, teacher, elder, or shepherd.

Paul writes to the Romans to solicit their support in his mission to Spain, and he doesn't say a word about anyone in Rome going with him (Romans 15:22–29). All the epistles of the New Testament are written with the explicit or implicit assumption that people stay right where they are, salt and light in their present vocations. Paul said in [1 Corinthians 7:20](#): "Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called."

So, that is the right question. That was my point: Glenn is asking the right question.

### Renewed Mind

Let's start with [Romans 12:2](#): "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Discerning the will of God assumes a renewed mind. I am assuming that the will of God here refers not to commandments of Scripture, which you don't need a renewed mind to read and know — commandments like "You shall not murder" ([Exodus 20:13](#)). You don't need a renewed mind to know that is against the will of God.

I am assuming what Paul is talking about in Romans 12:2 is how biblical teachings and all the other relevant factors conspire to produce a direction for my life that God approves and will bless, which leads now to a second point: renewal comes mainly through the word of God and prayer.

When he says to “be renewed in your mind,” I think he means to soak your mind, marinate your mind, saturate your mind with the word of God. The Christian mind is shaped by the word of God, all the while praying, “O God, shape me. O God, make me. O God, bring me into conformity to this word at the depths of my being.”

Now out of that renewed mind, and that prayerful experience, what the mind does to discern a call to missions is to take seriously these seven things.

## 1. Grace-Wrought Gifts

The renewed mind takes seriously your spiritual gifts. What are they? God is not calling you to do something he has not gifted you to do. What is the gifting?

I think the gifting that Paul and Peter have in mind is summed up in 1 Peter 4:10: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” That is what gifts are: varied grace incarnate in human personalities, which we steward for the good of others. Do you know how God is gifting you in this way?

## 2. Moving Needs

The renewed mind takes seriously the needs that you see in the world and the ones that move you most deeply. I wonder if we have thought enough about the implications of what Paul says in Romans 12:6–8 when he is talking about gifts. He says, “The one who exhorts, [let him do it] in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Now, every Christian is supposed to exhort. Every Christian is supposed to be generous. Every Christian is supposed to show mercy. Yet Paul treats those three things as gifts. It seems to me that some people will study a cluster of needs in the world — a people group, a crisis situation — and a very special, God-given compassion or mercy or generosity or bent to give would be imparted to that person. That should constitute a very significant component of a person’s calling.

So, take seriously not just the real, objective needs that you are looking at in the world — in the lostness and the hurt of people — but also how they affect you. Then study that in relation to Romans 12:8, where one who does acts of mercy is to do it with cheerfulness, as though there is some special mercifulness that God gives to some people and some special compassion that he gives to some people for missions.

## 3. Practical Knacks

The renewed mind takes seriously its skills. By this I am not thinking mainly of spiritual gifts — and they may overlap — but of practical skills that God may put to use in a special way in some context. Take, for example, finances or carpentry or organization or dozens of possible abilities that may flourish in an especially helpful way on the mission field.

#### 4. Recurrent Interests

The renewed mind takes seriously recurrent and growing interest and awareness of a place or a people. When God is moving someone into missions, he is ordinarily giving them a recurring — not just a flash in the pan — and growing interest and awareness of a need he is leading them to.

So, my question for people is this: What are you reading about? What are you investigating? What do you return to again and again? What are you finding compelling as you ponder the needs of the world?

#### 5. Missional Desire

The renewed mind takes seriously the growing desire of the heart for the work of missions — in other words, *desire*. First Timothy 3:1 says that elders are to aspire to and desire the work of the ministry. I take that as a principle that God uses to draw us into his work: Do you find this work desirable? Is your desire growing? Is it reaching the point of irresistibility?

That is what happened for me on October 14, 1979, when I was struggling with whether to stay a professor at a college or to be a pastor. All I know is that at about midnight that night, it became irresistible, after years of brewing.

#### 6. Local Confirmation

The renewed mind takes seriously the affirmation and confirmation of the local church. It is essential that you be part of a local church. This is the normal way of being a Christian, and it is the only way I know how anybody can go to the mission field and know what to do once he gets there.

It is churches that we want to come into being, so that believers have a way to be disciplined there. Part of the experience of the local church is to confirm our gifts and to confirm our desires and to confirm our skills and to confirm our compassion. Without that confirmation, we will tend to be loners who very easily mistake God's leading.

#### 7. God's Glory

The last thing I would say is the renewed mind wants to glorify God above everything. We want to see the glory of God celebrated in the world. Ask yourself: "In all these things, are we pursuing the glory of God? Do we see what I am being led to as what would glorify God most?"

So, immerse yourself in the word and pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Take these seven factors seriously, and the effect will be that you will know — eventually.



## 6 Questions That Help You Identify Your Calling

Jamie Rohrbaugh

Two ladies sat across the table from me and cried. We had been talking about God's calling. At their request, I had asked them some questions that had helped me identify my own calling.

As patterns began to emerge in their answers, both ladies wept. God had been molding them their whole lives, but they had never seen the themes of their storylines before. Joy welled up as they realized that their dreams were, in fact, God's dreams.

### Are you also trying to identify your calling?

If you've been wrestling with finding your purpose in life, I encourage you to ask yourself the same questions that helped me. Write down the answers, and you'll see how the stories of your life may not be so random after all.

Here are the questions:

#### 1. If you could spend the rest of your life doing or talking about one thing, what would it be?

Perhaps you're an artist, and you'd want to gift the world with beauty that inspires. Or maybe you're in love with learning, and you'd want children everywhere to experience the freedom and opportunity that are made possible by a good education.

Whatever you would do, write it down.

#### 2. Your life experience has rendered you an expert at something. At what are you an expert?

Your expertise doesn't have to be in a traditional career. However, you are definitely an expert at something! For example:

- Maybe you're passionate about stewardship, and you've learned how to get out of debt and manage a budget.
- Perhaps you've learned by experience how to heal from trauma through the power of God's Word.
- Maybe you've invested tons of energy into excelling at cooking, fitness, parenting, spiritual growth, or prayer.

Your area of expertise might feel commonplace to you. However, believe it or not, many people are craving the wisdom you have gained. Even if you don't feel like your experience is very important, your knowledge can be a lifeline to someone else.

#### 3 & 4. What do you love? What do you hate?

These questions go together because what you love and what you hate are often the left and right sides of the same thing. They are simply two different angles from which to view your calling, and they will generally be

opposites of one another.

Years ago, when I was praying about my calling, my immediate, gut-level response to these questions was, "I love powerful, happy, victorious living. I hate pitiful, negative attitudes."

My answer helped me see that I am called to help people come *out of* pitiful, beaten-down Christianity and *into* the abundant, joy-filled life that Jesus died to give us.

**5. What makes you feel alive?**

When you're doing what you're called to do, you will feel fully alive. You'll be firing on all cylinders--filled with joy, peace, inspiration, and motivation! Therefore, even if you aren't sure what your calling is yet, you can get some very telling clues by looking at what makes your adrenaline flow!

So, what makes you feel alive? Is it:

- Going for a morning run?
- Cuddling your children?
- Standing behind a pulpit with an open Bible?
- Writing words of hope to encourage weary souls?

Whatever you do that makes you feel alive, write it down.

**6. What's in your hand?**

In [2 Kings 4](#), a widow begged the prophet Elisha for help. Her late husband had left their family in debt, and his creditors were coming to enslave their sons as payment for their debts. Elisha's response was, "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" ([2 Kings 4:2](#)).

The woman responded that she had nothing in the house except a jar of oil. The prophet then instructed her to go borrow as many empty vessels as she could from her neighbors. After she had collected many jars, she was to shut the door and pour what little oil she had into all the jars.

When she obeyed, a miracle happened. God supernaturally multiplied the little bit of oil this widow had, turning it into so much oil that she sold it and repaid her creditors. She found significant breakthrough by starting with whatever was in her hand.

