

2016

Preaching More Effectively to Multiple Generations

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PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2016

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ABSTRACT

Preaching More Effectively to Multiple Generations

by

Rev. Lynne Kammeraad

This thesis explores the possibility of preaching more effectively to multiple generations at the same time. There are currently six generations (G.I., Silent, Boomer, Generation X, Millennial, and Unnamed) represented in the congregation where this research was conducted. First-person narrative, object-based, and story-based sermon styles were presented and tested to determine if a particular style was more effective. The definition used for effective preaching included the need for instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion to be present. Preaching effectively to multiple generations has the potential of shaping other ministries in the church in profound ways, and build strong multi-generational churches.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you Luther Seminary! What a joy and privilege to be surrounded by such gifted professors and colleagues. I could not have asked for a better cohort and am a better person for having spent time with you Donald Bryant Jr., Rodney Carlson, Derek Fossey, Paul Johnson, Daniel Justin, Edward Kay, Harold Kenyon, Judy Kincaid, Paul Miller, Christine Purcell, and Kathryn Skogland. Thank you for your support and encouragement! Thank you Dr. Christopher Smith and Dr. Michael Rogness for advising us with wisdom and grace. Thank you Dr. Jessica Maddox, Rev. Kerri Sandusky, Dr. Paul Tipton, and Rev. Ed Viening for assisting with the editing process. You not only pushed and challenged me, you encouraged me in the most gentle and loving ways possible. Thank you!

Thank you Christ Community Church for engaging in this work with me by providing financial, prayer, and physical support. I cannot begin to tell you how much I appreciate everything you did and your enthusiastic response. You blessed me beyond measure. Finally, there is no possible way I could have done this without the help and support of my family. Thank you Jacqui, Matthew, Jennifer, Josiah, and Jacob. Your love and patience the past three years has been amazing. I especially want to thank my husband. Mike, there is no possible way I could have done this without you. You have been and continue to be my biggest cheerleader, and I am profoundly grateful to call you my life-partner. I am in awe of you and love you more than you will ever know!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM, JUSTIFICATION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Worship is as at the heart of the week at the community church where I serve. Christ Community Church is ecumenically rich, bringing together people with Presbyterian, Reformed, Catholic, Christian Reformed, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Assemblies of God, Jehovah's Witness, and Congregational Church roots. Our weekly pattern for worship follows a familiar structure, yet is relaxed. This small, but growing church community hopes to be a community of hope by reflecting Christ in our community.

Every time we gather for worship my goal in preaching is to declare God's grace, remind people of the hope that has been entrusted to us, and emphasize the difference this hope is meant to make in our lives. "Preaching belongs to the heart of the Christian ministry."¹ As a member of Christ Community, I do not enter from a place outside the sanctuary but rather "from the middle of the congregation to the place of leadership."²

Forty-six Sundays of each year I step forward into a place of leadership from the middle of this same congregation to preach. In the past three years Christ Community

¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 31.

² Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 2.

Church has become more generationally diverse, leading me to wonder if it is possible to preach effectively to multiple generations at the same time.

Preaching is one of, if not *the*, primary way God's word is communicated to multiple generations at the same time. Consistent patterns of such communication appear throughout the Old and New Testaments alike. However, the typical weekly worship gatherings in North America today have become very age-segregated.

There are six generations where I preach and lead worship. Each generation represents an important part of the body of Christ and has something to learn from the other five generations. Making worship intergenerational requires committing to people of all ages, valuing each generation, and seeing all people as significant in worship. Preaching more effectively to multiple generations also requires committing to people of all ages, valuing each generation, and seeing all people as significant.

The focus of this thesis is preaching more effectively to multiple generations. In this chapter I plan to address the problem of preaching more effectively to multiple generations, define effective preaching, provide a summary of generational distinctions, and discuss the justification and rationale for my research.

In subsequent chapters I will provide biblical and theological insights specific to this topic, a review of relevant literature, the methodology I incorporated for my research, detailed analysis of the research I conducted, further evaluation, and personal reflections.

Problem

A couple of generations ago, intergenerational worship was not an issue. However, today it is an issue that is discussed with great frequency. "Some churches, besides having age-specific children's and teen worship services, offer a Millennial

worship service (sometimes on a Saturday evening), a traditional worship service at 8:00 or 8:30, and a contemporary worship service at 10:30 or 11:00, in effect dividing the church into five generational cohorts.”³

One reason for this more recent shift “is that developmental concerns and spiritual concerns came to be seen as essentially synonymous; therefore, ministry leaders began to create more *developmentally* appropriate worship opportunities for children in order to bless them *spiritually*.”⁴ If the church is for *all* generations, our worship services should be for *all* generations too, which means the sermon should be inclusive of *all* generations too.

The trend for having young children leave to an alternative age-appropriate worship service before the sermon developed during the early or mid 1960s.⁵ It did not take long for many congregations to adopt this style of ministry.

Age-appropriate worship services can provide a worship experience that is often more accessible for specific age groups. However, I would contend that offering age-appropriate worship services has the potential of shaping our communal identity in some negative ways, which I will address in the next chapter.

“Alongside the music, the sermon has been frequently maligned as a divider of the generations. How can a sermon possibly be made accessible for all ages? Is it even a

³ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 195-196.

⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁵ Darwin Glassford, “Fostering an Intergenerational Culture,” in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Hendon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 73.

goal within reach?”⁶ The task of preaching to multiple generations every Sunday can be quite challenging. Peter Menconi, author of *The Intergenerational Church*, feels that even though it is a challenging task, it is a feasible one.⁷

Preaching requires interacting with the entire congregation, not just with one or two generations. If only one or two generations are considered when preparing to preach, preachers will quite possibly exclude other generations that are present in worship. Preachers should attempt to use language, images, and stories that can be understood by all who are listening.

Intentionally or unintentionally, excluding specific generations in preaching can lead to exclusivity. If preachers become too sensitive to a particular generation that they wish to reach, other generations may feel unwelcome, as though they have to figure things out on their own, ask a lot of questions, or just leave.

As I will discuss in greater detail later, in a given congregation there may be five or even six generations present during worship. Preaching effectively to all of those generations at once is certainly challenging. They listen, learn, and understand differently. Nevertheless, the task of the preacher is to interact with all of the people present, from the very young to the very old. It is with this task in mind that I plan to investigate how preachers can preach more effectively to multiple generations.

Briefly exploring some of the reasons for ineffective preaching prior to defining effective preaching and providing a summary of generational distinctions may be helpful.

⁶ Timothy Brown, “The Power of Preaching to All Ages,” in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 113.

⁷ Peter Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Wwww.Com* (Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage, 2010), 189.

Ineffective preaching is often due to the lack of exegetical preparation (scripturally and congregationally); poor and unenthusiastic delivery; failure to address social issues or teachings concerning essential beliefs of the faith; lack of connection with events of daily life; no continuity week to week with the Scriptural message; and lack of cultural or generational relevance. Many preachers simply do not take the time needed to prepare a sermon.⁸

Several pastors with whom I have talked shared that after leading weekly Bible studies, visiting homebound members, calling on people in the hospital, attending and leading various meetings, taking care of building maintenance issues, answering the phone, putting together the bulletin, writing articles for the monthly newsletter, creating the order of worship (including finding or writing the liturgy), attending church-related social functions, counseling people, providing staff oversight, and officiating weddings and funerals (not necessarily weekly), they have very little time left in the week to prepare a sermon.

Some of these same pastors even defended themselves, despite knowing the importance of preaching and its potential impact, given that it is the most highly attended communal activity the congregation participates in each week. Staying busy performing too many other functions, as good as they may be, will more than likely lead to ineffective preaching.

Lenora Tubbs Tisdale, Professor of Homiletics at Yale Divinity School, argues for a more contextual approach to preaching. She advocates a competent exegesis of

⁸ Andrew-Carl Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multi-Generational Assembly* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 1-2.

one's congregation as a normative part of sermon preparation, citing common errors of seminary preaching courses:

They [students and pastors] prepare generic sermons for generic humanity that never becomes truly enfleshed in the real-life situations of particular congregations. They paint overly simplistic pictures of their hearers in preaching, attributing to them attitudes, beliefs, or values that they do not actually hold. They project onto congregations—unconsciously and unintentionally—their own issues and concerns.⁹

Tisdale's claim for the need to exegete one's congregation when preparing to preach is correct.

She also claims, "Preachers who cannot name generational characteristics of their own will fail in identifying attitudes, beliefs and values that comprise the many age groups to whom they preach. This renders the preacher much less effective or engaging in the pulpit."¹⁰ Therefore, it is necessary for the purpose of this thesis to define effective preaching and provide generational distinctions.

Effective Preaching

"Effective preachers are gifted people," according to Tom Long.¹¹ As a skilled and complex activity, preaching typically involves public speaking and is usually persuasive in nature. Classical rhetoricians such as Aristotle and Augustine classify three kinds of appeal considered essential to persuasive public speech.

⁹Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 19.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 14.

Aristotle considered three modes of appeal essential to persuasive public speech: “*ethos*, the trustworthiness of the speaker; *pathos*, the desire and ability to move a group of people to action’; and *logos*, ‘the actual words and arguments constructed for the speech.’”¹² Lucy Lind Hogan observes that when these three appeals of classical rhetoric “are in balance, the speaker has a much better chance of convincing his or her listeners.”¹³

Tom Long offers similar insights related to *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. When discussing the gifts required for faithful and effective preaching, he discusses gifts such as sensitivity to the needs of others, the ability to connect issues of faith and life, listening to the Word of God, a growing personal faith, and the courage to tell the truth.¹⁴

Henri Nouwen, on the other hand, limits himself to one question when it comes to understanding the crucial task of preaching: “What kind of person is it who can take away those obstacles that prevent the Word of God from falling on fertile ground?” He insists that the question is “really about the spirituality of the preacher.”¹⁵

Drawing from his Latin predecessor Cicero, Augustine, like Aristotle, also believed there were three essential proofs to persuasive public speech. However, Augustine differed from Aristotle by emphasizing the importance of instruction instead of *ethos*. “It has been said by a man of eloquence, and quite rightly, that the eloquent should speak in such a way as to instruct, delight, and move their listeners. He then

¹² Lucy Lind Hogan, *Graceful Speech: An Invitation to Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2006), 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 14.

¹⁵ Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*, 31.

added: ‘instructing is a matter of necessity, delighting a matter of charm, and moving them a matter of conquest.’”¹⁶

I wholeheartedly agree that the trustworthiness (*ethos*) of the preacher is important. For the purpose of this thesis, I plan to rely on Augustine’s proofs, while assuming the preacher’s trustworthiness (*ethos*) is equally as important for preaching effectively.

For a sermon to be effective, I believe, as Augustine does, that instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion need to be present. Words are a very powerful tool, but what good are they if, as a preacher, I am the only one who understands the content of my sermon? The words I speak must not only be understood, but must also be presented in a delightful or engaging way. While preaching, if I am not able to hold the attention of my listeners, the likelihood of change diminishes. “A hearer must be delighted so that he can be gripped and made to listen, and moved so that he can be impelled to action.”¹⁷

As a preacher, my hope for people is that the Word of God will have a significant impact and that they will experience some sort of reaction that leads to change.

Your hearer is delighted if you speak agreeably, and moved if he values what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, and rues the thing which you insist that he must regret, and if he rejoices at what you set forth in your preaching as something joyful, pities those whom by your words you present to his mind’s eye as miserable, and shuns those whom with terrifying language you urge him to avoid.¹⁸

¹⁶ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 117.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

Preaching effectively is challenging in and of itself, but preaching effectively to five to six generations week after week is even more challenging. According to generation experts William Strauss and Neil Howe, the cycle of each generation spans approximately twenty-two years.¹⁹ This definition means that “there is the possibility of six generations attending a church’s worship service and ministry activities each week.”²⁰

Generational Distinctions

Every context has generational realities that are important to understand with regard to preaching and ministry. The newest generation, one the experts have not yet named, starts with those born in 2003.

The GI Generation consists of people born between 1901 and 1924. This was the primary age group to suffer through the Great Depression and win World War I. “Raised under the influence of the strongly pro-feminist Missionaries, G.I.s matured into a father-worshipping and heavily male-fixated generation. As rising adults, they came to disdain womanish influences on public life.”²¹ Sample members of the G.I Generation include: Walt Disney, Bob Hope, John Wayne, Katherine Hepburn, Jimmy Stewart, Joe DiMaggio, Walter Conkrite, Billy Graham, Ann Landers, and Judy Garland.

The Silent Generation includes people born between 1925 and 1942. As children, they lived through the residual consequences of the Great Depression, experienced a nation at war, and are considered the quietest of today’s living generations. “Where the

¹⁹ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Quill, 1991), 34.

²⁰ Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Wwww.Com*, xviii.

²¹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, 264.

G.I.s did great things and felt one with history, where Boomers found ravishment within themselves, the Silent have taken great things for granted and looked beyond themselves—while worrying that, somehow, the larger challenges of life are passing them by.”²² Sample members of the Silent Generation include: Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol, Martin Luther King Jr., Sandra Day O’Connor, Clint Eastwood, James Dean, Elvis Presley, Woody Allen, Jack Nicholson, and Barbara Streisand.

Individuals born between 1943 and 1960 make up the Boomer Generation. They are also known as the Baby Boom Generation, the Spock Generation, TV Generation, Hippies, Yuppies, Flower Children, and the Vietnam Generation. These people see themselves as special. “Arriving as the inheritors of G.I. triumph, Boomers have always seen their mission not as constructing a society, but of justifying, purifying, even sanctifying it.”²³ Sample members of the Baby Boom Generation include: Oliver North, Janis Joplin, Joe Namath, Donald Trump, Gilda Radner, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, David Letterman, Oprah Winfrey, Steve Jobs, William Gates, Spike Lee, and John McEnroe.

Generation X encompasses people born between 1961 and 1981. The Vietnam War, Watergate, and other traumatic events have played a major role in shaping the attitudes of distrust and disinterest that many Gen Xers have. Older generations see this generation as frenetic, physical, and slippery.²⁴ Sample members of Generation X include: Michael J. Fox, Eddie Murphy, Jon Bon Jovi, Tom Cruise, Michael Jordan, Whitney Houston, Brooke Shields, Mike Tyson, Mary Lou Retton, and Gary Coleman.

²² Ibid., 282.

²³ Ibid., 301.

²⁴ Ibid., 319.

The Millennial Generation is made up of people born between 1982 and 2002. This is the first generation to come of age in the new millennium. This Millennial persona has seven distinguishing traits: special (they are vital to the nation and to their parents' sense of purpose), sheltered, confident (they often boast about their generation's power and potential), team-oriented, achieving, pressured ("trophy kids"), and conventional (believe social rules can help).²⁵ Sample members of the Millennial Generation include: LeAnn Rimes, Mandy Moore, Frankie Muniz, Mary Kate & Ashley Olsen, Jessica McClure, and Haley Joel Osment.

Acknowledging these distinctions and taking into consideration how each generation might respond to the sermon is a helpful practice to engage in during sermon preparation. It may change how we communicate the message we have to share, which may also include reducing the length of the sermon.

Justification and Rationale

I am interested in preaching more effectively to multiple generations because I believe that every generation that exists within a given church community should be included in worship and be able to understand the sermon. All generations should be considered when preachers prepare their sermons so that certain generations are not excluded and so that the preaching does not lead to exclusivity.

In the book of Nehemiah, we read that when God's people returned to their homeland after the Babylonian exile, they gathered in Jerusalem before the water gate. The people asked Ezra to read the book of the Law of Moses to them. We are told that all

²⁵ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000), 43-44.

the people gathered together, which included both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. I infer this group would have included children. The people were attentive as Ezra read the entire book. There was also a group of thirteen Levites who helped the people understand the Law (Neh 8:1-2²⁶).

New Testament examples of people responding at various ages are plentiful. In the womb John the Baptist leaped for joy upon hearing the word (Luke 1:41). At the age of 12 Jesus entered the temple, sat among the teachers, listened to them, and asked them questions (Luke 2:41-50). On the day of Pentecost about three thousand persons welcomed Peter's message, were baptized, and added to the church (Acts 2:41). Saul's eyes were opened when he had an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). In Acts 16:33 the jailer and his entire household responded to the gospel and were baptized without delay. Timothy knew the sacred writings since childhood (2 Timothy 3:15).

Jesus invited a group of twelve young men to come and follow Him. All of them responded by leaving their families, friends, homes, and work to spend the next three years of their lives travelling, learning, and living in community with him. He helped them understand the word of God.

As preachers of God's word, it is our job to make it possible for men, women, young adults, and children not only to hear the word of the Lord but also respond to it. Of course, they need to come to an understanding of the word to be able to respond to it.

²⁶ All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

Approximately three years ago, the church where I currently serve dismissed its preschool and elementary aged children approximately fifteen minutes into the worship service to an age-appropriate children's worship service. I wholeheartedly support age-appropriate ministries, but I was troubled by the fact that the majority of our youngest members were not present in worship during the sermon or when we celebrated communion.

I am a trained Children and Worship²⁷ leader and have several years' experience teaching children of various ages. These experiences in different contexts have taught me that children can and will realistically respond to God's word when it is presented in a way that they understand. Nevertheless, I also realize that preachers run the risk of alienating or excluding the adults in their congregations if their sermons are crafted with only children in mind.

The congregation where I am currently serving is located in the Southeast section of Grand Rapids, MI. Our community is rich in diversity with several churches, schools and colleges, homeowner and condo associations, retirement communities, businesses, rental properties, and several immigrant populations from around the world.

Christ Community reflects some of this diversity, especially generationally. Although relatively small, our church community spans in age from one to 102 years. The age range of those who consistently worship at Christ Community is from three to 96 years. Considering how many generations exist in this small congregation, I wondered if

²⁷ Children and Worship is a program curriculum that presents a joyful way for children to worship God. It invites children to experience the wonder and mystery of God through a unique storytelling format and multi-sensory materials.

there was a way for me to craft my sermons in a way that would help each generation not only understand what they were hearing but also be able to realistically respond.

The topic of preaching more effectively to multiple generations is of particular significance in my context because we think of ourselves as members of a family and also because of the size of our worshiping community. Given the current size of the congregation, we do not have the volunteer base to offer age-appropriate ministries during and after worship. Additionally, the families with young children in the congregation feel it is important to have their children in worship with them.

When discussing the importance of families worshiping together, Holly Allen and Christine Ross write, “Families need to be worshiping together. Children in the Old Testament times worshiped with their families on feast days, special celebrations and on Sabbath. Children in the early Church worshiped in house churches with their families.”²⁸ On a similar note, Eddie Prest particularly recommends including children in worship, saying, “The optimal spiritual impact upon children will take place in a warm, belonging, caring and concerned interaction with the gathered people of God, particularly in worship.”²⁹

Preaching effectively to multiple generations is important to the Church because most congregations consist of more than one generation. When discussing a recent experience worshiping in a multi-generational church Edward Hammett shared:

People are living longer. A church might minister at the same time to five generations of a single family. I sat on the platform of a church not long ago and had the opportunity to observe the congregation. Part of the service that morning

²⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*, 193.

²⁹ Eddie Prest, *From One Generation to Another* (Cape Town: Training for Leadership, 1993), 20.

was a baby dedication. There, near the front in one row, were five generations of one family. As I watched their participation in this traditional service, I observed that the older the members of this family were, the more they engaged in the service. They sang with gusto, using their open hymnals. They opened their Bibles when Scripture was read. They listened intently, nodding in affirmation. But as I glanced down the pew, I saw that being engaged in the worship service diminished with each generation rapidly reaching boredom and apparent total disinterest.³⁰

In my context there are six generations currently worshiping together and each generation engages differently.

There are colleagues and churches in my local community who would benefit from the results of this project. Several of the congregations are experiencing a decline in attendance in worship and other ministries. While the majority of them are generationally diverse, there are a handful of them who have very few individuals representing generation x, the millennial generation, or the newest generation that is yet to be named.

Being ordained in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and an active member of the Great Lakes City Classis, I will have the opportunity to share my results with more than 950 RCA churches spread throughout the United States and Canada that vary in size. A research project of this nature has the potential of profoundly impacting and transforming this denomination, which is currently populated with many aging congregations.

Serving a church affiliated with The International Council of Community Churches (ICCC), I plan to share my insights with the hundreds of churches across the United States, as well as throughout the world, that share the same affiliation. The ability

³⁰ Edward H. Hammett and James R. Pierce, *Reaching People under 40 While Keeping People over 60: Being Church for All Generations*, The Columbia Partnership Leadership Series (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 30.

to share my results will extend further since the ICCC is a member of the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Churches Uniting in Christ.

The topic of this thesis is important to the Church because of the limited amount of resources available on this particular topic. The majority of the multi-generational resources I discovered apply to ministry in general, not just preaching. My hope is to offer something in response to an obvious need in an effort to assist preachers and churches around the world.

