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Tyndale University

Encouraging Church and Neighbour Engagement in a Subsidized Housing Community in Markham, Ontario through Appreciative Inquiry

A Research Portfolio

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

Tyndale University

by

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Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Kin Village and Trinity Square is the largest subsidized housing community in Markham. Flow Without Bounds Ministries (FWBM) runs programs and builds relationships in the neighbourhood with the vision to see every neighbour at Kin Village and Trinity Square live life to the fullest by knowing and following Jesus Christ. This research project was developed through a process of theological reflection on the personal context, ministry setting, and philosophy of leadership of the executive director of FWBM. It was based in the discipline of Practical Theology and used the method of Appreciative Inquiry. The research project brought together representatives from local area churches and neighbours associated with the FWBM house church. Anecdotally, the researcher noticed a disconnect between these groups when they described their experiences either in the neighbourhood or in churches. The aim was to encourage engagement between these two groups. The participants led by the executive director followed the 4-I Appreciative Inquiry model (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement). The four-week process allowed participants to express their hopes for the neighbourhood and inspire each other with their experience and passion. There was uneasiness with the research process. Yet relationships between church representatives and neighbours developed which led to specific positive initiatives together.

DEDICATION

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us to find satisfaction in all of our toil because it is a gift of God (3:13). This DMin portfolio, which has been both toil and gift, is dedicated to the purposes of God. There is nothing better for me than to know that everything that God does will endure forever (3:14). From that perspective, my words and work are temporary, but my hope is eternal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

According to the Apostle Paul, God gives us life and breath and everything else. God determines the times set for us. It is in him that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:24-28). This means to me that it has been God's gift to be able to go through this DMin journey. It has been God's timing in providing this learning opportunity. So thanks be to God for all that he has provided.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FWBM: Flow Without Bounds Ministries

ESV: English Standard Version. All biblical quotations will be taken from the ESV unless otherwise stated.

MBTI: Myers Briggs Type Inventory

NIV: New International Version

GLOSSARY

Adaptive Leadership: Developed by Ronald Heifetz in 1994 along with colleagues Marty Linsky in 2002 and Alexander Grashow in 2009. Adaptive Leadership is a framework to handle complex challenges in a manner that is contextually relevant, flexible, empowering, and engaging. Adaptive Leadership is "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 14).

Appreciative Inquiry: "The cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system 'life' when the system is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (Cooperrider, Satvros & Whitney 2008, 433).

Invitational Leadership: My definition of Invitational Leadership is modelled after the invitation that Jesus extended in the Gospels. It is inviting people to become disciples of Jesus which encompasses spending time with Jesus, learning from him, recognizing his identity, exercising leadership, finding restoration, reflecting on failure, finding our calling, even to the extent of sharing in his suffering.

Servant Leadership: Proposed by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. "Servant Leadership is an approach focusing on leadership from the point of view of the leader and his or her behaviors … Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse 2016, p.

225). For Greenleaf, leadership develops out of "a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (1970, 7).

Subsidized housing: This term is used by the Regional Municipality of York which owns and manages 2,600 subsidized and market rental housing units, through Housing York Inc. (York Region 2022). The subsidy means that individuals are not paying the full market rate. This is called Rent Geared to Income (RGI), which is typically set at thirty per cent of total household gross income. The term subsidized housing community will be used throughout this paper instead of other possible terms including low-income community or lower socioeconomic status community.

Transformational Leadership: Coined by James Downton in 1973. This leadership style "is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential" (Northouse 2016, 162). Transformational Leadership emphasizes higher ideals and values to build commitment towards a collective cause or vision.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My last day at the church was on the Sunday after Easter in 2022. Six months earlier, after much prayer and deliberation, I had felt the need to resign as the lead minister from a local church in Markham. The elders and I agreed that my last day would be on the Sunday after Easter. In God's sense of timing and perhaps sense of humour, the following day, I began my Doctor of Ministry (DMin) journey. That particular Monday was a scheduled Zoom call with Dr. Mark Chapman, introducing the DMin program at Tyndale Seminary. I am usually not an emotional person, but I was filled with sadness, grief, uncertainty, and worry.

The day after that Zoom call and two days after my last day at the church, I discovered that an assignment was due in less than three weeks. The first assignment was to read three books and write up responses for each. The first book that I read was Henri Nouwen's *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. It was like balm to a wounded heart. It reminded me about the core of Christian ministry. For that assignment, I wrote, "Nouwen provides a compellingly simple and profound message. He speaks of Christian leadership in terms of humility, servanthood, vulnerability, and even powerlessness" (Ma 2022, Reading Responses). The idea of powerlessness in Christian leadership surprised me but brought relief. Nouwen wrote, "the Christian leader of the future is called

to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self" (Nouwen 1993, 33). I was also reminded that the heart of God is one that "forgives, cares, reaches out and wants to heal. In that heart there is no suspicion, no vindictiveness, no resentment, and not a tinge of hatred" (Nouwen 1993, 38). The pages of this book set the tone for my DMin experience. I wanted the style of leadership that Nouwen articulated and Jesus exemplified.

Eight months after my resignation, I began to serve in a new role, as pastor and executive director of Flow Without Bounds Ministries (FWBM). This was a completely different ministry context. Instead of serving in a church, I began to serve in a subsidized housing neighbourhood. The ministry was in flux due to the recent departures of staff and volunteers, along with limitations that arose during the global pandemic. The blank slate nature of this ministry was both refreshing and terrifying to me. It was refreshing to think about the freedom of serving in ministry without the burden of structure and institutional responsibilities. It was also terrifying for the same reason which led to familiar feelings of uncertainty and worry.

As I walked around the neighbourhood and met people, I was touched by their honesty, vulnerability, and openness. People were willing to share about their lives. Even though there were different understandings of faith, many were open to prayer. I had a sense that God was already present in the neighbourhood. I also met people associated with FWBM, Board members and volunteers, who served out of a genuine love for others and shared about the potential of this work. A phrase that came to mind was a ministry of reconciliation. This phrase became

more evident to me as people shared about broken relationships with other neighbours, family members, and God.

In parallel to my beginnings in the neighbourhood, I was thinking about my DMin research project. It was refreshing to think of ways that this project could further the work of ministry in my context. An idea came to mind as I had conversations with people. I talked with neighbours who told me that they had once attended local churches, but had stopped going for various reasons. I talked with church leaders and elders who told me that they had once done ministry and outreach in the neighbourhood, but had stopped doing so for various reasons. This led to the idea of encouraging church and neighbour engagement as the basis for my research project and the direction for my portfolio.

The story of my DMin journey did not begin at my acceptance into the program or the start of my work with FWBM. It began with my formation in faith and ministry. This is the content of Chapter 2, Personal and Ministry Context, which begins with a reflection on how God has shaped my life and ministry through my experiences and character. This is further described with the use of tools, including the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), the CliftonStrengths 34 survey, and a 360^{0} Leadership Assessment. I also analyze my ministry context through the use of community participant observation, demographic analysis, a sociogram, and force field analysis. This provides the foundation for understanding my research portfolio.

In Chapter 3, Philosophy of Christian Leadership, I further refine my understanding of ministry in the area of Christian leadership. This required

personal theological reflection in the form of faith seeking understanding as opposed to simply adopting the philosophies and teachings of others. This process led me to a personal definition of leadership, that Christian leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. The two main themes which undergird this definition are invitation and adaptation. I develop the idea of invitational leadership by looking at how Jesus invited people to follow him. This invitation goes even further to include suffering for Jesus' sake. The theme of adaptation is developed using the work of Ronald A. Heifetz et al.'s *Adaptive Leadership*. I reflect personally and theologically on the six principles of Adaptive Leadership, leading to a greater understanding of my own philosophy of leadership.

In Chapter 4, Ministry Research Project, I present my field research project which brought together representatives from local area churches and neighbours associated with the FWBM house church. We went through a process of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) for the purpose of encouraging engagement between these groups. The findings revealed a level of uneasiness with the research process. However, there was growing relationships by the end of the process, aided by the presence of FWBM volunteers. This resulted in two outcomes: a welcome pamphlet and a meeting called, Neighbours Helping Neighbours.

In Chapter 5, Conclusions, I reflect on lessons learned throughout my DMin journey. I consider the AI process, idea of engagement, and personal implications.

CHAPTER 2: PERSONAL AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

> But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)

Imagine a potter shaping and molding a piece of clay into something useful. This image reoccurs throughout the Bible, namely, in Isaiah chapters 29, 45, 64, Jeremiah 18, and Romans 9. It is a beautiful reminder of how God is working to transform our lives. The difficulty is that we, who are being molded, cannot see from the same perspective as God, who is the potter. The purpose of this personal and ministry context assessment is an attempt to understand how God is shaping and molding my life and ministry. It will analyze my identity as a Christian minister, my ministry context, and the current challenges and opportunities.

Identity as a Christian Minister

Throughout my five and a half decades, I have been convinced that our lives depend solely on God's grace. For it is God who gives us life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:25). It is God who has determined the times set for us and the exact places where we should live (Acts 17:26). It is God who is our dwelling place in all generations (Psalm 90:1). Our lives were in the mind of God before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:16). With this understanding, let me

describe my identity as a Christian minister based on my faith formation; my personality, strengths and weaknesses; and my ministry experiences.

Faith Formation

My life began on February 6, 1968, born as the fifth child, to Christian parents, Alex and Grace, who were both Chinese-Canadian in ethnicity and medical doctors in vocation. Family life was full of activities and fun since my siblings and I were close in age with only six-year difference between oldest and youngest. When I was eleven years old, life took an unexpected turn. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She went through both radiation and chemotherapy, but after two years, succumbed to her illness. It was a devastating time for every family member. It made me realize that life was not simply going to be a series of fun activities, but there would be difficult times as well.

Through that time, faith became increasingly important to me. I was praying for my mother's healing, but I was struggling to understand God's existence, as well as my own. I wanted to believe that my prayers were not simply wishes that stayed in my bedroom. Faith grew as I learned to entrust my hopes into God's loving hands. It became a daily struggle to leave those prayers with God, rather than to provide my own answers.

One example of this kind of faith development involved friendships and the way I related to people. My family upbringing allowed me to excel at sarcasm and criticism. This was part of our normal conversation that I learned as the youngest of five siblings. However, I soon realized that my talent in this area did not lead to strong or lasting friendships; instead, it produced the opposite. I also

personally discovered that my tongue is a restless evil (James 3:6) and that I could not change my ways, but ended up doing what I did not want to do (Romans 7:15). This reached a breaking point when my caustic words caused a classmate to cry. It was strange because I was actually trying to be a friend to her. It made me desperately pray to God for help and deliverance from myself. In time, I discovered that faith made a difference and that God answered prayer. God helped me with my sarcastic nature and the way I related to others. God provided ways forward through challenges and struggles. God was at work shaping my character.

Throughout my teenage years, family relationships seemed more distant with the passing of my mother. As family life grew apart, friendships at church became more important. I found myself enjoying many activities through the church. I became active in helping to organize our high school fellowship, teaching Sunday school, coaching a church softball team, and larger inter-church events. I found these opportunities enjoyable and enlivening.

However, I learned the most about leadership through difficulty and challenges. My first experience of this came in the form of a letter. Someone in our high school fellowship was concerned about the lack of spirituality. It was written out of concern and love, but it was difficult to accept. I took it personally that my leadership was not helping people to grow in faith. It made me reflect on the fellowship's vision and goals, and how I could re-focus my efforts. It made me realize that my perspective needed to be re-examined and reflected upon critically. It helped me understand the importance of purpose, feedback, and collaboration.

I consider one particular event as a defining moment in confirming my call to ministry. I attended a Christian event called "Youth Congress '85" in Washington D.C., when I was seventeen years old. I went by myself to the conference. Most attendees came as part of a youth group. Sitting in an auditorium with thousands of people, I felt oddly alone yet with a sense that God was with me. I was ready to listen to the teaching of many leaders in student ministry. One particular song caught my attention and one particular phrase spoke to me: "…til the glory of God is seen by the world, we will carry the torch for the Lord." It confirmed a desire in my heart that had been growing over the years. Later that evening in the hotel room, I wrote a letter to God, asking God to use me for that purpose, and entrusting my future into God's hands.

Through the end of my high school years, God provided opportunities to speak with some of my classmates on their questions about God, faith and the Bible. There were opportunities to serve at church leading worship and preaching in a Junior High worship service. Everything seemed to be leading in the direction of full-time ministry, causing me to enroll in Ontario Bible College for Pastoral Studies.

My time at Ontario Bible College was a challenge to my faith. I enjoyed the courses but I found unexpected difficulties. I discovered a degree of spiritual immaturity in myself, as studying the Bible became more about assignments and grades, rather than spiritual growth. As well, my idealism about Christian community met the reality of the student culture of the time. Living in residence at the college revealed wonderful Christian character, as well as human frailty and

weakness. I felt enclosed in this environment and needed a change. This led me to apply to the University of Waterloo where I was accepted into the Systems Design Engineering program.

For the next five years, I enjoyed the challenge of learning. The program included four-month work terms, bringing me into computer and engineering businesses, and interacting with technical people. A few Christians in my class and I organized a Bible study where we invited classmates for discussions on religion and the Bible. I began serving in the campus fellowship, organizing evangelistic events and leading Bible studies. It was an interesting experience to meet people from many different cultures. I was blessed to begin dating a lovely girl, Mora, with a dedicated faith, who eventually would become my wife. We began a partnership together as a family, as well as a partnership to continue serving God.

My desire to serve in full-time ministry was renewed after graduating from engineering. My goal was to help people to grow in faith by exercising leadership, communication and servanthood. I enrolled in Ontario Theological Studies and soon transferred to Knox College to become a Presbyterian minister. Studies at both institutions shaped my understanding of ministry and gave tools and practical instruction for the work of ministry.

Personality, Strengths and Weaknesses

My identity as a Christian minister has been shaped through my personality, strengths and weaknesses. I acknowledge that there are limits to understanding myself. But I make the words of Psalm 19 my prayer, "But who

can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:12-14 NIV). With this prayer in mind, I further explored how God has shaped my personality, strengths and weaknesses with particular focus on the results from the MBTI, the CliftonStrengths 34 survey, and a 360º Leadership Assessment.

Based on a recent MBTI survey, my personality type is INTP, which means that I have a natural preference for Introversion, Intuition, Thinking and Perceiving. The areas of Intuition and Perceiving are considered to be strong preferences, while the areas of Introversion and Thinking are moderate. Reflecting on these results, I can see that they align with my understanding of my personality. For the first personality trait, introversion is a definite preference as I gain energy from peace and quiet. But I have learned extroverted tendencies because if I am to care for people pastorally, I must reach out to them. This moderates my introversion. For the second trait, intuition is a strong preference as I live in the world of ideas and thoughts. I often want to find deeper meaning in things. At a recent personal retreat, I forgot to go to dinner because I was enjoying my time reading a book. The third trait, thinking, is a strong preference but it is moderated because I am learning to become more feeling. My personality at times can be relatively cold and calculating. My goal is to become more loving rather than more analytic as I believe this to be the call of Christ. For the fourth trait, perceiving is the highest rated preference on the probability scale. I love to think

about possibilities. I work well under pressure. I prefer flexibility over a fixed schedule. As a whole, the four character traits of INTP provide a good description of my personality.

The MBTI has also revealed areas of weakness. When it comes to communication, I can be quiet and detached (MBTI 2022, 9). I need to work on sharing my thoughts and expressing warmth towards others. When it comes to conflict resolution, I can come across as being impatient and dismissive (MBTI 2022, 10). However, relationships are not always about being right or dismantling illogical reasoning; they are also about empathy, compassion and forgiveness. When it comes to dealing with change, my tendency towards flexibility and openness will not always be shared with others (MBTI 2022, 11). It is important to respect personality differences by being as organized and prepared as possible. These are important learnings for future leadership. The MBTI has helped to affirm my understanding of self as well provide a warning against potential personality differences and conflicts.

The CliftonStrengths 34 survey results confirm my MBTI personality type, while providing further clarity. My top five strengths are Strategic, Ideation, Adaptability, Includer and Maximizer. Both Strategic and Ideation strengths fall into the broader category of Strategic Thinking. This aligns with the preferences of Intuition and Thinking for the MBTI. In this regard, I enjoy logical reasoning and the world of ideas. I am good at analysis and synthesis. For the third and fourth strengths, Adaptability and Includer are part of the broader category of Relationship Building. The Adaptability strength is understandable because it

aligns with the preference of Perceiving for the MBTI. The Includer strength is learned from my theological understanding of the Body of Christ as well as from prior failures of lacking empathy. This strength has grown through experience. Finally, the Maximizer strength aligns with the preferences of Thinking and Perceiving for the MBTI. I enjoy optimizing and improving. This also means that I can find myself bored with routine and ordinary things.

The CliftonStrengths 34 survey uncovered a weakness in the area of Executing (CliftonStrengths 2022, 21). Of the bottom five strengths, four of them can be placed in the broader category of Executing. Consistency, Restorative, Deliberative and Discipline are part of this weakness which points to less ability to turn ideas into reality. When I discovered this from the survey, my first reaction was one of defensiveness. However, upon reflection, I can see that there were initiatives that I started with the best intentions, that did not finish as well as I had hoped. It was a new insight for me that Executing was a weakness according to the Clifton Strengths 34 survey.

Finally, a 360º Leadership Assessment provided feedback from people who have experienced my leadership directly. This group of ten respondents included three managers, three peers and three direct reports, as well as myself. As a whole, I found this exercise to be highly informative because of the categories of respondents as well as the written feedback. I also felt the most vulnerable.

The broad categories of the leadership assessment were positive among all respondents. When compared to my self-assessment, I rated myself lower in all

cases. But the differences were small with Emotional-Social Responses being the closest match and Spiritual Practices being the largest. The difference in how I rate my Spiritual Practice compared to how others rate my Spiritual Practice can be attributed to the preaching or teaching office that I held. People generally appreciated this aspect of my ministry.

The leadership assessment allowed for written feedback, both positive and negative. On the positive side, were the following descriptions: strong faith, godly, spiritual, willingness to listen, compassionate, caring, calm, encouraging, humble, punctual, decisive, servant, perceptive, and creative (360 Feedback 2022). There were also negative descriptions including: dismissive, avoiding conflict, and taking on too much. I appreciate both the positive and negative feedback. The positive reminds me of the goal to become like Jesus in character and action, which is the idea of discipleship. Paul states this goal in Philippians 1:6, "…being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." The negative reminds me that I am human and my weaknesses are clearer to others than they are to myself at times. Again, Paul writes in Romans 12:3, "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" (NIV).

While reflecting on the results of the MBTI, the CliftonStrengths 34 survey, and a 360^0 Leadership Assessment, I am thankful for the ways that God has created and strengthened me. I have also been made aware of weaknesses and

tendencies that could derail my leadership. In my current role as executive director of FWBM, I find myself serving out of my strengths and running into my weaknesses. I love the idea of God being already present in the neighbourhood. My role is to reflect theologically and invite others to do the same. I think about how neighbours can connect to local area churches and vice versa. I think about how God is calling each of us to be his disciples. But I recognize my inability to communicate well at times. I may have lots of ideas about what should be but my ability to follow through can be lacking. Even still, God works through imperfect people, including myself. This leads me back to the truth that my life depends solely on the grace of God. I believe this to be true in my identity as a Christian minister, as well as, in my service to God.

Ministry Experiences and Values

My ministry experiences are centred around two churches and one Christian non-profit organization: a new Presbyterian church plant in Toronto, an established Presbyterian church in Markham, and Flow Without Bounds Ministries.

Near the end of my seminary studies, my home church minister, Rev. Dr. Tom Eng of Chinese Presbyterian Church, Toronto, asked me to help start a new ministry in the north end of the city. With approval from the Session, a church was planted. I was ordained to the position of minister for a new Presbyterian church plant in Toronto and began working with a small group of church members willing to be part of this endeavour.

There are challenges with a new church plant and being new in ministry. Some challenges are strategic (figuring out a style of ministry that is able to reach people); some are logistical (requiring transportation of equipment, setup and cleanup); and some are personal (learning to be spiritually healthy while providing leadership for the church). However, the difficulty for me was relational. With many people seeing me grow up as part of my home church along with the presence of my brother and sisters and their families, it presented a unique problem for me. I found myself enjoying the relationships, but being unable to inspire people to a greater vision. This took time to realize. After serving for twelve years, I became convinced that it was time for another minister to lead the congregation. I put my name forward towards another ministry situation. In 2008, I resigned my position at the church to start at an established Presbyterian church in Markham.

Serving as the lead minister in an established congregation was also a challenge. There was greater structure, more meetings, complicated relationships, and the need to work well with the current leadership. The transition was cross-cultural, going from a predominantly Asian congregation to a Scottish-Irish one; and going from an informal evangelical church to a mainline traditional one. There were two main learnings through the early years of serving in this charge.

The first learning was about being versus doing. I felt a need to get involved, meet people, and prove myself to others. Being younger than many in leadership and also a visible minority, I subconsciously wondered about my own place in ministry. Additionally, some did not accept my leadership and tried to

exert their own authority. There were times when I felt the need to defend myself as a few people would make comments suggesting that I did not understand or had not been serving long enough. One or two people in leadership, dealing with their own issues, spoke in opposition of me both privately and publicly. However, knowing that God was leading and guiding me, helped me to focus on being versus doing. The first call on my life is to belong to God, to be a servant of Christ and a child of God. This gave me confidence to focus on God's calling and to move forward in faith in a firm but gracious manner.

The second learning was about faith versus sight. There was a sense of functional atheism in many groups and committees. Serving in the church was less about a partnership with God and more about managing an organization. There were strong personalities who were able to influence others in what they considered to be the best way forward. However, for this group of leaders, there was also a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction when there was conflict or a lack of their own definition of success. As a representative and servant of God, I had the opportunity to pray for God's help, point to God's provision, and encourage decisions in partnership with God. One of my goals was to bring the presence of God into all of the meetings that I chaired or attended. I was not always successful in this focus, but it helped me navigate difficult decisions with our leadership.

My life has been a continual journey of learning and re-learning lessons of faith. There are times when I think that I have matured, only to find out that I

have failed to depend on God or live by faith. I see this as the challenge of faith. It will always be difficult because I am frail, faulty, and proud at times. I am human.

In 2021, the Presbyterian Church in Canada changed their doctrine and policy to allow for gay and lesbian marriage as well as the ordination of practicing gay and lesbian people. This allowance was given in the form of liberty of conscience for congregations, sessions, presbyteries, elders and ministers. My church Session wrestled with this issue, feeling the pressure on both sides of the debate. My conviction, based on my understanding of scripture, did not allow me to support these changes in doctrine. However, the church leadership decided to support the changes, but stated publicly that it would not do so immediately, because of the conscience of the lead minister. This left me in a difficult position as many supported me, but some on both sides were vocally unhappy. As a result, I felt it was the right time to resign from my position in the church. The Session asked that I stay on for a lengthy transition period of six months. I considered it a friendly transition as my goal was to be the presence of Christ in a difficult situation.

The transition time was sometimes difficult and awkward. My prayer during times of uncertainty and anxiety was simply, "Lord, have mercy. God, please help me." Through that time, I believe that God provided in many ways. God gave me grace to treat people well. God gave me peace that the future was in his hands. God gave me the reassurance that whatever I was going through, was helping me identify with the sufferings of Christ.

Certainly, there is no comparison with all that Christ went through, but suffering with Christ is to be with Christ. The theology of the cross, *theologia crucis*, became an important theme during this time of transition. I took comfort from the lack of defense that Jesus offered, his submission to his Father's will, and his willingness to suffer. It made me want to go through the ending of my ministry at the church in a similar manner. I struggled with the concept of washing the feet of those who I felt were against me. I was torn over wanting the best for others, instead of wanting the best for myself. The transition time itself was another challenge of faith.

After twenty-six years of pastoral ministry, I found myself unemployed and wondering about my future work. When asked, I told people that I was praying for a place of greater evangelism, wanting to spend my time and energy to help people come to greater faith in Christ. I enrolled in Tyndale University's Doctor of Ministry program and was particularly inspired by one of my first readings, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, by Henri Nouwen. Nouwen spoke about Christian leadership in terms of humility, servanthood, vulnerability and even powerlessness. This reflected his own transition in moving from Harvard University to L'Arche Daybreak in Richmond Hill, Ontario (Nouwen 1989, 15).

