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The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength: How Your Passions Can Serve God's Mission in the World

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THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH:
HOW YOUR PASSIONS CAN SERVE GOD’S MISSION IN THE WORLD

by
JAY GRAVE

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Luther Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of
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ABSTRACT

The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength

by

Jay Grave

This participatory action research project utilizes praxis events to enhance the understanding of Lutheran vocation in relationship to joy bringing activities. The research question driving this project is,

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

Data were collected through baseline and end-line interviews, transcribed meetings of a journey team, and census surveys. Data revealed that participation did yield a positive change effect on the understanding of joy bringing passions to enhance the missional congregational work.

Theoretical lenses of vocation, chaordic leadership, and American pragmatism provided the secular perspective. Luther's understanding of vocation and the *priesthood of all believers*, joy, and the narrative of Jesus calling the fishermen disciples provided additional perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my mother, Eileen Joy Grave, who taught me so much about enjoying the gifts God gives so freely. Without her lifelong support of my own growth and eventual ministry, I would not be nearly the man I am today. I know she is reading every page of this thesis on ministry and joy from heaven, and I know she is smiling.

Thanks also to the congregations I served as pastor during the writing of this thesis. They tell you to stay put as you begin this doctoral journey, and after serving four congregations in three states during the process, I would concur that *they* are right. Each congregation taught me something different about leadership, joy, vocation, and service.

Thanks to my wife, Elizabeth, who put up with stress and deadlines, rescheduled family trips, and late-night or all-night typing sessions. Without your support, I would not have accomplished this project. I love you very much. Lastly, to our girls, Isabelle and Ilsa, the two of you have taught me so much about joy and living out my vocational calling as father. I take great joy in watching you grow and I cannot wait to see the various joyful vocations into which you are called.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
 1. INTRODUCTION	 1
Fishing and Faith	1
Research Question	5
Variables.....	6
Importance of the Research Question	7
The Researcher/Pastoral Leader.....	7
Redeemer Lutheran Church	8
The Larger Church	10
Literature and Key Theories	11
Chaos Theory	11
Pragmatism.....	12
Vocation	13
Biblical and Theological Perspectives.....	13
Biblical Texts	13
Theological Frames	14
Joy	15
Vocation	16
Research Methodology	16
Participatory Action Research.....	17
The Context	18
Research Design.....	18
Phase One.....	19
Phase Two	20
Other Matters.....	22
Definitions of Key Terms.....	22
Ethical Concerns	23
Power	23
Confidentiality	23
Summary.....	24
 2. LITERATURE AND KEY THEORIES.....	 26

Introduction	26
Theoretical Lenses	30
Vocation	30
Parsons	31
Holland	33
Pragmatism	37
Chaos Theory	40
Summary	44
 3. THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES	 47
Introduction	47
Theological Frames	47
Vocation	47
Joy	52
Biblical Frame: Jesus Calls the First Disciples	54
Summary	58
 4. METHODOLOGY	 60
Methodology and Rationale	60
Participatory Action Research	61
Theoretically Framing the Research Methodology	63
Biblically and Theologically Framing the Research Methodology	64
Research Design	65
Operationalized Variables	66
Phase One	67
Phase Two	71
Praxis Events	72
Brunch of Tunes	72
Gunning for Jesus	73
Christmas Cantata	74
Reimagined Fellowship	76
Journey Team	77
Summary	78
 5. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION	 79
Introduction	79
Quantitative Participants	81
Qualitative Participants	86
Journey Team Participants	89
Results and Interpretation	91
Review of Methodology and Establishing the Baseline	91
Questionnaire Composition	91
Interview Protocol	94
Interventions	102

Brunch of Tunes / Joy in Other Events	102
Gunning for Jesus / Joy in Outside Activities	108
Christmas Cantata / Joy in Service	113
New Fellowship Time / Deeper Joyful Connections	117
Summary.....	121
6. CONCLUSION.....	123
Introduction	123
What Is Important about These Findings?.....	124
How Should We Think about These Findings from a Theoretical Perspective?.....	130
Vocation	130
Pragmatism.....	132
Chaos Theory and Chaordic Leadership	135
How Should We Think about These Findings from a Biblical and Theological Perspective?	137
Introduction of Biblical Theme and Theological Lenses.	137
Luther's Understanding of Vocation.....	137
Joy	139
Jesus Calling the Fishermen Disciples	141
What Are the Limits for Generalizing These Findings?.....	144
What Are the Questions for Future Research That Grow Out of This Study?..	145
Summary.....	145
7. EPILOGUE	148
APPENDIX A.....	152
APPENDIX B	155
APPENDIX C	160
APPENDIX D.....	161
APPENDIX E	162
APPENDIX F.....	164
APPENDIX G.....	165
APPENDIX H.....	166
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	167

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
CSS	Central States Synod
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PMC	Partnership for the Missional Church
QUAN	Quantitative
QUAL	Qualitative
RLC	Redeemer Lutheran Church
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WA	Weimar Ausgabe
WELCA	Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

Table 1. Baseline and End-Line Demographic Data	83
Table 2. Question 10: Baseline and End-Line Worship Attendance	85
Table 3. Qualitative Interview Participants	87
Table 4. Journey Team Members.....	90
Table 5. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Questions 13 and 14.....	92
Table 6. Baseline Axial Codes and Supporting Focused Codes.....	95
Table 7. Axial Codes and Supporting Focused End-Line Codes.....	100
Table 8. End-Line Response to Question E5	103
Table 9. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Questions 19 and 20.....	104
Table 10. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Question 18	106
Table 11. Baseline and End-Line Means Compared for Questions 21 and 22.....	106
Table 12. Paired t-test Results for Question 21	107
Table 13. End-Line Response to Questions E2	108
Table 14. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 25	109
Table 15. Paired t-test Mean Results for Question 25	109
Table 17. Baseline and End-Line Responses for Question 15.....	112
Table 18. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Question 15	113
Table 19. End-Line Response to Question E5	114
Table 20. Baseline and End-Line Mean Responses to Question 24	115

Table 21. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 25	116
Table 22. End-Line Response to Questions E5	118
Table 23. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 26.....	132
Table 24. Paired t-test Results for Question 21	140
Table 25. Baseline and End-Line Paired t-test Results.....	142

Figures

Figure 1. Holland Personality Types	35
Figure 2. Four-Step Process of Intervention	39
Figure 3. Research Design, Phase One	67
Figure 4. Diagram of Intervention Cycle	71
Figure 5. Research Design, Phase One and Two	72
Figure 6. Diagram of Research Design.....	81
Figure 7. Relationship Between Baseline Axial Codes	99
Figure 8. Relationship Between End-Line Axial Codes	102
Figure 9. Relationship Between End-line Axial Codes	120
Figure 10. Diagram of Research Design.....	126
Figure 11. Relationship Between End-Line Axial Codes.....	128
Figure 12. Holland Personality Types	131
Figure 13. Four Step Process of Intervention	133

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:9-10¹

Fishing and Faith

If you ask a young boy what he wants to be when he grows up, he may suggest one of the following jobs: fireman, policeman, pastor, or a baseball or football player. If you would have asked me when I was young, I would have said, "That's easy. I want to fish bass tournaments." My dad was a regional professional fisherman, fishing bass tournaments in the upper Midwest. When I was young, I spent a lot of time fishing with him in our boat. You could say it was a family tradition. I was fishing before I could walk. I was driving the boat by the time I was ten. As a youngster on the boat, I had my own tackle box full of tackle *and* toys, giving me other things with which to occupy my time during long days in the boat. I fished my first tournament at the age of twelve, and I was hooked.

¹ All of the biblical citations in this research project are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

In addition, I was very involved in the church. The Holy Spirit moved deeply in my life, and I began to see my vocation as one called to serve the church. My local congregation, pastors, Bible camp, Lutheran college, and family experiences influenced me. I accepted God's call to ordained ministry.² I began my life as a pastor after five years of youth ministry and four years of seminary. I served one congregation in Texas and two in Minnesota. Eventually, I became the Southern Minnesota Synod's youngest senior pastor, with a congregation of more than 1,500 members.³

The churches I served in Minnesota were two very different contexts. The first was a small, rural congregation in a western region of the state and was full of blessings and opportunities. The second call moved me closer to my childhood home. It was at this call that I began to struggle greatly with my vocation as it related to other joyful, sustaining practices in my life. The move to southern Minnesota allowed me to re-experience my dream of fishing bass tournaments as a profession. This call was much closer geographically to the lakes I had fished as a child. I started winning local bass-fishing tournaments and traveling to bigger lakes and more prestigious fishing events. Fishing sponsors started supporting me financially.

Changes in my family and the stresses of a conflicted congregation resulted in much more joy coming from fishing than from my ordained call. My mother

² In the Lutheran church the word *call* is used in several different ways. One of these ways is to describe God's prodding or invitation to serve in ministry, as if only those in church ministry are called. This understanding of call is challenged in this thesis, in exchange for an understanding that God calls each person to serve in ministering, each within their own lives. However, another understanding of call is also commonly used. Churches call pastors to serve as pastor. This understanding of call could be roughly translated as "hired." This understanding of being called into a specific context for a specific period of time comes from a period of time known as the call process. The call process also, unfortunately, enforces the belief that pastors receive calls to serve, and others are not called.

³ All proper nouns, names, and place names have been changed to pseudonyms throughout this thesis.

unexpectedly passed away in March of 2012. We had a wonderful relationship, and this was a devastating loss for me. My mother was a hard worker and had often sacrificed family time for the advancement of her career. Throughout her life, she had talked of the things she would do when she retired. She put off opportunities with the hope that after she retired she could spend more time with friends and family, but she died before realizing these opportunities.

I started to wonder about my own life. I found joy in fishing and nothing but stress and anxiety as I led a conflicted congregation. What could this mean for my vocation? Should joy be a decisive factor in vocation? I had been through congregational trials before. Certainly, grief and burnout came into play in my own experience. I started to wonder about how God's created design and joy interact with vocation. Through much discussion and prayer, my wife and I decided that I would leave a full-time pastoral call in Minnesota. We would move south to Missouri, where I would be able to fish all year long and focus full attention on being a fisher of fish, rather than a fisher of people. I resigned from my call as senior pastor in October of 2012.

The transition process that unfolded from this decision was both anticipated and unexpected. There were hundreds of tasks to be completed, including buying a home, finding the right school for our oldest daughter, and lots of packing. I was prepared for these tasks and transitions. I was unprepared for the vast number of pastoral conversations that emerged concerning the topics of dreams, sacrifice, vocation, call, sadness, and joy. Men and women from the congregation would stop by the office to say good-bye. They would share stories of how they wished they could live out their dreams or go back in time to make different vocational choices. They dreamed of returning to

their love of photography, painting, or coaching. It seemed as if so many were sacrificing their God-given joy for the sake of a more practical livelihood. I also wondered if I hadn't done the same thing. I had sought advancement in the ecclesiastical system. I had moved up the ranks from associate pastor, to solo pastor, to senior pastor. My story and vocational choices echoed my parishioner's voices in these pastoral conversations precisely because I had been there too.

I now travel the entire country fishing in bass-fishing tournaments as a professional angler. In addition, I serve a small Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation in Lake City, Missouri. I serve as a bivocational pastor, a fisher of people and a fisher of fish.⁴ This congregation knew of my fishing passion from the time we first met. My vocation as a professional angler was part of the call process and the employment plan from the very beginning. I would fish basically full time and serve the congregation as pastor for approximately twenty hours per week.⁵

I am a pastor. I am a professional fisherman. In each context, men and women still tell me stories of regret in their current callings. Many tell me at some point that they wish they could live like me and do what they love. They often share with me the passions they have sacrificed in exchange for a more practical life. This reality has made

⁴ The term "bivocation" is tricky for Lutherans. According to a Lutheran understanding, we all have many vocations and callings; we will explore this in later chapters. We are called, as Christians, to be good citizens, to be daughters or sons, some husbands or wives, sisters or brothers. Some are called to be teachers or ditch diggers or pastors or police officers. We all have multiple vocations. Bivocational is a term borrowed from other Christian traditions to mean someone who pastors and does something else as a primary paying job.

⁵ The story of how I came to serve this congregation is an amazing story of God's favor, which deserves telling. However, that will have to wait for another time. My current call story does not factor into the scope of this research project.

me very interested in topics such as following one's dreams and passions, as well as understanding how joy connects with our baptismal calling and vocation.

How can the Church expect the priesthood of all believers to live out their baptismal calling if vocational joylessness is such a predominant theme in the lives of so many?⁶ How can church members understand daily work as part of a missional church, sharing the good news of Christ, when so many are full of *should-haves* and *would-haves*? Is there joy in living a life of faith, or is it only sacrifice and suffering?

Research Question

We are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. Paul Lutter writes, "Emerging from the waters of baptism, we hear the challenge [of living life] anew, no longer as a challenge but as sheer promise."⁷ Our baptismal calling, our Lutheran understanding of vocation, and the priesthood of all believers should encourage us to live that promise of the gospel into being in the joy of the Lord. All of our tasks, our daily work, our hobbies, and our passions are part of the life God has created us to live. These experiences led me to ask the following research question:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

⁶ The "priesthood of all believers" is a term used in Lutheran theology as shorthand for the understanding that everyone is invited and equipped by God to minister by serving the neighbor. For Luther, it was important that God uses all people to serve the needs of others in various ways. Luther's understanding of vocation includes that all believers are part and parcel of God's priesthood, each serving in different ways.

⁷ Paul Lutter, "The Challenge (and Promise) of Baptism," Chicago, IL: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, 2011, <http://www.livinglutheran.org/2011/12/challenge-promise-baptism/> (accessed February 15, 2014).

Variables

The independent variable in this project was the PAR intervention. This intervention consisted of five praxis events throughout the past church year. The events themselves highlighted the passions of the participants as ways to live out God's mission in the world.⁸ Discussion and teaching around key missional concepts led to the creation of these praxis events. The teaching and discussion events, as well as feedback within the congregational system, were an important part of the larger intervention. These interventions were titled as follows: Gunning for Jesus, Brunch of Tunes, Reimagined Fellowship Time, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, and the Christmas Cantata. The interventions are described in detail in chapter 4.

The dependent variables were the congregational members' understanding and exercising of their vocation. This understanding included the utilization of their deeply held, joy-creating passions as pieces of their own baptismal calls, through which they lived into being God's mission for the world.⁹ Undergirding the work was the assumption that we behave our way into believing new things about our gifts, our passions, and our work in the world.¹⁰ The significant intervening variables included age, gender, activity level, church membership, and prior denominational connectedness.

⁸ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998).

⁹ "Baptismal call" is the understanding that, as individuals, we are invited and equipped, as well as forgiven through the power of baptism. The words, "sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked by the cross of Christ forever," in the concluding phrases of the ELCA baptismal liturgy remind us that we are joined into "the priesthood of all believers." This call is a call not only to live for Christ and the neighbor daily, but a reminder that each day the "old Adam" in us dies to sin, and we are born anew.

¹⁰ John Chandler, *Courageous Church Leadership: Conversations with Effective Practitioners*, The Columbia Partnership Leadership Series (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 11.

Importance of the Research Question

This research was not completed for its own sake, but my desire is that this research has importance and significance in the greater world. This research question is significant for three entities: the researcher, the members of the congregation being researched, and the larger church. The following sections describe the importance to the key players.

The Researcher/Pastoral Leader

This research was very important to me personally. I am so happy serving as a bivocational pastor. I get to live out my other vocational passions. I want everyone to experience joy in all aspects of their callings. I feel joy in my fishing and in my pastoral vocations, as well as the other vocations I live into being (son, neighbor, spouse, and so many more). I am freed up to accompany this congregation in mission as a pastor and to live other dreams into being as well. I visit the sick and homebound, prepare sermons, lead Bible studies, provide leadership, and help the congregation articulate mission. In addition, I fish tournaments, travel, lead guided trips, and promote products for my fishing sponsors. While I am fishing, the congregational lay leadership takes care of budget and property concerns, staffing, building usage, and the like. The congregation is tasked to function in a way that reflects their God-given gifts. This call has given me new insight into the role of missional pastor. I have been quick to encourage my ministry peers to explore the possibility of multiple vocations as a blessing in their own lives as well as in the faith development of their congregations.

I have felt the joy and blessedness that comes from living out my passions and dreams as part of my Christian vocation, rather than apart from it. I was blessed to join

with the leadership of my current congregation in creating and participating in praxis events throughout this research. It has been exciting to share God's mission for the world alongside folks who can articulate how God is working through them every day of the week.

This project has also been important to me as the culmination of my doctoral work. The conclusion of several years of intense reading, research, and writing was exciting. During that time, there have been significant changes in my own life situation. I have moved four times over three states. I have served four congregations in vastly different roles. I have struggled with burnout and experienced moments of great joy. I have worked with fantastic pastor-researchers, and I have lost dear friends. Particularly exciting was how this project transitioned into a project focused so intently on joy.

I have been afforded many opportunities to share my research with my colleagues in and around my synod and conference. I have shared my work thus far at a conference pastors' gathering and with the local ministerial alliance. My work has allowed me to network in ways that create opportunities for my professional and personal growth. I have also had the opportunity to apply some of my research to conversations with Lutheran Men in Mission, Christian Anglers Association, and the Fishers of Men bass tournament organization.

Redeemer Lutheran Church

Redeemer Lutheran started experiencing measurable growth and vitality, following a time of relative congregational peace. A church split in the early 2000s, following a church building project and questions of denominational orthodoxy, left the few remaining members with a huge debt. The worship attendance trickled down to the

low forties. These faithful members were compelled to make hard decisions. Programs were cut, along with staffing. The full-time pastor was encouraged to seek work elsewhere, and a call committee began looking for a part-time pastor. Currently, the passing of several years, the work of an intentional interim, a lengthy call process, and my work as part-time pastor have begun to bear fruit.

In the last few years, the average age of the congregation members has begun to decrease. After two years with no baptisms, Redeemer now has several young members in the pews and nursery. There is discussion about reviving a Sunday school and the potential need for an additional Sunday service, and for the first time in many years, there is a confirmation class with three members. The budget is still a concern, but with growing offering dollars, with a realistic look at expenses, and with some painful—but necessary—budget cuts, things are looking up.

The congregation now realizes a more missionally-minded understanding of who they are, and they are imagining new and exciting ways to grow a more impactful ministry.¹¹ Through this research project generally—and specifically through its participatory process—the church has grown into a deeper congregational unity, explained more in chapter 4.

¹¹ My understanding of missional church theology drew heavily from the following works: *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America; Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013); Gary Simpson, “Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society,” in *Missional Church and Global Civil Society Consultation* (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN 2008); Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007); Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, The Missional Network (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011); Craig Van Gelder, “The Hermeneutics of Leading Mission,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 3, no. 1-2 (2004).

This project gave the congregation's membership language to describe the thriving we are currently experiencing. The language of social science research gave the congregation new vocabulary through which they live out their baptismal calling and vocation. Joy in life and work and a cultivated understanding of giftedness are a part of the mission of God. The lay leadership participating in the intervention activities explored their own sense of vocation and call through the practices described in this study. We have grown in relationship with one another as we share our deeply held passions.

The Larger Church

This research project has great value for the larger church, especially congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This project and its quantifiable results provide insight for the greater church and in the local synod. Hopefully, this case study and its examples of missional, vocationally empowering events will be a powerful resource for many congregations. In addition, this study has the power to provide an example for congregations seeking to call a bivocational pastor.

A revitalized understanding of our own Lutheran theology and a more missional understanding of the priesthood of all believers bears much fruit. While this project can only make claims for this particular congregation specifically, there are generalizable conclusions that are deduced. Congregations which are struggling financially and facing the reality of being unable to pay a full-time pastor could be particularly interested. Learning through this one particular research project could encourage other faith communities to use similar methods to begin exercising community and individual vocation.

Literature and Key Theories

Several theories were used to address the themes named in my research question. I used the lenses of chaos theory, American pragmatism, and a secular understanding of vocation. These themes are discussed here briefly and again in greater detail in chapter 2.

Chaos Theory

James E. Huchingson writes, “Chaos theory is about relationships, in particular relationships between things and between creation and creator.”¹² Chaos theory and the related theory of complexity arise out of the new science’s discoveries in biology, chemistry, and physics, rather than from a Newtonian understanding of cause and effect.¹³ Richard Ascough, professor of religion at Queen’s College, Ontario, Canada, states, “Chaos theory suggests that if you set a group of people in motion, each one following the right set of three or four simple rules ... they will spontaneously self-organize into something complex and unexpected.”¹⁴ This fits perfectly alongside a research question investigating missional practices and joy within the congregational context and leads to very exciting and unexpected results in the analysis phase of the larger project.

¹² James E. Huchingson, “Chaos, Communications Theory, and God’s Abundance,” *Zygon* 37, no. 2 (2002).

¹³ The term “new science” is used often in the discussion of chaos theory. According to the proponents of chaos theory regarding its inclusion into western thinking, it is said that, “while most traditional science deals with supposedly predictable phenomena like gravity, electricity, or chemical reactions, Chaos Theory deals with nonlinear things that are effectively impossible to predict or control, like turbulence, weather, the stock market, our brain states, and so on. These phenomena are often described by fractal mathematics, which captures the infinite complexity of nature.” Fractal Foundation, “What Is Chaos Theory,” Albuquerque, NM: Fractal Foundation, 2011, <http://fractalfoundation.org/resources/what-is-chaos-theory/> (accessed June 9, 2014).

¹⁴ Richard S. Ascough, “Chaos Theory and Paul’s Organizational Leadership Style,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 1, no. 2 (2002): 21-43.

Chaos theory helped to frame this research project, by providing both critique and guidepost. As a critique, chaos theory challenges the Newtonian concept of cause and effect, which has for so long informed the work of the church. As a guidepost, chaos theory serves to encourage the church to find patterns (such as joy) within a life filled with various individual and seemingly disparate events. Together as critique and guidepost, chaos theory assists in naming and clarifying the structures of life.

Pragmatism

John Dewey's writings are the foundation for the philosophical understanding known as American pragmatism.¹⁵ American pragmatism, as a philosophy, "is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected."¹⁶ American pragmatism as a lens in this project, encourages the reader to see everyday work in the world as participation in God's overarching mission in the world. Congregation members are doing God's missional work as we live out our most joy-bringing activities. Dewey is concerned with accomplishing tasks, and if enjoying our work is part of the accomplishing, keep doing it.

Pragmatism as a lens for the missional church encourages us to keep our focus and to see if anything is being accomplished *missionally* by our action. A successful vocation is one that has a successful outcome, pragmatically speaking. If the praxis event

¹⁵ Philip J. Knight, "John Dewey and the Reality of God," *Modern Believing* 39, no. 1 (1998).

¹⁶ Douglas McDermid, "Pragmatism," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/pragmati/> (accessed May 14, 2015).

is successful in participating in God's mission in the world, it is a success, pragmatically speaking. Pragmatic thought in the praxis-creation process helped to keep Redeemer's membership on task. Was Gunning for Jesus just a fun event, or was there a connection with a missional understanding of baptismal call? If there was a connection, was it accomplished? Pragmatic, ends-based questions, much like chaos theory, provided critique and guidepost for the congregation as they attempted to create joy-giving, purposeful praxis events.