Although the scope of my research only focuses on preaching more effectively to multiple generations, the results could have a profound impact on how other church related ministries are approached, developed, and planned. The generational gap that so often divides may begin to narrow in worship, Christian education, small groups, teaching, congregational care, fellowship/community, and service/outreach.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Biblical Overview

When discussing intergenerational connectors, Laura and Robert Keely point out how natural it is to imagine an intergenerational congregation, especially as families grow. Without intentionality, however, worship services can become by and for adults if we are not careful. It is very easy to forget to include multiple generations into the natural ebb and flow of worship.¹

It is important to consider multiple generations when preaching as well because the biblical narrative is one of several generations. The continued growth of God's kingdom on earth is a result of one generation passing its knowledge of God to succeeding generations.

Beginning with Adam and Eve, we are introduced to the importance of generations. The command to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28, the fall and its consequences, as well as humanity's relationship with God, are passed from one generation to another.

Sharing the knowledge of God generationally is a consistent theme throughout the Old Testament. In 1 Chronicles we read, "Remember his covenant forever, the word that

¹ Laura & Robert Keely, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship," in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008).

he commanded, for a thousand generations” (1 Chr 16:15). The predominant way we remember is to keep talking about God’s covenant and to keep sharing stories about God with our children and grandchildren.

The psalmist also notes the importance of generations teaching and sharing the glorious deeds of the Lord with succeeding generations:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done (Ps 78:1-4).

Other Psalms that talk about one generation teaching another and the importance of sharing the glorious deeds of the Lord include: 33:11; 45:17; 78:1-8; 100:5; 105:8; and 145:4.

When prophesying to God’s people, the prophet Joel encourages all the inhabitants of the land to give ear: “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children and their children another generation” (Joel 1:3).

We are also encouraged in the book of Isaiah to listen closely to God’s word and to ensure that God’s story is passed down from generation to generation.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Is 55:10-11).

The command used repeatedly in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Revelation, “Let anyone with ears listen!”² applies to all generations. This command increases our responsibility as preachers to build bridges of understanding.

The emphasis on generations continues as we move to the New Testament. The very first words we encounter in the New Testament are, “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt 1:1). What follows genealogically demonstrates that what has been passed down from generation to generation is meant to continue through the ages.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus taught before crowds of thousands on multiple occasions that included multiple generations. The Synoptic Gospels (Mt 19:14, Mark 10:14, and Luke 18:16) include the story of Jesus inviting children to come to him. These incidences demonstrate that Jesus was multi-generational in his ministry and teaching and that he did not just focus on adults.

As we continue through the New Testament and come to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when thousands of people were added to the Church, we encounter entire households (which would have included multiple generations) that heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8). They believed and were baptized because of what they heard about Jesus, the Author of Life.

Biblical writers were writing to a generation that understood them. As preachers we must speak and write in a way so that current generations will understand us as well.

² Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 22; 13:9.

We need to draw upon “advanced understanding without letting it become a barrier that separates us from our listeners.”³

Crowds often gathered when Jesus taught. We are told in Mark 12:37 they were “listening to him with delight.” The word for “listening” (ἀκούω) here is the same word Jesus employed when he said, “Let anyone with ears, listen!” The word for listen (ἀκούω) also means to perceive, understand, or comprehend.

Interestingly, Paul used the same root word when he wrote, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the Word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Hearing (listening) is between preaching and faith.

We build bridges not only because it is effective when preaching but also because it reflects how God revealed God’s self throughout the biblical narrative. As a result, we are called to present God’s word in a way that children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and seniors can hear and, having heard, realistically respond.

The Scriptures, though in written form, were largely originally oral in nature. They are exciting, life-giving, and intergenerational. Like my first preaching professor Tim Brown, I believe it is possible to preach to all ages. He raises this particular difficulty that requires theological consideration: “One reason that sermons seem so distant to people is that they were born in the preacher’s mind as a literary phenomenon rather than as an oral one.”⁴

³ Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 9.

⁴ Brown, “The Power of Preaching to All Ages,” 120.

Brown goes on to suggest that we are living in a post-literate culture, where people may know how to read but choose not to do so, for a variety of reasons. “With television screens always in view and iPods and cellphones glued to every imaginable ear, who takes time to read or write?”⁵ These have become the means for many that shape ethics, beliefs, and vision.

It is Tex Sample’s contention “that about *half* of the people in the United States are people who work primarily out of a *traditional orality*.”⁶ Therefore, sermons need to be written for the listener, not the reader.

Readers, not listeners, have received more attention in my current context for the bulk of their history. This has had profound implications, some of which is being rethought, especially when it comes to the younger generations. The story we have to tell needs to be told in a compelling manner if it is going to compete with all of the other means that are currently shaping our ethics, beliefs, and vision.

Theological Overview

As people of faith we are dependent on stories. Like most stories, our lives follow a narrative structure—there is a beginning, middle, and end. However, our story is not simply a personal one. It is also communal in nature. Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1-2), we are born and baptized into a story that preceded our first breath. Upon taking our last breath we will join the cloud of witnesses, encouraging and challenging others, as the story continues. Between our first and last breath, we are sustained and

⁵ Ibid., 120.

⁶ Tex Sample, *Ministry in an Oral Culture: Living with Will Rogers, Uncle Remus, and Minnie Pearl* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 6.

supported by a larger narrative (God's story), which we reconstruct and retell as part of Christ's body. In Christ, we find purpose, meaning, and hope as our stories continue.

Together we learn to enact the ethics that are embodied in the biblical narrative, declare and defend what we believe, and cast a vision of a preferred reality. John Howard Yoder explains, "The church has the very character of a *polis*, that is, a structured social body. It has its ways of making decisions, defining membership, and carrying out common tasks."⁷

Regrettably, the shift toward radical individualism, spurred on by Immanuel Kant's intellectual foundation, has had a tremendous impact on our sense of community. Stanley Grenz argues:

Kant was confident that through observation, experiment, and careful reflection, human beings could discover the truth of the world. That being the case, he believed that the burden of discovering truth is ultimately a private matter, that the knowing process is fundamentally a relationship between the autonomous knowing self and the world waiting to be known through the creative power of the active mind.⁸

The discovery of truth, including morality, was no longer a communal matter, but a private one.

The shift toward radical individualism and our selfishness has played a role in offering worship services with only one or two generations in mind. Our focus has shifted from "us" and "ours" to "me" and "mine." One reason for this shift is developmental in

⁷ John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), viii.

⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996), 80.

nature. “One concern of educational developmentalists is that children and adults are typically at different cognitive developmental stages; that is, they *think* differently.”⁹

While it is true that children and adults are most often at different cognitive stages developmentally, people of the same age may also be at different stages. When sharing her thoughts about all-age learning, Judith Sadler writes, “People of the *same age* might be at *different stages* (and, of course, that people of different ages might be at the same stage). Much is lost when it is assumed that adults cannot learn with and from those younger than themselves.”¹⁰

The church in its entirety is a school of Christian discipleship, a place and a people created and called by God, infused with the Holy Spirit, where we learn Christ, to follow Christ, and to be more like Christ in our daily lives. To paraphrase Joan Chittister, the church is the place where we learn and practice the way of “Jesus-life.”¹¹

Offering a “cafeteria approach” to worship, where one simply chooses whatever suits one’s needs, can play a role in one’s spiritual development. However, it can also further promote the type of individualism and selfishness mentioned previously. We need to be careful that celebrating an individual’s uniqueness does not develop into self-centeredness.

⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*, 211.

¹⁰ Judith Sadler, “Learning Together: All-Age Learning in the Church,” in *Learning in the Way: Research and Reflection on Adult Christian Education*, ed. Jeff Astley (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2000), 115.

¹¹ Brett Webb-Mitchell, *Christly Gestures: Learning to Be Members of the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1-2.

The church is communal in nature: therefore, worship—including preaching—should be directed toward the community and not the individual. “Christian education and worship in particular are beholden to the viewpoint that some people are in search of the community for what it can bring to them rather than seeking a community in which they give of themselves—where each person’s life is open to the other, without hesitation.”¹² “The variety of people is magnificent. Yet amid the diversity Christians find their solace in being members of the one body of Christ, their “community,” their “home” and “household,” their educational context.”¹³

Christian communities share a common story, where the pages of our lives connect to the pages of other lives. It is a story that is meant to unite, not divide us. This shared story reminds us that we cannot make it in the world on our own. We need all the help we can get. We need God’s help. We need the help of the others who have gone before us. We need the help of others who are currently with us. We need to help others who are just entering the story. This story shapes us and gives us our identity.

Crafting sermons with multiple generations in mind helps people of faith live into their communal identity. Our sermons should remind people of all generations of our connectedness to God and other people. This kind of intentionality reminds listeners of all ages that this story is their story, that every single one of them has a role to play in the story, and that their story is connected to the stories of listeners.

Together we learn how to act in the world. We do not stand in isolation. Yet, the way many of us choose to worship suggests otherwise. Including people of all ages when

¹² Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989), 5.

¹³ Webb-Mitchell, *Christly Gestures: Learning to Be Members of the Body of Christ*, 31.

planning and writing the sermon reminds people that we do not stand in isolation and is also an act of hospitality. If presented effectively, the sermon serves as an opportunity for listeners to learn hospitality. As an act of hospitality it reminds us that all are welcome, while demonstrating how we are to live out our baptismal vows and practice sacrificial living.

Jesus Christ perfectly demonstrated how to live like this. With Christ living in us, the Holy Spirit helps us fulfill our baptismal vows and give of ourselves in ways that give others a glimpse of the kingdom of God. Our sermons should help people be able to respond to God's love in tangible ways.

Responding with God and others in mind first puts to death the radical individualism I spoke of earlier. God is the author of our story not us. God's story reminds us over and over again that we are part of something larger than ourselves.

Wendell Berry claims this is a religious, biological, and social perspective:

Each of us has had many authors, and each of us is engaged, for better or worse, in that same authorship. We could say that the human race is a great coauthorship in which we are collaborating with God and nature in the making of ourselves and one another... This is only a way of saying that by ourselves we have no meaning and no dignity; by ourselves we are outside the human definition, outside our identity. "More and more," Mary Catharine Bateson wrote in *With a Daughter's Eye*, "it has seemed to me that the idea of an individual, the idea that there is someone to be known, separate from the relationships, is simply an error."¹⁴

"In the body of Christ we are constantly looking out for the needs of other people first rather than necessarily thinking of ourselves and our own self-centered needs."¹⁵

¹⁴ Wendell Berry, *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1987), 115.

¹⁵ Webb-Mitchell, *Christly Gestures: Learning to Be Members of the Body of Christ*, 81.

Preaching in a multi-generational assembly, the preacher has the opportunity to address generational distinctions that may be the source of conflict. Identifying these distinctions and discussing how each generation has different skills and experiences that can benefit other generations, often complimenting them, is certainly something worth considering. “When people of different generations stop caring about each other, we are all in serious peril.”¹⁶

Preaching more effectively to multiple generations also has the potential of combatting different forms of ageism, which actually takes numerous forms. It is not just about how the elderly are treated.

Despite America’s continuing obsession with youth, ageism also can be aimed at young people. While it has been somewhat traditional to see teenagers as undependable and random, adolescence now often extends to twentysomethings. Gen Xers especially have reinforced the stereotype that young adults take longer to grow up and launch. Employers will often not hire young adults who have no experience, the same young adults who cannot get experience without being hired. Yet, many young people are quite responsible and have helpful opinions on a wide variety of subjects and issues. Older adults would be wise to engage teenagers and young adults in meaningful conversations, and young people can benefit greatly from the experience and perspective of the older generations. All age groups will find that the others have much to offer.¹⁷

Addressing intergenerational attitudes and acts of prejudice and discrimination from the pulpit reminds listeners that people of all ages are valued and important, no matter how old or young they are.

¹⁶ Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Wwww.Com*, 150-151.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

Preaching more effectively to multiple generations can also help us realize the mission of the church. Jesus preached about God's mission for the church, which was multi-generational in design and purpose.

He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Mt 22:37-40).

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt 28:18-20).

Jesus's method of preaching was both attractional and missional in nature. All generations were included. "When everyone in the church is growing in their journey with Jesus, the mission of the church is realized."¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., 163.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational Resources

As I established in the previous chapter, it is good and vital for the church to be multi-generational. Preaching effectively to multiple generations requires some knowledge of the different generations. Each generation experiences different issues that must be kept in mind when preparing to preach.

There is not an exact science for dating and naming generations. Strauss and Howe name five generations currently (2015) and indicate that the sixth is too young to be named. In *Generations*¹ and *Millennials Rising*² they suggest the following breakdown:

G.I. Generation: born 1901-1924
Silent Generation: born 1925-1942
Boomer Generation: born 1943-1960
Generation X: born 1961-1981
Millennial Generation: born 1982-2002
Unnamed Generation: born 2003 or later

Other experts³ suggest relatively similar breakdowns and typically name four to five generations.

¹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, 32.

² Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, 41.

³ Chuck Underwood, *The Generational Imperative: Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace, Marketplace and Living Room* (North Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2007), 28-29. Gary L.

Strauss and Howe have written at length about generational issues. *Generations*, the first book they wrote together, not only outlined the past but also forecasted the future by considering the progress of eighteen different birth groups.⁴ They were some of the first experts in their field to take Generation X seriously, tracing the life cycle of the oldest in this generation to show how different they were from the previous generation.

While they make some generalizations, Strauss and Howe do an excellent job of showing their readers how the world was changing as Generation X was maturing. Their research points out a remarkable contrast between the Boomers, who continued pursuing their dreams into adulthood to find personal fulfillment (often at the expense of others), and Gen Xers, who felt somewhat abandoned at every stage of life. This may explain why, according to Strauss and Howe, the Xers treated the Millennials as “precious—often, more precious than their parents.”⁵ In doing so, they trapped themselves between two generations that share this distinction.

Building on their work in *Generations* and *13th Generation*, Strauss and Howe discuss the generation they refer to as the “millennials,” “a group unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse.”⁶ The authors do a nice job of describing where the millennials come from, who they are, and where they believe this generation is headed. As the most watched-over generation in history, millennials are having a profound impact

McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 7.

⁴ Strauss and Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, 8.

⁵ Ibid., 339.

⁶ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, 4.

on our world and its history, especially when it comes to recasting the image of youth. This generation, that has been pressured, protected, and celebrated far more than previous generations, is at the center of a profound social shift. This shift focuses “on the needs of the community more than the individual, so it is likely to induce large-scale institutional change.”⁷ While I completely agree with the Strauss and Howe assessment, I believe that extreme care must be taken to ensure that a particular generation does not receive more attention than others when preaching to multiple generations at the same time.

On the other hand, because of their commitment to strengthening civic institutions and our physical infrastructure, we need to make sure we pay attention to millennials. We need to preach in ways that encourage them, as together we seek to restore the societal fragmentation made wider and deeper by previous generations. This generation has the power to help the church when it comes to celebrating our generational diversity.

Multi-generational Preaching Resources

Resources specifically focused on multi-generational preaching are not plentiful. Most of the multi-generational materials cited here apply to ministry in general. Yet they do provide some insights that are helpful with regard to preaching to multiple generations. This brief review highlights the fact that this proposal fills a void that exists.

Preaching to a Multi-generational Assembly

In his book, *Preaching to a Multi-generational Assembly*, Andrew Carl Wisdom begins with the problem of ineffective preaching. He believes this is a direct result of preachers failing to prepare properly. When addressing the problem of preaching

⁷ Ibid., 67.

effectively, he does so from a Catholic and Protestant perspective. While I found this section helpful and informative, it is beyond the scope of my research and project, since I am currently serving in a community church that is not affiliated with a specific denomination.

Wisdom contends that intergenerational preaching is a sacred dance with the participants of culture, language, and meaning. This sacred dance synthesizes some important realizations that foster the preacher's effectiveness. Each generation has a distinct worldview that shapes all of its experiences. Since culture is constantly changing, preachers must continuously seek ways of understanding their cultural context in order to communicate most effectively.

Preachers in multi-generational assemblies must also be familiar with each generation's unique vocabulary and expressions. Like Wisdom, I believe it is absolutely necessary to pay attention to the intersection between language and culture.⁸ Keeping each generation in mind when choosing what words to speak, gestures to make, and illustrations to incorporate, may require shifting back and forth between different language styles when preaching in order to effectively reach the most people.

Wisdom warns that preachers who do this run the risk of being perceived as inauthentic and manipulative if they are not careful. On the other hand, incorporating different language styles, when remaining true to one's self, provides opportunities for connecting with multiple generations that may otherwise be missed.⁹ Incorporating

⁸ Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multi-Generational Assembly*, 24.

⁹ The material in Strauss and Howe's *Generations* and Menconi's *The Intergenerational Church*, is helpful for understanding generational realities that may impact how we incorporate different language styles when preaching in a multi-generational assembly.

different language styles in one sermon has allowed me to demonstrate how diversity and unity are both honored and valued at the same time.

As the dance continues, its focus shifts to meaning and how meaning is shaped and constructed. Wisdom helped me realize the importance of understanding the kinds of stored information and experiences my audience has had and potentially share when it comes to how my listeners construct meaning. Language and meaning are directly connected. If I cannot speak to my audience in ways they understand, they will have a difficult time constructing meaning (finding ways of acting out what they think and feel).

Marketers are great at helping people find ways of acting out what they think and feel. Consequently, Wisdom believes preachers can learn a lot from marketers: “As successful marketers adapt their marketing programs to meet the specific needs of their target groups, so must preachers.”¹⁰ Like Wisdom, I found the idea of market segmentation both helpful and limiting. On the one hand, it requires being familiar with and acknowledging different generational distinctions, as well as being able to speak to those distinctions. On the other hand, preaching in a multi-generational assembly requires reaching a broader audience (particularly in my context) than most marketers are concerned with when it comes to advertising.

Much of what Wisdom had to say about market segmentation resembles what David Lose shared related to preaching in a changing world and church:

A lot of our stories come from a defined set. We all have our favorites and what happens over time is that we give our allegiance to different sources because we

¹⁰ Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multi-Generational Assembly*, 3.

trust them as good sources of stories. We are likely to go to the place that has the story we believe.¹¹

As we try to establish a connection with people from multiple generations, cultures, and backgrounds, we need to remember that, while they may all hear the same words, many may hear differently what is said.¹²

While there were many parts of Wisdom's book that were helpful, I chose not to incorporate his method of intergenerational preaching because I was not convinced it would work in my setting. He drew from predominantly Catholic resources, used each paragraph of his sermon to reach the different generations, and brought the sermon full circle by addressing all the generations. He chose to receive both written and oral feedback, which I did as well.

Preaching in the Sunday Assembly

The Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics wrote a pastoral commentary celebrating twenty-five years of *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* that provided helpful information related to the assembly, preacher, homily and methodology. When discussing the importance of the preacher knowing his or her assembly, Organ, Diaz and Joncas write, "Preaching has the potential to be either a

¹¹ David Lose, *The Changed and Changing World and Church in Which We Preach*, (Lecture delivered at Luther Seminary, 2013).

¹² Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multi-Generational Assembly*, 61.

barrier or a bridge to intercultural understanding.”¹³ I believe this is true in a generational sense as well. However, gaining understanding requires time to listen.

When addressing the preacher, Donald Heet, Theresa Richard, and James Wallace emphasize the importance of listening to both sacred texts and the people of God when preparing to preach. Listening requires practice and patience. Developing preaching skills also requires practice and patience. “The art of preaching involves speaking with clarity, coherence, and creativity. The language of the poet and the storyteller is crucial to the preacher.”¹⁴

Listening to people also requires practice and patience. Baumer, Pazdan, Skudlarek, and Werner utilize a threefold method when it comes to dwelling with and listening to people. The method they use includes exegeting (interpreting) the entire congregation, physical environment, as well as the social environment.¹⁵

Preachers must also seek critical feedback on a consistent basis if they want to grow and develop as preachers. Therefore, Baumer, Pazdan, Skudlarek, and Werner advocate for self-evaluation, in addition to community and peer evaluation.¹⁶ Although it can be painful for a preacher to watch himself or herself preach and receive comments that sometimes sting, receiving critical feedback are methods that help us grow and

¹³ Deborah Organ, Miguel Diaz, Jan Michael Joncas, “The Assembly: in *Preaching in the Sunday Assembly: A Pastoral Commentary on Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, ed. James A. Wallace (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 7.

¹⁴ Donald Heet, Theresa Richard, and James A. Wallace, “The Preacher,” in *Preaching in the Sunday Assembly: A Pastoral Commentary on Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, ed. James A. Wallace (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 25.

¹⁵ Fred Baumer et al., “Methodology,” in *Preaching in the Sunday Assembly: A Pastoral Commentary on Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, ed. James A. Wallace (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 44-45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

develop. Continual evaluation and critical feedback are necessary for preachers who desire to bridge generational gaps in their congregations.

The Intergenerational Church

Influenced by Strauss and Howe, Peter Menconi summarizes some helpful distinctions that are necessary for understanding today's generations.¹⁷ When talking specifically about preaching, he writes, "In order to reach multiple generations in one sermon, preachers must understand what each generation expects from a sermon and what kind of communication they normally learn from and respond to."¹⁸ Therefore, it is important for preachers to know their assemblies.