Five months after leaving my last pastoral charge, I was informed of an opportunity to serve in a subsidized housing community near where I lived. A Christian non-profit organization, called Flow Without Bounds Ministries, was looking for a new executive director. I was intrigued and excited at the possibility

of working in the neighbourhood and reaching out to people. After prayer and family discussion, I went through the interview process. By God's grace, I was hired as the executive director at FWBM starting in January 2023. This became my ministry context.

Ministry Context

> So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom … Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands! (Psalm 90:12, 17)

Prior to becoming the executive director of FWBM, I participated in FWBM events as a volunteer. It was wonderful to meet a group of dedicated Christians who were involved mainly in two areas: mentoring youth and a compassion ministry to neighbours in need. It was also equally wonderful to meet some of the people of the neighbourhood in Kin Village and Trinity Square. Since then, I have been continuing the process of meeting people and reflecting on my ministry context. I will now describe the context of Kin Village and Trinity Square and the world of FWBM.

Kin Village and Trinity Square

Kin Village and Trinity Square are located in Markham, Ontario, north of 16th Avenue between Woodbine Avenue and Rodick Road. The community is comprised of 287 households with 187 belonging to Kin Village and 100 to Trinity Square. Most units are two or three-bedroom townhomes with subsidized rent geared to income. Some units are available as market rent housing. Both Kin Village and Trinity Square are managed by a non-profit housing corporation and

are on the subsidized housing list for York Region. To gain a better understanding of this neighbourhood, I have engaged in community participant observation and demographic analysis.

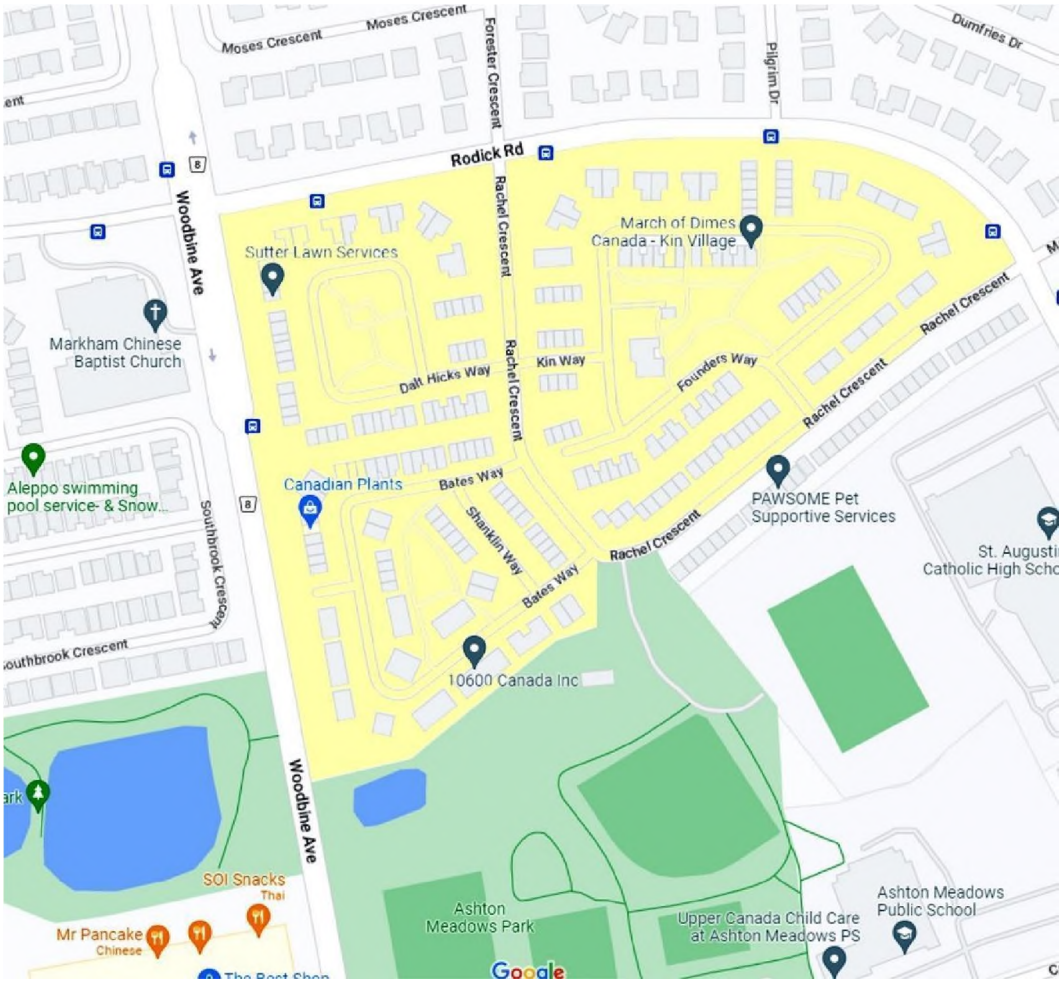


Figure 1: Map of Kin Village and Trinity Square (Google Maps 2022)

Community Participant Observation

I welcomed the opportunity to deepen my understanding of the neighbourhood. Community life is not simple and homogenous. There are layers and complexities to consider.

Observation

On an overcast weekday morning in January, I spent time observing the Kin Village and Trinity Square community by both driving and walking through it. At that time of day, there were few people walking around. Those who go to work or school would be well on their way. However, I had the opportunity to observe the physical characteristics of the neighbourhood itself.

From a cursory glance or from the main road (Woodbine Ave.), the homes in the neighbourhood appeared to fit in with the larger community. The structures are town and row houses with a consistency of style that suggests architecture from the 1980's. They are made of brick with partial aluminum siding and asphalt shingles. The structures have clean square lines with gable roofs. However, upon closer inspection, there were multiple apartment units contained within each building structure.

The neighbourhood is designed around three main blocks, two smaller and one larger. The smaller blocks contain a parkette (one with a playground). The larger block contain a community centre building along with a parkette and playground.

While walking through the neighbourhood, I observed stark differences. There were vehicles parked in the front of half of the apartment units. Some were luxury vehicles including brands such as Lexus and Range Rover. Some were wheelchair accessible vans. Some were cars that were dilapidated and decrepit. The front entrances revealed more differences with fewer that could be described as well-kept. Many front entrances were the place to store garbage and compost bins. Some were crowded with household items including bikes, barbecues and

furniture. Still others were cluttered with broken and rusty items that no longer look useful.

Interpretation

Since Kin Village and Trinity Square is a subsidized housing community, the reason why most people are living there is because of a lack of income or financial resources. However, there are other reasons as well. First, the presence of wheelchair accessible vans indicates people with assisted living needs. There are modified and accessible apartments with required services supported by the Ontario March of Dimes. Second, the presence of luxury vehicles indicates that some have greater financial resources. There are non-subsidized renters paying market price for rent. This allows for a greater mix of people of different socio-economic backgrounds. Third, poverty in this community is different from poverty in other areas. As a whole, this community does not suffer from extreme food insecurity or homelessness. There may be some cases, but these difficulties are being addressed by neighbours and social services.

The presence of dilapidated and decrepit vehicles, along with broken and rusty items at front entrances, indicate an inability to move forward in life. The feeling of being unable to control personal circumstances is more prevalent than in just these homes with physical signs. While visiting with neighbours, I often hear of feelings of isolation, broken relationships and obstacles that people face. In the book, *Walking with the Poor*, Bryant Myers provides a definition of poverty: "The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational and that its cause is fundamentally spiritual" (2011, 30). In this sense, the physical signs of brokenness in the community point to relational and spiritual disconnection. It

would not be an exact one-to-one correspondence but one of the indicators of such. For example, one neighbour told me about the feeling of shame for having a garage full of garbage. Another neighbour had built up a large amount of used cat litter. In both instances, FWBM was able to be present with the neighbours and work with them in finding a solution.

Demographic Analysis

Based on demographic information from Statistics Canada, there were substantial differences between Kin Village and the surrounding area. These included differences in the areas of economic status, family makeup, age range, visible minority population, immigration status, and employment.

Interestingly, Kin Village and Trinity Square are situated near much larger detached homes with three car garages. This highlights the difference in economic status. The average total income of households in 2020 for Kin Village was $75,000. However, one block away, in a different dissemination area, the average total income of households in 2020 was $139,000. Additionally, 39% of households in Kin Village reported a total income of less than $50,000. This was contrasted by all of Markham where 20% of households reported a total income of less than $50,000 (Statistics Canada 2021). For greater clarity on these differences, I have not included the statistical data for the dissemination area for Trinity Square because it also includes the luxury homes on Thackeray Court.

For family makeup in Kin Village, 35% were two parent families while the remainder, 65%, were single parent families in 2021. This was opposite as compared to the entire city of Markham where 85% of family households were

two parent families while the remainder, 15%, were single parent families in 2021 (Statistics Canada 2021).

In terms of the distribution of ages in Kin Village, 21% were 0 to 14 years, 67% were 15 to 64 years, 11% were 65 to 84 years, and 1% were 85 years and older. This was compared to all of Markham where 16% were 0 to 14 years, 66% were 15 to 64 years, 18% were 65 to 84 years, and 2% were 85 years and older. The median age for Kin Village was 33.6 years old compared to 42.4 years old for all of Markham (Statistics Canada 2021). Kin Village was skewed toward the younger ages.

In terms of visible minorities and immigration, 68% in Kin Village identified as a visible minority compared to 82% for all of Markham. The largest visible minority groups in Kin Village were Black (25%), Chinese (9%), Korean (9%) and South Asian (7%). This differed from all of Markham where the largest visible minority groups were Chinese (48%), South Asian (18%) and Black (3%) (Statistics Canada 2021).

For Canadian citizenship, 92% of residents in Kin Village were Canadian citizens, with 39% as immigrants and 61% as non-immigrants (Statistics Canada 2021). In all of Markham, 85% of residents were Canadian citizens with 59% as immigrants and 38% as non-immigrants.

Finally, the labour force status of the people in Kin Village include 49% employed, 16% unemployed and 43% non-participating. This was similar to all of Markham at 52% employed, 14% unemployed and 40% non-participating (Statistics Canada 2021).

From a demographics analysis and based on percentages, the people in Kin Village and, by extension, Trinity Square, had much less household income and more single parent families; were younger in age; contained less visible minorities; had more Canadian citizens and non-immigrants; and similar employment levels compared to the entire city of Markham. This is the neighbourhood in which FWBM operates.

Flow Without Bounds Ministries

In order to fill out this ministry context analysis, I examine FWBM as an organization. This includes FWBM's history, vision and mission, programs and values.

History, Vision and Mission

FWBM began in 2010 with a vision by the founding pastor, Rev. Louis Leung, to reach communities by planting house churches. Leung came to the realization that many of the Canadian population were not willing to step into a formal church building. He had been working on a social house project at a local church and felt compelled to reach out to the Kin Village and Trinity Square area, a subsidized housing community in Markham, Ontario. His goal was to meet the needs of the people living in that area, physically, financially, emotionally and most importantly, spiritually. The vision and mission of FWBM is as follows, "Our vision is to see every neighbour at Kin Village and Trinity Square live life to the fullest by knowing and following Jesus Christ. Our mission is to build genuine relationships with the neighbours at Kin Village and Trinity Square to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them" (FWBM 2022).

FWBM received donations from local area churches, Christian foundations, and private donors, allowing the creation of FWBM as a non-profit organization associated with the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec.

Programs

In line with this vision and mission statement are the activities of FWBM. There were four current programs: Stream Mentoring, Mercy Rain, Christmas Hampers, and Community Events.

Stream Mentoring invites parents to sign up their child between the ages of eight to sixteen years old for a mentoring relationship with a mature Christian adult on a bi-weekly basis. This is accomplished by canvassing the neighbourhood annually promoting Stream Mentoring as a Christian big brothers and big sisters program. Additionally, local churches are asked to provide names of people who could potentially serve as mentors. Care is taken to support mentors, mentees and provide a safe environment with a focus on spiritual conversations. Mentors are asked to commit to the program for at least two years in order for continuity in the mentoring relationship. Additionally, each mentor undergoes initial training, vulnerable sector screening, and monthly meetings with a mentor coach. During the actual mentoring meeting, each mentor and mentee are paired with another mentor and mentee, in order to reduce the risk of abuse.

Mercy Rain is a compassion ministry, which includes assistance where needed, as well as prayer and Bible study. The work is supported by donations from local churches including both finances and volunteers. Community needs are brought to the attention of the executive director and FWBM volunteers by neighbours, as a result of trust relationships. Volunteers are involved in helping

people move, buying groceries, and meeting the basic physical needs of people with disabilities. Some residents were placed in Kin Village by March of Dimes Canada, which promoted affordable housing for people with physical disabilities. The spiritual aspect of Mercy Rain happens with some of the same people who are being helped upon their request (including prayer and Bible study).

Christmas Hampers are given in mid-December to households in need. This is a collaborative project with FWBM volunteers and three local churches of various denominations: Baptist, Alliance, and Catholic. Donations are received by the churches. Lists of people receiving hampers are cross-referenced between churches to eliminate duplicate giving. FWBM spends time visiting people in Kin Village and Trinity Square in order to determine needs. I have personally delivered hampers as a practical way of building relationships.

Prior to the global pandemic, there were a good number of community events held throughout the year by FWBM, including barbecues, workshops, Christmas and Easter services, and community cleanups. However, this was reduced significantly during and after the pandemic, as the administration, who managed the common areas of the community, had been less receptive to the holding of events. It was unclear if this was an ongoing policy for FWBM or if it was purely pandemic related.

Values

FWBM Ministry values were not explicitly stated in any documentation. However, based on the history of this ministry and my experience as a volunteer, I put together my understanding of FWBM's corporate values.

The Value of Mission Outside of Church Walls

FWBM was an effort by the founding pastor, Rev. Louis Leung, to reach beyond church walls. His statistic of 80% of the Canadian population not willing to step into a formal church building provided justification for starting house churches. This idea aligned with the theological concept of the missionary nature of God and Christians being sent out for missional living. Jesus told his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). We are called to bring the presence of Christ into our communities.

The Value of Seeing the Image of God in Others

At a FWBM retreat for volunteers in 2021, the scripture passage (Genesis 1:26-2:3) reminded participants to recognize the image and likeness of God in all people. Even though people may be different from one another culturally, economically, educationally, religiously, and even morally, we all have a sacredness to us because of how we are created. While one can debate the precise definition of what it means to be created in the image of God, the larger truth is that there is inherent and God-given value in all people.

The Value of Compassion

One of the key characteristics of God is compassion. "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15). As followers of Christ and imitators of God, we, who have received compassion ourselves, have a call on our lives to show compassion to others. As Rupen Das concludes in the book, *Compassion and the Mission of God*, "To be compassionate in the midst of a culture which robs people of life is what it means to be the people of God in the world that we live in. Such

a life reflects the very nature and character of the God we worship" (Das 2016, 202).

The Value of Authentic Relationships

For FWBM, genuine and authentic relationships were particularly important. Since ministry was held inside homes, an invitation was required by Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbours for FWBM staff and volunteers to be present in their personal spaces. Any suggestion of abuse, exploitation or insincerity would have put the entire ministry at risk. Most importantly, genuine relationships are our gospel mandate, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

The Value of Discipleship

Jesus' commission to his disciples before he left them was to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). The call on our lives is not simply to elicit prayers of conversion from others, but to help others become wholly devoted disciples of Jesus. One of the phrases that was used in FWBM was to "enter life renewal together" (FWBM 2022).

The Value of Healthy Ministry Coming from a Healthy Spiritual Identity

At a FWBM retreat for volunteers in 2021, a two-hour quiet time with the Lord was scheduled, allowing participants to go off on their own for personal

prayer and scripture reading. The debriefing period that followed allowed reflection and sharing. It proved to be a valuable time of spiritual encouragement. Some shared about their struggle to stay focused for two hours. Others shared about their spiritual journey. Still others shared scriptures that they found meaningful and important. The entire retreat was an encouragement to have a healthy spiritual identity leading to a healthy ministry.

The Value of Resident-Led Initiatives

Some volunteers at FWBM reported the difficulty of meeting consistently for a Bible study with neighbours. It reached the point where volunteers had to go to peoples' doors to remind them that the Bible study was starting. As a result, sometimes the study would start an hour later than scheduled. The lesson learned was on the importance of resident-led initiatives in order to strengthen engagement. Resident-led initiatives also build leadership in the community, allowing neighbours to grow in their calling.

These seven values outlined above are my reflections on the values of FWBM. Based on my personal and ministry context, I find that these values build healthy and sustainable relationships. They are healthy because they are based on God's love for the world and the way that God relates to us. They are sustainable because they seek to partner with God in his work and mission in the world.

Challenges and Opportunities

> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

In the book, *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert define poverty as a series of broken relationships with self, community, creation, and God. This is described as "…a Poverty of Being, a Poverty of Community, a Poverty of Stewardship, and a Poverty of Spiritual Intimacy" (Corbett & Fikkert 2014, 181). As I have interacted with people and heard their stories, I can see this definition of poverty in the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood. It is also present in all of our lives and in the volunteers of FWBM. This has led to specific challenges and opportunities in the restoration of broken relationships which eventually would lead to the development of a field research project.

Building Community Engagement

It is important to do ministry with people rather than for people. This lesson was learned from the experience of the volunteers of FWBM in Kin Village and Trinity Square. An engaged group of participants will be more active and committed rather than passive and indifferent. In the journal article, "Changing the World without Doing Harm," Mark Chapman described the importance of engaged participants for insider student researchers. He outlined Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where social change or liberation is accomplished through dialogue rather than passive learning (Chapman 2019, 105). This principle finds parallels in the idea of lay ministry. It is echoed in the theology of Reformer Martin Luther with the priesthood of all believers (*presbyterii fidelium*) which finds its roots in the biblical teaching of 1 Peter 2:4-5 and 1 Peter 2:9. Good ministry that is sustainable builds community engagement. This is one of the challenges for FWBM.

Bridging Barriers

I have had conversations with a thoughtful and well-spoken neighbour who is quadriplegic and in a wheelchair. He was frustrated by language barriers with personal support workers. He also expressed frustration with being viewed only for his disability or wheelchair; these related to cultural barriers and stigmas around disabilities. This provided the opportunity to work on bridging these barriers with the goal of relationship wholeness with God, self, others and creation.

Strengthening Organizational Relationships

The pandemic reduced activity and relationships among organizations associated with Kin Village and Trinity Square. There had been less willingness from the administration of Kin Village and Trinity Square for FWBM to use common facilities. There was less communication with churches in the area. The hope for this field research project was to promote greater understanding and cooperation among neighbours, administration, volunteers and churches and to find common ground for joint projects and programs.

A Focus on Building a Resident-Led Christian Presence

Through conversation, I came to realize that there is a greater depth of brokenness in our relationships, both with neighbours in Kin Village and Trinity Square as well as with FWBM volunteers, Some neighbours were having relationship struggles within their own families. Some neighbours were uncomfortable with the personality of other neighbours. Some neighbours who used to attend house church on Sunday afternoons had stopped coming because of conflict.

Even among FWBM volunteers there had been uncertainty due to changes in the leadership. For a period of four years, between 2019 and 2023, a number of staff had either resigned or not had their contracts renewed. Some left under less-than-ideal circumstances. This caused some volunteers and donors to stop their association and partnership with FWBM.

When I first started to meet with some of the neighbours in Kin Village and Trinity Square, I discovered that Rev. Louis Leung, better known as Pastor Lou to the neighbours, was active in the area. Even though I had never met Pastor Lou before, it was like meeting him through my discussions with the neighbours. Pastor Lou had built up strong relationships over the years and continued to reach out. This can be seen in the sociogram titled, "Sociogram of Ministry Context." Note that this does not include the mentoring relationships with youth as they were independent of this set of relationships. It was also a subjective analysis rather than a comprehensive inventory of the breadth and depth of relationships among the people associated with FWBM, Kin Village and Trinity Square.

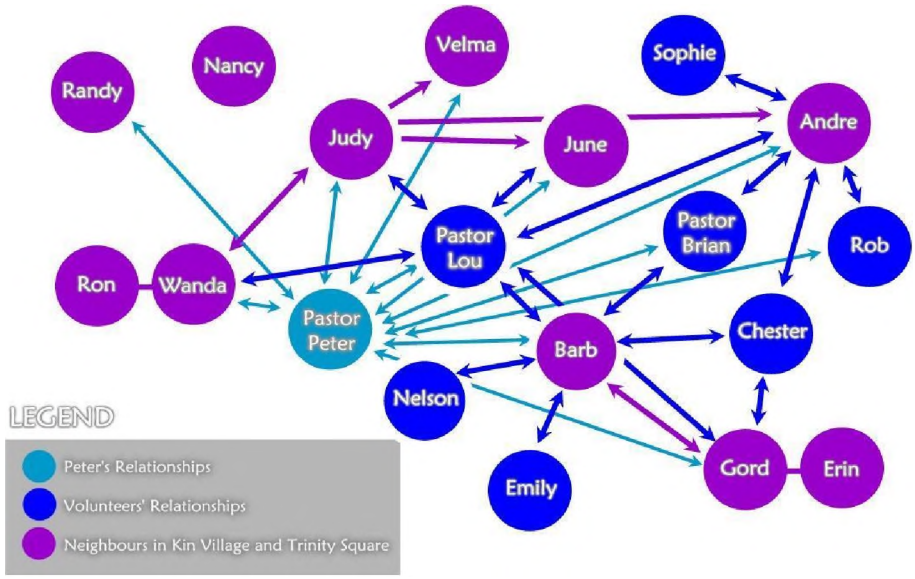


Figure 2: Sociogram of Ministry Context

Additionally, I was told by volunteers with FWBM who were in communication with Pastor Lou, that he was starting up a house church worship service again in Kin Village, something that was a core part of FWBM in the past. As a result, I reached out to Pastor Lou and began to have discussions to see if we could work together. I also discussed this possibility with the board members of FWBM.

On January 29, 2023, I began to work with Pastor Lou on starting up house church worship services on Sunday afternoons. This aligns with the values of FWBM in many ways. It is a mission outside of church walls. Through worshipping together, we bring scripture into our lives and highlight the importance of compassion, authentic relationships, discipleship and healthy ministry. However, it is not currently a fully resident-led initiative. Rather, it is organized by both Pastor Lou and myself. This includes elements of a traditional clergy-laity relationship where the clergy are the professional agents and the laypeople are the receivers of ministry. A resident-led Christian presence recognizes the priesthood of all believers where laypeople minister to one another and to the surrounding community. This aligns with the value of discipleship where those who have received ministry, become ministers themselves. A resident-led Christian presence does not mean the absence of outside help or partnership. But it is the neighbours or residents who are engaged and active in leading ministry in the neighbourhood, with support from local area churches and FWBM volunteers. This ideal along with my reflection on the values of FWBM

formed the basis of the field research project. But the following force-field diagram highlights the different factors that strengthens and weakens this goal.