Vocation

The last theoretical lens to be utilized in this research was a secular understanding of vocation. Frank Parsons was the first to begin using vocation in a secular sense, and his text *Choosing A Vocation* formed the groundwork for this section.¹⁷ The secular understanding of vocation is brought into conversation with a more theological understanding later in this project. This secular understanding equates vocation with career or job. A secular approach to vocation still searches for meaning in one's life and work; however, there is not a religious understanding of higher calling.

Biblical and Theological Perspectives

Biblical Texts

The work in this project and in this context is deeply grounded in a biblical witness and Lutheran theological understanding. Lutheran Christians consider themselves to be people of the Book, and we gather to worship God, expecting God to be active in

¹⁷ Frank Parsons, *Choosing a Vocation* (Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association, 2005).

our reality.¹⁸ The biblical theme “The Calling of Fishermen as Disciples” is examined from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and begins the biblical grounding.

These texts give us a glimpse of the occupational lives of the first disciples. The reader is invited to imagine their own occupational and vocational callings in comparison with these first fishermen disciples.

It makes sense that a fisherman pastor would identify with the calling of fishermen disciples as a key biblical text. The call story from both Matthew and Luke are unpacked in chapter 3 of this thesis. The fishermen disciples are invited by Jesus to leave their occupation behind. The disciples are retooled with new nets for catching people and yet John 21 reminds us that they are still fishermen.¹⁹

Luke Timothy Johnson and Daniel Harrington provide the exegetical framework for this section.²⁰ Missional texts from Patrick Keifert assist in making the contextual connection to Redeemer Lutheran and the praxis-creating events in this congregation.²¹

Theological Frames

The two theological frames used in the research project were joy and vocation. First, joy as a theological framework is discussed. Second, vocation from a theological perspective is invited into the dialogue. How people understand participation in God’s

¹⁸ Kaari Reiersen, “Authority in the Church,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011, <http://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/188> (accessed August 25, 2013).

¹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina Series 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 88.

²⁰ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina Series 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007); Johnson and Harrington, *The Gospel of Luke*.

²¹ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1957); Patrick R. Keifert, *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era, a Missional Journey of Spiritual Discovery* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2006).

mission in the world may make a great difference in their understanding of joy and of the priesthood of all believers. Vocation also has a place in the secular literature review; however, in this section we explore vocation from a primarily Lutheran theological perspective.

Joy

Joy is the primary theological framework in this project, and it is closely tied to vocation. The promises proclaimed at baptism and the joy understood through biblical promise can compel us to joyfully live into being God's mission in the world. *Surprised by Joy*, by C.S. Lewis, is the foundational text in this section.²² Lewis says this of joy,

It is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and only one, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again.²³

Congregation members and leaders came to better identify what things in the life of the congregation were really joy bringing. The Joy Project, an internet-based self-help foundation, was invaluable in helping me to operationalize joy as a variable.²⁴ Naming and identifying joy-bringing activities combined the best of these theological and theoretical frames.

²² C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (London: G. Bles, 1955).

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Amanda Gore, "The Joy Project," The Joy Project, 2011, <http://www.thejoyproject.com> (accessed August 29, 2014).

Vocation

The religious understanding of vocation is investigated in this thesis. In view are both the understanding of vocation as a calling to serve in official ministry in the church, and a more broadly defined Lutheran understanding of vocation. The Lutheran understanding of vocation asserts that each person has, as a member of the priesthood of all believers, a God-given gift. Calling in this sense may be understood as, “a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action; *especially*: a divine call to the religious life.”²⁵ Gustav Wingren’s book *Luther on Vocation* forms the basis for this section.²⁶

Luther’s understanding of vocation focuses on the needs of the neighbor. “In the Reformer’s vocational imagination, all the world is filled with neighbors and their neighborhoods, and God puts us in this world precisely for them.”²⁷ We are all called, in our work and daily life, to serve the needs of those around us. The varied gifts of each member of the priesthood of all believers are used by God. This thesis lifts up the varied joy-bringing gifts of the priesthood of all believers in bringing about God’s mission.

Research Methodology

The research question for this project is:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God’s mission in the world?

²⁵ Merriam Webster Dictionary, “Vocation,” Merriam-Webster, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vocation> (accessed May 14, 2015).

²⁶ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*.

²⁷ Simpson, “Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society,” 2.

This project is a mixed-methods, transformative participatory action research project with a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews providing baseline and end-line data. The praxis events, also called interventions, were created and implemented in relation to leader groups in the congregation as the project developed.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) was chosen for this project because of the collaborative nature of the work. Working together as a congregation to develop events to uplift *shared* joy-giving activities seemed the greatest way to live into a new behavior. This PAR project is mixed methods, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Biblically speaking, the PAR process models for a congregation the communal nature of God in creation. Coming together to speak new life into being points congregation members to the very beginnings of our holy scripture. The New Testament reminds us as well that while we are all different beings with different callings and giftedness, we are all included in the one body of Christ. The participation in participatory action research is the activeness of the community members together creating events, discussing weaknesses and strengths, and evaluating and imagining events in response. This participation together in a life of faith models the perichoretic communication within the Holy Trinity.

Creswell and Clark point out that gathering data with mixed methods offers strengths that a single approach cannot.²⁸ These strengths include a more complete

²⁸ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 9.

gathering of data, including multiple points of view, and a broader understanding of the variables being researched. A mixed-methods research design using both qualitative and quantitative data collection provides depth and breadth of data.

The Context

Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lake City, Missouri, was the context within which this research was conducted. This congregation was started as a mission congregation more than fifty years ago. The demographic makeup of Redeemer Lutheran was a few lifelong locals and lake retirees. The average weekly worshiping attendance at the conclusion of this research project was approximately 70. More in-depth demographic information is included in chapter 5. There is much to say about this community of faith, but one thing is clear: they care deeply for one another.

Following a time of struggle, Redeemer is now a thriving and welcoming place. Many of the church members have been Lutherans all of their lives, but this isn't true for all of them. While Redeemer remains small, the membership is growing through births, adult baptisms, and new members joining to the community.

Research Design

The research project began October 2014 with the collection of baseline data. The project concluded July 2015 with the collection of the end-line data. In the meantime, praxis events were created within the congregation, participants shared in the events, and time was taken for reflection on the events. The research design was a mixed-methods, transformative participatory action research project in two concurrent phases.

Phase One

This research project began with the gathering of data for a baseline. The data collection was comprised of a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The questionnaires are included as appendix A and appendix B.

The baseline questionnaire was distributed using a census of actively attending congregational members during the regularly scheduled worship service the weekend of October 18, 2014. This population of active members numbers 100. The completed questionnaires were then collected three ways: (1) after the service that day, (2) the following weekend, or (3) via mail within five days. Sixty-eight questionnaires were returned. Each completed questionnaire was labeled and numbered for analysis.

The interview protocol was developed using the operationalized variables. The baseline protocol is included as appendix C and the end-line protocol is included as appendix D. I administered the interview protocol using a nonprobability purposive sample from a population of actively attending members. I completed four interviews during the week of November 15, 2015. I used Dragon Dictate to assist in the transcription process. The coding utilized the method outlined by Kathy Charmaz.²⁹ This hybrid process was described during course work with Dr. Craig Van Gelder at Luther Seminary in the winter of 2015.³⁰

Both a survey questionnaire and an interview protocol were administered at the end of the research phase of this project to gather end-line data. The qualitative

²⁹ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd edition. ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 42-70.

³⁰ Craig Van Gelder, "Coding: A Hybrid Method of Charmaz and Rubin & Rubin," (Lecture, Luther Seminary St. Paul, MN, January 28, 2015).

interviews were conducted with the same subjects and the quantitative questionnaire was distributed to a census of present and active worshipers, including many of the same participants as the baseline. This allowed for paired t-tests to be run in the results and analysis sections. The t-test compares the means between two related groups on the same continuous, dependent variable.³¹ Participants who returned survey instruments in the baseline section received end-line questionnaires marked with a matching numerical code and were asked to complete these marked questionnaires. However, all questionnaires contained the initial question *Did you complete a questionnaire like this in the Fall of 2014?* The end-line questionnaire is included as appendix B. The end-line interview protocol is included as appendix D.

The quantitative data were first tabulated using Microsoft Excel, then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.³² The result section was then written. In my analysis I reported the descriptive statistics (i.e., N, frequency, percentages, and mean). Inferential statistics are shared in written form, charts, and tables. Independent and paired t-tests were conducted during the analysis phase.

Phase Two

Five programs or activities were conducted during the intervention phase of this research project. These programs were designed by participants of the congregation's chapter of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (WELCA), the Congregational Council, the Adult Sunday school class, and self-selected groups of

³¹ Laerd Statistics, "Dependent T-Test Using Spss Statistics," Lund Research Ltd, 2013, <https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/dependent-t-test-using-spss-statistics.php> (accessed May 14, 2015).

³² Statistical Package for Social Science. Ver. 22.0, IBM Corp, Armonk, NY.

members. These events highlighted personal passions and joy-giving activities that could be understood broadly as advancing God's mission in the world. Below is a brief explanation of these events:

- Brunch of Tunes: A potluck gathering of congregation members and friends held after the Sunday morning worship services on the fifth Sundays of the month, including a program such as a talent show to highlight the talents of volunteers.
- Reimagined Fellowship Time: A gathering following the Sunday service and prior to the Saturday service, including food and drink.
- Gunning for Jesus: A time of fellowship centered on shooting sports and firearms training.
- Christmas Cantata: A Christmas concert and program utilizing the gifts of almost every congregation member.
- *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*: A show-and-tell event of collectibles followed by a viewing of the motion picture *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*³³

Following these events, members of the congregational mutual-ministry team, who were serving also as the journey team for me in this Doctor of Ministry process, shared in a time of mutual reflection. The journey team consisted of members of the congregation's mutual ministry committee. The committee serves as a bridge between council leadership, staff, and the congregation. The journey team has an astute understanding of the pulse of the congregation. The journey team sessions were audio recorded and transcribed using the method of coding described by Charmaz.³⁴ These data are included in the results section in chapter 5.

³³ Guy Ritchie, "The Man from U.N.C.L.E.," (Burbank, CA2015). This particular intervention was ultimately rescheduled for a date after the end of the research phase. While there are no data supporting the most precise happening of the intervention, the PAR nature of the intervention creation was certainly a part of the more broadly understood intervention. Therefore it is included in the body of the research project.

³⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*.

In addition, I kept a journal and calendar throughout the process. This journal was coded. The coded journal data was quite valuable as I began writing the conclusions section. The calendar and the timeline helped me to add anecdotal information into the body of this thesis. This is included in chapter 5.

The baseline and end-line data are reported in chapter 5. The intent of this research was that participation in the interventions would effect positive change in the membership's understanding of both joy and vocation. The end-line survey asked questions about participation in each of the interventions. The PAR process provided that new interventions be created over time. Therefore, it was assumed that there would be a deepening understanding of baptismal call that would reciprocally interact with future interventions.

Chapter 6 included the analysis of the results from chapter 5 and brought them into discussion with the biblical, theoretical, and theological frames and lenses described in chapter 2 and chapter 3. This conversation then returned to the influence of this research project on the researcher and the community of faith context and to the generalizability to the larger church.

Other Matters

Definitions of Key Terms

Joy: A feeling beyond happiness that includes a fulfillment and yearning to continue. Joy connects in one's soul.

Perichoresis: The theological understanding of the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in communication.

Priesthood of all believers: The concept that all persons in the body of Christ are called to serve as priests (minister to others, proclaim the gospel, work to forward the kingdom of God) in their daily work. This understanding lifts up individual differences and at the same time removes a hierarchical understanding of service.

Vocation: An individual call to work or ministry.

Ethical Concerns

Power

Serving in the dual role of researcher and pastor in the congregation being researched made it very important that issues of power be clarified. The congregational council received regular updates throughout the progress of my Doctor of Ministry course work and research project. The congregation published newsletter articles in which I described my research and how they could choose whether or not to participate. During the interview sessions, I expressed verbally and also in the form of a written consent document (included as appendix E and appendix F) that my work was academic and not connected to my role as spiritual guide for the congregation. The journey team, with whom I regularly met throughout this project, also functioned as the congregational staff-support committee. They were very helpful in easing the tension between my dual roles, as well as in offering careful guidance as the work progressed.

Confidentiality

Pseudonyms have been used for the congregation, participants, interviewees, and others in this research project. I completed my own transcriptions and conducted my own data entry from the survey questionnaires. Neither the interview notes nor the survey

questionnaires bear the name of the subject. Electronic recordings of interviews are kept on my personal laptop and in a secure online-backup site, both with password protection. Paper copies of transcriptions and survey questionnaires are kept in a locked filing cabinet in my study. These paper copies and electronic recordings will be destroyed by May 31, 2019.

This research project was conducted with care to ensure ethically responsible treatment of human subjects and strictly adhered to the standards outlined by the Luther Seminary Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the documents that shape that policy.³⁵ Three values guided the research: (1) respect for persons—the research was conducted with a commitment to respect for the dignity and value of all persons; (2) beneficence—this research was conducted with a commitment to protecting persons from any form of harm while maximizing benefits to those involved in the study; and (3) justice—the benefits and burdens of research were distributed in a fair manner.

Summary

In the following five chapters, I investigate each of these sections in greater detail. I build the basis for the research project, highlight past research, and describe the foundations for the research project before sharing the results of the research. In chapter 2, literature and key theories are discussed. Chapter 3 outlines the biblical and theological themes.

Chapter 4 paints a methodological picture of the research project from start to finish. The PAR methodology, the interventions, and the data-collection process for the

³⁵ Peter Susag, “Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures,” St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, 2012, <http://www.luthersem.edu/irb.policies.asp> (accessed September 4, 2012).

qualitative and the quantitative research are explained in depth. The results and analysis (chapter 5) report the baseline and end-line data collected in text, tables, and figures. The results present the quantitative and qualitative data, and the analysis brings the data back into conversation with the literature, key theories, and biblical and theological lenses. Finally, the conclusion, chapter 6, consolidates the research project, lenses, theories, and data into usable and generalizable concepts. This concluding chapter lifts up the successes of the research project and identifies the challenges.

An epilogue discusses potential changes and future research; it also updates the reader on my own progress and any developments in the congregation since the conclusion of the research project. Several appendices and a bibliography of the works consulted in this thesis are included as well.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND KEY THEORIES

Introduction

I spent hours walking and viewing masterpiece after masterpiece one day while visiting an art museum. Eventually, I had seen enough and became more interested in people watching. As I watched, I saw an older gentleman examining one particular painting in great detail. He would sit and contemplate the work of art for some time from one perspective and then move across the gallery hall to view *the same* work of art from another vantage point. He changed his point of view several times, and then he continued his viewing.

This review of literature and key theories is similar to that gentleman's approach. We have the research question in front of us, something like that work of art. The question itself is made up of many different elements: PAR, praxis events, congregation members themselves and their experiences, joy, gifts, passions, and God's mission in the world. Each of these concepts demands careful observation when brought together into the composition that is this thesis. Several vantage points are required to clearly see what is going on. These vantage points are: a secular understanding of vocation, American pragmatism, and chaos/chaordic leadership theory.

This literature review begins with the secular understanding of vocation and the discussion of several current themes. The first topic shows how calling, in the secular sense, drives congregational members in making vocational decisions, including

decisions about social and recreational activities. Vocation, in this sense, is explained through writings of Frank Parsons, a progressive thinker from the early 1900s. His landmark work continues to inform the conversation around vocational counseling. John Holland and his work on vocational personalities identified a shared vocabulary, or shared viewpoint, from which we can see the research project anew and even branch off to a new viewing location.¹ Holland's work builds on that of Parsons. Holland, in his work, developed an instrument and three-letter code for understanding our vocational aptitudes. The Holland codes, or Holland Hexagram, is used in many career-aptitude tests. If you have ever used one of these instruments to help you pick the "perfect" career, then you have most likely used the Holland instrument.²

American pragmatism continues the conversation with its understanding of ends-focused, practical processes. American pragmatism is the philosophical understanding that there must be a movement toward a set goal.³ Pragmatism says that the goal must be both measurable and important. Pragmatic thinking is most concerned with efficiency and completion. John Dewey may be the most well-known of American pragmatists.⁴

¹ John L. Holland, *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments*, 3rd ed. (Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, 1997); Ann Taves, "American Pragmatism: A Religious Genealogy," *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 3 (2004); Holland, *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments*.

² 123Test, "Holland Codes Career Test," Nijmegen Netherlands: 123 Test, 2015, 123test.com/holland-codes-career-test (accessed March 26, 2015). This link also contains links to online versions of the Holland and Strong career assessment, just in case you are wondering what the Holland Code might offer you. The tests provide you your code and then some career suggestions. My code recommended Investment Fund Manager.

³ Taves, "American Pragmatism: A Religious Genealogy."

⁴ Alain Beauclair, "John Dewey's Quest to Make Experience Intelligible," *Soundings* 93, no. 1-2 (2010); Knight, "John Dewey and the Reality of God."; Randolph Crump Miller, "Dewey, Whitehead, and Christian Education," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1985); J. Wesley Robbins, "Pragmatism and Pluralism: John Dewey's Significance for Theology," *Zygon* 32, no. 2 (1997); Steven C. Rockefeller, "John Dewey," in *History of Western Philosophy Volume 5, Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion*

American pragmatism provides a vantage point in this research project: that of the very practical work of living daily life. How does one make decisions about career, home, family, and recreation? Pragmatic thought helps us identify the *hows* and *whys* of a particular research subject and the decisions made in life thus far. Pragmatic thought provides a benchmark in this research, by which we can assess whether or not the praxis event worked. The research question, and even the methodology, point to ends-based praxis events, leading toward a cohesive melding of vocation and joy both in the secular and religious spheres.⁵ The pragmatic maxim asks clear yes or no questions concerning each event. Was the event joyous? Did it encourage participants to evaluate their own call to service? Was the missional understanding of congregation participating in God's call enhanced? While these questions are certainly nuanced, beginning with pragmatic language forms a foundation for the research.

From the grounded perspectives of vocational theory and American pragmatism, we leap upward into quantum physics and chaos/chaordic theory.⁶ Margaret Wheatley and many other thinkers elucidate the framework of chaos thinking and then begin to connect chaos with the framework of vocation.⁷ Chaos and chaordic theory encourage us to see that even in the midst of seemingly random events one can indeed find order. It is

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); David Wangler, "John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism," *Religious Studies and Theology* 19, no. 1 (2000).

⁵ Richard Rorty, Randall E. Auxier, and Lewis Edwin Hahn, *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty*, The Library of Living Philosophers 32 (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2010); John P. Murphy and Richard Rorty, *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).

⁶ Dee Hock and VISA International, *Birth of the Chaordic Age*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999).

⁷ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006).

possible, according to chaos theory, to view this order in such a way that a prediction might be possible.⁸ Holland's work in vocation is conversant with Wheatley in that they both hope to find meaning and direction within the vast expanse of life. Wheatley paints for us a picture of viewing life from far above.

This research project illuminates various—and at times, disconnected—events in the life of Redeemer Lutheran Church. These events are part chaos, and yet at the same time, the self-organizing action of individuals connected through the perichoretic reality of joy. How this self-organization happens is quite interesting. Chaordic theory and quantum physics might describe it as “spooky action at a distance,” but congregational leaders know that much of this self-organization takes a great deal of time and planning.⁹

In total, this multiperspective view of Redeemer Lutheran Church is used to analyze the project's data themselves. Viewpoints ranging from those that are quite high above to those at ground level allow a thorough investigation of the research question and context. I begin with the vantage point of vocation.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ J. S. Bell, *Speakable and Unsayable in Quantum Mechanics: Collected Papers on Quantum Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Chaordic theory is, “a leadership discipline,” coined in 1999 by former Visa CEO Dee Hock that is both a management style and a system of organization that governs the exercise of authority. It is characterized by the harmonious blending of both order and chaos principles where neither is dominant (e.g., competition and cooperation). Chaordic leadership involves four main responsibilities, which are (1) manage self 50% of the time, (2) manage those with authority over us 25% of the time, (3) manage your peers 20% of the time, and (4) manage those we are responsible for 5% of the time. Business Dictionary, “Chaordic Leadership,” Washington D.C.: WebFinance, Inc, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/chaordic-leadership.html#ixzz3cauh3QmH> (accessed June 9, 2014).

Theoretical Lenses

Vocation

Vocation can be understood within the religious framework “as a calling to ministry or the work of the church.”¹⁰ A religious understanding of calling and vocation is included in the following chapter. In this section, vocation is discussed from a secular perspective. Taking glimpses into the Monday-to-Saturday lives of church members, especially in how they understand their secular *and* religious callings at work in the world, helps us to better understand how the church responds in uniting the two. Martin Luther melds these understandings together in what we might term “calling,” or in Luther’s terms *Stand* or *Beruf*.¹¹ There are quite literally thousands of papers on secular vocation and religious vocational understanding. Phrases such as “the quest for meaning” may be used in both the secular and religious sphere. Educator Alvin Leung observes, “The search for life purposes and meanings, the journey to actualize oneself through various life and work-related roles, and the efforts by nations to deal with problems of employment and unemployment, are examples of universal issues that seem to affect many individuals from diverse cultures.”¹²

Leung continues in this text to describe how workplace connectedness, congruence, and differentiation lead to workplace satisfaction. He goes on to state that

¹⁰ Gene Edward Veith, “The Doctrine of Vocation,” *World Magazine*, <http://www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=articledisplay&var2=541%20%20God%20Hides...> (accessed March 8, 2015).

¹¹ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*.

¹² James A. Athanasou and Raoul van Esbroeck, *International Handbook of Career Guidance* (New York, NY: Springer, 2008). 115. S. Alvin Leung, “Methodological Issues in Conducting Vocational Psychology Research in Chinese Communities,” *Papers presented at the 28th International Congress of Psychology* (2004).

vocational-placement testing is key to matching students with more self-actualizing work roles.¹³ The scholarship in this vocational understanding branches in many directions, but it is clear that Parsons and his posthumously published work *Choosing a Vocation* lay the groundwork.¹⁴

Parsons

Frank Parsons (1854–1908) was a learned, passionate, enthusiastic, and progressive thinker.¹⁵ Parsons is often cited as the father of vocational guidance.¹⁶ A teacher by profession, an engineer by training, and a suffragist and social reformer by passion, Parsons soon realized that his true calling was to help laborers, unemployed workers, recent immigrants, and those ready to leave academia to think through their career goals and choices.¹⁷ His work in Boston's Civic Service House helped to establish his talent-matching approach to career placement, which was later developed into the Trait and Factor Theory of Occupational Choice.¹⁸

Parsons's Trait and Factor theory can be identified by these factors:

¹³ Athanasou and Esbroeck, *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 117.

¹⁴ Parsons, *Choosing a Vocation*.

¹⁵ Jeannine R. Studer, *The Essential School Counselor in a Changing Society* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), 7.

¹⁶ Donald G. Zytowski, *Vocational Behavior: Readings in Theory and Research* (New York: Holt, 1968), 7.

¹⁷ Charles Williams, "Frank Parsons, Father of Career Development," Street Directory, http://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/188494/careers_and_job_hunting/frank_parsons_father_of_career_development.html (accessed March 9, 2015).

¹⁸ Vernon G. Zunker, *Career Counseling: Applied Concepts of Life Planning*, 6th ed. (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thomson Learning, 2002).

