

TRINITY BIBLE COLLEGE & GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS TITLE

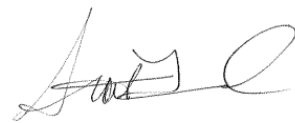
Investigating a Synthesis of Both Charismatic and Seeker-Friendly Outreach: Causeway Coast Vineyard Church in Coleraine, North Ireland, as a Model.

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ABSTRACT

The tension of how best to reach the ever-changing world in which we live has faced the church since its birth. Church leadership has wrestled with the best way for their church to engage the unchurched, and there has been much adaptation, and change over time. The ethos of a church influences its strategy and vision on outreach. The seeker church movement adopted more of an attractional model, essentially endeavouring to create a meeting environment that the unchurched would like to attend, adjusting language and using more multi-media presentation to enhance and promote the preaching of the gospel. This often came at the expense of engaging with the Holy Spirit's gifts, specifically demonstrations of power that might intimidate the seeker. Alternatively, the charismatic church was not willing to disengage from the Holy Spirit's gifts operating in the church, which potentially impacted more sensitive seekers from returning. Are these two approaches mutually exclusive or can there be a synergy? This research engages the Causeway Coast Vineyard through a process of interview-based comparative study. It seeks to establish the possibility of better balance and synergy between the seeker and charismatic church models of outreach. This Vineyard church made significant changes to make their Sunday gatherings more attractional to the unchurched, without forfeiting the Holy Spirit's role and the Spirit's gifts in outreach. From the analysis of eight structured church leader interviews, certain themes emerged, with resulting implications and conclusions. (a) Is Sunday for the church or the unchurched? (b) Is Sunday or every day best for outreach? (c) Attractive or Attractional, which is better? (d) The power of being missional in everything. (e) Power Evangelism and the Holy Spirit gifts in outreach (f) The struggle of creating an invitational culture across the whole church; everyone, everywhere, every day. (g) Is the model embraced by the Coleraine church reproducible elsewhere? Discussion around the above questions and ideas promoted implications and recommendations for church leadership teams to consider concerning not only effective outreach but ongoing equipping of ever-maturing apprentices of Christ.

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KEYWORDS

Seeker-sensitive, Seeker-friendly, Charismatic, Outreach, Attractional, Power Evangelism, Unchurched, Miracles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| KEY WORDS | v |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Thesis Statement | 2 |
| Methodology | 2 |
| Definitions..... | 3 |
| Exclusions | 4 |
| PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 5 |
| Chapter 1. A Biblical Basis for Outreach. | 6 |
| Chapter 2. An Overview of the Challenge. | 7 |
| Chapter 3. A Discussion on Seeker Churches. | 10 |
| Chapter 4. Some Positives of Seeker Outreach. | 16 |
| Chapter 5. Some Critiques of the Seeker Church’s Attractional Model..... | 19 |
| Chapter 6. The Charismatic Approach and Power Evangelism..... | 23 |
| Chapter 7. Causeway Coast Vineyard as a Model. | 25 |
| PART II: THE RESEARCH..... | 31 |
| Chapter 8. The Research Background. | 32 |
| Chapter 9. Investigating Pastors’ Perspectives on Outreach: An Analysis of the Data. | 33 |
| Chapter 10. Evaluating the Findings: What was Discovered. | 38 |
| Chapter 11. Implications and Recommendations. | 46 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 53 |
| APPENDIX..... | 56 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 57 |

INTRODUCTION

One church celebrates numerous salvations on any given Sunday morning, while another celebrates a church visitor's miraculous healing from cancer on a Sunday morning.¹ I rejoiced in that dramatic healing but confess to secretly longing for more people to commit publicly to following Christ. Both are miraculous events, the activity of the Spirit of God amongst men, yet some churches see more conversion miracles and some more healing miracles.

Surely one doesn't have to choose as if the two paths are mutually exclusive. Because of such a dichotomy, I embark on this project, seeking that somehow, there can be a better synergy of outreach from the church. It seems that when a church intentionally shapes its meetings to reach the unchurched, its experience of healing and deliverance is somehow limited. Yet, they see many visitors either coming to faith or returning to discover more. On the other hand, a church more like ours, more intentionally seeking God's power encounter individuals in our meetings, whilst seeing some miracles, certainly sees fewer visitors returning to find out more.² Perhaps there is a synergy to be discovered, between seeker-sensitive churches on the one side of the continuum, Pentecostal/charismatic churches on the other, and the variety of churches that find themselves somewhere between the two.³ When considering this against the backdrop of the New Testament Church as recorded in the Scriptures, such has concerned me.

Reading Alan Scott's *Scattered Servants* challenged me to re-evaluate how we at Immanuel Church could better approach our outreach.⁴ This book outlines how Causeway

¹ This healing miracle happened on Sunday morning, 25/09/22, at the author's church, Immanuel. A visitor, named Kathy, riddled with cancer, with only half her colon due to the disease, was delivered publicly through prayer. After falling to the floor and being exorcised in the name of Jesus, she arose feeling well. She set an appointment with her oncologist, who after doing scans confirmed that there was no sign of any cancer in her body anymore. Amazed, the oncologist seeks to do further scans in February 2023.

² Our church meaning Immanuel Christian Church, Umhlanga Rocks, KZN, South Africa.

³ Definitions of Pentecostal/ Charismatic churches and seeker-friendly churches follow in the next sub section.

⁴ The term 'outreach' definition follows in next sub-section.

Coast Vineyard,⁵ then led by Alan and Kathryn Scott, went through a transformation to reach more people outside of the church, which for the sake of simplicity I will refer to as the unchurched.⁶ What became evident was their willingness to make some adjustments without compromising the integrity of who God had called Causeway Coast Vineyard church to be. They continued to pursue God's power encountering both the church and the unchurched yet remained essentially a more charismatic people. I will use this church as a model and explore whether such a vision, with its resulting testimonies of changed lives, is reproducible in other contexts outside of Coleraine, particularly Durban, South Africa.

Thesis Statement

It seems from Scripture, as reflected in Jesus' words to the disciples, that the Holy Spirit and witnessing are inexorably linked,⁷ yet I find churches that seemingly focus on the activity of the Holy Spirit amongst them whilst seeing more signs and wonders, generally don't see as many new converts as they hope to. Contrarily, churches focusing intentionally on the unchurched and seeker, tend to de-emphasise their engagement with the activity of the Spirit, seeing fewer signs and wonders, yet more seeking visitors returning. I intend to investigate to what degree a church can be seeker-friendly yet simultaneously charismatic in outreach, seeing people come to faith and still mature in discipleship with demonstrations of the Spirit's power.

Methodology

The scope of this project will include first a literary review followed by empirical research of a qualitative nature.⁸ Besides selected literary engagement, I interviewed eight pastors, six from local Durban churches, one from Cape Town, and the one currently leading Causeway Coast Vineyard in Coleraine (The church identified as the model). I identified their

⁵ This Vineyard church is found in Coleraine, Northern Ireland.

⁶ Alan Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2018), Kindle.

⁷ Acts 1:8 (ESV).

⁸ Kevin Gary Smith, *Academic Writing and Theological Research* (Johannesburg, SA: South African Theological Seminary Press, 2008), 213-247.

visions and modus operandi around outreach and weighed this against the backdrop of whether they see their churches as more Pentecostal/charismatic or seeker-friendly. I hope to discover some synergy between the diverse approaches employed by seeker-friendly churches and more charismatic type churches yet anticipate finding that each church is somewhat unique in where they may fit along a continuum of seeker churches on one side and Pentecostal/charismatic on the other. While much has been written in critical evaluation of the seeker-friendly church's seeming 'candy-coating of the truth' to draw more people and much critical literature around the concerns of charismatic church excesses, my endeavours are not to focus on such.⁹ Instead, this research will be aimed at how these churches approach outreach with the goal of not simply decisions for Christ but ever-maturing disciples living as apprentices of Jesus.

In remaining faithful to the Scriptures, an overall evaluation of the church achieving its goal, cannot simply be measured by how many people attended Sunday meetings, but by how many are maturing as apprentices or disciples of Christ. Apprentices model and replicate the life, teachings, and endeavours of their teachers.¹⁰ Apprentices of Christ, model the lifestyle of Christ, which includes having a heart for the unchurched. Therefore, assumptions and projections should be held lightly while pursuing how the modern-day church can both better reach the world with the gospel, and raise faithful Christ-followers, who continue to represent Jesus well.

Definitions

Certain terms require clarification. The term Pentecostal refers to churches that strongly emphasise the Holy Spirit baptism, with charismatic churches being a branch of Pentecostalism, embracing the power of the Holy Spirit with divinely given gifts of grace for

⁹ Among others see:, John F. MacArthur Jnr *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2013), Kindle Edition. Frank Viola, *Rethinking the Wineskin: The Practice of the New Testament Church*, (Jacksonville, Florida: Seedsowers Publishing, 2001).

¹⁰ Gary W Moon, *Apprenticeship with Jesus: Learning to Live Like the Master* (Ada, Michigan: Baker Books Publishing, 2009), Foreword, Kindle.

all believers.¹¹ Seeker-friendly or Seeker-sensitive Churches refer to churches that intentionally fashion their meetings in a way that helps the unchurched to feel more welcome and less alien in a church context.¹² Finally, the term outreach will be used to refer to the church's mission of how best to share the gospel of Christ with those outside of the church, also called evangelisation.¹³ Toal points out that faithfulness in outreach ministry "isn't just keeping the doors of the church open, hoping people will walk in. It means finding ways to take the good news to them, whether they are in another neighborhood, subculture, language group, or country."¹⁴ These definitions may be oversimplified, but for the purposes of this paper should suffice. Some difficulty lies in defining a term that is not essentially biblical.

Exclusions

I acknowledge that there are many other types, streams, and denominations of churches, that engage in outreach, but only the Seeker church and the Pentecostal/Charismatic church will be the focus of this research.

¹¹. Alex Dorian, "What is a Charismatic Church", ChristianministryEDU.org, (April 19, 2022), <https://christianministryedu.org/faq/what-is-a-charismatic-church/>, accessed 06/02/23; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pentecostalism>, accessed 08/02/23.

¹². "The term unchurched refers to people not belonging to or connected with a church. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Seargent has described Seeker-sensitive/friendly churches as "Featuring live bands, professional lighting and sound systems, and multi-media presentations, seeker churches are attracting many people who have 'dropped out' of organized religion. To broaden their appeal, they offer attendees advice on everyday issues ranging from relationships to finance." Kimon Howland Seargent, *Seeker Churches Promoting Traditional Religion in a Non-traditional Way* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

¹³. Mark Keown, "Learning from Paul's vision for the mission of the local church," *The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice* 19, no. 1, (4/2012) : 27-33, accessed 07/02/23, https://www.academia.edu/73488750/Learning_from_Pauls_vision_for_the_mission_of_the_local_church; Mike Booker, 'Mission, Evangelism and the Church of God' in *Evangelism: Which Way Now?* ed. by Mike Booker & Mark Ireland (London: Church House Publishing, 2010), 1-11.

¹⁴. Rob Toal, Presenting the Gospel to distracted people, Christianity Today Pastors (September 14, 2016), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2016/state-of-church-ministry-2017/outreach-and-evangelism-what-works-today.html> Accessed 06/02/23.

PART I:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1. A Biblical Basis for Outreach.

Firstly, I will endeavour to briefly reflect on the type of ministry outreach Jesus employed, and the disciples, and the New Testament church. In considering how Jesus carried out his outreach ministry on earth, although there is both ministry within the synagogue and ministry taking place in public places or private homes, most of Jesus' outreach seemed to be outside the organised religious space.¹⁵ When one considers the practice of the New Testament Church, there is a combination of ministry taking place in meetings such as the synagogue and the lecture hall of Tyrannus, as well as in public places, including homes, public squares, and the streets.¹⁶ It is important to realise that outreach carried out in public places significantly impacted the onlookers and often resulted in further conversion experiences.¹⁷ The New Testament suggests that outreach was not limited to their church meetings but also occurred frequently in public places.

Furthermore, from New Testament studies, it must be noted that the activity of the Holy Spirit with accompanying signs and wonders was frequent and proved to be a most effective form of outreach.¹⁸ Such activity of the Holy Spirit also took place in their church gatherings, and not only as they ministered out on the streets. For example, consider the following exert, which resulted in Simon the magician becoming a believer:

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

A similar experience occurs at Cornelius's house meeting, where friends and relatives gather to hear Peter preach the gospel. Scripture records that while Peter was still speaking the gift of

¹⁵ Such encounters include Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-41; Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); Jesus sending out the 12 into the public spaces (Matthew 10:5-14.)

¹⁶ See Acts 19:8-10; Acts 2: Acts 3:1-8.

¹⁷ Peter addresses the crowd that gathered in Solomon's Portico, after the dramatic healing of the beggar. (Acts 3: 11- 4:4); Lydia's conversion at the riverside in Acts 16: 11-14 and the tormented girl's deliverance which led to Paul and Silas being thrown into prison where the conversion of the jailer and his household took place, (Acts 16:25-34).

¹⁸ Acts 2:1-41; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 7:4-8; Acts 7:32-35 to mention only a few encounters.

¹⁹ Acts 7:14-17 (ESV).

the Holy Spirit descended on those listening to Peter, and they extolled God in new tongues and were baptized.²⁰ One last example of this is when Paul enters Ephesus, and upon finding out that although they believed they had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they were all filled and spoke in other tongues.²¹ I have explained the above highlighting the Holy Spirit's activity in gathered meetings and public places, which sometimes translated into outreach to unbelievers with resultant conversions to faith in Christ. In the following chapter, an overview of the problem will be examined, and an introduction to the outreach approach assumed by the different types of churches in question.