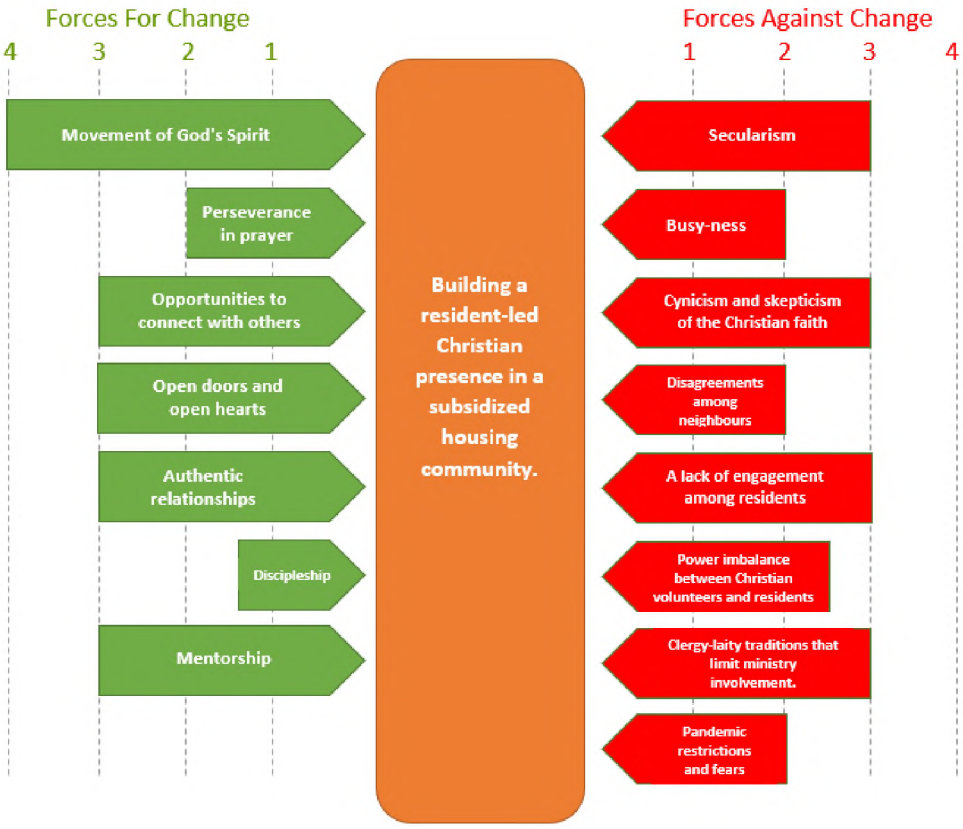


Figure 3: Force Field Diagram of Ministry Context

In order to analyze the context of Kin Village and Trinity Square further, I offer the following forces for change and forces against change.

Forces For Change

I have identified seven forces for change that strengthen the goal of a resident-led Christian presence in a subsidized housing community.

Movement of God's Spirit

This force is unmeasurable but crucial. We need the Spirit to be active and working in our ministry, but the work of the Spirit cannot be controlled (John

3:8). However, we can seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). We can desire the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31) and the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We can walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). In order to increase the work of the Spirit in our lives, it requires simple acts of faith where we grow in our dependence on the Holy Spirit. The importance of the Spirit was emphasized in our meetings through regular devotionals and prayer.

Perseverance in Prayer

Prayer brings us to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). However, it is difficult to persevere in prayer. We hoped to inspire one another to pray and celebrate answered prayers. FWBM held bi-monthly prayer meetings called "Prayer Summits." We saw this as an opportunity to go up to the mountain of the Lord (Isaiah 2:3).

Opportunities to connect with others

In order to build a Christian presence, we first need to be a Christian presence. This requires opportunities to connect. With our volunteers, we encourage regular visits to the community with simple acts of kindness and outreach. For example, a FWBM volunteer grocery shops for two households who are not able to shop for themselves. We are working on ways to increase these opportunities with the focus on building long term relationships.

Open doors and open hearts

The people that I met in this subsidized community have all been welcoming. The nature of FWBM depends on this quality in people, since we are visiting in their homes. In order to increase this force, we need to find connectors in the community and build relationships of trust.

Authentic relationships

This is a strength of FWBM. Many of the volunteers have good and authentic relationships with the neighbours. It is important to learn from those who have developed these relationships in order to inspire others. The training process and regular organizational meetings for volunteers emphasizes this value.

Discipleship

This was a weakness of FWBM that needed to be strengthened. Our mentoring program is accomplishing this goal through regular spiritual conversations with youth. Also, there are occasions to hold Bible studies with neighbours. However, the goal of discipleship could be lost when we focus on immediate needs and circumstances. There needs to be a greater emphasis on discipleship along with the right tools and materials that work for the people.

Mentorship

There is a mentoring program for youth ages eight to sixteen years old. Previously it was well organized and supported. However, there was a lack of mentors who would commit to developing long-term relationships. The hope is to engage with churches in the area in order to find and inspire more mentors.

Forces Against Change

I have identified eight forces against change that weaken the goal of a resident-led Christian presence in a subsidized housing community.

Secularism

It was becoming generally less acceptable to be overtly Christian in society (EKOS Politics 2025). This is a larger movement within the Canadian context. However, we can be a force for good if there is healing and restoration in

people's lives and their relationships. We hope to transcend this trend by living a life of compassion and humble service as Jesus did.

Busy-ness

With both volunteers and neighbours, life can be busy. For some, it will require a different season in their lives in order to be open to spiritual growth. However, if positive factors are strengthened, for example, persevering in prayer, the hope is that spiritual thirst will increase, resulting in a greater priority on spiritual growth and learning.

Cynicism and skepticism of the Christian faith

Some people have had negative experiences with the Christian faith resulting in cynicism and skepticism. There may have been legalism, hypocrisy, or abuse experienced in a church or Christian setting. This would be a difficult force to decrease except for a consistent approach to building genuine and authentic relationships.

Disagreements among neighbours

There were some neighbours who had been associated with FWBM that did not get along with other neighbours. In order to reduce interpersonal conflict, there needs to be both wisdom and prayer to work towards the possibility of reconciliation. We explore these relationship difficulties, but we do not take it upon ourselves to fix them. Our approach is incarnational; to be the presence of Christ in the community and pray for opportunities for reconciliation.

A lack of engagement among neighbours

Sometimes if a program is led by a Christian volunteer outside of the community, the neighbours will not be as engaged or committed to the program.

The approach is to engage neighbours in the creation, planning and implementation of new programs.

Power imbalance between Christian volunteers and neighbours

Volunteers come to this ministry with certain assumptions about people living in subsidized housing. This could lead to a power imbalance, where a volunteer tries to fix the neighbour or solve their problems. Instead, we need to recognize that the journey towards wholeness and healing requires much more than simple fixes. It is walking together and taking steps to discover God's healing and call on our lives.

Clergy-laity traditions that limit ministry involvement

The traditional understanding of ministry is that the clergy are the agents while the laity are the receivers of the ministry. However, this can limit lay people from growing and developing in their own calling to be ministers themselves. Clergy can reinforce this tradition out of a need to be active and important in the community. Laity can reinforce this tradition by expecting ministry to be done for them and to them. In order to weaken this tradition, we look for lay people who are ready to be active in ministry in order to model the priesthood of all believers.

Pandemic restrictions and fears

The pandemic caused the shutdown of many activities and programs for FWBM. Looking at this positively, it gave us a chance to re-evaluate and re-focus our ministry. We were praying for greater cooperation with the non-profit housing corporation and their management company in order to build a Christian presence in the community.

Moving Forward

In the book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Ruth Haley Barton presents the heart of spiritual leadership as "…the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God both personally and in community" (Barton 2008, 192). In order to go beyond the realm of academic exercise to a potential ministry plan or project, it requires spiritual discernment. In my experience, we can discern God's will through vision, prayer, and gathering as a group and walking together.

Vision

There are times in our lives when God burdens our hearts for a purpose. This sense of dis-ease can lead to ideas, initiative and change. It can bring us back to our core values and reason for being. It can remind us of the good life according to the gospel (Vanhoozer & Sleasman 2007, 107). In this sense, the vision of a resident-led Christian presence in a subsidized housing community had three aspects. First, it was to be the Christian community found in Acts 2 where early followers of Jesus "…devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (v. 42). It was to be involved in the core practices of Christian faith that allow for Christian presence. Second, it was to see reconciliation happen on all levels: reconciliation with God, self, others and creation. Third, it was to reflect on the unstated values of FWBM, which originated from a biblical understanding of ministry, being lived out in a practical way. The values of mission outside of church walls; seeing the image of God in others; compassion; authentic relationships; discipleship; healthy ministry coming from healthy spirituality; and resident-led initiatives, provided guidance as to how

the work is to be done. It is important to keep this vision before us so that we knew where we were going and how to get there.

Prayer

In order for ministry to be a spiritual act, we first begin with prayer. Prayer could be thought of as participatory action with God. We are the ones discovering more of God's will through prayer and then applying it to our current context. According to Barton, "I realize now that intercessory prayer is not primarily about thinking that I know what someone else needs and trying to wrestle it from God. Rather, it is being present to God on another's behalf, listening for the prayer of the Holy Spirit that is already being prayed for that person before the throne of grace, and being willing to join God in that prayer" (Barton 2008, 146).

Gathering a group

It is exciting when ideas and initiatives percolate from the ground up rather than the top down. This allows the people involved to become more active and engaged. With this in mind, I began to gather with a group by asking those associated with our house church to begin meeting together. We found a regular time to meet on Wednesday afternoons at 3:00 pm. Those who responded were willing to help organize community barbecues, care for people in need, and host local church groups in caring for the community. This has led to greater engagement with local churches. Through FWBM and Christian neighbours, we have hosted local church mission groups, youth groups, and prayer walks. We shared in the goal of putting on barbecues where the whole community is invited. I have had opportunities to speak about FWBM in local church services, youth

groups, and mission fairs. I consider all of these to be iterative successes. But the challenges related to the force-field analysis remain.

Walking together

It is a privilege to work together in Christian fellowship and unity. The goal is not primarily ministry or project successes. One of the main goals is to inspire Christians in the community to be the presence of Christ. In fact, the process of working together already accomplishes much of that purpose. Therefore, it is important to walk together in a long-term sustainable way, rather than a short-term approach. It is through these relationships that ministry happens.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to analyze my identity as a Christian minister, my ministry context, and challenges and opportunities for the immediate future. Reflecting on my spiritual journey has given me confidence that "…the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10). Looking deeper into the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood, as well as the work of FWBM, has provided valuable insight. It remains a work in progress to develop the skills of contextual analysis. However, it was thought-provoking and inspiring. It is God who is shaping and molding our lives. God is the potter and we are the clay.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Reflecting on my leadership has not been the first order of business for my life. In fact, it has fallen far down on the scale of priorities over the past decades. But the opportunity for theological reflection in understanding my philosophy of leadership could not have come at a better time. Through the Doctor of Ministry program, I have discovered a greater curiosity to understand Christian ministry and leadership. But not just ministry and leadership from a theoretical point of view, but from a personal one. My identity, faith and experiences have shaped me to be a certain kind of Christian leader. The better I understand the unique qualities and giftings of my leadership, the better I can lead authentically and passionately with a greater confidence in God's calling on my life. It provides a foundation from which I can minister to others and also do good research. This chapter reflects theologically on my understanding of Christian leadership. With this in mind, I offer a statement of what Christian leadership means to me. Christian leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. This simple and personal definition of leadership will be examined in the face of failure, suffering, and challenging leadership situations.

Tossed and Turned Leadership

Developing my philosophy of Christian leadership has been a journey (or perhaps more of a voyage). There have been waves of understanding and misunderstanding that have tossed and turned me over the years. The words of James are relevant to me, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind" (James 1:5-6). While the writer of James is not specifically talking about leadership, wisdom finds its source in God. Wisdom, in part, requires supplication and faith in God. This foundational truth is obvious and yet at times has been hidden to me.

Throughout my years of ministry, I have been inspired by Christian leaders, particularly charismatic American church leaders. One of my early influences was Bill Hybels, founder of Willow Creek Community Church and the Seeker Sensitive church model. His philosophy of ministry became my idealized philosophy. His teaching on church vision, purpose and organization became important to me. Next came Rick Warren, founder of Saddleback Church and the Purpose Driven Church. Inspired by his excellent communication, I adopted his teaching into my ministry. From there, I drifted towards needs-based ministry and then on to a missional understanding of the church. All of these movements in church ministry were not wrong in and of themselves; they were beneficial in providing focus and direction. They showed how theology, particularly ecclesiology and missiology, could be lived out in a church organization. But for me, they became a way to bypass theological reflection resulting in a lack of

spiritual discernment. Instead of exercising faith in difficult circumstances, my hopes were founded on the ideas, philosophies, and teachings of others. St. Anselm of Canterbury's motto of *fides quaerens intellectum* or "faith seeking understanding" (Kane 1973, 40) was an excellent reminder of the work of theological reflection. It suggested to me that the process of learning cannot be bypassed. It is obtained through first principles learning. This comes back to the words of James 1:5-6, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." True wisdom and understanding find their origin in God through faith. This is contrasted with doubt which leads to being tossed and turned by the wind. While God can work in and through imperfect people such as myself, I still believe that the early years of my ministry were a kind of tossed and turned leadership.

Importance of Practical Theology

Practical theology is a valuable approach and discipline for those who are active and engaged in ministry. It brings together both theory and praxis in a natural way. Practical theology can provide a foundation from which to carry out participatory action research. The field of practical theology has evolved over the years changing from a deductive model where theology proper is applied to the practice of ministry, to an inductive model where theology evolves out of the context of ministry. Paul Bramer and Mark Chapman describe this development

as "contextual theology with personal experience and cultural realities being full dialog partners" (Bramer & Chapman 2017, 29).

Throughout the history of its evolution, the field of practical theology has developed many flavours. There are different emphases and definitions starting with Frederich Schleiermacher, who is looked upon as the father of modern practical theology (Browning 1983, 36). Schleiermacher used the metaphor of a tree to bring the three main branches of theology together. Philosophical theology is the root system; historical theology is the trunk; and practical theology is the crown of the tree (Sensing 2013, 30). Tim Sensing reports that in the years following Schleiermacher, practical theology became narrowly focused on the practice of ministry, "...delimiting the subject to preaching the word and administering the sacraments" (Sensing 2013, 30). More recently, practical theology has become more holistic, integrated and existential. Andrew Root identifies scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, including Don Browning, James Fowler, Edward Farley, Lewis Mudge, and Thomas Groom, who helped practical theology find greater value and importance in the theological realm (Sensing 2014, 21). "These scholars made a convincing case that concrete communities of practice (whether congregations or other social forms of lived practice) are the very text of practical theological reflection because these communities are places of embodied theology, places of practical wisdom" (Root 2014, 22). Richard Osmer provides a helpful definition, "practical theology is that branch of Christian theology that seeks to construct action-guiding theories of Christian praxis in particular social contexts" (2005, xiv). This definition includes both the

how and the why. The how encompasses Christian praxis. For example, "how to teach, preach, raise children, influence society, and so forth" (Osmer 2005, xiv). The why encompasses the reasons for Christian praxis "in light of an interpretation of a particular social context and the normative claims of the Christian community" (Osmer 2005, xiv).

Practical theology has personal implications on my understanding of ministry. I am learning not simply to adopt the theology of others without reflecting theologically myself. Based on my personality, faith understanding, and ministry experience, I have come to embrace practical theology as my own. Having studied engineering in an undergraduate degree program, I naturally gravitate toward the application rather than the theoretical. I am naturally interested in useful tools in order to be able to do-it-yourself rather than paying for someone else to do the work. I naturally enjoy living in community with neighbours rather than keeping to myself in isolation.

My faith understanding has led me towards practical theology as well. I appreciate the Apostle Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ as a human body with many members (1 Corinthians 12:12-30). I find joy in corporate worship when we are encouraging one another in the faith (Psalm 95:6-7; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-20). I love the idea of inspiring one another towards love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). I believe that Jesus is present when we gather together (Matthew 18:20, 28:16-20). I enjoy finding God present in the other, especially for those in vulnerable situations (Matthew 25:40). My faith

understanding allows me to reflect on the movement of God within my personal context.

However, my ministry experience has helped me to appreciate practical theology the most. After serving for over twenty-five years as a Presbyterian minister, with the last thirteen years in a traditional mainline congregation, I found myself unable to continue to serve as the lead minister. With changes to Presbyterian doctrine and polity regarding the definition of marriage and human sexuality, a large majority of elders wanted to embrace this change. However, based on my understanding and love of scripture, I was not able to move in that direction. Discussions with the elders and congregation members went on, over a period of about two years. While most conversations were friendly and respectful, there were awkward and difficult moments as well. However, it was through those moments that I found Christ present with me in deeper and more meaningful ways. I found myself identifying with the theology of the cross, where Christ suffered greatly, but was able to love deeply. Christ lived out his identity without needing to prove himself. Christ wrestled with his Father's will and eventually accepted it with equanimity. While I was not going through anything near what Christ went through, I found myself wanting to be like Christ in those moments.

This personal longing found a voice in Root's book, *Christopraxis: a practical theology of the Cross*. I found his book to be eminently practical but not very accessible. Root confesses that it was written more as a theological proof to scholars and professors in the field of practical theology (Root 2014, 29, 54). As such, there is excellent theory and sidebar discussions on how Root's

understanding of Christopraxis fits into the practical theology realm. But there is little in the way of methodology and process. It is eminently practical because Root wants his idea of Christopraxis to be grounded in the lived experience of regular people and their encounter with Christ. The whole idea of the theology of the cross demands that it not be highly philosophical and abstract. "People experience a real sense of God's action, of the praxis of Christ, and this experience is not simply intellectual or religious, but also personal and spiritual" (Root 2014, 91). This praxis is grounded in the person of Christ leading to Root's definition of Christopraxis as "the act of God in Jesus Christ which occurred once and for all through his life as Incarnate Word, but which continues to occur through the mighty acts of revelation and reconciliation whereby the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by coming into our sphere of historical and personal existence to manifest his resurrection power and presence" (2014, 90).

Root places his work on Christopraxis within the practical theology methodology of Richard Osmer. For Osmer, practical theology is defined by four core tasks: the descriptive, interpretative, normative and pragmatic. The descriptive asks the question, "What is happening?" It is important to develop a thick description which could include the use of qualitative research tools (Root 2014, 23). The interpretative asks the question, "Why is it happening?" This question tries to explain the event or phenomenon in a social science framework. However, Root wants more than just social constructionism with the focus on human constructs (Root 2014, 24), he seeks space for encounters with the divine.

The third core task for Osmer is the normative, with the question, "What ought to be happening?" This is where Root places his Christopraxis:

> The heart of the normative question in the perspective I'll be articulating is the "ought," defined not as moralistic or epistemological (Kantian) but as an event of encounter, as an ontological reality, as the unveiling of God's being next to our own. What ought to happen now that the Spirit has come upon us (Acts 2)? Therefore, my Christopraxis practical theology of the cross frames the normative question of what ought to happen not within a philosophical ethic, but as the experience of Pentecost. (2014, 26)

Root is attempting to bring divine encounter or revelation into practical theology methodology, which in his estimation, has been too easily lost (2014, 26). Finally, the fourth core task for Osmer is the pragmatic. The question to be asked here is, "What then should we do?" Root recognizes the need for practical theology to affect change, and in fact, change the world (Root 2014, 26).

The challenge of Practical Theology is my challenge. Instead of adopting principles and practices of Christian leadership from others, I want to reflect theologically in order to lead spiritually. Root's articulation of Christopraxis provides a goal to encounter the continuing work of Christ in the world through revelation and reconciliation. In working with FWBM volunteers, Christians in the neighbourhood, and a variety of people from different backgrounds and cultures, I find it refreshing and enlivening to ask theological questions and seek godly wisdom. This process of reflection has led me to the understanding that Christian leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. This definition comprises two themes of Christian leadership: invitation and adaptation. In the next sections, I will consider invitation and adaptation from both a theological and leadership theory

point of view, and how it comes together to form my understanding of Christian leadership.

Theological Reflections on Invitation

The language of invitation is powerful in scripture and foundational to my understanding of leadership. In the Old Testament, the Lord sought to bless all the peoples of the earth with the call of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to a covenantal relationship. The Lord invited specific people at specific times to be his spokesperson, instrument of deliverance, intermediary, and agent of leadership. The Lord pleaded with his chosen people to walk in his ways, even using the language of romance to woo Israel back into his arms (Isaiah 54:5-8; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekial 16; Hosea 2:14). These invitations to relationship, partnership and leadership, are beautiful grace-filled words, encouraging participation in the Kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, invitation is essential to the ministry and message of Jesus. Some religious practice had become so institutionalized, hypocritical, and elite, that it had become a stumbling block for common folk. Jesus cut through the bureaucracy of religion to bring the core message of the gospel. Jesus himself, became the open door, welcoming people to a right relationship with God and inviting them to participate in the Kingdom of God. One of the ways that Jesus did this was to call an inner circle of disciples to share in his work. This was an invitation to mentorship, leadership, and future succession in ministry.

In light of this understanding of invitation and how it resonates with my own philosophy of leadership, I will highlight the following passages from the

Gospel of John which describe Jesus' invitation to his disciples: John 1:35-42, 43-51, and 21:15-19 in order to develop an understanding of the invitational leadership of Jesus.

John 1:35-42

John 1:35-42 tells the story of Andrew and another disciple's first encounter with Jesus. Both Andrew and the unnamed person were disciples of John the Baptist at the time, but in the end, became followers of Jesus. Craig Keener notes that switching rabbis was unusual but not without precedent (2003, 467). Within the context of John 1, it happened naturally since John the Baptist is mentioned several times (John 1:6, 15, 29-34) as a witness pointing to Jesus the Messiah.

One issue regarding this passage is how it harmonizes with the synoptic gospels. The call of Andrew and Simon Peter in Matthew 4:18-20 and Mark 1:16-18 along with the story of Simon Peter in Luke 5:1-11, present a different context. The setting for the call of the disciples in the synoptic gospels was on the shores of Galilee, while for the gospel of John it takes place at Bethany. The narrative in the synoptic accounts portrayed Jesus as decisive and brief with Simon Peter and Andrew leaving their fishing nets behind. Raymond Brown, Craig Keener and D.A. Carson points to the traditional harmonization suggestion that the story in the Gospel of John occurred earlier than the synoptic accounts. Carson points out for John 1:35-42 that "strictly speaking Jesus does not 'call' his disciples at all in these verses" (1991, 154). Keener postulates that it would have been easier for the disciples to leave their nets in the synoptic accounts had they encountered Jesus

earlier, as in the Gospel of John (2003, 466). Brown goes further to suggest that John's account "has been reorganized under theological orientation" (1966, 77).

As Carson has noted, the two disciples of John the Baptist were not explicitly invited by Jesus to become followers. They simply followed Jesus around literally, prompting the question by Jesus, "What are you seeking?" (John 1:38). Brown, Keener and Carson all reflect on the deeper meaning of this question with reference to the gospel writer's understanding of Jesus' identity. But the answer from the two disciples was a deflection of the question with another question, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (John 1:38). Carson recognizes this to be an opportunity to "seek him out in private and at greater leisure" (Carson 1991, 155). Jesus' reply became a wonderful invitation: "Come and you will see" (John 1:39). After spending the day with Jesus, another invitation was extended with Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus with the claim, "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41).

This passage describes a beautiful invitation to spend time with Jesus. This leads to relational richness resulting in Andrew's proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah. Andrew carried on with an invitation to his brother Simon to meet Jesus. In turn, Jesus assigned Simon the name "Cephas" with Carson suggesting that "Jesus, who not only knows people thoroughly (cf. vv 43-51), and not only 'sees into' them (cf. 47-48), but so calls them that he makes them what he calls them to be" (1991, 156). In this sense, I would say that Jesus was inviting Simon to play a foundational role in future ministry.

John 1:43-51

In John 1:43-51, Jesus left for Galilee and directly called Philip with the command, "Follow me" (John 1:43). This action of Jesus was quite different from the calling of Andrew and Simon Peter. It was abrupt and decisive, which could be described as a commanding invitation. The gospel writer mentions that Philip was from the same hometown as Andrew and Simon Peter (John 1:44), perhaps helping Philip's implicit eagerness to follow Jesus and share the good news with Nathanael. Philip identified Jesus as "him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). Similar to Andrew (John 1:41), Philip recognized Jesus as the fulfilment of scripture with language that situated Jesus within Jewish heritage and culture. Nathanael, coming from Cana, reacted with "disparaging doubt" (Brown 1966, 86). Keener calls Nathanael's reaction "more flippant than hostile" (2003, 483) citing local village rivalries. This led to another beautiful invitation where Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see" (John 1:46).