- Every person has a unique pattern of traits made up of their interests, values, abilities and personality characteristics. These traits can be objectively identified and profiled to represent an individual's potential.
- Every occupation is made up of factors required for the successful performance of that occupation. These factors can be objectively identified and represented as an occupational profile.
- It is possible to identify a fit or match between individual traits and job factors using a straightforward problem solving/decision making process.¹⁹

The closer the match between personal traits and job factors, the greater the likelihood for successful job performance and satisfaction. Parsons's theory continues to inform vocational and guidance counseling. His work undergirds most vocational training programs and inventories in use around the world. Understanding one's vocation, according to Parsons, is a complicated process, and a guide is needed to provide clarifying direction in at least seven areas:

- Personal data: The counselor creates a statement of key facts about the individual, remembering to include every fact that has bearing on the vocational problem.
- Self-analysis: Self-examination is done in private and under the instruction of the counselor. Every tendency and interest that might impact the choice of a life work should be recorded.
- The client's own choice and decision: The counselor must bear in mind that the choice of vocation should be made by the client, with the counselor merely acting as guide.
- Counselor's analysis: The counselor tests the client's decision to see if it is in line with the "main quest."
- Outlook on the vocational field: The counselor must be familiar with industrial knowledge such as lists and classifications of industries and vocations, in addition to locations of training and apprenticeship.
- Induction and advice: A broad-minded attitude, coupled with logical and clear reasoning, is critical at this stage.
- General helpfulness: The counselor helps the client to fit into the chosen work and to reflect on the decision.²⁰

¹⁹ Canadian Career Development Foundation, "Big Picture View of Career Development Theory," Canadian Career Development Foundation, http://www.ccdf.ca/ccdf/NewCoach/english/ccoache/e4a_bp_theory.htm (accessed March 9, 2015).

Parsons's work is still in practice around the world.²¹ However, since his groundbreaking work, vocational theory has evolved in several different directions. Leung outlines several of these branches, labeling them into his *Big Five*.²² These five theories are (1) Theory of Work-Adjustment, (2) Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment, (3) the Self-Concept Theory of Career Development, (4) Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, and (5) Social Cognitive Career Theory. While each of these theories has much to offer, this thesis considers Holland's Theory in greatest detail because of the similarity to the vocabulary of missional church literature.

Holland

John L. Holland attributes his beginning understanding of vocational personalities to his three years serving in the army.²³ Holland worked as a "classification interviewer, test proctor, paralegal clerk, psychological assistant, and Wechsler test administrator."²⁴ His training in psychology and mathematics at the University of Nebraska had led him to believe that people were infinitely complex and unique. However, as an adult he began to believe that many people exemplify common psychological types. Holland continued this research, earning his doctorate at the University of Minnesota.

²⁰ Careerz New Zealand, "Parson's Theory," Career New Zealand, <http://www.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/career-practice/career-theory-models/parsons-theory/> (accessed October 31, 2014).

²¹ Ibid.

²² S. Alvin Leung, "The Big Five Career Theories," National Centre for Vocational Education Research, <http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv35645> (accessed October 21, 2014).

²³ John L. Holland: Award for Distinguished Scientific Application of Psychology. *American Psychologist* Vol. 63, No. 8 (November 2008): 672-4.

²⁴ Ibid. 672.

John L. Holland's theory of vocational personalities first appeared in an article in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 1958; in 1959, another article set out his theory of vocational choices.²⁵ The basic premise is that one's occupational preferences are, in a sense, a veiled expression of underlying character.²⁶ Holland's theory uses language quite similar to that of family systems theory: for example, *differentiation*, *congruence*, and *self-actualization*. Holland's theory states that people and work can be understood categorically and that categories must match one's need to be at the same time both in congruence with and differentiated from the other.²⁷ Holland used qualitative instruments to identify the three-letter Holland Code. Instruments were scored onto a hexagonal map to identify the areas of greatest expression.

²⁵ Journal of Applied Psychology, "John Holland," <http://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/GENERAL/WIKIPEDI/W120519J.pdf> (accessed March 9, 2015).

²⁶ National Career Development Association, "Holland Personality Types," National Career Development Assoc., 2015, http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/6521/_PARENT/layout_details/false. (accessed March 9, 2015).

²⁷ Ross Donohue, "Person-Environment Congruence in Relation to Career Change and Career Persistence," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 68 (2006).

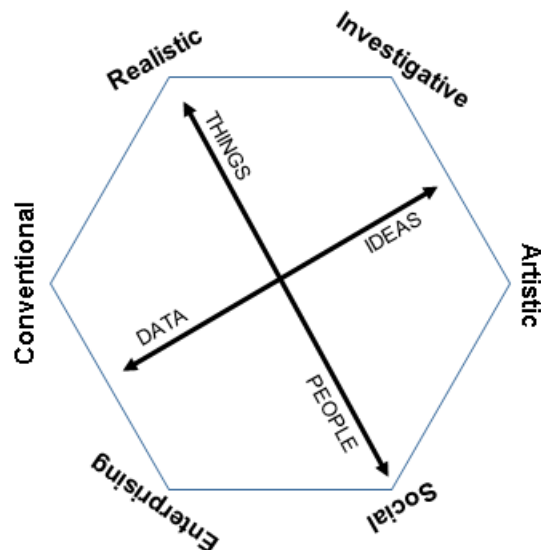


Figure 1. Holland Personality Types²⁸

Holland may forever be known for establishing a permanent association between a geometric shape (the hexagon) and the field of career psychology. The following quotation comes from Holland's obituary, prepared by Dr. Jack Rayman, in which he uses the language of the hexagon to describe Holland. This interpretation gives us a glimpse, not only into the man, Holland, but also helps to put the Holland code into practice,

- His elevated "R" (Realistic) manifested itself in his long-time interest and skill at woodworking—some of his handiwork will forever grace my home.
- His elevated "I" (Investigative) is probably the most obvious in that he was first and foremost intellectually curious about human behavior with a keen interest in philosophy, anthropology, and, of course, psychology.
- His elevated "A" (Artistic) is apparent in his creative and innovative way of interpreting human behavior, his skill as an accomplished pianist—the proud owner of a baby grand piano—and his long-time interest in art—he was a huge fan of the French Fauvist painter Raoul Dufy. His home was decorated with a number of Dufy paintings, as well as the work of other prominent artists. In a modest way, his home was a sort of small gallery, and he enjoyed providing the

²⁸ Sheridan College, "Holland Hexagon," Brampton Ontario: Sheridan College, <http://ideagenerator.sheridancollege.ca/Images/hexagon.png> (accessed December 10, 2015).

occasional close friend with a gallery tour. He had an eye for the aesthetic and one of his fond possessions was a Frank Lloyd Wright designed chair for which he admitted to having paid “far too much.”

- His elevated “S” (Social) undoubtedly led to his life of service to the profession and his commitment to issues of social justice.
- While publishers and academicians sometimes jokingly referred to Holland's elevated “E” (Enterprising), he was far too generous and caring, and not financially motivated enough to have been a truly successful entrepreneur.
- While Holland's lowest code was probably “C” (Conventional), as evidenced by his sometimes impulsive and artistic flair, he was a fiscal conservative who always strove for efficiency and often said, “‘Carefulness’ is the secret to my success.”²⁹

Understanding vocational choices as part of trait-matching and personality frames, this research project considers joy as part of living out God’s mission in the world. A congregational member finds great joy in one activity or another and then uses that activity to participate in the mission of God in the world. Martin Luther said,

A craftsman's workshop is like a Bible, in which is written how he is to conduct himself toward his neighbor. Tools and food, needle and thimble—not even excepting “your beer-vat”—call aloud, “Use us for the well-being of your neighbor!” Things are the vehicle of the Word of God to us...for you have as many preachers as there are transactions, commodities, tools, and other implements in your house and estate; and they should say this to your face, “My dear, use me toward your neighbor as you would want him to act toward you with that which is his.”³⁰

One might then choose to participate in one activity that gives joy over other activities that do not give joy. Both may be used to serve one’s neighbor.

In 2005, Ross Donahue, a lecturer at the University of Monash in Caulfield, Australia, published a research project titled “Person-Environment Congruence in Relation to Career Change and Career Persistence” in the *Journal of Vocational*

²⁹ National Career Development Association, “Holland Personality Types.”

³⁰ Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*, vol. 2 (Weimar: H. Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1912). WA 32, 495-496 (The Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

Behavior.³¹ Donohue's work comparing career persisters, those who remain in their careers for a long time, against the career changers, those who change careers often, offered much in this research project. His project focuses on a workplace setting:

The findings of the current study also have practical implications for human resource management and organizational behavior, as Holland's (1997) framework is used extensively in recruitment and selection, career counseling, and job design for the purposes of choosing and retaining productive and satisfied workers.³²

It is also true that in a congregational context, Holland's codes may be of assistance in "choosing and retaining productive and satisfied"—that is to say, "joy-filled"—members.³³

The research question in this study seeks to increase awareness that participating in joy-giving activities and participating in God's mission can be one and the same. The secular vocational literature gives this project grounding in terms and methods. A deepening awareness of participating in God's mission is the pragmatic goal of understanding vocational calling as joy giving.

Pragmatism

John Dewey (1859-1952) and his writings are the foundation for the philosophical understanding known as American pragmatism.³⁴ Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it

³¹ Ross Donohue, "Person-Environment Congruence in Relation to Career Changer and Career Persistence," Caulfield, Australia: Journal of Vocational Behavior, <http://oak.ucc.nau.edu/rh232/courses/eps625/handouts/ancova%20article.pdf> (accessed March 9, 2015).

³² Donohue, "Person-Environment Congruence in Relation to Career Change and Career Persistence."

³³ Ibid.509.

³⁴ Knight, "John Dewey and the Reality of God," 14.

works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected.³⁵

Pragmatism was a philosophical tradition that originated in the United States around 1870.³⁶ The overarching concepts are (1) ideas are understood less as absolutes and more as instruments, (2) means and ends are seen as interdependent, and, (3) knowledge is conceived of in social, relational, and above all, contextual ways. “The process of inquiry and making decisions is absolutely crucial to their outcome.”³⁷ Pragmatic thinking states that decision making demands adaptability and tolerance. Curtis W. Hart describes an understanding of American pragmatism in the context of pastoral care and bioethics as a four-fold method for clinical pragmatism. His steps are (1) assessment, (2) diagnosis, (3) plan of action, and finally, (4) evaluation.³⁸

These steps sound similar to the methods of social science action research, and the similarities continue. Hart describes pragmatism as it applies to contextual situations and notes that its implementation is process based and contextually driven.³⁹ Hart footnotes many authors in the body of pragmatic literature, including Friedrich Schleiermacher’s speeches against the “cultured despisers” and Krister Stendahl’s writings.⁴⁰

³⁵ McDermid, “Pragmatism.”

³⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Pragmatism,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/> (accessed March 9, 2015).

³⁷ Curtis W. Hart, “Clinical Pragmatism in Bioethics: A Pastoral Approach,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 2 (2006). 197.

³⁸ Ibid. 201.

³⁹ Curtis W. Hart, “I Believe I Am So Called: Reflections on a Vocation in Medical Education,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no. 3 (2012). 789.

⁴⁰ Hart, “Clinical Pragmatism in Bioethics: A Pastoral Approach.” Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Depsisers*, College Translations (New York,: Ungar, 1955); Friedrich

The four-step process of pragmatism is also a model of the four steps of this participatory action research methodology. The congregation, leadership, members, and journey team completed these four steps again and again throughout this research project. The interventions were planned and executed in the midst of these four steps (see figure 2).

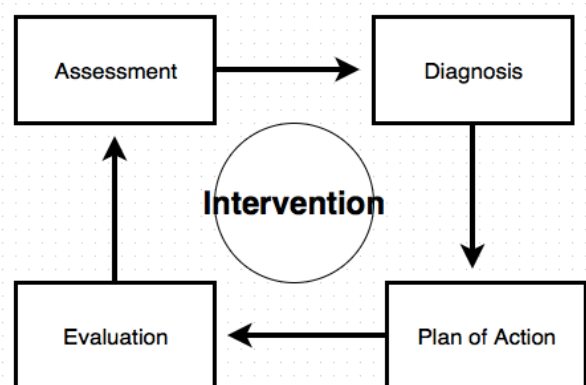


Figure 2. Four-Step Process of Intervention

Discussion of the congregation’s current context, naming of a value or core concept, or the excitement of a member to share their own passions started the movement around the intervention. Evaluation, assessment, and communal conversation started the flow moving again, much like the diagram above. Pragmatism’s output-based understanding of the *process* required to enact change made it an important lens for this project.

Philip Knight argues that there are six stages of development in John Dewey’s understanding, as outlined in Dewey’s *Reality of God*.⁴¹ The stages follow Dewey’s life chronologically and geographically. Dewey’s early stages of thought bear similarity to

Schleiermacher and John Oman, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, 1st Westminster/John Knox Press ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

⁴¹ Knight, “John Dewey and the Reality of God,” 15.

the attributes of missional theology: a blend of practical reason and romanticism, a sense of awe and wonder, dependence, peace, joy, integration within one's community, and so on.⁴² Dewey focuses his pragmatism on behaviors and results, much like this project's participatory action research design.

American pragmatism, as a lens in this project, provides an opportunity to see one's own position in life, as in the understanding of the German word *Beruf*, as participation in God's overarching mission in the world. We are indeed doing work, even when it might not feel like work, as is the case with our most joy-bringing activities.

Together pragmatism and secular vocation form the theoretical grounding for this research project and thesis. The ends, results, and data define the success of the project through the pragmatic lens. Secular vocation anchors the praxis events in a congruent matching of interest areas, talents, and abilities. The understanding of who we are in our work lives allows us to discuss our own needs for self-actualization, as well as differentiation from and congruence with our neighbor. Understanding these as opportunities enables us to use our differentness to advance God's kingdom. The vantage points from these two lenses provide quantifiable and concrete descriptors.

Chaos Theory

James Huchingson describes chaos theory as being about relationships: in particular, relationships "between things and between creation and creator."⁴³ Chaos theory and the related theory of complexity arise out of the new science and from discoveries in biology, chemistry, and physics, rather than from a Newtonian

⁴² Ibid. 18.

⁴³ Huchingson, "Chaos, Communications Theory, and God's Abundance," 21.

understanding of cause and effect. “Chaos theory tells us that even simple systems can exhibit complex behavior.”⁴⁴ There is no longer a causal understanding of the world; A no longer leads directly to B.

Leadership and the New Science has been the most influential in my understanding of chaos theory; in it Margaret Wheatley writes, “This world of relationships ... ‘the pattern that connects’ ... urges that we stop teaching facts—the ‘things of knowledge’—and focus, instead, on relationships as the basis for all definitions. With relationships, we give up the predictability and open up to potentiality.”⁴⁵

Chaos theory, understood within the framework of leadership, is referred to as *chaordic* theory, this term was originally coined by former Visa CEO Dee Hock.⁴⁶

Chaordic theory is both a management style and a system of organization that governs the exercise of authority.⁴⁷

It is characterized by the harmonious blending of both order and chaos principles where neither is dominant (e.g. competition and cooperation). Chaordic leadership involves four main responsibilities, which are (1) manage self 50% of the time (2) manage those with authority over us 25% of the time (3) manage your peers 20% of the time and (4) manage those we are responsible for 5% of the time.⁴⁸

Chaordic theory challenges the order inferred in pragmatic theory. However, in this PAR project they complement each other very well. Pragmatism allows the

⁴⁴ Ascough, “Chaos Theory and Paul's Organizational Leadership Style,” 22.

⁴⁵ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), 35.

⁴⁶ Dee Hock and VISA International, *One from Many: Visa and the Rise of the Chaordic Organization* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2005).

⁴⁷ Hock and VISA International, *Birth of the Chaordic Age*.

⁴⁸ Business Dictionary, “Chaordic Leadership.”

congregation to do something. Chaordic participation of the leadership allows for the something to get done in any number of ways. Chaordic leadership and theory focus on individuals in action amidst the ever-changing world.⁴⁹ The model for ministry at Redeemer Lutheran reflects this chaordic leadership. Lay leaders tend to the business of the church, while I am freed up to spend time empowering leaders in their own ministries.⁵⁰ Chaordic theory “describes a complex, unpredictable, and orderly disorder in which patterns of behavior unfolded in irregular but similar forms.”⁵¹ Building upon Wheatley’s work, Richard Ascoug offers this: “Chaos theory suggests that if you set a group of people in motion, each one following the right set of three or four simple rules ... they will spontaneously self-organize into something complex and unexpected.”⁵²

This fits perfectly alongside research investigating missional practices and joy. I began this project wondering how this congregation might self-organize around the deepening principles of joy and vocation. The creation of five praxis events and the growing development of new programs and lay-led ministry events embodied Ascoug’s assertion concerning unexpected things just happening.

Chaos theory has functioned in this research project as critique and guidepost. As a critique, chaos theory challenges the Newtonian and pragmatic concepts of cause and

⁴⁹ Beverly G. McCarter and Brian E. White, *Leadership in Chaordic Organizations*, Complex and Enterprise Systems Engineering (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis, 2013).

⁵⁰ The missions statement of Redeemer Lutheran is “To Be and Make Disciples.” This phrase has encouraged a chaordic, and shared ministry that understands both the roles of pastor and lay members as important to this mission.

⁵¹ Ascoug, “Chaos Theory and Paul’s Organizational Leadership Style,” 28. In this quote Ascoug is quoting Toby J. Tetenbaum, “Shifting Paradigms: From Newton to Chaos,” *Organizational Dynamics* (Spring, 1998), 24.

⁵² Ibid.

effect, which have for so long informed the work of the church. For example, suffering for Jesus is (positively) a direct consequence of living one's baptismal calling or is (negatively) some sort of punishment for not living one's vocations. Suffering in turn directly causes other results; phrases such as "earning jewels in one's heavenly crown" or practices such as suffering through the season of Lent come to mind. Chaos theory serves as a guidepost for this project in that the theory itself encourages us to find patterns, such as joy, within a life filled with various individual and seemingly separate events. Together as critique and guidepost, chaos theory assists in naming and clarifying the structures of life.

Chaos theory and pragmatism offer two very different perspectives of the same question. Chaos theory requires a view from afar, not paying attention to the individual details but instead looking for big-picture themes. Pragmatism assists in the nuts-and-bolts decisions to be made in praxis event creation. *When, where, and who* were pragmatic questions that were asked. In contrast, vocation and pragmatism seem to ride along side by side. The works of Holland and Dewey seem to desire an easily compartmentalized world, in which traits and scores efficiently answer the question "What ought I to do with my life?" Vocation, from this pragmatic view, is ultimately concerned with accomplishing whatever it is that has been identified as the pragmatic maxim. Wealth and security come to the fore in many of these discussions. Joy can certainly be understood as a pragmatic maxim, but it is a little hard to pinpoint.

Finally, the lenses of chaos theory and chaordic leadership move slowly—and perhaps even cautiously—toward a closer view, like a slowly zooming lens or carefully

measured steps toward an artistic masterpiece. Lost in the details, one can lose perspective, until it all comes together and, amazingly, an entirely new world is glimpsed.

Summary

This chapter identifies the literature and key theories that form the foundation for this research project. The literature investigated here is by no means exhaustive; however, it is illustrative of several growing bodies of literature. Together the included lenses and frames create a composite view, a multilevel picture of the literature framing the research question.

Beginning with the three theoretical lenses I created a foundation for understanding the individual and congregational experiences of joy and process in three differing ways. The work of Holland and Parsons sought to explain how an individual comes to understand their own calling, and thereby, their work in the world. Parsons's work in vocational call and identification allowed us to imagine the congregant wondering about a place to fit into the congregation, inquiring or reflecting on personal tastes and aptitudes.

Holland takes this a step further, and while giving note to the individual needs of congruence and differentiation, he allows us to see that in the midst of a multiplicity of individual vocational options there are certain identifiable traits, or codes, by which a more efficient match may be found. The Holland Hexagram allows for grouping and even predicting vocational aptitude. When I was a preseminarian considering my call, a vocational counselor had me complete the Holland code. Her response after scoring it was that I might "bring different gifts" to the ministry. How to utilize these different

gifts, or experiences of joy, is exactly what this PAR project concerning vocational joy and the priesthood of all believers uncovers.

Pragmatism is the second key theory, following secular vocation, which was considered in this chapter. Pragmatic thought demands that something get accomplished. Is the task set forth being completed? The work of John Dewey and several other American pragmatists remind the reader that it is important to accomplish something. The thing that needed to be accomplished in this project was some sort of participatory action. The work of planning, enacting, and reviewing this action was indeed the format of this particular project. The action details themselves were less important than the fact that the congregation members were coming together to *do something*. It is for the results section to determine whether or not the something was significant and missional or not. As I wrote earlier in the chapter, pragmatism allows the congregation to do something. Chaordic participation of the leadership allows for the something to get done in any number of ways.

Chaos theory and chaordic leadership theory were the concluding frames in this chapter. Chaos theory and chaordic theory make the claim that anything is possible. This was certainly true in this project. No one would have imagined that somehow vocation joy and baptismal calling would be lived out with forty persons shooting handguns as a fellowship and study event. Chaos theory allowed for the *anything* to be accomplished, no matter how far outside the normal boundaries it may have initially seemed.

The next chapter investigates the biblical and theological grounding for this research project and question. The key theories are placed into conversation with the biblical and theological themes in chapter 6. In that chapter, the data from the baseline

and end line come together with the literature to form a mosaic of information that can be viewed from multiple angles.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

I started to explore the research question from several vantage points. I began with secular literature on vocation, pragmatism, and chaos theory. This use of multiple perspectives was likened, in the previous chapter, to a man in a museum viewing the same piece of art from several different vantage points in order to garner a more complete understanding. In this chapter, I examine the same research question from the perspective of two theological bodies of literature: Martin Luther's writings on vocation and C.S. Lewis's understanding of joy. These authors' works provide the lenses needed to better understand the data.¹

This project also finds its biblical home in the disciples' call stories found in the Gospels. Jesus calls the disciples *from* their work as fisherman and calls them *to* a life of fishing for *people*, dramatically reimagining their previous station in life.

Theological Frames

Vocation

Martin Luther writes a great deal concerning faith lived out in the world. Vocation, for him, was not something reserved for those who took on religious vows.

¹ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*.

Instead, vocations were the multiple calls, or stations, in which we all serve the neighbor.² Luther writes, “There is nothing more delightful and lovable on earth than one’s neighbor. Love does not think about doing works, it finds joy in people; and when something good is done for others, that does not appear to love as works but simply as gifts which flow naturally from love.”³ This love for neighbor is developed most clearly in his work *On the Freedom of a Christian*.⁴ In this work, Luther uses the phrase “priesthood of all believers” to describe the work of all believers in ministry within the kingdom of God.

Gustav Wingren wrote *Luther on Vocation* in 1954.⁵ In it, he explains Martin Luther’s teaching on the priesthood of all believers as it relates to daily work. He writes, “In speaking about Luther’s doctrine of vocation we always mean vocation in accord with Luther’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:20. The work which one does as farmer or craftsman.”⁶ Vocation is for Luther, all the work a person does in the world. Even works that appear to go against the will of God. God uses all earthly works, painful works and joyful works, in God’s own mission. “Our neighbor with his need does not press upon us against our will; rather he fills us with gladness, for it is our joy to serve him.”⁷ This participation becomes for the believer, and for Luther, one way God kills the sinful man

² Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 5.