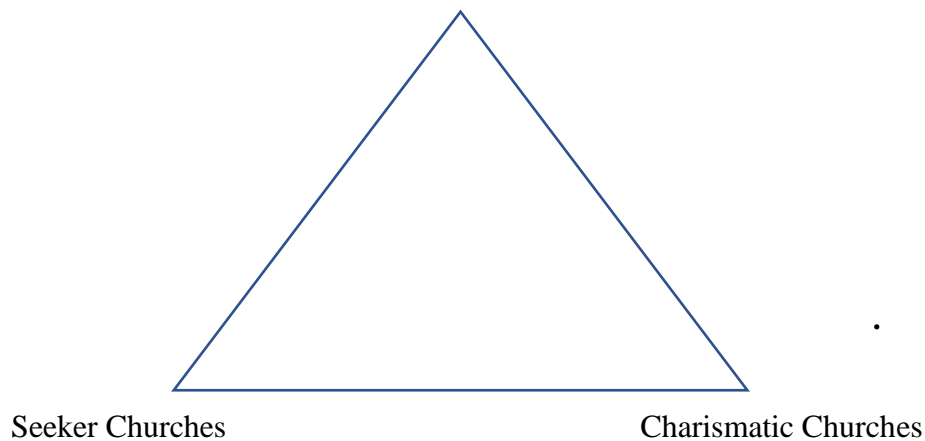
Chapter 2. An Overview of the Challenge.

In investigating the perceived dichotomy between seeker-focused outreach and charismatic outreach, consider the triangle diagram below which shows a continuum running on the baseline, from seeker-friendly churches on one side to charismatic churches on the other. Between the two extremes of this continuum, one finds churches that are a unique blend of aspects of both the seeker church style and charismatic influences, obviously varying in degree, based on the leadership's vision to fulfil the mandate given to them by God. Contextually I would position Immanuel Church, which is the Church I lead, somewhere closer to the charismatic end of the spectrum. This context is vital in understanding my pursuit of discovering a better synergy between the seeker church and charismatic church outreach.

²⁰. Acts 7:44-48 (ESV).

²¹. Acts 19:1-7 (ESV).

Intended Audience (non-believers/unchurched people)



The apex of the triangle constitutes the target group, in other words, the people we as the church are attempting to reach with the gospel. I shall refer to these as unchurched for this discussion. This group comprises people of diverse stages of belief or unbelief. Amongst the unchurched are atheists, agnostics, spiritually inclined, rationally inclined, humanists, hedonists, all those of other religions, philosophies, and worldviews, as well as those interested and open to visiting a church (seekers) or those antagonistic and vehemently against it. In exploring this assignment, I will focus more on those open to spirituality and visiting church.

Furthermore, cognisance should be taken that generational categories influence what seekers may be looking for, even within the seeker group. One might assume that all seekers are after a particular experience within a church context, but assumptions often prove wrong. For example, it might be erroneous to assume that Baby Boomers are seeking a similar experience of Christianity to Gen Z.²² In the light of modernity and post-modernity, with ever-shifting worldviews, each generation is seemingly redefining its reality and searching for an authentic realisation of purpose and meaning as a human. A challenging question to pose is can one style and ethos of the church fulfil such a wide range of seekers?

Lastly, each extreme side of the continuum of churches (along the triangle's base), employs a radically different approach to their Church gatherings. While the Seeker church

²² For more on the ages of the generations see: Beresford Research, accessed 13/02/23 <https://www.beresfordresearch.com/age-range-by-generation/>.

employs more the attractional model, the other end of the spectrum promotes the missional model of church.²³ The former model primarily seeks to attract the unchurched while the latter focuses on equipping the church for outreach into the world. Roxburgh proposes that “The missional church cannot be codified in a simple definition. It is more than a new word for evangelism, church planting, or meeting someone in a coffee shop for conversation. It is not about restructuring or a new program. Missional church is about an alternative imagination for being the church.”²⁴ Woodward views the church as either an industrial complex or a missional movement, stating that as an industrial complex swimming in resources, she promotes a desire for the church to be on stage as opposed to a desire to be on the streets, reaching a world different from us.²⁵ Churches fit more into one model or the other. While there are different ways to describe these two models, and none perfect, Horn describes these “as ‘doxological’ and ‘attractional’ based on the intentional, permeating design of their weekly corporate worship service.”²⁶ Horn continues his assessment by comparing the doxological approach of believers-focused worship, exhortation, and equipping against the attractional model many churches employ in which they “believe the primary focus of the worship service is evangelistic and, as a result, work hard to intentionally downplay things that lost people might find offensive or that would be impediments to their accepting the Gospel.”²⁷ Along this continuum, some churches seek to blend the two approaches, which will be discussed in further detail later in this paper. In the following chapter, the Seeker model of church shall be the focus.

²³ Jesse Wilson, “Missional versus attractional: An argument the church cannot afford,” *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* (August 2018): 18-21, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2018/08/Missional-versus-attractional-An-argument-the-church-cannot-afford>.

²⁴ Alan J, Roxburgh M. Scott. Boren, and Mark Priddy. *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 45.

²⁵ J.R. Woodward, *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities* (Westmont, Illinois: IVP, 2016), Chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁶ Sam Horn, “Choosing a Church: Two Models: Recognizing the Theological Orientation of a Local Church,” *BJU Today*, (November 19, 2019), accessed 15/02/23, <https://today.bju.edu/vicepresident/choosing-a-church-doxological-vs-attractional-models/>.

²⁷ Horn, “Choosing a Church: Two Models.”

Chapter 3. A Discussion on Seeker Churches.

A challenge facing the modern-day church is how to reach the unchurched effectively. The motive behind seeker churches is essentially one of desiring to reach out to the world and invite people to come and experience the God we so love by creating attractive and what Stanley calls “irresistible environments” that are welcoming and not offensive.²⁸ Stanley, who leads North Point Church in Atlanta, describes their mega-church as unapologetically attractional.²⁹ The ‘seeker-sensitive’ approach presumes that church meetings are primarily for “recruiting the unchurched or evangelising the lost. This idea can be traced to the “revivalism” of 19th century American experience.”³⁰ The modern seeker-friendly church has simply but intentionally mastered this attractional style of a church gathering, and with it seen reinvigorated church gatherings, with many more visitors in attendance.

1. Hillsong Church.

One such example of a seeker church would be Hillsong. This megachurch has gained tremendous popularity globally, with thousands of churches making up the Hillsong Family across the continents.³¹ Their attractional model approach has been accompanied by many changes both aesthetically and spiritually. Wade purports:

[within] the megachurch, ornate, solemn, or morbid symbolism, liturgy, and design are eschewed in favour of lively performance, seeming spontaneity, and familiar milieus. Crucifixes are rarely seen and there is certainly no kneeling in sombre repentance. The foremost aim is to induce comfort and awe in the seeker, to be ‘world-affirming’ rather than overly insular, sombre, or damning.³²

²⁸ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Chap. 9. Kindle.

²⁹ Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*, Introduction, Kindle.

³⁰ “The focus during this era was then moved from the church gathering to worship God, to be edified, to receive the sacraments and to enjoy fellowship with Christ and one another, to “drawing the net,” or getting decisions from the lost.” John H. Armstrong, “The Mad Rush to Seeker Sensitive Worship”, *Monergism*, 1995, 1998 Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, accessed 23/01/23, <https://www.monergism.com/mad-rush-seeker-sensitive-worship>.

³¹ <https://hillsong.com/family/about-hillsong-family/>. Accessed 15/02/23.

³² Matt Wade, “Seeker Friendly: The Hillsong megachurch as an enchanting Total Institution,” *Journal of Sociology* 52, no.4 (2016): 661–676, accessed 15/02/23, https://www.academia.edu/10136428/Seeker_Friendly_The_Hillsong_megachurch_as_an_enchanting_Total_Institution?email_work_card=view-paper. For more on this also see Goh, R. “Hillsong and Megachurch Semiotics, Spatial Logic and Embodiment,” *Material Religion* 4 no.3 (2008): 284–305; Trueheart, C. “Welcome to the Next Church,” *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1996): 37–52; Shibley, M.A. “Contemporary

Wade further comments, “in being mindful of always remaining seeker-friendly, more potentially confronting practices – such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, direct references to Satan or the forthcoming return of Jesus – are generally not seen during regular services.”³³ Again, this may be a turning away from the early church’s practice.³⁴ On the contrary however, they appear successful in attracting seekers, with many returning visitors finding the church gathering most rewarding.

At this juncture, one should question the ultimate goal of the church. Is it to evangelise as many people as possible, using various strategies to attract the unchurched into the gathering, so that they can hear the gospel? Is the success of a gathering determined by how many new visitors fill the auditorium or how many returning visitors are present, where the number of people on seats reflects successful ministry? Others, particularly those on the furthestmost side of the continuum (See diagram in Chapter 2), most likely have a different view of a thriving church gathering. They might measure their success in how many believers (both new and more established) are growing in their faith as mature apprentices of Jesus, whose everyday lives in some way model that of the Lord Jesus. They may not be as enamoured with how many attendees were present on a Sunday. Numbers might be a focus but they are measured very differently.

What might be the reason for Hillsong’s growth? Some accuse Hillsong of “edutainment”, of using the strategy of “performance of pleasure” and using that which is akin to New Age “feelgoodism”, as well as a “consumer-driven approach to evangelism” to keep people coming, yet Hillsong remains resolute around a clear and compelling vision to attract

Evangelicals: Born-Again and World-Affirming,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 558 (1998): 67–87.

³³ Wade, “Seeker Friendly: The Hillsong megachurch as an enchanting Total Institution.”

³⁴ Paul describes their experiences in Acts as dynamic because of God’s power and not the leaders’ wisdom, and ability to articulate the message or plan good meetings. See 1 Corinthians 2:5 as “So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God,” (ESV).

the seeker to hear the gospel.³⁵ The clarity of their purpose is encapsulated in this excerpt from a workshop for creatives for Hillsong pastors:

What we wanna do is bring something excellent, and the whole aim is to make sure that our worship services are fantastic, and they're ALL seeker-friendly.... Now, remember, we're not singing to the congregation, we're singing to the people that are coming in.... We're trying to make sure that the next person that comes in, the next visitor that comes in, is seeing that what we're doing we're doing GREAT ...³⁶

Credit for unapologetically and single-mindedly pursuing the vision should be given, yet against the backdrop of the New Testament church practice found in Acts, the demonstrative power of God dynamic is not really what is attracting the seeker.

2. Saddleback Church.

Saddleback Church, led by Rick Warren, is another seeker church worthy of mention.³⁷

Warren planted the church intentionally desiring to "go out after the total pagan, the unchurched who wouldn't be caught dead in any of these fine churches."³⁸ He never wanted disgruntled members of other churches to transfer across to Saddleback; in fact, he wanted to make it difficult to join if you were a member from another church.

Warren believes that the balance between church health and healthy Christians will be key for the church in the 21st century. Warren suggests "Unhealthy churches tend to concentrate on one thing, such as becoming known as a worship church, an evangelism church, a discipleship church, a fellowship church, or a ministry church. To be healthy, all of these areas must be in balance with each other."³⁹ He maintains "A worship service doesn't have to

³⁵ Feelgoodism see A Lohrey, 'Voting for Jesus: Christianity and Politics in Australia', Quarterly Essay, (2006), 22. "Edutainment" see Ellingson, S. 'New Research on Megachurches: Non-denominationalism and Sectarianism', in B.S. Turner (ed.) *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2010), 245-266. "Performance of pleasure" see Maddox, M. 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved,' *Critical Research on Religion* 1, no 1 (April 2013): 108–15, accessed 07/02/23, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2050303213476108>. "Consumer-driven approach to evangelism" see M. Wade, and M. Hynes "Worshipping Bodies: Affective Labour in the Hillsong Church," *Geographical Research* 51, no 2 (May 2013): 173–179, accessed 08/02/23, https://www.academia.edu/9379916/Worshipping_Bodies_Affective_Labour_in_the_Hillsong_Church.

³⁶ Hillsong Pastors Conference (2010: Session 72).

³⁷ <https://saddleback.com/>.

³⁸ Debbie Moore, "Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive," accessed 23/01/23, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/sbc-life-articles/orthodox-evangelistic-and-seeker-sensitive/>.

³⁹ Moore, "Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive."

be shallow to be seeker-sensitive and the message doesn't have to be compromised. It just has to be understandable. "Making a service seeker-sensitive does not mean changing the theology, changing the Bible, or changing the message," he said.⁴⁰ While the gospel message doesn't change with time, Warren believes "the methods must change with every generation."⁴¹ Where Warren is to be highly commended as the leader of a seeker-friendly church is in his view of believers maturing in their faith. Moore reports as follows:

It's not enough to have a big crowd of Christians who are "baby believers" immature in their faith, Warren said. "You must move them to maturity." He doesn't stop there, however, emphasizing maturity is not an end in itself. "Maturity is for ministry and for mission," he said, noting that every believer should have a ministry in the church and a mission in the world.⁴²

This particular view synergises with Scott, who leads Causeway Coast Vineyard.⁴³ Scott agrees that the attractional model is insufficient, and the whole church is to be mobilised into outreach, just as Warren purports. I shall look at Causeway Coast Vineyard in greater detail in chapter seven.