Jesus' conversation with Nathanael was anything but abrupt and brief. His comment, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" (John 1:47), elicited an incredulous response from Nathanael, "How do you know me?" (John 1:48). Brown, Keener and Carson recognize the play on words with Jacob known both as a deceiver and as Israel. But the text does not explain why Nathanael found the comment so personally revealing. Carson surmises that it "hit the mark" of revealing his character (Carson 1991, 161). Another possibility could be that Nathanael was reading about Jacob earlier while he was under the fig tree. Jesus' revelation to Nathanael that he saw him earlier under the fig tree is met with an

even greater response. Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49). While the gospel writer does not explain the supernatural nature of Jesus' comment, Nathanael came to the same conclusion of the entire Gospel (John 20:31). Jesus responded with another mixed reference to Jacob with heaven opened and "angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Jesus' conversation with Nathanael was not an explicit invitation. Philip had already provided that. But Jesus continued following Philip's invitation through with a conversation that changed Nathanael's life.

Summary of John 1:35-42 and 1:43-51

Both passages together, John 1:35-42 and 1:43-51, provide a number of invitations to follow Jesus. John the Baptist pointed two of his disciples to Jesus. Jesus invited them to an extended time with him at his home. Andrew invited his brother Simon to meet the Messiah. Jesus changed Peter's name to Cephas, representing an invitation to a future role in ministry. Jesus invited Philip with the simple command, "Follow me" (John 1:43). Philip invited Nathanael to meet Jesus resulting in a beautiful conversation and expression of faith. In his chapter on "Jesus and Leadership," Skip Bell writes, "Jesus delighted in inviting people to join Him in ministry, essentially sharing leadership with those whom He called" (2014, 284). I resonate with the idea of invitational leadership as a call to greater discipleship, becoming a follower of Christ and inviting others to do the same. This is in line with the vision of FWBM as well, wanting "every neighbour at Kin Village and Trinity Square live life to the fullest by knowing and following Jesus Christ" (FWBM 2022).

John 21:15-19

John 21:15-19 tells the story of Jesus reinstating or restoring Peter. This passage deepens my understanding of invitation because of the context of this passage. Before applying this passage to the theme of invitation, there is a background issue that I will address that provides an understanding of how I am interpreting this passage.

The background issue is the distinction between the Greek words used for *love* in the conversation between Jesus and Peter. In verse 15, Jesus used the verb *agapaō* while Peter responded with the verb *phileō*. Similarly in verse 16, Jesus used the verb *agapaō* while Peter responded with the verb *phileō*. But in verse 17, Jesus used the verb *phileō* while Peter responded with the verb *phileō*. Brown traces the history of interpretation of this distinction with the majority of early church and Reformation scholars treating these verbs as having the same meaning (1966, notes 1101-1122). However, Brown notes that the British scholars Richard Trench and B.F. Westcott found this distinction to be important. Trench interpreted *phileō* to be a stronger and more intimate definition of love compared to *agapaō*. But Westcott interpreted the opposite with *agapaō* being a higher form of love compared to *phileō* (Brown 1991, 495-518). Brown, Carson and Frederick Dale Bruner also note that most modern scholars treat *agapaō* and *phileō* to be interchangeable (Bruner 2012, 917). This is the interpretation that all three make for themselves. This is strengthened because there are variations in the words used for all three of Jesus' responses to Peter. "Feed my lambs," "take care of my sheep," and "feed my sheep" are all taken to be synonymous by Brown, Carson and Bruner.

Having dealt with this background issue, I will now consider how the theme of invitation is strengthened in this passage in three ways. Jesus invited Peter to a restored relationship. He invited Peter to reflect on his failure. He invited Peter to a new calling.

Invitation to a Restored Relationship

It is important to understand the context of Peter's personality and all that had happened. As we learn from the gospel writers, Peter was passionate, headstrong and even impulsive. During the storm when Jesus walked on water to the disciples in the boat, it was Peter who asked if he could walk on water too (Matthew 14:28). When Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say I am?" it was Peter who boldly responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15-16). When Jesus declared that he must go to Jerusalem; suffer and die; and rise again on the third day, it was Peter who said, "This shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22). To which Jesus replied, "Get behind me Satan" (Matthew 16:23). When Jesus took his closest disciples up a mountain, and was transfigured, along with Moses and Elijah, it was Peter who offered to make shelters for them (Matthew 17:4). That suggestion was way out of place. In the upper room, when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, it was Peter who protested. "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8). When Jesus insisted, Peter went in the opposite direction. "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9). Jesus simply washed Peter's feet along with the rest of the disciples. When Jesus was arrested and the disciples scattered, Peter was recognized by some people who asked if he was with Jesus. Peter denied it and on the third time even swore an oath, "I do not know the man" (Matthew 26:72). Then the rooster

crowed and Peter left weeping bitterly (v. 75). After Jesus rose from the grave and showed himself to his disciples, there is no description of how Peter was feeling. We are not told whether or not he experienced joy, thanksgiving, or a sense of victory. The shock of his failure likely lingered on in his mind.

The nature of the conversation that Jesus subsequently had with Peter was restorative. The first question that Jesus asked Peter was a curious one, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15). The title that Jesus gave to Peter as "son of John" could be seen as Jesus "treating him less familiarly and thus challenging his friendship" (Brown 1996, notes 1101-1122). Scholars also wonder who Jesus was referring to, with the word *these*. Bruner notes that most modern scholars interpret it as referring to the other disciples (Bruner 2012, 917). Jesus' question is restorative because it points to Peter's self-confidence that had been shattered. This self-confidence is described as "the strongest personal boast" (Carson 1991, 676), "Peter's earlier impetuous claims for himself" (Bruner 2012, 911) and a "boast of greater love" (Brown 1966, notes 1101-1122). Instead of answering comparatively, Peter answered simply, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you" (John 21:15). With this statement, the relationship became not one of boasting or comparing. It grew in depth and intimacy because as Bruner writes, "Peter knows he loves Jesus, he knows that Jesus knows he does, and he says so" (2012, 912). Jesus' response to Peter was to feed his sheep (vv. 15, 16, 17). Carson notes that this is an emphasis on the "pastoral rather than the evangelistic" (1991, 678). This indicates a restoration of service and ministry. The conversation that Jesus had with Peter was an invitation to a restored relationship.

Invitation to Reflect on Failure

Jesus asked Peter a second time and a third time "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (John 21:16-17). With the third question, we are informed that Peter was hurt or grieved by the repetition of the question. As Bruner notes, Jesus' three questions parallels Peter's prior three denials (2012, 914). This is important numerically since the number three is prominent in both situations. It is also significant emotionally because Peter's three denials immediately caused him to weep bitterly (Matthew 26:72). The grief that Peter showed before Jesus, opened up the woundedness of Peter's failure. Peter was forced to reflect on and re-examine his allegiance and love for his Lord. Understanding the tenderness of this situation, Jesus did not seem to ask these questions maliciously or sanctimoniously. It was less of an invitation to pull back the covering to expose a wound and was more of an opportunity to bring salve and provide healing where most needed. Bruner connects it pastorally. "But perhaps Jesus wanted Peter's last memory of his last main meeting with Jesus to be Peter's threefold, 'I do love you, Lord,' 'I do love you, Lord,' and 'I do love you, Lord' rather than his shameful threefold, 'I don't know the man,' 'I don't know the man,' 'I don't know the man'" (Bruner 2012, 914). In this sense, the shame that Peter felt and the forgiveness that he had been given would propel him to greater heights. As Jesus told Simon the Pharisee, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47). Henri Nouwen (1989, 38) points to God's love that is found in this passage as being vital to Christian ministry and leadership. The heart of God is one that "forgives, cares, reaches out and wants to heal. In that heart there is no suspicion,

no vindictiveness, no resentment, and not a tinge of hatred" (Nouwen 1989, 38). This conversation that Jesus had with Peter should deepen our understanding of Jesus' love and by extension, God's love. Jesus' invitation was gentle but powerful. It was subtle but restorative. It was simple but profound.

Peter responded similarly again, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (John 21:17). Carson notes that "there is no trace of self-righteousness in Peter's response. He can only appeal to the fact that the Lord knows everything, and therefore knows Peter's heart…" (Carson 1991, 678). Peter had learned. He had reflected on his failure to the extent that he did not rely on the brashness of his personality to defend himself. He had put his failure before Jesus in order to receive mercy and forgiveness. "Ever since his bad Weekend [sic] Peter no longer trusts his own instincts, as we are noticing in each of his three answers. He quite simply appeals to the supreme court of Jesus' knowing of him and of everyone else" (Bruner 2012, 913). In response, Jesus told Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). This leads to a third invitation.

Invitation to a New Calling

The three statements, "feed my lambs," "take care of my sheep" and "feed my sheep" (vv. 15, 16, 17) are not invitations grammatically. They are commands but they transform the work and ministry of Peter. They invite Peter to Christian leadership in a new way. Brown examines the meaning of the verbs "feed" and "tend" in the Greek, *boskein* and *poimainein* respectively.

> *Boskein* is used both literally and figuratively (Ezek 34:2) for feeding animals. *Poimainein* includes such duties toward the flock as guiding, guarding, and feeding, whether literally (Luke 17:7) or figuratively (Ezek 34:10; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2; Rev 2:27, 7:17); equivalently it may mean "to rule, govern" (2 Sam 7:7; Ps 2:9; Matt 2:6). A sentence from Philo,

> Quod deterius viii #25, catches the nuance of the two verbs: "Those who feed [*boskein*] supply nourishment … but those who tend [*poimainein*] have the power of rulers and governors." Combined, the two verbs express the fullness of the pastoral task assigned to Peter. (Brown 1966, notes 1101-1122)

This task became one of service to others, to feed and nourish lambs and sheep through the exercise of leadership. "This ministry is described in verbs, not nouns…" (Carson 1991, 678). This is a ministry of action, not of titles or position. Peter was not to focus on himself but on his love for God expressing itself in service to others.

The lambs and sheep are not different groups of people in the church according to Brown, "We are inclined to treat the variant Greek nouns as synonyms and the variation as stylistic, serving at most to emphasize that the flock includes all the faithful" (Brown 1966, notes 1101-1122). But the ownership of the flock belongs to Jesus. 1 Peter 5:1-4 includes Peter's imperative, "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." Peter took Jesus' words to heart and it transformed his work and ministry, just as he sought to pass on this ministry to others.

Bruner goes even further to describe the conversation of Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-19 as a kind of ordination.

> In sum, just as in this interview there is only one ordination question—vertically—"Do you love me?" so there is essentially only one ordination charge—horizontally—as here again, "Please, feed my sheep!" Each exchange is deeply simple, profoundly single, emphatically focused: Love for Jesus (the single qualification he asks) is to be put into practice not so much by emotional outbursts upward but by love outward to that part of

> his Church or world that Jesus entrusts to us (the single responsibility in all three of his charges). And the question feeds the charge just as the charge feeds the question: Love for Jesus feeds love for his people; and in turn, loving his people feeds love for Jesus. And each is demonstrated by the other: If the one is in place, the other will often be in place as well. The two sentences in each exchange form a perfect circle of divine devotion upward and then of human devotion downward, each arc of which, followed, moves the other farther on. We are in the presence of a divine physics, of a deep ordination. (Bruner 2012, 914)

This emphasizes the invitation to a new calling. The call is for the love of God to express itself in service to others. This is a wonderful conclusion but there is more.

Surprisingly, Jesus added a dark and ominous warning. He told Peter that when he is old, he would be led to a place where he did not want to go (John 21:18). The gospel writer interpreted this to be the kind of death that Peter would face (John 21:19). The conversation ended with a final command of Jesus to Peter, "Follow me" (John 21:19). Nouwen understood these words of Jesus as a way to counteract the lure of power (Nouwen 1989, 67). It is a call to suffering just as Jesus suffered. "It is not a leadership of power and control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest" (Nouwen 1989, 67). The invitation is not to greatness according to the value system of the world, but to greatness by following the way of Jesus. This includes powerlessness, humility and even death, which according to the gospel writer, would bring glory to God (John 21:19). According to Bruner, "The divine way of glory, surprisingly, is downward—for both the Lord *and* [sic] for his disciples" (2012, 915). As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the

power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). In my personal definition of Christian leadership, inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus involves the aspect of suffering too.

Summary of John 21:15-19

The theme of invitation in this passage is not explicit grammatically. It is implicit in the context of Jesus reinstating Peter. Jesus invited Peter to a restored relationship. He invited Peter to reflect on his failure. He invited Peter to a new calling. Because of the dramatic nature of this passage, we discover a depth of God's love in the midst of failure. We discover a focus not on ourselves but on serving and caring for others. We discover that the invitation encompasses suffering for Christ.

This fits with Root's articulation of Christopraxis in that we find the presence of God in the "shared brokenness of human suffering" (2014, 11). This also has been my lived experience as well. In moments when I could not offer answers, fixes, or future plans, I found myself identifying with the cross of Christ. I found comfort in the way that Christ went through his suffering all the way to the cross. I discovered a depth of faith that carried through my emptiness. This is a powerful invitation that is found in these passages and throughout the life of Christ.

Invitational Leadership in Leadership Theory

A literature survey on the topic of invitational leadership finds a body of writing and research in the area of education. There is a Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) which "promotes the study, application, and research

of invitational theory. It is an online peer-reviewed scholarly publication presenting articles to advance invitational learning and living and the foundations that support this theory of practice, particularly self-concept theory and perceptual psychology" (International Alliance for Invitational Education 2022). Invitational leadership was coined through the application of Invitational Education Theory (IET) with four components given by William Purkey and John Novak in 1984. "In their model on IET, Purkey and Novak (1984) suggest that educators should take on their tasks from a consistent stance of trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality" (Lynch 2012, 148). This model of leadership is shown to be effective in how principals relate to teachers, providing an environment for school improvement. "This model shifts from emphasizing control and dominance to one that focuses on connectedness, cooperation, and communication" (Purkey & Siegel 2013, 1). Matthew Lynch finds similarities between invitational leadership and transformational and servant leadership. They share similar emphases of empowering followers and leading in an exemplary manner (Lynch 2012, 153). This builds a culture of trust and respect for all people. However, invitational leadership also differs with other leadership theories because of "the twin elements of optimism and intentionality" (Lynch 2012, 154). These elements create a unique approach that makes "the invitational leadership model quite an excellent choice especially in these times of critical need and increased accountability for school leaders" (Lynch 2012, 154).

There are similarities between the invitational leadership of Jesus and invitational leadership coming from Invitational Education Theory. The key

components of trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality can be found in both. However, the foundation of the former is spiritual while the latter is psychological. In my understanding of theology, the invitational leadership of Jesus provides a broader perspective that subsumes Invitational Education Theory. The One who created all things (John 1:3) understands the human mindset and calls us to the greater purpose of the Kingdom of God. This purpose is found in the life of Jesus and in the way that he lived his life. It includes the models of leadership described through invitation, transformation and servanthood. But it gives spiritual reason and hope beyond that of psychology or organizational behaviour.

The invitational leadership of Jesus is foundational to my understanding, that Christian leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. The way that Jesus interacted with people inviting them to greater discipleship is a beautiful example to follow. But there is more. The second half of my understanding of Christian leadership—that is, exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances—has been gained through personal experience, understanding Adaptive Leadership, and confirmation of scripture. This leads to a second area of leadership that I have found to be fascinating and meaningful based on my personal and ministry context.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive Leadership, according to Ronald Heifetz, is "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (2009, 14). One of the

keys to this process is distinguishing between technical and adaptive challenges. Technical challenges are resolved “through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things” (Heifetz et al. 2009, 19). Adaptive challenges “can only be addressed through changes in peoples' priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties” (Heifetz et al. 2009, 19). In this way, Adaptive Leadership attempts to address the heart of the matter or more importantly, the hearts of those who are involved in the process. Adaptive Leadership does this by starting with observation and asking questions. It moves to interpretation or listening to the song beneath the words; then it progresses to intervention (Heifetz et al. 2009, 32).

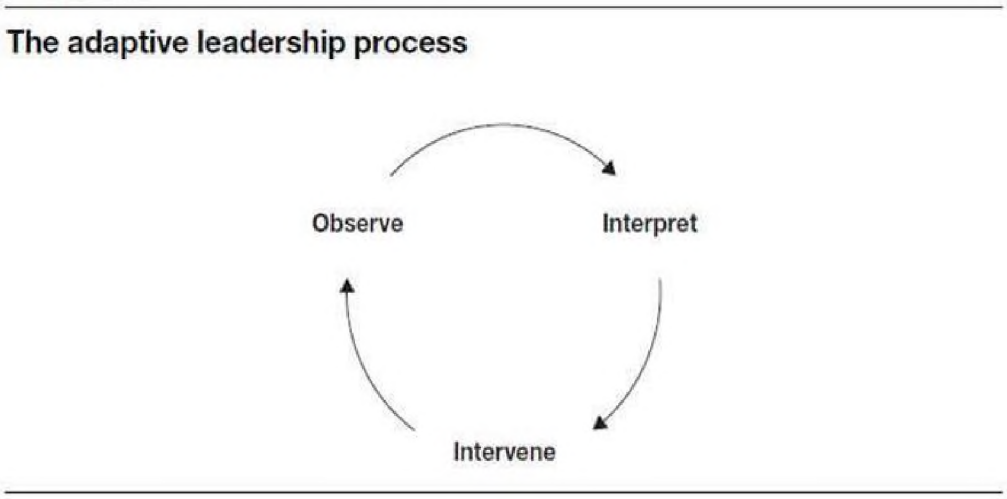


Figure 4. The Adaptive Leadership Process (Heifetz et al. 2009, 32)

Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie identify six principles that provide the framework for adaptive leadership (1997). These six principles are called leader behaviours by Peter Northouse in his summary of Adaptive Leadership (2019, 261).

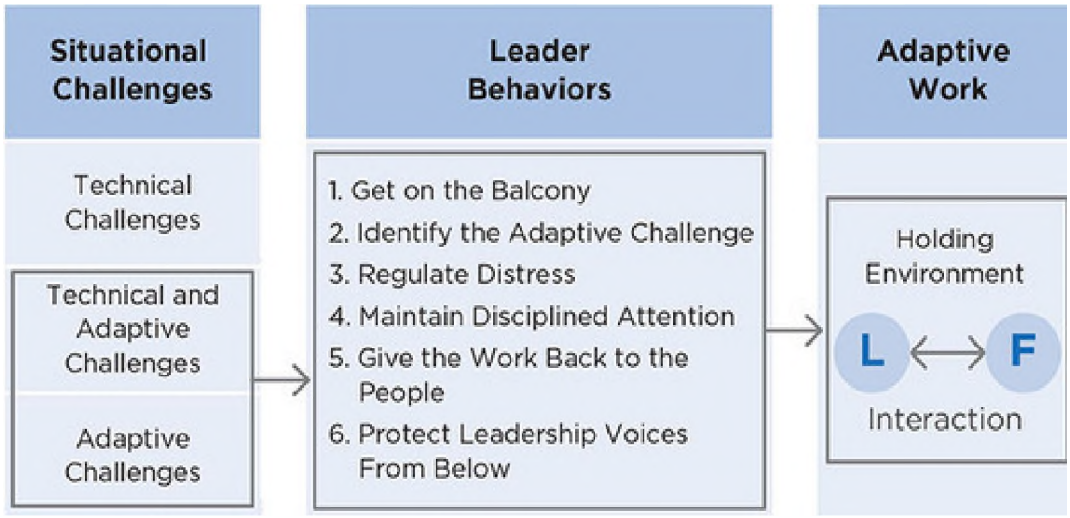


Figure 5. Model of Adaptive Leadership (Northouse 2019, 261)

Get on the Balcony

This principle of Adaptive Leadership is a means of gaining perspective. It is the ability to change roles from being a participant to being a spectator. The analogy of getting on the balcony is contrasted with that of being on the dance floor. On the dance floor, "Most of your attention focuses on your dance partner, and you reserve whatever is left to make sure that you don't collide with dancers close by. You let yourself get carried away by the music, your partner, and the moment" (Heifetz & Linsky 2017, 53). The challenge of getting on the balcony is to be able to see patterns; to recognize the issues; to understand both the historical and current context; to know the people involved and their "functional and dysfunctional reactions to change" (Heifetz & Laurie 1997, 125). However, it is important to maintain connection with both the balcony and the dance floor. "Effective leaders are able to move back and forth as participants and observers between the struggles of their people and the intentions of the organization or community" (Northouse 2019, 262).

Identify the Adaptive Challenge

Adaptive Leadership is best applied to adaptive challenges rather than technical ones. In any situation, there may be a combination of both adaptive and technical elements requiring the ability to distinguish between the two. "Adaptive challenges are typically grounded in the complexity of values, beliefs, and loyalties rather than technical complexity and stir up intense emotions rather than dispassionate analysis" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 70). According to Heifetz, adaptive challenges can fall into four main archetypes or common patterns.

1. Gap between espoused values and behaviour
2. Competing commitments
3. Speaking the unspeakable
4. Work avoidance

The first archetype is the idea that actions speak louder than words. There can be situations where organizations or individuals proclaim values that are not consistently shown in their actions. The gap between espoused values and behaviour can widen over time and without realization. The second archetype occurs when differing commitments conflict with one another requiring difficult or hurtful compromise. This can result in a win-lose situation where one group is favoured over the other. It can also result in a lack of decision-making ability because the competing commitments cannot be resolved. The third archetype refers to the analogy of the elephant in the room. In this scenario, the conversation around the table does not get to the deeper issue. Without acknowledging the unspeakable, it is difficult to move forward or find resolution. The fourth archetype is a way to resist the discomfort and pain of adaptive change.

Heifetz identifies two tactics for work avoidance: diverting attention and displacing responsibility (Heifetz et al. 2009, 85). Diverting attention is a way to cover up a problem without having to deal with it. Displacing responsibility is a way to pass the blame on to someone else. Both of these tactics are not able to resolve the problem. Heifetz recognizes that these archetypes do not cover the scope of all adaptive challenges; however, they reveal the depth of analysis that is required to identify and diagnose.

Regulate Distress

Conflict between people or groups facing an adaptive challenge can be helpful. It can provide the necessary motivation to find resolution. "If you want to generate progress on adaptive issues, you have to seek out, surface, nurture, and then carefully manage the conflict toward resolution, rather than see it as something to be eliminated or neutralized" (Heifetz et al. 2009. 151). Regulating distress is also described as orchestrating the conflict. Heifetz uses the analogy of a composer to describe this principle. "To a composer, the art of harmony is the creative uses of dissonance and consonance, woven together to create tension, a sense of forward motion, resolution, tension again until, usually, there is a final resolution" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 151). Regulating this tension is an art that involves not allowing the temperature of a conflict to rise too high but being able to manage the pace and provide direction.

Maintain Disciplined Attention

Because adaptive challenges deal with difficult issues requiring people to re-examine their priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties, it is easier to avoid the

hard questions and maintain the status quo. The work of Adaptive Leadership is to "get employees to confront tough trade-offs in values, procedures, operating styles, and power" (Heifetz & Laurie 1997, 128). This requires a disciplined focus on the deeper issues. It requires the ability to identify distractions that divert attention. It requires holding people accountable to work together in the problem-solving process.

Give the Work Back to the People

Heifetz recognizes that an authoritarian kind of leadership makes the leader feel powerful and indispensable. In contrast, Adaptive Leadership does the opposite. "Your job in exercising adaptive leadership is to make yourself dispensable. The only way you can do that is to constantly give work back to others so you can develop their abilities and calibrate their current and potential talent for skills such as critical thinking and smart decision making" (Heifetz et al. 2009 169). This is a strategic benefit because it allows everyone to look for ways to adapt based on their view of the needs and opportunities. The result is an engaged group of people who are able to make decisions nimbly and efficiently.

Protect Leadership Voices from Below

It is too easy to disregard negative voices and contrary ideas. Heifetz recognizes that these voices can be silenced because they may not be articulate or cooperative. "But buried inside a poorly packaged interjection may lie an important intuition that needs to be teased out and considered. To toss it out for its bad timing, lack of clarity, or seeming unreasonableness is to lose potentially valuable information and discourage a potential leader in the organization"

(Heifetz & Laurie 1997, 1). These voices can be like "canaries in the coal mine, early-warning systems" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 145). There is much to be learned about individual and team values through voices of dissent.