³ Ibid., 43.

⁴ Martin Luther and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*.

⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷ WA 10, 2, 178.

in each of us so that we can participate in the resurrection joy of life in Christ. “Then man stands under the law, and his vocation weighs upon him with its demands.”⁸

A broadly defined Lutheran understanding of vocation points to the calling each person has as a participant in the priesthood of all believers.⁹ Calling, in this sense, “may come from another person, from a divine messenger, or from within oneself.”¹⁰ The priesthood of all believers is foundational in Lutheran theology and connects with the chaordic leadership discussed in the previous chapter. Each member of the body of Christ is uniquely called to serve in the ways he or she has been gifted. Dee Hock would encourage a chaordic leader to spend half of his or her time managing self. This management uplifts the personal call and unique talents of all participants.¹¹ Though it spends much time on personal development, vocational living, much like chaordic leadership, is not focused on the benefit of the initial participant. Vocational living is ultimately all about the neighbor. Luther writes,

When a person gladly gives his endeavors to his earthly tasks, filling his neighbor’s needs and attending to his vocation, then love from God or Christ is active, then the Spirit is present. Finding love is thus the same things as finding both neighbor and vocation to be something in which one can live with joy.¹²

Wingren explores the writings of Martin Luther and presents in three sections an overview of Lutheran thought on vocation, calling, and the priesthood of all believers as

⁸ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 44.

⁹ Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*. 8:254.

¹⁰ UrbanMinistry, “Spiritual Gifts,” http://www.urbanministry.org/spiritual_gifts (accessed August 29, 2014).

¹¹ Business Dictionary, “Chaordic Leadership.”

¹² Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 44.

it pertains to the two kingdoms, the devil, heaven, earth, and humankind.¹³ In the words of Lewis Spitz, Luther historian and author, “Every Christian who feels discouraged in his secular calling should read this book for his encouragement.”¹⁴

Wingren divides his work into three distinct sections. In the first section, Wingren explores Luther’s teachings on vocation as seen through the theological lens of Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine. These two kingdoms are “the realm of the works of the law on earth, where vocation is located, and the realm of the gospel of grace, in heaven, where man does not build on fidelity to his vocation or works in general.”¹⁵ This section begins with Luther’s discussion of how living out one’s call on earth is oftentimes a calling to our own traits, abilities, and joys.

The second section of *Luther on Vocation* concerns itself with God and the devil, and the final section looks particularly at humankind. These second two sections focus mostly on how our earthly vocations are disconnected from eschatology and are instead focused on the needs of our neighbor even now. God uses the vocation of mankind to battle the devil by serving the neighbor. Service to neighbor is the work of the body of Christ in the world.

Kenneth Hagen, in his article “A Critique of Wingren on Luther on Vocation,” posits that we have at present an urgent and important problem of vocation.¹⁶ The modern church has lost its vocational grounding. He states, “The problem now is not only to

¹³ Luther and Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*.

¹⁴ L. W. Spitz, “Luther on Vocation,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 28, no. 11 (1957).

¹⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 164.

¹⁶ Kenneth Hagen, “A Critique of Wingren on Luther on Vocation,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2002).

equip our lay-people with fuller theological resources for the understanding of the meaning of discipleship, but to utilize their practical experience of day-to-day dilemmas and day to-day decisions.”¹⁷ Martin Yee makes the assertion that “Hagen argued that Wingren has ‘wrongly opted for creation and Law as the basic frame of reference instead of Christology and Gospel.’”¹⁸

I have gone so far as to say that not only dilemmas and decisions but also joys are the practical expressions that will assist us most in dealing with this urgent and important misunderstanding of vocation. Luther claims that in his vocation, a person rejoices in his labor.¹⁹ There is joy and gladness in one’s work. “When a person gladly gives his endeavors to his earthly tasks, filling his neighbor’s needs and attending to his vocation, then love from God of Christ is active, then the Spirit is present. Finding love is thus the same thing as finding both neighbor and vocation to be something in which one can live with *joy*.”²⁰ This comes back into the conversation in chapter 6.

Redeemer Lutheran lives vocationally as individuals and as a congregation. Vocation, both individual and congregational, entails the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. The vocation of missional congregations as public companions means spiritual presence.²¹ The PAR structure of this project encouraged the

¹⁷ Ibid., 133.

¹⁸ Martin Yee, “Critique of Gustaf Wingren's Luther on Vocation,” <http://lutherantheologystudygroup.blogspot.com/2011/04/critique-of-gustaf-wingrens-luther-on.html> (accessed May 14, 2015).

¹⁹ Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*. 40, 577f.

²⁰ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 44.

²¹ Simpson, “Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society,” 15.

congregation to think missionally and vocationally together for the sake of the neighbors and the community, in the name of Jesus Christ. Luther reminds us that, “There is nothing more delightful and lovable on earth than one’s neighbor. Love does not think about doing works, it finds joy in people; and when something good is done for others, that does not appear to love as works but simply as gifts which flow naturally from love.”²² Joy in vocation takes many forms, as highlighted in chapter 4. Interventions share joy within the membership of the congregation and also point Redeemer members to see the other. “In [Luther’s] vocational imagination, all the world is filled with neighbors and their neighborhoods, and God puts us in this world precisely for them.”²³

Joy

Joy is the second theological framework in this project, and it is closely tied to vocation. The promises proclaimed at baptism and the joy understood through the biblical promises should compel us to live God’s mission in the world into being in joyful ways. Several books and articles build the argument for biblical and vocational joy.

C.S. Lewis wrote *Surprised by Joy* over the course of many years. Its purpose was not that of a comprehensive autobiography but instead a chronicle of his own coming to faith.²⁴ Lewis provides a foundation for the understanding of joy, in this thesis. While not writing specifically of vocational joy, Lewis says this:

It is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has

²² Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 43.

²³ Simpson, “Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society,” 3.

²⁴ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*.

indeed one characteristic, and only one, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again.²⁵

With this understanding of joy we may be able to better identify what things in the life of the congregation are really joy bringing, including our calling to work and play. As we then look into scripture, we might have a better understanding of how living out a joy-filled life, as Lewis describes, is indeed part of what our baptismal calling is all about.

Joy is more than happiness; it is more than pleasure. These things, for Lewis, are “much more oriented to the immediate, to gratification of various types, most of them instant, ephemeral, and in the end, not satisfying over a long term.”²⁶ Wingren concurs that joy is beyond the mundane emotions, but deeply experienced.²⁷

Joy is often a theological lens for the discussion of other aspects of the Christian life. Angella Son begins with joy in her discussion of a new perspective of pastoral care.²⁸ In a paper given at the Mennonite World Conference in 2004, Siaka Traore juxtaposes joy with suffering and beautifully explores a missional way of sharing what we have.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., 24.

²⁶ David M. Howard, Jr., ““Surprised by Joy”: Joy in the Christian Life and in Christian Scholarship,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 1 (2004): 5. There are many commentaries and articles written using Lewis’s text as a jumping off point. David Howard relates *Surprised by Joy* to living out a Christian life, and this was very helpful in this research project.

²⁷ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 68.

²⁸ Angella Son, “Agents of Joy as a New Image of Pastoral Care,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 18, no. 1 (2008).

²⁹ Siaka Traore, ““Sharing Our Gifts in Suffering and in Joy”: “We Give What We Have,”” *Conrad Grebel Review* 22, no. 3 (2004).

Biblical Frame: Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Lutheran Christians understand themselves to be “people of the book” who gather to worship God, expecting God to be active in reality.³⁰ The New Testament theme of calling, particularly the calling of the disciples as understood in Matthew 4 and Luke 5, begins our biblical section. The calling of the fisherman has a special place in my heart, considering my own fishing passions. I like to think about myself or my fishing friends retying lines or telling fish stories as Jesus walks by. I find myself wondering if we would have been so quick to leave our bass boats and trucks behind to follow Jesus. I also find myself asking whether the disciples’ exact situation was unique and whether there are also ways to use our fishing equipment as we live out our call.

I like to imagine a modern version of the calling of the first disciples. Shiny bass boats with glitter finish, covered with sponsor logos and high-tech gadgets, sit on trailers by the lake while professional fishermen are getting ready for the next big payday, tournament, or bass picture to post on Facebook. Into this scene walks Jesus.

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matt. 4:18-22)

³⁰ Several years ago, the ELCA with Augsburg Fortress Publishing created a program to increase the biblical fluency of congregational members. During that time the phrase “people of the book” was used many times. According to the ELCA Book of Faith webpage, we believe that “people meet God in Scripture, where God’s relationship to—and intention for—humankind is revealed. The Book of Faith Initiative strives to increase biblical literacy and fluency for the sake of the world.” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Book of Faith,” Chicago, IL: ELCA, 2013, <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Book-of-Faith#sthash.aDtzTMvd.dpuf>.

Peter and Andrew hear this call and away they go. They change their occupations from professional fishermen to something that initially seems completely different. They are now to understand themselves as fishers of people. Harrington writes in his commentary of Matthew, “To the Jewish audience of Matthew, this call story would have seemed unusual.”³¹ Even though the most common industries in Galilee would have been farming and fishing, it seems that the Judeans would have “probably looked upon the Galileans as ‘country bumpkins’ or ‘hicks.’”³² These fishermen were unlikely disciples.

It seems that Jesus isn’t interested in cleaning them up or even washing off that fishy smell before ministry starts happening. Their *earthly* vocation of fisherman takes on a whole new meaning when it has *heavenly* intent, as Luther would agree. Fishermen have no special status on their own, just as a person need not become a fisherman to be saved. Wingen writes, “that would be like living under that tragic misapprehension that one would have to be a shoemaker to be saved, and then fall into the delusion that it is by being a tailor that he can gain heaven. The work of Christ is victory over that law in any form: good works lead to salvation neither through one route nor the other.”³³

Unfortunately, it seems that this tragic focus on our own works instead of Christ’s work for us is, in fact, often present in our churches. The fellowship time at Redeemer Lutheran, for example, used to be full of “all these weird rules, like they had to be homemade treats, and they had to be plated in certain ways.”³⁴ It was as if brownies were

³¹ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina Series 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 75.

³² Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 74.

³³ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 11.

³⁴ S.L., interview by the author, Lake City, MO, January 21, 2014.

salvific, but only if they were on a brownie tray. From a vocational standpoint, in the time of Luther some occupations were lifted up as more spiritual than others, and in many congregations today it still seems as if some vocational options are seen as less spiritual than others. The disciples did not entirely stop being fisherman, as we see in John 21:3, following Jesus's resurrection, "Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing."

There is a man in a congregation near Redeemer who is a terrific bass fisherman. A few years ago he suffered a terrible illness, and he and his family thought he was going to die. Juan made a promise to God that, if he were allowed to live, he would buy a new boat and use it for ministry (research journal). The cynic might hear this as a vain attempt to get what he wanted and the last gasp of a dying man, but Juan lived, regained his strength, and did buy a new boat. You can see him most Sunday mornings fishing on a local lake with a father and son who are not active in any faith community, fishing and preaching to them about the goodness of Jesus Christ. He takes seriously the call to be a fisher of people, and he continues to have a huge impact on the faith lives of fathers and sons (and husbands, neighbors, citizens, etc.). His vocation is still fishing, but a little different than before. On the back of Juan's boat is the biblical citation "John 21:3."

Luke's Gospel also tells the call story of the first disciples:

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When

they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 15:5-11)

Luke's telling of this story provides greater detail. How encouraging to all of us that even though these disciples became fishers of men, they might not have been great fishermen to start out with! This biblical theme points us again to Luther's understanding of vocation as not for the heavenly realm, but as "directed toward one's neighbor."³⁵ It is more the doing of work for the neighbor than it is achieving success in that work that matters. The fishermen have no fish. They do not give up this vocation and change who they are; instead, they leave nets that are about to burst (Luke 5:6) in exchange for nets that do not break (John 21:11).³⁶ They are retooled for an altered vocation.

Patrick Keifert outlines the method and benefits of the Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) process in *We Are Here Now*.³⁷ In the discovering phase, a local church is "invited into a journey of spiritual discernment that engages in cultural change and transforms mission."³⁸ The process of discovery for the disciples meant leaving their boats, nets, and tackle behind to begin this journey of transforming mission. They remained fishermen, disciples, neighbors, and friends, yet they were invited on a new

³⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 10.

³⁶ Ibid., 88.

³⁷ Johnson and Harrington, *The Gospel of Luke*.

³⁸ Keifert, *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era, a Missional Journey of Spiritual Discovery*, 61.

journey as well. “You might be surprised,” writes Keifert, “how seldom members of your local church consciously imagine or describe their lives as local church, both gathered and sent, as a journey within the life of the living God.”³⁹ The journey, much like fishing, contains successes and failures, days with fish and days with no fish. This provides a challenge to a congregation employing fishing as a biblical theme or metaphor. There is a “polarity between the understandable need for some early victories and the painful fact that we are working for long-term, even multigenerational change.”⁴⁰

Summary

In this chapter, I have looked at the theological grounding for this research project. Luther understood vocation as the sum of all the roles in our lives, combined for the good of the neighbor. Through the thoughtful lens of Wingren, we saw just how important the neighbor is for the practical, pragmatic understanding of vocation. It is not just accomplishing something; it is accomplishing something for the other. The phrase that started to embody this new understanding of vocation in the congregation toward the end of this research project was “for the sake of the neighbor, in the name of Jesus.” This phrase describes the unique placement of our baptismal vocations for joy beyond just ourselves.

Lewis’s conception of joy is that it is something so marvelous that ends up driving us for good. Joy is such a deep need for the individuals in the world that once one experiences this love of Christ, one is compelled to continue the search for it. This was a lifelong searching process for Lewis that found him again and again surprised by joy.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 85.

The biblical witness of fishermen retooled as disciples and evangelists formed the exegetical section of this thesis. The stories of working men experiencing their call in completely new ways in an instant were powerful to this research project. Throughout the intervention phase, I found myself reassuring the congregation deep in the waters of participatory action that the fishermen-turned-disciples must have felt the same feelings of apprehension, excitement, freedom, and joy when they started fishing for people. The Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John encourage the priesthood of all believers that they continue to remain in all of the other, more worldly vocations that they love, even while acting upon their priestly vocations as well.

Biblical grounding and theological orthodoxy helped the congregation to chart our path in the midst of changing waters. The literature provided a starting point from which the research question and variables were understood. In chapter 6, these viewpoints and the accumulated data are combined to describe what is happening in the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran: joy-filled ministry using the multiplicity of talents God has given for the care of the neighbor. Building upon the previous chapter on theoretical lenses, including pragmatism, chaordic thought, and vocational discernment, this thesis moves forward in the next chapter to describe the research methodology employed based on these concepts.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This research project sought to understand and transform the beliefs and behaviors of the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran in Lake City, Missouri, in relation to living out baptismal calling, with a move toward the centrality of joy. The methodology invited participants to practice joy in their callings and to live it out in their beliefs and behaviors. Participatory action research, employing the creation of and participation in praxis events, provided opportunities to learn and practice these joyful behaviors together. Baseline and end-line data were collected and analyzed.

Methodology and Rationale

This research project employs a mixed-methods, transformative participatory action research with a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews providing baseline and end-line data. The praxis events, also called interventions, were created and implemented in relation to congregational groups as the project developed. The specific research question in this project was:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was chosen as the methodology for this project. The stated goal of the project was to enact changes within the congregation in regards to vocational understanding and joy. Three factors led the selection of this research method, each of them influenced by the theological frames and biblical lenses identified in the previous chapter. These lenses and frames undergird the entire research project.

The first reason for choosing participatory action research was because of the collaborative nature of the work (*participatory*). PAR offered a research methodology that included the subjects in the process from beginning to end, thus providing a higher likelihood of successful change within the congregational system. Changing the understanding of one's baptismal call to intrinsically include joy involved "a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies" in which the researcher and stakeholders worked together.¹ Working together in community and with communication among all the equal parts also lived out the perichoretic relationship modeled in the Trinity. The perichoretic understanding of the Trinity deeply embedded in the missional theology was foundational for this project.²

¹ Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 1.

² For more information on these topics I recommend, Dreier, ed. *Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations*; Guder and Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*; Simpson, "Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society."; Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit*; Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009); Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*.

Following *participatory*, is the word *action*. This research project desired from its inception to change beliefs and behaviors. Change was introduced through the action-oriented interventions. The PAR interventions were designed so the research population was more able to act out their joy-filled and joy-creating passions as part of their baptismal vocation. The action and the description of the action using missional vocabulary were indeed intrinsic to the research methodology. The action is the *doing something* which is needful in the pragmatic sense.

The final reason for using PAR is the word *research*. Together the participants engaged in events, activities, or dialogue *so that* the reader might better understand who the subjects are as a community of faith. Doing the research, having the data, and putting the pieces together in a measurable way gave greater meaning to the whole process. The research was important to the individuals themselves, but also for the researcher, the congregation, and the greater church, as described in the introductory chapter.

The use of research also gave the community of faith permission to think outside the box. Under the auspices of research or experiment, the congregation didn't have the stress of *having to* succeed: "It is *only* research; we can give it a shot." The permission-giving attitude of *research* certainly found fertile ground in a few men and women in the congregation who were quick to engage in praxis event creation around shooting sports and the Christmas cantata.

Research also legitimized the process of data collection. Having a plan, a timeline, due dates, and a set reporting method in place from the very beginning helped, at Redeemer Lutheran, to take away the anxiety of being a *test subject* or *test congregation*. In meetings with the journey team, it was very clear that they wanted the

congregation to be part of the entire process. They wanted to have regular updates. The congregational leadership wanted to *participate* in the *action* of the *research* so they were more able to celebrate the conclusions.

Theoretically Framing the Research Methodology

Action research involves change. Change is required for growth. Chaos theorists have informed us that creation is always changing.³ This change, while seemingly unpredictable, does function according to certain long-standing trends. Pragmatists also remind us that changes in behavior do not come easily, but with fear and pain. Action research places all of the stakeholders together in the change process. Luther Seminary professor Gary Simpson is fond of saying, “consequence-takers must be [the] decision-makers.”⁴

A mixed-methods research design was selected to combine a qualitative and a quantitative approach. The quantitative method was able, through use of survey instruments and statistical analysis, to provide a vantage point with great breadth. In the results section, chapter 5, inferential and descriptive statistics are used to describe the sample and analyze the baseline and end-line questionnaires. This breadth made it possible to get a thumbnail picture of the population and of the results of the interventions.

The method of data collection for the qualitative section included several interviews and the compiling of journey team meeting notes and notes from my own

³ Fractal Foundation, “What Is Chaos Theory,” <http://fractalfoundation.org/resources/what-is-chaos-theory/> (accessed June 1, 2015); Fractal Foundation, “What Is Chaos Theory.”

⁴ Gary Simpson, “Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society: Vocational Imagination and Spiritual Presence ” (presentation, Missional Church and Global Civil Society Consultation at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN in November 2008.) 12.

research diary, all of which were recorded, transcribed, and coded. In comparison with the quantitative data, these qualitative data provided great depth into the research project. This depth highlighted personal experiences, anecdotal information and quotes, and carefully coded data that could be expanded to further generalization.

A mixed-methods design utilized the strengths of both data streams. These strengths included a more comprehensive gathering of data, inclusion of multiple viewpoints, and a broader understanding of the issue being researched.⁵ The combination allows for a better understanding of the research context and the significance of the changes described in chapters 5 and 6.

Biblically and Theologically Framing the Research Methodology

Lutheran Christians understand *vocation*, one's calling in the world, as that of God's beloved children. Therefore, a Lutheran faith is lived in joyful service and leadership within the contexts of family, local community, and global society.⁶ These locations of vocation are soundly within the realm of the social sciences. As beings created in the image of our Triune God, following in God's own desires for redemption and reconciliation, we therefore engage and seek to understand the world God has made. We strive in many ways to understand the context in which we live. Van Gelder writes:

⁵ Guder and Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*; Simpson, "Missional Congregations as Public Companions with God in Global Civil Society."; Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008); Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008).

⁶ The ELCA Social Statement, *Church in Society* offers a great deal of information both on an orthodox Lutheran understanding of vocation as well as placing this action firmly in the global community. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Church in Society," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991, http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Church_SocietySS.pdf?_ga=1.20072824.1743327243.1389290619 (accessed March 23, 2015).

Christians understand the world as having been created by God, where God is desirous to bring this world into a reconciled relationship with God's self. God takes this world seriously. Christians, therefore, actively engage the world through Christian ministry, and though they interpret it through a hermeneutical lens, they believe that this world can be truly known, though always in context. This makes information available from the social sciences useful and contributive.⁷

Research Design

Redeemer Lutheran Church, the context for this research project, is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) located in Lake City, Missouri. Redeemer is a small congregation with a worshipping attendance of seventy persons, but those seventy people draw from a pool of 100 active members.⁸ This project focused on the vocational understanding of the congregation and how it could be enhanced or deepened through praxis events created and enacted in relation to the joy-giving passions and hobbies of the congregation.

I serve Redeemer as a bivocational pastor. I left a full-time pastorate so that I would have opportunities to pursue other vocations and passions, primarily that of a professional tournament bass angler. In the transition out of a full-time call, I was amazed by the numerous conversations I had with folks who had set aside joy-bringing activities in exchange for more practical, less joyous endeavors. I continue to have these pastoral conversations in my pastoral and fishing vocations.

The research project itself began October 2014 and concluded July 2015. The design took the form of two concurrent phases. The independent variable was the PAR

⁷ Van Gelder, "The Hermeneutics of Leading Mission," 159-171.

⁸ This average attendance number reflects the average attendance at the conclusion of the research project. The initial worshipping population often dipped into the low forties prior to several changes made near the onset of this research project.

intervention, including the five praxis events, also referred to as interventions. The dependent variables identified were (1) self-recognition and understanding of one's vocations and deeply held passions and (2) exercising of these as part of one's missional baptismal call.

Operationalized Variables

Joy was measured qualitatively with questions modified from a joy inventory used by The Joy Project.⁹ The Joy Project's named mission is the "eradication of a matrix of fear in which we all live and replac[ement of] it with a matrix of joy."¹⁰ The Joy Project identifies four points by which it is active in its mission, including, "changing behaviors so we are able to recognize when we are operating from fear and choose to consciously turn from fear to joy (or love)—which will change everything!"¹¹

Individual joys and passions were included in the quantitative instrument, including Likert-scale questions such as, "How often do you take time to engage in an activity that brings you great joy?" Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed-choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions. These ordinal scales measure levels of agreement and disagreement.¹²

⁹ Gore, "The Joy Project."

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Vicki L. Plano Clark and John W. Creswell, *The Mixed Methods Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 9.

Phase One

Phase one of this research project consisted of gathering baseline and end-line data. These data consisted of qualitative interviewing and quantitative survey research. The baseline and end-line questionnaires are included as appendix A and appendix B. The interview protocols are also included as appendix C and appendix D. Additional qualitative data not illustrated on the figure below include transcribed and coded notes from meetings with the journey team and entries from my own research log. The interventions took place during the interim period.