**So I ask you today: What do you have in your house? What's in your hand?**

I recently asked this question of a bi-vocational pastor friend who had left his secular job. As our families sat at the dinner table and chatted about his career plans, I was reminded of Elisha's story above. I encouraged my friend to make a list of everything he had in his hand.

Grabbing a pencil, he wrote down things like:

- willingness to learn;
- passion for helping people;
- experience in his secular trade;
- relationships with supportive family, friends, and mentors;
- a love for entrepreneurship, and more.

His list included many items that didn't appear to have eternal significance. However, when we disregarded

the outliers and looked at the common themes, a light came on in his mind. My friend suddenly realized that he desired to combine his passion for pastoring with his enjoyment of entrepreneurship.

In that moment, a new business was born. My friend is now writing and teaching God's Word using an internet platform, e-books, and social media. When he looked at the assets he had in his hand, he moved from feeling helpless to knowing he was already equipped to operate in his true calling.

Now it's time to look for common themes.

If you look at your answers to the questions above, you'll see consistent threads that run from question to question. To visualize this, imagine a Venn diagram like the one below:



Your answers to each question above will have some outliers (totally random bits that are part of who you are, but not necessarily related to your purpose in life). For example, unless you're called to work with animals, loving your cat is probably not related to your calling.

However, disregard the outliers and look for repeated themes—even themes from opposite angles. Put those themes together, and you'll generally have a picture of your calling. (Hint: Your calling has probably been the passion of your heart for many years.)

If you've been trying to figure out what you're called to do, the answer may be easier than you think.

When you examine your life's motivations from various angles, your calling and purpose will often become readily apparent.

*Did these questions help you? If so, please leave a comment below. I'd love to hear from you!*



**Jamie Rohrbaugh** is an author, speaker, and Presence seeker whose heart is for the local church. Called to edify, encourage, and equip the Body of Christ, her passion is to see sons and daughters of all ages transformed by the love of [Abba Father](#). Jamie blogs at [FromHisPresence.com](#)® about prayer, revival, and the manifest presence of God. She is the author of four books and of numerous articles around the web. Jamie is a grateful member of the Redbud Writers Guild. She and her husband live in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and together they have one cat. Follow her on [Pinterest](#), [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#).

Definitions of preaching:

Preaching is partnering with God's work in the scriptures and with the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the hearts, minds and souls of the preacher and listeners towards a fuller knowledge of Jesus and what He wants for us.

Curtis Zoerb

Preaching is finally more than art or science. It is alchemy, in which tin becomes gold and yard rocks become diamonds under the influence of the Holy Spirit

Barbara Brown Taylor, in *The Company of Preachers*  
(Lischer 2002, 52)

Ministers can proclaim anything in a stained-glass voice at 11:30 on Sunday morning following the singing of hymns. Yet when they fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God. That is why most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it.

Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*  
(Robinson 2001, 20)

You can have teaching without preaching, but you can't have preaching without teaching!

Unknown

The gospel in 30 words: **Jesus is God with us, come to: 1. Show us God's love 2. Save us from sin 3. Set up God's kingdom and 4. Shut down religion – so we can share in God's life.**

Bruxy Cavey,  
(Cavey 2017, 70)



## Colossians 1 New International Version (NIV)

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

<sup>2</sup>To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup> in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.<sup>[b]</sup>

### Thanksgiving and Prayer

<sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,<sup>4</sup> because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—<sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel<sup>6</sup> that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. <sup>7</sup>You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant,<sup>[c]</sup> who is a faithful minister of Christ on our<sup>[d]</sup> behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup> and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you<sup>[f]</sup> to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the

dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

## The Supremacy of the Son of God

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

<sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of <sup>21a</sup>your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— <sup>23</sup>if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

## Paul's Labor for the Church

<sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— <sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. <sup>27</sup>To them God has chosen to make

known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

<sup>28</sup>He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Colossians 1:2](#) The Greek word for *brothers and sisters (adelphoi)* refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 4:15.
- b. [Colossians 1:2](#) Some manuscripts *Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*
- c. [Colossians 1:7](#) Or *slave*
- d. [Colossians 1:7](#) Some manuscripts *your*
- e. [Colossians 1:9](#) Or *all spiritual wisdom and understanding*
- f. [Colossians 1:12](#) Some manuscripts *us*
- g. [Colossians 1:21](#) Or *minds, as shown by*

## **Week Two: Teachers Notes**

Opening prayer.

Share a strength off of your personality sheet, and on help.

- Is that true of you? How so?

Calling – two sheets

- Desiring God
  - Walk through the 6 steps
- I believe
  - 5 questions about calling

Preaching and Teaching

- What is it? How are they different?
  - Quotes on sheet

Why do we preach?

- To Share the good news of Jesus!
  - (same reason behind teaching in the church)

What do we preach?

- How do we select a passage?
  - Special season
  - Special day of year
  - Lectionary
  - Series
    - Theme
    - Book of the Bible
  - Given a text

Choosing the preaching text within the text

- Breaking it down into sections
- What comes before & after
- What is within the text
- What could be 'big idea' or main point
  - Is there one main point?
    - Should there be one main point?

- What is the idea? (
  - The Subject? (what am I talking about?)
  - The Compliment? (what am I saying about what I'm talking about?))

Settling on a main idea

- Time, prayer, work of the Holy Spirit
- Commentaries – helpful but confirmation not to skip the important work of digging into the text.

. Here I believe we see the strengths of God's individual gifting's and callings. In the class lectures there were seven Greek verbs given us that describe preaching, Johnson also briefly summarizes these same seven verbs (Johnson 2009, 98,99, also Livingstone 2017, session 2). Evangelize, herald, teach, exhort, prophesy, confess and witness are each listed along with the intended outcome of each. God speaks in each of these ways and God uses the preacher in any one of these ways!

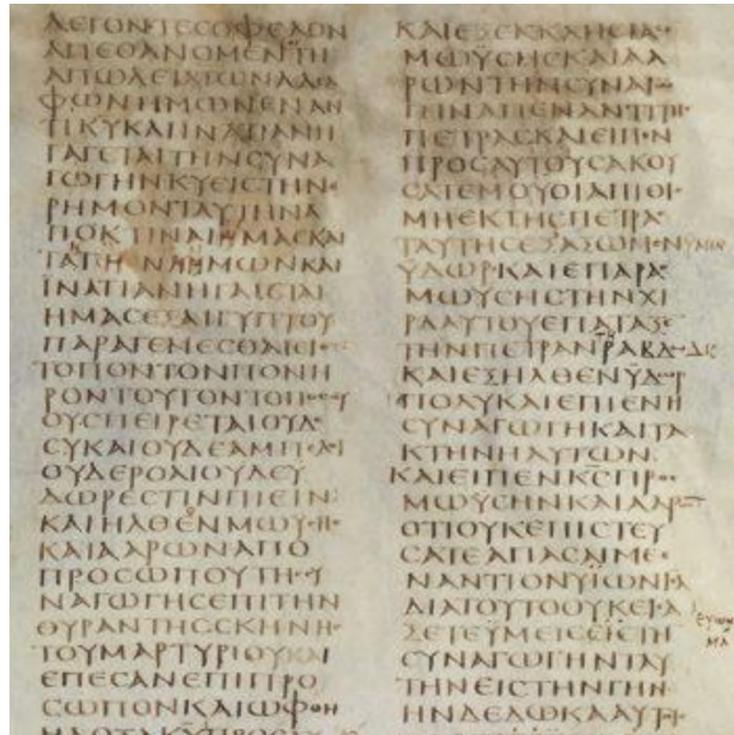
Jesus spoke in different ways, Campolo and Darling speak of breaking Jesus' ministry into three categories; teaching, preaching and healing (Campolo, Darling 2010, 15). We see the same categorization in Gibson's work (Gibson 2004, 42). Let's divide them up a little further as we explore each one. Jesus was a teacher, he instructed both the masses and his disciples. There are many great things to learn from his teaching and he gives us great insight into the heart of God. However, teaching (didasko) was a secondary or supplemental to his preaching, even though good preaching will include some teaching.