Evaluation of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive Leadership resonates with my experience of leadership. I am not a charismatic person with the innate ability to influence and inspire others, so I rely on the leadership strategies of collaboration, teamwork and empowerment. However, I find that these qualities, which are also principles of Adaptive Leadership, promote healthy relationships within a team. They allow people to work together in challenging and crisis situations. They allow for innovative and outside-the-box thinking without an emphasis on following rules. This empowers people to be engaged and active in their work. These are my hopes for FWBM. I hope to empower Christians in the neighbourhood to be the presence of Christ in their community. I hope for churches to be active in their communities. I hope for FWBM volunteers to minister in the name of Christ. I find that the principles of Adaptive Leadership reinforce these hopes.

The strengths of Adaptive Leadership also reveal its weaknesses. The positives relating to innovation and outside-the-box thinking can be negatives as well. The lack of structure and lack of adherence to rules can lead to ambiguity and uncertainty with both the leader and the followers. "A leader has to have the emotional capacity to tolerate uncertainty, frustration, and pain. [The individual] has to be able to raise tough questions without getting too anxious [him/herself]" (Heifetz & Laurie 1997, 128). Additionally, Adaptive Leadership has been

criticized for insufficient empirical research (Northouse 2019, 276). "Without evidence-based support for the tenets of the model, the ideas and principles set forth on adaptive leadership
should be viewed cautiously" (Northouse 2019, 276). However, despite these weaknesses, I have found the principles of Adaptive Leadership to correspond with my leadership experience.

Adaptive Leadership has confirmed concepts and ideas that I have learned about leadership over the years. It has allowed me to think more critically on these matters with its clear and concise language. I am continuing to learn about Adaptive Leadership principles and how I can incorporate them into my philosophy of Christian leadership. Even more refreshing to me is the correspondence I find when I reflect theologically beyond Adaptive Leadership. This is the opposite experience to Invitational Leadership, where I have learned theologically first and then seek to apply the example of Jesus' leadership to my ministry. For Adaptive Leadership, I have learned experientially, then theoretically through Heifetz, and found it to be enlightening theologically. Both Invitational Leadership and Adaptive Leadership have led to my definition that Christian leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances.

Reflecting Theologically Beyond Adaptive Leadership

While Adaptive Leadership does not have an explicit theological foundation, there are similarities with Practical Theology. The method in which Practical Theology is applied has changed over the years from a deductive model,

where theology proper is applied to the practice of ministry, to an inductive model where theology evolves out of the context of ministry. Pete Ward provides an overview of the field of Practical Theology in his chapter on "Practical Theology as a Conversation about Practice and Theology" (Ward 2017). "If you are new to the field, this can be quite confusing, but the key issue here is how practice and theology connect" (Ward 2017, 39). For the inductive model of Practical Theology, theology derives out of the practice or context of ministry. Adaptive Leadership promotes a similar trajectory where authority and structure are eschewed in favour of a contextual approach. I resonate with this approach because I find this kind of leadership to be aligned with my personality and faith. My initial tendencies are towards listening and observation rather than decisions and action. I am interested in theological reflection and discovering how God is at work in the midst of questions and crises.

In this sense, the principles of Adaptive Leadership as applied in the Christian context are not new and modern, but ancient and biblical. Anthony Robinson sees Adaptive Leadership in the life of Moses. "Heifetz describes the leader's task as 'mobilizing adaptive work.' Moses mobilized adaptive work in a most literal way, leading people on a journey of learning and transformation" (Robinson 2006, 44). Similarly, Tod Bolsinger cites Heifetz extensively while examining Moses' leadership. It was only six weeks after the Red Sea miracle that the Israelites turned against Moses in bitter complaint, even wanting to go back into slavery. Bolsinger understands this resistance to change through the lens of Adaptive Leadership, "People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss. You

appear dangerous to people when you question their values, beliefs, or habits of a lifetime" (Bolsinger 2020, 24). Adaptive Leadership principles are not new and modern but they can give voice to what is already found in scripture.

While the language of Adaptive Leadership is written to reach the Harvard Business School audience, there are clear parallels to scriptural principles. For this section, scripture is being used as confirmation of Adaptive Leadership principles rather than providing a comprehensive theological basis. This mirrors my experience with Adaptive Leadership. I discovered that Adaptive Leadership was reflective of my understanding of leadership, and then realized that scripture contained these same principles. Since Adaptive Leadership can be characterized by six principles or leader behaviours (Heifetz & Laurie 1997; Northouse 2019, 261), I will now look at its correspondence with scripture and how it can be applied in the Christian context.

Get on the Balcony

The balcony perspective is the larger perspective. It is being able to see patterns, issues, and context that would be difficult to see from below. From a theological point of view, the ultimate perspective would be a heavenly one. Since God is our Creator, we can respond in a way that honours his creative work. Since God is our Redeemer, we can respond in a way that participates in his redemptive work. Since God is our Sustainer, we can exercise our faith confidently in his providence. These are perspectives that are beyond the scope of Adaptive Leadership, but they arise when Adaptive Leadership is subject to theological reflection.

A passage that highlights the ability to see from a heavenly perspective is 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. In this passage, the Apostle Paul reminded the church in Corinth to see beyond their present sufferings. Even though they were going through difficulty, their "light and momentary affliction" (v. 17) was the very thing that would lead to renewal and eternal reward. This redefined the issue from simply trying to reduce and eliminate suffering. The challenge of faith is to see heavenly values that are growing or being stored in heaven. There is more beyond our present circumstances. There is a heavenly perspective.

Within the principle of getting on the balcony, is the idea of maintaining a connection with both the balcony and the dance floor, to be an observer and a participant. From a theological perspective, this can be seen in the leadership of the Apostle Paul. The balcony perspective as described above is clearly communicated in all of the Apostle Paul's letters. For example, in Ephesians 1:1-14, he reminded the church in Ephesus about what is happening in the spiritual realm and about the spiritual blessings that God has given. The dance floor perspective is also clearly communicated throughout the Apostle Paul's letters. In 1 Thessalonians 2, he wrote about how his love for people caused him to work tirelessly. "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:8-9). The Apostle Paul spoke about being fellow workers with others. "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's

field, God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). This is also reflected through Romans 16 in verses 3, 7, 9 and 21. The Adaptive Leadership idea of maintaining a connection with both the balcony and the dance floor is present in the Apostle Paul's leadership.

The phrase getting on the balcony has its roots in Adaptive Leadership, but the concept is also present in scripture. It is redefined through theological reflection to mean the heavenly perspective.

Identify the Adaptive Challenge

Adaptive challenges are ones that test our values, beliefs and loyalties. They stir up passions and emotions inside of us that make these challenges difficult to resolve. The Adaptive Leadership answer is not to remove the challenges. It is to identify and diagnose the challenges carefully, and then resolve them together as a team.

The task of identifying and diagnosing the challenge is a cross-over point with theology. In 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul found himself with a "thorn in the flesh" (v. 7), which he described as a "messenger of Satan" (v. 7). The initial challenge from Paul was to remove the thorn. He pleaded with the Lord three times to this effect. However, in this chapter, the challenge was redefined. Instead of removing the thorn, the Apostle Paul was encouraged to accept the thorn in order to find that God's grace was sufficient for his weaknesses. The Apostle Paul embraced this concept and went further to say that he would "boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon

me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The challenge was redefined from one of removal to one of spiritual discovery.

Heifetz provides four archetypes that help with identify the adaptive challenge. The first archetype is the gap between espoused values and behaviours. This finds correspondence in scripture with the many injunctions against hypocrisy. One particular passage speaks about both faith and works being aligned. "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17). The adaptive challenge is to align faith, which is related to values with works or actions.

The second archetype is competing commitments. In this situation, theological reflection clarifies priorities and values with the call to be loyal to Christ. "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8). While win-win situations are ideal, Heifetz and Alexander Grashow recognize that strategic choices will likely "generate losses for some groups" (Heifetz & Grashow 2009, 81). In scriptural terms, losses are required in order to move forward with faith. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). The

concept of competing commitments finds some correspondence in scripture but scripture provides spiritual purpose and meaning.

The third archetype is speaking the unspeakable. This is the analogy of the common phrase regarding the elephant in the room. There are times when adaptive challenges will not be addressed because they are painful or require change. Speaking and communicating truth is commanded all throughout scripture including in Ephesians. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). We have an obligation to speak truth to one another with compassion in order not to be led astray by "human cunning" or "deceitful schemes" (Ephesians 4:14). The outcome of speaking the truth in love is growing in maturity or greater discipleship. This is one of the ways that we love our neighbour as ourselves.

The fourth archetype is work avoidance. Heifetz identifies two ways in which this situation manifests: diverting attention and displacing responsibility. Throughout scripture, we are given the mandate to work diligently and fulfill our responsibilities. The Apostle Paul provides many references to this in his letters. For example, "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). As well, he addressed the issue of Christians who had given up working because they thought that the second coming of Christ was imminent.

> Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a

> burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-11)

The Apostle Paul's example of leadership included toil and labour. He asked the Christians in his letter to the Thessalonians to do the same.

When the writings of the Apostle Paul are examined, it is clear that adaptive challenges are present in a variety of ways. There is clear correspondence with the four archetypes presented by Heifetz. With theological reflection and with the application of the teaching of the Apostle Paul, there is greater refinement of the adaptive challenge for Christians. Referring to 2 Corinthians 12, the challenge is not to remove the thorn, but to see it as an opportunity for spiritual discovery.

Regulate Distress

Heifetz teaches that conflict between people or groups can be helpful. It can provide an impetus that leads to adaptive change. So the work of Adaptive Leadership is to regulate the temperature of the conflict. That is, to keep it hot enough that the conflict is not forgotten. But also, to keep it cold enough that it does not boil over into becoming unmanageable. The Apostle Paul tried to regulate the distress or the difficult circumstances facing the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, he told them to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." This was an exhortation not to shy away from their difficulties, but to face them with courage and perseverance. But the last phrase of the verse provides a reminder

that there would be heavenly satisfaction. This verse holds the difficulties before the people but it also mitigates it as well.

This principle of regulating distress can be found in many places throughout scripture including the teaching of the Apostle Paul. He was no stranger to conflict and distress (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). But he wrote about finding spiritual meaning through his struggles in passages like Romans 5::3, 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 12:9-10; Philippians 1:12; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; and 2 Timothy 3:12. This has direct application to neighbourhood ministry and the work of FWBM. Our goal is not to eliminate conflict and distress; it is to find a greater depth of spiritual meaning in our conflict and distress. Adaptive Leadership is not simply modern leadership philosophy. It has parallels in theological reflection but it is theological reflection that provides clearer spiritual depth and meaning.

Maintain Disciplined Attention

Since adaptive challenges require people to re-examine their priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties, there is a need for disciplined attention on the deeper issues. From a theological perspective, the deeper issues are spiritual in nature. In Philippians 3:12-16, the Apostle Paul reminded the church in Philippi to keep a disciplined focus on "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." He told them not to look backward but to press forward towards this goal. This is a reminder that the way of faith is not easy and effortless. It requires a disciplined focus on what really matters. It is a challenge to take hold of our identity as followers of Jesus as

the Apostle Paul wrote, "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12).

Give the Work Back to the People

Adaptive Leadership for Heifetz is the opposite of an authoritarian style of leadership. It is the work of Adaptive Leadership to give the work back to the people. The result of this principle is the development of everyone involved. This includes abilities, talents, critical thinking and smart decision making. Adaptive is a characteristic that applies to everyone in the team rather than just to the one in position of authority.

One of the powerful images of the church, given to us by the Apostle Paul, is that of the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, physical body parts are described as attached to one another but different in function. The attachment process is accomplished through the Spirit and includes Jews and Greeks, slaves and free (1 Corinthians 12:13). The difference in function is described in verses 15 and 16: "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body." The implication is that each body part has a specific function that cannot be replaced by other body parts. Through the analogy of a physical human body, the implication is that Christians are connected to one another and have a specific role to play in the effective functioning of the body of Christ. One of the aims of Christian leadership is to equip the laity or to help people find their roles and fulfill their God-given calling. This parallels the

Adaptive Leadership principle of giving the work back to the people. In neighbourhood ministry, one of the aims of FWBM is to inspire and encourage Christians living in the neighbourhood to be the presence of Christ in their community.

Protect Leadership Voices from Below

Heifetz finds value in differences of opinion and contrary ideas. It is too easy to discount these dissenting voices because of their inability to articulate or cooperate. However, these voices are valuable in providing warning against groupthink or blind following.

In theological terms, we are exhorted to "be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). Listening is a virtue over angry reactions. We are told to, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). While these verses on their own do not fully describe the Adaptive Leadership principle of protecting leadership voices from below, together they provide this foundation.

In 1 Corinthians 12, as described in the previous Adaptive Leadership principle, the Apostle Paul gave the analogy of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul went further to say that the weaker and less honourable body parts are treated with greater honour. This is an intentional valuing in order to allow each part of the body to function well. It is important to protect leadership voices from below.

Adaptive Leadership Conclusion

Adaptive Leadership principles can be found throughout scripture. I have found parallels in the teaching of the Apostle Paul. But not only are there scriptural similarities, I have found that my personal experience has been given a voice through Adaptive Leadership. I love the idea of living by faith and embracing what could be described as adaptive challenges. I consider ministry in the neighbourhood and the work of FWBM to be adaptive by nature. There is little control over the environment and circumstances. There is a wide variety of beliefs, loyalties, and values. There is interpersonal conflict as neighbours interact with each other on a daily basis. These challenges address matters of the heart and are less technical and more adaptive in nature. This is why the second half of my understanding of leadership is described as exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. Adaptive Leadership has helped me to understand this aspect of leadership more clearly. I find that it is confirmed in scripture as well.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to reflect theologically on my personal philosophy of Christian leadership. This has not been an easy process, nor one that I would have chosen to do out of recreation or leisure. However, it has been a valued and important part of my formation and becoming. I have learned over the years that theological reflection cannot be bypassed by adopting the ideas, philosophies, and teachings of others. It is more helpful when it is hard won through faith seeking understanding. This has been my understanding of the process that led to my definition, that Christian leadership is inviting others to a

closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances. This definition is built on the themes of invitation and adaptation. First, the theme of invitation comes directly from scripture. The invitational leadership of Jesus is gentle but powerful. It is subtle but restorative. It is simple but profound. It goes beyond our understanding of invitation in a social sense. It is an invitation to walk closer to Jesus even to the point of experiencing suffering for Jesus and with Jesus.

Second, the theme of adaptation was discovered through learning about Adaptive Leadership. I resonated with the teaching of Heifetz et al., and found it corresponded both to scripture and my personal experience. It confirmed my understanding of the challenge of faith. Everyday I am invited to step out in faith and not to shrink back. Some of these challenges are adaptive in nature, that "can only be addressed through changes in peoples' priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 19). Scripture defines similar challenges from a spiritual perspective. Difficult circumstances are given so that our faith grows stronger. All of this has become part of what Christian Leadership means to me. Christian Leadership is inviting others to a closer walk with Jesus and exercising one's faith even in difficult circumstances.

Third, the themes of invitation and adaptation have naturally become part of the work and ministry of FWBM. It is a personal invitation for me to be involved in the ministry of Jesus in the neighbourhood. Extending it further, like the disciples Andrew and Philip, I have the privilege to invite others to participate in this same work. The invitation goes beyond simple welcome and hospitality. It

is an invitation to walk closer to Jesus even in the face of difficult circumstances. Additionally, the theme of adaptation is part of the nature of neighbourhood ministry. There are differences, uncertainties, and challenges that require an adaptive response. When understood through the lens of theological reflection, there is a depth and richness that challenges one's heart and faith. This is the beauty of the neighbourhood, the ministry, and the people. This provides the foundation for both good ministry and also good research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

At the beginning of my DMin journey, I experienced a ministry transition from serving as the lead minister in a Presbyterian church to becoming the Executive Director and Pastor for Flow Without Bounds Ministries (FWBM). The transition was easier than expected because I was ready for a change in ministry. I went from inability to move forward together in church leadership (due to differences in vision and theology), to freedom to be present in a neighbourhood and engage with people in a manner that was seeking to follow the way of Jesus. At FWBM, I found a partnership with volunteers and those on the Board of Directors that valued people and relationships. I also discovered a group of Christians living in the neighbourhood who wanted to give and serve in many ways. God was present in the neighbourhood through the depths of despair of some people's lives, and acts of kindness, generosity, and hospitality of others. There is beauty in the lives of these people. Within this context came the opportunity to conduct a research project. I will now present the basis for the research project and the findings.

Research Question and Opportunity

Relationships between those living in subsidized housing communities and local churches are difficult to develop at times. Based on my experience as Executive Director of FWBM, I have seen churches reach out through advertising

and programs but find a lack of participation from those living in the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood. I have also spoken with people living in this neighbourhood about attending a local church, but, sadly, heard stories of alienation.

Through the work of FWBM, we invite volunteers, churches, and Christ-centred neighbours living in Kin Village and Trinity Square, to live as Jesus lived: to live a life of love and humble service, transcending differences by being good to one another, building genuine and authentic relationships, offering prayers of hope to those in need, working together for the good of the community, building partnerships with neighbours, organizations, and churches, and joining together in becoming a beautiful society of Jesus followers. As Executive Director of FWBM and a DMin student, a contextually relevant research question was: what will happen when Christian neighbours in a subsidized housing community and representatives from local churches meet together to go through an Appreciative Inquiry process?

Response: Intended Purpose and Intended Outcomes

The intended purpose of this research project was to further the work of ministry in the neighbourhood of Kin Village and Trinity Square in a manner that would build relationships between neighbours living in a subsidized housing community and representatives from local churches. This was an opportunity for discussion and collaboration between these two somewhat disparate groups, providing space for people to share honestly and openly. I wanted to work together in a hopeful manner rather than potentially reinforcing negative

stereotypes of the other. The method of Appreciative Inquiry was chosen for this reason.

Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based methodology developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivasta. "Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005, 8). The challenge of this method for this specific ministry context is that Appreciative Inquiry was developed as a process within an organization, as noted in the above quote, rather than between different groups. As a result, there was some modification of the process which will be described in further detail later.

The intended outcome of this research project was to find ways for representatives from local area churches and neighbours associated with the FWBM house church to work together in a positive, hopeful, and tangible way. I wanted the group as a whole to see the potential of ministry together. For Christians in the neighbourhood, my hope was that they would be supported in being the presence of Christ in the neighbourhood. For local church leaders, my hope was that they would see the beauty of the neighbourhood in the lives of people and that God was already present and working. While Appreciative Inquiry does not prescribe outcomes, these were my hopes for the process.

Research Ethics: Consent, Access, Risk and Supervision

This project followed the research ethics best practices described in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE), as well as the specific guidelines of the Tyndale Research and Ethics Board (REB). Access to the neighbourhood participants and church representatives was granted by permission of the Board of Directors of FWBM, to whom I am accountable. At the beginning of the project, informed consent was obtained from all participants. All participants had the option to attend or not attend the sessions. At the beginning of each session, participants were briefed on any ethical concerns related to the project. All group work and findings from the previous sessions were available to them. All information gathered was handled with the strictest confidence; the results were anonymized in this research report. The project was approved by my faculty supervisor Dr. Mark Chapman. The Tyndale Research Ethics Board issued their approval certificate on April 25, 2024.

Context

During my ministry transition after serving as a Presbyterian minister for over twenty-five years, I shared with my wife, my family and friends, that "I was praying for a place of greater [sic] evangelism" (Ma 2022, personal conversations). I told them that I did not know exactly what that meant (in the sense of the exact ministry context), but that I wanted to spend the next chapter of my life helping others to come to faith in Jesus Christ and become his disciples. I wanted to be challenged to live by faith and put my faith into practice everyday.

So, I found it both refreshing and terrifying to begin my vocation anew in a subsidized housing community through FWBM.

FWBM works in the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood, located in Markham, Ontario, north of 16th Avenue between Woodbine Avenue and Rodick Road. The community is comprised of 287 households with 187 belonging to Kin Village and 100 to Trinity Square. Most units are two or three-bedroom townhomes with subsidized rent geared to income. Some units are available as market rental housing. Both Kin Village and Trinity Square are managed by non-profit housing corporations and are on the Subsidized Housing list for York Region. In order to qualify financially, applicants must have a total household income of less than $80,000 and a total household value of assets of less than $75,000.

Demographically, the Kin Village neighbourhood differs compared to the wider community. Specifically, there are more single parent families, a younger median age, less visible minorities, and less household income, while employment levels are similar.

Table 1: Demographics of the Kin Village Neighbourhood

	In Kin Village	**In all of Markham**
Family composition – two parent families	35%	85%
Family composition – single parent families	65%	15%
Median age	33.6 years old	42.4 years old
Visible minorities	68%	82%

Percentage of immigrants	39%	59%
Labour Force Status – employed	49%	52%
% reporting <$50,000 household income	39%	20%

(Statistics Canada 2021)

In my experience, the people in the neighbourhood are friendly and open. But there is also frustration, discouragement, and broken relationships. As a result, ministry is not simply and completely about a lack of money or troubled finances; it is about reconciliation and the restoration of relationships at all levels. FWBM seeks to encourage neighbours to be connected with God, each other, and local churches. We encourage Christians to be the presence of Christ in the neighbourhood. We do this through the programs of FWBM including house church, youth mentoring, compassion ministry, and community events. But in reality, it is the way that we go about doing these programs with a deep sense of faith and partnership with God and each other, that makes the difference.

From the local church perspective, I have heard of several churches who are interested in making a difference in the neighbourhood. However, over the years, they have tried different forms of outreach and programs, only to find participation from the community to be lacking. In discussing this with me, local church leaders expressed a sense of frustration that they were not able to engage successfully with the neighbourhood.

Additionally, there are cultural differences between the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood and the local churches. In terms of culture, local churches are more commonly of one ethnicity. The three closest churches to Kin

Village and Trinity Square are known as the Chinese Baptist, Chinese Catholic and Arabic Presbyterian congregations. However, the people of Kin Village and Trinity Square are predominantly non-Asian with a mix of ethnicities.

The spiritual context of the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood is difficult to describe in a comprehensive manner. However, I have personally found many people who are open to spiritual discussions. Some people have a strong faith which naturally leads to talking about God. Some people have gone through heart-breaking situations or are facing tremendous challenges. This also naturally leads to talking about spiritual matters.

This is the context of my project including my personality and leadership, the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood, the relationship with the local churches, cultural differences and the spiritual openness of the neighbourhood. All of this provided the basis for the field research project.

Models and Other Resources

The DMin program has helped me reflect on my own model of leadership and how it developed through life experience. This section of the paper will summarize my ministry leadership model and philosophy and examine other literature.

Background from Ministry Leadership Model and Philosophy

My philosophy of leadership is based on two themes, invitation and adaptation. The language of invitation is powerful in scripture and foundational to my understanding of leadership. All throughout scripture, God invited people to participate in his Kingdom and enter into a covenantal relationship. In the Old

Testament, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord called his chosen people to walk in his ways and follow his paths (Isaiah 2). The Lord called prophets, priests and kings to deliver his message, mediate the covenant, and lead his people. In the New Testament, Jesus called his disciples to leave their nets and become fishers of men and women (John 1:35-51). He broke through cultural, religious and gender barriers to invite people to follow him. This was an invitation to mentorship, leadership, and future succession in ministry. But it was also a call to experience suffering and persecution, as an integral part of the process (John 21:15-23). Throughout scripture and in my understanding of leadership, it is God who initiates.

Therefore, it is important to discover and recognize God's invitation that is already at work in a community. Our desire to engage in a neighbourhood is not simply about our initiative. We are not the first to bring mission and ministry to an area. God has already been there. The Kingdom has already come. We need to find where God is already at work and join in.

The second leadership theme that defines my philosophy of leadership is adaptation. The adaptive leadership (AL) model was introduced by Heifetz in 1994. Adaptive Leadership is a framework to handle complex challenges in a manner that is contextually relevant, flexible, empowering, and engaging. Adaptive Leadership is "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz et al. 2009, 14). However, I find the principles of AL to be present in biblical story and teaching. I resonate with the challenge of AL as the challenge of applying Christian faith under difficult circumstances.

From my perspective, it is AL that provides a depth of understanding that parallels my understanding of Christian leadership. This is detailed in my philosophy of leadership section of my research portfolio.