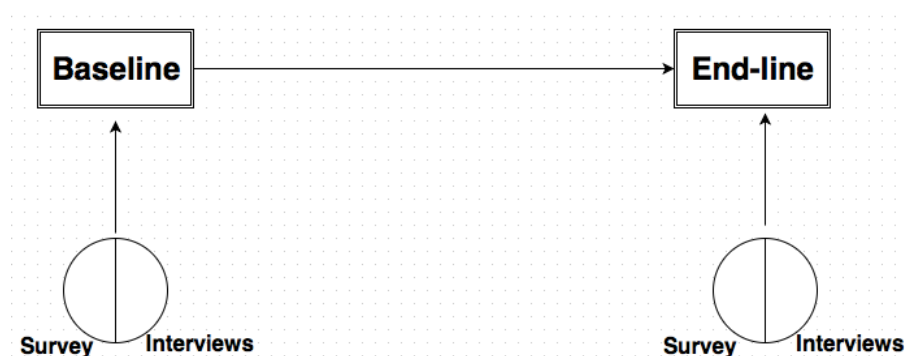


Figure 3. Research Design, Phase One

This research project began with the gathering of data for a baseline. The data collection took the form of a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The initial quantitative survey questionnaire was developed utilizing the aforementioned operationalized variables. This questionnaire was field-tested at Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA) by a few members chosen at random by the local pastor. Appropriate changes were made based on the feedback received. The questionnaire is included as appendix A.

Due to the small number of members in the congregation, naming the research population as the 100 actively participating adults made the most sense. Rather than including all of the adult members in the congregation as the population, using the active

membership increased the probability that the subjects would participate in the interventions. In addition, it was much simpler to distribute the questionnaires to a census of those who were regularly present in the church building. The population is best understood as census of active and participating members. The demographic breakdown of this population is included in the following chapter. A list of the 100 active participants in the congregation was compiled by the church office administrator. “Active members” were defined as those with regular church attendance, regular giving, and regular participation in the sacraments. “Regular” was defined as worship attendance once per month, a recordable donation to the general fund of the congregation once per year, and recorded participation in Holy Communion once per year. This definition is the same definition outlined in the Redeemer Lutheran constitution.

The questionnaires were printed and numbered, placed into envelopes, and distributed in person on a Sunday morning to this census sample of worshippers. The completed questionnaires were then collected after the service that day or the following weekend. Three submissions were returned by mail in the week following distribution. Sixty-eight questionnaires were collected. Each completed questionnaire was labeled and numbered, and the data were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. I then uploaded the data into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Finally, the completed, numbered, and entered questionnaires were locked into the filing cabinet in the pastor’s study of Redeemer Lutheran, and the electronic data stored in a password-protected Dropbox folder.

The interview protocol was developed utilizing the aforementioned operationalized variables. It is included as appendix C. The protocol was field-tested with

two members of Trinity Lutheran Church, a neighboring congregation. The field-tested interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed with the assistance of Dragon Dictate software. I completed the transcriptions, and I coded one field-tested transcription. The coding process was completed according to the method described by Nancy Charmaz.¹³ I made changes to the protocol where appropriate. Prior to conducting the interviews, participants were provided an informed consent form, which was read out loud and signed in my presence. The informed consent form is included as appendix E.

I conducted the interviews with a nonprobability purposive sample from a population of actively attending members, completing four interviews. I used Dragon Dictate to assist in the transcription process. Again, the coding took place according to the method described by Charmaz. The initial coding, which is also called *in vivo*, utilized a word-by-word and line-by-line notation. Some of this coding was completed during the transcription process.

The second phase of the coding was focused coding. Focused coding is concerned with identifying the hermeneutical shift from individual experience to a broader metanarrative. Coding involves three distinct steps: focused, axial, and theoretical. The first step creates categories and can be understood as a first-level abstraction. Axial coding creates even broader categories and may be understood as a second level. Finally, theoretical coding primarily tries to find the best-fit explanation for the interrelationships of the axial codes. This technique was nuanced to include steps from Herbert Rubin and

¹³ Ann Bowling, *Research Methods in Health: Investigating Health and Health Services* (Bristol, PA: Open University Press, 1997).

Irene Rubin.¹⁴ This hybrid process was described during course work with Craig Van Gelder at Luther Seminary in the winter of 2015.¹⁵

The raw data and coded data were then stored in a locked filing cabinet in the pastor's study at Redeemer Lutheran, and the electronic data stored in a password-protected Dropbox folder. Both a survey questionnaire and an interview protocol were administered at the end of the research phase of this project to gather an end-line data. The qualitative interviews were conducted with the same subjects and the quantitative questionnaire was distributed to a census of present and active worshipers, including many of the same participants as the baseline. This allowed for paired t-tests to be run in the results and analysis sections. The t-test compares the means between two related groups on the same continuous, dependent variable.¹⁶ Participants who returned survey questionnaires in the baseline section received end-line questionnaires marked with a matching numerical code and were asked to complete these marked questionnaires. However, all questionnaires contained the initial question *Did you complete a questionnaire like this in the Fall of 2014?* The congregation was again invited to participate, and nonmarked instruments were distributed during a worship service on July 19, 2015. Seventy-two completed questionnaires were returned. The results were first recorded in Excel and then exported to SPSS.

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, and the results chapter was written. In my analysis, I reported the descriptive statistics (i.e., the sample size,

¹⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Herbert J. Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012).

¹⁵ Van Gelder, "Coding: A Hybrid Method of Charmaz and Rubin & Rubin."

¹⁶ Laerd Statistics, "Dependent T-Test Using Spss Statistics."

frequency, percentages, and mean). Inferential statistics include paired t-tests on the respondents who completed both the end-line and the baseline questionnaires; independent t-tests were completed for on all baseline and end-line questionnaires.

Phase Two

During the intervention phase of this research project, five individual praxis events, also called interventions, were conducted. The praxis events began in conversation with and were designed by congregational groups of Redeemer Lutheran: the WELCA, the congregational council, self-selected groups of worshippers, and the adult Sunday school class. These events highlighted personal passions and joy-giving activities; each could be understood broadly as advancing God's mission in the world.

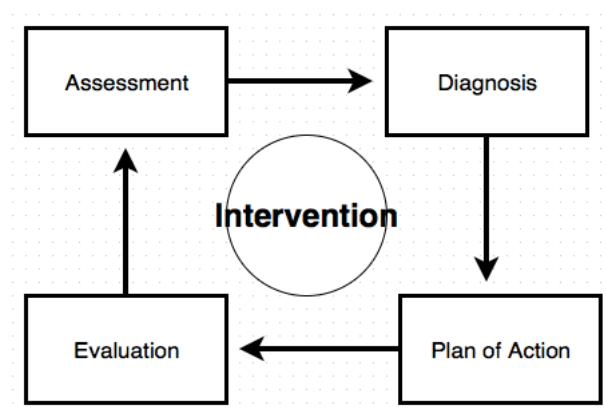


Figure 4. Diagram of Intervention Cycle

The diagram (figure 4) above describes the intervention creation process. In our discussions, leader groups and individuals would self-identify a good place to start. Sometimes that was from a place of need (for example, a lack of community fellowship following the worship service); at other times, this good place to start was simply something for which the congregation members felt enthusiasm. This initial conversation

could be in any of the four boxes of the intervention cycle diagram. The congregational groups would then continue a cycle of *assessment*, *diagnosis*, *plan of action*, and *evaluation*. This cycle would continue as necessary until a praxis event was developed and enacted.

Following the praxis event there was a time of reflection and sharing, and the process restarted. Individual congregation members began to participate in the creation process beginning in September of 2014. This particular research project repeated this cycle in five praxis events.

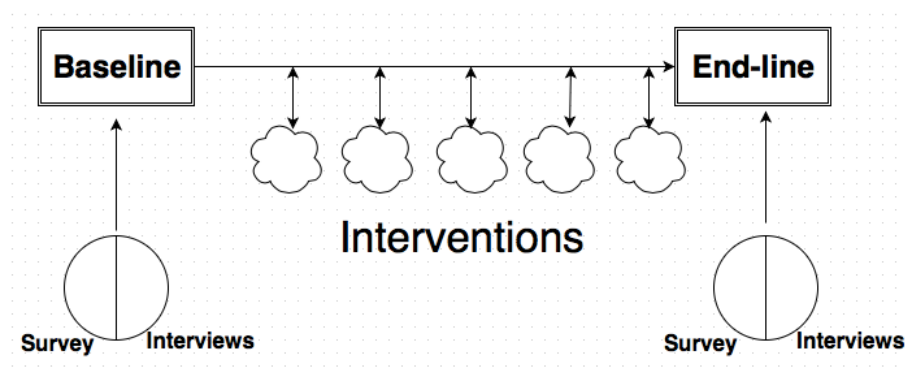


Figure 5. Research Design, Phase One and Two

Praxis Events

Brunch of Tunes

This praxis event came out of conversation in the WELCA group. It seems, in years past, this congregation would gather for a potluck luncheon following the last Sunday service when the month had five Sundays. This luncheon included a program of some sort. After much deliberation it was decided that the group would resurrect this event and ask members of the congregation to share their musical talents.

It was a great success. The first meal was well attended by forty people. Following a time of eating and conversation, our organist shared a collection of ragtime classics on the basement piano. The program, which continued for about an hour, included two little girls in the congregation sharing an interpretive dance, which may or may not have been made up on the spot. A young couple, new to the congregation, sang a pair of Civil War love songs played on guitar and mandolin. This was a surprise to almost everyone. Few members knew they had these talents.

This event was a great deal of fun and highlighted the passions and talents of our congregation members. Afterward there was more conversation about others in the congregation who had talents to share. This discussion also included folks *volunteering* to be included in the next Brunch of Tunes. Laughter, joy, fellowship, and sharing came from this very easy and repeatable praxis event. During the research project there were five months with five Sundays. Each of these has seen a growing number of participants. Throughout the seasons there have been various themes, including a picnic event in the summer, an Advent program before Christmas, and a service project making shoes for children in Malawi.

Gunning for Jesus

Ethan is a member of Redeemer Lutheran and a retired New York City policeman. He is outspoken in his beliefs, especially those concerning gun control and gun ownership. This is not too surprising in this conservative area of the country. In fact, Redeemer Lutheran has many members who carry firearms with them daily, including to the worship service on Sunday. Concealed Carry Weapons (CCW) courses have used our fellowship hall for their classroom instruction several times in the last few years.

Ethan, because of his expertise and passion, saw a need in the congregation for regular firearms training and invited members of Redeemer to come to his private shooting range to practice. This would be identified on figure 4 as a *good place to start*. A praxis event, Gunning for Jesus, was born. In collaboration with the men and women of the adult Sunday school class, details were organized for a regular meeting one Sunday of the month, from April to October, for a time of shooting and fellowship. Congregation members carpooled to Ethan's beautiful home in the Ozarks. Beginning in April and continuing until the cold of winter, Gunning for Jesus had an average of fifteen shooters and another dozen spectators and family members.

The Gunning for Jesus program expanded during the intervention time. The expansions included an introduction to firearms class and a very vigorous combat handgun class for experienced shooters. These programs have outlasted the research phase of this project.

Throughout the research program, shooters, spouses, and children gathered together, enjoying serious target practice as well as shooting games used to build camaraderie, excitement, and friendly competition. Participants had opportunities to shoot other weapons, discuss firearms, and learn from one another. More importantly, as far as this research project is concerned, they laughed and shared in time of mutual upbuilding and fellowship, exploring their Christian vocations as neighbors, citizens, friends, and families.

Christmas Cantata

The church choir got in on creating praxis events. The choir, early in September 2014, started talking about a Christmas cantata, much to the surprise of the music

director. Cantatas had been performed in the history of the congregation, but it had been a long time and the choir was much smaller now. A piece was chosen and the work began. The music director worked up the music, and the choir sang their hearts out. The part that was the most interesting to watch was when the cantata started to grow into a full-size theatrical production.

Members of the congregation, active and inactive, were enlisted to be players in the production. The smallest members of the congregation were fitted for sheep costumes. My wife started practicing a solo for the time during the offering when the choir needed a break. A beautiful young family, who just recently joined, was asked to play the parts of Mary and Joseph, and their newborn baby, Nathan, became Jesus for the production. Their costumed picture became their family Christmas card. A physically challenged member of the congregation played the angel Gabriel. A family who rarely attended took on parts as kings and wise men. A member with connections to the local Baptist church commandeered all their Christmas pageant costumes so we had an appropriately dressed troupe of actors. A member on the fringes rehabbed the sound system, and video cameras appeared on production night to chronicle the event. Even the bell choir participated, playing gathering and recessional music.

The Christmas cantata opened to rave reviews. The church attendance on the Sunday of the performance was amazing, considering that almost every member was involved in one way or another with the production. Friends, neighbors, community members, and grandparents packed the little sanctuary at Redeemer Lutheran to share in the good news of Jesus's birth and the joyful expression of our talents and gifts. It was

not perfectly smooth, but even in the anxiety and giggles of a runaway tiny shepherd, the congregation joyfully shared in this praxis event.

Reimagined Fellowship

Coffee time after the service had, in the past, been a time of contention. Members had been asked to share treats, bars, cookies, etc., following the service. However, there had been a multiplicity of rules involved. They must be plated in a particular way, they must be homemade, and so forth. It stands to reason that folks stopped signing up to bring fellowship-time food, and eventually the fellowship time disappeared, with members scattering to the winds immediately following the service.

The church council got involved and saw this as an opportunity to create a simple praxis event. The council president, Shelly, reorganized the implementation with the help of the council. The rules were abolished; the rule maker had since moved to another state. A new, rule-free fellowship time was advertised. A sign-up sheet for treats and an affirmation process for all who brought treats were created.

The first few weeks the participation was minimal, but on week three of this newly reimagined fellowship time, a crowd of worshippers was still gathered and visiting *two hours* after the service was over! Several tables had been pushed together, making larger groups of visitors. On the fourth week of this new fellowship time, a group of eight worshippers not only stayed for several hours after the service, but I have been told that they then went out for lunch, lasting until late in the afternoon. A second group left after the fellowship time and headed off to breakfast together. This opportunity for fellowship seems to have met a need for the congregation.

One anecdote fits in here: During this reimagined fellowship time, it was brought to the membership's attention that new bookshelves had been purchased at a thrift store for the pastor's study. They were shaped like row boats but had no shelves in them. The property manager, Greg, was going to buy wood for the shelves but it was brought to his attention that Seth, the man who had been Joseph in the Christmas cantata, did some woodworking. Greg asked Seth and Seth was so excited to be asked that he pulled out his phone and for the next *hour* shared pictures of his woodworking projects with Greg and Shelly, the church council president.

In March, a new fellowship time prior to the Saturday night worship service appeared all on its own. An active nonmember who had experienced the new fellowship time on Sunday mornings came to the Saturday evening service prepared with a nice cheese and cracker tray. The praxis events created new opportunities for identifying ways to joyfully behave our way into sharing our gifts and passions.

Journey Team

Following each of these events, the five members of the congregational mutual ministry team, who also served as the journey team in this Doctoral of Ministry process, participated in a time of mutual reflection. These sessions were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded. I also kept a research journal and calendar throughout the process. This journal was also coded at the end of the project. Quotes and anecdotes recorded in the journal are also included in the data. The timeline helped to create points in time where changes were noticed.

Careful field testing and adequate literature review helped to ensure the validity of this study. Reliability, also, was enhanced through carefully describing and enacting the

research methodology after a thorough literature review and field-testing process.

Through these processes this study and its accountability came to be sound and well based in social science foundations.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology, including research design and data collection for this participatory action research project. The baseline and end-line data collection tools are included in the appendices, as are many more documents that may prove helpful in future research projects. Descriptions of the interventions, praxis events, and evaluation process are included. The following chapter explores the results of this research.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

Redeemer Lutheran Church was already a joyful and active place at the beginning of this participatory action research project. There were opportunities for discipleship, faith formation, and outreach. Pastor-driven programs and lay-led events were present, and the members who were gathering together regularly were enjoying each other's company. In the midst of all these blessings, there was a feeling that something was changing even more for the better during the time of the research project.

It seemed that each week something new was popping up. The announcements shared before the worship services included more and more events led by members. Groups of worshippers lifted up some new, joyful expression of individual vocation and ministry each and every week. That feeling of joy poured out over cups of coffee and giggling children. It felt like the Spirit was moving. However real that joy might *feel*, though, doing good research meant not jumping to conclusions based on feelings alone, but rather establishing conclusions based on an evidence trail of collecting data and interpreting those data. This chapter reports and analyzes the data collected throughout this project.¹

¹ I kept a research journal during this project, as described in chapter 4. In this journal I would track my *feelings* and perceptions as the process changed. I made attempts to capture, to the best of my recollection, stories and anecdotes that members of the congregation shared with me. The research journal was very much free-form and changed formats several times during the intervention process. I coded this

The research design, as described in great detail in chapter 4, was a mixed-methods, participatory action research project. The interventions were conducted between October 2014 and July 2015. Prior to the interventions, baseline data were collected through a quantitative questionnaire given to a census of active members of Redeemer Lutheran Church. During the intervention phase, five interventions were conducted.² An end-line survey was completed by a census of active and present members following the interventions.

Four qualitative baseline and four qualitative end-line interviews were also collected as data for this research project. These participants were selected with a nonprobability purposive sample. I used my own judgment to select the participants to serve a certain purpose, which differs from random sampling. I wanted to get input from active members who participated in several of the interventions. Such participation was the purpose.³ Throughout the intervention phase the journey team met to provide insight and critique. These group sessions, as well as my own research notes, were transcribed and coded according to the method described in chapter 4.

journal in a manner similar to that outlined by Charmaz, but I also created a list of notes and quotes. This coding, and the notes / quotes were utilized to bring my perceptions and the statistical data to life. I have chosen to reference all of this research journal data as *research journal*; when possible, I have also identified the speaker.

² Due to a host of reasons, the fifth intervention, *Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, took place after the quantitative survey was administered. Quantitative data for this intervention are not included.

³ Laerd Statistics, "Non-Probability Sampling," <http://dissertation.laerd.com/non-probability-sampling.php> (accessed December 10, 2015).

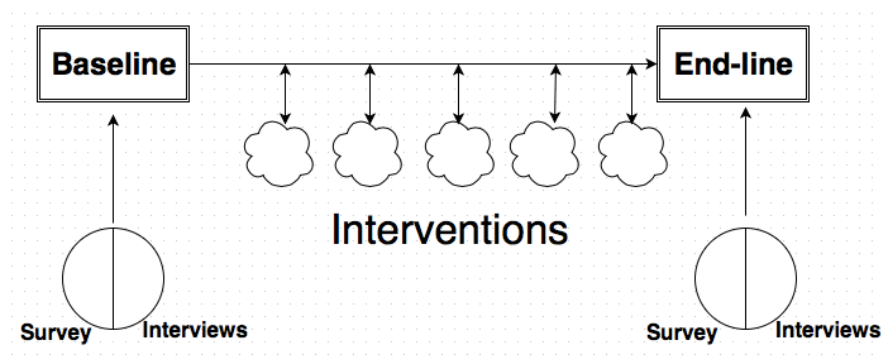


Figure 6. Diagram of Research Design

This chapter takes the following format: Initially, I introduce the research context—the congregation and the research subjects. I do this using the data gathered from the quantitative survey and the qualitative interview data. The questionnaire is also described in this first section. The data are included both in tables and in the text itself. This initial section lifts up in measurable ways the change effect which took place during the time of the research project.

In the next section of this chapter, I use the qualitative data compiled in my research journal, the transcribed notes from meetings with the journey team, and the timeline of the interventions to create a narrative chronology, from which I examine and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data. This section makes use of many tables to bring the copious amount of data into a more digestible format. All of the data are brought into conversation and are triangulated with greater meaning identified. The chapter summary recapitulates the results of this research project.

Quantitative Participants

Members of the congregation were invited to participate in the baseline and end-line surveys as described in the methodology. This is best understood as a census of the present and active members of the congregation. The completed and returned baseline

questionnaires numbered sixty-eight. Completed and returned end-line questionnaires numbered seventy-two. This is near the average weekly attendance of Redeemer Lutheran. Each questionnaire was marked with an individualized user number, for the purpose of conducting paired t-tests. There were forty-seven respondents who completed both the baseline and end-line questionnaires. The purpose of gathering baseline and end-line data in this research project was to identify and measure a change effect related to the interventions.

Baseline demographic information was gathered using the initial section of questions in the questionnaire. The typical respondent was a married female who had participated in confirmation instruction within a Lutheran congregation and who attended worship services every week. She was a member of another Lutheran congregation before joining this one. She was born in 1946 and drove less than five miles to get to church. These data were interpreted from sixty-eight completed questionnaires.⁴

The typical respondent to the end-line survey was still a married woman, only now she would have been born in 1947, one year younger than the baseline. She took confirmation instruction in a Lutheran congregation. She regularly attended worship and was a member of a different Lutheran congregation prior to belonging to Redeemer Lutheran. She traveled less than five miles from her home to the church building, and she has not held an official position of leadership. These interpretations are calculated from the seventy-two completed and returned questionnaires. The table below (table 1) compares the baseline and end-line demographic data.

⁴ One questionnaire in the base-line survey was completed by a younger teen. This questionnaire was immediately destroyed.

Table 1. Baseline and End-Line Demographic Data

Question	Baseline (N=68)		End-line (N=72)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q1. Gender				
Male	27	39.7	31	43.1
Female	41	60.3	41	56.9
	68	100.0	72	100.0
Q2. Current Marital Status				
Married	36	52.9	37	51.4
Widowed	21	30.9	23	31.9
Divorced	2	2.9	2	2.7
Separated	6	8.8	6	8.3
Never Married	3	4.4	4	5.5
	68	100.0	72	100.0
Q3. Lutheran Confirmation				
Yes	42	61.8	41	56.9
No	26	38.2	31	43
	68	100.0	72	100.0
Q4. Worship Attendance				
Usually Every Week	57	86.3	63	88.7
Several Times per Year	7	10.6	6	8.5
Once a Year or Less	2	3.1	2	2.8
	66	100.0	71	100.0
Q5. Prior Church Experience				
Always a Member Here	0	0.0	0	0.0
Member of Other Luth.	39	59.1	40	55.6
Member of Other Denom.	23	34.8	25	34.7
No Prior Membership	4	6.1	7	9.7
	66	100.0	72	100.0
Q6. *				
Q7. Distance from Home to Church				
Less than 5 Miles	28	41.2	27	37.5
From 6 to 10 Miles	20	28.4	24	33.3
From 11 to 15 Miles	18	26.5	19	26.4
26 Miles or More	2	2.9	2	2.8
	68	100.0	72	100.0

Table 1. Baseline and End-Line Demographic Data, continued

Question	Baseline (N=68)		End-line (N=72)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q8. Congregational Leadership Position				
Yes	30	44.8	17	24.3
No	<u>37</u>	<u>55.2</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>61.4</u>
	67	100.0	70	100.0

*Q6 asked respondents which year they were born. The baseline mean was 1946 and the end-line mean was 1947.

The typical end-line respondent is slightly younger than the baseline respondent. This is not surprising. During the intervention period, twenty-one new members were welcomed into the congregation, with an average age of 21.5 years old. The typical respondent remains female; however, it is interesting to note that while the baseline and end-line frequencies for female respondents remained the same, four more men, an increase of 3.3%, responded to the second questionnaire. It is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents who were confirmed in a Lutheran congregation dropped from 61.8% to only 56.9% (see table 1). Five additional respondents in the end-line survey reported they did not receive Lutheran confirmation. Likewise, when asked about prior church experiences, the percentage of participants who had been members of another Lutheran congregation declined from 59.1% to 55.6% (see table 1).