3. Willow Creek Church

Lastly, our attention is drawn to Willow. Arguably the most well-known or celebrated Seeker church in the past three decades, Hybels pioneered a ministry that made significant progress in attracting people back to Sunday church.⁴⁴ However while Hybels' entrepreneurship shaped Willow, credence must be given to Robert Schuller for his earlier work. As Lee and co-authors succinctly posture it, "Schuller pioneered the use of marketing techniques to reach the non-churched. It would not be overreaching to say that without Schuller and the Crystal Cathedral, there would likely be no Willow Creek Community Church, no

⁴⁰ Moore, "Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive."

⁴¹ "Being seeker-sensitive, he said, is about how greeters speak to people at the church's entry points; how the church recognizes visitors in its service ("You don't make them stand up and embarrass them"); and using words that visitors understand. Warren said, although he has a doctor's degree, he doesn't use such theological terms as sanctification, justification, and propitiation in his sermons because few people in the congregation would understand. He said he sees himself as a translator of ideas. Moore, "Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive."

⁴² Moore, "Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive."

⁴³ <https://www.causewaycoastvineyard.com/>.

⁴⁴ <https://www.willowcreek.org/>.

Saddleback Community Church, or the thousands of other seeker-oriented churches around the country."⁴⁵ Another strong influence on the seeker church movement and in particular Willow Creek is surprisingly Peter Drucker. Maciariello connotes:

One perhaps unexpected example of Druckerism is the modern mega-church movement. He suggested to evangelical pastors that they create a more customer-friendly environment (hold back on the overt religious symbolism and provide plenty of facilities). Bill Hybels...has a quotation from Mr. Drucker hanging outside his office: "What is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?"⁴⁶

This is where Willow and other seeker churches come under fire. When business models and consumer language are used to motivate how best to bring people into the church, success may hinge more upon human strategy and gifting, as opposed to the power and presence of God.⁴⁷ However such critique does not seem justified when one reads the core values of Willow in the book Hybels co-authored with his wife Lynne.⁴⁸ Their vision and values were clear, but their modus operandi was arguably questionable.

While they successfully attracted seekers into their Sunday meetings and saw many commit their lives to Christ through Willow's chosen mode of outreach, the Reveal, an independent spiritual audit conducted by a research company highlighted some glaring deficiencies in the maturity of Christians at Willow.⁴⁹ Hybels publicly apologised, admitting

⁴⁵. "Few are the pastors who, knowingly or not, haven't wrestled with the approaches Schuller used and then to accept, adapt or reject them. As Schuller's grandson Bobby (Robert V. Schuller), who is today pastoring the successor to the Crystal Cathedral said, "He reached out to wounded, broken people who were afraid of the church experience. It was the beginning of the seeker-sensitive movement." Indeed the church's mission was represented by Schuller's oft-repeated mantra, "Find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it." Michael Lee, Alvin Reid, Ed Stetzer, Rick Richardson, "Willow Creek and the Seeker-Sensitive Movement (SSM): a timeline of the modern seeker-sensitive movement," Sutori, Accessed 18/01/2023, <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/willow-creek-and-the-seeker-sensitive-movement-ssm--8n7JgK1x4XyVaSrh4SfNg6yd>.

⁴⁶. The Economist, "Trusting the teacher in the grey-flannel suit: The one management thinker every educated person should read." Special Report: Peter Drucker, The Economist (Nov 17th 2005), Accessed 16/02/23, <http://tinyurl.com/8ntzb>.

⁴⁷. "and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, (ESV).

⁴⁸. Lynne and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The story and vision of Willow Creek Community Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 183-194.

⁴⁹. "In 2004, key leaders at Willow Creek Community Church connected with Eric Arnson, a former partner at McKinsey and Company and founder of Originate, a cutting-edge research and strategy-consulting firm. While meeting together, God revealed in their hearts a new vision for measuring spiritual development. Greg Hawkins, who was Willow Creek's executive pastor at the time, and Cally Parkinson, the church's communications director, collaborated with Eric to field a ground-breaking survey with the Willow Creek

Willow had made a mistake. He confessed that they should have helped promote new Christians to take greater responsibility for spiritual growth and not rely as heavily on weekend services. Hybels comments “spiritual growth doesn't happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age-old spiritual practices of prayer, bible reading..... And, ironically, these basic disciplines do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage.”⁵⁰ Reveal helped Willow refocus their efforts and re-evaluate their methods with greater scriptural integrity.

A church’s outreach to the world around them is often based upon assumptions or ideas, arrived at through prayerful consideration. For example, Willow believed that visitors who found a new faith in Christ would most likely be the greatest outreach advocates, quickly telling their friends and inviting them to come and discover what they had found. However, Reveal found that those who classified themselves as close to Christ or Christ-centred had a more significant evangelistic impact than new attendees regarding evangelism.⁵¹ What was even more shocking is that many of these close-to-Christ members of Willow, described themselves as “spiritually stalled” or dissatisfied with the role of the church in their spiritual formation, and about a quarter of the "stalled" segment and 63 per cent of the "dissatisfied" segment contemplated leaving the church.⁵² If the church’s goal is only to see people become Christians, the seeker churches such as Willow look effective. However, if the church’s goal is broader, and includes aiding believers to become entirely devoted mature apprentices of Christ, then

congregation. In 2007, they launched a pilot with seven churches to evaluate the survey’s effectiveness across multiple church formats.” Sutori, Accessed 18/01/2023 <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/willow-creek-and-the-seeker-sensitive-movement-ssm--8n7JgK1x4XyVaSrh4SfNg6yd>.

⁵⁰. Sutori, Accessed 18/01/2023

<https://www.sutori.com/en/story/willow-creek-and-the-seeker-sensitive-movement-ssm--8n7JgK1x4XyVaSrh4SfNg6yd>.

⁵¹. Matt Branaugh, “Willow Creek's 'Huge Shift': Influential megachurch moves away from seeker-sensitive services,” Christianity Today (May 15, 2008), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/june/5.13.html>.

⁵². Branaugh, “Willow Creek's 'Huge Shift': Influential megachurch moves away from seeker-sensitive services.”

seeker churches, like Willow are not as effective as initially perceived. The following chapter brings to light some positive aspects of ministry the Seeker church has engaged.

Chapter 4. Some Positives of Seeker Outreach.

Willow Creek, under Hybels, positively affirms the worth of all people. A famous line of Hybels is “lost people matter to God,” which certainly is biblical.⁵³ Hybels' passion for outreach is expressed in the following vision Mittelberg was tasked with at Willow Creek, “Mark Mittelberg spearheaded the development of a plan to equip our entire congregation for personal evangelism. He built a whole new kind of evangelism team.”⁵⁴ Willow’s pursuit of the entire church body being equipped for personal outreach in reaching their world is admirable, and indeed, one I long for as senior pastor of our family of churches. Sadly, some years later, Reveal highlighted the shortcomings in their approach and practice in pursuing this grand vision.⁵⁵ Mittelberg maintains that “evangelism is one of the highest values in the church—and one of the least practiced.”⁵⁶ He continues outlining that the values and core beliefs of the leaders’ hearts are significant in reshaping the church culture towards more effective outreach, and connotes, “Truly contagious churches don’t grow out of programs, conferences, but out of beliefs and values.”⁵⁷ This is accurate and commensurate with literature on the topic of creating better cultures within organisations, whether church or secular.⁵⁸ Willow sought to create a culture that would strongly motivate the church toward outreach.

⁵³. Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 11; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16, ESV.

⁵⁴. “Willow creek had the desire to equip ordinary believers to communicate their faith naturally and effectively.” Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 12 & 21.

⁵⁵. Sutori, Accessed 18/01/2023
<https://www.sutori.com/en/story/willow-creek-and-the-seeker-sensitive-movement-ssm--8n7JgK1x4XyVaSrh4SfNg6yd>.

⁵⁶. Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 20.

⁵⁷. Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 89.

⁵⁸. “Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization. It determines the

Unfortunately, the problem that surfaced was one endemic to most churches, where most congregants believe the church essentially exists to cater to their needs. In his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, Warren tells of a survey conducted by Win Arn, a leading church consultant, in which the survey of nearly 1000 churches revealed that 89% of Christians surveyed believed the church was there to take care of their family's needs as opposed to reaching the world for Jesus.⁵⁹ Mittelberg stated, "When the mission of the church gets reduced to keeping the sheep in the pen happy, the mission is falling woefully short."⁶⁰ Unfortunately, as Reveal highlighted, although Willow was certainly not this type of church, they could not shift this trend to the place they desired. Hybels was not content and used an analogy of realising something significant must be wrong if you are at an airport and no airplanes are landing or taking off.⁶¹ Although they sought to project a clear and compelling mission for the church, Reveal showed few congregants shared their faith, but some continued to invite the seekers to their services, where their strongly attractional model appealed in many ways to the visitor.

Positively, Willow wisely invested in their outreach vision. Barna found that "the churches who were most serious about evangelism, seem to put their money where their mission is."⁶² Aware that many churches invest vast sums of finance in foreign missions but almost ignore reaching the people within their own community, Willow chose to employ a

receptivity of staff and volunteers to new ideas, unleashes or dampens creativity, builds or erodes enthusiasm, and creates a sense of pride or deep discouragement about working or being involved there. Ultimately, the culture of a church shapes individual morale, teamwork, effectiveness, and outcomes." Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration*, Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2010), Chap.1, Kindle.

⁵⁹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 112-113.

⁶⁰ Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 113.

⁶¹ Bill Hybels recently spoke to a group of church leaders in Europe: "If you went to the airport, and there were no planes landing, and there were no planes taking off, you'd say, "I think there is a problem!" If you went to the train station, and there were no trains coming and no trains leaving, you'd say, "There's a problem!" So why is it that we can be part of churches that go on year after year with almost no truly unchurched people coming to faith in Christ, and with very few people really becoming more Christlike, and yet think there is no problem? Friends, if that describes your church, "There is a problem!" Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 24.

⁶² George Barna, *Evangelism that Works* (Ventura, California: Gospel Light, 1995), 97.

point person, tasked explicitly with spearheading their vision of mobilising the church, in general, to engage in personal evangelism.⁶³ The inherent danger in such an appointment is that some within the church could defer evangelistic responsibility to the paid professional. This is the very ideology one intends to break. However, such an appointment also ensures that the fire for outreach is continually burning before the congregation.

One of Willow's core values undergirding its strategy for reaching secular people was cultural relevance. Mittelberg addresses the often-overlooked traditional church practices concerning dress, music, food, language, cultural norms, habits, and traditions.⁶⁴ Added to this would be high-end media productions, done with a standard of excellence, to appeal to a generation more media shaped than previous generations. This plays into the attractional model of outreach Willow vigorously pursues. Consider Hybels's commitment to the church around invitations to church moments, outreaches, and occasions:

We enter into this trust relationship. We say to you "Here's our guarantee again for this next ministry year. We're going to do everything in our power every seven days, to serve up to you and your invited guests the most prayer-filled, practical, creative, compelling, Christ-centered, relevant weekend services that we possibly can. We will give 110%, fifty-two times as you're building relationships and leading people into a dialogue about Christianity."⁶⁵

From this quote, there is an agreement of commitment, but one that holds the church to account in both engaging with the unchurched and inviting them when deemed appropriate to such strategically focused church moments. This worked well for Willow for many years but is a strategy that only seems beneficial when one has a gifted and winsome communicator, and talented teams of musicians, dancers, and actors to ensure an excellent production. Smaller

⁶³ Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 140-146.

⁶⁴ Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 49. Also consider Atlantic's Charles Truehart's perspective on such attractional church models, "No spires. No crosses. No robes. No clerical collars. No hard pews. No kneelers. No fire, no brimstone. No pipe organs. No dreary eighteenth-century hymns." Kimon Howard Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Non-traditional Way* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 55.

⁶⁵ Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 76.

churches with smaller budgets would struggle to match this. In the following chapter, critiques of the Seeker church approach will be highlighted.

Chapter 5. Some Critiques of the Seeker Church's Attractional Model.

What might some of the reasons be for church attendance to wane? Changing times and worldviews have some influence on people including those who once attended church. What previously was captivating, may lack the dynamism and influence it had over modern culture. Sargeant states, a seeker church “tailors its programs and services to attract people who are not church attenders.”⁶⁶ Most evangelical churches try to appeal to the unchurched, but for the so-called seeker churches, attracting the unchurched means doing church differently.⁶⁷ This ‘different way’ has attracted interest from the unchurched and criticism from the church. Critique has been levelled at seeker churches from many angles, two of which deserve worthwhile comment.

Worthy of first mention is embracing the business model, which consequentially led to a consumeristic ethos. While something can be learned from the secular business space, Watson and Scalen warn that “The modern church’s intoxication with corporate business culture, self-improvement perspectives, and pop culture is part of a larger trend, namely, secularisation.”⁶⁸ Adopting success strategies from the business arena does not necessarily translate into success within the church or social sectors. Church leaders would do well to heed Collins who states, “We must reject the idea, well-intentioned, but dead wrong, that the primary path to greatness

⁶⁶ Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Non-traditional Way*, 2.

⁶⁷ Regarding the different way, Mittelberg maintains many churches “hide behind the idea of just being a bit more “seeker-sensitive, using it as an excuse to change little or nothing.....Many seeker-sensitive worship services are in reality the same old fare, with superficial cosmetic fixes and face-lifts that fail to address or relate to a truly unchurched visitor.” Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 380.