In order to grow in appreciation for a subsidized housing community, the challenge of adaptive leadership and the challenge of applying Christian faith are also present. I want to see the beauty of these challenges in that context. I want to be inspired by people in these situations, as well as provide support and encouragement by walking together as neighbours.

Other Literature and Cases

In the 1980s, a network of missional writers and thinkers was formed largely around the writings of Leslie Newbigin, a missionary who had served in India for over thirty years (Guder 1998, 10). The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) explored the connection between the gospel and contemporary culture, eventually developing into the Missional Church movement. This movement is centred on God as a missionary or sending God. The goal is not the establishment of the church but participation in God's mission. In his book, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, Alan Roxburgh criticizes his own early understanding of the missional church when he understood it as an element of ecclesiology (Roxburgh 2011, 36). Instead, he advocates for Christians to "enter the neighborhoods and communities where you live. Sit at the table of the other, and there you may begin to hear what God is doing" (Roxburgh 2011, 77).

Another movement that plays a role in my understanding of neighbourhood ministry is Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). John

McKnight and John Kretzmann's innovative book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (1993), laid out the principles of ABCD with the focus on leveraging the strengths of a community rather than focussing on the deficits. McKnight (1995, 123) is trying to recover from communities taken over by professionalized services. He writes about the importance of each other, "Community is about the common life that is lived in such a way that the unique creativity of each person is a contribution to the other. The crisis we have created in the lives of excluded people is that they are disassociated from their fellow citizens" (McKnight 1995, 123). This sense of disconnection and disassociation is at the heart of the problem of poverty. In the book, *Walking with the Poor*, Myers comes to the same understanding when he wrote, "The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational" (Myers 2011, 116). Myers goes further to provide a theological framework for the cause of poverty that disconnection and alienation is a result of sin. "For the Christian, the biblical story provides an unambiguous answer. Sin is what distorts these relationships. Sin is the root of deception, distortion, and domination. When God is on the sidelines or written out of our story, we do not treat each other well" (Myers 2011, 117). Corbett and Fikkert build on Myers' work, to define poverty as a series of broken relationships with self, community, creation, and God. This is described as "a Poverty of Being, a Poverty of Community, a Poverty of Stewardship, and a Poverty of Spiritual Intimacy" (Corbett & Fikkert 2014, 181). As I have interacted with people and heard their stories, I can see this definition of poverty in the Kin Village and

Trinity Square neighbourhood. Aspects of broken relationships are also present in all of our lives and in the volunteers of FWBM.

In the beginning of my work with FWBM, I was introduced to the teaching of Corbett and Fikkert, which I found personally inspiring. It allowed me to think about poverty and need, as a set of broken relationships, rather than simply a lack of resources. It also introduced me to the idea of asset-based or strengths-based approaches. Corbett and Fikkert summarize Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and describe three common approaches to ABCD: Asset Mapping, Participatory Learning and Action, and Appreciative Inquiry (2014, 126-129). Asset Mapping interviews people or groups to develop a list of abilities and resources in a community. Both Participatory Learning and Action and Appreciative Inquiry seek to empower and energize community members to take greater initiative in their community. The idea of change coming from within and focussing on strengths is common to all three approaches. The Missional Church movement, ABCD, the idea of poverty as a set of broken relationships, and Appreciative Inquiry provided foundational thinking for my understanding of neighbourhood ministry. Later, when I learned about Participatory Action Research and Appreciation Inquiry through the DMin program, I found a beautiful convergence of ideas that led to a research project in my ministry context based on the Appreciative Inquiry approach.

Project, Methodology, and Methods

This section of my research report describes the project and the context of the time and place that it occurred. It describes the field, scope, methodology, methods, data collected, phases, timetable, and ethics.

Field

This project was conducted in three different apartments of neighbours in Kin Village and Trinity Square. The apartments were the best space available for this project for the following reasons: First, they allowed the neighbours to be the host adding to the idea of partnership with the local churches. Second, they provided the closest and easiest access for neighbours. Third, they introduced church representatives to the neighbourhood. Fourth, the community centre room in Kin Village, which would have been a sensible choice, was not open or available to us.

The participants were the neighbours in the community, representatives from local churches, and FWBM volunteers, along with myself as researcher. Participants were above the age of majority with the freedom to opt out at any time.

The neighbours were those who were active in the community and participated in Christian community whether through house church or FWBM programs. The local church representatives were either pastors or lay leaders who were interested in neighbourhood ministry.

The churches represented are named anonymously as First Church, Second Church, Third Church, Fourth Church, and Fifth Church. For Fourth

Church, the person attending was also active in the FWBM mentoring program as a mentor coach. For Fifth Church, the person attending was the founder of FWBM approximately fifteen years prior, well known in the community, and a regular preacher at the FWBM house church, but was currently the lead minister at Fifth Church.

The FWBM volunteers were those who have served in the neighbourhood providing both practical and spiritual support through FWBM programs. I consider all of the participants as friends and partners in ministry.

Scope

The project invited participants from local area churches and neighbours associated with the FWBM house church. I had a personal relationship with each of the people invited. Based on my conversations, I knew that they were interested in neighbourhood ministry. Of the local area churches, I asked leaders from eight churches. Some were pastors and others were lay leaders. Of the FWBM house church, I invited everyone who was associated with our house church.

Methodology

The methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was used for this research project. AI is an asset-based or strengths-based method of organizational change developed by David Cooperrider and his mentor Suresh Srivastva, at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio. "AI is based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change" (Cooperrider et al

2008, 3). The 4-D model of AI is the original and includes the following steps: discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Other practitioners of AI have suggested a 5-D model with the addition of "definition" at the beginning of the cycle (Bushe 2011, 4). Still others have suggested a more different set of labels with the 4-I model (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement) (Preskill & Catsambas 2006, 15). Based on my personal and ministry context, I decided that the group would connect better with the labels of inquire, imagine, innovate, and implement. These labels seemed to be more concrete and realistic.

The meetings consisted of a series of four focused discussions following the 4-I Appreciative Inquiry model (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement). I began each discussion with a short devotional that framed our discussion within the idea that God was already at work in the neighbourhood. The four devotional themes I chose were based on my theological understanding of the invitational nature of God. Each meeting lasted approximately ninety minutes. The project occurred over a period of four weeks.

Based on the work of Cooperrider et al. (2008), I outline the four Appreciative Inquiry phases. The first phase, "inquire," attempts to uncover the best of "what is" including peak moments in a community's history. It asks the questions such as, "what gives life?" and "what is working?" to discover the factors that lead to beauty, value and effectiveness in the community. The second phase, "imagine" asks the questions, "what might be?" and "what are we being called to become?" The goal is to create shared images of a desired future together within the participants. The third phase, "innovate" attempts to move

from vision to reality. Participants are tasked to create "provocative propositions" or "possibility statements." The questions that are asked include "What should be?" and "What would the community look like if dreams and ideals were to be realized?" The fourth phase, "implement," develops timeline and agency. "Who will do what by when?" The task is to plan for the "provocative propositions" to be put into effect. The goal is for participants to take ownership and be willing to work together.

In my ministry context, AI methodology was adapted to bring two somewhat disparate groups together. The discussion focussed on the area of neighbourhood ministry and how neighbours and churches can work together in healthy and sustainable ways. There was less emphasis on the fourth phase of implementation or taking ownership since these groups were coming together for the first time.

Methods

This section will discuss the specific procedures that I used to collect and analyze data. Each Appreciative Inquiry session generated its own unique set of data.

Data from the Appreciative Inquiry Process

The AI sessions provided data and data analysis in and of themselves. The people who participated in the sessions formed a team working together through the stages of inquire, imagine, innovate, and implement. The first session, inquire, generated data based on participants interviewing each other. The data collected through these sessions included notes from participants, my field notes as the

researcher, and observations from the research assistant. The research assistant was in the background during each session, typing observations into a computer laptop. Between the first and second sessions, I took the notes from the participants and coded them using the descriptive coding technique as a first cycle coding method. "Descriptive Coding leads primarily to a categorized inventory, tabular account, summary, or index of the data's contents" (Saldana 2013, 89). Descriptive coding was used to itemize the major themes of discussion among all of the participants. The list of coded themes from the participants was checked against my field notes and the research assistant's observations. The list of themes was presented in the second session in order to prepare the participants for the imagine phase of AI.

The second session was conducted in larger groups of four to six people. These groups were asked to discuss the themes discovered in the first session in order to describe a desired future together. The data collected consisted of large paper sheets (20x23 inches) of notes and drawings from the groups, along with my field notes and observations from the research assistant. Between the second and third sessions, this data was summarized by me to produce a description of key areas of ministry to work together on that incorporated the discussions of the groups. The resulting summary was checked against my personal field notes and the research assistant's observations. The results were presented in the third session in order to prepare the participants for the innovate phase of AI.

The third session was conducted as a time of personal reflection and sharing. As the participants reflected on the large paper sheets from the last

session, representing a desired future together, along with key areas of ministry work, they were asked to share about what would be best and what they cared about the most. There was not enough time to synthesize this sharing as a group into a summary or provocative proposal. So I used my personal field notes and the observations from the research assistant in order to produce a rough statement of purpose that expressed the hopes of the group in our work together. Every effort was made to use the exact phrases from the discussion so that people could identify with the statement. This was presented in the implement phase of AI.

The fourth session was a brainstorming session that produced possibilities of churches and Christian neighbours working together. With the rouch statement of purpose as inspiration, the data collected was concrete ideas that could be prayed over, worked on, and implemented together. Cooperrider and Whitney report that their early experience of the fourth session was to focus on "action planning, developing implementation strategies, and dealing with conventional challenges of sustainability" (2009, 34). However, they found greater momentum and energy by empowering participants to organize and plan next steps. "Our experience suggests that organizational change needs to look a lot more like an inspired movement than a neatly packaged or engineered product" (Cooperrider & Whitney 2009, 34).

Data from Field Notes

Following each AI sessions, I took time to reflect on the meeting and write my field notes through participant observation. This was triangulated by the research assistant's observations. This data was used to provide a thick

description of the AI process and to tell the story of the research project in my ministry context.

Phases and Timetable

This section lays out the actions and dates of the research project in a table format.

Table 2: Phases and Timetable

Obtain permission from the Research Ethics Board and Tyndale DMin Program	April 2024
Obtain permission and consent from participants	July 2024
Session One: Inquiry - What gives life? What is working?	July 24, 2024
Summary Session One: through Data Analysis – first cycle coding	July 25, 2024
Session Two: Imagine - What might be? What are we called to become	July 31, 2024
Summary of Session Two: Themes identified	August 1, 2024
Session Three: Innovate - What should be?	August 7, 2024
Summary of Session Three: Provocative Proposal	August 8, 2024
Session Four: Implement - Who will do what, by when?	August 14, 2024
Summary of Session Four: Concrete Proposals	August 15, 2024
Research Report Writeup	September to December 2024

AI Sessions Attendance

Attendance was taken by the research assistant for each session. This is described in the following table.

Table 3: AI Sessions Attendance

	No. of neighbours	No. of Church representatives	No. of FWBM volunteers	Totals
Session One July 24, 2024	8	4	4	16
Session Two July 31, 2024	5	4	3	12
Session Three August 7, 2024	6	4	4	14
Session Four August 14, 2024	5	3	1	9

Continuity of Attendees

There was not a complete consistency of attendance among the participants. This is described in the table below with specific attendees identified by an alphabetic letter.

Table 4: Continuity of Attendees

	Neighbours	Church Representatives	FWBM volunteers
Session One July 24, 2024	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H	J, K, L, M	O, P, Q, R
Session Two July 31, 2024	A, D, E, F, I	J, K, L, N	O, P, Q
Session Three	A, C, D, E, F, G	K, L, M, N	O, Q, R, S

August 7, 2024			
Session Four August 14, 2024	A, C, D, G, H	J, K, L	O

Demographics of Attendees

I did not require attendees to disclose any demographic information. But based on my personal relationship with each person, I can offer a rough demographic picture of the attendees in order to get a better sense of the people involved.

For the neighbours, there were nine people who came to the meetings. In terms of age, three were adults under the age of forty years old, one was between forty and sixty-five years old, and five were over the age of sixty-five. In terms of gender, two were male and three were female. In terms of ethnicity, there was a mix of cultures including Canadian, Scottish, Jamaican, Trinidadian, Hong Kong, Brazilian, and Persian. In terms of years in the neighbourhood, one had just come in the last two years, two had come in the last fifteen years, and six had been in the neighbourhood for over twenty years. Additionally, one neighbour was in a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy. Another neighbour was in a wheelchair due to epilepsy.

For the church representatives, there were five people who came to the meetings. In terms of age, all of them were between the age of forty and sixty-five years old. In terms of gender, two were male and three were female. In terms of ethnicity, there was a mix of cultures including Canadian, Hong Kong, and Sri

Lankan. In terms of years with relationships in the neighbourhood, two had no relationships, one was familiar with the neighbourhood for the past five years, and two had long term relationships over the past fifteen years.

The group as a whole was mixed in age, gender, ethnicity, and years in the neighbourhood.

Ethics in Ministry Based Research

As the Executive Director of FWBM, a pastor in the community, and the researcher, I wanted to minimize or reduce the sense of obligation that potential participants might feel. This work began with a verbal invitation to be part of a research project with the purpose of working together for the good of the community. If people were open to hearing more, I shared the idea of building relationships between neighbours living in a subsidized housing community and representatives from local churches. I invited them to participate but told them if they were not interested or available, that I appreciated our relationship whether it was as a friend or partner in ministry. I also told them that if they came but could not make all of the four meetings for any reason, they were still welcome to take part. This provided an informal start to participation rather than a formal letter of invitation.

I was particularly concerned for the neighbours living in the subsidized housing community. Some feel a stigma of being looked down upon by outsiders. I wanted this to be about partnership together and the beauty of the community rather than about negative stereotypes. I invited neighbours to a meeting where I introduced the information sheet and consent form. There were seven neighbours

who attended this meeting with a variety of responses. Some were happy to sign the consent form without any question. A couple of people had concerns with the title of the research project. They felt that it was disrespectful or demeaning to use the term subsidized housing community. I invited discussion to learn more about the underlying issues of this concern. One of the neighbours said that the words subsidized housing should be removed. Another neighbour countered saying that that community is exactly subsidized housing. As the discussion continued, I learned that the fear was that this title would be posted on flyers inviting everyone in the neighbourhood to participate. I explained that this was an academic title and that only a limited number of people, particularly those associated with our neighbourhood house church, were being invited to participate. Once this was explained, the concern appeared to be resolved.

I also felt that it was appropriate to offer a token of appreciation in the form of a twenty-dollar Tim Horton's gift card. I thought it would be a nice gesture as many neighbours speak of walking to the local coffee shop. This was approved by the Research Ethics Board with the condition that the gift card was offered to all people even if they were not able to make all four meetings.

Another concern was to find the best time to meet in order to provide access for both neighbours and church representatives. Since we had developed a semi-regular meeting time of Wednesdays at 3:00 pm for those associated with the house church in order to talk about the neighbourhood and plan future events, I chose the same time to meet for our AI sessions.

Findings, Interpretations, and Outcomes

This section of the report takes the data from the project and describes the findings, interpretations and outcomes.

Findings

Each Appreciative Inquiry session generated its own unique set of data with each session building upon the previous one. The combined group of neighbours and church representatives were also part of the data analysis as "Appreciative Inquiry is a cooperative and coevolutionary approach searching for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them" (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005, 8). Another group of people that were present for the meetings were FWBM volunteers. I didn't consider them to be a distinct group as they were there to help the process.

Session One

The first session was titled, "Inquiry – What gives life? What is working?" I began by welcoming all participants and sharing a devotional based on John 1:14 with the title "God invites us to be with him. God is already at work in our neighbourhoods." I also introduced the concept of Appreciative Inquiry by describing five principles: positive, constructionist, poetic, simultaneity, and anticipatory. I thought by describing these principles, it would allow participants to understand the process in order to be engaged and involved. I did not receive any feedback on the value of Appreciative Inquiry principles in the minds of participants. However, this would come to light in the second session.

Based on the number of neighbours, church representatives and FWBM volunteers, six groups were created for the one-on-one interviews. There were two limitations that required some adaptation. First, there were only four church representatives compared to eight neighbours. It made sense to pair each church representative with a neighbour. The additional neighbours were assigned to interview each other, along with a FWBM volunteer who could provide a local church perspective. Second, some of the neighbours had limitations in their conversation and writing due to their health conditions. In these cases, a FWBM volunteer was assigned to each of these groups in order to facilitate the interviews. These adaptations resulted in three groups of two and three groups of three for a total of six groups altogether.

Based on my understanding of both the neighbourhood and the AI process, I adapted the questions to fit the context of the neighbourhood (Cooperrider et al. 2008, 107). The groups were asked to interview each other with the following questions:

1. Think back on your experience in Kin Village and Trinity Square to a time when you were most energized, involved and passionate for the neighbourhood. Tell a story about that time. What happened? What were you doing? What were others doing? Were local churches involved? What contributed to the success you experienced?
2. What do you value most about the Kin Village and Trinity Square community? What is healthy and life-giving about the relationships here? Give some examples.
3. When you think about church involvement or Christians being present in Kin Village and Trinity Square, what has been valuable and effective ministry? Give some examples.
4. What are three wishes or prayers you have for Kin Village and Trinity Square? Describe them in detail if possible.

Following the interview time, each person was given a time to share about their interview with the other person. A summary of each person's sharing was recorded by the research assistant.

The data generated included ten handwritten notes from the six groups of interviews along with the observations of the research assistant and my field notes. Following the meeting, I transcribed the interview notes into one document. Any additional statements or thoughts that were captured by the research assistant or me but not in the interview notes were added to the document. I read through the document several times to ensure the accuracy of the content as well as to reflect on the best method of analysis. I chose to use descriptive coding as a first cycle coding method in NVivo (qualitative data analysis software) in order to itemize the major themes. This is presented below:

Table 5: Session One Themes

Themes Identified During Session One

Loving and Helping in Times of Need	22
Churches and Neighbours Relationship	21
Activities and Events	13
Worshipping Together	13
Becoming Disciples of Jesus	12
Mentoring and Supporting Children	12
Being a Good Neighbour	11
Welcome and Invitation	10
Facilities and Space	8
Organizing Events and Activities	6
Communicating to the Neighbourhood	6
Conversations with People	2
Working Together	1

I did not generate a summary of the answers for each of the questions because of the wide variety of responses. But in retrospect, I believe that could have helped people to identify with the themes to a greater extent.

Session Two

The second session was titled, "What might be? What are we called to become?" I began by welcoming all participants and sharing a devotional based on Matthew 14:13-21 with the title "God invites us to be partners in his work. The miracle of the loaves and fish." I explained my understanding of partnership with God as being similar to the story of the loaves and fish. We are the ones who provide the loaves and fish. God is the one who multiplies our efforts and makes them effective. I briefly described the Appreciative Inquiry process and shared a summary of the last meeting, presenting the "Themes Identified During Session One." At this point, one of the neighbours interrupted the session by expressing disappointment with the process. The neighbour did not like the direction of the meeting and thought everyone should share about their heart for the neighbourhood. As the facilitator of the meeting, I let the neighbour talk for a few minutes and then asked if the neighbour wanted to talk privately after the meeting or during the discussion. The neighbour continued to talk about other matters. I thanked the neighbour for speaking but said that we wanted everyone to give input through this meeting. The neighbour decided to continue being part of the meeting.

The groups were asked to discuss the following based on the Appreciative Inquiry process (Cooperrider et al. 2008, 131):

1. Imagine this group together, supporting and encouraging one another, being brothers and sisters in Christ, doing effective ministry in the community. Describe or paint a picture of how people are working together. Please use the present tense to describe this picture.
2. Write down the themes that are represented in this future picture.
3. On a separate piece of paper, draw a picture of these themes and how they fit together.

After the group discussion, each of the groups chose someone to present their findings. The data generated included the flipchart notes and diagrams along with notes from both the research assistant and me. Because of the composite nature of the group and a lack of time, the meeting closed in prayer without the opportunity for the group to analyze and further refine the presented results.

Following the meeting, I took photographs of the flipchart work and reviewed the data including the research assistant's observations and my field notes. After reading and re-reading the data, I grouped the findings into three main themes and summarized the data into three pictures of a shared future together.

Open the Community Centre!
- A place for the community to gather and support one another
- A place where neighbours can book events
- A place which is open for people to drop in
- A place for daily activities—exercise, arts and crafts, bingo, how to write a resume, computer skills, technology education, prayer group
- A place for special events—Christmas party / Easter services

Neighbours Help Neighbours!
- Neighbours caring for one another—cooking, food bank, generosity, time, resources
- Neighbours discipling one another—inspiring others to grow in faith—Bible study, prayer
- Neighbours coming together to grow together as a community

- Flow and churches are supporting neighbours—Markham Collaborative
- Flow and churches are in the mix everywhere—another part of the community
- Flow and churches support spiritual growth and transformation

Reach Out and Support!

- Support during times of crisis, grief, and mourning
- Support for newcomers—Welcome Wagon, Village Voice
- Support for those in need of food and companionship
- Support for people with pets—dog walking, etc
- Support for those struggling with technology
- Support through neighbours, Flow, churches—Markham Collaborative

I tried to use the words of the participants themselves so that there would be greater ownership of these three pictures. In retrospect, I realized that it would have been more valuable for the group to process the data together. But there was already expressed discomfort over the process which led me to believe that extending the research process by one or two sessions was not likely to be met with positive agreement. The theme of uncomfortableness is detailed further in the next section titled, Interpretations.

Session Three

The third session was titled, "Innovate - What should be? What would the community look like if dreams and ideals were to be realized?" I began the meeting by welcoming participants and sharing a devotional based on 1 Peter 4:12-13 with the title, "God invites us to the challenge of faith." I shared a summary of the previous meeting along with three pictures of a shared future together: "Open the Community Centre! Neighbours Help Neighbours! Reach Out and Support!" The feedback that followed was positive but limited.

According to the Appreciative Inquiry process, the next step was to identify provocative propositions or design statements that incorporate the positive core (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005, 39). However, based on the concerns expressed about the Appreciative Inquiry process during the previous session (added with concerns expressed before the sessions started), I decided to limit the use of Appreciative Inquiry verbiage or vocabulary. The hope was to accomplish the same step in the process, but in a way that decreased resistance. As a result, the group was asked to take time reflect on the following questions:

1. If this group were a team, what would be best to work on together? Why?
2. With all of that has been discussed and presented, what do you care about the most?
3. Be prepared to share your thoughts, reasons and passion.

After a short time of personal reflection, the group met together as whole, with each person given time to share their thoughts. The sharing was honest, passionate and practical. Some built on the three pictures of a shared future together. The meeting itself was unstructured which allowed the neighbours to be spontaneous and passionate about their sharing (research assistant's notes 2024, session three). The data that resulted from this session were the observations of the research assistant and my field notes.

There was not enough time to cover the last step of Session Three, "Gather into groups around a common purpose, and come up with bold statements that reflect these ideals, faith and passion." Following the meeting, I reviewed the data and put together a rough statement of purpose in the place of the provocative proposal to be used in the next session. Care was taken to use the exact words or

phrases of the participants in order to increase ownership. This resulted in the following statement:

> We all want a close loving community that works together; that recognizes people's strengths; that provides space for people to be themselves; that listens to their stories, so that everyone can feel like they are part of the community. We can learn to work together in order to bless others.
>
> This means that we respect people and appreciate their differences including gifts, abilities, faith, and backgrounds.
>
> With God as our foundation, we want the community to be filled with unity, love and forgiveness. We believe this is how God's love is spread throughout the neighbourhood. Accepting the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts leads naturally to caring relationships with others. This includes not passing judgment on others but instead listening and getting to know our neighbours. Every act of kindness is a demonstration of God's love.
>
> Sometimes we think that people need certain things, but really what everybody needs is a friend. We can be friends and neighbours to one another. But we aren't perfect. We can end up in conflict with each other. God has a lot to teach us about how to be a true neighbour. We need to keep learning because the better we learn; the better the friendships; the more needs are met; the better the community.
>
> It can start in simple ways, including supporting immediate and urgent needs. It is helping with practical things that make a difference. It is helping people who are new to the community find what they need. It's improving communication in the neighbourhood so that people are talking to one another. It is opening up space for people to be together.
>
> As neighbours and churches, we are all part of the mix. We are all neighbours helping neighbours sharing God's love with others.