Menconi begins by focusing on why ministry should be intergenerational and the need to know one's church. Although he writes about younger generations finding it difficult to relate to church "as it is 'done' by older generations,"¹⁹ he does not address the difficulty some of the older generations are experiencing with the changes in the church.

Part two of his book is where he draws most heavily from Strauss and Howe's research on generations and gives very effective, succinct descriptions of the GI, Silent, Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial generations. The section on millennial spirituality was very helpful knowing this is the largest and perhaps most influential generation to date. His contention is this:

¹⁷ See for example, the discussion in Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Www.Com*, 31. He succinctly describes today's generations (GI, Silent, Boomer, Generation X and Millennial).

¹⁸ Ibid., 186.

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

Many Millennials define “God” significantly different than do GIs, Silents, and most Boomers. The postmodern understanding of God and spirituality that began with the Boomers and was accelerated by Gen Xers has reached new levels with the Millennials. In fact, their view of God is not only postmodern but it is also post-Christian. That is, many Millennials embrace a pluralistic understanding of God and a spirituality that makes room for many valid expressions of faith and many roads to God. Even those Millennials who profess faith in Jesus Christ see themselves more as *followers of Jesus* and not necessarily *Christians*.²⁰

This generation has been heavily influenced by the Boomer generation, who taught them a lot about embracing change and diversity as well as being tolerant. Just as Millennials have been influenced by previous generations, they will no doubt impact future generations.

The third and final section of his book includes nine chapters devoted to moving toward an intergenerational church. While the various church ministries included in the chapter titles are connected, there is only one chapter devoted specifically to intergenerational preaching. Menconi emphasizes the need to understand what each generation expects from a sermon and how this complicates the communication process.

He also suggests reassessing the length of sermons and proposes interspersing movie, music, or drama illustrations to communicate more effectively. However, he offers nothing as far as a suggested time limit after claiming every generation struggles with paying attention to preachers who believe they need to speak for thirty minutes or more in order to get their point across.²¹

Despite all of the differences and challenges that exist generationally, Menconi believes the task of intergenerational preaching is still a feasible one. He offers a few

²⁰ Ibid., 136-137.

²¹ Ibid., 186.

basic ground rules that I incorporated into my methodology for preaching to multiple generations.

- Be authentic and communicate a message that is genuine.
- Talk on topics and issues with which the congregation members are wrestling.
- Always give practical ways of applying the message to their lives.
- When possible and appropriate, use illustrations and examples from current events and pop culture.
- As often as possible, the sermon should relate to the everyday context of each of the generations in the congregation.
- On regular occasions involve the congregation in the sermon.
- Provide opportunities for various generations to interact around the sermon.
- Seek regular input from all the generations.²²

His list of ground rules evidently focuses on the need for pastors to understand the world if they hope to be effective when trying to communicate.

The Church of All Ages

Editor Howard Vanderwell²³ did a great job compiling reflections from pastors, teachers, worship planners, and others serving in specialized ministries on issues they are confronted with when planning worship services. While the contributors provide guidance as they plan worship services that fit their specific context, they are careful not to give quick solutions or propose easy answers that may not work in other contexts. Similar to Menconi's *The Intergenerational Church*, only one chapter is dedicated to intergeneration preaching.

²² Ibid., 189-190.

²³ Howard Vanderwell, "The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together," (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008).

Tim Brown begins by talking about the difficult task of preaching that informs, persuades, and delights everyone “from an 80-year old with a hearing problem to an eight-year old *with a hearing problem*.”²⁴ He contends that if preachers fail to consider the vast life experiences and needs of people from various generations, they can plan on being frustrated when preaching.²⁵ Based on my experience preaching and having spent time with Tim, I have also found this to be true.

Brown was my homiletics professor in seminary. Therefore, his methodology and definition of effective preaching, which is heavily influenced by Augustine, has influenced me tremendously. Having a hunch that Augustine knew something about intergenerational preaching, he shares this analogy:

For Augustine, preaching was like one of those doors with two-way hinges that you often see in restaurant kitchens that allow the door to swing freely in or out. Intergenerational preaching is something like those doors. The interpretive process swings in (“the process of discovering what we need to learn”), and it swings out (“the process of presenting what we have learned”). If the preacher fails to walk through the door in either direction, the sermon that he or she preaches will probably be met with a yawn.²⁶

The remainder of the chapter is devoted to exploring each process.

According to Brown, the Bible is the most intergenerational resource we have.²⁷ For that reason, it is the primary resource from which we need to draw most deeply and creatively. What was written to and for people thousands of years ago was written to and for us as well.

²⁴ Brown, “The Power of Preaching to All Ages,” 113.

²⁵ Ibid., 114.

²⁶ Ibid., 115.

²⁷ Ibid.

Brown often stressed the importance of scripture memorization (hiding God's word in our hearts) during his lectures, as he does when discussing discovering what we learn. Paying attention to how much the biblical witness is retold throughout scripture is also something he highlighted on numerous occasions. He notes that Peter's sermon after Pentecost was roughly forty-six percent scripture recitation, and instead of explaining it to the people he allows scripture to explain them.²⁸ Brown's hope, and mine, is that there is time and space in the sermon for the Word to interpret the gathered community.

The final few pages of his chapter are devoted to presenting what we have learned. Believing as Tex Sample does, that we live in a post-literate world, Brown introduces the concepts of chatting, gossiping, and daydreaming as ways of interpreting meaning.

When he talks about chatting, he is certainly not implying that the work preachers engage in is trivial. Employing this technique has more to do with how our ears have been trained and conditioned. We are most comfortable hearing through the uneven rhythms of conversation.²⁹ "Sermons prepared and preached with a wide intergenerational gathering in view will mostly likely be preached without notes and with a pretty loose relationship to a pulpit or lectern."³⁰ Like Tim, I find employing a more conversational style of preaching helps when it comes to reaching more generations.

Gossiping refers to standing with and for baptized believers as a way to encourage them. Brown wonders if this may be what the apostle Paul is doing in many of his letters

²⁸ Ibid., 116.

²⁹ Ibid., 121.

³⁰ Ibid., 121-122.

when he is commending this sister or that brother.³¹ Thinking of gossiping in this manner is helpful for preachers as we attempt to lead by example and not by pointing fingers. Gossiping about (commending) those whom they have been entrusted to lead and serve is indeed a blessing for preachers.

The final few pages are devoted to daydreaming. Brown begins with a passage about St. John's dream while on the Island of Patmos from Revelation and goes on to define daydreaming as follows:

Daydreaming is the practicing of envisioning within the sermon a better future for everyone based on gospel truth. It is a peculiar kind of speech that is imaginative but not fictitious, hopeful but not maudlin, compelling but still resistible.³²

We are invited to “come up here and see what must take place after this” (Rev 4:1) by the same One who called and invited St. John to come. We are called to invite others to come and see as well.

We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who were also daydreamers: Simone Weil, Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr. “They were daydreamers one and all, and I want to preach in a way that will sustain their dreams.”³³

Multi-generational Preaching Research Projects

Thomas Choi created test case sermon experiences that attempted to speak to a multi-generational congregation, sought feedback from the members of the congregation who heard the sermons, and formulated recommendations for multi-generational

³¹ Ibid., 123.

³² Ibid., 125.

³³ Ibid., 127.

approaches for preaching in the twenty-first century.³⁴ He stressed the importance of a strong Christology, rhetorical skills, authenticity, testimony, community, and generational literacy, as well as acknowledging the importance of images, technology, pastoral care, and children.

Jean Zietlow, on the other hand, emphasized celebrative design. Her methodology included a holistic approach (imagination, emotive expression, and celebration), shared emotional surfaces (intersection of the preacher and the prepared sermon, anticipation, and projected expectations of the hearers, and the biblical text), and celebrative design (the movement when we as individuals and as a community intersect with God's story and receive the assurance of grace).³⁵

If our goal as preachers is to help communities of individuals intersect with God's story, then we need to help individuals from each generation make a deep connection. "Most preachers talk about what comes naturally to them, finding illustrations and making applications from their own lives," notes Fred Provencher.³⁶ This can be somewhat problematic if children are encouraged to remain in worship.

The Church needs to rethink how children are viewed and treated. We segregate children into child-focused programs and expect that they will appreciate Sunday worship when they reach a certain age. Children are not lesser members waiting for a time when they can be really useful. One of best places to begin including children is in worship, the

³⁴ Thomas S. Choi, "Multigenerational Preaching" (Wesley Theological Seminary, 2009), 9.

³⁵ Jean A. Zietlow, "Preaching to All Generations through Celebrative Design" (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2000), 4-10.

³⁶ Fred Provencher, "Preaching Exegetically to Multiple Generations at the Same Time" (Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 2010), 4.

place where God promises to meet with his redeemed people.³⁷ If preachers truly desire to welcome young children and introduce them to Jesus, then they need to be more sensitive to their presence when preparing to preach.

Collectively, the resources I reviewed remind preachers that being properly prepared by spending adequate time in God's presence with the text, as well as in community with others as a way of understanding the text more deeply, requires patience and practice. Proper preparation also requires careful interpretation of the text, entire congregation, physical setting, social setting, and continuous evaluation from a variety of sources.

Together, these resources made it abundantly clear that each generation gathered in the assembly is important and requires my full attention. This approach drove the methodology I employed during my project in profound ways. Although the use of technology works well for some preachers, I have always struggled incorporating it and have found that it often ends by alienating at least one or more generations.

I also did not want to end up trying to include six different stories, illustrations, or examples in one sermon as a way of reaching every generation in the congregation. My fear was that it would be too confusing and would lead to a very fragmented sermon. Therefore, I chose three types of sermons, which are discussed in greater detail in chapter four. Each type of sermon highlighted a particular character, object, or story that I thought would appeal to all generations. The key to incorporating an object or story is finding one that is easily identifiable by all generations. This tends to be more difficult with stories.

³⁷ Megan Hill, "Full Members at Age 1," *Christianity Today* 57, no. 8 (2013): 25.

Throughout the week while meditating on and studying the text I paid close attention to verbs in the passage. My hope in doing so was to build a bridge of understanding that intentionally captured the listeners' attention. Early in the week I took a piece of paper and created a column for each character in the biblical text I used for the sermon. Under each character I listed all of the verbs associated with that particular character. This process allowed me to quickly identify the problem (sin) and solution (grace) that existed in the original context.

Next I took our church directory and chose one person from each generation and began praying for each person and asked God to help me understand how each one of these people might identify with what was going on in the biblical text. I kept that list of names before me the entire week as I continued developing the sermon and kept asking myself how each person on that list would hear, understand, and potentially respond to what I said.

Engaging in exegesis of the text and congregation in this way helped me choose phrases and language that each generation identified with and understood. Utilizing three different types of sermons that were based on one character, object, or story also enabled me to use the same survey, focus-group, and interview questions for each sermon that was included in this project.

Since the literature I read reinforced the need to include all generations when preaching, everyone present in worship was invited to fill out a survey for each sermon that was part of this research project. The focus-groups that met each week included individuals from five of the six generations in my research context. Additionally, at least

one person from all six generations was interviewed at some point in time during this research project.

The next chapter includes a detailed description of the church community where this research was conducted. The research method and tools that were used are also described in more detail in chapter four, and are a direct result of the literature review provided in this chapter. The goals and anticipated outcomes connect the literature reviewed in this chapter with the literature reviewed for each sermon type, as well as the research method and tools.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Context

In order to understand more completely the nature of the research related to this thesis, it is helpful to know more about the church community where the research was conducted. Christ Community Church was founded in 1992 when a group of about 100 people left another church to found this one. While the original group was fairly homogenous ethnically and somewhat diverse socio-economically, it had about the same number of males and females and was pretty diverse generationally.

Throughout its history, Christ Community Church has shared its facilities with a number of other congregations. A small Seventh Day Adventist congregation used parts of the facility from 2000-2001, Divine Grace in 2001, a Korean church from 2006-2007, another small non-denominational church from 2007-2008, and a small Church of Christ congregation from 2009-2012. Each of these arrangements included a small amount of rental income payable to Christ Community Church, meant to be mutually beneficial. The additional income Christ Community Church received helped with significant expenses related to the care and maintenance of the building and grounds. At the same time, the other congregations were provided a beautiful facility in which to meet and worship without spending a lot of money. However, providing these opportunities created a great deal of confusion and sent a mixed message when it came to trying to reach our community.

At their peak, Christ Community Church had about 325 members and averaged 125-160 people in worship. Between the years 1999 and 2009 they gradually began losing members, mostly from the Boomer, Generation X, Millennial, and unnamed generations. In 2010 this community experienced a significant amount of loss when several members from the GI and Silent generations died. The average worship attendance in 2011 shrunk to approximately twenty-five people, as a result of these losses.

Attendance in worship started slowly increasing in 2012, after the church went through a long discernment process. This process involved focusing on becoming a healthy congregation and building a solid foundation on which to build and grow. Today an average of fifty-five people representing all six generations gather each week to worship at Christ Community Church.

The congregation is still fairly homogenous ethnically, diverse socio-economically, has almost twice as many females as males, and is pretty diverse generationally. There are roughly 20 males and 35 females ranging in age from one month to age 96 in worship each week. Again, there may be five or six generations present during worship. Preaching effectively to the people gathered for worship in my current context involves interacting with six generations. Every generation from the newest (unnamed) to the GI generation is consistently represented in worship where I preach.

Visitors are often surprised that the size of the congregation is not larger, given how large the church building looks from the outside. The sanctuary can seat approximately 300 people and is more contemporary in design, with very large windows

that provide an abundance of natural light. We receive many compliments about how beautiful the church, especially the sanctuary, is.

It has been a struggle to attract people who are willing to commit to serving with us for a long period of time because of the lack of children's ministries. In the past, Christ Community Church has offered ministries for children after worship, during part of a broader Sunday school program, and during worship, using various children's church models. Each method and ministry model succeeded with varying degrees of success. Before I started this research, children in preschool and elementary school left the sanctuary after about fifteen minutes to participate in "children's church." They were never with the gathered community for the message or communion.

Dismissing part of the gathered community was somewhat troubling to me. Plus, it was becoming more difficult maintaining any type of age appropriate children's ministry because of the number of children, their ages, and lack of volunteers. Therefore, considering other options, that included having our preschool and elementary age children remain in the sanctuary for the entire worship service, was necessary.

While most people at Christ Community Church have been supportive of exploring different options such as the one just mentioned, not all of them were. A small contingent believes that younger children should not remain in the sanctuary for the entire worship service. They find younger children to be distracting when they are trying to listen to the sermon. Thankfully, the current movement in the broader church toward intergenerational or cross-generational worship and ministry supported my proposal.

Research Method

I used an action reflection research method that included collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, using a variety of research questions. I chose to use mixed methods because “mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone.”¹

The reasons for employing mixed methods were many. I wanted to corroborate each type of data gathered, offset the weaknesses and strengths of each method, expand the range of inquiry, gain a more comprehensive account of the area of inquiry, answer different research questions, and enhance the level of integrity of my research.

The qualitative and quantitative methods of research were directly connected, and each method played an equally important role during the research process. Both methods of research were incorporated into the survey, focus-groups, and interviews. As a result, the timing was congruent in nature. Since each method provides a partial view, they converged throughout the entire process of design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Tools

The research tools I employed included administering a survey, meeting with two focus-groups, conducting multiple personal interviews, and journaling. The same survey was administered after each of the six sermons for the purpose of consistency. Each of the thirteen focus-group members received an invitation to participate in a specific focus-group several weeks prior to the beginning of the project. The meeting schedule for each

¹ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 11.

focus-group was determined prior to the start of each round of sermons, with the expectation that we would meet either immediately after the sermon was presented or within the next few days. Two to four personal interviews were conducted each week within five days of each participant hearing the sermon. My personal journal reflections were recorded throughout the entire research process.

After each sermon was presented, all of the listeners were given a two-sided survey they were asked to complete and hand to an usher before leaving the sanctuary. A date-specific letter (implying consent) was on the back side of each survey, including a “thank you” from me for taking time to complete the survey. The survey was comprised of eight questions that were both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

- How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?
- Did you learn something about the Bible reading’s original context?
- Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?
- Did the preacher hold your attention?
- When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?
- When during the sermon did you find it the most difficult to pay attention?
- Did the sermon inspire you?
- Are you willing to be interviewed?

The first question included five choices; three of the subsequent questions included a follow-up question, if “yes” was selected as the response. Most of the questions required providing very short answers (unless the participant chose to provide more detail) and the last question did not require providing anything further, unless the participant was willing to be interviewed (see appendix 1 to view the survey in its entirety).

The first seven questions were based on the description of effective preaching discussed in chapter 1 (effective preaching consists of instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion). Beneath the title was a request for each participant to

willingly provide his or her name, age, and phone number. Participants under the age of eighteen were required to have a parent or legal guardian complete an additional consent form. Asking participants to provide their names and phone numbers was critical for identifying potential interviewees. The request for participants to include their age was also very important, given the subject of the research.

The thirteen focus-group participants were divided into two groups. The first group that met on Sunday mornings after worship included one five-year-old boy and his 32-year-old mother, an eleven-year-old boy and his 32-year-old mother, and two sisters, eleven and nine years old, and their 44-year-old mother and 45-year-old father. The second focus-group that met on Thursday evenings was comprised of an 81-year-old man, a 79-year-old woman, a 75-year-old man, a 73-year-old man, and a 72-year-old woman. Having two different focus-groups would also enable me to see if the data I received from both groups is similar.

I intentionally scheduled the focus-group that included children immediately after worship so that the sermon would be fresh in their minds and hopefully assist with memorability. All the members of my parish-response-group² participated in a focus-group. However, keeping the children participants together in the same focus-group meant splitting up my parish response group.

Each participant was required to fill out an informed consent form. Participants under the age of 18 were required to have a parent or legal guardian fill one out on their

² My parish-response-group was comprised of six people from the Unnamed, Generation X, Boomer, and Silent generations. This group was formed and met five times each fall for the last three years, after I attended my first three-week in-residency at Luther Seminary. We discussed the scripture passage that was the subject of the sermon they were going to hear the following Sunday and then met after they heard the sermon to discuss the sermon and give them the opportunity to provide critical feedback.

behalf. The questions they were asked were all qualitative in nature, giving them the opportunity to convey whatever thoughts and feelings emerged as a result of the sermon.

Our time together began with my sharing a few guidelines for participating in the discussion. The same twelve questions were asked with each group and after each sermon.

1. What was your favorite part of the sermon and why?
2. What character or event did you identify with the most and why?
3. In what ways did the preacher help you understand the Bible reading that was the subject of the sermon?
4. How was the sermon you heard helpful to you?
5. What was the main thought/idea that you took away from the sermon?
6. In what way did the sermon you heard inspire you to respond?
7. What feelings, attitudes, or thoughts did the sermon provoke in you?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add about the sermon you heard?
9. What was the main idea that you got out of what I talked about today/on Sunday?
10. What feelings or thoughts did you have while I was talking today/on Sunday?
11. In what ways does what I talked about today/on Sunday make you want to act, react, or change?
12. Is there anything more you would like to say about what you heard me talk about today/on Sunday?

(See appendix 2 to view the focus-group guide and questions in their entirety).

The questions asked in the focus-groups, though similar to many of the questions on the survey, were designed to encourage the participants to reflect more deeply on the sermon they heard, affirm what they perhaps shared on their surveys, and also experience the opportunity to discuss their insights in a small group setting with others representing the same generation and at least one more generation.

Two to four interviews were conducted each week following the presentation of each sermon written for this project. These interviews consisted of standardized, open-ended questions where we explored the impact of the sermon in more detail and its effect

on their faith development. The age span of the interviewees ranged from the ages of eight to 91. When the eight-year-old was interviewed, his mother was present.

Our time together began with a review of the guidelines which we would be following during the interview. These questions were asked in every interview:

1. What do you remember the most about what you heard me talk about on Sunday?
2. Did you learn anything from what I said on Sunday? If so, what?
3. Did I help you understand the Bible story that you heard on Sunday? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
4. Did I help you understand how those who heard this Bible story a long time ago may have understood it? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
5. Did I do anything while I was talking that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could I have done differently?
6. Did I do anything while I was talking that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?
7. What were you most interested in while I was talking on Sunday?
8. Was what I talked about on Sunday helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
9. What was the main idea that you got out of what I talked about on Sunday?
10. What feelings or thoughts did you have while I was talking on Sunday?
11. In what ways does what I talked about on Sunday make you to want to act, react or change?
12. Is there anything more you would like to say about what you heard me talk about on Sunday?

Several of the questions included direct follow-up, especially if the interviewee responded favorably to the question. (See appendix 3 to view the interview form in its entirety).

The questions asked during each interview, although similar to many of the questions on the survey, were designed to encourage the participants to reflect more deeply on the sermon they heard, affirm what they perhaps shared on their surveys, and also experience the opportunity to discuss their insights as an individual representative of a specific generation

The sermons in my context were recorded each week. Therefore, throughout each series of sermons I viewed the sermons and journaled about my experience, observations, and conversations with others. More information about this experience will be presented in chapter 7.