The fact that the typical respondent was an every-week attender is not all that unusual in this congregation. The second section of questions in the questionnaire asked respondents how often they engage in certain behaviors. Question 10 in both the baseline and end-line survey asked how often the respondent attended worship. In the baseline

survey an amazing 99.9% completed and returned questionnaires indicating worship attendance of regular or always. The end-line respondents are still high attenders, 97.2% of respondents indicating they attend worship regularly or always (see table 2). This decrease may reflect a more honest appraisal of their worship attendance, but it is impossible to tell.

Table 2. Question 10: Baseline and End-Line Worship Attendance

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	%DK
Q10 Baseline (N=68)						
Attend Worship	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	97.0	0.0
Q10. End-line (N=72)						
Attend Worship	0.0	0.0	2.8	69.4	27.8	0.0
N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don't Know						

The greatest gain quantified by question 5 was in the categories of unchurched with no prior membership, a growth from 6.1% to 9.7% (see table 1). Question 7 asked the congregation members how far they traveled from their homes to church. It would seem that the circle of influence was widening from the six to ten mile section. Four additional respondents, for an increase of 4.9%, reported that response (see table 1). Our closest worshipers decreased by one and so did those in the 11- to 15-mile category. The respondents in the end-line survey were less likely to hold a position in leadership in the congregation (24.3%) compared to a baseline percentage of 44.8% (see table 1).

From these participant statistics, it appeared as if worship attendance had increased. This was gathered from the fact that more end-line than baseline questionnaires were completed by the worshiping community on the particular Sundays when they were administered. The congregation keeps track of the average worship

attendance and the number of worshipers receiving Holy Communion. In the time before the baseline survey, around forty communion cups were prepared for the Sunday service. Most recently seventy-five cups were prepared (research journal). The congregation, it seems, was also growing younger. This could be gathered from the fact that the average age of the respondents was getting slightly younger. Added to these data was also the fact that the average age of the most recent attendee in the new member class was much lower than the average age of the respondents. In fact, most of the new members were unable to complete the questionnaire as they were too young—most of them too young to read!⁵ Joseph mentioned, “Nancy (the church secretary) told me she had to make six extra pre-k Sunday school packets for the upcoming month, because we have so many new families with young kids. It’s wild to even think we could add that many new members under the age of 5” (research journal).

The most exciting piece of data was that during the time of the interventions a growing number of responses came from worshipers who had no prior church affiliation. It would seem that this congregation is truly making disciples from the unchurched rather than just *swapping sheep* with other congregations.

Qualitative Participants

Four active members of Redeemer Lutheran were invited to participate in the qualitative interview process for this research project. They were selected from an active

⁵ In order to avoid contact with vulnerable populations, questionnaires were only tabulated for respondents eighteen years of age and older. Members, in this congregation, refer to all persons on the membership roles. This includes the children of members even prior to baptism or confirmation. One questionnaire in the baseline survey was completed by a younger teen. This questionnaire was immediately destroyed. Considering the pre-readers in our congregation, this is the fastest growing demographic group in our congregation. In the last year, Redeemer Lutheran has welcomed nine new pre-reading youngsters and infants into our congregation.

membership population of 100 people. This was a nonprobability purposive sample.

Three women and one man were included in this process. Two were retired people, and two were working people. Two members were in their sixties, one was in his fifties, and the youngest participant was in her thirties. These participants are, of course, identified by pseudonyms.

Table 3. Qualitative Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Occupation
Beth	F	33	M	Dentist
JoAnn	F	56	M	Office Admin.
June	F	66	W	Retired
Joseph	M	62	M	Grocer
M= Married; W= Widowed				

Beth is a thirty-three year-old, married mother of one. She is a dentist and stays very busy with her work and family. She grew up in a military family, and her confirmation experience came at a military base in Germany. She has a solid understanding of her Lutheran heritage, as well as of the world around her. Beth's husband was injured in a car accident several years ago, and her private practice suffered an erroneous lawsuit around the same time; in the midst of this, her mother passed away from cancer. She said, "The church is where I was cared for in the midst of all this craziness. The people here were like my family, when mine was gone."

JoAnn loves the choir and is quick to volunteer to sing a solo. She and her husband are regular, weekly attenders. She spends some of her free time singing karaoke, but most of her time is spent with her grandchildren. She volunteers at the church, helps in the kitchen, recently became wedding coordinator for Redeemer Lutheran Church, and

loves the opportunity to welcome young couples into the church family. Her children and grandchildren are mostly absent from congregational life, although they do live in the community. Her own church background includes the experience of a powerful confirmation ministry and youth program. In fact, her confirmation class continues to gather for reunions almost fifty years later. She was a regular, “every Sunday” kid. When asked about this, she said, “We need parents to continue [to bring kids to church] because the kids are the hope for the future.” JoAnn’s brother is an ELCA pastor in Kansas, so she keeps abreast of the workings of the larger Lutheran church.

After retiring from their accounting firm in Illinois in the 1980s, June and her husband moved to the lake to run a resort. A Chicago native, June wastes no time in small talk: “This congregation was where I was grounded in this community.” June was widowed several years ago, and her husband is laid to rest in the Redeemer Lutheran columbarium. Active in the church choir and serving on the church council, June does not miss much that happens at Redeemer Lutheran. She reflects the joy of this congregation, with an openness to strangers and a willingness to embrace change. June also serves as a member of the journey team, which is discussed in the following section.

Joseph is a sixty-two year-old man. He grew up in a small town near New York City, and his fast-paced speech and East-coast accent keep people on their toes. Joseph has lived in Lake City for twenty years, and he is married to the church secretary, Nancy. Being mostly retired, Joseph continues to work part time in a local grocery store, mostly to remain connected to the community. Joseph would quickly tell you that his deepest commitment to the congregation comes through his connection with the church choir.

Oftentimes, he jokes with me, saying, “When we sound like the gospel choir in *The Blues Brothers*, you need to preach like James Brown.”

Journey Team Participants

Throughout the course of this research project, the journey team met several times. The journey team also functioned as the mutual ministry committee of the congregation. In addition, they existed as a liaison between the staff of the congregation and the congregational council. Members of the journey team included Victoria, Greg, and June. June was also one of the subjects included in the congregational interviews.

Greg is a retired businessman from St. Louis. He moved to the lake to retire several years ago. He is active in the congregation, a regular Sunday school participant, and although he does not serve officially on the church council, he has become the *de facto* property manager. He has an affinity for grounds upkeep and a keen eye for the projects that keep Redeemer Lutheran looking in top shape.

Victoria is a nurse at the local hospital. She has been a member of the congregation for many years. Her husband, now deceased, was the church council president twice. They were integral members of the committee that oversaw the construction of the new church building. She is an active member of the church choir and adult Sunday school class. Victoria is great at providing me with the history of RLC that others have forgotten: “Well, that was when Pastor Jansen was here, remember, he had the extra-large desk brought in because he was such a big man. I remember him saying he needed the bigger desk to make him look less like a giant. That is why we bought such large office furniture, remember?”

Table 4. Journey Team Members

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Occupation
Greg	M	62	M	Retired
Victoria	F	66	W	Nurse
June	F	66	W	Retired
M= Married; W= Widowed				

During the meetings of the journey team, I kept audio recordings of sections of the meetings, particularly as they pertained to the interventions. These recordings were transcribed and coded throughout the intervention time period. These codes were examined individually and also combined into one long list of focused codes. There is not a clear baseline/end-line distinction but rather an evolving view of congregation members participating in the interventions. This evolving view and data from my own research diary and timeline form the structural backbone for this section of this chapter.

The focused codes lifted up the change between the way things used to be, the new congregational reality, and what that shift represented. Laughter and joy permeated these journey team meetings. In the midst of celebrating a new joyful reality, there were certainly moments of lament for the loss of members who had left the congregation and for lost ministry opportunities. Words describing feelings included *sadness*, *missing*, *leaving*, and also words like *happy*, *welcoming*, *joyful*, and *laughter*. Conversation also highlighted a sense of hope for the future and the empowering nature of this PAR project. One committee member spoke candidly: “This [project] has been great for us as a congregation. We are laughing together and enjoying each other, and that is very welcoming to new people” (Greg).

Results and Interpretation

Review of Methodology and Establishing the Baseline

Beginning in October of 2014, members of Redeemer Lutheran were invited to participate in this research project focused on living out one's joy-filled passions. A quantitative questionnaire, included as appendix A, was distributed during the regular worship services on the weekend of October 19, 2014, along with an implied consent form (appendix F). Completed questionnaires were returned immediately after the worship service. Several questionnaires were returned to the church office on the days following the service. All questionnaires returned within five days of the initial distribution were accepted. The survey sought to gather information that operated with a wide-lens view of the congregation, providing little depth at this initial point in time.

Questionnaire Composition

The baseline questionnaire was composed of twenty-six numbered questions, as well as several blanks for open-ended questions and comments. The first eight questions were demographic questions used to gather basic demographic information on the surveyed subjects. The baseline demographic data, shown in table 1, were taken from this section of the questionnaire. These first eight questions included gender, marital status, whether or not the respondent took confirmation instruction in a Lutheran church, worship attendance, age, distance from church to home, congregational leadership experiences, and prior church membership.

The next section of the questionnaire (Q9-Q20) consisted of Likert-scale questions concerning the frequency of common practices. All questions in this section were prefaced with, "How often do you engage in the following practices?" Some of the

practices included were: *engage in Bible study, taking time to engage in an activity that brings you great joy, telling your friends about joyful times, and thinking about how God wants us to live our lives.* The responses were: “never,” “seldom,” “sometimes,” “regularly,” “always,” and “don’t know.”

Table 5. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Questions 13 and 14

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	% DK
Q13. Baseline (N=68) Making your home a welcome place for visitors	0.0	0.0	20.8	44.4	34.7	0.0
Q13. End-line (N=72) Making your home a welcome place for visitors	0.0	0.0	10.6	50.4	39.0	0.0
Q14. Baseline (N=68) Making your church a welcome place for visitors	0.0	0.0	4.2	58.3	37.5	0.0
Q14. End-line (N=72) Making your church a welcome place for visitors	0.0	0.0	2.9	51.0	46.1	0.0
N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don’t Know						

The last six questions of the baseline questionnaire asked for strength of agreement with several statements. The respondents were asked to circle a numerical response, with “1” representing “very low” and “5” representing “very high.” The response of “don’t know” was recorded as an “8” for analytical purposes and unanswered statements were coded as “9”. Responses of “don’t know” and unanswered responses were not included in the statistical analysis. The statements included the following from

the questionnaire: *The ministry of RLC is joyful, I am excited to go to church for events other than worship, I think being joyful in one's work is a way to serve God*, and others. There were sixty-eight completed and returned questionnaires included in the baseline survey.

The end-line questionnaire was distributed on July 19, 2015. Questionnaires were included in the regular weekend bulletins and completed questionnaires were collected following the services and accepted in the church office for five days thereafter. There were seventy-two completed and returned questionnaires. The results were gathered into an Excel spreadsheet and then uploaded into an SPSS dataset for analysis. This analysis was completed in September of 2015.

There were six additional questions added to the end-line questionnaire—one for each of the interventions and a separate question concerning the congregation's printed bulletins. The worship committee of Redeemer Lutheran had made some changes to the printed bulletins for the weekend services. While this question had nothing to do with the interventions or the research project, the questionnaire provided a perfect opportunity to poll the congregation. The results for this question are not included in this results section. The entire end-line survey questionnaire is included as appendix B.

Questions E1 through E5 were similar and focused on the interventions. Each question asked, "Did you participate in the [Name of Intervention]?" with a check box for "yes" or "no." These questions then offered five follow-up questions for each intervention and an area for respondents to add additional comments. These responses were helpful in interpreting the end-line data.

Interview Protocol

The baseline and end-line interview process is described in great detail in chapter 4. The four subjects were asked many of the same questions in the both the baseline and the end-line, with the notable exception of question 5: “Did you participate in (Intervention)? Name some positives and negatives for the congregation and community from (this Intervention).”

The complete interview sessions were recorded, transcribed, and coded in the manner described in the methodology section. The interview protocols are included as appendices C and D. I completed the transcriptions myself, and as I did so, I began the coding process. Word-by-word, line-by-line, and section-by-section coding began the process. These led to identifying *in vivo* codes which initially numbered in the hundreds. Combining duplicate items began to focus this coding process. The focusing continued in three rounds of grouping and combining terms. The process of completing the interviews, creating the transcriptions, and doing the coding myself allowed me to really get into the meaning of the interviews themselves. This was a great benefit in the coding process. Appendix G contains a listing of a second round of focused baseline codes. These focused codes led to another level of abstraction.

In light of the interview transcriptions, I reflected on the meanings of the codes. I put these action words into conversation with the transcriptions again. I asked questions of the data such as these: What events lead to *placing*? Where is *belonging* part of the conversation in ways that *unbelonging* might not be? How does *receiving* seem to be working in the congregation? These questions and the focused codes led to the naming of

three axial codes. The baseline axial codes are *providing*, *shaping*, and *belonging* (see table 6).

Table 6. Baseling Axial Codes and Supporting Focused Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes	
Providing	Memory Program Joy Cantata Youth Minority Support Confirmation Adopt	Come Share Inquire Practice Reach out Volunteer Outside world Homeless Communal
Shaping	Pastor Cantata Loss Preaching Lutheran Identity	Confirmation Life Prayer Share Bible Job –Biblical Book

Table 6. Continued. Baseling Axial Codes and Supporting Focused Codes

Belonging	Lake	NA
	Baby	Co-workers
	Friends	Daddy
	Brothers	Buddy
	Pastor	Parents
	Kids	People
	Congregation	Class
	Church	Son
	Family	Husband
	Daughters and Sons	Students
	Families	Each other
	Our	Reach out
	Married	Outside world
	Grandkids	Neighbors
	Cheerleader	Community
	Youth	Park
	CADV	Pool
	Homeless	Beach
	Minority	

There was a great deal of joy in the congregation, shared by both the longtime members and regular visitors. Most of the congregational members are longtime transplants to the lake from other places. Being *here* was seen as important, while at the same time these members felt they were all still *from* somewhere else. The quantitative data confirm this, in that not one respondent had been a lifelong member of the congregation.

Outsiders, strangers, and members of the community are more than welcome to come to Redeemer, and the ministry of the community is rich. However, the axial code of *belonging* certainly connotes that the *other* will learn “what it means to belong here.” Transformation is expected with presence here. This transformation takes the form of the practices and programs that are interpreted as *shaping*. Programs, ministries, and

activities are in place with the sense that people will come here, and the congregation will “be and make disciples” more like us.⁶

The three named axial codes are centered around the congregational experiences of joy named in the qualitative interviews and coded data from the journey team, as displayed in figure 7. The ministry and named mission of Redeemer Lutheran is “to be and make disciples.” This disciple being and making work has often times brought great joy to the congregation from programs centered around pastoral leadership and located in the church building. *Providing* ministry opportunities and meeting the needs of the neighbor did indeed create opportunities to reach out into the community, but there was a focus on what *we* were doing for *them*.

The established program and structure provided tools for *shaping* the next generation of members in the likeness of the original charter members of this mission congregation. Liturgical structure, longevity of musical staff, and congregational activities maintained a connection to the historically continued and *orthodox* way to do things. *Shaping* took the form of many programs and structures throughout the history of this congregation, down to the plating of dessert items for the fellowship time, as mentioned in chapter 4. “I like to bring the snacks for the fellowship time after the service. It gives me a chance to try out new recipes and visit with the people who used to head out right after the service,” said Sherry during one of our fellowship times. All of this shaping was in the hope of growing the congregation, the congregational ministry, and of course, its impact for the kingdom of God. The *shaping* was meant to lead to *belonging*.

⁶ The mission statement of this congregation is “To Be and Make Disciples.”

The *belonging* axial code represented a genuine desire to have more people working together. The congregation wanted increase and wanted an increase in folks like them. “It is nice to bring members into RLC that can relate to the world of retirement and lake living. Although, seeing all the new young families makes me look forward to what we are doing here” (June). This mission congregation of mostly transplants to the area desired to become not only a house of worship, but a community of faith, a sharing group of friends who worked together for the kingdom. *Belonging* was a part and belonging meant participating like we do.

The quantitative data correspond with these qualitative data. Questions 13 and 14 asked participants to indicate how often they make their homes or their church welcoming places for visitors. The baseline and end-line data for both questions are included in table 6. Reflecting on these three axial codes and the workings of the congregation helped me to better understand how these three codes interrelate.

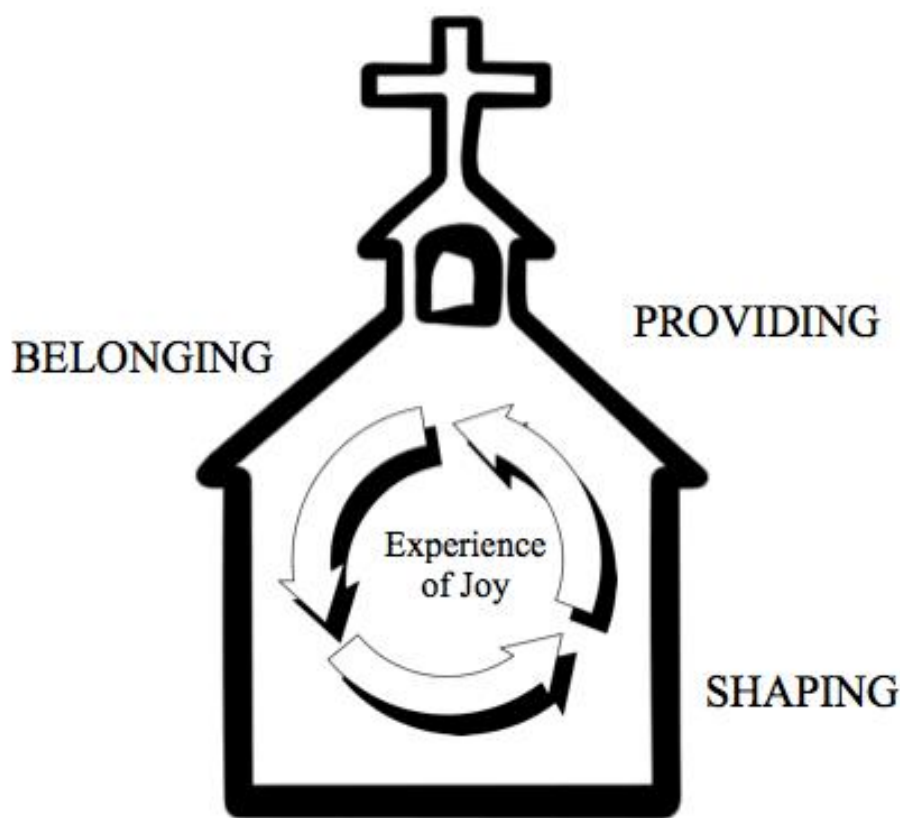


Figure 7. Relationship Between Baseline Axial Codes

Following the research interventions, the end-line qualitative interviews were completed following the procedure described in chapter 4. I recorded, transcribed, and coded the end-line interviews as well. The *in vivo* codes for the four interviews numbered close to 200 individual codes. Several rounds of focusing, combining, and clarifying resulted in a more manageable list of ninety-one focused codes that were included as appendix H. These final focused codes were then brought into conversation with the initial transcribed texts. Through several rounds of focusing, I was able to narrow the list and begin to group them into a higher level of abstraction. These axial codes and their corresponding focused codes are shown below in table 7. I identified four axial codes in

this level of abstraction. These axial codes are *outreaching*, *inviting*, *sharing*, and *including*.

Table 7. Axial Codes and Supporting Focused End-Line Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes	
Outreaching	Growth Time System Love Welcome Help Preaching Mission Feed Young Parents	Biblical Volunteer Reach out Confirmation Outside Church Excepting Joyful Loss Advice Different
Inviting	Pastor Cantata Church Strip Community Events Pool, Park Congregation ELCA Lake Youth	Simple Scary Practice Prayer Life Identity Sing Drama Different Preaching
Including	Serving Food Meet Change Extended Family Others Forgive Sickness Meet	Question Events Join Adopt Accepting Outside

Table 7. Axial and Supporting Focused End-Line Codes, continued

Sharing	Serving Discipleship CADV Homeless Minority Love Communal Blessed Patience Joyful Help Humility Give	Parents People Each other Biblical Practice Share Miracle Home Memory Support Extended Family Need
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The diagram of the end-line axial codes continues to include the baseline motion of belonging, sharing, and providing represented by the moving circle within the church building surrounding the congregational experiences of joy. These relationships and codes represent theoretical coding. These inner movements continue to be present as Redeemer continues to meet the needs of the community, growing its own membership by shaping newcomers who will, hopefully, belong to this community of faith. It is noteworthy here to recognize a second circle of axial codes *outside* of the church building. These new axial codes identified in the end-line qualitative interviews as well as the journey team's reflection were identified as more evangelical for the sake of the neighbor.

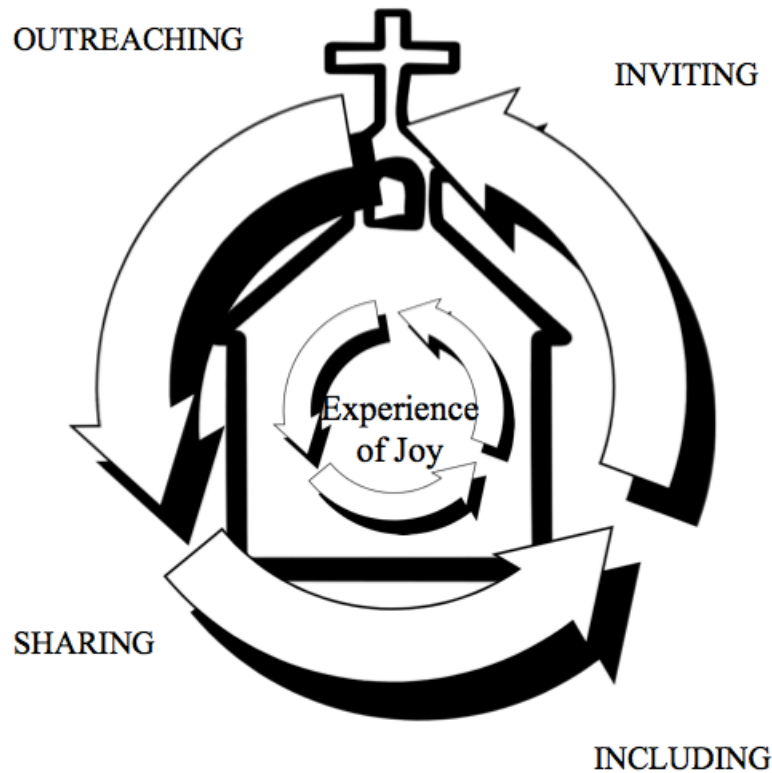


Figure 8. Relationship Between End-Line Axial Codes

The qualitative change effect is best named in the movement occurring between the baseline axial codes and the end-line axial codes. This change effect is described in the following section of this chapter along with bringing the quantitative data into the conversation. The narrative of journey team transcriptions shapes the following section.