Preaching, kerysso - to proclaim (Danker 2000, 542) and euangelizo – to bring good news (Danker 2000, 402), are both used in the Gospels when talking about Jesus preaching. The same two words are also used throughout the rest of the New Testament as well when talking about the disciples and the work of the church. Beyond proclamation and bringing the good news we find further clarification and many more types of preaching. We can see both pastoral and prophetic preaching. Pastoral, a proclamation of the good news for the hearer today, and prophetic proclaiming about what is yet to come. Both speak of the good news message of the kingdom and both are seen throughout the scriptures.

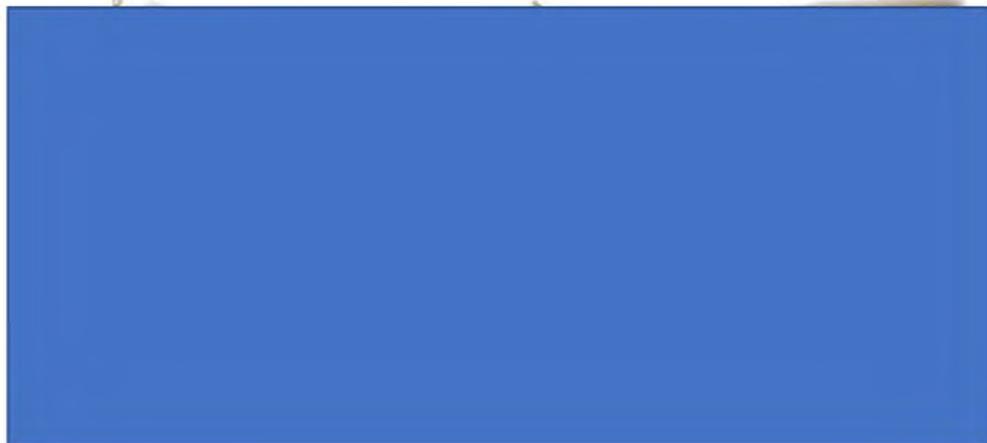
Healing would be the third category of preaching. We see this ministry in the gospels and throughout the epistles as well. On occasion the ministry we read about included both soul and body healing. Johnson refers to this as

transformation. “The word of God not only informs, it performs, it transforms! The word of God makes things happen” (Johnson 2009, 25). It teaches/informs, performs/proclaims and heals/transforms. The transformation was sometimes in a bodily form through miraculous healings. This was not the only transformation that took place, the salvific work of the good news message is the pinnacle point of preaching should also be the focal point of our sermons. When the alchemy of our words, empowered by the Holy Spirit is proclaimed and those who hear not only listen but respond, at that moment the transformation miraculously happens. People move into a relationship with Jesus and those who already have a relationship with Jesus move closer to him.

Examples of the Ancient Scripture Manuscripts



(Biblical Archaeology 2021)



## Week Three: Handouts

Colossians chapter 2

**2** I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. <sup>2</sup>My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

## Spiritual Fullness in Christ

<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

<sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces<sup>[a]</sup> of this world rather than on Christ.

<sup>9</sup>For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup>and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup>In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh<sup>[b]</sup> was put off when you were circumcised by<sup>[c]</sup> Christ, <sup>12</sup>having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

<sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you<sup>[d]</sup> alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.<sup>[e]</sup>

## Freedom From Human Rules

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. <sup>19</sup> They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

<sup>20</sup> Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? <sup>22</sup> These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup> Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

# BIBLE TRANSLATION CHART

Translation	Reading Level	Translation Philosophy	Target Audience	2 Corinthians 10:13	Distinctives
<b>AMP</b> Amplified Bible	11	Word-for-word plus additional amplification of word meanings	Those looking for more detailed shades of meaning in Scripture	"We, on the other hand, will not boast beyond our legitimate province and proper limit, but will keep within the limits [of our commission which] God has allotted us as our measuring line and which reaches and includes even you."	A popular translation used to understand the hidden meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. Published in 1964 (updated in 1987). Break through the language barrier.
<b>CEV</b> Contemporary English Version	5.4	Thought-for-thought	Unchurched	"We won't brag about something we don't have a right to brag about. We will only brag about the work that God has sent us to do, and you are part of that work."	Written at an elementary-school reading level, the CEV is readable and understandable for the modern reader. Published in 1995.
<b>ESV</b> English Standard Version	7.4	Word-for-word	Bible readers of all ages	"But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you."	A literal update of the Revised Standard Version, seeks to produce word-for-word correspondence. Published in 2001.
<b>God's Word</b> Translation	4.3	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Christians and non-Christians; adults and children	"How can we brag about things that no one can evaluate? Instead, we will only brag about what God has given us to do—coming to [the city of Corinth] where you live."	Published in 1995, a meaning-based, contemporary translation utilizing the thought-for-thought translation philosophy.
<b>HCSB</b> Holman Christian Standard Bible	7.5	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Bible readers of all ages	"We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but according to the measure of the area [of ministry] that God has assigned to us, [which] reaches even to you."	A translation that attempts to combine both formal and dynamic equivalence. Published in 2004.
<b>KJV</b> King James Version	12	Word-for-word	Conservative Protestant	"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."	Traditionally loved and accepted by all Christians. Purpose in translation was "to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they can understand." Published in 1611. Timeless Treasure.
<b>The Message</b> A Paraphrase	5.5-10 depending on the passage	Thought-for-thought. Converts the original languages into the tone and rhythms of modern-day American speech while retaining the idioms and meaning of the original languages	Christians who want a fresh Bible-reading experience and seekers	"We aren't making outrageous claims here. We're sticking to the limits of what God has set for us. But there can be no question that those limits reach to and include you."	This paraphrase was translated using the rhythms and tone of contemporary English to communicate to the modern reader. Complete Bible published in 2002.
<b>NAB</b> New American Bible	6.6	Word-for-word	Catholic	"But we will not boast beyond measure but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, namely, to reach even to you."	Published under the direction of Pope Pius XII, this Catholic version of the Bible represents more than 25 years of effort by the Catholic Biblical Association of America. All editions include the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books. Published in 1970.
<b>NASB</b> New American Standard Bible	11	Word-for-word	Conservative, evangelical Protestant	"But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you."	A highly respected, formal translation of the Bible. Purpose of the work was to update the American Standard Version into more current English. Published in 1971. Updated in 1995. The most literal is now more readable.
<b>NCV</b> New Century Version	5.6	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Those who want a highly readable translation of the Bible in today's language	"But we will not brag about things outside the work that was given us to do. We will limit our bragging to the work that God gave us, and this includes our work with you."	Based on the ICB (International Children's Bible), it's a readable and simple translation using the thought-for-thought translation methodology. Published in 1991.
<b>NIV</b> NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION	7.8	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Evangelical Christians of all ages	"We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you."	The bestselling translation, widely accepted by evangelical Christians. Purpose in translation was to "produce an accurate translation, suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use." Published in 1978. Most read. Most trusted.
<b>NIRV</b> New International Reader's Version	2.9	Balance between word-for-word translation and thought-for-thought, with an emphasis on meaning when necessary for simplification	Children ages 10 and under	"But I won't brag more than I should. Instead, I will brag only about what I have done in the area God has given me. It is an area that reaches all the way to you."	A thorough, scholarly simplification of the NIV, the NIRV was specifically designed to help young children and new readers understand the Bible for themselves and create an easy stepping-stone from a children's Bible to an adult Bible. Published in 1994. Updated in 1998. The NIV for kids!
<b>NKJV</b> New King James Version	8	Authors used the original KJV as a benchmark, while working to produce an accurate and modern word-for-word translation	Those who want a readable translation of the Bible that is great for study but maintains the poetry of the KJV	"We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you."	A modern language update of the original KJV. Purpose was to update and modernize the original KJV but preserve the KJV as much as possible. Published in 1982.
<b>NLT</b> New Living Translation	6.3	Balance between word-for-word translation and thought-for-thought	Adults and children	"But we will not boast of authority we do not have. Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us, and this plan includes our working there with you."	Based on the work of 90 Bible scholars and a smaller team of English stylists. These scholars and stylists went back to the original languages and sought to produce the closest natural equivalent of the message in natural, contemporary English. Published in 1996.
<b>NRSV</b> New Revised Standard Version	8.1-10.4	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Mainline and interconfessional	"We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you."	A widely accepted translation in the tradition of the King James Version. Purpose was to make a good one better." Published in 1990. A Bible for all Christians.
<b>TNIV</b> TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION	n.a.	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Today's generation of Bible readers looking for readability without sacrificing accuracy	"We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you."	Remaining faithful to the original texts while using up-to-date language of today's world, the TNIV is a highly readable and highly accurate translation. Complete Bible published in 2005. Timeless truth. Today's language.