Goals and Outcomes

My goal was to preach six sermons (See appendices 4-9 to view manuscripts), incorporating three different styles, over the course of two and half months to determine if a particular style was more effective than another. Three of the sermons (incorporating one style per sermon) were presented in the latter part of the spring and the other three (repeating each style previously used) were presented in the summer. The three styles included preaching two first-person narrative sermons, two object/image based sermons, and two sermons that involved weaving a more contemporary story and the biblical narrative together.

I chose to preach narrative passages of Scripture in a narrative style because it is a faithful way of preaching the biblical text.³ The congregation where I am currently serving loves stories, especially when told in the first person. According to Haddon Robinson, “One of the best ways to develop a story is to use the first person, to climb inside the story and tell it from the perspective of one of the characters.”⁴

Like Robinson, I appreciate the power of story and drama working together and have found it to be a very effective way of preaching. Our culture is one of stories and

³ J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 20.

⁴ Haddon W. Robinson and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 13.

people tend to remember a good story. Stories help people to experience God's truth in their lives. They also influence the way people think by painting mental pictures.

Dramatically, it involves people in conflict and resolution.⁵

Delivery is critical when it comes to first-person preaching. It requires being very aware of the environment. Additionally, having knowledge of tools such as physical movement, delivery, and costuming, including how best to use them can make your sermon more effective.⁶

The majority of the messages we communicate are nonverbal. Therefore, determining where to stand and what gestures to make when going over a manuscript is very important. Being able to deliver the sermon without notes is also very important, since preaching with notes is like carrying on a one-sided conversation. Therefore, maintaining eye contact is absolutely critical. In the past I have preached first-person narrative sermons in costume. However, I purposely chose not to for my research, primarily because of the nature of the sermons and characters involved.

Every aspect of narrative preaching requires attention to detail. Eugene Lowry notes, "A sermon is not an object in space but an event in time."⁷ When discussing the construction of a sermon he writes, "The intent is not to make a piece of the gospel for Sunday but to effect an event."⁸ Effecting an event suggests some sort of movement or flow, like one would experience in a musical composition or the filming of a movie.

⁵ Ibid., 20-21.

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ Eugene L. Lowry, "Narrative Preaching," in *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 201.

⁸ Ibid.

Incorporating some kind of object that was easily identifiable by all the generations in my context was the second style of preaching I chose to test. Choosing objects that were contextually familiar was a common practice Jesus employed in many of his parables. While some preachers choose to incorporate different forms of media, including movie clips, I have found this to be very difficult in my context because of how many generations are present in worship. It is hard to find one clip that most everyone is familiar with and can relate to.

Objects used in preaching are often referred to as “props.” This term “is short for properties and refers to the moveable articles on the platform, which are used to aid your presentation.”⁹ Rehearsing with the prop (prior to actually preaching with it) is crucial. It is essential to make sure a preacher is comfortable with the prop so that it will not end up becoming a distraction.

Similar to a children’s message, “An object is presented and its physical properties discussed. The preacher then uses those physical properties to make a spiritual point.”¹⁰ Adults appreciate, and often find connecting something concrete to the point of the sermon more memorable, as much as children do. Pastor Jeff and Susan Smart, owners of SonLife, Inc. Christian Bookstores, also affirm that object lessons are powerful tools that can be used to teach long-lasting lessons. “Most objects are everyday items that

⁹ Robinson and Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages*, 67.

¹⁰ Carolyn C. Brown, “Preaching to Children,” in *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 279.

you can pick up around the house and be ready to teach a Bible lesson, children's sermon, or family devotional in a matter of minutes."¹¹ They are great for capturing attention.

The third style of preaching I selected to incorporate in my project involved the use of story. When it comes to storytelling, I could not agree more with Fred Craddock, "The Bible uses, and good storytellers use and re-use, the basic stuff of the story in many ways."¹² Story sermons consist of a story told, sometimes even two stories, notes Lowry. The telling of a story could include the telling of a biblical account or modern-day parable. A variety of writers, including Richard Jensen, Charles Rice, Edmund Steimle, and Morris Niedenthal, advocate for this type of preaching.¹³

Tom Long also advocates for this type of preaching. When discussing the different images of the preacher in *The Witness of Preaching*, he indicates that preaching as a storyteller/poet is different from other types of preaching because it is marked by "poetically expressive language."¹⁴ Charles Rice, Professor of Homiletics Emeritus at Drew University, has also developed the storyteller/poet image, believing the gifts of the poet and artist are essential to preaching:

Successfully bringing art to the pulpit is not simply a matter of shaping an artistic idiom to express theology that we could just as well state in clear propositions, as if theology were not itself dependent upon imagination. Nor is it a matter of more thoroughly scrutinizing art in order to find better sermon illustrations, although the pulpit seems always short at that point. Rather, it is the genuine affinity

¹¹ Jeff Smart and Susan Smart, "Creative Bible Study Lessons & Ideas," Hammond, LA: Son Life, Inc, 2007-2015, <http://www.creativebiblestudy.com/object-lessons.html> (accessed March 25, 2015).

¹² Fred Craddock, "Preaching as Storytelling: How to Rely on Stories to Carry Spiritual Freight," *Preaching Today*, 2005, <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2005/august/132--craddock.html> (accessed December 10, 2014).

¹³ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 22.

¹⁴ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 36.

between the church at worship and the arts that makes for the effective appropriation of specific works of art to liturgy and sermon. What the church does on Sunday morning is, at its best, artful, and once we see it as such the doors swing wide to drama, literature, and the visual arts.¹⁵

When analyzing the results of my research I plan to compare the listeners' responses to see if they learned anything about the biblical narrative, God, or themselves; if I held their attention; and how God might be inviting them to react or change. The first and second series of sermons will be compared as a way of potentially validating the different methods of preaching.

Given what some of the experts quoted in this thesis have shared, I suspect the first-person narrative and story-based sermons will be most effective in reaching multiple generations. Having a close relationship with the people in the congregation and having already exposed them to several of the methods of preaching used in my research, I am relatively certain the results of my research will substantiate that claim.

However, while I believe the results between first-person narrative and story-based sermons will be relatively close, I suspect the story-based sermons will be received more favorably. My suspicion is based on my previous preaching experiences in this context and how much I know people love to hear stories. The results of my suspicions will be shared in subsequent chapters.

¹⁵ Charles Lynnel Rice, *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art and Liturgy*, Fortress Resources for Preaching (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 94-95.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Research utilizing the survey, interview, and focus-group questions outlined in the previous chapter was conducted between April 26 and May 10, 2015 and July 12 and July 26, 2015. During those time periods:

- a total of 151 persons completed a survey
- twelve focus-group discussions were held
- eighteen personal interviews were conducted

The survey, interview, and focus-group questions were crafted to determine the effectiveness of the sermons based on the definition given in chapter 1 (effective preaching consists of instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion).

Reporting of Data

The following data includes the date the sermons related to this project were presented, the number of people counted in worship, the number of surveys received, including how many persons from each generation completed a survey.

- **April 26, 2015**
 - 74% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 57 people were counted in worship
 - 42 surveys were received
 - 5 (12%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation
 - 15 (36%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation

- 9 (21.4%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
 - 5 (12%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
 - 6 (14%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
 - 1 (2.3%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation
 - 1 (2.3%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation
- **May 3, 2015**
 - 53% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 57 people were counted in worship
 - 30 surveys were received
 - 2 (6.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation
 - 11 (36.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation
 - 8 (26.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
 - 3 (10%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
 - 5 (16.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
 - 1 (3.3%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation
- **May 10, 2015**
 - 50% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 48 people were counted in worship
 - 24 surveys were received
 - 1 (4.2%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation
 - 9 (37.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation
 - 4 (16.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
 - 4 (16.6%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
 - 5 (21%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
 - 1 (4.2%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation

- 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation
- **July 12, 2015**
 - 35% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 46 people were counted in worship
 - 16 surveys were received
 - 2 (12.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation
 - 6 (37.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation
 - 1 (6.25%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
 - 2 (12.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
 - 5 (31.25%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation
- **July 19, 2015**
 - 63% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 42 people were counted in worship
 - 26 surveys were received
 - 2 (7.7%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation
 - 6 (23.1%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation
 - 4 (15.3%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
 - 6 (23.1%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
 - 6 (23.1%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation
 - 2 (7.7%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation
- **July 26, 2015**
 - 36% of the people counted in worship turned in a survey
 - 36 people were counted in worship
 - 13 surveys were received
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the unnamed generation

- 3 (23.1%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the millennial generation
- 1 (7.7%) of the persons who completed a survey were from generation x
- 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the boomer generation
- 8 (61.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the silent generation
- 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey were from the GI generation
- 1 (7.7%) of the persons who completed a survey did not identify themselves with any specific generation

The following data is a summary of the responses to the demographic inquiries

(name, age, and phone number) included on the survey:

- **Name**
 - 146 of 151 (97%) of the persons who completed a survey included their name, which was necessary for contacting individuals who were willing to be interviewed.
 - 73 (49.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were female.
 - 74 (50.5%) of the persons who completed a survey were male.
- **Age**
 - 137 of 151 (91%) of the persons who completed a survey included their age.

▪ 0-12 (Unnamed Generation)	12 (9%)
▪ 13-33 (Millennial Generation)	52 (38%)
▪ 34-54 (Generation X)	26 (19%)
▪ 55-72 (Boomer Generation)	17 (12%)
▪ 73-90 (Silent Generation)	29 (21%)
▪ 91+ (GI Generation)	1 (1%)
- **Phone Number**
 - 115 of 151 (76%) of the persons who completed a survey included their phone number
 - It should be noted that only 93 (62%) of these persons indicated a willingness to be interviewed.

The following data is a summary of the responses to the questions related to the effectiveness of the sermons based on the definition given in chapter 1 (effective preaching consists of instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion):

- **How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?**
 - 151 (100%) of the persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 13 (8.6%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey indicated that they extremely familiar with the Bible reading.
 - 43 (28.4%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey indicated that they were very familiar with the Bible reading.
 - 42 (28%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey indicated that they were moderately familiar with the Bible reading.
 - 33 (22%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey indicated that they were slightly familiar with the Bible reading.
 - 20 (13%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey indicated that they were not at all familiar with the Bible reading.
 - 0 (0%) of the persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?**
 - 135 (89%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 115 (85%) of the 135 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered yes.
 - 20 (15%) of the 135 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered no.
 - 16 (11%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?**
 - 130 (86%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 119 (92%) of the 130 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered yes.
 - 10 (8%) of the 130 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered no
 - 22 (14%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **Did the preacher hold your attention?**

- 149 (99%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 147 (99%) of the 149 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered yes.
 - 2 (1%) of the 149 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered no.
- 2 (1%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?**
 - 129 (85%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 22 (15%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?**
 - 96 (64%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 55 (36%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.
- **Did the sermon inspired you?**
 - 138 (91%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 129 (93%) of the 138 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered yes.
 - 9 (7%) of the 138 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered no.
 - 13 (9%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.

The following data is a summary of the responses to the question about participating further in this research project:

- **Are you willing to be interviewed?**
 - 121 (80%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey responded to this question.
 - 91 (75%) of the 121 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered yes.
 - 30 (25%) of the 121 persons who responded to this question on the survey answered no.
 - 30 (20%) of the 151 persons who completed a survey chose not to respond to this question.

More specific data, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, for each sermon presented as a part of this research project can be found in appendices 10-15.

The following is a summary of the responses provided during the focus-group discussions. All thirteen (100%) of the persons participating in a focus-group answered each of the questions in the engagement, exploration, and exit sections during at least one of the focus-group discussions. Every participant was able to do the following at some point in time:

- Clearly identify a favorite part of the sermon and explain why.
- Identify a character or event they identified with the most and explain why.
- Discuss ways the preacher helped them understand the Bible reading that was the subject of the sermon.
- Describe how the sermon they heard was helpful to them.
- Offer a main thought/idea that they took away from the sermon.
- Talk about ways they were inspired to respond.
- Identify feelings, attitudes, or thoughts the sermon provoked in them.
- Offer additional insights about the sermon they heard.

The following is a summary of the responses provided during the personal interviews. Eighteen people were interviewed. However, the last three interviews were accidentally erased and were not able to be incorporated. All fifteen (100%) of the usable personal interview conversations indicated the respondents were able to do the following:

- Recall what they heard me talk about on Sunday.
- Talk about something they learned more about in the sermon.
- Share how I helped them understand the Bible story.
- Discuss how I help them understand how those who heard this Bible story a long time ago may have understood it.
- Describe ways I made listening to the sermon easier for them.
- Talk about what they were most interested in while I was preaching.
- Clearly identify ways the sermon was helpful to them.
- State a main idea they took away from the sermon.

- Name at least one feeling or thought they had while I was talking on Sunday.
- Discuss ways the sermon inspired them to want to act, react or change.
- Offer additional thoughts and insights about the sermon they heard.

Instruction

Effective preaching, as noted in chapter 1, consists of instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion. The survey, interview, and focus-group discussion questions were crafted with those goals in mind. Therefore, it makes sense to analyze the data from my research accordingly.

The following questions on the survey, in the focus-group conversations, and personal interviews were meant to help me determine if I effectively instructed my listeners while preaching.

- Survey questions focused on instruction:
 - How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?
 - Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?
 - Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?
- Focus-group questions focused on instruction:
 - In what ways did the preacher help you understand the Bible reading that was the subject of the
 - What was the main thought/idea that you took away from the sermon?
 - How was the sermon you heard helpful to you?
- Interview questions focused on instruction:
 - Did you learn anything from what I said on Sunday? If so, what?
 - Did I help you understand the Bible story that you heard on Sunday? If so, how?
 - Did I help you understand how those who heard this Bible story a long time ago may have understood it? If so, how?
 - Was what I talked about on Sunday helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
 - What was the main idea/thought that you got out of what I talked about on Sunday?

First-person Narrative Sermon on April 26, 2015

74% of the people who heard the first-person narrative sermon on April 26, 2015¹ filled out a survey, three people were interviewed, and two focus-groups met after hearing the sermon. 73.8% of the people who filled out a survey were slightly, moderately, or very familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. While 26% of them were not at all familiar with the reading, 90.4% of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context, God, or themselves during the sermon.

All three interviewees reported learning something new about the original context and expressed appreciation for the conversational tone of the sermon. They all felt that preaching this way brought the scripture passage to life (humanized it) in a way that was helpful. Each person also mentioned feeling like they were there in the original context because of how the sermon was offered. One woman stated, "It was like I was friends with your character."

Nine of the thirteen focus-group participants (two were absent and two did not engage much in the conversation) mentioned that the background information about Zeus and Hermes was not only informative but also helpful for understanding the biblical narrative and how to apply it today. The same nine also shared how the first person narrative portrayal helped them connect the past to the present. These same individuals all mentioned something about learning to do things for God's glory and not for self-glorification. One respondent found assurance in shared meaning of the sermon with other respondents.

¹ See appendix 4.

Object/Image Based Sermon on May 3, 2015

Over half (56%) of the people who heard the object/image-based sermon on May 3, 2015² filled out a survey; three people were interviewed while two focus-groups met after hearing the sermon. Most (86.66%) of the people who filled out a survey were slightly, moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. While 13.33% of them were not at all familiar with it, the rest of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context during the sermon. The other 13.33% of the respondents chose not to answer this question. Almost all (93.33%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about God or themselves during the sermon. The other 6.66% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

All three of the interviewees mentioned that I helped them understand the Bible story by making connections from the past to the present. Two of the three interviewees reported learning something new about the original context. The other interviewee did not remember that part of the sermon. Two of the three interviewees recalled learning that we need to help others and that sometimes our efforts to reach others need to be repeated numerous times. The third interviewee did not recall "learning" anything consciously. One interviewee said, "It would have been helpful if I would have preached this part of Paul's letter as a first-person narrative."

All eight focus-group participants (five were absent) mentioned that the background information helped them connect the past to the present. Comparing God to a

² See appendix 5.

doctor or physician and sin to cancer was especially helpful. All of them also found the brief explanation about letter writing helpful.

Story-based Sermon on May 10, 2015

Exactly half of the people who heard the sermon with a contemporary story woven together with the biblical narrative on May 10, 2015³ filled out a survey. Four people were interviewed, and one focus-group met after hearing the sermon. Most (87.5%) of the people who filled out a survey were slightly, moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. While 12.5% of them were not at all familiar with it, 62.5% of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context during the sermon. Some (20.83%) of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about the Bible reading's original context. A few (16.66%) of the respondents chose not to answer this question. 87.5% of the respondents indicated that they learned something about God or themselves during the sermon. Even fewer (8.33%) of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about God or themselves during the sermon. Only 4.16% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

All four interviewees and six focus-group participants (two were absent and the other group was not able to meet) mentioned that I helped them understand the biblical narrative by incorporating the story about Corrie Ten Boom. One interviewee shared that she got rid of a lot of resentments. Descriptions about what it was like for the original

³ See appendix 6.

listeners helped three interviewees and all six focus-group participants better understand the type of suffering Paul must have endured for the sake of the gospel.

First-person Narrative Sermon on July 12, 2015

About one third (35%) of the people who heard the first-person narrative sermon on July 12, 2015⁴ filled out a survey. Three people were interviewed, and two focus-groups met after hearing the sermon. All of the people who filled out a survey were moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. Over half (56.25%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context during the sermon. One quarter of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about the Bible reading's original context. A few (18.75%) of the respondents chose not to answer this question. Over half (68.75%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about God or themselves during the sermon. Even fewer (12.5%) of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about God or themselves during the sermon while 3.875% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

All of the interviewees specifically mentioned learning about the animal sacrifice and God clothing Adam and Eve and us. They also all shared how my portrayal of Eve helped understand more about what she was going through and better understand the biblical narrative. One interviewee said she learned more about how God pursues us despite our sinfulness.

⁴ See appendix 7.

Eleven focus-group participants (two were absent) mentioned learning more about the Garden of Eden, God, Adam, Eve, the serpent, and themselves as a result of my portrayal of Eve. Comments about passing the blame and sitting idly by even when we are partially to blame were consistently made by all of the focus-group participants.

Object/Image Based Sermon on July 19, 2015

Of the people who heard the object/image based sermon on July 19, 2015⁵, 63% filled out a survey. Two people were interviewed while two focus-groups met after hearing the sermon. All of the people who filled out a survey were slightly, moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. Most (88.46%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context during the sermon. A few (7.69%) of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about the Bible reading's original context. Even fewer (3.85%) of the respondents chose not to answer this question. Over half (65.38%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about God or themselves during the sermon. Only 3.85% of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything about God or themselves during the sermon while 30.77% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

Both interviewees could not recall anything they learned, but expressed appreciation for the way it was presented, which helps them to learn. They both mentioned how the use of and discussion about a basket during the sermon helped them learn. All eleven focus-group participants (two were absent) mentioned learning more

⁵ See appendix 8.

about the original context through the discussion about baskets and the ark, the Red Sea, and also the people (especially the women) in the scripture passage. One participant said that it is helpful for her when I incorporate the beginning, middle, and end of a story (go full circle with it).

Story-based Sermon on July 26, 2015

Of the people who heard the sermon with a contemporary story woven together with the biblical narrative on July 26, 2015⁶, 36% filled out a survey. Three people were interviewed (recordings were accidentally erased) while three (one group split into two because of other commitments) focus-groups met after hearing the sermon. Most (84.6%) of the people who filled out a survey were slightly, moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading that morning. The rest were not at all familiar with it. Most (84.65%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about the Bible reading's original context during the sermon. Only 15.4% of the respondents chose not to answer this question. Over half (53.85%) of the respondents indicated that they learned something about God or themselves during the sermon. 46.45% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

Eleven focus-group participants (one was absent) said that weaving the story about Harriet Tubman in with the story about Rahab and the spies helped them understand it better. The same eleven participants also learned more about the importance of kindness and that even small random acts of kindness are important. Ten of the

⁶ See appendix 9.

participants mentioned learning that Rahab was the mother of Boaz and was one of the few women included in the genealogy of Jesus.

Delightful Presentation

The following questions on the survey, in the focus-group conversations, and personal interviews were meant to help me determine if my listeners found the sermon presentation delightful.

- Survey questions focused on a delightful presentation:
 - Did the preacher hold your attention?
 - When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?
 - When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?
- Focus-group questions focused on a delightful presentation:
 - What was your favorite part of the sermon and why?
 - What character or event did you identify with the most in the sermon and why?
- Interview questions focused on a delightful presentation:
 - What do you remember the most about what you heard me talk about on Sunday?
 - Did I do anything while I was talking that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could I have done differently?
 - Did I do anything while I was talking that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could I have done differently?
 - What were you most interested in while I was talking on Sunday?

First-person Narrative Sermon on April 26, 2015

Forty-one (97.6%) of the survey respondents who heard the first-person narrative sermon on April 26, 2015⁷ indicated that I held their attention. One (2.4%) respondent indicated that I sometimes held their attention. See appendix 11 for a more detailed account of when during the sermon the respondents felt it was easier or more difficult to pay attention.

⁷ See appendix 4.