Interventions

Brunch of Tunes / Joy in Other Events

The first event to take place in the research phase of this project was the Brunch of Tunes. This event is described in the methodology section in great detail. Members and visitors were invited to participate in special activities on the fifth Sunday of the month. The program changed from event to event, but there was always a time for eating

together followed by a program of volunteers sharing their talents. Sometimes the families in the congregation shared musical talent; in December a group of older women put on a Christmas play, and during the summer, we completed a service project making shoes for people living in Malawi. A whopping 81.9% of the end-line respondents participated in at least *one* of the Brunch of Tunes events (see table 8).

Table 8. End-Line Response to Question E5

Question (N=72)	Yes	%	No	%
QE5. Did you participate in the Brunch of Tunes event?	59	81.9	13	18.0

Two new families happened to be with us on the shoemaking day. One of the families was made up of Jolene and her three children. The children felt right at home, and it was easy to see the congregation was eager to have more children in our midst. The journey team reflected on newcomers and the service project in interesting ways. “It was like they had always been here; they just jumped right in,” said Greg.

This congregation is deeply involved in service work and mission projects not only in our community, but in support of worldwide mission work. Questions 19 and 20 of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their levels of engagement in practices of community volunteering and in direct support of community members and neighbors (see table 9).

Table 9. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Questions 19 and 20

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	%DK
Q19. Baseline (N=68) Volunteering in a community service organization	4.2	25.0	41.7	22.2	2.8	0.0
Q19. End-line (N=72) Volunteering in a community service organization	4.2	20.1	61.1	0.0	12.6	0.0
Q20. Baseline (N=68) Directly helping your neighbors and other community members	1.4	1.4	47.2	27.8	15.3	0.0
Q20. End-line (N=72) Directly helping your neighbors and other community members	1.4	4.2	12.7	58.3	23.4	0.0
N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don't Know						

During the interventions several change effects were noticed. These change effects are described using the language of the journey team. The initial code of *belonging* shifted toward an end-line code of *including* during the course of the interventions. Initially, there was a focus on being a part of the congregational family made clear in the interviews and focused codes. *Belonging*, as an axial code, was identified from focused codes naming relationships such as *husband*, *baby*, *family*, *congregational community*, and *each other*, and geographic codes like *lake*, *pool*, and *here*. *Belonging* seemed to again have a hint of insider language, as compared with those who did not belong. There was not really a purposeful exclusion, but instead a sense that *we are here for a reason*.

Including as an axial code in the end-line data was interpreted as a new expression of belonging. Terms like *together*, *friendships*, and *community* seemed to connote growing relationships and the desire to be more inclusive in programmatic and congregational life. The Brunch of Tunes intervention was identified by all of the interview participants as a time when “lots of people” were “included” in the event. June, a member of the journey team and interview participant, said, “It was so great to see families, children, and members of the congregation all being a part of this.”

This idea of including is also represented in the survey results. This section, again, asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with several statements. Question 18 in this section queried how often members were *telling your friends and neighbors about joyful times* (see table 10). There is an increase from baseline to end-line in respondents who regularly agree in this evangelistic work. In the baseline 33.3% indicate that they seldom tell friends and neighbors about your joyful times. The percentage of *seldom* respondents decreases to 17.2% in the end-line survey. While the *always* respondent also decreases there is an increase in the *regular* respondents.

Table 10. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Question 18

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	%DK
Baseline (N=48) Q18. Telling your friends and neighbors about your joyful times	0.0	4.2	33.3	47.2	15.3	0.0
End-line (N=72) Q18. Telling your friends and neighbors about your joyful times	0.0	2.1	17.2	55.3	4.2	0.0

N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don't Know

The mean responses to Q21 and Q22 both indicate an increase in agreement with the statements *The ministry of RLC is joyful* and *I am excited to go to church for events other than worship*. The mean scores are presented in table 11 below.

Table 11. Baseline and End-Line Means Compared for Questions 21 and 22

Question	Baseline Mean (N=68)	End-line Mean (N=72)
Q21. The ministry of RLC is joyful.	3.94	4.86
Q22. I am excited to go to church for events other than worship.	4.22	4.46

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the responses in the matched forty-seven respondents who had taken both the end-line and baseline questionnaires (see table 12). Question 21 asked respondents to what degree they agreed with the statement *The ministry of RLC is joyful*. The respondents were asked to circle a numerical response, with “1” representing “very low” and “5” representing “very high.” The response of “don’t know” was recorded as an “8” for analytical purposes. The data coded as missing,

“9,” and the data coded as “don’t know, 8,” were not included in the calculations of the means. The means were compared in this test. There was a statistically significant difference in the means for the baseline question ($M=3.6$) and end-line ($M=4.2$); $t_{(46)} = -2.92$, $p = 0.005$. These results suggest that the interventions did have an effect on the degree of agreement with this question. When comparing means in the paired t-test the null hypothesis is that the interventions have no influence on the change effect between the end-line and baseline mean scores. A p-value of .05 or less rejects the null hypothesis. For this question the p value is .0005, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The mean comparison indicated a statistically significant increase in agreement with the statement *The ministry of RLC is joyful*.

The change effect measured in the question would lead us to believe that for the forty-seven subjects who responded to this particular question were influenced by the interventions. This is significant to this research project. Participation in the intervention as a whole, and the particular interventions created as a part of this participatory action research project statistically influenced the self-defined feeling of joy regarding the ministry of RLC.

Table 12. Paired t-test Results for Question 21

Q21. The ministry of RLC is joyful		Mean	N	t	df	p
Baseline		3.5957	47	-2.92	46	.005
End-line		4.2340				

The baseline and end-line responses of the forty-seven respondents for question 22 were also compared using the paired t-test. The mean comparison indicated an increase in agreement with the statement *I am excited to go to church for events other*

than worship. There was a not a statistically significant difference in the mean for the baseline question (M=4.1) and end-line (M=4.3); $t_{(46)} = -1.03$, $p = 0.307$. These results suggest that the interventions did not have an effect on the degree of agreement with this question. While the change in mean scores were not statistically significant, there was an increase in lay-led programs and attendance.

Gunning for Jesus / Joy in Outside Activities

The next intervention to be discussed by the journey team was the Redeemer Lutheran Church Shooting Club, informally known as Gunning for Jesus. This intervention originated from conversations with Ethan, a retired New York City police officer, during the adult Sunday school class. Several of the class members and many more of the congregation regularly carry concealed firearms. Ethan was quite outspoken that regular, disciplined, and progressive training and practice are a part of gun responsibility. Gunning for Jesus was a way, he explained, “for church folks to get together to practice and have fun outside of the church.” He opened up his private shooting range for members to share in potluck dinners and shooting activities starting in the spring of 2015.

Table 13. End-Line Response to Questions E2

Question (N=72)	Yes	%	No	%
QE5. Did you participate in the Redeemer Lutheran Shooting Club Events?	44	61.1	28	38.8

Participation in the interventions varied. There were forty-four end-line respondents who participated in some way in the Redeemer Lutheran Shooting Club (see table 13). This question did not ask the respondents to what degree they participated.

Table 14. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 25

Question	Baseline Mean (N=68)	End-line Mean (N=72)
Q25. The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life.	4.29	4.22

In table 14, the mean responses for question 25 from the baseline and end-line survey are presented. The mean score declines less than 0.1 during the course of the interventions on question 25. When comparing the means of the paired responses to the baseline and end-line survey, it is interesting to note that the mean scores did not decrease; in fact, they increased a great deal, from 3.9 to 4.5 (see table 15).

Table 15. Paired t-test Mean Results for Question 25

Q25. I think being joyful in one's work is a way to serve God		Mean	N	t	df	p
Baseline		3.9362	47	-4.616	46	.000
End-line		4.5106				

There was a statistically significant difference in the means for the baseline question (M=3.9) and end-line (M=4.5); $t_{(46)} = -4.616$, $p = <0.001$. The mean comparison indicated a statistically significant increase in agreement with the statement *The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life*. It is important to reiterate at this point that the baseline and end line data presented in this

results section were gathered at two points in time, before the interventions and again after. It is impossible to determine within this methodology which interventions were or were not significant to the results of individual questions. However, it certainly seems like participating in the interventions made it more likely to see outside of church activities of joy transferring more easily to inside church life. This understanding of individual vocations and callings as part of the priesthood of all believers is very important to the scope of this research project.

I conducted an independent t-test using the data from this question as well. The independent t-test compares the means from two different samples; in this case I compared the difference between the respondents who completed the baseline and the end-line survey with the respondents who did not. The sample size was seventy-three. In this analysis the p-values are .203. Since these are greater than the .05 needed to reject the null hypothesis, I can interpret that there was not a significantly significant change between the respondents completing only one of the questionnaires and the forty-five respondents who complete this question on both the baseline and end-line survey questionnaires.

The journey team identified the power of personal sharing of joys and passions as very important. *Sharing* was understood in this process as an extension of *inquiring*. The transition moved toward proclamation in *in vivo* codes such as *sing, give, care, preach, help, mission, change, and growth*. *Sharing* connotes both giving away the things that we have and also telling our story to those who will hear it. Sharing, in this sense, happens across a person's many vocations. In homes, at work, and in the congregation, sharing becomes a theme.

Ethan shared his joy, and that joy bubbled over into shared joy with others. June, who attended the initial Gunning for Jesus gathering with her son and granddaughter, spoke freely at the journey team meeting about this opportunity to share her deceased husband's revolver. June said, "This handgun was part of his [her husband's] passion, and now his granddaughter is learning to shoot it too."

Even when the journey team questioned the efficacy of the event itself, the sharing of passion was never in question. Sharing did not have a clear baseline axial correlation. Sharing grew as a new axial category from the coded data. This change effect indicated that a new practice of sharing our faith in new and active ways was taking hold in the life of the congregation. It made sense that the model of participatory action research, which focused so deeply on sharing one's own passions and joy-bringing activities, should do just this.

The questionnaire addressed this point of sharing. Question 15 asked respondents how often they engaged in behaviors that shared God's gifts with others. Maintaining that they regularly engaged in such behavior were thirty-three baseline respondents, and twenty-nine more who said they did this sometimes. Only six maintained that they always share God's gifts. Exactly the same number of end-line individuals as baseline individuals (33), 48.5% of the baseline respondents while only 45.8% of the end-line respondents, claimed to regularly engage in behaviors that shared God's gifts with others. There is no way to know if these are the same 33 individuals. This time there were seven who said that they always share God's gifts (see table 17).

Table 16. Baseline and End-Line Responses for Question 15

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	%DK
Baseline (N=48) Q15. Sharing God's gifts with others	0.0	0.0	42.7	48.5	8.8	0.0
End-line (N=72) Q15. Sharing God's gifts with others	0.0	0.0	44.4	45.8	9.7	0.0
N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don't Know						

Sharing as a form of evangelism was addressed qualitatively in the questionnaire as well. Question 17 asked the members of the congregation how often they engaged in practices of sharing God's love with people different than themselves. While this is different from sharing passions with friends and neighbors, it was interesting to see that the percentages changed quite a bit from baseline to end-line. In the end-line, there were no respondents reporting that they seldom share God's love with others who are different, and the number who reported always doing so dropped by 1.1%. Those who engaged in this behavior sometimes dropped from 63.9% to 44.4% from baseline to end-line, while regular evangelists increased from one-fifth of the respondents to 45.6%, which is the highest respondent category for this question.

Table 17. Baseline and End-Line Responses to Question 15

Question	% N	% SE	% S	% R	% A	%DK
Baseline (N=68) Q15. Sharing God's love with people different than you	0.0	11.2	63.9	20.8	4.1	0.0
End-line (N=72) Q15. Sharing God's love with people different than you	0.0	0.0	44.4	45.6	3.0	0.0

N= Never; SE= Seldom; S=Sometimes; R=Regularly; A=Always; DK= Don't Know

Christmas Cantata / Joy in Service

Discussion in the choir set the wheels in motion for a Christmas cantata. The cantata took on a life of its own with a full nativity play, bell and vocal choir, and complete costumes. The methodology chapter set the stage, so to speak, for this particular intervention. There were fifty-one respondents who participated in some way in the Christmas cantata (see table 19). This included members of the choir, the actors in the pageant, musicians, and spectators as well.

Table 18. End-Line Response to Question E5

Question (N=72)	Yes	%	No	%
QE5. Did you participate in OR attend the Christmas Cantata	51	70.8	21	29.1

Beginning with the qualitative data, I identified the axial code *inviting*. *Inviting* was lifted up as an axial code through *in vivo* terms, including *meet*, *new*, *program*, *outside*, *need*, and especially *cantata*. The Christmas cantata intervention was a common theme mentioned by all of the interview subjects. The event itself encouraged participants and congregation members to invite friends and neighbors. Victoria recounted, “Well, I think it was important to include everyone. Even if their part was small, we let anyone who wanted a part have one.” *Inviting* became a theme in the planning of and participation in the event. *Inviting* was identified as an extension of *belonging*.

Karen is a regular attender of the Saturday evening services. Karen’s sister, also a member of the congregation, passed away only a few days before the Christmas cantata. Usually, at Redeemer, special events like the cantata are only held on Sundays, and the Saturday worshipping community is invited to join the Sunday group for worship. However, in this case, the cantata was performed at both services. Karen had planned on skipping the services but was invited by several members of the choir to stay for the program. June, one of the interview subjects, recalled her words after the cantata. “It was the gospel,” she said. “It was the gospel in ways I could see and hear in the midst of my sadness.” Had she not been invited, she might have missed these words of great joy. The

invitation to worship with the cantata and the invitation to participate in this intervention allowed many friends and members to experience Christmas in a new way.

Connecting this intervention to the results presented in the qualitative data, two questions, Q24 and Q25, are lifted up (see tables 20 and 21). These questions asked the congregation members their degree of agreement with the following two statements:

There are times in my work when I am filled with great joy and *The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life*. The mean response indicated that for Q24 there was an increase from 4.01 to 4.44.

Table 19. Baseline and End-Line Mean Responses to Question 24

Question	Baseline Mean (N=68)	End-line Mean (N=72)
Q24. There are times in my work when I am filled with great joy.	4.01	4.44

When comparing the paired respondents answering both the baseline and end-line questionnaires, mean scores for the paired respondents were 3.96 for the baseline and 4.51 for the end-line (table 21).

Responses such as the statistically significant changes shown in these questions are interpreted as an affirmative response to the research question. The research question posed for this project was:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

Participation in the interventions had an effect on the understanding of the perception of joy in one's work. Question 25 *The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are*

easily transferred to church life., also spoke directly to the research question. The results reflect a change effect relating joy, vocation, and serving in God's world.

Question 25 showed a slight decrease in the mean scores of the baseline and end-line samples. It is very interesting to note that in the forty-seven respondents who completed both the baseline and end-line questionnaires the means are quite different. For all the respondents, the initial baseline score of 4.29 decreases by 0.07 to 4.22 in the end-line. This is still a very high level of agreement, however. In a research project that is interested in how one's passions can be used in ministry, the transferring of passions into a more ecclesiastical understanding is key. Table 21 below shows the difference between the unpaired and paired responses.

Table 20. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 25

Question	Baseline Mean (N=68)	End-line Mean (N=72)
Q25. The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life.	4.29	4.22
Paired Q25. (N=47) The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life.	3.96	4.51

As table 21 shows, the responses offered by the members who completed both the end-line and the baseline questionnaires shows a considerable increase, from 3.96 to 4.51. This increase cannot be clearly attributed to any one intervention using these data, but the data do indicate that the mean score of these forty-seven individuals began lower than the entire group of baseline respondents and ended higher than the entire group of end-line respondents. The paired t-tests for this question also indicated that there was a significant

difference in the scores for the baseline question ($M=4.0$) and end-line ($M=4.5$); $t_{(46)} = -4.61$, $p = <.001$. Again, there is a statistically significant difference between the baseline and end line means.

This particular question was very important to me. I experienced great joy in the activities of my life outside of the congregation and through the experience of bivocational ministry I was able to transfer that joy between these separate vocations in my life. The changes highlighted in table 21 and the paired responses to question 25 illustrated that through a PAR defined in this research project a growing understanding of joy and daily work is possible. While these results are limited as a single case study in a particular congregation at a particular time, there are some generalizable themes. Every congregation is different and the interventions are certain to be varied, but in this congregation these five interventions were quite effective.

The magnitude of the cantata in this little congregation was breathtaking. It was expected that the congregation's pews would be empty during the performance because everyone was going to be singing. Journey team member June stated, "As a choir member, I am often involved with the Sunday mornings, so it was great to have others, not normally involved, be such a vital part in the service."

New Fellowship Time / Deeper Joyful Connections

The last of the interventions discussed in this section is the one that was the first to become a new tradition. The new fellowship time revived an old tradition. The time after the morning service was previously a time of rules and regulations. This was described in the methodology section. A joyful loosening of the rules helped revamp this lost tradition, and many of our congregation members began to stay after the Sunday

morning service for a time of fellowship, and many of our Saturday night worshippers began coming to the church early so they too could spend time in fellowship with others: “During the service there is not much time to visit, but now that we have the after-church fellowship time, it gives people a reason to stick around and chat” (Greg). Question 5 of the end-line questionnaire asked the congregants whether or not they participated. Forty-two of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Table 21. End-Line Response to Questions E5

Question (N=72)	Yes	%	No	%
QE5. Did you participate in the Fellowship time?	42	58.3	29	40.3

The journey team connected this particular intervention with a feeling of welcome and outreach. It seems an interesting connection, but the words they used seemed to name a new understanding of the “other.” The qualitative interviews also connected the codes, not necessarily with *this* intervention, but initially with an understanding of *place*.

There was a sense in the baseline data, that the church was maintaining a place for the congregation to worship and gather. Newcomers would be welcome, of course, but they would have to come to this particular place. The interview subjects named, in one way or another, that they were placed or grounded in this community. *Belonging* as an axial code was identified within the focused codes, with terms including *lake, here, community, park, outside world, come, beach, pool*, etc. *Belonging*, in this sense, was understood as being a part of this particular place, location, and geography. Included in this was certainly a sense of insider language.

Outreaching was the third of the focused codes identified in the end-line interviews. Corresponding with the baseline code of *belonging*, *outreaching* connotes an understanding of a welcome or inviting action toward people outside of the congregation. This code draws together *in vivo* codes such as *homeless*, *reach out*, *community*, *accepting*, *outside*, and others. Several times throughout the interview sessions, the ministries of Redeemer Lutheran were named specifically, especially the ministries to Community Against Domestic Violence, our local homeless shelter, and Narcotics Anonymous (NA): “It is nice to see us reach out in ministries so different from our own experiences. It would be easy for us to forget that our community is so stricken with people who need ministry if we only reached out to those like ourselves, but helping with NA and the CADV really shows us at RLC that our community needs us” (Greg). Several of our current active members began their connection to Redeemer as clients of one of these three nonprofits. One such client, Tom, is now a member of our congregation and an active member of the congregational choir.

Tom first came to our congregation as a client of the homeless shelter. He worked through the twelve steps of NA in our church basement. The son of a Missouri-Synod Lutheran pastor, Tom found Redeemer Lutheran to be a welcoming and inviting place, with a familiar liturgical connection. He is a vocal reminder of the continuing work of healing and welcoming in our congregation and community.

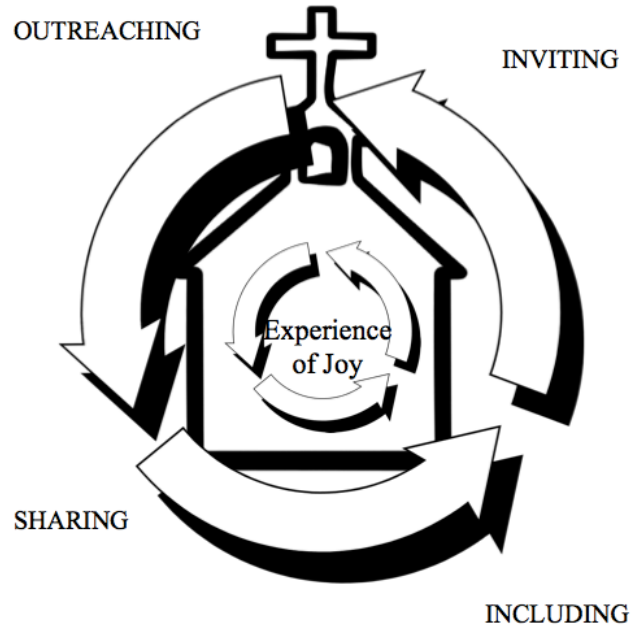


Figure 9. Relationship Between End-line Axial Codes

Tom's story made a nice entry point into our end-line qualitative data. If we place Tom into figure 9, we can see that he entered into the diagram in the quadrant of *outreaching*. Redeemer provided a space for NA to meet and was thereby *outreaching* into the community. Through the norming activities of liturgical worship and continued presence, Tom started to feel like he belonged in the congregation. He was invited to participate more deeply in the life of the congregation, even when he struggled with life skills, living in a homeless shelter.

During the course of the interventions Tom was able to personify several of the axial codes. While singing in the Christmas cantata he also was *inviting* other recovering addicts to be a part of the worshipping community. He was reaching out with a message of inclusion and *belonging* while at the same time participating in the life within the congregation.

Tom continued to struggle with his addiction, and while I was finalizing the writing process of this thesis, I was able to share a cup of coffee and fellowship with him as he served a sentence in a Missouri state correctional facility. Outreaching and fellowship are intricately connected. Question 23 asked the congregation to rate their degree of agreement with the statement *I would like to connect more personally with members of our congregation.*

The baseline mean score for this question was 3.69. Comparing this to an end-line mean of 3.63 shows a slight decrease. This decrease was true for the membership completing the baseline and end-line surveys as well. The mean decreases from 4.1 in the baseline to 3.89 in the end-line. These data, along with the growing numbers in our congregation and the increase in unchurched and non-Lutheran new members, might indicate that the evangelical spirit has so moved in the congregation that the membership is less interested in connecting with each other and more interested in reaching out to the unchurched masses around us, or perhaps they did not want to connect *more* because they are feeling connected now. The paired t-tests for this question also indicated that there was not a significant difference in the means for the baseline question ($M=4.01$) and end line ($M=3.89$); $t_{(46)}= 1.184$, $p = 0.243$.

Summary

A change effect was noted both qualitatively and quantitatively from the baseline to the end-line of this research project. Using the journey team as the narrative chronology, this chapter has included the baseline and end-line demographic data. These data show the congregational attendance and activity are increasing, the scope of ministry is growing larger, with more members traveling a greater distance to attend worship. The

research context is growing younger and also growing numerically, with responses showing that the majority of new membership have no prior church involvement. This is exciting news.

The congregation also seems to be making a shift from *insider*-based ministry to a more evangelical ministry. The awareness of using one's joy-bringing passions as part of an evangelical ministry as a member of the priesthood of all believers shows increases in both qualitative and quantitative data. The data are also interpreted in such a way that it appears participating in the interventions of this project also increased the likelihood of seeing outside joy-bringing expressions as transferable into the life of the worshipping community.

This interpretation of the change effect of this PAR project points toward a statistically significant change in the quantitative data in many areas, and a qualitative change effect is also present. These shifts are brought into conversation with the theoretical and theological lenses and themes in the next chapter. The conclusions from this research are given in the next chapter, and also included are the generalizations to other congregations and the larger church.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The data collected by the qualitative and quantitative instruments utilized in this research project were presented in the previous chapter. The survey data provided a glimpse of the congregation through a census of the active and present members. The data gave a sense of the breadth of attitudes concerning vocation and joy, and of behaviors regarding certain practices of joy-bringing activities and the ministries of the church. The survey data did not, however, provide a very deep understanding of the population. The qualitative data provided a deep understanding of a very small sample of the congregation. Using the coding method described by Charmaz, the interview data were analyzed and interpreted into an image of a congregation that represents the joyful expression of vocation and its outreach into the community.¹ The quantitative data provided the hard numbers for statistical analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data were brought into conversation with the five research interventions.