Session Four

The fourth session was titled "Implement." I began the meeting by welcoming participants and sharing a devotional based on John 1:35-42 with the title, "God invites us to work together with him." I summarized the last session and shared the rough statement of purpose and invited feedback. Participants were split into two groups of four or five and asked to consider the following:

> Look over the summary statement from Session Three and think of three or four ideas on how both Christians in the neighbourhood and churches can work together. Would you be willing to get involved with this? Be ready to share your findings with the whole group.

Following the discussion, the groups were then asked to present their ideas. The following is a summary of each group's ideas:

Group 1

1. Website to replace the Village Voice
2. Churches to open their space for coffee hour
3. Partnering with schools in the community
4. Helping PSWs learn to treat people with respect
5. Subsidy for kids' programs

Group 2

1. Website or info sheet
2. Monthly gathering where people can come and chat
3. Monthly gathering could include a kid's activity for families
4. Ask the community for ways they can help, their skills, and interests—neighbours helping neighbours

The data collected in session four includes the observations of the research assistant and my field notes.

As a result of the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, the best of the past was appreciated; a future together was envisioned; a rough statement of purpose was generated and practical ideas were given to provide concrete steps forward.

However, there were several ways that I made the AI process less participatory and more leader driven. I summarized the results of each meeting for feedback at the next meeting. I decided not to use the terminology of a provocative proposition but asked simple questions which provided for more unstructured and spontaneous sharing. The rough statement of purpose was put

together by myself, even though I used the exact words and phrases of the people. The consequence of these actions was less ownership of the process and less time spent working together. Reflecting back, it would have been helpful to ask if people would have liked to extend the meetings in order to finish the work together.

Interpretations

There is a story behind the story that must also be told. This is the story of two somewhat disparate groups coming together. The Appreciative Inquiry process brought together Christian neighbours in a subsidized housing community and representatives from local churches. Additionally, it brought together neighbours who were not all familiar with each other. It also brought together representatives from five churches who were not all familiar with each other. It provided possibilities and opportunities for ministry in the neighbourhood together.

After reading and re-reading my field notes and the research assistant's notes, I wrote down the major themes that were emerging from the background. The first was the uncomfortableness with the research process. The second was the growing relationship between participants. The third was the actions of FWBM volunteers to provide help and support for others. The fourth was the passion and energy that people had for the neighbourhood.

In order to discover more, I coded for the first two themes of uncomfortableness and growing relationship in a versus coding method (Saldana 2013, 115). I chose this approach as a way to identify either a positive or a

negative statement for each particular theme. This was a simple but efficient coding method to reveal the strength of each theme. For the theme of uncomfortableness with the research process, I coded for positive and negative sentiment towards the process. For the theme of relationship between participants, I coded for either a growing relationship or a growing distance. I considered a more complex understanding of relationships, for example, Erskine's model of relational needs (Erskine et al 1999). But I did not have that level of granularity with the data. For both themes, I felt that the versus coding method of either-or served the data best because of the simple nature of the statements. For the themes of the actions of FWBM volunteers and the passion and energy for the neighbourhood, I used descriptive coding to document both of these instances because there were nuances to the statements about these themes.

Uncomfortableness

The theme of uncomfortableness with the research process began before the Appreciative Inquiry sessions. As mentioned in the section "Ethics in Ministry Based Research" of this paper, there were initial concerns about the title of this research project. While that was able to be resolved, the uncomfortableness continued with the Appreciative Inquiry process. According to the data, there were nineteen references to negative sentiment for the Appreciative Inquiry process with two coming from local church representatives and seventeen coming from the neighbours. The two negative sentiments coming from local church representatives were expressed before the Appreciate Inquiry process began with initial doubts that the results may not be valuable or useful. The seventeen negative sentiments coming from the neighbours stemmed mainly from the

process not being in step with what was on their minds. The research assistant noted in Session Two, "In general the neighbours didn't really respond to the parts of the session where concepts and processes were being discussed (no interjections), but they engaged a lot when it was time to come up with practical ideas (some interjections)" (research assistant's notes 2024, session two). This observation was repeated in sessions three and four as well. Some of the neighbours wanted to talk about practicalities and concrete plans. When that did not happen, they expressed negative sentiment with the process.

This theme of uncomfortableness with the research process led me to change the content of Session Three. I thought that introducing the need to create a provocative proposition would cause further negative sentiment based on the discomfort expressed up to that point in the process. I found help from another Appreciative Inquiry practitioner who wrote:

> However, one area was a bit more of a struggle and at one point in the afternoon I had that sinking feeling and a little seed of doubt that we may not achieve our goals for the day. The need to create a Provocative Proposition is key and without this you struggle to progress further. As already described the Provocative Proposition is a clear statement of intent, it is your bold statement reflecting your values and assets, strengths and innate abilities. It's the opportunity to dream about a new reality! We were struggling and I was trying to understand why? (Coupland 2018)

I resonated with the idea of creating "a clear statement of intent, it is your bold statement reflecting your values and assets, strengths and innate abilities" (Coupland 2018). As a result, I simply asked people to take time to reflect on the first two sessions and share about "What would be best to work on together?" and "What do you care about most?" (Appendix H). Then in one larger group, we

went around the room to share our thoughts. My hope was that we would be inspired, leading us to create a bold statement that reflected these sharings. Unfortunately we did not have enough time to create that bold statement together, so I took it upon myself to do that work. In my field notes following the meeting, I wrote, "I felt that there was no need to try to come up with provocative propositions because this group was more interested in talking about themselves, and sharing what was on their heart. There was a spirit of kindness, love, yearning, faith, with people engaged and wanting more" (Personal Field Notes 2024). Between the third and fourth sessions, I used the sharing data to create a rough statement of purpose that was composed of the exact terms that participants had expressed in Session Three. Reflecting on this situation, I realize the limitation of crafting that statement myself was not ideal, as it did not allow for greater ownership of the statement. But with the uncomfortableness that had already been expressed and the lack of time, I felt the need to adapt the process under the circumstances. I did not ask participants whether they would be willing to add one or two more sessions to the process because of this uncomfortableness as well as the weather-related heat in August since our last meeting location did not have air conditioning.

Reflecting personally on my own uncomfortableness with the process, I recognize my limitations as an Appreciative Inquiry practitioner.
The possibility would have been to open up the process completely from the beginning with a team collaboratively designing the questions or defining the topic of discussion along with the entire group analyzing the data and talking

about the issue of uncomfortableness. I recognize the beauty of this ideal similar to the force field analysis in Chapter 2: Personal and Ministry Context of a resident-led Christian presence. But on my understanding of the context and the relationships at the time, this was not a possibility. As was pointed out in the force field analysis, there are still disagreements among neighbours. But upon reflection, I believe that the presence of representatives from local churches and FWBM volunteers helps to reduce the level of conflict. In the future, I hope to be able to test this belief which will help me to overcome my own sense of uncomfortableness.

Growing Relationships

The theme of growing relationships between participants was present all throughout my field notes and the research assistant's notes. This background theme was extremely positive with twenty-three references to a growing relationship compared to two references to growing distance between participants. This started in Session One where "people seemed to be excited, enjoying each other's company" (Personal Field Notes 2024) and a "very friendly atmosphere with neighbours all chatting" (research assistant's notes 2024, session one). This was to be expected as many of the neighbours were familiar with each other and the setting was in a neighbour's apartment. There was tentativeness to engage in the same manner with the local church representatives (research assistant's notes 2024, session one). This also was to be expected as some of the local church representatives did not know anyone and had not visited the community before. However, by the end of the first session, there were signs of growing relationships

where the research assistant reported "more mingling between groups" (research assistant's notes 2024, session one).

There were two notes of negativity or growing distance between participants. The first situation was between neighbours where it was reported to me by a FWBM volunteer that there had been a disagreement at the house church meeting on the Sunday between Appreciative Inquiry sessions one and two. When I called one of the neighbours to see if they were able to come to session two, I was told without much explanation that they were not able to make it (Personal Field Notes 2024). This proved to be the case with that neighbour not attending session two. The second note of relationship distance was expressed privately to me from a local church representative who "felt sorry for me and that she almost felt compelled to intervene during the meeting" (Personal Field Notes 2024) regarding the interruption during Session Two. This interruption was precipitated by the discomfort with the research process, which then caused relationship distance. Despite the interruption, other neighbours tried to help resolve the situation by reason and persuasion (research assistant's notes 2024, session two). This showed the kind of accommodation that different participants began to make to help the group as a whole. These accommodations included writing notes for one another, speaking slowly and clearly, and taking time to listen (research assistant's notes 2024, session two). By Session Four, there was greater rapport and a more relaxed atmosphere. The group discussion was described as "collaborative and thoughtful" (research assistant's notes 2024, session four). This resulted in people not leaving as quickly at the end of the meeting and

engaging in casual conversation (research assistant's notes 2024, session four). It reflected the final words of the summary of Session Three, "As neighbours and churches, we are all part of the mix. We are all neighbours helping neighbours sharing God's love with others" (Appendix I).

In retrospect, based on this growing relationship, it would be possible to work through the theme of uncomfortableness with the process but it would require extra meetings. Based on my initial discussions with the participants involved, most would not be able to extend the meetings through August; however, I was able to continue to invite the same participants to future meetings together months later.

FWBM Volunteers

Initially, I did not think about the need for FWBM volunteers for the research project. Some of the volunteers were regular attenders for our house church service and would have heard and received the invitation to participate. But it surprised me that they were willing to attend because I did not directly solicit their help. Even still, four volunteers decided to be part of the process. I observed with gratefulness their actions which provided help and support for others. In my field notes and the research assistant's notes, there were sixteen instances of these actions.

Based on their own personal experiences, FWBM volunteers knew the limitations of some of the neighbours and the accommodations that would be required to help them participate. There were five instances when FWBM volunteers took on the role of note-taker when they knew that writing would have been difficult for that person. There was another instance when a FWBM

volunteer (referred to as O), helped to add to the conversation during the first session interviews when keeping a conversation going would have been difficult for that person because of their health situation. Another FWBM volunteer (designated as P), led the discussion and provided a summary, which allowed the voices of two neighbours to be heard and understood.

> "So I think that the group dynamic with [Flow volunteer] P driving everything was inevitable and probably the best case scenario. After the session when everyone was leaving, both [neighbours] B and H expressed their thankfulness for how [Flow volunteer] P was able to formulate their answers into a more coherent story. They both mentioned that they don't think they are the best communicators so it was helpful to have [Flow volunteer] P get their point across." (research assistant's notes 2024, session one)

Additionally, FWBM volunteers were able to speak with and listen to both neighbours and local church representatives before and after the sessions. They provided friendship, care and conversation and most importantly allowed some of the neighbours to thrive in the research process. In my experience prior to these sessions, these kinds of actions have not been limited to FWBM volunteers but they have been displayed among the neighbours. These kinds of actions were also displayed by some of the local church representatives in the next sessions (research assistant's notes 2024, sessions two and four). I was grateful for the FWBM volunteers for all of the help and support that they provided (Personal Field Notes 2024). I recognize the value of FWBM volunteers in being involved in future meetings between representatives from local churches and neighbours associated with our FWBM house church.

Passion for the Neighbourhood

Even though there was initial skepticism shown by some of the local church representatives and uncomfortableness with the research process shown by some of the neighbours, the passion and energy that people had for the neighbourhood was shared and communicated in these meetings. In my field notes and the research assistant's notes there were thirty documented instances of this with many of them being part of the Appreciative Inquiry process. The first session asked participants to describe a time when they were most energized, involved and passionate about the neighbourhood, what they valued most about the community, and about wishes or prayers for the community. The passion of the local church representatives had a greater focus on knowing Jesus and for the church to have greater involvement in the community (research assistant's notes, session one). The passion of the neighbours had a greater focus on building a loving community that is functioning well (research assistant's notes, session one). Near the end of Session One, two sharings stood out in my mind as being more passionate. The first was a neighbour sharing that they were praying to be able to stay in this community and asked the group to pray as well (research assistant's notes, session one). The second was a neighbour saying that God loves the neighbourhood and they were all blessed to be living here (research assistant's notes, session one).

This love for the neighbourhood was less overtly expressed in Sessions Two and Four as both had a more practical focus. But Session Three asked participants to reflect personally on what they cared about the most, based on all that had been discussed and presented. I asked participants to share their thoughts,

reasons and passion (Appendix H). This led to thirteen sharings that ranged from both spiritual to practical. There were longings for people to grow to love God and others; for people to love and support one another; and for practical work to be done to build better supports in the community (research assistant's notes, session three). This was the basis for what I called a rough statement of purpose which was shared in the final session (Appendix I). Session Four built on the passionate statements of the previous session to produce practical and concrete steps forward. The Appreciative Inquiry process allowed the passion of the neighbourhood to be expressed and to inspire the group towards that purpose.

Outcomes

The research project resulted in two practical outcomes: (1) a welcome pamphlet for newcomers and (2) a meeting called, Neighbours Helping Neighbours. The welcome pamphlet (Appendix L) was put together, at a later date, by a group of neighbours during our regular Wednesday afternoon meetings. The genesis of this idea came from the suggestions of a welcome wagon and a neighbourhood newsletter made during the research project meetings. But it was further refined iteratively in future meetings to become a pamphlet. The idea was to provide practical information for people new to the neighbourhood including medical clinics, pharmacies, supermarkets, food banks, Internet services, crisis hotlines, and places of worship. The neighbours provided their own advice on what they liked about many of these places. We packaged this up with a mug, tea, hot chocolate, and small treats to form a welcome gift for newcomers. Some of

the neighbours took one to give away when appropriate with the possibility of writing their own note of welcome on the pamphlet as well.

At the time of writing this research report, the Neighbours Helping Neighbours meeting is still in the planning process. I had asked a local church for space to meet on a monthly basis. The idea is to gather people who are interested in working together and helping those in need. Both Christians in the neighbourhood and local churches would have people or representatives in this meeting to pray and plan together. There would also be an open time for anyone in the neighbourhood to be welcomed and access help or services through the advice of this group. This has been a development for the ministry that has received affirmation from both representatives and neighbours.

Conclusion

This research project brought together Christian neighbours living in a subsidized housing community and local church representatives. For four Wednesday afternoons, during the summer of 2024, we met in the homes of neighbours in Kin Village and Trinity Square in Markham, Ontario. The meetings followed the 4-I Appreciative Inquiry model (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement), allowing people to express their hopes for the neighbourhood and to plan concrete steps forward. Participants in the group inspired each other with their passion for the neighbourhood. Along the way, there was some discomfort with the research process. But the relationship between neighbours and church representatives developed, providing a relaxed and friendly atmosphere by Session Four. This was supported by FWBM volunteers allowing those with

limitations to contribute to the research. These accommodations continued among all participants which resulted in the group, as a whole, working together in a collaborative manner. This has benefitted the ministry and the provided concrete steps forward including a welcome pamphlet and a meeting called, Neighbours Helping Neighbours.

Expectations and Limitations

The question at the beginning of this research project was as follows: What will happen when Christian neighbours in a subsidized housing community and representatives from local churches meet together to go through an Appreciative Inquiry process? This question was open-ended by design as both Appreciative Inquiry and Participatory Action Research do not prescribe outcomes. The hope was that two somewhat disparate groups would find a way to work together and that this would further the work of ministry in Kin Village and Trinity Square. The outcome of this research project were two concrete plans that were able to move forward. Looking at the story behind the story, the outcomes were growing relationships and a shared passion for the neighbourhood. The data from the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, the research assistant's notes, and my field notes supported this claim.

I expect these results would be useful in other circumstances with some limitations. In contexts where the goal is for two different groups to work together, the Appreciative Inquiry process can be helpful in growing relationships and uniting around a common purpose. Based on the groups in this research project, this proved to be true even though there were challenges. There was little

to no familiarity between groups. There was no compulsory or mandatory obligation for anyone to attend, for example, as an employee in a work environment. For some, there was nominal interest in attending. For others, there was suspicion with the research process. The Appreciative Inquiry process was able to overcome these challenges in this research context.

However, there were limitations. Because there were two different groups coming together, the process needed more time. This could have allowed the group to analyze data together as a whole which could strengthen ownership of the results. But the limitation of that possibility was the level of commitment for a lengthier process when there were already some questioning the process itself.

What helped in this research process was the presence of FWBM volunteers. While this group could have been considered as a third party in the process, they did not function in that way. They were there to help others with limitations to be part of the research process. They took notes, asked questions, and even took leadership in a way that allowed participants to have a voice. This allowed the process to move forward more effectively. In other contexts where this kind of help is not available, it may make it more difficult or require other accommodations.

The final limitation is with the level of experience with myself as the facilitator and researcher. I approached this research project in a manner that fit my character, leadership and ministry experience. This means that I was welcoming and engaging with people. I was able to adapt as I felt was necessary under the circumstances. I wanted this to be a spiritual endeavour or act of faith

rather than a theoretical project. But I was not experienced in either the Appreciative Inquiry process or in qualitative research. In the future, I would take more time to encourage greater collaboration in all parts of the Appreciative Inquiry process, rather than feeling the need to analyze data myself between sessions. These are valuable lessons that have benefitted the ministry in Kin Village and Trinity Square.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The opportunity to further ministry in the neighbourhood through a research project was appealing to me. I wanted this DMin program to be helpful and useful but I did not know in what way that would be accomplished. I was not well-versed in qualitative research methods, data collection, and data analysis. I did not have experience in the AI process. At times I felt inadequate and unconfident that this research project would become reality. But in the summer of 2024, people came together. Neighbours associated with our FWBM house church were willing. Representatives from local area churches responded positively. This was not the case for everyone who was invited. Some neighbours and representatives simply declined to be involved or indicated interest but were not able to attend. Some expressed reservations with the research process. Despite these challenges, there was interest and passion in the people who attended. Two different groupings of people, neighbours and church representatives went through the AI process to share about their hopes for the neighbourhood and see how we could work together. The story behind the story involved skepticism and uneasiness with the process. Accommodations and adjustments were made by participants, FWBM volunteers, and myself. This allowed for relationships to develop and for ideas to grow. I conclude this portfolio by reflecting on the AI process, idea of engagement, and personal implications.

Appreciative Inquiry Process

AI is a process that brings energy and focus to a group. In this context, AI helped to bring two groups together with that result. Neighbours associated with the house church and representatives from local area churches followed the 4-I AI model (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement) which allowed hopes to be shared and plans to be made. This result has been proven in different contexts as well. "Our key finding is that Appreciative Inquiry gives people the experience of personal and collective power. It gives them practice exercising power—and doing so responsibly for the good of the whole. Once they experience this liberation of power and the effect it has on their lives and the world, people are permanently transformed" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom 2010, 266).

In my ministry context, I could see elements of transformation and liberation but not to the extent of Diane Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. Participants were able to inspire each other with their love for the neighbourhood but there were also elements of discomfort with AI vocabulary and skepticism of the process. This could have been mitigated by better facilitation, more time, and greater participation in the data analysis by the group as a whole. However, I felt the need to adapt the process based on the context of these two groups. From a participatory action research perspective, it is important to reflect and learn from the actions that were taken. This would lead to a new iteration of meetings together which could continue to include the AI process.

The difficulty in my ministry context is that there was already a degree of negativity with the AI process. As noted in Chapter 4: Research Project Report under the heading Interpretations, there were nineteen references to negative

sentiment with the AI process with two coming from local church representatives and seventeen coming from the neighbours. In my estimation, it would be difficult to bring both groups together again for the same kind of meetings. This was tested months later with an invitation to meet together again as described further on in this conclusion.

The Idea of Engagement

The idea of engagement was fundamental to the research project. Two somewhat disparate groups came together in a way that encouraged communication and participation in working together. In writing about community guides who bring excluded people back into community life, McKnight offered an idea of how an individual can be engaged.

> Effective guides do not just introduce one person to another: They bring a person into the web of associational life that can act as a powerful force in that person's life. And they bring the individual into life as a citizen by incorporating [one] into relationships where [one's] capacities can be expressed--where [one] is not simply defined by [one's] "deficiencies." (McKnight 1995, 119-120)

In my research context, I believe that this kind of engagement happened among the people involved. First, FWBM volunteers acted as McKnight described community guides. They helped neighbours tell their story and interacted in a way that made accommodations for those with limitations. Their example in turn allowed other participants to make accommodations as well. Second, both neighbours and representatives grew in their relationship with one another. They listened to one another and were able to share their passion for the neighbourhood. There was a growing rapport with one another. This resulted in

plans to work together in the future. This kind of engagement could be described as listening, loving, accommodating, empowering, and working together.

However, there were limitations to the level of engagement that people offered. Some who were asked to be part of the research project declined to participate. In one instance, a neighbour said that she only wanted to observe and came out to the first meeting but did not come to any other. In other instances, two local churches said that they did not have time to participate. Additionally, in Chapter 4: Research Project Report under the section on Interpretations, I noted a conflict that two neighbours had with each other resulting in one not attending one of the AI sessions. All of these limitations made me uncertain about the level of engagement that people were willing to give. About seven months after the research project meetings, we decided to test whether or not people were willing to meet again. I sent out a notice to all the people who had participated and invited them to a meeting together. Thankfully, a local church had offered a room for us to use. But this was not ideal as the meeting location was not directly in the neighbourhood. The day and time of meeting came with the arrival of an early spring storm. There were three kinds of precipitation that day including snow and sleet followed by rain. Still about fourteen people came including neighbours associated with the house church and representatives from local area churches. It was a beautiful time of meeting despite the weather. But when we met again a month later during good weather, less people attended. I recognize that there are limitations to the level of engagement that people are able to offer. We continue

to pray for a meeting place in the community centre which is central in the neighbourhood.

The idea of engagement is not limited to human participation. Throughout this process, we have asked for God's guidance, mercy, and provision. This has happened through personal contact and conversations with many of the participants. We do not profess to have the answers, but we take this as the challenge of faith. Theological reflection is more important than program success. We want our faith to be engaged in the process because we believe in the invitation of Jesus to be with him in his ministry to the neighbourhood. This was at the heart of the devotionals offered during each AI session:

1. God invites us to be with him–-God is already at work
2. God invites us to partner with him
3. God invites us to the challenge of faith
4. God invites us to work together with him

There have been times throughout this DMin journey where I have been uncertain and unconfident. An engaged faith does not happen automatically for me. It requires a conscious decision moment by moment. It is hard won through theological reflection in the form of faith seeking understanding. I take to heart the words of the Apostle Paul, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12).

Personal Implications

I have been challenged through the DMin journey to embrace our humanness. There is beauty in the lives of people but there is also weakness and frailty. Reflecting on the research project meetings provided an opportunity to see this not just in others but also in myself. I thought that doing the data analysis between meetings would be helpful based on time constraints. But I can see that it limited greater ownership of the outcome by others. I have a tendency to take on too much myself without realizing the consequences of how it affects the engagement of others. I naturally gravitate towards getting results rather than going through the process. This highlights the importance of participatory action research. There is value in going through the iterative process together; to reflect on our actions and redesign future actions. This is also the posture of being a continuous learner when it comes to faith. I recognize my inclination to take shortcuts when it comes to theological reflection. This is the challenge of faith: to go through the process of faith seeking understanding rather than being satisfied with easy answers. This is the challenge of Practical Theology which has become my challenge as well.

Embracing my humanness also provides me with an invitation. I find myself invited back to pray for God's mercy. This has become a familiar refrain for me in my ministry context. As I attempt to walk with people in the beauty of their lives and in the depths of their despair, I know that we are all in need of God's mercy. I try to remind myself of the theology of the cross, where God is revealed in weakness, suffering, and in the cross of Christ. I try to remind myself of Christian leadership in Nouwen's teaching that involves humility, servanthood,

vulnerability, and even powerlessness. I try to remind myself of Root's understanding of Christopraxis which is grounded in the lived experience of regular people and their encounter with Christ. The invitation is for me and for all of us "to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:18b-19 NIV).