All three interviewees noted I held their attention. The conversational tone helped keep one interviewee's attention, and embodying the sermon or the use of drama made it much easier to pay attention for the other two.

Nine of the eleven (two did not engage in the conversation very much) focus-group participants discussed favorite parts of the sermon and could also identify a character they identified with, indicating I held their attention. All of them mentioned identifying with the character I was playing and how being able to do that helped them understand the biblical narrative better, especially since it was not familiar to at least three of them.

Object/Image Based Sermon on May 3, 2015

Twenty-nine (96.66%) of the survey respondents who heard the object/image based sermon on May 3, 2015⁸ indicated that I held their attention. One (3.33%) respondent indicated that I did not hold their attention. See appendix 12 for a more detailed account of when during the sermon the respondents felt it was easier or more difficult to pay attention.

All three interviewees said I held their attention. My tone, manner, and projection made it easy for them to listen. One millennial interviewee shared that she had difficulty listening the more excited and louder I got. She felt like she was getting yelled at and got distracted.

All eight of the focus-group participants this week discussed their favorite part(s) of the sermon and listed a character they identified with, indicating I held their attention.

⁸ See appendix 5.

The youngest focus-group participant from the unnamed generation really liked it when I was talking about Paul and how great God was. One of the silent generation focus-group participants, who was seventy-nine at the time, said she really liked when I “gave an animated shout it from the rooftops.”

Story-based Sermon on May 10, 2015

Twenty-three (95.83%) of the survey respondents who heard the sermon with a contemporary story woven together with the biblical narrative on May 10, 2015⁹ indicated that I held their attention. One (4.16%) of the survey respondents did not respond to any of the questions related to delightful presentation.

All four interviewees said I did not do anything that made it more difficult to pay attention. My tone, gestures, delivery, presentation, and story about Corrie Ten Boom, according to all the interviewees, made it easier to pay attention. One person shared that she was “enthralled” with the whole sermon.

All six of the focus-group participants this week discussed their favorite part(s) of the sermon and said that the story about Corrie kept them focused on the sermon, making them more curious on how it was related to the Paul and what was going on in the scripture passage.

First-person Narrative Sermon on July 12, 2015

Sixteen (100%) of the survey respondents who heard the first-person narrative sermon on July 12, 2015¹⁰ marked that I held their attention. One survey respondent did

⁹ See appendix 6.

¹⁰ See appendix 7.

not respond to the other two questions related to delightful presentation. Interestingly, six survey respondents chose not to answer the last question related to delightful presentation.

All three interviewees said I did not do anything that made it more difficult to pay attention. Specific remarks they made about making it easier to listen include: my tone inflections, emotions, passion, and portrayal of Eve.

The eleven focus-group participants this week all said they like it when I portray a specific character. It not only helps them gain a better understanding, but also helps them pay attention. Four respondents (one from the unnamed and millennial generations, and two from the silent generation) shared how these kinds of sermons help them engage and enter the story with me.

Object/Image Based Sermon on July 19, 2015

Twenty-five (96.15%) of the survey respondents who heard the object/image based sermon on July 19, 2015¹¹ checked that I held their attention. One (3.85%) survey respondent from the unnamed generation checked that I did not hold his attention. Interestingly, six survey respondents chose not to answer the second question and eight respondents chose not to answer the third question related to delightful presentation.

The interviewee from the silent generation said I did not do anything that made it more difficult to pay attention. She also shared that my different expressions and tones of my voice make it easier to listen and creates interest. The interviewee from the unnamed

¹¹ See appendix 8.

generation said when I was talking about baskets it was more difficult to listen; he said that when I talk about Jesus it is easier to listen.

All of the (eleven) focus-group participants this week talked about how the basket and image of the ark helped them pay attention and peaked their curiosity. All five of the female respondents appreciated hearing a sermon that involved mostly women. While this did not appear to make it more difficult for the male respondents to pay attention, they did have more difficulty identifying with a specific character or event.

Story-based Sermon on July 26, 2015

All thirteen of the survey respondents who heard the story-based sermon on July 26, 2015¹² indicated that I held their attention. Five respondents representing three different generations indicated that it was easy to pay attention the whole sermon. Five chose not to respond and three wrote that it was easiest to pay attention during the Harriet Tubman story.

All thirteen focus-group participants this week said they liked it when I shared the Harriet Tubman story alongside of the biblical story. One respondent from the unnamed generation said that using both stories helped him make connections and made it easier to understand for him. One respondent from the boomer generation shared that while her attention did not wane, she liked the sermons on July 12 and July 19 better.

¹² See appendix 9.

Persuasion

The following questions on the survey, in the focus-group conversations, and personal interviews were meant to help me determine if my listeners were somehow persuaded to respond.

- Survey question focused on a being persuaded:
 - Did the sermon inspire you?
- Focus-group questions focused on being persuaded:
 - In what ways did the sermon you heard inspire you to respond?
 - What feelings, attitudes, or thoughts did the sermon provoke in you?
- Interview questions focused on being persuaded:
 - What feelings our thoughts did you have while I was talking on Sunday?
 - In what ways does what I talked about on Sunday make you want to act, react, or change?

First-person Narrative Sermon on April 26, 2015

Forty (95.23%) of the survey respondents who heard the first-person narrative sermon on April 26, 2015¹³ circled yes to being inspired. One (2.38%) survey respondent from the unnamed generation circled no and one (2.38%) survey respondent from the millennial generation chose not to answer this question. All three interviewees (one from the millennial, boomer, and silent generation) said they were more inspired (felt led to act, react, or change) to do things for God's glory and not for their own. Nine of the focus-group participants this week were similarly inspired. Five of the focus-group participants from the youngest three generations felt provoked to help and give. One person from the silent generation emphasized using the gifts God has entrusted to us to empathize others.

¹³ See appendix 4.

Object/Image Based Sermon on May 3, 2015

Twenty-six (86.66%) of the survey respondents who heard the object/image based sermon on May 3, 2015¹⁴ circled yes to being inspired. Two (6.66%) survey respondents (one from the unnamed and one from the millennial generation) circled no and two (6.66%) survey respondents (one from the unnamed generation and one from generation x) chose not to answer this question. All three interviewees (one from the millennial, boomer, and GI generation) said they were inspired (felt led to act, react, or change) to be more caring toward others and also to share their faith. Three of the focus-group participants from the unnamed generation and one from generation x stressed being inspired to persist in their faith. Two from the silent generation were inspired to share their testimony.

Story-based Sermon on May 10, 2015

Twenty-one (87.5%) of the survey respondents who heard the story-based sermon on May 10, 2015¹⁵ circled yes to being inspired. One survey respondent from the millennial generation circled no and one survey respondent from the millennial and GI generation chose not to answer this question. All four interviewees (one from the millennial, boomer, and two from the silent generation) said they were inspired (felt led to act, react, or change) to not give hope, keep their faith, let go of resentments, give and be more generous. Five of the focus-group participants from the youngest three

¹⁴ See appendix 5.

¹⁵ See appendix 6.

generations experienced a range of emotions and were inspired to keep their faith, endurance, perseverance, give back, forgive, and also live out their faith more deeply.

First-person Narrative Sermon on July 12, 2015

Eleven (69.75%) of the survey respondents who heard the first-person narrative sermon on July 12, 2015¹⁶ circled yes to being inspired. Three (18.75%) survey respondents (one from the unnamed and two from the millennial generations) circled no and two (12.5%) survey respondents (one from the millennial generation and one from generation x) chose not to answer this question. The three interviewees (one from the millennial and boomer generation and one from generation x) said they were inspired (felt led to act, react, or change) in the following ways: be more forgiving and not as quick to judge and to be more trusting of God and aware of God's presence. Four of the focus-group participants from the youngest three generations were persuaded to take a stand against inherently wrong behavior, be more conscious of blaming others, and to avoid lying and greed. Five (one from boomer and four from the silent generations) were inspired by what they learned but could not identify ways they were persuaded to act, react, or change.

Object/Image Based Sermon on July 19, 2015

Twenty (76.92%) of the survey respondents who heard the object/image based sermon on July 19, 2015¹⁷ circled yes to being inspired. Two (7.69%) of the survey respondents (one from the unnamed and millennial generations) circled no. While four

¹⁶ See appendix 7.

¹⁷ See appendix 8.

(15.38%) of the survey respondents (one from the millennial and two from the silent generations and one from generation x) chose not to answer this question. The interviewee from the unnamed generation expressed remorse for Pharaoh's behavior. While the interviewee from the silent generation said she felt good, she could not explicitly answer the questions related to persuasion. Four of the focus-group participants from the youngest three generations mentioned being persuaded to stand up against bullies, be an example, not give up, do what is right no matter what, obey God above all else, and to stand up for others when they are not being treated equally. Two focus-group participants (from the boomer and silent generations) were inspired to be more available to God. The woman from the silent generation mentioned being more courageous and research the scriptures as well.

Story-based Sermon on July 26, 2015

Eleven (84.6%) of the survey respondents who heard the story-based sermon on July 26, 2015¹⁸ circled yes to being inspired. Two (15.4%) survey respondents (one from the silent generation and one unidentified) chose not to answer this question. Eleven of the focus-group participants (from the youngest five generations) were persuaded to respond by sharing kindness.

Interpreting of Data

The data reported and analyzed in the previous two sections of this chapter demonstrates that each type of sermon (first-person narrative, object/image based, and story-based) incorporated in this research project was effective (according to the

¹⁸ See appendix 9.

definition given in chapter 1) in reaching multiple generations. The majority of listeners from every generation learned something new about the primary Bible reading, God, or themselves; were delighted with the presentation; and were persuaded to act, react, or change as a result of listening to the different types of sermons that were part of this research project.

Delightful Presentation Data

The data collected related to delightful presentation (when it was the easiest or most difficult to pay attention) was quite informative. It was somewhat difficult to determine if some of the survey respondents were actually responding out of a fear of being judged when it came to answering the questions related to when it was the easiest and most difficult to pay attention. A number of the same survey respondents consistently shared that they found it easy to pay attention during the entire sermon and never found it difficult. Interestingly, the majority of these respondents were from the boomer and silent generations.

I also noticed that several survey respondents chose not to answer one or both of the questions related to when it was the easiest or most difficult to pay attention if they answered yes to the fourth question (Did the preacher hold your attention?). This was particularly true of the respondents from the millennial generation and generation x. When analyzing the data I wondered if they felt it was too repetitive or unnecessary. However, this was not the case when conducting personal interviews with individuals from these same generations.

The remarks that a number of people made on their surveys, during the focus-group conversations, and in interviews also indicated that the relationship I have with

them may also have had something to do with their ability to pay attention, including personality and voice projection.

Familiarity with the Bible Reading

I believe familiarity with the primary Bible reading was a factor in whether or not my listeners learned something about the original context. The first group of sermons from April 26-May 10 drew upon texts from Acts and Romans and were less familiar, in general. However, the group of sermons from July 12-26 drew upon texts from the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Joshua that were generally more familiar to people. Yet the data that corresponded to the second question was not always consistent. I would have guessed that more people would have shared something they learned, especially given how many respondents checked that they were not at all, slightly, or moderately familiar with the primary Bible reading. This was especially true of the youngest participant who was five-years-old at the time.

The data related to familiarity also confirmed that even though many respondents were very or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading, they still learned something about the original context.

Generational Discoveries

Upon further review, I discovered that out of the sixty-six different survey respondents only five of them filled out and submitted a survey for all six sermons that were part of this research project. Two of them were from the millennial generation and are actively involved in worship on a weekly basis. The other three were from the silent generation and faithfully participated in the focus-group that met later in the week. There were just three other survey respondents (one from each of the generations mentioned in

the previous sentence, and one from the unnamed generation) who filled out and submitted five surveys.

The number of survey respondents from a broader range of generations gradually increased when a total of four or less surveys were completed and submitted. Two survey respondents from Generation X joined others from the unnamed, millennial, and silent generations who completed and submitted four surveys. The GI and boomer generations were not counted among respondents with multiple submissions until the number of completed and submitted surveys dropped to three. The number of respondents with multiple completions and submissions dramatically increased when it involved only two surveys and almost doubled when just one survey was completed and submitted.

These results accurately reflected the generational demographics of the congregation, as well as some of the distinctions and characteristics that are unique to each generation. Therefore, it did not surprise me in the least to discover that it was respondents from the silent generation who led the way when it came to completing and submitting all six surveys. Having lived through the residual consequences of the Great Depression and experienced a nation at war, they are not only considered more quiet or silent, they are resilient, tend to have a very strong work ethic, as well as a robust sense of responsibility.

It also did not surprise me to discover that the millennial generation was right behind the silent generation when it came to completing and submitting all six surveys. Most of the numerical growth Christ Community Church had experienced in the last year and a half had included people from the unnamed generation, millennial generation, and generation x. If I were to describe the group of young adults from the millennial

generation at Christ Community Church, the distinguishing traits (special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional) used to describe them in chapter 1 would be fairly accurate. They are especially team-oriented and want to see the church grow (achieve its goals). Survey respondents from this generation were also very willing and eager to participate in the personal interviews. I am so very humbled that they wanted to help me achieve my goals.

Predominant Goals/Themes

Leaving a legacy was the over-arching goal of the focus-group participants that typically met on Thursday evenings. Four of these focus-group participants were from the silent generation and one was from the boomer generation, but very close in age to the other four participants. The individuals I interviewed from the silent and GI generations appeared to share this same goal.

On more than one occasion the concept of personal blessing was discussed with this focus-group and during the interviews. Although at times one could perceive their motive behind being blessed as selfish, I do not believe this is the case. Their motive for experiencing God's blessings clearly focused on the desire to bless others and for leaving a lasting legacy.

As ones who are generationally closer to breathing their last breath, they know and affirm that they are sustained and supported by a larger narrative (God's story), which we reconstruct and retell as part of Christ's body. They find their purpose, meaning, and hope in Christ as their stories continue.

Although they desire to help others who are just entering the story or have not been part of the story for as long as they have, it is quite apparent they are unsure of how

to do this, especially because of the generational differences and preferences that exist. The story that is meant to unite, and not divide us, is in some ways dividing us because of these differences. Instead of trying to understand why these differences exist, there were a couple of occasions when a couple of individuals became quite critical of people from the younger generations. This appeared to be more out of their own frustration for not being able to connect with them the way they would like to than simply a criticism against a particular generation.

Two predominant themes emerged during the discussions with the focus-group that met on Sunday mornings. The more prevalent had to do with social justice (a true concern for the rights of other people). Secondly, there was a strong emphasis on collaboration. Social justice and collaboration also appeared to be important to the individuals I interviewed from the unnamed generation, millennial generation, and generation x.

The majority of the individuals from the unnamed generation and generation x are close in age to the individuals who are generally included in the millennial generation. This would explain in part the close resemblance in their responses and conversations during the group discussions.

As ones who have not breathed as many breaths as those who entered the story before them, they still know and affirm that they are sustained and supported by a larger narrative (God's story), which we reconstruct and retell as part of Christ's body. They also find their purpose, meaning, and hope in Christ as their stories continue. They want to change the world, even if it involves slow and incremental change, making it a better place to live for everyone. Therefore, they tend to be a bit more accepting of a more

diverse range of opinions, receptive to change, and less fearful of failure. If something does not work we can either try again or try something else. However, it is with the understanding that we are to collaborate with others. Working together is important to them because they do not want leave others behind or exclude anyone.

The data from the surveys, focus-group discussions, and interviews confirmed the outcomes I proposed in the previous chapter. In the next chapter I will summarize the strengths of my project, review the criteria discussed in earlier chapters, discuss the weaknesses of my project, and offer some final observations.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION

Overall, I am pleased with the results of this project. I am grateful for the support I received from the congregation to engage in this work. The data from the surveys, focus-group discussions, and interviews confirmed the outcomes I proposed in the previous chapter. While all three types of sermons were effective (based on the definition given in chapter 1) in reaching multiple generations, first-person and story-based sermons were slightly more effective.

I discovered that even though many survey respondents were very or extremely familiar with the primary Bible reading, they still learned something about the original context, God, or themselves. The generational discoveries in the previous chapter aligned closely with generational summaries provided in the literature review in chapter three. The predominant themes and goals that emerged in chapter five also proved to be indicative of generational materials summarized in previous chapters, contributing to the strengths and overall success of this project.

Strengths

Given the size of the congregation and the need to obtain enough data, I was encouraged to consider engaging in a project that included six sermons, three of them incorporating the different types of sermons I wanted to test in the late spring, and then repeating the three types later in the summer. I appreciated this suggestion and overall

think it went well. Asking people to engage and participate in the gathering of data for six weeks straight would have been too much.

Gathering both quantitative and qualitative data helped me confirm the results of my predicted outcomes. Relying on these two types of data offset the weaknesses and strengths of each method, expanded the range of inquiry, helped me gain a more comprehensive account of the area of inquiry, answered different research questions, and enhanced the level of integrity of my research. My survey, focus-group questions, and interview questions all included questions that were quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Using multiple research tools for gathering data also proved useful. The information gathered from the surveys provided the most quantitate data and also allowed people to participate in a more non-threatening and least time-consuming way. Even though the number of people of filling out surveys continued to drop, the information was helpful and confirmed the outcomes I projected in chapter four. The surveys provided the first layer of results and also helped me identify potential interviewees.

Everyone who was asked to participate in a focus-group immediately responded positively and was eager to help me with my research. These discussions helped participants reflect more deeply on the sermons they heard. Our time together affirmed and challenged what they shared on their surveys. The participants appeared to gain a new level of understanding and appreciation for people from other generations because of this project too. Many of the participants became more confident about expressing their thoughts and ideas the longer they participated, especially when their opinions were validated by others in the group.

I was pleasantly surprised at the percentage of people who were willing to be interviewed. Those who agreed were very flexible and readily available. These discussions gave interviewees the opportunity to reflect more deeply on what they shared on their surveys. Since I was deliberate about interviewing at least one person from each generation, I was able to more accurately confirm the outcomes I projected in chapter four. Their remarks confirmed that the three types of sermons I chose to include in this project were effective in reaching multiple generations.

Journaling throughout the entire project helped keep me focused in a number of ways. On a number of occasions it helped redirect my attention back to the definition of effective preaching I offered in chapter one and employed. While journaling, I was constantly reflecting on different generational perspectives, as well as my own, as I prepared exegetically and thought about the sermon delivery. Journaling helped me look beyond my own generational perspective.

Utilizing three different sermon styles allowed me to expose some people in the congregation to sermon types that were less familiar to them previously. It helped me grow as a preacher. The strength and beauty of this is that it keeps the art of preaching fresh for all. While it challenges and stimulates the preacher, it keeps the congregation engaged as they try to anticipate what they will encounter from week to week.

Engaging in this project drew all of the generations in the congregation together in ways I had not previously experienced. We were all excited about discovering what the outcomes would be, learning from each other, and the impact it would have on the congregation and the broader church. People were also curious to see if there would be an impact in any other areas of ministry.

Another strength of this project and focus of my studies was the gradual impact it had on the congregation and its ministries over the course of the past couple of years. It emphasized the importance of each generation and the communal nature of worship, new ministries were added, and additional ways of reaching families with young children in worship were explored.

Assessing the Criteria

The predominant criteria I considered for preaching effectively to multiple generations included a clear definition of effective preaching, a basic understanding of generational distinctions and the need to address all generations in the assembly, and a well-developed methodology with specific goals and outcomes in mind.

As defined in chapter one, effective preaching includes instruction, a delightful presentation, and persuasion. All of the survey, focus-group, and interview questions were formulated based on this definition.

While all three types of sermons were effective in reaching multiple generations, based on the combined percentages from April 26-May 10 and July 12-26, the first-person and story-based sermons were the more effective when it came to delightful presentation and persuasion. On the other hand, the first-person and object/image based sermons were more effective when it came to instruction or learning.

I predicted in chapter three that, given what some of the experts shared, first-person narrative and story-based sermons would be most effective in reaching multiple generations. I also shared that I believed the results of their effectiveness would be relatively close, with story-based sermons slightly edging out first-person narrative sermons. These suspicions were based on my preaching experiences in this context and

how much I know they love to hear stories. The results confirmed my suspicions and the success of this project.

Understanding some generational distinctions was helpful, especially when it came to incorporating stories and objects. I was very mindful about choosing a story each generation would be at least somewhat familiar or fascinated with; this was also the case when it concerned using an object or prop. The survey results, focus-group conversations, and interviews indicated that this was successful. The unnamed generation was the generation I was most concerned about when it came to familiarity with the stories. However, after speaking with them, I learned they had already discussed each of the stories I shared in school, which proved to be very helpful in their ability to connect to what I sharing more deeply.

Paying close attention to verbs in the passage as a way of building a bridge of understanding to capture the listeners' attention contributed to the effectiveness of the sermons, especially the first-person narrative sermons. Taking the church directory and choosing one person from each generation and then praying for each person and asking God to help me understand how each one of these people might identify with what was going on the biblical text also contributed to the success of this project. As the weeks progressed, I became more confident in choosing phrases and language that each generation identified with and understood.