(Pinterest 2019)

From *Integrative Preaching* by Kenton Anderson. Used with Permission



What do we need to look at to prepare to teach about this text?

- Language of the text
  - Definitions, lexicology, syntax...
  - Use of various translations
  - What to do with differences
  
- Background of the text
  - Who wrote it / Who was it written to / what was happening in their lives at that time / in the culture / in the world
  
- Literary & literature forms
  - Genre / sub-genres / archetypes (images/patterns/models)
  - Narrative/poetry/prophecy/gospel & acts (sub-genres in gospels ie: parable)/epistles/apocalyptic

What do we bring to the text?

- Our own pre-suppositions & history
- Our own theological presuppositions

Cross focused – Integrative approach

- Picture – Problem – Point – Prayer
- Inspire – Engage – Instruct - Convict

## **Bible Study Tools:**

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

- Online Bible available in many translations

[www.stepbible.com](http://www.stepbible.com)

- Online Bible with various original language and Biblical text related research

**Commentaries**

- A series of notes that explain a Scripture passage

**Bible survey**

- An overview of themes in across all of scripture or single books of the Bible.

**Parallel study**

- A commentary that focuses on comparisons of matching or similar portions of scripture

**Bible Dictionary**

- A dictionary of Biblical words and themes

**Biblical Concordance**

- A list of Biblical words in alphabetical order

**Topical Bible**

- A topical concordance of the Bible

**Lexicon**

- Provides meanings/definitions of biblical words in the original languages

**Historical timetable**

- Provides a timeline for understanding what is happening in the culture at that moment in time

**Inductive study**

- What? So what? Now what?

- An attempt to use information about a specific situation to draw a conclusion.
- This would be an exegetical approach

#### Deductive study

- You already have a topic and then you look through scripture to find scriptures that speak to that topic.
- Some call this a topical approach

## Week Three: Teachers Notes

### Week 3

Open in prayer

Share something off your personality profile card that would be a strength in teaching/preaching.

Looking at Colossians 1 & 2

- Pick a section of text to focus on

What do we need to look at to prepare to teach about this text?

- Language of the text
  - o Definitions, lexicology, syntax...
  - o Use of various translations
  - o What to do with differences
- Background of the text
  - o Who wrote it / Who was it written to / what was happening in their lives at that time / in the culture / in the world
- Literary & literature forms
  - o Genre / sub-genres / archetypes (images/patterns/models)
  - o Narrative/poetry/prophesy/gospel & acts (sub-genres in gospels ie: parable)/epistles/apocalyptic

What do we bring to the text?

- Our own pre-suppositions & history
- Our own theological presuppositions

Cross focused – Integrative approach

- Picture – Problem – Point – Prayer
- Inspire – Engage – Instruct - Convict

Pick a passage

Pick a resource – spend about 15 minutes with it... What do you learn/have you learned?

Putting the pieces together – next week!

## Week Four: Handouts

### Living as Those Made Alive in Christ

**3** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup>You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup>But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup>Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

## Instructions for Christian Households

<sup>18</sup>Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

<sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

<sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

<sup>21</sup>Fathers,<sup>[e]</sup> do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

<sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup>since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup>Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

### Footnotes:

- a. **Colossians 3:4** Some manuscripts *our*
- b. **Colossians 3:6** Some early manuscripts *coming on those who are disobedient*
- c. **Colossians 3:21** Or *Parents*

**4** Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

## Further Instructions

<sup>2</sup>Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup>And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup>Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

## Final Greetings

<sup>7</sup>Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant<sup>(a)</sup> in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our<sup>(b)</sup> circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

<sup>10</sup>My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)<sup>11</sup> Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews<sup>(c)</sup> among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. <sup>13</sup>I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. <sup>15</sup>Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

<sup>16</sup>After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

<sup>17</sup>Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

**Footnotes:**

- a. **Colossians 4:7** Or *slave*; also in verse 12
- b. **Colossians 4:8** Some manuscripts *that he may know about your*
- c. **Colossians 4:11** Greek *only ones of the circumcision group*

The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life.

Howard & William Hendricks  
(Hendricks and Hendricks, 2007)

*If we read the Bible properly, we will see that God never asked one generation to step back in time and live the way it had done before. No, God spoke in each generation in that generation's ways.*

Scott McKnight  
(McKnight 2018)

To preach contextually is to connect the preached word with the deep needs of these people at this time. Although it feels like an individual event, preaching is really a team sport, arising from and responding to the particular needs of a particular congregation. The sermon is not a standalone piece of performance art.... Jesus preached big ideas in a way that connected with the daily lives of the people who were listening.

Mary S. Hulst  
(Hulst 2016, 102)

Positive preaching recognizes our depravity, but it also recognizes that there is power from the Holy Spirit that enables us to grow. We are all in a growth process. We are often aware of how far we have to go, but not how far we have come. We need to encourage one another by pointing out progress.

Haddon Robinson  
(Robinson 2005, 261)

Preaching connects biblical truth to people's lives in a way that changes them.

Carter, Duvall & Hays  
(Carter, Duvall and Hays 2005, 117)

## **Week Four: Teachers Notes**

Week 4 - Application

Open in Prayer

Personalities

- Spiritual Gifts... have you ever had to make an effort to do something that does not come easily to you in order to fulfill your role as a Christian? Where did you find the strength/sustenance to do that?

Thoughts about the Bible Study helps/texts?

- Any questions?

Read Colossians 3 & 4

- What jumps out at you?
- How would you divide it up?

Choose a text

- Col 1:3-14
- Col 1:15-23
- Col 1:24 – 2:5
- Col 2:6-12
- Col 2:13-15
- Col 2:16-23
- Col 3:1-17
- Col 3:18-4:1
- Col 4:2-6
- Col 4:7-18

Pick text for yourself:

Main point – of the text (What?)

What does it mean? (So What?)

Why do I care today? (Now What?)

7 points in the Gospel coalition article on application

Application

- Ask questions
- Extend a challenge

- Give examples

Application for our text?

Close in prayer

## Week Five: Handouts

### Week 5: (Rinne 2013)

Learning the Art of Sermon Application 2013-11-13, 5:11 PM

# Learning the Art of Sermon Application

JULY 23, 2013 | [Jeramie Rinne](#)



Photo by [Mark Lee](#) on [iStockphoto](#)

After 15 years of preaching, application is still one of the trickiest parts of sermon writing. **Why?**

I struggled early on because seminary equipped me well for exegesis and interpretation, but not as well for Bible application. That's why we have the stereotype of the fresh-out-of-seminary pastor whose sermons sound more like a Bible commentary and less like a word from God. And speaking of commentaries, they seem to provide infrequent help in applying the text. They tend to serve us best by addressing interpretive issues.

Perhaps application will always elude us somewhat because there's something live and dynamic about it. Application deals with how God's timeless message speaks now, and now is always changing. Or maybe the difficulty lies in the fact that exegesis is more the science part of sermon writing, and application is more the art. And as an art it will always be a bit nebulous.