⁶⁸ J B Watson Jr, Walter H Scalen Jr, “‘Dining with the Devil’: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches,” *International Social Science Review* Vol 83, no 3/4(January 2008): 171-180, accessed 20/02/23, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41887369>.

in the social sectors is to become more like a business.”⁶⁹ Collins’s work in *Good to Great* revealed that few businesses are great, so the question begs why we would want to import such practices of mediocrity into the social sectors or the church for that matter.⁷⁰ This perspective necessitates church leaders like myself, to be more intuitive and selective, to filter secular leadership principles through new creation lenses, and be aware of consumerism’s dangers and our susceptibility to numbers, growth, and success, as defined in the business arena. The mission of church and business are not the same. Missional leadership within the church context takes the context in which we find ourselves and seeks ways of reaching people within that context. Roxburgh makes a vital contribution to the subject when he posits, “Missional leadership is also about the capacity to develop a continuing awareness and understanding with the people, neighbourhood, community, social reality, and changing issues in which they are located. This is what we mean by context.”⁷¹ While missionally minded church leaders seek innovative ways to engage with their context, creating an environment where church attendees pick and choose churches based on the coffee, children’s facilities, and parking availability, results in a consumeristic mindset, which may subtly sabotage one’s missional vision.⁷² Frequent realignment with the Scriptures is vital and will help protect us from this distraction.

A second criticism levelled at seeker churches is that of a taming of the gospel. This involves the perceived softening of the gospel’s message, deliberately avoiding certain biblical topics, to make the message palatable to the unchurched. Viola comments:

The modern techniques it utilises to communicate the gospel are often just as carnal as the system from which it is supposed to deliver people. In this way the gospel has become trivialised, commercialised, and emptied of its power, being viewed as just another product in our consumer-obsessed culture⁷³

⁶⁹. Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors, a Monograph to accompany Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 1.

⁷⁰. Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't* (New York: Harper Business, 2011), Kindle Edition.

⁷¹. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 115.

⁷². Chelsen Vicari, “The Dreaded Seeker-Friendly Church, Juicy Ecumenism,” The Institute on Religion and Democracy’s Blog, (December 29, 2015), <https://juicyecumenism.com/2015/12/29/the-church-search-continues-the-non-denominational-church/>.

⁷³. Viola, *Rethinking the Wineskin: The Practice of the New Testament Church*, 53.

Consistent with Viola, Carter, a former pastor in a seeker church purports, “The bottom line is that what you win people with is what you have to keep people with.” He refers to it as the basic bait-and-switch operation.⁷⁴ Carter believes this is why most seeker churches “never managed to exit the theological merge lane. If you sell them on Christianity Lite then you need to continue to offer Christianity Lite week after week after week. The logic of seeker church traps you in a spiritual re-enactment of Waiting For Godot.”⁷⁵ This has led to some believers in seeker churches looking to move churches, seeking deeper teachings in Scripture, no longer content with motivational messages or a mere Christian social commentary on today’s world.⁷⁶ The message preached has a bearing on who consistently attends, and transformed lives should ultimately prove the worth of the message preached.

A question that has continually been asked of the modern church is, ‘Should the church’s message be adapted for changing generations?’ On this subject, Nicolosi comments on the current status of society's drift from the church and purports that society is becoming more secular and less religious:

With each passing generation – from the Boomers to Gen Xers, to the Millennials, to Generation Z – there are fewer believers and church members. This downward trajectory shows no indication of leveling off. Thus, there is a need for preachers to reimagine how we communicate in a culture where people may not know the Christian story or know it accurately. While our method of preaching may need to change, our message remains unchanging.⁷⁷

Nicolosi continues, confronting his readers with the challenge that we are called not to preach our own word but God’s. He believes the essential message of the Gospel has not changed. He

⁷⁴ “The basic logic of the seeker-sensitive movement was that we would get people in the door by playing contemporary music, singing contemporary songs, speaking contemporary jargon and addressing contemporary issues. Then at some unspecified point in the future, we would transition into more meaty and substantial things.” Paul Carter, *Why I Abandoned Seeker Church*, TGC Canadian Edition, Columns (August 23, 2018), <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/abandoned-seeker-church/>.

⁷⁵ Carter, *Why I Abandoned Seeker Church*, accessed 18/01/23, <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/abandoned-seeker-church/>

⁷⁶ See footnote 52, where Willow members expressed desire to move churches. Having led Immanuel Church for nearly 23 years, I have encountered numerous believers from other seeker churches in our area, moving across to us, who desire greater depth of Scriptural teaching and experience. When asked why, the general response is around being weary of teachings of the more ‘motivational type’.

⁷⁷ Gary Nicolosi, *Soulfire: Preaching the Church’s Message in a Secular, Postmodern World* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2020), Preface, Kindle.

does however question whether we should adapt how we present the Gospel message in today's world, stating, "The issue is how to preach effectively in a twenty-first-century world where attention spans are shorter, communication techniques are more sophisticated, and many people (including Christians) do not know the Christian story, or do not know it accurately or adequately."⁷⁸ The seeker church has adapted to presenting the message to today's world well but has perhaps ventured too far in that the offensive, clarion-clear challenge Jesus gives, is filtered out so that seekers are not offended and will hopefully return next week. As Carter, quoted above, questioned the seeker movement around the classic 'bait and switch' operation.

Some final comments on the carefully constructed seeker church outreach strategy lie in the experience offered to the seekers. McManus poignantly wrote, "It's pretty simple, but seeker services don't work if there are no seekers in the service."⁷⁹ Whilst successfully attracting the unchurched, this offering is considered a sterile environment, weak in theology, lacking transcendence and power, with the preacher being more a motivational speaker than a Gospel articulator, with Kimball stating the "preaching has too often become like a 'self-help guru' Tony Robbins-like teaching with some Bible verses added."⁸⁰ Nevertheless, I believe the seeker form of outreach, based mainly on the attractional model, reached many who would not have ventured willingly into certain church gatherings but cannot be the yardstick by which church outreach is measured or defined. In the following chapter, the focus shifts to other approaches of outreach, in particular the Pentecostal/Charismatic approach.

⁷⁸ Nicolosi, *Soulfire: Preaching the Church's Message in a Secular, Postmodern World, Part One*, Kindle.

⁷⁹ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to become the Church God had in Mind*, (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013), 16., Google Books.

⁸⁰ Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), Introduction, Kindle.

Chapter 6. The Charismatic Approach and Power Evangelism.

The Pentecostal approach, with a more focused look at charismatic outreach, takes an entirely different approach. One comment before considering the differences is what the Apostle Paul writes about Christian gatherings and what unbelievers may think upon experiencing prophecy and speaking in tongues.⁸¹ This confirms that Christian gatherings are not exclusively for believers; the unchurched are invited in. Neither can one argue from Scripture that Christian meetings are to be exclusively geared toward the unchurched. While the book of Acts shows accounts of the demonstration of the Spirit's power, the charismatic movement has not left itself without criticism, often due to extremes and excesses that have attracted rightful critique. MacArthur posits that charismatic theology "has warped genuine worship through unbridled emotionalism, polluted prayer with private gibberish, contaminated true spirituality with unbiblical mysticism, and corrupted faith by turning it into a creative force for speaking worldly desires into existence."⁸² However, such a scathing attack cannot blanket all charismatic churches. The Causeway Coast Church in Coleraine, Northern Ireland, as a charismatic church relating to the Vineyard Family of churches, has managed to attract many unchurched people into its gatherings and seen successful outreach results based not only on persons coming to faith in Christ but being disciplined towards a mature apprenticeship in Christ. Using this church as a model, I anticipate a better synergy between the two extremes of Pentecostal/charismatic churches on one side and seeker churches on the other.

It is worth noting the impact that Wimber had on outreach within a charismatic context. In the Thesis Statement, there was a reference to the Holy Spirit empowering the church to be witnesses.⁸³ Wimber believed that evangelism should not just produce decisions for Christ but disciples of Christ and acknowledged that "once I accepted the fact that all the spiritual gifts

⁸¹. See 1 Corinthians 14: 10-25 (ESV).

⁸². MacArthur Jnr, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*, Introduction, Kindle Edition.

⁸³. See page 1.

are for today, I found a key for effective evangelism: combining the proclamation with demonstration of the gospel.”⁸⁴ Springer and Wimber propose that due to a lack of God’s kingdom power in operation, “many churches have become so secular that non-members have no thought or concern about entering their premises. In fact, people often see the Church as only another organisation in need of their help.”⁸⁵ While acknowledging that “the Bible does not teach that evangelism without signs and wonders is invalid,” power evangelism was one of the typical kinds of evangelism in the early church.⁸⁶ Such power encounters were common, where the Spirit’s charismatic gifts somehow opened the people’s hearts to the truth and power of the Gospel.⁸⁷ Wimber believes that:

Power Evangelism cuts through much resistance that comes from ignorance or negative attitudes; that is, it moves people along the Engel Scale quickly, especially overcoming negative attitudes towards Christianity. By penetrating the inner heart and consciousness, God overcomes resistance with the supernatural; resistance that through rational means alone might take a lifetime – if not more – to overcome.⁸⁸

Furthermore, Wimber believes that many Western Christians’ inhibition to boldly step out and practice power evangelism has made our outreach ineffective, especially in dealing with people with demonic problems, illness, and serious sin.⁸⁹ Lastly, Wimber recounts an episode where an unchurched couple out for a walk, dropped in on their Sunday charismatic worship gathering in a school gymnasium, cried throughout the worship time without knowing why, and responded to an invite to get saved, even though they never fully understood what that meant.

⁸⁴. John Wimber & Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 2013), Introduction, Kindle.

⁸⁵. Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.9, Kindle.

⁸⁶. Wimber and Springer wisely acknowledge that “simply telling non-believers about Christ does not necessarily mean they will believe in him. Power evangelism – even receiving a miracle – also doesn’t necessarily mean they will believe.” Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.15, Kindle.

⁸⁷. By power evangelism I mean a presentation of the gospel that is rational but that also transcends the rational (though it is in no way ‘irrational’ or anti-rational). The explanation of the gospel – the clear proclamation of the finished work of Christ on the cross – comes with a demonstration of God’s power through signs and wonders. Power evangelism is a spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, empowered presentation of the gospel. Power evangelism is preceded and undergirded by demonstrations of God’s presence, and frequently results in groups of people being saved. Signs and wonders do not save; only Jesus and his substitutionary work on the cross saves.” Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.11, Kindle.

⁸⁸. Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.15, Kindle. For further information on the Engel Scale visit <https://www.eauk.org/great-commission/what-is-the-engel-scale>.

⁸⁹. Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.11, Kindle.

“They were drawn not by a message but by a supernatural presence. The message of the cross had to be given to complete the process, but without the leading of the Holy Spirit the couple would not have readily accepted it.”⁹⁰ Such encounters cannot be discredited, and an openness to remaining biblically accurate in how evangelism occurs will better position all churches to engage in outreach. In the following chapter, the attention now shifts to Scott and the Coleraine Church, who shall be considered as a model for this study.

Chapter 7. Causeway Coast Vineyard as a Model.

This Vineyard church in Coleraine transformed, not in identity with respect to who God had called them to be in their community, but rather in methodology and practice. While any truly missional believer, whether belonging to a seeker church or a non-seeker church has a passion for outreach, what they invite the unchurched to can be very different.⁹¹ While Willow and many other seeker churches send their congregations out of the building to invite their friends, neighbours, and colleagues to the next Sunday attraction, other churches who may not possess the budget to put on high-end dramas, musical excellence or have gifted charismatic orators like Hybels, send their congregations out to simply share their faith. Scott, in his book, *Scattered Servants*, recounts the journey of this local church in Northern Ireland, where he had the privilege of pastoring for 20 years, and how they enjoyed seeing miracles and salvations take place on the streets and in the building. Scott describes it as a book “about the church loving the city back to life ... about unleashing the church to bring life to the city. It reminds us that our cities are not hard to reach—they are just hard to reach when we stay in the building.”⁹² While there may be some agreement between the seeker church outreach model and the charismatic church outreach model that all the church are to witness to Christ outside of the building, Scott’s challenge shakes the foundation of the attractional model when he purports,

⁹⁰ Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.15, Kindle.

⁹¹ According to Kimball, “missional living: Christians go out into the world to serve God rather than isolate themselves within communities of like-minded individuals.” Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), Kindle.

⁹² Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Introduction, Kindle.

“Indeed, it’s impossible to reach our cities through better church services.”⁹³ According to Scott gathered environments (church meetings) grow churches, while scattered servants reach cities.⁹⁴ When gathered church environments are our focus it is harder to reach a city as “our ministry models revolve around expanding our services.”⁹⁵ Scott maintains, “It’s not especially challenging to create irresistible gathered environments. But the call is to release unstoppable, impassioned scattered servants.”⁹⁶ Two questions remain: is there space for both to occur in a church and is this a model that can be transposed into other contexts around the world?

The practice of the early church, reveals something of both. After persecution arose, those scattered preached the gospel wherever they travelled.⁹⁷ It seems these scattered servants brought the kingdom of God life wherever they found themselves. Simon the magician and the Ethiopian Eunuch experienced this kingdom life outside of a structured gathering, yet the church also met together in house churches encouraging and strengthening one another.⁹⁸ This brings us to a primary question of this research: why should churches feel the need to choose one or the other? Scott reflects on this same tension by posing some questions:

What if believers didn’t have to choose between churches that emphasised ‘seeker sensitive’ or ‘supernaturally empowered’? What if gathered environments were marked by God’s presence and scattered servants were empowered by His Spirit?..... What if it was normal for people to come to faith in the building? What if it was normal for miracles to happen beyond the building? What if our services attracted the lost and empowered the found?⁹⁹

They embarked on mobilising the church to be scattered servants and remodelling their church meetings to be more attractive to the unchurched at the same time. Scott paraphrases McMaunus, “It’s not difficult to reach the community. It’s just really hard to change the church.