I met my goal of preaching six sermons, incorporating three different styles, over the course of two and half months to determine if a particular style was more effective than another. The break during the month of June helped reduce the level of survey fatigue and "project" burnout for the congregation. Also, the data I gathered in July

helped confirm the data I gathered in April and May, solidifying the results I projected in chapter four.

Weaknesses

Although the data I collected was fairly solid, one of the major difficulties I encountered with using three different styles of preaching is that it was hard to tell whether the varied responses were because of the different sermon styles I incorporated or their familiarity of the Bible reading. I wonder if perhaps finding a way in the future to preach three different types of sermons based on the same text might be a better way of getting even more reliable data.

It also became quite apparent after the second week that people were struggling with survey fatigue. The number of respondents went from 74% the first Sunday down to 35% and 36% the final two Sundays. The number of survey respondents choosing not to answer specific questions or to provide additional feedback continued to increase as I got further along with the project. This may have had more to do with my survey design than with asking people to fill out a survey each week. In hindsight, I wonder if the survey should have focused solely on gathering quantitative data, relying on the focus-groups and personal interviews for the gathering of qualitative data.

Additionally, although people were genuinely eager to assist with my research, maintaining consistent attendance in the focus-groups was also somewhat difficult. Family vacations, travel for work, sickness, and other conflicts prohibited some from participating in all of the focus-group meetings. The group that was meeting on Sundays after worship divided into two groups to discuss the final sermon because of conflicts. It also seemed like the youngest participant (was five years old at the time) was somewhat

intimidated by the experience and would probably have felt more comfortable being interviewed individually.

Keeping some of the focus-group and personal interview participants from the boomer and silent generations focused on the specific questions was somewhat challenging. Several of them had a difficult time answering several of the questions more succinctly and precisely. They tended to talk around questions, taking the conversation in different directions more quickly than the focus-group and personal interview participants from the unnamed generation, millennial generation, and generation x. I should have been more diligent in helping them refocus and keeping them on track.

A number of times their inability to stay focused on the specific question appeared to be out of fear of answering it incorrectly, despite being told there were no right or wrong answers. Several of the more mature participants would often grab a Bible and begin re-reading sections of the Bible reading related to the sermons before answering a question or when trying to substantiate statements they had already made. This never happened with any of the participants under the age of 65.

Two problems I encountered with the interviews had to do with memorability and technology. The later in the week the interview was conducted the more difficult it was for some of the interviewees to answer some of the questions. Conducting all of the interviews within two days of hearing the sermon would have probably been better, especially for some of the older members who were interviewed. Also, I accidentally erased the interview conversations from the last sermon. Thankfully, I still had the surveys and focus-group discussions that corresponded to that sermon from which to gather data.

Furthermore, I should have sought out more help designing my survey, focus-group, and interview questions. While trying to adhere to a clear definition of effective, many of the questions apparently came off as sounding redundant to people. This was especially true of the individuals who filled out a survey and participated in either a focus-group or personal interview, despite my best efforts to include a variety of questions so that would not happen.

In order to help each generation either learn or understand something more about at least one of the other generations, it also would have been fun to include one or two questions on the survey, in the focus-group discussions, and interviews related to how they believe a person from one of the other generations may have either heard or understood the sermon they heard and be inclined to act, react, or change as a result.

Also, it would have been interesting to administer a short survey at the end of each round of sermons, giving the congregation the opportunity to choose a sermon style they liked the best. I am curious to see if there is a connection between preferred style and effectiveness. However, I am not sure how trustworthy that would have been given the results I shared in chapter five, apparent survey fatigue, and attendance.

Final Observations

Engaging in this research confirmed that there are several types of sermons that are effective when it comes to preaching to multiple generations. The key for preachers is to not limit themselves to just one.

However, when it comes to the preacher's ability to maintain the attention of his or her listeners, personality and relationship are factors that need to be considered. I mentioned previously that some respondents appeared to be more apprehensive in their

answers when it came to paying attention. Perhaps having someone else administer the survey, conduct the focus-group discussions, and interview willing participants may have been more helpful. Respondents and participants may have felt more freedom to share openly and honestly.

Asking people to include only their age at the top of the survey and including their name and telephone number at the bottom next to the last question (*Are you willing to be interviewed?*) is also something I should have considered more thoroughly beforehand. Although this is only speculation, doing so may have enticed more people to fill out a survey and encouraged more thorough responses.

The next chapter will include additional reflections. There, I will discuss additional thoughts for potential follow-up work related to this project, suggestions for successors who may want to consider engaging in a similar project, and the growth I experienced personally. I will also briefly share how my understanding of preaching was both affirmed and challenged, as well as the effects it has had on my preaching.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS

Each of the six generations in the congregation where I preached represents an important part of the body of Christ. Although I support age-appropriate ministries, I was troubled by the fact that we used to send the majority of our youngest members to an age-appropriate worship/learning experience and they were not present in worship during the sermon or when we celebrated communion. Therefore, I wondered if it were possible to preach more effectively to multiple generations, given how generationally-segregated worship has become prevalent in the last several decades.

In an attempt to answer this question, I exposed the congregation to three different types of sermons for three consecutive weeks on two different occasions to see if one type of sermon was more effective than the others in reaching multiple generations. I discovered that they were all successful to varying degrees. The story-based and first-narrative sermons were the most successful of the three types.

Implications for Others

What I discovered upon completing this project will be useful to other preachers and churches in a couple of ways. First, preachers can be assured that people learn from, enjoy hearing, and are inspired by different types of sermons. Incorporating different types of sermons actually gives our listeners something to anticipate. One of my focus-group participants shared that she really appreciated it that my sermons incorporate a

variety of styles because she said, “I never know what to expect and it keeps it fresh.”

Incorporating a variety of styles also has the possibility of keeping preachers from getting bored with preaching the same way week after week.

Second, planning worship and the sermon with multiple generations in mind helps remind preachers and their congregations that worship is something the entire church community, including its youngest members, participates and engages in. The congregation went from sending its youngest members away to discovering new ways of including and involving them in worship that have been very meaningful and transformative to their spiritual growth.

Christ Community Church includes a brief children’s message that is very interactive during each worship service, has children assisting in worship, has sermon-related resources available each week, and recently transformed our continued learning option after worship called *Learning in Community (LINC)*¹ into a more generationally inclusive option. This is also based on the sermon text. These resources will most definitely be of help to other congregations who either do not have the volunteer base to offer something for children during worship (or choose not to) or are hoping to find ways of encouraging families with young children to continue discussing the biblical text or sermon at home.

Third, engaging in this project proved that the members of our younger generations, although they may not completely understand the entire sermon, are

¹ Learning in Community was originally introduced as an after-worship learning opportunity for adolescents and adults. Together, they explored the biblical text and sermon in greater detail. In the midst of this project it was expanded to include young children as well and began to incorporate more learning styles.

learning, appreciate the delivery when it is engaging, and are inspired to react, act, or change. This means that congregations do not necessarily need to offer a multitude of ministries during worship, but can worship together as one body united in Christ. It also reinforces the notion that our young people are an important part of the body and that they belong.

Follow-Up

Having completed this project and seeing the impact it has already had on the congregation, I see that it would be helpful to ensure that there are as many different generations represented on the worship planning team as possible. If worship is meant to include the entire community then why not include some of our youngest members while planning our worship services?

Given the nature and success of the focus-group discussions, I think it would also be interesting to form a “permanent” focus or pastoral response group that would be of multiple generations who met prior to and after hearing the sermon. After studying the text together, this group could discuss ways the preaching of this text could be most effective for each generation in worship.

Additionally, since the narrative lectionary was followed, plans were made quite far ahead, as a way of fostering creativity and variety in preaching and worship it would be helpful to determine which sermon texts might best lend themselves to some of the different sermon types used in the project.

It would also be helpful to share the results of my project with the congregation and offer a brief study of the generations as a way of promoting understanding. This would not only be simply informational but exploratory in nature as well. There are so

many fun ways of approaching this that I know the congregation would enjoy them, while employing several different learning styles too. My hope would be for all to come to a greater understanding and appreciation of how people from other generations might not only hear and understand the biblical text and sermon but also respond to it. A new women's ministry was started at Christ Community Church this fall as a way to foster interaction between women of different generations and for them to encourage one another.

Suggestions for Successors

Additional projects that my successors may want to consider undertaking, related to my work, include testing additional sermon types that are topical, textual, or expository in nature. Perhaps someone might want to consider using the text as a springboard for a specific subject and see how multiple generations hear, understand, and respond to it.

After learning that first-person and story-based sermons were a little more effective in my context, another colleague might want to test this same thesis in his or her own context to see if the results would be similar. These results would give more credibility to the outcomes of this project and help other preachers in the future. Testing out this thesis in a number of congregations may also be a way of finding out if some seminaries might want to rethink the way its students are taught to preach.

Personal Growth

I have grown a great deal as a result of this project. It has helped me connect with God more closely because I knew there was no way I could complete this study using only my own strength. There is no way I could have completed the project without the help and support of my family. My family members encouraged me repeatedly when I

wanted to quit because they could see the impact it was having on the congregation and in my preaching. I relied on, trusted in, and came to love my family more deeply.

Like the Grinch, my heart grew ten sizes when it came to the congregation. I have always loved them and cared about them, but I grew closer to the people at Christ Community Church through this work. I learned much more about them from reading the surveys, engaging in focus-group discussions and other conversations, and while conducting the personal interviews. They taught me so much more about grace and love; I will be forever grateful. I also grew in my ability to empathize with others as a result of spending more time listening to people as they poured out their hearts to me about what resonated with them and what was going on in their lives.

While careful preparation has always been important, it became even more important to me. I became more diligent about protecting specific time each day to study and to listen to what the Holy Spirit was saying through the text and to the members of the congregation. Although I know I still have a lot of work to do in this area, I grew when it came to building a bridge that connected the biblical text to their lives. One of the oldest members I interviewed affirmed this as well.

I would also like to think that I grew in humility. The preaching task is an awesome one, where preachers bear a great amount of responsibility. Bringing the word of the Lord to the people is not something we should ever take lightly. Throughout the course of this project I was humbled over and over again to realize how much the people of God entrusted to me as their pastor. As they shared their deepest longings, pains, joys, and sorrows, it was often with the expectation that I would have a word from the Lord to

share with them because they trusted me. I am overwhelmed and deeply humbled at the amount of trust they place in me.

As a preacher I also grew in confidence and learned that what I do matters. The experience I had even after the first half of my project was complete affirmed some of my suspicions about the types of sermons I was testing. However, I was surprised by the amount of affirmation I received as a preacher. What I was sharing in my sermons was making a difference in the lives of the people at Christ Community Church. This is something that people in full-time vocational ministry often wait a lifetime to learn. I am so thankful for their feedback and their honesty. Even when I learned some of the respondents indicated that they did not learn anything, that I did not hold their attention, or that they were not inspired, I was thankful.

Affirmations and Challenges

This experience has most definitely affirmed and challenged my understanding of preaching. It affirmed the need to be properly prepared exegetically (scripturally and congregationally); to practice and continue working on delivering the sermon enthusiastically; to address social issues and teachings concerning essential beliefs of the faith; to connect with events of daily life; to provide continuity on a weekly basis; and to be relevant. Preparing good sermons consistently takes a lot of time each and every week.

It also affirmed my belief that preaching does not happen in isolation but rather in community. It begins with being in community with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who inspired the writing of the scriptures is the same Spirit who inspires us and will inspire the people who hear the words I share with them. Therefore, time alone reflecting on the scripture passage with the Holy Spirit is necessary.

Time spent listening to others is also very important, especially if I want the words I plan on sharing with them to move them in ways that are not only meaningful but relevant to their current life situations.

Engaging in this project affirmed what I believed about effective preaching too. For a sermon to be effective, instruction, delightful presentation, and persuasion need to be present. The preaching moment, like sermon preparation, occurs in community. The words which I speak are heard by many others, and words have life-giving power. However, if no one else has a clue what I am talking about, what does it matter? The possibility of hoping that others will somehow act, react, or change diminishes if I am not able to hold their attention.

There are also ways my understanding of preaching was challenged as a result of this project. This project challenged me to learn more about each of the different generations, their attitudes, beliefs, and values, that are not only present in the congregation, but in our community. Prior to starting this project, I discovered a website called BridgeWorks² and subscribed to receive email updates. This resource has been a helpful tool for understanding workplace dynamics for some, but not all six, generations.

Furthermore, I realized I need to be more intentional about engaging in conversation with people from various generations, especially people from the unnamed generation, millennial generation, and generation x. I need to allow them to teach me about their beliefs, values, and attitudes.

² BridgeWorks (www.generations.com) is a helpful resource when it comes to understanding generational dynamics in the workplace.

Effects on Preaching

These past three years have been both rewarding and challenging at the same time. What I have learned in the classroom, from my colleagues, and through my own research has helped me to grow as a preacher. I have been affirmed and encouraged to spread my wings by considering different preaching methodologies, exercises, and ways of thinking. This has instilled a new level of confidence, but, more importantly, humility.

I am completely humbled and amazed that I get to do what I do. God's grace really is amazing. While I knew this, I did not always sound that message in all my sermons. Often the messages were heavier on the problem of sin and on preaching the law than on God's grace and the Gospel. Making sure that people are reminded of God's love and grace has become even more important to me, knowing how fractured we are, generationally and otherwise.

Though I still have much room for improvement, my preaching is more inclusive generationally than it was three years ago. I have become more aware of the different generations in the congregation, which has also helped me to become more empathetic when preaching. Knowing the congregation even better than I did three years ago, I am better able to find ways of connecting the biblical narrative to their lives in relevant ways. My preaching became more effective in this congregation where multiple generations choose to worship.

APPENDIX 1

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY

Name _____ Age _____ Phone _____
(Parents of children under the age of 18 must complete a consent form)

1. How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?
 - ☐ Extremely
 - ☐ Very
 - ☐ Moderately
 - ☐ Slightly
 - ☐ Not at all
2. Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original (i.e. historical, social, cultural, etc.) context?
 No / Yes (if yes, please share what you learned)
3. Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?
 No / Yes (if yes, please share what you learned)
4. Did the preacher hold your attention? No / Yes
5. When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?
6. When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?
7. Did the sermon inspire you?
 No / Yes (if yes, please share how you were inspired)
8. Are you willing to be interviewed? No / Yes

Implied Consent Letter for Surveys

[Click here to insert date]

Dear Christ Community Church worshiper,

You are invited to participate in a study of preaching more effectively to multiple generations. I hope to learn how to preach more effectively to multiple generations. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you represent a particular generation and are worshipping at Christ Community Church.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to help the preacher determine the impact of the sermon. It will take about five-ten minutes. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to help preachers preach more effectively to multiple generations. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Christ Community Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact Pastor Lynne Kammeraad 616-954-0331, 2400 Forest Hill Ave SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rev. Lynne Kammeraad

APPENDIX 2

FOCUS-GROUP GUIDELINES & QUESTIONS

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus study group on preaching effectively to multiple generations. Before I begin with asking questions, I would like to go through a few guidelines to help facilitate our time together.

Guidelines:

- There are no right or wrong answers, only different opinions
- This is being recorded so please speak up and do not talk over one another
- Use only first names
- We do not need to agree with one another but please be respectful of other opinions and views
- Please silence all electronic devices
- My role as moderator is to guide the discussion but please talk to each other
- If you need further clarification at any point during our discussion please raise your hand
- There are two engagement questions, five exploration questions and one exit question. However, additional questions in order to gain clarity may be asked, such as:
 - “Could you please explain what you mean by...”?
 - “Can you say something else about...”?
 - “Could you share an example of ...”?
- The following questions all apply to the sermon heard on Sunday, date.

Engagement Questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the sermon and why?
2. What character or event did you identify with the most in the sermon and why?

Exploration Questions:

3. In what ways did the preacher help you understand the Bible reading that was the subject of the sermon?
4. How was the sermon you heard helpful to you?
5. What was the main thought/idea that you took away from the sermon?
6. In what way did the sermon you heard inspire you to respond?
7. What feelings, attitudes or thoughts did the sermon provoke in you?

Exit Question:

8. Is there anything else you would like to add about the sermon you heard?

APPENDIX 3

PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES & QUESTIONS

Hi name! Thank you for helping me out with this project. Before I begin asking questions, I would like to go through a few things that will be helpful for us while we are talking.

Guidelines:

- This is not a test, so don't worry there are no right or wrong answers
- I am recording our conversation so please talk loudly
- I will only be using your first name while we're talking
- Please silence all electronic devices (depends on age)
- If you need me to explain anything at any point during our conversation just let me know
- If I don't understand something you have said to me I might ask more questions to help me understand such as:
 - Could you please explain what you mean by...?
 - Can you say something else about...?
 - Could you share an example of ...?
- The following questions all apply to the what you heard me talk about this past Sunday

Questions:

1. What do you remember the most about what you heard me talk about on Sunday?
2. Did you learn anything from what I said on Sunday? If so, what?
3. Did I help you understand the Bible story that you heard on Sunday? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
4. Did I help you understand how those who heard this Bible story a long time ago may have understood it? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
5. Did I do anything while I was talking that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could I have done differently?
6. Did I do anything while I was talking that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?
7. What were you most interested in while I was talking on Sunday?
8. Was what I talked about on Sunday helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could I have done differently?
9. What was the main idea that you got out of what I talked about on Sunday?
10. What feelings or thoughts did you have while I was talking on Sunday?
11. In what ways does what I talked about on Sunday make you to want to act, react or change?
12. Is there anything more you would like to say about what you heard me talk about on Sunday?

APPENDIX 4

APRIL 26, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOOD NEWS

Acts 14:8-18 – ⁸In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. ⁹He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And the man sprang up and began to walk. ¹¹When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. ¹⁴When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, ¹⁵“Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; ¹⁷yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.” ¹⁸Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

I’ve lived in Lystra almost all my life. It’s a beautiful city. Perhaps you’ve heard of it? Some people refer to it as Turkey. It was established by Augustus and served as a defensive base against the tribes in the mountains that surrounded it. Eventually it became less known as a military base and developed into a market town.

Have you ever been there? Some people you might know have been. Perhaps you’ve heard of Paul and Barnabas. They were on their first missionary trip which started in Antioch where the Holy Spirit called them and the church community confirmed their calling after fasting and praying for them. They visited several cities, some of which didn’t go so well, around the northeast edge of the Mediterranean Sea before coming to Lystra.

It was absolutely incredible to hear them talk and to see what we saw. There was a man who had not been able to walk since birth. Though he couldn’t walk, he could hear and he was listening very closely to what Paul had to say.

Normally people tend to ignore people like this man, but not Paul. He noticed that the man hung on every word he spoke. Paul could tell there was something different about this man and that somehow he knew the man believed he could be healed.

Speaking loudly he said, "Stand up on your feet." Amazingly, this man, who hadn't been able to walk his entire life, suddenly jumped up and began walking. Everyone was impressed. Wouldn't you be? I have to admit I was. We thought they were gods and so we began shouting, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"

You might think it was silly that we thought they were gods, but you probably aren't familiar with our legendary history. There's a story about how Zeus, the greatest of all the Olympian gods, and Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, came to earth in disguise once. No one made them feel welcome, no one, except an old peasant named Philemon and his wife Baucis.

This made Zeus and Hermes very angry. They were so angry they killed everyone except for Philemon and his wife. Because the two peasants had been nice to them, they made them guardians of temple. Eventually when the peasants died, they were turned into trees.

We didn't want to make the mistake of not welcoming the gods again. So, when we saw Paul and Barnabas heal that man, we thought for sure that they were gods. Since Paul did most of the talking we called him Hermes, because Hermes was the god of speech.

According to the legend, if Paul is Hermes, then Barnabas must be Zeus, the god of the sky and weather. Even one of the priests who served in Zeus' temple thought they were gods. And the gods expected sacrifices, so he brought bulls and wreaths with him and was ready sacrifice these things to them.

This didn't sit too well with Paul and Barnabas. They tore their clothes and began shouting, "Friends, why are you doing this?" They called us friends. This seemed a little odd, since we never considered ourselves friends of the gods. Gods and humans live in different worlds, so how can we be friends?

I think they saw that we were confused, and so Paul began to explain that they weren't gods, that they were people just like us. Paul said, "We're not gods, but we still have good news for you. Zeus and Hermes and all the other gods you worship are worthless and can't help you. But there is a God who can. The living God, the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them can help you."

You could hear the crowd begin to quiet down just a little because this did sound like good news. You see, the gods we worshiped, and we worshiped a lot of them, only cared about themselves. We were constantly sacrificing to them in order to earn their

favor and avoid their anger. To hear that there is one God who made everything is amazing and is a tremendous relief.

Seeing we were more curious, Paul continued, God's desire is to give all nations joy, even though they've ignored him and have sought to do their own thing. God's been planning to make things right for a long time and now it's time to set things straight. God, not Zeus, is the one who gives you rain that produces fruitful seasons of food that fill you and give you joy. Despite this good news, many in the crowd still wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

While you might be inclined to shake your heads because you think you know better, I wonder how you would have reacted if you were there. Paul and Barnabas did something we thought only a god was capable of doing and so we wanted to give them credit for it. But they would have nothing to do with it. I learned a few things about how to live that day.