Whatever the reason, we struggle to do good application, and as a result one of the common beefs people have about church is that they don't understand how the sermon

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/learning-the-art-of-sermon-application/> Page 1 of 5

relates to real life. No wonder pastors get tempted to jettison expository preaching and instead primarily address topics that people deem pertinent.

### Ear for Application

Over the years, I have come to believe that developing good application actually works a lot like doing good exegesis. Both arise from asking good questions of the text. Both exegesis and also application involve intentional listening to the passage by bombarding it with questions. In exegesis we're ultimately asking, "What does this passage mean? What is its main point?" And in application we're asking, "How does the original message of this text apply today?"

Below I've listed application questions I regularly ask of a text. I've cobbled together this list out of insights gleaned from books, articles, professors, and other preachers over the years. I encourage you to glean from my gleanings and develop your own pattern of actively listening for application. Here are seven questions to ask while puzzling out what your passage means today.

#### 1. What's the main point?

Solid exegesis tees up effective application. The more accurately and clearly you can nail down the main point of the text, the better prepared you will be to press that meaning home to your hearers. So as the first step in application, write out the main idea of the text in one sentence. I practice this discipline every week, and it's one of the most important steps in sermon writing for me (see Haddon Robinson's "exegetical idea" of a passage and then transforming it into a "homiletical idea" in *Biblical Preaching* (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/0801022622?tag=theospcoal-20>), 66-99). If you're not super clear on the central theme of the text, how do you expect to make textually legitimate, searching applications to peoples' lives? It's hard to hit a target with a warped arrow.

#### 2. How did this text apply back then?

Based on that same exegetical spadework, ask how your text applied in its original context. Was it originally a command to be obeyed, a praise to be sung, or a promise to be trusted? Does the passage reveal truths that should be believed or warnings that should be heeded? Do the characters in the text exemplify either righteousness to emulate or sin to avoid?

Of course God's word to them is not always God's word to us in exactly the same way. The original application must pass through the filters of biblical theology, a right understanding of the covenants, and considerations of cultural specificity. But if you can identify the species of the original application, then your present-day application should at least be in the same genus.

If your application grows organically from the soil of your passage, it will ring true with your congregation. They will know that the Word of God itself, and not just the cleverness of the preacher, is pricking their hearts.

#### 3. How might this text address different categories of listeners?

Try applying the text like the Puritans did (for example, see William Perkins, *Art of Prophesying* ([http://www.moneraism.com/thethreshold/sda/perkins\\_prophesying.html#chapter7](http://www.moneraism.com/thethreshold/sda/perkins_prophesying.html#chapter7))). Think about the spiritual taxonomy of people hearing the sermon and how the text might speak to each of those groups. What does your passage say to unbelievers? To believers? Does it address specific types of people like fathers, children, women, the rich, religious leaders, rulers, the depressed, the hot-tempered, or the fearful?

You can take this a step further by contrasting what the Bible says to each group with what the culture says to each group. How are the text's implications for marriage or money or happiness different from the current conventional wisdom? Any time I can contrast a biblical approach to worldly approaches, the light bulbs start going off for people.

#### 4. How does this text shape the church?

Change your perspective and stare at the passage wearing wide-angle lenses to see how it applies to your congregation as a whole, and not just to individuals. We suffer from an individualistic, self-focused orientation (at least here in the United States). As a result, we instinctively think of relevance in personal terms. We ask, "What does this text mean for me?" but fail to ponder what it means for us. And yet so much of the Bible is written to God's gathered people, whether Israel or local churches.

The people in my church seem to perk up when I apply the text to congregational life. It sounds fresh and revolutionary to our individualistic ears. So don't be afraid to tell people, "This is how our church should look because of this text." American churches so often suffer from terribly anemic, pragmatic ecclesologies. So amaze your members with how much God's Word has to say to the local church by making corporate applications week after week.

#### 5. What objections might a skeptic raise?

Where would a skeptic get stuck in your passage? Would she get hooked by an exclusive truth claim, or a vivid description of God's wrath, or a rigorous moral demand? Consider taking a minute in a sermon to address doubts endemic to your culture. I'm not suggesting that we turn sermons into apologetic lectures. But apologetic comments can be a kind of application because they address the questions people have.

I've been helped by Tim Keller's list of "Defeater Beliefs" in analyzing a given scripture for hot-button issues.

#### 6. How can I preach the gospel from this passage?

Always preach the gospel in every sermon. The gospel is the central message of the Bible, so all faithful expository preaching should include an application of the gospel to the people. Let's strive to be like Paul, who could summarize his preaching by saying, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23 (<https://www.esv.org/%20Corinthians%201%3A23/>)).

Where is the gospel in your text? Where do you see the holiness of God and his glory on display? How does sin against that holy God manifest itself? Bryan Chapell calls this the "fallen condition focus" (*Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*,

(<https://www.amazon.com/Christ-Centered-Preaching-Redeeming-Evangelist-or-v-Sermon/dp/0801027985/?tag=theagcs-coat-20>), pp. 40-44). Use the glimpses of sin afforded by your text as a mirror to show people that they are indeed rebels who need gospel amnesty. And of course, take people to Jesus and his cross from the passage at hand. Be like Charles Spurgeon who said, "I take my text and make a bee-line to the cross."

#### 7. How does this text help me know and worship God?

Finally, show the people God and his glory in every sermon. When you go off on God's character during a sermon, it triggers a reflex of worship and wonder in the heart of believers. Relevance erupts in the pews as hearts treasure Jesus himself, shining through the pages of Scripture.

#### Heart of Application

I'm sure there are other helpful application questions to ask. In fact, I invite readers to share their approaches. Let's redeem the comment section below by developing a best practices thread.

But whatever process you use to listen to and apply the text, remember to aim for the heart. Reach the heart and you reach the whole person.

And don't neglect your own heart. When you're filled with love for your people, application becomes natural and instinctive. The questions listed above are tools that work best when wielded by a shepherd who cares deeply for his sheep. Love is the best fuel for the labor of application. So love your people deeply, apply the text fearlessly and precisely, shout out the gospel weekly, burn publicly with wonder at God's glory, and the last thing your people will be wondering is how the Bible is relevant.



**Jeremie Rinne** is the senior pastor of Evangelical Community Church Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

#### TAGS

PASTORAL MINISTRY • PREACHING AND TEACHING

Application:

Why apply it? James 1:22-25

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Matthew 10:5-15 (7:8 – example of what we choose to listen too...)

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,<sup>[a]</sup> drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

<sup>9</sup>“Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— <sup>10</sup>no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup>Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup>If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 --- Paul understood the rules to have changed:

<sup>19</sup>Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, to win the

weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

### **Sermon Formats... putting it all together.**

1. How you approach the text – Topically (Inductive) or Exegetically or Textually (Deductive)
2. How you approach communicating that text – Focus on Idea (Cognitive) or Image (Affective)
3. How will you structure the message:
  - a. Various ways: Declarative, Pragmatic, Visionary, Narrative, integrative

#### **Declarative Sermon:**

Introduction  
Body  
    Point 1  
        Explanation  
        Illustration  
        Application  
    Point 2  
        Explanation  
        Illustration  
        Application  
    Further points...  
Conclusion

#### **Pragmatic Sermon:**

Pray for Wisdom  
Raise the listeners questions  
List all the possibilities  
Eliminate the illogical  
Gather all of scripture's wisdom  
Answer the listeners questions  
Apply the insights gained

**Narrative Sermon:**

Pray your way into the story  
Involve the listener  
Create a crisis  
Resolve the tension  
Realize the hope

**Visionary Sermon:**

Determine the vision  
Articulate the vision

**Integrative Sermon:**

The Logical argument  
The underlying mystery  
The human story  
The motivating vision

**Sermon Forms**

- What it looks like (blank forms)
- What it means (explanation from Kent Anderson)
- What mine look like