⁹³ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Introduction, Kindle.

⁹⁴ “When I use the term *scattered servants*, I mean a movement of people empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent to bring life to cities. When they show up in the city, carrying hope for the city, everything changes and captives are released.” Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁵ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁶ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁷ Acts 8:4-8 (ESV).

⁹⁸ “The revered British evangelist Smith Wigglesworth once said, “It’s not called the book of thoughts. It’s called the book of Acts. It’s called the book of Acts because the believers acted.” Smith Wigglesworth, *Faith That Prevails* (Radford, VA: Wilder, 2007), 9. Acts 8:9-13 (ESV); Acts 8:26-40 (ESV); Acts 11:26 (ESV); Acts 12:12-17 (ESV).

⁹⁹ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

Our cities are longing for life. But to reach them, we have to reposition our churches.”¹⁰⁰ Scott and their team pursued this vision, believing “The next move of God is not a movement *in* the church. It is a movement *of* the church.”¹⁰¹ Their mission no longer centred on strategic locations only, but happened in everyday environments, fuelled by knowing that “Gathering together as believers had given them access to exceptional teaching and astonishing generosity, but going together had given them authority to bring hope to hurting humanity.”¹⁰² Scott believes broken cities need more than larger, more culturally relevant churches with better services trying to impress our cities to life, but need the church to show up beyond the building, with hearts of love and grace, but also in the Spirit’s power.¹⁰³ This resonates with Wimber’s philosophy of ministry, who believed that “preaching and demonstrating the gospel are not mutually exclusive activities; they work together, reinforcing each other” and that demonstrations of the Spirit’s power open hearts to the gospel.¹⁰⁴ Scott references numerous testimonies of encounters in public places where the unchurched were powerfully affected through scattered servants of the Coleraine church, ministering the gifts of the Spirit and taking the message out beyond the building.¹⁰⁵ In Scott, there is a move from a felt tension to a synthesis of two seemingly irreconcilable approaches to outreach. The combination of empowering gathered church environments and empowered scattered servants reaching the world beyond meetings and the building can unlock new vision in other churches.

Scott’s journey towards a more outward focussed church had begun. His story resonated with another church leader he dialogued with, who explained that even though they were

¹⁰⁰ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰¹ “We are moving beyond gathered environments and entrusting the kingdom to scattered servants who communicate and demonstrate the word—the message of the kingdom—wherever they go.” Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰² Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰³ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰⁴ Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap. 11, Kindle.

¹⁰⁵ Testimony 1: Ben using words of knowledge on the street; Testimony 2: Nick using words of knowledge in a public setting; Testimony 3: Alan Scott’s testimony in a ladies home. Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle. Testimony 4: Rae in a Department Store; Testimony 5: Dave in a local School, Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

experiencing healings, renewal, and the supernatural in their Sunday gatherings, he longed for a more significant impact in the broader city.¹⁰⁶ The Coleraine church needed to reposition the church to reach the lost outside the walls of the church and create environments that would help lead lost people to life. Scott admits that the latter is simpler than the former.¹⁰⁷ However, re-shaping the gathered church environment can upset the status quo. Scott maintains that some pastors do not love their city enough to upset their church.¹⁰⁸ Everything changed for Scott the day he attended a Willow Creek conference in England, where he heard Erwin McManus of Mosaic Church in California, explain how Mosaic had made every ministry of the church missional with every environment infused with a commitment to the outsider.¹⁰⁹ Scott and his team began evaluating every church ministry with the same commitment McManus had proposed; to close any ministry that was not outwardly focused. Their new mission being:

It doesn't matter if a ministry is growing or appears successful. If it's not missional, we don't do it. It doesn't matter if it is marked by the supernatural. If it's not missional, we don't do it. It doesn't matter if it's appealing or attractive. If it's not missional, we don't do it. It doesn't matter if it's the next big thing in renewal. If it's not missional, we don't do it. It doesn't matter if it serves huge pastoral needs. If it's not missional, we don't do it. Every one of our ministries must connect with the unchurched community at some level.¹¹⁰

This complements Mittelberg, who purports “there can be no ambiguity about our mission..... If you want to change values and create a real evangelistic culture, you're going to have to attack on every front – and do it relentlessly.”¹¹¹ As a result, the Coleraine church's journey involved more than re-envisioning each ministry; but also included restructuring their Sunday gatherings.

Significant change requires wisdom in both vision sharing and pragmatic application to involve the church in the journey. While unwilling to deny their charismatic heart, the Coleraine church shortened their worship from 40 minutes to 25 minutes; used more inclusive

^{106.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{107.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{108.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{109.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{110.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{111.} Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 113-114.

language, and began calling their visitors ‘guests’ to mention a few adjustments. Scott applauded the seeker-friendly church pioneers, who were often criticised for their radical approach.¹¹² However, while they celebrated some success, certain challenges remained. Scott writes:

We now had gathered environments where people who were looking for God could attend. We had structures that leaned toward lost people, but we didn’t yet have scattered servants—a movement of people empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent to bring life to the city..... We were prioritising and finding the lost, yet insufficiently mobilising the found.¹¹³

After years of reinforcement, their church persisted in their vision and began to see more of the church living as scattered servants, mobilised in the power of the Spirit to reach the unchurched, bringing life to their very city.¹¹⁴ Scott believes that the dream of God over every believer is not only to serve in the local church but rather “to come alive in His presence and bring life to every environment, spilling contagious hope into hurting humanity.”¹¹⁵ The vision for a church, to both offer gatherings that are attractional toward the unchurched, and foster a mobilising of the church into the marketplace and schools and every corner of society, carrying a Spirit-empowered gospel, with signs and wonders to follow, is what drew me to study the Coleraine church as a model.

In summary, such a model may be reproducible elsewhere. Such a model may include a broader percentage of the congregation in missional living, as some will invite people to gatherings and some will practice what Wimber called power evangelism.¹¹⁶ Scott diagrammatically captures their church’s mission in the following way:¹¹⁷

¹¹² “I love the disciplined focus and intentional bias of those churches and movements that have an irrevocable commitment to reaching their city and who attentively address the needs of their city..... We have learned so much from them. Without their example, we would not be seeing dozens of people every month come to Christ. Without them, we would still be drifting inward—doing church for us. These churches and movements have taught us the value of guests to the King.” Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

¹¹³ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

¹¹⁵ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Introduction, Kindle.

¹¹⁶ Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap. 11, Kindle.

¹¹⁷ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.



Their courage to embrace attractional gatherings and mobilise the church as scattered servants is noteworthy. Scott maintains that while attractional services are important, they are “insufficient to create and generate missional movement.”¹¹⁸ His working definition of ‘attractional’ and ‘missional’ is “Anything that happens on church time and territory is attractional. Anything that happens outside church time and territory is missional. Anything that focuses on letting outsiders in is attractional. Anything that catalyses and releases insiders out is missional.”¹¹⁹ Their church embraced both, finding a synergy between what many consider only alternatives. It wasn’t easy and took much time, but through persistence, it became a working model for others. At the outset of this research paper, I posed the question of whether a church could be seeker sensitive yet simultaneously charismatic in outreach, Scott and the Coleraine church have brought hope. To be both attractional and missional, without compromising the vision and ethos of the church, is complex yet powerful for outreach.

^{118.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

^{119.} Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

PART II:
THE RESEARCH

Chapter 8. The Research Background.

This section involves eight interviews of pastors whose experience in leading churches ranges from seven to forty years. The interviews were conducted over two weeks, seven in person and one via Zoom. I engaged each to discover an in-depth appreciation of the issue under discussion and to glean personal perspective and experiential knowledge about the subject. Although the Coleraine church was not viewed as a pure case study, Yin writes of three types of such research, that being explorative, descriptive, and explanatory.¹²⁰ This explorative study used the Coleraine church more as a model.

Attention was paid to clarifying the guidelines of the interview and the scope of what was expected in each interview. Although it was communicated to each that their anonymity would be respected if so desired, they agreed to have their names footnoted in the research paper about particular quotes they may have made or perspectives they had given. In addition, each interview was recorded with permission, to enable details could be referenced after the interview to ensure the accuracy of the data captured. With the interview being the primary data-gathering instrument for this research paper, a semi-structured interview was chosen over a structured interview, with a set of carefully designed questions.¹²¹ The semi-structured was chosen as it offered some flexibility to interviewees to elaborate further beyond a specific question.¹²² Although the same questions were asked of each in the same order, some flexibility was granted in terms of further questions they asked concerning clarity on the topic.

^{120.} Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods 4th edition* (California: Sage Publication, 2009), 11-15.

^{121.} See Appendix 1.

^{122.} “An open question allows respondents to answer however they wish, without prompting. Because answers vary so greatly, tabulating open questions is involved and time-consuming.” Smith, *Academic Writing and Theological Research: A Guide for Students*, 235.

Chapter 9. Investigating Pastors' Perspectives on Outreach: An Analysis of the Data.

This qualitative research involved church leaders who pastor or have pastored churches, from Seeker-Sensitive to Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. This descriptive research aims to make reality known so that conclusions might be drawn and possible directions might be discovered.¹²³ Isaac and Michael state, “descriptive research of this nature might include determining what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefitting from their experience in making future plans and decisions.”¹²⁴ Durban, South Africa, has many churches of multiple styles and ethos.

Having pastored Immanuel Church in Umhlanga Rocks, Durban since November 1999, I have observed with interest that there are few Seeker-focused churches compared to others. In the research, only one church leader, Interviewee 1, described their church boldly as Seeker-focused.¹²⁵ Having been schooled in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and having led such a church in Empangeni, on the North Coast of South Africa for ten years, he had grown somewhat disillusioned with that model, and upon planting Grace Family Church in Durban, soon discovered a new way of doing church. He commented, “I had got so caught up in church, and in charismatic church particularly, that we weren’t focused on lost people, but healing and prophecy and gifts.”¹²⁶ He reflected on his experience at a church in Empangeni as two-hour Sunday meetings, with 45 minutes of worship, healing lines, and prophecy, but seeing few people come to Christ. After reading Lynne and Bill Hybels’ *Rediscovering Church*, the revelation of the Seeker model excited him and strongly influenced a fresh vision for a new

¹²³ N.J. Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers: for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 126.

¹²⁴ Smith, *Academic Writing and Theological Research: A Guide for Students*, 227. For original reference, see Stephen Isaac and William B. Michael, *Handbook in Research Evaluation* (San Diego: Edits Pub, 1971), 18.

¹²⁵ Interviewee 1. Pastor Mark van Straaten, who planted and led Grace Family Church, Umhlanga for 30 years.

¹²⁶ Mark van Straaten, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

way of church, which is consistent with Sargeant who believes Seeker churches attract outsiders by “doing church in a different way.”¹²⁷ If worldviews are shifting and times are changing, perhaps different ways of engaging the unchurched should be explored.

A commonality among all interviewees was everyone’s passion for reaching the unchurched. This is confirmed by McManus’ observation, “When I talk to pastors and church leaders, I rarely find people who do not have it in their hearts to touch the world with the love of Christ.”¹²⁸ Whether those interviewed considered their church a seeker-friendly church or not, there was consistency in leading a church that was not only catering for the congregation but seeking ways to engage the unchurched. The big difference was simply how.

A further consistency across all interviewees was the willingness to adjust language so that the unchurched could all understand and feel included. This synergises with Mittelberg who proposed that overcoming the “cultural chasm,” included using phrases and words the unchurched could identify with.¹²⁹ Interviewee 8¹³⁰ spoke of their need to adjust how they interacted with the church on Sundays. He admitted that although they “never liked the term ‘seeker sensitive’ they were taking some of the best parts of the ‘attractional model,’ like if someone far from Jesus turned up on a Sunday could they even understand what was happening, like the language used from the front. Were we explaining what our even simple concepts like worship and ministry are?”¹³¹ These adjustments to language are confirmed in the literary portion of this paper.

Besides language, moments of opportunity to experience God’s transcendence were discussed. Interviewee 2,¹³² in speaking of Sunday gatherings, referenced adjustments they made to create encounter opportunities where everybody felt allowed to engage in communion

^{127.} Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Non-traditional Way*, 2.

^{128.} Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 57, Google Books.

^{129.} Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 49.

^{130.} Interviewee 8, Neil Young, Leader of Causeway Coast Vineyard Church, Coleraine, North Ireland.

^{131.} Neil Young, in discussion with the author, December 2022.

^{132.} Interviewee 2, Ryan Matthews, Church Planter, and Leader of Freedom House Church, Salt Rock.

and worship, without the unchurched feeling excluded.¹³³ Such encounter opportunities synthesise with Interviewee 3,¹³⁴ who explained how they understood that seekers need to encounter God through such opportunities and not just a good presentation of the gospel. Such encounter moments are pivotal for the unchurched to experience the transcendent presence of God, although they may not be able to identify precisely what that is.¹³⁵ Interviewee 3 elaborates on these encounter moments, explaining how they create a few moments of silence at the end of every preach, inviting everyone present to be still and listen to what they feel God might be saying to them. Everyone present is included and invited into this, no matter their standing in God.¹³⁶ Interviewee 3 acknowledged that they have shifted in practice from being more seeker sensitive in their meetings to offering engaging moments, like this, which might feel awkward for some, but results in positive outcomes in many visitors' lives.¹³⁷ The philosophy of inclusivity in church gatherings is not a typical, universal, traditional practice.¹³⁸ Yet, if the church is seeking to introduce the unchurched to God, such moments can be pivotal.