I learned it's important to do good to and for others. Paul healed a man who hadn't been able to walk his entire life. I've never physically healed someone else. But that doesn't mean I can't do something good for other people. Later Paul said not to get tired in doing good (Galatians 6:9-10).

Like me, maybe you've occasionally gotten tired of doing good things for other people because you wonder if it does any good. We might not see the results of goodness immediately or in this lifetime, but who knows, our goodness could be what leads someone else to the living God Paul talked about.

Every single day God gives me new and different opportunities to do good things for other people. This means I have to pay attention though, because sometimes these opportunities come somewhat unexpectedly and in unexpected ways. There have been times when I've thought that doing good means I have to do something really big or spend a lot of money. That's true sometimes, but not always. Doing good for others can be as easy as sending someone a note, making a telephone call, opening the door, bringing a glass of ice water to your neighbor who is mowing the lawn on a hot summer day or visiting someone when they're in the hospital.

In the short time I've tried to follow Paul and Barnabas's example I've found that something else unexpected has happened. While trying to do good for others, most of the time I feel like I've been blessed more than the person I was trying to help. The primary goal of doing nice things for others, though, is to bring God glory.

I also learned that whenever I do something for someone else I need to do it with the right attitude. I heard a story once about a man who wanted to build a church. He used all of his own money to buy the land, buy the materials and put a parking lot. He owned a construction business, but considered himself a minister. Others offered to help, but

he refused their help because he thought too many hands and ideas would just confuse things. So, he did all the work himself and later talked about how no one else helped him. In other words, he was bragging about what he did. He thought he was doing something good.

No matter how much “good” we do or no matter how “good” we think we are, we shouldn’t brag about it. Paul and Barnabas did a lot of good, they did greater things than I can ever dream of doing, and yet they never bragged about it. They saw themselves as sinners who were saved by God’s grace. Therefore, they wanted to serve the living God who made everything.

Unfortunately, most of us don’t like to admit it when we’ve done something wrong. We’d rather talk about how “good” we are, when we’re supposed to be humble. Paul was quick to give God the credit after he healed that man and we tried to offer sacrifices to him and Barnabas. But this made some people angry.

And I learned that some people won’t like it when I do things for God. After this all happened there were some Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city because they thought he was dead. But he wasn’t. Paul got right back up and went back into the city. It was the most incredible thing I’ve ever seen.

He wasn’t afraid to die. I’m not afraid to die, but I’m not in a hurry to either. When we live our lives to the living God, we’ll face some sort of opposition at some point in time in our lives. When we do good and talk about God’s power and love, it will make some people angry. Some people will just ignore us. Some people will call us names. And some people will do worse.

Paul and Barnabas were only men. I’m only a woman. You are only human. We may only be human, but we belong to God, and that makes all the difference in the world.

God gave Paul the grace to preach. God gives us the ability to do things for him too no matter who we are or what we may think about ourselves. God gives us the grace to do good. God gives us the grace to give. God gives us the grace to love. And God gives us the grace to serve.

Paul and Barnabas weren’t gods. We’re not gods either. But we serve the living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. And the living God we serve is the only one who is all powerful. Amen.

APPENDIX 5

MAY 3, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

POWER OF THE GOSPEL

If you discovered a cure for cancer that was all natural and 100% effective for every single type of cancer imaginable, how much of your time and energy would you invest making sure it was available to everyone? What a mission that would be.

In these first seventeen verses of the book of Romans, we're going to encounter a man on a mission. His name is Paul. And his mission is to dispense the most precious 'medicine' the world has ever received. The medicine I'm referring to is the gospel.

Paul is obsessed with making sure everyone receives the cure, but he needs help. Since they've not met yet, he writes a letter to the church in Rome asking for their help. Let's see what Paul has to say to them and us...

Romans 1:1-17 – Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. ⁹For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, ¹⁰asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — ¹²or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish ¹⁵—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

It was customary when this was written for letters to start with a greeting. To us Paul's greeting probably seems a bit lengthy, but introducing oneself at the beginning was common and it was also somewhat customary to include a brief outline of what the letter is addressing.

He then offers a word or prayer of thanksgiving, affirming their faith, which is proclaimed throughout the world. They've got a great reputation apparently. Then he shifts to what many believe is his thesis statement. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

Paul was eager to proclaim the gospel to them because he wasn't ashamed of it. In other words, Paul was excited to share the gospel because he was proud of it. And he was proud of it for a couple of reasons. I brought along a doctor's kit to help us as we explore why Paul was proud of the gospel.

Once a year I visit my doctor for a checkup. When I'm there she typically checks my temperature, my blood pressure, my eyes, ears, nose and throat, my reflexes, listens to my heart and lungs and sometimes she'll give me a shot to help prevent me from getting sick. If everything checks out okay, I'm good for another year. If something doesn't check out, she may order some tests to make sure I'm okay. It could mean getting a blood test or going in for an xray, so she can see what's going on inside of my body.

Usually, if I'm not feeling well in between my yearly visit with her, I'll take different medicines that are available in the store or when I'm really sick I'll schedule an additional appointment and she'll typically write out a prescription for me. I go see my doctor because she knows how to help me preserve my life.

God wants to preserve us. God wants to save us all from our sin. The gospel/good news that Paul referred to in the opening of his letter is that Jesus Christ, who was King David's heir, has been raised from the dead and is seated in power at the right hand of the Father.

This is the same Jesus who said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but the sinners" (Mark 2:17) and also referred to himself as a doctor in Luke's gospel (Luke 4:23). Whether we want to admit it or not, we all need to be cured because we're all sick with sin. Paul makes it pretty clear that the solution to our problem begins with God. The gospel (good news about Jesus Christ) is God's cure for our sin.

Paul is excited because God's cure doesn't discriminate, it's available to everyone. Before I read the scripture passage this morning I asked what you would do if you discovered an all-natural cure for cancer that was 100% effective for every single type of cancer. Can you just imagine the joy of seeing patients who are terminally ill walk out of the hospital to enjoy a long, healthy life? We'd probably care a lot less about what people thought about us and would share the cure with everyone we knew or met, just in case they had cancer.

This can seem like a daunting task when think about sharing God's cure for our sickness, especially since there are more than 7 billion people in the world and the likelihood of us meeting them all isn't too good. However, we can share the cure God offers with everyone we know and those we meet. We're all sick with sin and don't know who's received the cure the God offers. But people have to hear about the good news in order to come to faith.

This doctor's case is pretty sophisticated. It has a power switch. And when you turn it on and push the different buttons, it will make different sounds and there are a couple of lights too. It's powered by a couple of batteries. Because the power of salvation comes from God, God, will give us the power to share his cure with others. What's pretty is cool is that if I tell one family member or friend about Jesus and they tell someone and they tell someone, it wouldn't take long before the entire world heard.

It started with the Jews, with God making the promise of salvation through a Davidic Messiah and Israel's scriptures but it is also for the Greek, because Jesus is Lord of all. Paul was stoned and beaten several times for sharing the gospel, but that never stopped him. He must have sounded like a broken record.

I can always tell when a certain three-year old in our house is playing with this even when I'm in a different room because he likes to play with the buttons, especially this one (*push the button several times*). It's his favorite. Is sharing the good news about Jesus our favorite thing to do and are we willing to share it with everyone we know?

While we could describe sin as sickness or disease, God's righteousness could be described as good health. Generally speaking, righteousness means to do what is right. For God it meant keeping the promises he made to Israel. The resurrection of Jesus proved God was faithful, God's righteousness.

It's not our response to the gospel that displays God's righteousness. It's what God did in raising Jesus from the dead. The righteous one who lives by faith that Paul is referring to is Jesus the Great Physician. And we receive the healing that God offers by grace alone through faith.

Whenever I want to see my doctor I have to go to her office or if I was in the hospital for some reason she'd come check on there, but she's never been to my house. A long time

ago, it was more common for doctors to visit you at home (they were called house calls). They came to you.

The Great Physician, Jesus, came to us and was faithful. Therefore, his faithfulness, God's faithfulness must be met with a response of faith. This is why Paul is so eager to share the gospel with others. He never lost his enthusiasm either. What a priceless gift entrusted to us! Paul didn't heal others in his own power or alone and neither do we. The Lord who was faithful in all things will carry us along the way.

Jesus, the great healer and author of salvation, who makes us whole by the saving power of his love, has set a table before us. He invites us to partake of his bountiful feast, to remember his broken body and poured out blood, and to celebrate the health and new life we receive through the power of the Spirit.

Invitation to the Lord's Table: Come, all who are loved by God; Come, accept the strength for your soul from the Bread of Life; Come, be renewed by the Fount of the Spirit which never runs dry.

APPENDIX 6

MAY 10, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOD'S LOVE POURED OUT

Romans 5:1-11 – Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

In the first four chapters of Romans Paul has established that it is by faith that we are justified/made right with God, which is why the “therefore” is there. It is because of God's faithfulness (Christ's death and resurrection) that we are saved and experience peace with God.

This is the good news, God's cure for the disease/cancer called sin, we talked about last week. It's also the reason for the hope we have of sharing in God's glory. Sharing in God's glory is a good thing and we like that. But when we turn up the volume and/or push the repeat button and people respond in faith, sometimes it's with false assumptions.

Some people think that by responding in faith to God's faithfulness that their life is going to be picture perfect and they won't experience any problems, go through difficult times or have to suffer. Paul certainly knew better. I'd like to introduce you to someone else who knew better as well.

Her name is Cornelia Arnolda Johanna ten Boom. Her friends and family called her Corrie. Corrie was born on April 15, 1892 in Haarlem, Netherlands. She was the youngest of four children. Her sisters Betsie and Nollie, along with her brother Willem,

all helped their father, Casper in his shop, where he worked as a jeweler and watchmaker. They lived above the shop.

They were faithful Christians. Their faith inspired them to serve others by offering food, shelter and money to those in need. They also held a deep respect for the Jewish community in Amsterdam, considering them God's ancient people. Corrie loved the Lord, loved her family, loved others and learned the value and importance of hard work.

Although the death of her mother was painful and she was disappointed romantically, life was still pretty good. In 1922 Corrie became the first woman licensed as a watchmaker in Holland. Over the course of the next ten years she worked in her father's shop. She also established a youth club for teenage girls, which provided religious instruction, as well as classes in performing arts, sewing and handicrafts.

Overall, this sounds like a pretty good life since death is a natural part of the cycle of life and romantic disappointments are common. Corrie experienced success in life and was making a difference in the lives of other young women, which was pretty fantastic, especially given the time period. Her accomplishments and blessings from God were certainly something she could have boasted about.

However, I'm not so sure this is what Paul meant when he said we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God. You see, for Paul God's glory is linked to suffering, Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, that is. This is why he continued by saying, that we also boast in our sufferings.

Wait – what? We boast in our sufferings. What on earth is Paul talking about? Inviting people to come and suffer and die doesn't sound very fun. Yet this is precisely what Paul did. And if anyone had a reason to boast in their sufferings it was Paul. He worked hard and was thrown in jail, flogged and was near death several times because of it. Five times he received 39 lashes from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods. He was stoned, shipwrecked, and experienced several other dangers (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). He was able to boast in those things because he knew they couldn't separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8), despite all evidence to the contrary. Seeing someone endure such suffering, including Paul himself, one might say, "That person obviously isn't blessed. That person must be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

One could certainly have thought that about Corrie Ten Boom as well. Remember the pretty good life she had? Well, it didn't stay that way. In May 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands and within months the quiet, nice life that Corrie and her family enjoyed, changed forever. The entire ten Boom family became active in the Dutch resistance, risking their lives to help save Jews. They built a secret hiding place in Corrie's bedroom where Jews would hide when the German army came looking for them. It's estimated that eight-hundred Jew's lives were saved.

On February 28, 1944, an informant told the Nazis about the ten Booms' activities and they were all arrested and brought to different concentration camps, where they suffered and saw horrible, unspeakable acts committed against people. Her father died shortly after he was arrested. Corrie's sister Betsy died in the concentration camp after 9 ½ months. Corrie was released 12 days later for reasons completely unknown.

Like Paul, she knew that nothing could separate her from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Because of this, Corrie and her sister Betsy found ways to smuggle the word of God into their camp and led devotions and prayer with the other women in their cell.

Their suffering didn't separate them from God. Their suffering produced endurance, and endurance produced character, and character produced hope, and hope didn't disappoint, because God's love was poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given to them.

They didn't go looking for the suffering they experienced. And we're certainly not called to look for suffering or inflict it on others. Rather, we're to remain open to whatever suffering may come our way either naturally or as a result of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Christ loves this world and suffering is an inherent part of the world. That's why one of the marks of being a Christian is suffering.

For Paul, the most glorious thing God has done is the cross. Therefore, sharing in God's glory means we're called to share in Jesus' sufferings. It also means the Jesus shares in our sufferings. The Lord knew like Paul and Corrie what it felt like to receive lashings and was with them both. The cross is the way God has chosen to be present with us and meet us in our suffering.

If we set up the promise of the Christian life as there will be no suffering because we belong to God, then we have to lie about the reality of the world. This idea of suffering not separating us from God and suffering as sharing in the glory of God is most fully and ultimately found in the cross. It's also found in Israel's history. We see it with God choosing Abraham. Choosing Abraham seems like sharing in the glory of God. But Abraham's life is full of suffering, disappointments and trials, not only for him but his family too.

It's something the Israelites experienced in community as well while in slavery in Egypt and in exile in Babylon. Being claimed by God often produces suffering, but that's not the end of the matter. The suffering we experience doesn't separate us from God, but instead produces hope that in Christ, the righteous will live by faith, which was part of our discussion last Sunday.

After the war, Corrie ten Boom returned to the Netherlands where she established a rehabilitation center for concentration camp survivors. Because of the suffering she

endured, which produced character, which produced hope, she also took in those who had cooperated with Germans during the occupation. A couple of years later she began a worldwide ministry that took her to more than 60 countries. She did this with the help of the Christian community.

All the pronouns (we and us) in this passage are first person plural. That's because we help each other do this. As a community we help each other face sickness, death and suffering. When someone is hospitalized or there is a death we comfort, encouragement and support one another. One way we do this is by providing meals. The comfort, encouragement, support and meals are ways we help pull each other through suffering and help each other fight.

We help each other when we're weak. Christ helps us in our weakness too. While we were still weak, Christ died for us. Before we ever responded to God's faithfulness, Christ died for us so that we could be reconciled to God. God didn't wait for us to make the first move before rescuing us. God interceded on our behalf before we even knew what we needed or what to ask for.

Maybe you know what to ask for and maybe you don't. There is one who does. The Holy Spirit prays for us on our behalf when we don't know what to pray or ask for and is waiting to fill our hearts with the love of God that has been poured out. It filled Paul's heart. It filled Corrie's heart. God desires to fill our hearts with his love as well. Amen.

APPENDIX 7

JULY 12, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOD'S GOT IT COVERED

Genesis 2:18-3:21 – ¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” ²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. ¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. ⁸They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” ¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” ¹⁶To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet

your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” ²⁰ The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

Adam and I were evicted from our first home. We used to live in the most beautiful place you could ever imagine. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided into four branches – Pishon (pee-shone), Gihon (ghee-khone), Tigris, and Euphrates.

These clear blue waters were filled with all kinds of living creatures like turtles, fish, whales, starfish, coral and more, more than you could possibly think of or name. The sky was also the most beautiful shade of blue with the biggest, puffiest looking clouds. Sometimes they looked giant marshmallows.

Watching the sun rise every morning and set every night was absolutely incredible. The sun provided light and warmed us, but it was never too hot – it was always just right. Because it was just right, the grass was thick, lush, and green. It was a perfect source of food for some of the animals that were lower to the ground.

A lot of the other animals ate the leaves and fruit off from the bushes, plants, and trees that framed the grass and water. All that God made was good and life in the garden was very peaceful and serene. The birds sang such sweet melodies that it sounded like a symphony, as the elephants trumpeted, doves cooed, frogs croaked along. The rush of the cascading rivers provided a constant rhythm. But one day the rhythm changed.

Adam and I were enjoying the symphony of praise and encountered the serpent. The serpent was crafty. He asked me if God told us not to eat from any of the trees. Why in Eden he didn’t ask Adam, since Adam is the one God gave the instructions to, is beyond me. And since Adam chose not to say anything, I told the serpent that God said we could eat from all of the trees in the garden except for one. We were told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or touch it, or we’d die.

The serpent sounded so convincing and reassuring when he said we wouldn’t die and that we’d become like God, knowing good and evil. Although the thought of dying didn’t have a nice ring to it, we didn’t really know what death was since we had never encountered it before; and the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil looked really, really good.

Something that good, couldn't be bad, right? Being like God is a good thing, right? I couldn't resist any longer and took a piece of the fruit and took a big bite. Not wanting to be selfish I gave some to Adam too, cuz that's just the kind of girl I am; I share.

But the minute we ate the fruit something strange happened. We noticed things we didn't notice before. We felt things we didn't feel before. Feeling somewhat exposed, or should I say over-exposed, we made loincloths out of fig leaves. Later that night we heard God walking in the garden and we hid. This is the first time we felt afraid and the first time we ever hid from God. What in Eden was going on?

When God asked us if we ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil we still kept trying to hide. Adam didn't want to take any responsibility so he blamed me. But he didn't stop there. He also blamed God for giving me to him.

I wasn't about to take all the blame either. And the only one left to blame was the serpent, even though Adam was as guilty as I was. Some feel he's actually guiltier, since he was standing right there with me when the serpent was asking me about the tree and never said a word, not to mention he's the one God initially gave the instructions to concerning the tree. I guess it really doesn't matter since we're both guilty.

Now I know we're no longer in Eden and you weren't told you couldn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but have you ever wanted something you were told you couldn't have or that really wasn't very good for you?

It's hard to resist, especially when someone else is telling you how good it is and that it's okay, like the serpent did to me and Adam. The fruit on that tree always looked good, but on that day it's like it was calling our names—Adam...Eve...Take a piece and take a bite....You'll be like God.

I can't speak for Adam, but I am so sorry I listened to the serpent and didn't trust God. I'm sorry for what my desire did to my relationship with God. I'm sorry for what my desire did to my relationship with Adam. I'm sorry for what my desire did to our children, and I'm so very sorry for what my desire did to you. I'm sorry. It took a while for everything to sink in and for us to realize that it wasn't really the fruit that we desired. We desired to be like God – to have the same knowledge as God.

Only God can be God. Even though we tried to hide from God in the garden and we tried to hide the truth from God by blaming others, God didn't hide from us. God came looking for us. God called for us. God was very concerned for us and about what we had done.

God won't hide from you either. God is concerned about you too, about everything you do. You don't have to hide from God when your desires get the best of you. You don't have to hide from God when you fail to trust God. You don't have to hide from God when you disobey God. You can't hide anyway so why waste your time trying to. God

will never stop pursuing you. God's goodness and mercy will pursue you all the days of your life.

Trust me, I know what I'm talking about and experienced it firsthand. You see after we left the garden things were never quite the same. My relationship with Adam changed – we didn't get along like we used to and work was much harder. We traded the beauty of Eden for thorns and thistles—how foolish. Enough of that though because I don't want you think it was all bad.

Before sending us out of the garden God did something else. God made garments of skins for us and clothed us. God covered us with clothes made from skins. Death became a reality and blood was shed, but it wasn't ours. It was because of the death of another that we were clothed and covered. Exposed and ashamed, God restored our dignity by providing us with clothes, something we needed outside of Eden.

God's got you covered too and has enough clothes for everyone and they're just the right size. You can't buy them anywhere. They're too expensive anyway because the blood that was spilled to provide them came from the Lamb of God; God's own Son, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

The righteous one covers you and sends you out with a belt, with a breastplate, with shoes, with a shield, with a helmet and with a sword so that are able to withstand evil, quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one, and stand firm. Trust me you'll need these outside of Eden.

God's got it covered. God's got you covered. Amen.

APPENDIX 8

JULY 19, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

A GIFT IN A BASKET

This week is a big week according to the news and retailers. Most large chain retailers are promoting Christmas in July sales in order to increase their bottom line. Now I'm not quite prepared to begin Christmas shopping yet, but this did give me pause to think about different gifts I've received for Christmas.

Most of the Christmas gifts my husband and I receive come in a box, wrapped in paper appropriate to the season. Sometimes there is even a bow. Other gifts we receive come in a gift bag stuffed with colorful tissue paper. There is a unique gift that we receive we receive every year from my husband's parents that most often includes a basket of some sort.

The basket I have with me this morning, which is one of my favorites, is from this past Christmas. It arrived at our home about a week and half before Christmas filled with pears, cheese and crackers, coffee beans, as well as an assortment of candy and nuts. We've saved all of the baskets we've received. And every time we use them I'm reminded of the love his parents have for us.

We've used the baskets we've received in a lot of different ways. But I have never put a baby in one of them. In the scripture passage we're going to focus on this morning we're going to hear a story about a woman who hid her baby boy for three months and then put him in a basket in the river. Let us consider how the Lord is speaking to us today as we hear these words from Exodus 2:1-10.