# Kenton Anderson Sermon Planning Form

(Anderson 2019)

## Integrative Preaching Sermon Planning Form

**Preacher** a person gifted and called

**Date** a specific date

**Text** a biblical text

**Theme** Express the message in a single, simple, memorable proposition.

<b>Instruct - Theme</b>	<b>Convict - Gospel</b>	<b>Inspire - Mission</b>
<p>Now that the listeners are engaged through the story, the second move is to establish the theme through careful instruction from the Bible. The theme is the sermon's center tentpole around which all the other elements are organized.</p> <p>Instruction addresses problems (human) by means of points (heaven) through use of a profound theme statement. A great theme puts the point to the problem, explaining the relevant scriptures so that the mind of God is known. This is both pastoral and theological work.</p> <p>Express the theme in as few words as possible (less than nine). Write a complete statement (subject plus complement) that can be stated and repeated in the sermon. Eliminate conjunctions. The result should be something that can be proclaimed and that demands a response.</p> <p>Develop the theme through a rational argument that displays and explains the biblical text to people. This instruction will develop logically, perhaps through a numbered set of subpoints.</p> <p>Establish the point, then show how it serves to solve the problem (deduction), or start with the problem and develop the point so that the truth becomes self-evident (induction). Either way, discipline the material so that there is nothing unnecessary to the listener's clarity about and appreciation.</p>	<p>Having established the theme through careful instruction, the sermon now moves toward its climax. Preaching is practiced in the presence of God. It is not enough to know the message. We must be convicted by and deepened in conviction of the truth.</p> <p>Conviction is the place where the point (head) is put to prayer (heart). This is theological work that leads to worship in God's presence. Information about God leads to an encounter with God.</p> <p>The underlying truth of every text and theme is the Christian gospel. Every sermon must somehow culminate in the preaching of the cross. This does not necessarily require explicit expression of the gospel narrative, but it does mean that we will always find the place where grace applies.</p> <p>Identify the place the sermon pinches on the listener's conscience. Why are we struggling to attend to this? Shift to the listener's voice and speak directly to God. What must we say to Him, O God?</p>	<p>The final move of the sermon is to inspire the people to engage in mission. Having met with God, we feel compelled to respond to God in ways consequent to the theme.</p> <p>Inspiration rises up from prayer (heaven) and results in an altered picture of the future (human). This is where the worshipper becomes a prophet. We gain a vision of what the world could be as we embody God's intention.</p> <p>Describe a vision of how this investment of time and energy will change us going forward. What will we do with this, perhaps even in this immediate moment? Could we paint a picture of the difference? Could we describe it so that the picture motivates us? Or could we offer an example of someone or some situation that well describes the intended application of this sermon?</p> <p>Our mission will be fueled by grace. Do not motivate by means of fear or guilt or hype.</p> <p>God is on mission and so are his people. The sermon serves the trajectory of the Kingdom, advancing the purposes of God until Christ returns. We are looking for more than merely moral application (read the Bible more, pray more, be a better person...). We are looking to describe specific, concrete, measurable ways that we can fulfill the missio dei as it touches on the specific aspects related to this sermon text and theme.</p>
<b>Engage - Story</b>		
<p>Our first move is to capture the listener's attention. This cannot be assumed. The most effective way to engage listeners is by telling a compelling story that sets them up to hear the sermon theme.</p> <p>Engagement happens as we struggle with problems (head) and are captured by pictures (heart). A good story works to paint a picture of a problem. The story grounds the sermon in human life, starting with the listener's subjective experience, before moving to an objective appreciation for the truth.</p> <p>Find the place where our story connects with their story (the story in the text) and overlaps with his story, the grand story of God's engagement with his people across time.</p> <p>Shape the telling of the story so that it prepares people to hear the big idea of the sermon.</p> <p>Imagine ways you can bring the story to life so that it engages the listener both cognitively (head) and a</p>		

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## Integrative Preaching Sermon Planning Form

Preacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Text \_\_\_\_\_

Theme \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Instruct - Theme</b> Second Move	<b>Convict - Gospel</b> Third Move	<b>Inspire - Mission</b> Fourth Move
	<b>Engage - Story</b> First Move	

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## **Week Five: Teachers Notes**

Week 5 – Basic Expository Sermon forms

Open in prayer:

Spiritual Gift exploration: Do you think it's possible to grow into a gift? What is essential to you as you pursue growth in this gift?

Educator Roles and Teaching – learning cycle (KERP document)

Application – (So What)

### **Sermon Formats... putting it all together.**

4. How you approach the text – Topically (Inductive) or Exegetically or Textually (Deductive)
5. How you approach communicating that text – Focus on Idea (Cognitive) or Image (Affective)
6. How will you structure the message:
  - a. Various ways: Declarative, Pragmatic, Visionary, Narrative, integrative

### **Declarative Sermon:**

Introduction

Body

Point 1

Explanation

Illustration

Application

Point 2

Explanation

Illustration

Application

Further points...

Conclusion

**Pragmatic Sermon:**

Pray for Wisdom  
Raise the listeners questions  
List all the possibilities  
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Apply the insights gained

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Pray your way into the story  
Involve the listener  
Create a crisis  
Resolve the tension  
Realize the hope

**Visionary Sermon:**

Determine the vision  
Articulate the vision

**Integrative Sermon:**

The Logical argument  
The underlying mystery  
The human story  
The motivating vision

**Sermon Forms**

- What it looks like (blank forms)
- What it means (explanation from Kent Anderson)
- What mine look like

Putting it all together

Working on Colossians passage together

Blank cross – rough work

Document template

How would we fill this in?

Close in prayer

## Week Six: Handouts

Preparing yourself to preach or teach scripture.... PRAY! Prepare and PRAY again!

- We partner with the Holy Spirit but we do not do his work!
- We can help/hinder – but God does what only God can do.

Be saturated in the text, your studying and preparatory work...

Be Organized in how you assemble it together

- Does it flow?
- Will it make sense to someone hearing it for the first time?
- What will you use for notes?
  - Lots of notes? (hard to read with skill)
  - Limited notes?
  - No notes?
    - For all 3 –
      - step 1 – 50% saturation
      - Step 2 – 40% organization
      - Step 3 – 10% memorization

The art of public speaking.

BE YOURSELF! – but you may need to be a bigger version of yourself!

- Keep it natural

What we say and how we say it are both important

- 7% words ---- 38% voice ---- 55% facial expressions
- How we stand/act/gesture/speak.... SPEAKS VOLUMES!
  - African Controversy over my preaching

Practice speaking aloud – 7 different texts/stories – one for each person.

Dress – should not call attention to us

Gestures – match words your using – Remember DISTANCE of the congregation = size needed

Eye contact – connects you

Tone – varied/clear – Mood of text could = mood of sermon

- Pitch – punch – pause

Visuals – ppt – video – object lessons

Length – shorter = harder BUT potentially greater impact

Typeface – adjust typeface/colour/interaction to tell you how to say it & what to say

Quirks – work at it – watch and listen – learn and grow.

REHEARSE!

Get and use feedback – from you own observations & from other people  
Romans 10:13-15

(Miller 2010)

One of the best ways to improve your voice is to: [Read Aloud](#) - [Read Aloud](#) - [Read Aloud](#) 2019-11-26, 4:30 PM

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# FRED MILLER

Speaker | International Coach | Author

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## Practice Tip #1 – Read Aloud!

POSTED ON 05.21.10 | FRED E. MILLER | 20 COMMENTS

<https://nosweatpublicspeaking.com/practice-tip-1-read-aloud/> Page 1 of 22



## Reading Aloud *Will* Improve Your Delivery.

**Practice - Practice - Practice**

We've all heard that mantra, and it's true.

And one of the best ways to improve your voice is to:

**Read Aloud - Read Aloud - Read Aloud**

Hearing yourself as you speak, and listening to a recording of yourself, are two of the quickest to improve your Verbal Delivery.