Besides understandable language, explanations of occurrences to the unchurched are vital. Interviewee 5¹³⁹ referenced their previous Sunday gathering, where a church member had functioned in the gift of tongues with interpretation, and how they immediately took time to explain to any visitor what this was and where it was referenced in Scripture.¹⁴⁰ He described how they were committed to making everything understandable to the visitor.¹⁴¹ Using less confusing language was also important to Interviewee 1, who remarked how they would not

¹³³ Ryan Matthews, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹³⁴ Interviewee 3, Dylan Jahnig, Church Planter, and Leader of Linc Church, Salt Rock.

¹³⁵ Dylan Jahnig, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹³⁶ Dylan Jahnig, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹³⁷ Dylan Jahnig, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹³⁸ A church leader within a local Anglican church recounted to me (the Author) of how he and many others felt excluded at a Memorial held for a mutual friend at a local Catholic church, where only members of the Catholic church were able to participate in the sacraments, irrespective of faith in Christ, devotion to Christ or any other criterion. His comment to myself being “How does this make the unchurched feel?” Conversation with Author, February 2023.

¹³⁹ Interviewee 5, Stan Phipps, Leader of Glenridge Church, Durban.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 14 (ESV).

¹⁴¹ Stan Phipps in discussion with the author, March 2023.

welcome people to the house of the Lord, as it is merely a building and that people have now become the house of the Lord.¹⁴² A question that needs to be raised is if the church is inviting the unchurched into their gatherings, would not a warm, welcoming environment, with accompanying explanation and one open to participation for all be beneficial?

A further common trend among the interviewed was their passion for creating an invitational culture within the church. Interviewee 6¹⁴³ maintains, “When you are in love with Jesus and following Him, the overflow is you reach your friends.”¹⁴⁴ Interviewee 4¹⁴⁵ maintains that when Christians really believe the gospel, they “will tell them straight.”¹⁴⁶ Is this a function of pure passion, or a combination of gifting and perhaps personality?¹⁴⁷ Mittelberg and Hybels validate the effectiveness of friendship evangelism.¹⁴⁸ This is collaborated by both Interviewees 1 and 6, who promote the value of such evangelism over cold-calling, with Interviewee 1 asking the question, “Why all the Christian Cycling clubs and Motorcycle clubs?”¹⁴⁹ If Jesus was known as a friend of sinners, why do believers seek to exclude them from their friendship circles?¹⁵⁰ Interviewee 6 held the church to account for one’s interests with the unchurched. If your hobby or interest were practiced only with believers, they would lovingly challenge the church, and practically assist with advice on being more inclusive and building friendships with the unchurched.¹⁵¹ Interestingly, Interviewee 4, though a supporter of this type of witnessing issued a challenge to friendship evangelism when he said, “Studies show that friendship/personal evangelism is most effective, but the danger is you begin to value their friendship more than their salvation and fear losing a friend in sharing the gospel, so

¹⁴² Mark van Straaten, in discussion with the author, March 2023. 1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV).

¹⁴³ Interviewee 6, Wally Gerstmeier, planted and led Life Changers Church in Table View, Cape Town.

¹⁴⁴ Wally Gerstmeier in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Interviewee 4, Glenn Schroder, Church planter and leader of CRC, Durban.

¹⁴⁶ Glenn Schroder, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁴⁷ Such a topic demands further attention but cannot be focussed upon in this paper.

¹⁴⁸ Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 69.

¹⁴⁹ Mark van Straaten, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew 11:19 (ESV).

¹⁵¹ Wally Gerstmeier, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

become reticent to engage around the gospel.”¹⁵² This leads to a realization that both friendship evangelism and outreach to strangers are more beneficial.

Creating an invitational culture can be challenging. Interviewee 8 highlighted the trust dynamic between the church congregation and the leadership as a factor of influence in realising this culture. He reiterates, “We had always told people to invite your unchurched friends, but it seems that once the church trusted that the environment was truly welcoming to their friends, they started inviting their friends. Trust was important.”¹⁵³ As the church, engaging the unchurched world around us, and being more inclusive than exclusive opens doors of opportunity for deeper conversations, and hopefully, revelations in the heart.

The church environment that outsiders are being invited into is noteworthy. Some of the Pastors interviewed championed the physical space the unchurched were being invited into. Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 7¹⁵⁴ held a firm conviction about creating attractive environments of excellence. Interviewee 7 confessed, “We offer a well-run, well-maintained environment as they are inviting people to something worth coming to. We want people to arrive and go wow, this is not what I expected!”¹⁵⁵ While they strive to create an excellent experience for their visitors, he stated “we don’t seek to impress you, but want to add value to your life. People don’t want to experience just a big show, something fake, but what is real.”¹⁵⁶ This was corroborated by Interviewee 3, who connotes, “Environments really matter. By making our environment more friendly, and more contemporarily relevant to culture, we have seen way more people come through these doors.”¹⁵⁷ He continues, explaining that the experience of such environments, which include the people who create them, impacts the visitor positively. Referencing the context of Salt Rock as an expanding newer suburban area,

^{152.} Glenn Schroder, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

^{153.} Neil Young, in discussion with the author, December 2022.

^{154.} Interviewee 7, Dean Ivey, Church planter and leader of Rivers Church, Durban North.

^{155.} Dean Ivey, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

^{156.} Dean Ivey, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

^{157.} Dylan Jahnig, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

he highlighted the population's financial means, adventurous spirit, and appetite to explore new things. This plays into the church's hands, as their campus offers not only church meetings but two gyms, a car wash, pre-school, business suites, and a coffee shop, all of which attract higher volumes of traffic exploring their offerings.¹⁵⁸ Reaching the unchurched in today's world has required the church to express itself in relatable ways, including language and environments, and encouraged interactions between the church and the world.

Chapter 10. Evaluating the Findings: What was Discovered.

10.1: Are Sundays for the church or the unchurched?

One of the contentious debates between seeker churches and others pertains to the question of who Sunday church really is for. Is it for the church or the unchurched? Is it a time for encouraging and equipping the saints for the works of ministry or is it primarily an opportunity to reach the unchurched?¹⁵⁹ Scripture speaks of both, with Vantassel stating, "Christ commanded us to not only reach the lost but to feed the sheep already in the fold as well."¹⁶⁰ The seeker church might take courage from Paul's willingness to "become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some,"¹⁶¹ and Keown's belief that while the primary purpose of the gathered meeting is the edification of the church, gathered meetings are also for evangelism.¹⁶² Keown summarises his thoughts: "This desire for cultural appropriateness has an important implication for us today—while church gatherings are

¹⁵⁸ Dylan Jahnig, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁵⁹ Reference to Ephesians 4:12 (ESV).

¹⁶⁰ Stephen Vantassel, "Beyond Seeker Friendly," *The Journal of The American Society for Church Growth* 18 (2007): 49-54, accessed 18 January 2023, https://www.academia.edu/10212180/Beyond_Seeker_Friendly_rev.

¹⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 9:22 (ESV).

¹⁶² 1 Corinthians 14:3-5; 12 & 17 show that the purpose of the church gathering is for building up the church. Keown however also points out Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church about their practice of spiritual gifts in the context of an outsider or unbeliever who enters their gathering, see 1 Corinthians 14: 22-25. Mark Keown, "Learning from Paul's Vision of the Mission of the Local Church," *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice*, 19, no 1, (4/2012): 27-33, accessed 07/02/2023, https://www.academia.edu/73488750/Learning_from_Pauls_vision_for_the_mission_of_the_local_church.

primarily focused on Christian nurture, the church needs to ensure that the gatherings carry no needless offense to unbelievers.”¹⁶³ Church gatherings are opportunities for both seeker engagement and believer equipping when approached wisely.

Not all interviewed agreed on this. Only Interviewee 1 unapologetically aimed Sunday gatherings more towards seekers, confirming this in saying, “I feel at times we pander to the saved at the cost of the unchurched.”¹⁶⁴ All others interviewed believed that the Sunday gathering is both for equipping the saints for the work of ministry and reaching out to the unchurched.¹⁶⁵ Interviewee 5 phrases it as both “come and see, and go and tell,” and remarks that people are being saved both in their gatherings and beyond the walls of the church building.¹⁶⁶ Interviewee 6 remarked that most salvations at Life Changers Church were during the week but explained they helped equip the church on Sundays by modelling how to do it from the pulpit. “We would use an analogy when inviting people to respond to Christ, and instruct the church, saying, ‘during the week some of you will have the opportunity to do what I am doing now, you can learn from this and do it like this.’”¹⁶⁷ Sundays were an Equipping time, empowering time, and envisioning time.

While Interviewees 2 and 7 agreed about the equipping of saints at a Sunday gathering, they differed substantially on how the church reaches the unchurched most effectively. Interviewee 7 acknowledged that they strongly encouraged the congregation to invite the unchurched they know to Sunday meetings, where they can hear the truth and hopefully be saved.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, Interviewee 2 promotes empowered disciples above meetings as the best way for the unchurched to hear the truth, stating that “meetings are few, but people are many.”¹⁶⁹ He argues that when all empowered disciples filter daily into the world, looking for

¹⁶³. Keown, “Learning from Paul’s Vision of the Mission of the Local Church,” 27-33.

¹⁶⁴. Mark van Straaten, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁶⁵. Interviewees 2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8, discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁶⁶. Stan Phipps, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁶⁷. Wally Gerstmeier, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁶⁸. Dean Ivey, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁶⁹. Ryan Matthews, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

an opportunity to share the gospel, many more are reached than in the few Sunday meetings. This resonates with Scott, who wrote, “It is time to unleash the power of everyone, everywhere, every day so that the church begins to fill every city, every industry, and every family with the beauty and story of Christ.”¹⁷⁰ Interviewee 2 believes this to be the most sustainable and scalable way to reach the unchurched, as the expectation shifts from the shoulders of a few to the many, and states, “If we can see the people as the riches and true agency of the church, as the purveyors of the gospel, then it becomes more sustainable than relying upon meetings.”¹⁷¹ Both an attractive meeting and an empowered church are vital in reaching the world.

A further pitfall was highlighted by Interviewee 2. He argues that if we say every Sunday bring your friends to church and they will get saved, though the premise of this is innocent, what are we developing in the people we lead over a long period? Are we not implying their role is to invite people to church, and the pastor’s role is to save them? “God has not made a meeting to be evangelistic, His Spirit comes upon people to do the witnessing.”¹⁷² From all interviewed, the church is empowered to reach the unchurched through gathering and scattering.

Further comments on the attractional model versus the missional model will be valuable. Frost and Hirsch highlight that a missional church is unlike the more traditional church which adopts an attractional model, inviting outsiders to come within the four walls of the church to hear the gospel.¹⁷³ Instead, they advocate the missional church to be more ‘incarnational’ in its ecclesiology; “it will leave its religious zones . . . seeping into the host culture like salt and light.”¹⁷⁴ The attractional model favours the professional team doing the ministry, while the missional model involves the greater priesthood. On this subject, Wright

¹⁷⁰ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Introduction, Kindle.

¹⁷¹ Ryan Matthews, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁷² Ryan Matthews, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁷³ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*, (Carol stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003), 41.

¹⁷⁴ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*, 30.

purports, “Of course, no one individual can attempt more than a fraction of this mission. That’s why mission is the work of the whole church, the whole time.”¹⁷⁵ It seems counter-intuitive to only empower a few within the church for outreach.

Innovative ways are required to reach out beyond the walls of the church. McManus, who started the Mosaic Church in LA, challenged the church to engage with the more pluralistic and global-cultured communities, instead of waiting for them to come in.¹⁷⁶ This synergises with Roxburgh and Romanuk’s viewpoint that a missional leader must be a cultivator of an environment that innovates and releases missional imagination among God’s people.¹⁷⁷ Cultivating the congregation’s imagination is crucial, reinforcing McManus who speaks of missional leaders as being cultural architects.¹⁷⁸ In this ever-changing world, Nicolosi termed his model “the ‘The Open Church’ – open because it is flexible, adaptable, and able to change its methods of ministry while remaining steadfast to an unchanging Gospel message.”¹⁷⁹ The Interviewees, barring No. 1, all concurred in a greater synergy between creating an attractional environment to invite the unchurched into and promoting a culture of everybody being outward-focused to reach their world.

10.2: Describing and Defining your Church.

It is not often a simple matter to appropriately define or describe one’s church, particularly when there is a blend of practices. Scripture is in no way prescriptive around what a church gathering is required to have to be an authentic church gathering. Should the gifts of the Spirit happen every time or should there be the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual

¹⁷⁵. Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, (London, UK: SPCK Publishing, 2007), Chap. 15, Kindle.

¹⁷⁶. Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 283.

¹⁷⁷. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 104.

¹⁷⁸. Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2013), 112-113, Google Books.

¹⁷⁹. Nicolosi, *Soulfire: Preaching the Church’s Message in a Secular, Postmodern World*, Part One, Kindle.

songs to one another, or should there be an invitation to respond to Jesus every service?¹⁸⁰ Here is a Table summarising each Interviewee’s perspectives relative to the diagram in Chapter 2.