Exodus 2:1-10 – Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman.

²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. ⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me,

and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, “because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

A man and woman from the house of Levi marry (the unnamed couple the writer is referring are later identified (Ex 6:20) as Amram and Jochebed), conceive and have a son. He’s described as fine, beautiful, or good like how God describes everything in creation. But why would the parents hide this baby boy that’s described as good?

They had to hide him because the Pharaoh that was currently ruling in Egypt didn’t remember Amram and Jochebed’s relative Joseph. The Pharaoh didn’t realize that Joseph was second in command and friends with one of the previous Pharaohs. He apparently wasn’t familiar with the story of how Joseph saved Egypt when there were several years of famine. He didn’t recall that Joseph’s entire family was given land and invited to stay.

All he saw was how large this group of people was becoming and it concerned him. He felt threatened because they outnumbered them and had become more powerful than the Egyptians. So implements a forced labor program (a.k.a. slavery).

This Pharaoh doesn’t appear to be the sharpest knife in the drawer because next he instructs the midwives to kill all the baby boys when the Hebrew women give birth. Hello...how well do you think the forced labor program is going to work out in the long run if you get rid of all the boys?

Thankfully the midwives ignore what they’re told to do and the Hebrew population continues to grow. Still, Pharaoh is determined so he commands all of his people to throw every baby boy that is born to the Hebrews into the Nile River. The Nile, also known as the river of life, is to be used to take life.

Imagine the fear expectant parents must have felt as they waited to see if the precious life they were about to welcome into the world would be snatched from them. Jochebed doesn’t succumb to the fear and chooses to hide her baby for three months. And when she can no longer hide him she takes a papyrus basket, covers it with tar (slime) and pitch, puts her baby in it, and places the basket among the reeds in the river.

This is not a story about a mother’s disregard for life like perhaps the one we’ve heard on the news this week (story of mother (Mitchelle Blair) in Detroit who confessed to killing two of her children and stuffing their bodies in a freezer). Jochebed places her baby in the river of life, hoping to spare his life, hoping someone will care for this gift in a basket, offering this three-month-old gift of God to whoever may find him. What a sacrifice!

The average weight and height of a three month old boy (babycenter.com) is 13-15.2 pounds and 23.6-24.7 inches. An average three month old baby boy wouldn't fit in the basket I brought this morning. This one is only about 16 inches long at its widest point. The basket Jochebed put her baby in would have been a little larger than this one.

The images on the screen are of a papyrus basket covered in tar and pitch and the ark, also covered in tar and pitch. Given the choice, which one would you be more inclined to put a three month old baby in if you were hoping to save his life?

I'd probably choose the ark. It just looks sturdier and safer. It was made of gopher wood. The basket, on the other hand, was made of Papyrus reeds. Papyrus reeds were also used to make shoes and paper and they were used to make light boats. While the translation we read says Jochebed got a Papyrus basket for him, the King James Version says she took for him an ark of bulrushes. The word for basket here is the same word for ark that appears in Genesis 8.

Jochebed placed the baby in a small ark/basket and placed it among the reeds and instructed his sister Miriam to watch over him. There must have been some level of comfort knowing Miriam was watching over him, still she had to be wondering what would become of her beautiful boy, this gift from God.

The gift in a basket is discovered by none other than Pharaoh's daughter. When she opens the basket and sees the baby, who is crying, she takes pity on him and realizes that he must be one of the Hebrews' children. Despite her father's command, she receives this gift of life from the river of life and desires to preserve his life.

Watching from a distance, Miriam now springs into action and offers to get Pharaoh's daughter a nurse from the Hebrew women. The nurse she finds just so happens to be the baby's mother. Hiring a nurse in Mesopotamian culture was quite common. These contracts would extend from two to three years.

Imagine Jochebed's joy. The gift she placed in the basket was returned to her and then some. She would get to keep him for at least a couple more years and would be paid to do what she would have done anyway. Jochebed would have 2-3 years with her beautiful boy, the most formative years of his life, to love him, teach him and watch him grow and develop. What a gift!

Pharaoh's edict to take the lives of all the baby boys and only let the daughters live was defeated. This story of three daughters—Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter—reveals God's compassion and power. The one who was given and received in a basket would grow up to deliver God's people from the Egyptians.

My husband and I received a gift offered in love in this basket. We have also filled baskets with gifts and given them to others in love. We give freely because we've

received freely. Jochebed not only gave, she sacrificed, and did so freely because she received freely.

This wasn't the only time Jochebed gave him away. When he no longer needed to be nursed she gave him back to Pharaoh's daughter who would raise him in the house of Pharaoh. Oh what mixed emotions Jochebed must have felt. Yet, she responded in faith because she trusted God.

These first few years at home with his parents impacted Moses in the most profound of ways. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The impact of her sacrifice, the gift of life she placed in a basket, is evident. What are we placing in our baskets? The sacrifices and gifts offered by the cloud of witnesses that surround us are evident. They can be seen in this beautiful structure and in the ongoing ministry we are a part of in our community. Many gave without receiving any sort of recognition and gave varying amounts.

Amram and Jochebed did a lot by faith. We hear nothing of what they did out of fear. I have found nothing associated with fear or panic related to the gift they offered in the basket. . Isn't that interesting? All this makes me wonder what God might accomplish through the gifts we offer in faith.

Brian Kluth shared a story (givewithjoy.org) recently that tugged at my heart. Nancy was a single mother with young children. Her ex-husband sent her only a small amount of grocery money every week--so small it couldn't even feed one person, much less her family of four. But Nancy decided to begin giving to God from her little bit of grocery money and trust Him to provide. Shortly after, she got a job with a cookbook company. The company paid Nancy to go grocery shopping and prepare meals so they could take photographs for their cookbooks. When they were done taking pictures, Nancy could keep the food she had purchased and prepared. What an amazing story of God's goodness! Nancy learned that even if you're poor, you still need to learn to give from whatever you have.

Many of us give without receiving any sort of recognition and give different amounts. I don't know how much anyone here gives except for what my husband and I give. What Amram and Jochebed did, they did by faith. Was it easy? No, exercising our faith is usually anything but easy. Most of the time exercising our faith is very difficult.

Keeping this in mind, I'm asking every single one of us here to step out in faith. The challenge I'm presenting to you this morning, which includes me, is to prayerfully

consider (If you're married please do this with your partner) how much God wants you to give in support of the ministry and mission of Christ Community Church.

For the next several months we're going to receive our offering in baskets instead of in the wooden plates/bowls we typically use. These baskets, though not made of papyrus, will serve as a reminder of the faith that Amram & Jochebed demonstrated. They will serve to remind us of the gift of life we received in Christ Jesus. They are to remind us that we've been blessed to be blessing.

What are we willing to sacrifice? What gifts are we willing to place in the basket and offer to God in order to bring life to another? Amen.

APPENDIX 9

JULY 26, 2015

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

DEALING KINDLY WITH OTHERS

Joshua 2:1-24 – Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. ²The king of Jericho was told, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.” ³Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land.” ⁴But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. ⁵And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.” ⁶She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. ⁷So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. ⁸Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof ⁹and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. ¹²Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith ¹³that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” ¹⁴The men said to her, “Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land.” ¹⁵Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. ¹⁶She said to them, “Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way.” ¹⁷The men said to her, “We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you ¹⁸if we invade the land and you do not tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down, and you do not gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family. ¹⁹If any of you go out of the doors of your house into the street, they shall be responsible for their own death, and we shall be innocent; but if a hand is laid upon any who are with you in the house, we shall bear the responsibility for their death. ²⁰But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be released from this oath that you made us swear to you.” ²¹She said, “According to your words, so be it.” She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord in

the window. ²²They departed and went into the hill country and stayed there three days, until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the way and found nothing. ²³Then the two men came down again from the hill country. They crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him all that had happened to them. ²⁴They said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us.”

Today we encounter a woman who not only exhibited great courage, but who dealt kindly with others – even those considered agitators or enemies. Her occupation almost always seems to accompany her name. However, I’m not so sure Rahab chose this particular occupation.

The most common reason women ended up in this profession was because of poverty, usually some sort of debt or other money problems, which is still the case today. In all likelihood, Rahab’s family is brought into this story because her story reflects their poverty and indebtedness.

The house she was living in was probably her father’s. Many believe that her family was able to keep the house because of Rahab and that she was working to pay off some sort of debt. In most instances in the ancient world prostitution alternated with debt slavery. If a poor family didn’t submit to one alternative, it was forced to submit to the other, if not both.

Throughout American history many others have been forced into different forms of slavery for one reason or another. Some were taken from their homes and were forced to work for others in the most grueling of circumstances simply because of the color of their skin. Others were born slaves.

Araminta Ross was born a slave in 1820 in Dorchester County Maryland. She began working as a house servant at the tender age of five or six. Once she became a teen she was sent to work in the fields. Life was extremely difficult. While still in her early teens, she was hurt when trying to protect another field worker from an angry overseer. Araminta was standing in the doorway between the field hand and overseer. The overseer picked up a two-pound weight and threw it at the field hand. But, he didn’t throw it far enough and it hit Araminta on the head. She never fully recovered from the injury and would periodically fall into a deep sleep.

Around 1844, Araminta married a free black man named John Tubman. She took his last name and changed her first name to Harriet, after her mother. In 1849, in fear that she and the other slaves on the plantation would be sold, Tubman resolved to run away.

I wonder how often Rahab wanted to run away having been forced to do something she probably didn’t want to do. And now here she is caught in a dangerous game of espionage. She ends up hiding the spies that Joshua sent in her house and when the king of Jericho orders her to bring them out she lies about it.

She hid them on her roof but told the king's men that the spies left before it was time to close the gate at dark and that she didn't know where they went. After the king's men leave she goes up to the roof and we find out that she knows that the Lord has given them this land, and that the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea when they came out Egypt, and that they utterly destroyed Kings of the Amorites. This is why she deals kindly with them and even considers helping them.

There was a friendly white woman who helped Harriet and dealt kindly with her when she decided to run away one night. With the woman's help, eventually Harriet made it to Philadelphia where she found work and saved some money. The following year Harriet returned to Maryland and led her sister and her sister's two children to freedom.

Soon after, she made the dangerous trip back to the South to rescue her brother and two other men. On the third return, she went to get her husband but learned he had married someone else. Undeterred, she found other slaves seeking freedom and escorted them to the North.

Harriet returned to the South numerous times, leading more than 300 slaves to freedom. She never lost a single one and no one ever turned back. Harriet was undeterred because of her faith. She knew the Lord! Because she knew the Lord she dealt kindly with others.

There are others who respond kindly in the text this morning. Rahab was told by the spies to tie a red cord in the window. That way when the Israelites came to invade the land and saw the red cord, they would know to spare Rahab and her family.

The Israelites did come and they marched around the city and destroyed it. Everything and everyone was destroyed except for Rahab's house and family. They were saved (Joshua 6:15-21). Later, in the book of Hebrews, we read that it was by faith that Rahab didn't perish with those who were disobedient, because she had welcomed the spies in peace (Hebrews 11:31).

The future can change: Rahab is remembered for her faith and courage, not her profession. In time, she was blessed with a good husband named Salmon. Together they had a son named Boaz who married a widow named Ruth. Perhaps you've heard of them. They're King David's great-grandparents. Rahab is one of Jesus' descendants.

Harriet Tubman went on to serve as a nurse, scout and spy during the Civil War. Since she was short and didn't have any distinctive features, she could move about somewhat easily in enemy territory. This made her invaluable as a scout and pay under the command of Col. James Montgomery. She wasn't paid real well but it did lead to other slaves being freed.

Others are impacted: Rahab's family was spared from death because of her actions. We don't know if they knew God like Rahab or how they responded to the events that unfolded. Rahab loved them. She cared for them and saved them. It's no wonder that Salmon (one of the spies she hid) wanted to marry her and raise a family with her.

Harriet was impacted by the kindness of a white woman when she decided to run away. In turn this led to more than 300 hundred slaves and future generations being impacted by Harriet Tubman's kindness and courage.

Obedience is necessary: Rahab was told to hang the red cord in her window. She obeyed. That red cord, like the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, signified that death would skip that house. The Israelites obeyed their agreement with Rahab and welcomed her. It very well may have something to do with her confession too: "The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below" (2:11). It would have been so easy for Rahab to obey the king of Jericho instead.

It would have been so easy for Harriet Tubman to obey her overseers and masters instead of God. After the war she returned to Auburn New York where she obediently cared for her parents and other needy relatives. She financed her home by selling copies of her biography and giving speeches in order to care for others.

We will be remembered: Rahab is one of four women listed by name in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah in the book of Matthew. She is remembered in the book of Hebrews and James for her faith and works. She walked the talk. Harriet Tubman also walked the talk and is included in countless history books, novels, journals, articles and websites.

Dealing kindly with others doesn't have to be something big and grandiose. In fact most often it will be something smaller like giving food to someone who is hungry, something to drink to someone who is thirsty, welcoming a stranger, giving some of our clothes to someone who has none, caring for someone who is sick or visiting someone who is in prison (Matthew 25:34-36).

When we deal kindly with others in this way, everyone will know that we are Jesus' disciples (John 13:35). Dealing kindly with others in this way can change the future, will impact others, and requires obedience. The canon scripture is closed so we won't be remembered there. Most of us probably won't be remembered in a history book. But we will be remembered in the book of life. And that's what really matters. Amen.

APPENDIX 10

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – APRIL 26, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATION

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 0							
Very – 7		3	1	2		1	
Moderately – 9		4	1		3		1
Slightly – 15	1	6	3	2	3		
Not at all – 11	4	2	4	1			

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2	1	1					
Yes – 38	4	14	9	5	5		1
Didn't answer – 2					1	1	

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 3	2		1				
Yes – 38	3	15	8	5	6		1
Didn't answer – 1						1	

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 41	5	14	9	5	6	1	1
Sometimes – 1		1					

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Storytelling – 13	3	6	4				
Entirety – 8		1		3	3		
Beginning – 7	1	1	3	2			
End – 1			1				
Scripture Reading – 2		2					
When applied to current situation – 1		1					
Historical Context – 1		1					
Paul goes back to city – 4	1		1				1

Every knee shall bow and tongue confess – 1					1		
God's grace – 1					1		
Didn't answer – 3		3			1	1	

When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Beginning – 1				1			
Middle – 4	1	2	1				
End – 4	2		1	1			
Never – 21	1	6	2	3	5		
Didn't answer – 8	1	4	2		1	1	
Scripture Reading – 2		1	1				
When explaining ways to help others – 1		1					
Distracted by others–1		1					
Transitions – 1			1				
2 nd half when thinking about other duties – 1			1				
When I began thinking about a point made – 1							1

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1	1						
Yes – 40	4	14	9	5	6	1	1
Didn't answer – 1		1					

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 9		5	3				1
Yes – 28	5	8	6	4	4	1	
Didn't answer – 5		2		1	2		

APPENDIX 11

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – MAY 3, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATION

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 2			1		1		
Very – 4		2	1			1	
Moderately – 10		2	3	2	3		
Slightly – 10	1	7		1	1		
Not at all – 4	1		3				

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 8		6	1		1		
Yes – 18	2	3	6	2	4	1	
Didn't answer – 4		2	1	1			

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2		1	1				
Yes – 26	2	10	6	2	5	1	
Didn't answer – 2			1	1			

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1			1				
Yes – 29	2	11	7	3	5	1	
Didn't answer – 0							

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
First Half – 2	1		1				
During Letter – 1	1						
Analogy to cure for cancer – 3		2			1		
Dr. Kit (prop) – 17		9	5	2	1		
Whole time – 4			1	1	2		
Daily Comparison – 1						1	

Reading Dramatization – 1			1				
Didn't answer – 2			1		1		

When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Beginning – 1		1					
End – 2	1			1			
Recap of scripture – 1		1					
Never – 12		2	2	2	5	1	
Closing prayer – 1		1					
Reading – 1			1				
Part about hospital and proclaiming – 1			1				
Didn't answer – 11	1	6	4				

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2	1	1					
Yes – 26		10	7	3	5	1	
Didn't answer – 2	1		1				

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 8	1	2	4		1		
Yes – 19	1	8	4	1	4	1	
Didn't answer – 3		1		2			

APPENDIX 12

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – MAY 10, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATIONS

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 1		1					
Very – 7		2	2	3			
Moderately – 8		4	1		2	1	
Slightly – 5		2	1		2		
Not at all – 3	1			1	1		

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 5		3	1	1			
Yes – 15	1	3	3	3	5		
Didn't answer – 4		3				1	

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2		2					
Yes – 21	1	6	4	4	5	1	
Didn't answer – 1		1					

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 23	1	8	4	4	5	1	
Didn't answer – 1		1					

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Simple life discussion – 1	1						
Corrie Ten Boom story – 12		6	4		2		
Didn't answer – 5		3			1	1	
Whole time – 5				3	2		
Main Subject – 1				1			

When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Part about Paul – 2	1		1				
Started thinking about names after hearing Corrie – 1		1					
Never – 7		1	2	2	2		
Didn't answer – 12		7	1	1	2	1	
When I got behind taking notes – 1					1		
Beginning – 1				1			

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1		1					
Yes – 21	1	7	4	4	5		
Didn't answer – 2		1				1	

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 7		3	3	1			
Yes – 11	1	4	1	2	3		
Didn't answer – 6		2		1	2	1	

APPENDIX 13

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – JULY 12, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATION

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 4		3			1		
Very – 8		3		2	3		
Moderately – 4	2		1		1		
Slightly – 0							
Not at all – 0							

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 4	2	2					
Yes – 9		4	1	2	2		
Didn't answer – 3					3		

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2		2					
Yes – 11	2	3	1	2	3		
Didn't answer – 3		1			2		

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 16	2	6	1	2	5		
Didn't answer – 0							

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Background about Adam & Eve – 1	1						
Scripture reading – 1	1						
1 st person story – 5		2		1	2		
When Eve apologized – 3		2			1		
Whole thing – 4		1		1	2		
Transitions – 1		1					
Didn't answer – 1			1				
Garden description – 1				1			

When I was learning things – 1					1		
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When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Beginning – 1		1					
Middle – 1	1						
End – 2	1	1					
Didn't answer – 6		3	1	1	1		
Never – 6		1		1	4		

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 3	1	2					
Yes – 11	1	3		2	5		
Didn't answer – 2		1	1				

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 3		2	1				
Yes – 12	2	4		1	5		
Didn't answer – 1				1			

APPENDIX 14

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – JULY 19, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATION

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 4		2	1	1			
Very – 14	1	4	2	2	4		1
Moderately – 7			1	3	2		1
Slightly – 1	1						
Not at all – 0							

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2	2						
Yes – 23		6	4	6	6		1
Didn't answer – 1							1

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1		1					
Yes – 17	2	2	4	4	4		1
Didn't answer – 8		3		2	2		1

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1	1						
Yes – 25	1	6	4	6	6		2
Didn't answer – 0							

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Basket/Boat – 4	2	1	1				
Scripture explanation – 1		1					
When learning about women disobeying edict – 1		1					
Story at end – 4		3			1		
Whole sermon – 8			1	4	3		
When talking about examples of love & giving – 1			1				

Didn't answer – 6			1	2	1		2
While learning – 1					1		

When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Middle – 1	1						
Story at end – 1	1						
Didn't answer – 13		5	2	2	2		2
Distracted by my kids – 1		1					
Never – 8			1	3	4		
When screen blackened – 1			1				
I get all the names confused – 1				1			

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2	1	1					
Yes – 20	1	4	3	6	4		2
Didn't answer – 4		1	1		2		

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 2			2				
Yes – 16	2	6	1	2	5		
Didn't answer – 8			1	4	1		2

APPENDIX 15

PREACHING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

SERMON SURVEY RESULTS – JULY 26, 2015

TOTAL RESULTS AND BY GENERATION

How familiar were you with the primary Bible reading today?

Familiarity	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Extremely – 2		1			1		
Very – 3		1	1		1		
Moderately – 4		1			3		
Slightly – 2					1		1
Not at all - 2					2		

Did you learn something about the Bible reading's original context?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 11		3			7		1
Didn't answer – 2			1		1		

Did you learn something about God or yourself during the sermon?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 7		1			6		
Didn't answer – 6		2	1		2		1

Did the preacher hold your attention?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 13		3	1		8		1
Didn't answer – 0							

When during the sermon did you find it the easiest to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Whole sermon – 5		1	1		3		
Didn't answer – 5		1			3		1
Harriet Tubman story – 3		1			2		

When during the sermon was it the most difficult to pay attention?

Sermon Section	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
Kid's sermon – 1			1				

Use current story (was angry about Planned Parenthood) – 1							1
Didn't answer – 5		2			3		
Never – 6		1			5		

Did the sermon inspire you?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 0							
Yes – 11		3	1		7		
Didn't answer – 2					1		1

Are you willing to be interviewed?

Response	Unnamed Gen	Millennial Gen	Gen X	Boomer Gen	Silent Gen	GI Gen	Unidentified Gen
No – 1					1		
Yes – 6		3			3		
Didn't answer – 6			1		4		1

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