Areas for improvement are quickly 'heard' and usually easy to correct.

***Pay attention to your:***

- Pronunciation and Enunciation
  - Are words pronounced as they should be with the correct syllables emphasized?
  - Is your diction correct, or are you mumbling?
  - Are you speaking clearly and distinctly?
    - If English is your second language, or if you have a regional accent, don't completely trust your own judgment on this, get the opinion of a trusted adviser.
    - Projection of your voice
      - Will the entire audience be able to hear you clearly?
      - Is the projection consistent, or does your voice sometimes fade?
    - Inflection
      - Do you speak in a boring monotone, or do you correctly put inflection into sentences to paint vivid pictures in the minds of the audience.
    - Cadence
      - Is the pace of your delivery boringly the same, or do you quicken and slow down the pace based on emotion and content?
    - Pauses
      - Do you stop speaking long enough for the audience to digest the words you've just said or enjoy laughing at a humorous statement?

**Pick a variety of material to read.**

- **Read aloud** several news headlines and the stories that follow.
- **Read aloud** magazine articles.
- **Read aloud** children's books.
  - These are among the best to read, since many are written with the intention to be read to kids.
  - If you have a child, or children to practice on, so much the better.

**Read Aloud**, and 'Hear' the improvement!

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Haddon Robinson

(Robinson 2001, 201)

Articulatory agility is a marvelous ability,  
manipulating with dexterity  
the tongue the teeth the lips.

The Skit Guys

(Skit Guys 2019)

In a famous study, psychologist Albert Mehrabian broke it down to a formula. Only seven percent of a speaker's message comes through his words; thirty-eight percent springs from his voice; fifty-five percent comes from his facial expressions.

Haddon Robinson

(Robinson 2001, 203)

*Vocally speaking, preaching is a performance. It demands something different from us. Don't fake it; don't put on another voice. Be yourself, but as with my student, when you're up in front, you may need to be a bigger version of yourself.*

Mary S. Hulst

(Hulst 2016, 145)

## Week Six: Teaching Notes

Week 6

Open in prayer

What is a calling? Do you feel called to do something?

What is preaching? What is teaching? How are they the same? How are they different?

- What would be the difference between teaching about Col 2 and preaching about it?

Preparing yourself to preach or teach scripture.... PRAY! Prepare and PRAY again!

- We partner with the Holy Spirit but we do not do his work!
- We can help/hinder – but God does what only God can do.

Be saturated in the text, your studying and preparatory work...

Be Organized in how you assemble it together

- Does it flow?
- Will it make sense to someone hearing it for the first time?
- What will you use for notes?
  - o Lots of notes? (hard to read with skill)
  - o Limited notes?
  - o No notes?
    - For all 3 –
      - o step 1 – 50% saturation
      - o Step 2 – 40% organization
      - o Step 3 – 10% memorization

The art of public speaking.

BE YOURSELF! – but you may need to be a bigger version of yourself!

- Keep it natural

What we say and how we say it are both important

- 7% words ---- 38% voice ---- 55% facial expressions
- How we stand/act/gesture/speak.... SPEAKS VOLUMES!
  - o African Controversy over my preaching

Practice speaking aloud – 7 different texts/stories – one for each person.

Dress – should not call attention to us

Gestures – match words your using – Remember DISTANCE of the congregation  
= size needed

Eye contact – connects you

Tone – varied/clear – Mood of text could = mood of sermon

- Pitch – punch – pause

Visuals – ppt – video – object lessons

Length – shorter = harder BUT potentially greater impact

Typeface – adjust typeface/colour/interaction to tell you how to say it & what to say

Quirks – work at it – watch and listen – learn and grow.

REHEARSE!

Get and use feedback – from your own observations & from other people.

Romans 10:13-15

Hand out surveys

Close in prayer

**APPENDIX THREE:**

**INTEGRATIVE ONE PAGE PREACHING SHEET**

(Anderson 2019)

**Integrative Preaching Sermon Planning Form**

Preacher  Date  Text

Theme

<p><b>Instruct - Theme</b></p> <p>Second Move</p>	<p><b>Convict - Gospel</b></p> <p>Third Move</p>	<p><b>Inspire - Mission</b></p> <p>Fourth Move</p>
<p><b>Engage - Story</b></p> <p>First Move</p>		

©Kenton C. Anderson, 2015

## APPENDIX FOUR: PARTICIPANT SURVEY QUESTIONS

### Survey Questions:

#### Pre-amble

This survey is to help me, as a researcher gauge the changes that might occur throughout this training process. I ask that you answer as honestly as possible, remembering that this is a self-evaluation and there is no 'wrong answer'. This is not a test, there is no way to pass or fail. These questions will ask about your own feelings and desires. I want to know how you feel and what you think about your experiences related to the questions in this survey.

There will be a follow-up survey at the completion of the training that will be identical to this one. I ask that you include your names so that I can compare the two surveys however, no one will see these responses except me I will keep your answers confidential. In anything published all names/identifying comments will be changed to anonymize the data recorded from these surveys.

Find the survey online here - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFB3WGQ>

Or scan this QR code with your smartphone:



Or fill in with pen below and hand back to Pastor Curtis by Sunday October 20<sup>th</sup>.

Name:

Questions:

1. If you could spend the rest of your life doing or talking about one thing, what would that be?

2. Your life experience has rendered you an expert at something. At what are you an expert?

3. What do you love?

4. What do you hate?

5. What makes you feel alive?

6. What would you consider to be your spiritual gifts?

A Spiritual Gift is a special ability or aptitude that God gives us to accomplish his mission in our world. There can be a single or variety of ways God gifts you.

7. Do you ever feel like God has given you something to share with others?

8. Have you felt like God wants you to teach others?

This could be to individuals or groups, children or adults, Sunday School classes, Bible Studies or preach a sermon.

9. Has anyone ever told you that you should 'share that with others'? If so, what did they say?

10. On a scale of 1 – 10 would you stand up and teach a group.

1 = Never

10 = Easy/no problem

Questions 1-5 are used from an article "6 Questions that help you identify your calling" by Jamie Rohrbaugh – used by permission

<https://www.ibelieve.com/career-calling/6-questions-that-help-you-identify-your-calling.html>

Questions 6-10 were developed by me, Curtis Zoerb – to focus in tighter on the aims of this research.

These will be inputted into survey monkey and handed out in paper form. All paper forms will be added to survey monkey by the researcher for easier analyzation.

## APPENDIX FIVE: SCRIPT FOR INTRODUCTION NIGHT

### **SCRIPT for the introductory meeting night.**

Welcome everyone! I want to thank you for your interest in this training and research project. Tonight will be fairly straight forward. I will tell you about the training, how this fits into my schooling at Tyndale Seminary and invite you to become one of the participants in this research project.

As you know I have been a student at Tyndale over the past two and half years. The courses have been focused on the ministry of preaching and communication. One of the things I have realized through studying my own ministry journey, taking these courses and ministering to our church here, is that I believe that God has given our church exactly who we need for this moment in time.

Right here sitting among us are exactly the people that God needs here for us to do what God is calling our church to accomplish in our church, in our community and around the globe. Thinking about specific ministries of Massey Place Community Church I have come to the following conclusion, I believe that:

Sitting in the pews are people who God has called and gifted to serve the church. I believe there are some who are called to share his word, teaching and preaching. Through this field project these individuals will be identified, equipped and presented with opportunities to preach or teach God's word in their own setting.

I am inviting each of you to join in in a 6 week training course, that will take the first steps in equipping you to understand your own spiritual gifts and calling, while training you to read the Bible for teaching and you will learn one way to prepare that material for sharing it with others. Either through a teaching or preaching opportunity, should you want to share what you have learned.