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Information Sheet

Encouraging Church and Neighbour Engagement in a Subsidized Housing Community Through Appreciative Inquiry

July – August 2024

Introduction:

Relationships between those living in subsidized housing communities and local churches are difficult to develop at times. Based on my experience as Executive Director of FWBM, I have seen churches reach out through advertising and programs but find a lack of participation from those living in the neighbourhood. I have also spoken with people living in a subsidized housing community about attending a local church, but hearing stories of alienation. The result can lead to a long-term breakdown in the relationship.

At FWBM, we want to live as Jesus lived: to live a life of love and humble service, transcending differences by being good to one another, building genuine and authentic relationships, offering prayers of hope to those in need, working together for the good of the community, building partnerships with neighbours, organizations, and churches, and inviting people to join us in becoming a beautiful society of Jesus followers. As Executive Director of FWBM and a doctoral researcher, what would happen when Christian neighbours living in Kin Village and Trinity Square, along with representatives from local churches, meet to go through an Appreciative Inquiry process?

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to engage with neighbours associated with our house church in Kin Village and Trinity Square, along with representatives from the local churches. Through the process of Appreciative Inquiry, participants will follow the 4-I model (inquire, imagine, innovate, and implement) together in focused discussions led by the Executive Director of FWBM. The hope is that this will lead to an appreciation of the beauty of the neighbourhood along with how churches can engage in healthy and sustainable ways. It could lead to a description of the specific community context of Kin Village and Trinity Square and a model for church engagement. It is in dialoguing together that people become loved, valued and respected.

Timeline:

The research study will be four sessions of approximately 90 minutes in length, along with a short survey before and after. The sessions will be held during the months of July and August 2024.

Appendix B. Consent to Participate in this Study

Encouraging Church and Neighbour Engagement in a Subsidized Housing Community Through Appreciative Inquiry

July – August 2024

Conducted by:	Rev. Peter Ma Executive Director of Flow Without Bounds Ministries Doctor of Ministry Program, Tyndale University
Contact information:	416-459-2207, pma535@gmail.com
Under the supervision of:	Dr. Mark Chapman, Director of D. Min. Program, Professor of Research Methods, Tyndale University 416.226.6620 ext. 2208, mchapman@tyndale.ca

I understand that I am invited to participate in the research study named above. This study is intended to explore the beauty of the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood along with how churches can engage in healthy and sustainable ways. By signing this form in the space provided at the end, I indicate my agreement to participate in the study.

What Will My Participation Involve?

Your participation will consist of a series of four sessions of approximately 90 minutes in length. The sessions will follow the main themes of the Appreciative Inquiry method (inquire, imagine, innovate, implement). There will also be a short survey at the beginning and end of the research study. There will be no homework or extra reading required.

Are There Significant Risks?

Your participation in this study means that we will be talking about the neighbourhood and local churches. In the discussions, there may be complaints, uncomfortable statements or biases that are revealed. Since the method of Appreciative Inquiry is to focus on assets and strengths, the discussion will be led along those lines. Any complaints against specific individuals or churches will be discouraged. The risk is deemed to be not more than the regular day to day risk faced by individuals in the neighbourhood or in local churches.

What Benefits Will My Participation Bring?

Your participation does not guarantee any benefit to yourself. However, by participating in this study, you will be helping the wider community learn how to relate better to one another. You will be demonstrating Christian goodness and kindness to others. You will be helping us to work together for the good of the community.

Will the Information I Share Be Kept Confidential?

Information collected through the surveys and sessions will be stored confidentially and securely for analysis only by the researcher and faculty advisor. Data in physical form will be kept under lock and key. Data in computer form will be password protected. All data will be kept temporarily and destroyed permanently after a specified number of years. In the reporting of this research, individual responses will be anonymized.

How Will the Study Results Be Shared?

Summaries of surveys and sessions will be available to all participants within two months of completion. The research study will be written up in to a Doctor of Ministry portfolio and will be publicly available upon successful completion.

Will I Receive Any Compensation?

As a token of appreciation, the researcher will give a $20 Tim Horton's gift card to all participants. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any time or for any reason, you will still receive this compensation.

Is My Participation Totally Voluntary?

Yes. You are under no obligation to participate in this study. There will be no penalty if you choose not to participate. You may withdraw from this study at any time without need of explanation and without negative consequences. Your relationship with the researcher will continue regardless. If you choose to participate in this research, you have not waived any legal rights.

Consent to Participate:

I, _____, have read and understood the above information and I freely consent to participate in this research study by signing in the space provided below.

If I have any further questions about the study, I may at any stage contact the researcher or study supervisor.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Tyndale University. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study or my rights as a participant, I may contact the Research Ethics Board at reb@tyndale.ca.

Participant's signature_____
Date_____

Appendix C. Verbal Script to Invite Participants to the Research Study

Hello _____

I wanted to let you know about a research study that I am conducting as part of my studies in the Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale University. I'm asking you to consider participating in this study.

The study is titled, "Encouraging Church and Neighbour Engagement in a Subsidized Housing Community Through Appreciative Inquiry." The aim is to build healthy and sustainable relationships where people are loved, valued and respected; and relationships that stand the test of time. Sometimes there is a disconnect between churches and neighbourhoods. I have seen churches reach out through advertising and programs but find a lack of participation from those living in the neighbourhood. I have also spoken with people living in a subsidized housing community about attending a local church but hearing stories of alienation. Is it possible to bridge barriers?

The proposal is to meet together with a small group of local church leaders and a small group of neighbours living in Kin Village and Trinity Square. Through the process of Appreciative Inquiry, we'll discover the beauty of the neighbourhood, the potential of partnership, and the challenge of stepping out in faith.

The study will take place in the Fall of 2024 with four meetings over a period of four weeks on a Saturday morning. Each meeting will last approximately 90 minutes. The meetings will be in the living rooms of neighbours who have graciously volunteered to host.

I can't promise that these meetings will be beneficial to you, but you would be contributing to the community. You would be helping us all to understand the Kin Village and Trinity Square neighbourhood and encouraging churches in their ministry.

If you're interested, I can give you an information sheet and an agreement to participate. You can take two weeks to read it over and if you have any questions, please feel free to call or reach out to me. Also, there is no problem if you aren't interested or you are unable to participate. I trust that we can continue to developing our friendship as neighbours or colleagues in ministry.

Thanks again for your consideration.

Appendix D. Session One

Inquiry - What gives life? What's working?

Devotional

God invites us to be with him. God is already at work in our neighbourhoods.

Description of the AI process

Interviewing each other - in pairs

Proposed Questions

For each of these questions, if you don't have any experience in Kin Village and Trinity Square, describe a different neighbourhood and your experiences there.

1. Think back on your experience in Kin Village and Trinity Square to a time when you were most energized, involved and passionate for the neighbourhood. Tell a story about that time. What happened? What were you doing? What were others doing? Were local churches involved? What contributed to the success you experienced?

2. What do you value most about the Kin Village and Trinity Square community? What is healthy and life-giving about the relationships here? Give some examples.

3. When you think about church involvement or Christians being present in Kin Village and Trinity Square, what has been valuable and effective ministry? Give some examples.

4. What are three wishes or prayers you have for Kin Village and Trinity Square? Describe them in detail if possible.

Larger Group Discussion

Gather together in a larger group with each participant sharing about the person they interviewed.

Appendix E. Summary of Session One

Themes Identified During Session One

Loving and Helping in Times of Need	22
Churches and Neighbours Relationship	21
Activities and Events	13
Worshipping Together	13
Becoming Disciples of Jesus	12
Mentoring and Supporting Children	12
Being a Good Neighbour	11
Welcome and Invitation	10
Facilities and Space	8
Organizing Events and Activities	6
Communicating to the Neighbourhood	6
Conversations with People	2
Working Together	1

Appendix F. Session Two

Imagine - What might be? What are we called to become?

Devotional

God invites us to partner in his work. - loaves and fish

Further description of the AI process

Paradigm 1: Problem Solving	Paradigm 2: Appreciative Inquiry
"Felt Need" Identification of Problem	Appreciating "Valuing the Best of What Is"
⇓	⇓
Analysis of Causes	Envisioning "What Might Be"
⇓	⇓
Analysis of Possible Solutions	Dialoguing "What Should Be"
⇓	⇓
Action Planning (Treatment)	Innovating "What Will Be"
Organizing is a problem to be solved.	*Organizing is a mystery (infinite capacity) to be embraced.*

(Cooperrider, Stavros & Whitney, 2008, 16)

Summary of the last meeting

Highlight common themes.

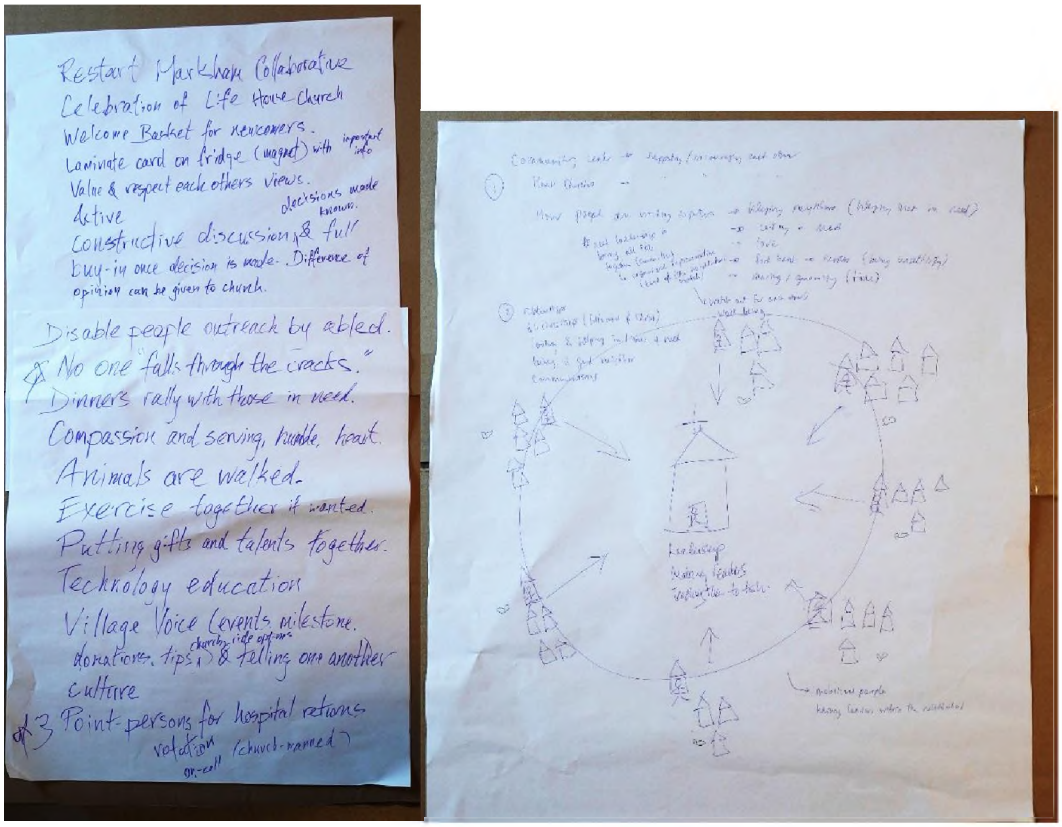
Working in Small Groups (4 people each) with a Flipchart

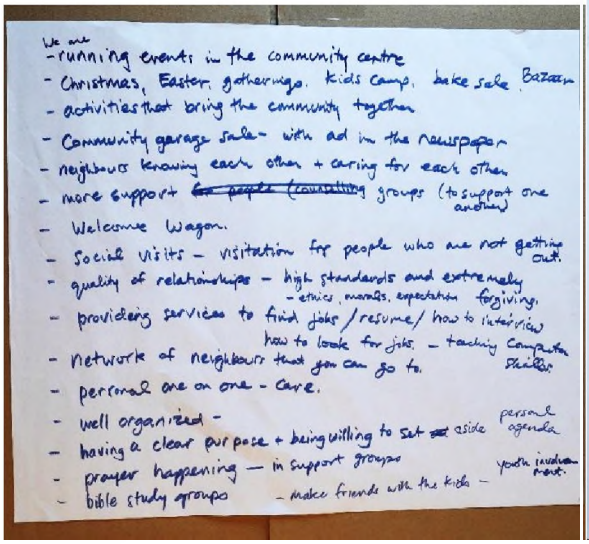
1. Imagine this group together, supporting and encouraging one another, being brothers and sisters in Christ, doing effective ministry in the community. Describe or paint a picture of how people are working together. Please use the present tense to describe this picture.

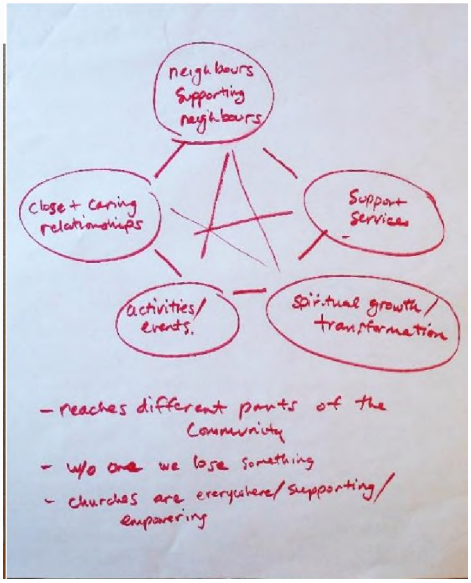
2. Write down the themes that are represented in this future picture.

3. On a separate piece of paper, draw a picture of these themes and how they fit together.

Appendix G. Summary of Session Two







Open the Community Centre!

- A place for the community to gather and support one another
- A place where neighbours can book events
- A place which is open for people to drop in
- A place for daily activities – exercise, arts and crafts, bingo, how to write a resume, computer skills, technology education, prayer group
- A place for special events – Christmas party / Easter services

Neighbours Help Neighbours!

- Neighbours caring for one another – cooking, food bank, generosity, time, resources
- Neighbours discipling one another – inspiring others to grow in faith – Bible study, prayer
- Neighbours coming together to grow together as a community
- Flow and churches are supporting neighbours – Markham Collaborative
- Flow and churches are in the mix everywhere – another part of the community
- Flow and churches support spiritual growth and transformation

Reach Out and Support!

- Support during times of crisis, grief, and mourning
- Support for newcomers – Welcome Wagon, Village Voice
- Support for those in need of food and companionship
- Support for people with pets – dog walking, etc
- Support for those struggling with technology
- Support through neighbours, Flow, churches – Markham Collaborative

Appendix H. Session Three

Innovate - What should be? What would the community look like if dreams and ideals were to be realized?

Devotional

God invites us to the challenge of faith.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
(1 Peter 4:12-13 NIV)

Summary of the last meeting

We've discussed the best of what was, and the best of what might be. This meeting we want to see if the first two meetings can move us towards purpose and inspiration. What can we work on together?

Personal Reflection and Sharing

If this group were a team, what would be best to work on together? Why?

With all of that has been discussed and presented, what do you care about the most?

Be prepared to share your thoughts, reasons and passion.

Getting together

Gather into groups around a common purpose, and come up with bold statements that reflect these ideals, faith and passion.

Appendix I. Summary of Session Three

A Rough Statement of Purpose forour Work Together

We all want a close loving community that works together; that recognizes people's strengths; that provides space for people to be themselves; that listens to their stories, so that everyone can feel like they are part of the community. We can learn to work together in order to bless others.

This means that we respect people and appreciate their differences including gifts, abilities, faith, and backgrounds.

With God as our foundation, we want the community to be filled with unity, love and forgiveness. We believe this is how God's love is spread throughout the neighbourhood. Accepting the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts leads naturally to caring relationships with others. This includes not passing judgment on others but instead listening and getting to know our neighbours. Every act of kindness is a demonstration of God's love.

Sometimes we think that people need certain things, but really what everybody needs is a friend. We can be friends and neighbours to one another. But we aren't perfect. We can end up in conflict with each other. God has a lot to teach us about how to be a true neighbour. We need to keep learning because the better we learn; the better the friendships; the more needs are met; the better the community.

It can start in simple ways, including supporting immediate and urgent needs. It's helping with practical things that make a difference. It's helping people who are new to the community find what they need. It's improving communication in the neighbourhood so that people are talking to one another. It's opening up space for people to be together.

As neighbours and churches, we are all part of the mix. We are all neighbours helping neighbours sharing God's love with others.

Appendix J. Session Four

Implement

Devotional

God invites us to work together with him.

Summary of the last meeting

We all want a close loving community that works together; that recognizes people's strengths; that provides space for people to be themselves; that listens to their stories, so that everyone can feel like they are part of the community. We can learn to work together in order to bless others.

This means that we respect people and appreciate their differences including gifts, abilities, faith, and backgrounds.

With God as our foundation, we want the community to be filled with unity, love and forgiveness. We believe this is how God's love is spread throughout the neighbourhood. Accepting the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts leads naturally to caring relationships with others. This includes not passing judgment on others but instead listening and getting to know our neighbours. Every act of kindness is a demonstration of God's love.

Sometimes we think that people need certain things, but really what everybody needs is a friend. We can be friends and neighbours to one another. But we aren't perfect. We can end up in conflict with each other. God has a lot to teach us about how to be a true neighbour. We need to keep learning because the better we learn; the better the friendships; the more needs are met; the better the community.

It can start in simple ways, including supporting immediate and urgent needs. It's helping with practical things that make a difference. It's helping people who are new to the community find what they need. It's improving communication in the neighbourhood so that people are talking to one another. It's opening up space for people to be together.

As neighbours and churches, we are all part of the mix. We are all neighbours helping neighbours sharing God's love with others.

In groups of three or four

Look over the summary statement from Session Three and think of three or four ideas on how both Christians in the neighbourhood and churches can work together. Would you be willing to get involved with this? Be ready to share your findings with the whole group.

Closing Prayer

Appendix K. Summary of Session Four

Group 1

1. Website to replace the Village Voice – a way to communicate community information to people. Eg. Important numbers, hospitals, transportation, deals on wifi
2. Churches to open their space for coffee hour. A weekly time to chat, socialize or meet for programs. Seniors activities.
3. Partnering with schools in the community (Ashton Meadows, St. Augustine, PET) – breakfast program, mentoring, tutoring
4. Helping PSWs learn to treat people with respect. Supporting their work and helping them with burnout.
5. Subsidy for kids programs – Scouts, sports, basketball ministry

Group 2

1. Website or info sheet – accessibility, grocery stores, gardening, kids program, neighbourhood help line – different ways to communicate – website, flyer, phone
2. Monthly gathering where people can come and chat – also have people and resources available to help.
3. Monthly gathering could include a kids activity for families
4. Ask the community for ways they can help, their skills, and interests – neighbours helping neighbours – working together – churches are neighbours too

Appendix L. Welcome to the Neighbourhood

welcome to the neighbourhood!

FLOW WITHOUT BOUNDS MINISTRIES

Welcome to the neighbourhood!

This is an unofficial welcome from some of the neighbours, volunteers and Pastor Peter. We are here to help you. Transitions can be difficult at times. If we can support you, give you local information, help you settle in, we're here to offer our support.

Contained in this document is local information that we find useful.

Nearest Medical Clinics (Walk-In)

King Square Medical Centre - 9390 Woodbine Ave. Suite 1E3
https://kingsquaremedicalcentre.ca/ - 905-766-4700
[online appointments and booking online]

Atlas Medical Clinic - 1383 16th Avenue, Richmond Hill
https://atlasmedicalclinic.ca/ - 905-918-3560
[open 10am to 5pm, 7 days a week]

Home Phone / Cable / Internet / Cell

Rogers Connected for Success offers low rates, if you are with any of the following income support programs: Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Rent geared to income (RGI), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or Ontario Works (OW).
https://www.rogers.com/connected-for-success
[shop around and let us know if there are better rates]

Nearest Pharmacies

Shoppers Drug Mart – 9255 Woodbine Ave – 905-887-3000
[open from 9am to 9pm]

Shoppers Drug Mart – 2920 Major Mackenzie Dr E – 905-927-7161
[open from 9am to midnight]

I.D.A Pharmacy – 9425 Leslie St – 905-237-6937
[compounding pharmacy]

King Square Pharmacy – 9390 Woodbine Ave – 905-887-9800
[open from 10am to 5pm]

Nearest Supermarkets

T&T Supermarket - 9255 Woodbine Ave, Markham
[check out the mini-buffet takeout section, egg tarts are good]

Full Fresh Supermarket - 9390 Woodbine Ave, Markham
[fresh fruits and vegetables]

No Frills - 8601 Warden Ave, Markham
[international foods and spices]

Fresh Co - 1430 Major Mackenzie Dr East, Richmond Hill
[international foods and spices, flowers and plants in the spring]

Walmart - 1070 Major Mackenzie Dr E, Richmond Hill, ON
[Supercenter]

Nearest Food Banks

Markham Food Bank – #11-190 Bullock Dr. – 905-472-2437
https://markhamfoodbank.ca/
[id required, visit once every 28 days]

The Master's Pantry – Unionville Alliance Church - 4898 16th Ave
https://uachome.org/masters-pantry
[id required first time, two Saturdays a month from 9 to 10:30am, visit once a month]

Applecreek Seventh Day Adventist - 700 Applecreek Blvd
https://applecreeksda.com/community-service/
[fourth Sunday of every month - 1pm to 5pm]

St. Justin Martyr Parish – 3898 Highway No. 7 East
https://stjustinmartyrun.archtoronto.org/
Society of St. Vincent De Paul - 905-479-2463 ext 52
[leave a message and your contact information]

Crisis Hotlines

Your Support Services Network – 1-855-310-COPE (2673)

Suicide Crisis Helpline (Canada) – 988 (call or text)

Assaulted Women's Helpline – 1-888-917-3449

Kids Help Phone – 1-800-668-6868

Ontario Community Information and Referrals – 211

Local Kids Programs

360°kids YOUTHrive program – ages 7-12 and 13-17
5 days a week in the Kin Village Community Centre
416-873-8004

FWBM Stream Mentoring – ages 8-16
youth mentoring on a bi-weekly basis
416-459-2207

Elected Officials

Town Councillor – Ward 2 - Ritch Lau
905-948-5102
RitchLau@markham.ca

Member of Provincial Parliament – Billy Pang
905-474-3288
billy.pang@pc.ola.org

Member of Parliament – Paul Chiang
905-470-2509
paul.chiang@parl.gc.ca

Churches

† House Church – FWBM
Sundays at 3pm
[we meet in some of the homes in Kin Village and Trinity Square]
[contact Pastor Peter for more info]

† Markham Chinese Baptist Church
Sundays at 9:30am for English
9580 Woodbine Ave.
https://mcbc.com/
[also has Cantonese and Mandarin services]

† Unionville Alliance Church
Sundays at 10 am
4898 16th Avenue
https://uachome.org/

[also has a food bank]

† Applecreek Seventh Day Adventist Church
Saturdays at 11 am
700 Applecreek Blvd
https://applecreeksda.com/
[also has a food bank]

† St. Justin Martyr Parish
Sundays at 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30am, 7pm
3898 Highway 7 East
https://stjustinmartyrun.archtoronto.org/en/
[also provides help through the Society of St. Vincent De Paul]

† the bridge, a markham community church
Sundays at 9:15, 11:15am
5440 16th Avenue
https://www.thebridgemarkham.com/
[also has support groups]

† Chapel Place Presbyterian Church
Sundays at 11:30am for English
8 Chapel Place
https://cppc.ca/
[also has Arabic services]

† Unionville Presbyterian Church
Sundays at 11 am
600 Village Parkway
https://upc.community/

† Celebration Presbyterian Church
Sundays at 9:30 am
600 Village Parkway
https://celebrationpc.com/

† St. Agnes Kouying Catholic Church
Sundays at 2pm for English
2130 Rodick Rd.
https://stagneskouyingtsao.archtoronto.org/
[also has Cantonese and Mandarin services]

Mosques

Ismaili Community Centre And Jamatkhana
350 Applecreek Blvd
http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/21426

Islamic Society of Markham
2900 Denison St
https://markhammasjid.ca/

Hindu Temple

Sanatan Mandir Cultural Centre
9333 Woodbine Ave
https://www.sanatanmandir.com/

Give us a Call

We'd like to welcome you with a small gift.

Pastor Peter Ma – FWBM
416-459-2207

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