Consolidated Table of Perspectives

| | Personal Description of the church: | Outsiders' perceptions of the church: | Personal Comments: |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| Interviewee 1 | Strongly Seeker-Sensitive. | Strongly Seeker-Sensitive. | Desire all Christians to live more charismatically but Church meetings to be Seeker-Sensitive. |
| Interviewee 2 | Two-thirds towards the charismatic side. | Extreme Charismatic side. | We are not attractional but attractive. |
| Interviewee 3 | Two-thirds towards the charismatic side. | Two-thirds towards the seeker side. | Strongly attractional but open to “God Moments.” |
| Interviewee 4 | Halfway on the continuum. (50/50) | Halfway on the continuum. (50/50) | Balance of Spirit and Word, not veering off to one side. |
| Interviewee 5 | Two-thirds towards the charismatic side. | 80-90% closer to the charismatic side. | Our history was more charismatic but we have somewhat moved towards the Seeker side. |
| Interviewee 6 | More in the middle. | More in the middle. | Not Seeker, but intentionally welcoming of unchurched. |
| Interviewee 7 | Two-thirds towards the charismatic side. | Positioned closer to the seeker side. | Historically Pentecostal, but strategic and guarded* in Sunday meetings. |
| Interviewee 8 | We are both Seeker-friendly and intentionally charismatic. | I am not sure. | It is not 50% seeker and 50% supernatural as if we are balancing it. Jesus had a theology of wholeness, not balance. |

*We will not allow any spontaneous contributions from the congregation during Sunday meetings.¹⁸¹

While all those interviewed expressed a desire to see people coming to faith in their meetings, each recorded different numbers of decisions for Christ.¹⁸² Of interest is that the number of decisions in Sunday meetings for Christ was not overly in favour of the seeker model but

^{180.} Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14: 26-37; Acts 2:37 (ESV).

^{181.} Dean Ivey, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

^{182.} Such might be contingent on various other factors such as the size of the church, the presence of the gift of the evangelist, the strength of the invitational culture for example.

inclusive of those positioned mid-way or even two-thirds along the continuum. (See diagram in Chapter 2).¹⁸³ All interviewees concurred that they have grown to be aware and inclusive of the unchurched in their meetings, irrespective of how attractional a model they practice. Sunday meetings are not however the only place or necessarily the best place for people to decide to follow Christ.

10.3: Power Encounters and Witnessing.

An assumption easily made might be that the unchurched prefer visiting churches that are less spiritual and more like their usual establishments. Seeker models have been accused of offering shallow teaching and being more consumer-minded than spiritually minded.¹⁸⁴ Warren rebuffs this view stating, “A worship service doesn't have to be shallow to be seeker-sensitive. The message doesn't have to be compromised. It just has to be understandable. Making a service seeker-sensitive does not mean changing the theology, changing the Bible, or changing the message.”¹⁸⁵ Interviewee 7 passionately promoted preaching the truth over toning down the message. Commenting on the methodology of reaching the unchurched he stated, “the Seeker-Sensitive church movement have done so by not trying to offend people and not stepping on people’s toes, but people want to hear the truth. I believe people are coming to church to seek truth, boldly clearly articulated truth.”¹⁸⁶ Their hosting five services every weekend and having just procured property to build a larger church facility surely bears testament to the hunger for truth amongst those they are reaching.

¹⁸³ Interviewee 6 reported that over the 18 years, he and his wife led Life Changers Church, although they never followed the seeker model of church, around 75% of all the church had come to faith in Life Changers, with very limited church transfer growth. Wally Gerstmeier in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁸⁴ Viola, *Rethinking the Wineskin: The Practice of the New Testament Church*, 53;

¹⁸⁵ Moore quoted Rick Warren after he was interviewed by Hank Hanegraaff, host of the Bible Answer Man program, on Oct. 12-13 1999. Debbie Moore, “Orthodox, Evangelistic, and Seeker Sensitive,” (1 January, 2000), <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/sbc-life-articles/orthodox-evangelistic-and-seeker-sensitive/>.

¹⁸⁶ Dean Ivey in discussion with the author, March 2023.

When supernatural encounters take place in gatherings, are the unchurched put off? Many seeker churches are mindful of the more contentious practices of divine healing and speaking in tongues in their meetings.¹⁸⁷ Interviewees 1, 3, and 7, were cautious of encounters where God’s power was demonstrated in their weekend services. Interviewee 4 contrasted this by saying, “What really changes people is the presence of God, which can be a culture shock – as light and darkness interact. Beware of becoming so slick that we lose the power.”¹⁸⁸ Concurring with this, Interviewee 5 admitted, “Our meeting can be wild but when the government of God is present, there is peace,” as he recalled what took place in their previous Sunday morning meeting, where a young man, whose parents were Satanists, was powerfully impacted by God and became a follower of Christ before the message was even preached.¹⁸⁹ Interviewee 2 similarly shared a recent experience where an unbeliever who visited came under such a conviction of God in their meeting that he even wanted to run out of the building but was drawn to stay, and he got saved.¹⁹⁰ These interviews showed that Sunday meetings with power encounters also saw Christian commitments. Therefore, one cannot assume that limiting such power encounters promotes a more welcoming environment for the unchurched. Interestingly, while the seeker model may seek to declutter a meeting from such encounters, one is forgetting it is not always palatable or respectable when a sinner encounters the living God.¹⁹¹ Questions around anointing versus respectability and the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation must also shape our expectation of reaching the unchurched.

¹⁸⁷ Matt Wade, “Seeker Friendly: The Hillsong megachurch as an enchanting Total Institution,” 661-676.

¹⁸⁸ Glenn Schroder in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁸⁹ The young man’s parents were at a Satanic Coven Meeting, and were alerted by a fellow Coven attendee, who had a vision that their son was seeing bright light. They instructed the parents to call their son and find out what he was doing, to stop him. When the son got the call in church, instead of deterring him, it catalysed him to commit to following Christ. Stan Phipps in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁹⁰ Ryan Matthews in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁹¹ Consider the demoniac of the Gadderenes being set free by Jesus, Mark 5:1-20; Paul and Silas with the fortune-telling girl, Acts 16:16-24.

10.4: A Church that Looks Like You.

While many seeker churches attract the unchurched, a question to be asked is, “Does the church end up looking like you?” If the congregation is interacting mainly with neighbours, friends and colleagues, most of the interaction is with people similar to you. Interviewee 8 speaks of their church’s wider reach because the congregants never only focused on their friends but even strangers. This included anyone in their surroundings, whom the Spirit moved them to speak to, this being a more charismatic approach to outreach.¹⁹² He remarks, “We started to notice people showing up on Sundays who didn’t look like us. A lot of ‘Goth/Emo’ people dressed in black. People would smoke before going into church and rumours on the street were ‘You have to smoke if you want to go to Vineyard Church’ as this wasn’t at all common in Northern Ireland.”¹⁹³ This synergises with Cole who wrote, “If you want to win this world to Christ, you are going to have to sit in the smoking section. That is where lost people are found and if you make them put their cigarettes out to hear the message they will be thinking about only one thing: “When can I get another cigarette?”¹⁹⁴ Such stories highlight the width and breadth of the harvest. It is not only people who look and act like us.

Loving people different from us enough to engage them can be challenging. Interviewee 4 added further perspective concerning the people being reached by commenting, “If we really love God we will love people, and that means all people, not just people like us.”¹⁹⁵ He maintains that one of the areas we, as the church, are most likely least obedient in is evangelism, emphasising, “there is not a harvest problem, just a labour problem.”¹⁹⁶ Peter, like Jesus his Master, learned to share the gospel with those different from him in race, culture and class, including the Gentiles.¹⁹⁷ Interviewees 5 and 7 spoke of how their church congregations have

¹⁹² Wimber & Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*, Chap.11, Kindle.

¹⁹³ Neil Young, in discussion with the author, December 2022.

¹⁹⁴ Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2010), Introduction, Kindle.

¹⁹⁵ Glenn Schroder, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

¹⁹⁶ Glenn Schroder, in discussion with the author, referencing Matthew 9:35-38, March 2023.

¹⁹⁷ Consider Jesus at Cornelius’ house, Acts 10:9-48 (ESV).

changed demographically over time, indicating that the church was moving beyond simply inviting people just like themselves.¹⁹⁸ Of the pastors interviewed most of their churches were a fair reflection of the demographics of the localities in which they are positioned. However, the most striking variety of congregants belonged to Interviewee 8, who were more intentional in practising ‘power evangelism’ on the streets, than the other churches interviewed.¹⁹⁹ Can our churches, no matter our model, open our doors and hearts to the wide range of cultures, nationalities, and classes surrounding us, or will our churches look just like us?

Chapter 11. Implications and Recommendations.

The implications of this explorative study may assist other church leaders similarly grappling with how to reach the unchurched better. Further, it may create dynamic conversations within leadership teams, concerning questions that may need answering. For example, are we genuinely missional in all we do? Are our Sunday gatherings attractive to the unchurched? Are we compromising the integrity of whom God has called us to be as a church if we make any adjustments? Is the modus operandi we employ scalable and sustainable? Is the weight of outreach upon a few, or is the priesthood of all believers in operation? Finally, are we satisfied as a leadership team with our current way of doing church? Hopefully, the study’s implications as reported in this chapter will help navigate leaders through such evaluations. The study results were notable as perspectives were gleaned from various Pastors leading churches with varying outreach practices and philosophies of ministry. The implications of the research are discussed below.

Implication 1: Sunday or Every Day?

Both Sundays and every other day are important for reaching the unchurched. As the research discussion revealed, while some of those interviewed championed Sunday as their

^{198.} Stan Phipps and Dean Ivey, in discussion with the author, March 2023.

^{199.} Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

most effective outreach expression, others reported numbers being evangelised in their places of work, home, study, and places of leisure during the week.²⁰⁰ The assumption is that because Sunday is the most important church day of the week, most of the energy, resources and focus available should be spent on Sundays. If Sunday demands such attention, is it sustainable over time? Roxburgh suggests otherwise when he acknowledges becoming aware that “the ways in which the forms of church life we were practicing required a number of full-time staff and volunteers to attend to a set of factors shaping the inner workings of the church,” which leaves less energy to focus on being missional throughout the week.²⁰¹ What is both sustainable and scalable ought to be pursued. Only when the priesthood of all believers is a reality, where whilst the one gifted in evangelism is empowered to flourish, so too the whole church congregation is equipped to be aware of the unchurched and trained to engage the unchurched in everyday life, living out Scott’s dream of a church where it is everybody, every day, everywhere.²⁰² In conclusion of this point, leadership could evaluate which day is most important, why, and what is the best way to equip the entire church for this and not just the paid professionals.

Implication 2: Attractive or Attractional?

Each of the Pastors interviewed saw the benefit of adjusting Sunday meetings to being attractive to the unchurched, but not all embraced the attractional model. Hosting more attractive meetings to the unchurched may be discovered by filtering everything that would happen in the meeting through their eyes. In other words, would they understand what was happening, and then use explanation and language to help them understand? A danger of the

²⁰⁰ Interviewee 6 reported the missional nature of their church in intentionally looking out for removal trucks and “For Sale” or “To Rent” signs, indicative that new people were moving in and could be welcomed to the neighbourhood with a meal or flowers. Wally Gerstmeier in discussion with the author, March 2023.

Interviewee 8 reflected on the number of school children reached in their schools by their Children’s Ministry team, during the week. He reported that by the end of that term, ending in September 2022, they had effectively reached 2000-3000 children and seen around 60% make decisions for Christ. Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

²⁰¹ Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making skills for leading in times of transition* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 128.

²⁰² Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 6 & 7, Kindle

attractational model is that it becomes so attractive, not just to the unchurched but to Christians from other churches. Roxburgh remarked, “The attractational model doesn’t always bring in the unchurched, but other Christians looking for a better church experience. One indicator was that the people turning up at the various churches I pastored were coming from other churches.”²⁰³ All Interviewees sought to attract the unchurched rather than attract Christians from other churches. One of the attractational model’s dangers is that it reinforces the ideology that believers are off duty concerning witnessing during the week, as the Pastors will handle this on Sunday. A further question that needs to be asked is what are you attracting the unchurched with, and what are you attracting them to? Is it sustainable? Interviewee 4 maintains, “If you compromise to gain, you have to compromise to retain.”²⁰⁴ In conclusion, leadership teams can evaluate their Sunday gatherings in the light of what an unchurched person might feel and hear, and the perceptions they might leave with.

Implication 3: Power Evangelism is still working.

The better and more holistic way to reach the unchurched involves attractive Sunday gatherings and a mobilised church engaging the unchurched throughout the week. Considering the Coleraine church as a model, through the book *Scattered Servants* and interviewing Young (Interviewee 8), power evangelism as Wimber called it is still working.²⁰⁵ Some may be reticent to engage in Holy Spirit-empowered evangelism, but are not all confessions of Christ done through the Holy Spirit’s activity?²⁰⁶ Evangelism is a confrontation of the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness and cannot always be neat and tidy, as some would like their

²⁰³ Roxburgh continues, “Those of us in leadership bought into an implicit expectation that focusing on these internal factors was what brought success and growth. What became clear to us was that by attending to these variables, our congregation did draw new people, but they were almost always Christians from other places. The people in the church were all good and energetic people, but their basic focus was shaped by this centripetal force, what later came to be described as the attractational model of church.” Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making skills for leading in times of transition*, 128.

²⁰⁴ Glenn Schroder in discussion with the author, March 2023.

²⁰⁵ Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Kindle; Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*.

²⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:3 (ESV).

gatherings to be.²⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit anoints and empowers us to be witnesses. His role is crucial and to be celebrated, even on Sundays.²⁰⁸ An assumption might be that Holy Spirit activity may scare people away, but some amongst this postmodern generation are hungry for the transcendent, and if they cannot find it in the church, they may look elsewhere.²⁰⁹ However, being strategic around how this happens in our gatherings and welcoming the unchurched makes or breaks this. The problem may not be the power of God visible among us but rather our lack of wisdom in explaining it to those present. In conclusion, leadership teams can assess what equipping they are doing about training the congregation for such engagements with the unchurched and the role of the Spirit in these engagements.