Here is a breakdown of what you would be committing to do:

- After tonight if you choose to participate you will sign a consent form (which I will explain in a few moments)
- You will then receive the material to complete your Myers Briggs inventory and your Spiritual gift inventory. Those are to be completed by September 27<sup>th</sup> and handed back into my office.
- Our first meeting together will be Tuesday October 8<sup>th</sup>, we will meet each Tuesday from 7 till 9 pm for six weeks. With our last session ending on November 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Following those six sessions I will work one on one with anyone who is interested in sharing with the church some of the things they have prepared in the class. This could be in leading a small group, a devotional for a meeting or sharing in part of a sermon on Sunday morning. This is just a small opportunity to try what we have been learning about.
  - Nobody will be required or forced to share public ally – this will just be an extra opportunity to those who desire to do so, and you don't have to decide this until November.

This is the basic outline to this fall course.

You may be wondering how this fits into my Doctor of ministry program. Let me explain this to you little further. As part of my program we must do a research-based project in the field that we have been studying and it must be applicable and helpful to the ministry setting that we are part of. I shared with you the thesis for this project already:

Sitting in the pews are people who God has called and gifted to serve the church. I believe there are some who are called to share his word, teaching and preaching. Through this field project these individuals will be identified, equipped and presented with opportunities to preach or teach God's word in their own setting.

My research will be to see if this type of training program fits with my proposed believe that there are people here tonight who desire to be used or feel called by God in to step into ministry in this way. In

order to make this training a research project you will, if you choose to participate, you will fill out two surveys, one will be handed out tonight and one following the conclusion of the training. The intent of the survey will be to see if the training has helped you to understand your calling, and if it helped you to feel more confident in this area of ministry. There would also be opportunity for one on one interviews to help me gain clarity about the benefits of the training course. This then becomes research, that benefits our local community.

Now I would like to pause and see if any of you have any questions about anything I have mentioned. Please feel free to ask whatever you are curious about – I want to make it as clear as possible.

Any questions?

Now, I would like to invite you to join me in the project. You need to know that in signing up for this training and research project I will make every effort to keep your surveys, interviews and our discussions confidential. However, because of the small size of our congregation it will be hard to make them anonymous to people from this church who may read the final project. I will change names as necessary, but the final paper will be published as part of my Doctor of Ministry final research project. You would all have opportunity to read this paper if you wish to.

I also want you to know that this is completely voluntary, you can participate if you wish to. Even though there is a published research paper you are not giving up any of your rights, you can withdraw at any point during the training and I will protect your information with password protection on my computer.

Any further questions?

You do not need to decide tonight; you will have one week to think about it and return the consent form. Following the return of that

consent form you will have until September 27<sup>th</sup> to finish the 1<sup>st</sup> project – the survey, personality profile and spiritual gift inventory.

I want to thank you for your time tonight, whether you participated in the project or not, I thank you for giving me your time tonight.

## APPENDIX SIX: CHURCH VISION DOCUMENT

### Ministry Focus for Fall 2021 at Massey Place Community Church

#### Staff:

Lead Pastor: Curtis Zoerb  
Worship Pastor: Karen Kotanko  
Children's Church Director: Vacant (Volunteer)  
Spanish Pastor: Miguel Robles  
Custodian: Jolene Agent  
Intern: Matthew Gartner

#### Our Church:

**Sunday services** will include a multi-voiced approach that will be focused on young families and growing followers of Jesus. We will reach into their lives with relevant and life-giving worship, sermons, music and engaging children's programming.

**Growth opportunities** will include a focus on going deeper. We will start with the basics of faith for those new in Christ and through to deep discipleship, learning how to be disciples and disciplers. This is achieved through ongoing small groups & Bible studies and MPCC Academy classes all with a focus on building Christ centered relationships.

#### Our Homes:

We are committing to increased emphasis on deepening the relationships within our church family. We feel this is an important focus to help build the body of Christ here at Massey Place Community Church. The small groups and Bible studies will provide opportunities for prayer, fellowship, [discipleship](#) and leadership growth.

#### Our Community

Our services, small groups and ministry focus will help us to be the best church we can be to reach young families. We will continue to provide regular fellowship events that will provide a safe environment to invite our friends, children, grandchildren, neighbors and the broader community. We will provide you opportunities for invitation, exploration and salvation as key elements of our ministry focus.

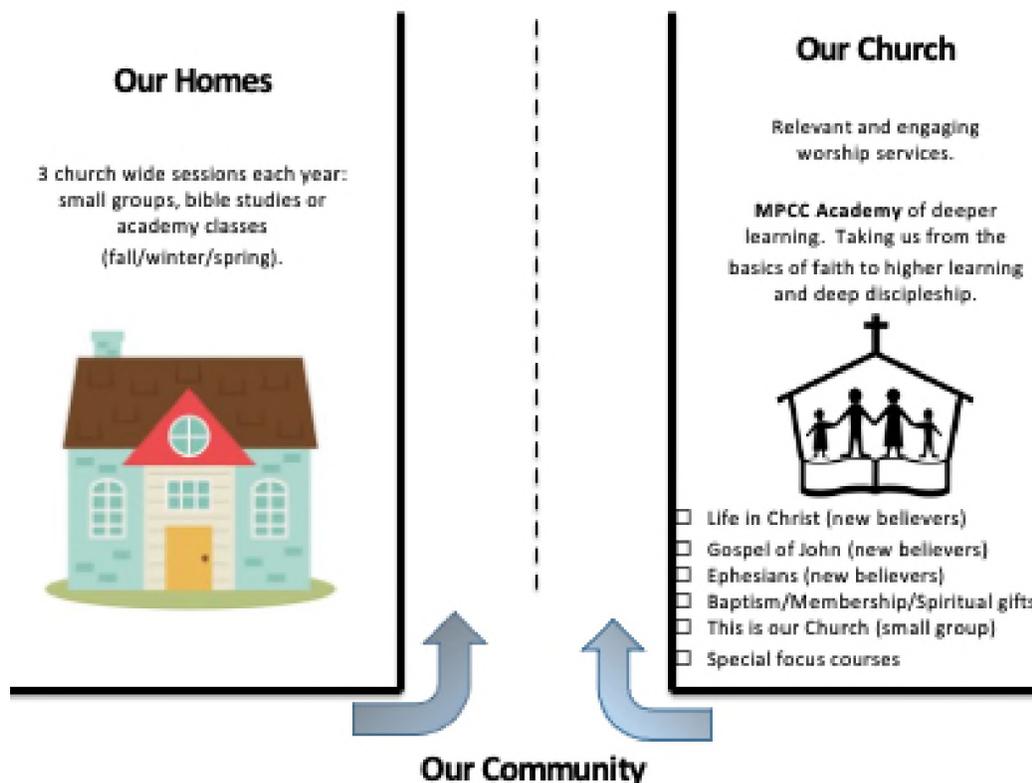
#### We want to fulfill our vision:

We are a church striving to:

Love God, Love People and Make Disciples

**We desire to be a church with a strong gravitational pull – drawing people into its ministry and holding onto them long enough to impact God's Kingdom together.**

# The Journey of Faith at MPCC



----- The people on our street, in our homes and at our workplace are who we want to journey with. We will continue to provide you opportunities for invitation, exploration and salvation.

The roads represent the various ways that people "travel through" our lives and the life of our church. This year we will have an increased focus on getting people to turn off the community road to come check our church and to engage more actively in our homes. We want to build on the discipleship, small groups and Sunday service work we have done with a growing emphasis on how to engage our community (specifically our vision of reaching out to young families, just like your children, grandkids and the neighbors in our community).

**APPENDIX SEVEN: RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL**



**TYNDALE**  
• UNIVERSITY COLLEGE & SEMINARY •

*Certificate of Ethics Review Clearance for  
Research Involving Human Subjects*

Primary Investigator:	Curtis Zoerb
Faculty Supervisor:	Mark Chapman
REB File Number:	201900018
Title of Project:	Preparing God's People to Preach God's Word

**Status of Approval**

- Approved
- Revisions Required
- Denied

Notes:

Chair, Research Ethics Board

Date

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