Implication 4. Is this Model Reproducible Elsewhere?

While Causeway Coast Vineyard has successfully transitioned from a more Charismatic Sunday gathering to one that is more attractive to the unchurched, they have not stopped charismatic outreach on the streets of Coleraine and beyond.²¹⁰ While what works in one context might not work in another, This research found no reason to discount this model from being successful elsewhere, and even in Durban South Africa.²¹¹ A standout in each Interviewee was finding out who God had called them to be and discovering how to do what God had called them to do better, without needing to copy another. Interviewee 1 commented that when he discovered the Willow model of Seeker church, it fitted him perfectly, which is why it has proved successful in Durban over the past 20 years. While I assumed there might be

^{207.} The incident in Footnote 2, of the unchurched visitor being healed and set free from demons, was not without a visible and audible display of God's power over Satan.

^{208.} Acts 1:8 (ESV).

^{209.} Nicolosi speaks of today's world of postmodernism and globalisation, as a time when people may not be religious but they are spiritual, as "secular but spiritual", seeking truth. Nicolosi, *Soulfire: Preaching the Church's Message in a Secular, Postmodern World*, Part One, Kindle.

^{210.} Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

^{211.} When the author asked Neil Young, if other churches in their area of Northern Ireland were successfully modelling a similar way of doing church, he answered very few. Even churches that had attended their conferences numerous times, learning to be more attractive to the unchurched yet still using power evangelism to reach the unchurched, were struggling to model it. This is indicative that there are no formulas, no 'copy and paste', but we can still all learn something from each other. Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

an ideal model for Durban, assumptions can be proven wrong. Not everyone is the same, and not all people in Durban are the same and to reach all, not all churches should be the same. It cannot be one size fits all, with one ideal style, way, or model. The key is to be true to whom God has called you to be. In conclusion, leadership teams can evaluate their model and why they believe it is effective but should take stock of the synergy the Coleraine church achieved, in both the creation of more attractational meetings and the empowered release of church members on mission into society.

Implication 5. The Power and Struggle of an Invitational Culture.

All research pointed toward the power of establishing an invitational culture in a church and the resulting dynamic liberated when all the church is engaged in awareness and outreach to the unchurched. Moving away from a Sunday-centric church, empowered by a few to empowered scattered servants living with an outward focus daily was not easy according to Interviewee 8.²¹² All Interviewees expressed the challenge of establishing this invitational culture amongst all the congregation. Most admitted that some always caught and modelled it better than others, and others battle to embrace it. This should not deter teams from spending time and energy finding ways and means to engender this culture deeper in the hearts of their congregations. No matter how attractive our Sunday meetings become, not all the unchurched will visit.²¹³ However, the powerful outworking of the embraced invitational culture is easily comprehended in that the more of the church one has to engage the unchurched, the more unchurched will be reached, some of whom may come to faith, either in a gathering or outside the walls of the building. In conclusion, leadership teams can assess the strength of the invitational culture within their church, and how to engender this culture better.

²¹² Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

²¹³ Roxburgh writes “The people in these neighbourhoods—representing a huge array of nationalities and ethnicities, professionals, and blue-collar workers of all ages—were never going to turn up at church on Sunday morning no matter how good or healthy our worship was, and they were never going to sign on to our great ministries and programs.” Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making skills for leading in times of transition*, 128.

Implication 6: Being missional in everything.

Being missional in some ministries is not enough. Hybels and Mittelberg maintain, “When the church is absolutely clear on what the main thing is, it makes you face it at every turn- in the way you pray, plan, prepare, preach, and give.”²¹⁴ To be fully missional, every ministry within the church needed to adjust.²¹⁵ Arguably, the most effective Interviewees in seeing more unchurched saved and joining their churches were the ones who stressed the importance of not only making a few changes but changes in every ministry. Guder described a missional church as one that has transitioned from “being the sender of missionaries to understanding that it is the Church itself as a whole which is sent.”²¹⁶ Church is not meant to be a consumer experience where I pay, and get my needs met, but instead, as McLaren connoted, “Our faith is vain and self-centered if it brings blessing only for us and to us. It also must result in blessing that flows through us to the world.”²¹⁷ When everybody believes they are part of the missional team to reach the unchurched, the church’s transition to being fully missional may be genuine. In conclusion, leadership teams are encouraged to consider what areas of ministry in the churches they lead reflect a clear outward focus toward the unchurched and what ministries do not.

Implication 7. Who Really is satisfied with their Outreach Culture?

The assumption that Seeker-church pastors are more satisfied with the number of salvations than non-seeker-church pastors is invalid. While all Interviewees experienced varying degrees of success concerning the unchurched coming to faith through their ministries, all admitted to being unsatisfied. Interviewee 4, who has seen thousands come to Christ through

²¹⁴. Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism*, 114.

²¹⁵. Neil Young in discussion with the author, December 2022.

²¹⁶. Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), Chap.1, Kindle.

²¹⁷. Brian D McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions that are Transforming the Faith* (Hachette, UK: HarperCollins, 2010), chap.3, Kindle.

the ministry of their church, candidly admitted to feeling like he was failing.²¹⁸ It seems that the hunger God has placed within His leaders to reach the world Christ died for will always remain a hunger and never be satisfied. Surely this is because more of the world can always be reached. Scott admitted that even though they were experiencing the power of God in their gatherings in Coleraine, “it wasn’t going to be enough for me.”²¹⁹ In conclusion, leadership teams can self-evaluate their hunger level to reach the unchurched, and what they are willing to do about it.

Implication 8: Ever-maturing Disciples of Jesus.

At no time in any interviewee’s mind was the focus of outreach simply people responding to Jesus. Decisions for Christ, whether in a church gathering or beyond the walls of the building, were commonly viewed as only the start of their spiritual journey, which the church is responsible for. One cannot rejoice in decisions for Christ alone but also in the discipling of that new believer. In what is referred to as the Great Commission, Jesus mandates his disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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.”²²⁰ When Interviewee 1 was questioned on how their seeker approach to Sundays was influencing the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, he acknowledged that he had heard the critique many times, “Your church is a great church for people to come to faith, but not stay and grow in faith,” or “They will get people saved but won’t keep them.” He disagreed and maintained that he was still growing in his own faith in their church.²²¹ When one uses Sundays to engage the unchurched instead of equipping the saints, some traction around mature Christian growth and development wains but can be recovered by offering other key moments as Interviewee 3

²¹⁸. Glenn Schroder in discussion with the author, March 2023.

²¹⁹. Scott, *Scattered Servants, Unleashing the Church to bring Life to the City*, Chap. 5, Kindle.

²²⁰. Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV).

²²¹. Mark van Straaten in discussion with the author, March 2023.

suggested.²²² In conclusion, each church must evaluate where the congregation is being trained and equipped for ministry. Is it Sundays, another key moment, or a combination of both?

CONCLUSION

At the outset, I questioned whether one church could create attractive meetings where the unchurched could feel welcome enough to return yet continue to experience the power of God to heal, deliver, and set people free. Could one church celebrate numbers saved through faith in Christ, and numbers being healed and delivered, or does one have to choose? Surveying our local North Durban area, unconvinced there were churches truly experiencing both simultaneously, I explored whether there could be a synergy in outreach between those advocating a more attractational way of doing church and those who sought God's power demonstrated amongst them. Through literary study and personal interviews, I was delighted to discover there was some synergy taking place but was disappointed to realise that levels of synergy within any one church were still at a developing stage, and one could learn much from the Coleraine church, which I used as a model. Not to say that all churches should employ such a model, as from the research it was evident that each church, in its unique way, was seeking to reach the unchurched, and all interviewed were convinced that without God's power and grace present, it could not be done.

Each church leader interviewed, expressed a desire for a more significant impact upon the unchurched, and greater power from God among them. Although being faithful to the Scriptures, both the lost being saved and people being healed and set free is the church's mandate, choosing one at the expense of the other, may simply be more manageable but not suitable.²²³ Taking McManus' prediction to light that "The church must acclimate to a changing

²²² Dylan Jahnig in discussion with the author, March 2023.

²²³ Jesus modelled this and sent out his disciples to model both, and the early church in Acts modelled both.

world, or she will destine herself to irrelevance,” the seeker approach to creating a more attractional meeting aided the church in adapting, from the more traditional church that had lost touch with their community, to one engaging the community.²²⁴ He continues:

We need to adapt to capturing images that communicate truth and to move from static to dynamic communication systems. Our culture is not only multisensory; it is multilayered. We receive information not only through all of our senses, but also through multiple senses at one time. That’s why for us, worship many times encompasses not only the teaching of the “Word and worship through song, but also the use of sculpture, painting, dance, aromas, and film. It must not be seen as a necessary evil but a God-given tool.²²⁵

Creating more attractional meetings that engage the unchurched by presenting the message of the gospel in fresh ways, has transitioned the church to be a place where the unchurched can interface with God’s truth, in a more familial way. McManus believes the church had become “a fortress from the world, rather than a hope to the world” and a “refuge from the world rather than a force in the world.”²²⁶ Scott similarly questions his readers when he asks if the church has become a refuge from the city instead of a refuge for the city.²²⁷ All interviewees embraced this challenge, each uniquely, but none were seeking to hide from the world.

Outreach to the unchurched, while challenging, is not beyond any church. As McKnight purports, “The task of evangelism, what I am calling “gospeling,” is no less demanding and difficult today than it was in the time of Peter and Paul. It is also in no less need of creative adaptations to one’s audience.”²²⁸ The Coleraine church never limited its outreach to only creating more attractive Sunday meetings but also sought to mobilise the entire church into missional living. McManus connotes, “When the church is a movement, it becomes a place of refuge for an unbelieving world. The church becomes the place where the seekers finally find the God they were searching for.”²²⁹ The seekers do not have to wait to be invited to a meeting but have the opportunity wherever they are, to engage with missional Christians. There is no

²²⁴. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 19.

²²⁵. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 19-20.

²²⁶. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 40,45.

²²⁷. Scott, *Scattered Servants: Unleashing the Church to Bring Life to the City*, Introduction, Kindle.

²²⁸. Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), Chap. 9, Kindle.

²²⁹. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 96.

limitation because of budget, resources, or buildings in such missional living, compared to the pure attractional model of some seeker churches. Scott concurs with McManus when he states, “The next move of God is not a movement *in* the church. It is a movement *of* the church.”²³⁰ When churches realise their most significant asset to outreach is not their latest program but their congregation and intentionally begin to equip these saints for the work of such ministry, the reach of the unchurched multiplies exponentially.²³¹ So may this treasure of gifts and talents, with unique personalities be awakened by leadership to what is possible.

Finally, as the research process unfolded, it became evident that there was not one ideal way to reach the unchurched. Interviewee 1 remarked, “If we were all the same kind of people there would be one ideal model of church.” This liberates one from seeking to find that perfect but often elusive way. Instead, each Church leadership is challenged to evaluate and discern whom God has called their church to be in the community and how best to both attract the unchurched to Sundays and reach the unchurched every day of the week, through mobilising the congregation. Interviewee 2 termed it “Mission Monday” to excite the church to the endless possibilities that await when the church goes out into the world, aware and intentional about building bridges with the unchurched, whether at work or home, at school or play.²³² My sincere prayer is for every church to make necessary adjustments to Sunday gatherings to be more inclusive and welcoming of the unchurched without compromising the opportunity to equip and strengthen the saints in their faith for works of ministry, as well as mobilise the church into shouldering the responsibility to reach the unchurched together, as opposed to leaving it to a few paid professionals.

²³⁰ Scott, *Scattered Servants: Unleashing the Church to Bring Life to the City*, Chap. 1, Kindle.

²³¹ This is not to say that programs aren’t helpful and at times necessary, like feeding the poor, or social development for poorer areas, but comment and evaluation of such is not within the scope of this paper.

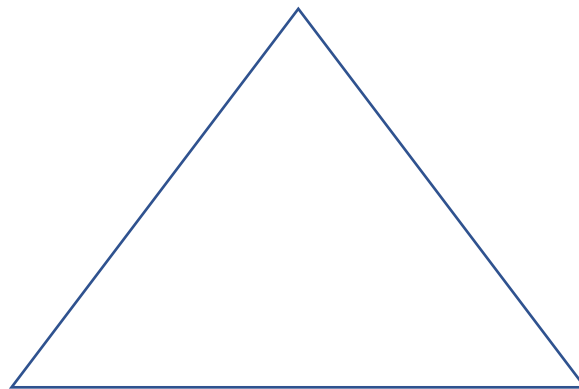
²³² Ryan Matthews in discussion with the author, March 2023.

APPENDIX

Interviews:

1. What do you consider the best way for _____ Church (name of the church) to reach the world around you with the Gospel?
2. How effective, in your opinion, are you as a church in doing this? What might be some contributing factors in your assessment?
3. What adjustments if any, have you as a church made in your Sunday meetings, to better carry out effective outreach to the unchurched around you?
4. How effective do you feel your leadership team has been in conveying your heart for outreach to the church and motivating the church body toward outreach, and to what extent is the church body buying into this? Why do you think this is?
5. Where would you position the church you lead, on the continuum, if Seeker Friendly was on the extreme left, moving towards Pentecostal/Charismatic on the extreme right? Explain.
How do you think other people would see your church on that continuum? Explain.

Target Group/Intended Audience (non-believers/unchurched people)



Seeker Churches

Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches

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