In this concluding, chapter, I bring these data into a greater conversation with the theoretical lenses named in chapter 2 and the theological and biblical themes developed in chapter 3. The theoretical lenses are vocational theory, American pragmatism, and chaos theory / chaordic leadership. The theological and biblical themes include vocation, joy, and the narrative of Jesus calling the fishermen as the first disciples.

¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*.

Five guiding questions form the backbone of this chapter. These guiding questions are: What is important about these findings? How should we think about these findings from a theoretical perspective? How should we think about these findings from a biblical and theological perspective? What are the limits in generalizing these findings? What are the questions for future research that grow out of this study?

What Is Important about These Findings?

How important is it to do what you love? In the introductory chapter, I related how I left a full-time call as senior pastor of a large and prestigious congregation to pursue an activity that I loved, full-time tournament bass fishing. In the process of transitioning from one career to the next, I had numerous conversations with church members and nonchurched members alike who were doing one thing for pay while their heart desired some other vocation.

I heard people in the church saying that they had nothing to offer the congregation because their gifts were different than the norm. “I don’t know how to quilt” and “I live too far away to serve on the property committee” become disheartening reminders that the prevalent understanding of Christian vocation is often too limiting.² A Lutheran understanding of vocation and the priesthood of all believers, as described in chapter 3, welcomes all to serve as part of the priesthood of all believers. This realization is important as people begin to understand their vocations as part of God’s mission.

This research project examined this connection between vocation and joy. Through the several interventions of the PAR process, joy-bringing activities were reimagined as ministry events. Members and nonmembers alike were invited to

² Journey team meeting transcript (December, 2014).

reinterpret the daily activities that brought them great joy as important parts of their baptismal callings. Luther states, “When a person gladly gives his endeavors to his earthly task, filling his neighbor’s needs and attending to his vocation, then love from God and Christ is active, then the Spirit is present. Finding love is thus the same thing as finding both neighbor and vocation to be something in which one can live with joy.”³

The data showed that these interventions did increase or deepen the participants’ understanding of joy as being part of ministry. Respondents indicated that they were more likely to invite others to joy-filled congregational activities after participating in the interventions and that they were more likely to understand their own joy-bringing activities as transferable to the life of the congregation and to the work of God’s mission. The data suggest this is important to the individual participants and the congregation.

Redeemer Lutheran Church was the context for this particular research project. A census of active members, interviews with a sample of key active leaders, and the transcriptions of journey team conversations provide a rich composite of data. The research methodology provided for baseline and end-line data collection surrounding the PAR interventions which were organically developed by members of this vibrant community of faith. The research interventions involved several aspects of joy-bringing activities held deeply by members of the congregation. Figure 10 illustrates the research design.

³ Martin Luther and J. G. Walch, *Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1982).

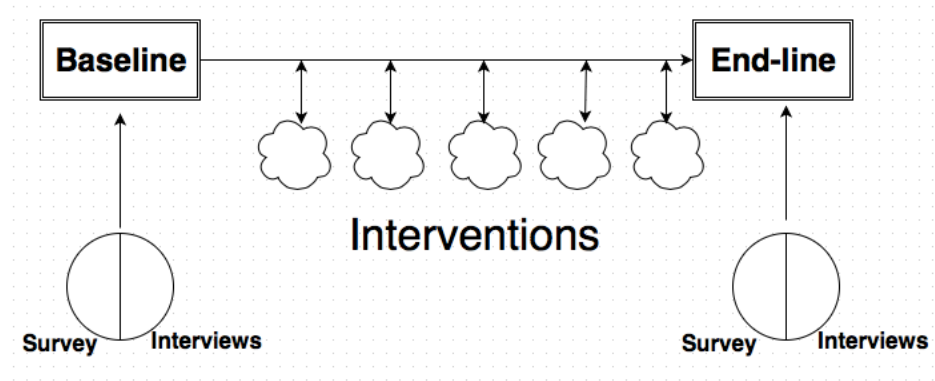


Figure 10. Diagram of Research Design

The PAR research interventions all involved shifting depths of understanding concerning joy-bringing activities and vocations. The calling of the individual, including the passions that bring great joy, were reinterpreted as participating actions in God's mission. This reinterpreting led to changes in the congregation. The qualitative data brought words to the feelings of growth and joyful worship that were noticeable in the congregation. The quantitative data gave numerical data in addition to these feelings. The research question driving this project was as follows:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

This research question has guided this entire PAR project, including the creation of the instruments used for data collection, and the processes for analyzing and interpreting these data.

These findings were important to the life of Redeemer Lutheran Church. It became a regular occurrence for new programs and events, beyond the planned interventions, to be announced during worship. New groups began to feel empowered to make changes. It was important for the congregation to be empowered to use their God-

given gifts to share the good news in a multiplicity of ways. The narrative, included in chapter 5, shared how the research interventions and reflection processes were important to this community of faith. Through the creation of interventions and the process of data collection, the congregation experienced positive change. The data supporting this change effect were described in chapter 5.

The study showed that the congregation experienced the largest level of positive change in (1) moving from a community of *belonging* to one of *including*, (2) understanding the baptismal vocation and joy as a method for *inviting*, (3) transitioning from *shaping* to *sharing*, and (4) growing in the ways the congregation is *outreaching* (see figure 11). The results also suggest how important it was to participate in the interventions themselves. Respondents who participated in events and completed baseline and end-line questionnaires or interviews reported much higher change effects than those who had not. This, coupled with the results showing that following participation in events the respondents were more likely to invite others to additional events, suggests that participation was meaningful in a personal way. The joyfulness and relevance of the interventions were encouraging an evangelistic response.

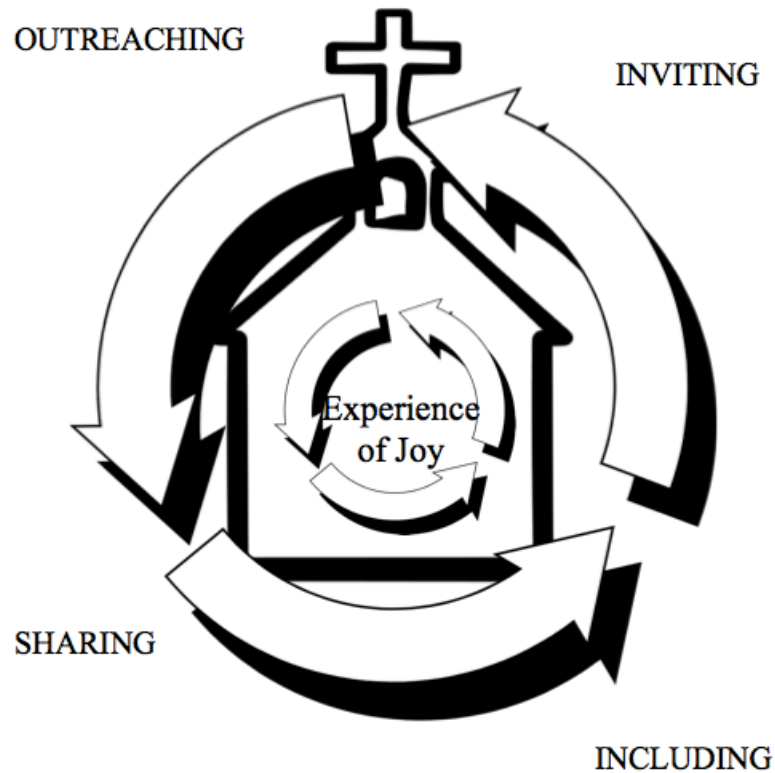


Figure 11. Relationship Between End-Line Axial Codes

The change effect is important for this congregation as it grows in joyful expression of who it is as a community of faith. Through shooting and song, coffee and potlucks, the members of Redeemer Lutheran are living the gospel into being in missional ways. They are laughing and crying together as they proclaim Christ's message of reconciliation and redemption. Following a time of congregational struggle, this project functioned in an important way, helping them know it is appropriate to grow and change and reach out to neighbors.

Before the research project began, June, interview subject and member of the journey team, told me her sister was a member of a congregation of similar demographic makeup to Redeemer (research journal). They had been in the call process about the same time and had experienced a split shortly before that. They were, at the time, a small

congregation struggling to pay for a large building project, much like Redeemer. Near the conclusion of the research phase of this study, I asked the journey team if they thought the project had been helpful to the congregation. June recounted, “We are the healthiest we have been in years, maybe ever! We laugh. We joke! We sing! And we give!” (Journey team transcription). She continued to tell of how her sister’s congregation has since closed, sold their building, and disbanded. These interventions, in June’s interpretation, were of life-saving importance to the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran.

This PAR project, with a focus on joy and vocation, provided the framework and opportunity to celebrate the best of what Redeemer is doing. It provided an opportunity to share our passions and celebrate the gifts God has given this particular group of people, in this particular time. New members were received through these interventions. Young and old were washed in the saving waters of baptism. The gospel was shared in new ways, spoken by new voices, and heard by new ears.

How this project might be generalized to other congregations is discussed at greater length in following sections; however, it is important to note that the work done at Redeemer *could* certainly be repeated in other congregations. The principles of vocation and joy that were applied here to a small, struggling congregation with a bivocational pastor could certainly be likewise implemented in other congregations facing similar struggles. Congregations such as those in which June’s sister was a member might have been very interested in a project or programs that could lead to increased congregational vitality. The greater church might find this to be very helpful at a time when church memberships are declining in small rural and urban congregations, when theological

education costs are on the rise, and when the number of prospective pastoral candidates is in decline.

How Should We Think about These Findings from a Theoretical Perspective?

In chapter 2, vocation, pragmatism, and chaos theory / chaordic leadership were discussed at great length. These key theories and their corresponding bodies of literature formed the initial building blocks of this study. Even before the research question was composed, these three lenses were being used to shape the design of the process. In this concluding chapter, I include these theories in conversation with the data.

Vocation

Vocation, as stated in chapter 2, can be understood within a religious framework and also within a secular framework. The work of social scientists and vocational educators like Frank Parsons and John Holland influenced the way we understand vocational decision-making and perhaps why we enjoy doing the things we do. Parsons, known as the father of vocational theory, stated that each person has a unique pattern of traits, and that each occupation is a composite of factors needed for success. Parsons went on to argue that the traits and the factors can be cataloged, and ultimately a person could be matched to a job using common traits and factors.

John Holland furthered the work of Parsons by creating an instrument, a three-letter code, and a descriptive hexagram to identify the individual traits and occupational factors. Holland's code is the standard in vocational counseling and guidance (see figure 12). Holland shared Parsons's belief that that by correctly identifying traits and factors, one could be matched to a successful and satisfying occupation. Alvin Lueng goes on to

clarify the positions of Parsons and Holland. He then compares them to other well-known vocational theories.

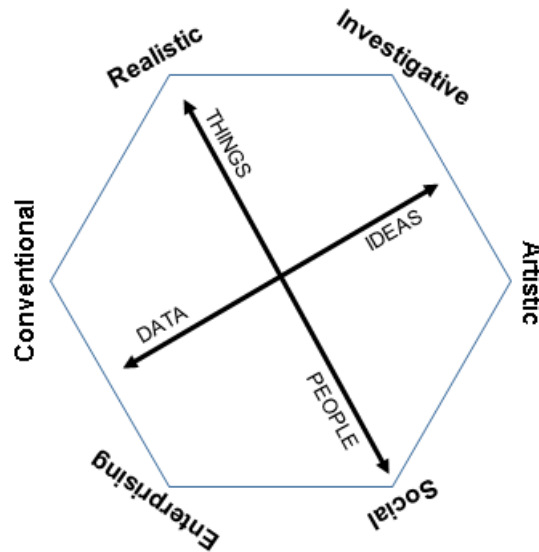


Figure 12. Holland Personality Types⁴

Social scientific vocational theory takes into consideration the traits identifying personal preference, happiness, and even joy when matching a person to a career. Luther would encourage us to understand joy as one of many ways we discern vocation. I wanted to know how the intervention process might enhance this more *Lutheran* understanding of vocation so that all might enjoy their call as members of the priesthood of all believers. Would a Lutheran understanding of vocation incarnate the bones of the Parsons / Holland understanding with a missional life together as the body of Christ? This is discussed later in this chapter.

The data concluded that the PAR process did exactly that. The change effect from the baseline to end-line data shows in many responses that, through the research

⁴ Sheridan College, "Holland Hexagon."

interventions, subjects increased in their understanding of joy and vocation. Responses such as those found in reply to Q25 are common in this study (see table 23).

Table 22. Baseline and End-Line Means for Question 26

Question Paired Responses	Baseline Mean	End-line Mean (N=47)
Q26. The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life.	3.9	4.5

While for Luther there is no distinction between *church life* and *secular life* in regards to vocation, the reality is that for most people there is a perceived difference. The increased mean score for this question suggests that the interventions were effective in positively influencing change toward a more cohesive understanding, transferring joy events. Vocational theory was helpful in this study to explain the importance of using joy-bringing activities as a part of being a member of the priesthood of all believers.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism holds that the truth or meaning of a statement is to be measured by its practical consequences.⁵ Pragmatism itself is a derivative from the Greek *pragma*, meaning “deed.” Loosely defined, American pragmatism means doing what works best. It was the lens of American pragmatism and the teachings of John Dewey that greatly influenced the development of the methodology section of this research project. Dewey taught that ideas are adaptive and that ends and means are interdependent. The evaluative process was of utmost importance to Dewey, for without it there was no way to understand if the named goals were reached. Figure 13, identifies the four-fold process of

⁵ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pragmatism> (accessed January 7, 2015).

pragmatism. These measured movements around the intervention provide an adaptive and analytical method designed to reach an outcome, which is the beginning of the next process.

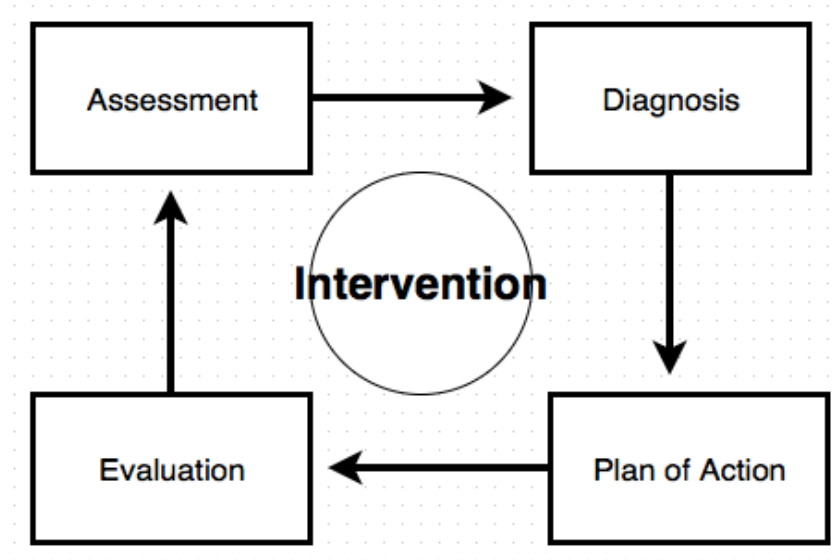


Figure 13. Four Step Process of Intervention

I deeply desired for this project to accomplish something measurable and concrete. I wanted the project to have significance and provide insight on how we should do church. I needed a goal for the project that would be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.⁶ Given the framework of a PAR project, there was no way to forecast the results of the actual interventions, but the baseline / end-line structure would allow me to identify change in a measurable way. The specifics came later, but pragmatic thinking was able to provide structure and an evaluative process.

Van Gelder, in his *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit*, provides this helpful understanding of church. He states:

⁶ Mark Murphy, "Smart Can Sometimes Be Dumb," New York: Forbes, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markmurphy/2015/01/08/smart-goals-can-sometimes-be-dumb/> (accessed December 26, 2015).

The church is.
 The church does what it is.
 The church organizes what it does.⁷

This description of church connects very well to this pragmatic lens. Pragmatism is about doing things, and doing them well. The church, doing and organizing what it is doing, ought to be in a continual process of reflection and analysis as it plans future activities.

The intervention cycle followed the four steps of pragmatism, as shown in figure 13 above, and kept the process moving. The movement through the stages of *assessment*, *diagnosis*, *plan of action*, and *evaluation* around each individual intervention, as well as around the interventions as a whole, provided several opportunities for me to see if we were accomplishing something.

The qualitative data pointed to the pragmatic outcomes of this process. As uncovered through interview and narrative, the congregation initially best understood itself as *belonging*, *providing*, and *shaping*. Now, the congregation has experienced a measurable pragmatic change. New members are attracted, or *invited*, to participate in joyful *outreach* events. These events are accomplishing their goal of reaching out. Through the *sharing* of the gospel and congregational experiences of great joy, more and more people are being *included* in the community of faith. The coded data from my research journal have informed this study. Laura, a volunteer who prepares communion for our Sunday morning services tells me that in the last few years she has increased the number of communion cups from “around forty” to “a few more than seventy-five.” The church secretary often times reminds me that she “used to only make fifty bulletins” (research journal).

⁷ Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007).

Pragmatism would ask this of the study: Did it accomplish what it set out to accomplish? The data would attest that it did. The mean response for question 21, for example, increased from 3.9 to 4.9, in agreement with the statement, *The ministry of RLC is joyful*. This suggests that a feeling of joy in the congregation is increasing. This is a measurable change. Paired t-tests identify the change effect in questions concerning vocation and joy. Question 25 asked survey participants their level of agreement with the statement, *I think being joyful in one's work is a way to serve God*. The data from the paired t-test reported an increase in means from 3.9 to 4.5. This result was a statistically significant change in means, as described in chapter 5. Changes are happening. Pragmatically speaking, something is being accomplished. Coded data show the change from one perspective to another. These axial codes identified, through word lists and successive rounds of coding, that something important and measureable had taken place at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Chaos Theory and Chaordic Leadership

The PAR structure of this research project is a wonderful example of chaordic leadership. The leader-researcher, me, devoted a great deal of time to creating a space for conversation and intervention creating. When given space and freedom, empowered lay members were able to define, create, and enact joy-bringing praxis events that were completely beyond my own imagination. Never would I have imagined that a shooting program would somehow bring a grandmother and her granddaughter closer in a way that shared the love and forgiveness of the gospel. No pastor could have ever predicted the powerful growth in new, young members that found footing in a potluck talent show held

in the church basement on the fifth Sunday of the month. Chaordic leadership and chaos theory, however, would expect these crazy events to evolve into powerful practices.

I shared a quote from Richard Ascough in chapter 2, "Chaos theory suggests that if you set a group of people in motion, each one following the right set of three or four simple rules ... they will spontaneously self-organize into something complex and unexpected."⁸ This is exactly what I witnessed during the course of this project. While the statistical analysis and coding reflect the outcome of the interventions in the life of the congregation, it is in the creation of the events themselves where the lens of chaos theory and chaordic leadership provided clarifying perspectives.

Groups of people, including the choir, the Sunday school class, the WELCA, the church council, and more, grouped together around themes of joy and action. Through reflection and observation they created amazing and powerful events that shared the gospel in ways that were exciting to the participants and leaders. The lens of chaos theory gave permission to longtime members and newcomers alike to think boldly outside the box. Chaos theory would ask of this research project: Would these interventions reflect the wildly changing world of chaos theory?

The answer would be a definitive yes! Connections, experiments, and even variations on long-standing or abandoned traditions came to the fore as discussions were given the freedom to go where they may. The freedom and foundation of chaos theory and chaordic leadership were greatly beneficial to this project.

⁸ Ascough, "Chaos Theory and Paul's Organizational Leadership Style."

How Should We Think about These Findings from a Biblical and Theological Perspective?

Introduction of Biblical Theme and Theological Lenses.

This thesis examines life lived inside and outside the church building. Redeemer Lutheran, as a congregation of the ELCA, has a rich background of theological reflection and biblical study. Chapter 3 brought into the conversation theological understandings of vocation and joy. Vocational thinking, based in the writings of Luther, encourages believers to see all of life's callings as belonging to the priesthood of all believers. The understanding of joy as described in C.S. Lewis's *Surprised by Joy* was transformational as a theological theme.

Luther's Understanding of Vocation

Luther described in his work *Freedom of a Christian* that each person has the same vocation; we are all called to be the *priesthood of all believers*.⁹ As members in the priesthood of all believers, we all minister to and care for the neighbor. This theological understanding undergirds this entire research project. Clearly, we are not all given the same gifts, talents, or (using Parsons's terminology) traits.

This understanding finds a biblical foundation in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 12, Paul reminds the Corinthian worshiping community that they are already members in the body of Christ. The body of Christ has many members, each with unique talents and abilities.

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not

⁹ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*; Luther and Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*.

consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. (1 Cor 12:13-20)

The Pauline emphasis on the importance of different parts within one body encourages the church to embrace the various and different gifts of its members. Dale Martin, in his work *The Corinthian Body*, describes in great detail the various perspectives of unity and division within the early Corinthian church.¹⁰

Luther’s vocational understanding is that each of us is tooled to serve differently in the kingdom of God with no more importance given to one calling than another. God tools some to be priests, and God tools others to be ditch diggers, shoemakers, etc. Wingren reminds the reader that the controversy concerning the distinction between one’s vocation and the established hierarchy was very real. The understanding of the priesthood of all believers, especially in light of the 1 Corinthians passage, encourages us each to see our joy-filled work as an integral part of God’s mission.

The change effect in axial codes described in chapter 5 illustrated a movement to a congregation more interested in *sharing*. This axial code was born from supporting terms such as *sing, give, care, preach, help, mission, change, and growth*. These focused codes connote various ways of sharing. Many joy-bringing activities are lifted up, activities that represent skills, talents, and abilities shared by a diverse membership. *Sharing* understood as outreach and connected activities is quite different than the

¹⁰ Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

baseline code of *shaping*. In contrast, shaping seemed to hold in esteem the long-standing traditions. During the course of the project it was interesting to see the transformation from shaping to sharing. The new fellowship time is again a prime example. In the past, shaping, using more rigid rules and focused structures, attempted to modify the fellowship time behavior to match the prescribed activities of the past. Within the structure of the praxis intervention, the focus was moved away from the shaping of behaviors to match our history, but instead to embrace the reality of both long-time member and newcomer alike. Fellowship and being together became the new focus. Sharing fellowship / food was the new behavior that resulted.

Joy

The second theological lens framing this research project was joy. Joy itself is more than happiness, more than just contentment. Joy in this sense contains a depth of feeling as real as suffering or despair.¹¹ The joy lifted up in this project reflects the teaching of C.S. Lewis. Lewis says this:

It is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and only one, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again.¹²

We may be able to better identify which desires in the lives of congregation members are really joy bringing. The deepened understanding includes understanding our joyful callings to work and play. Throughout the qualitative and quantitative research,

¹¹ Mary C. Boys, "Created for Joy: A Christian View of Suffering," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 61, no. 3-4 (2008): 24.

¹² Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*, 169.

respondents were asked to consider their own joy and joy-bringing passions, but never were respondents asked to define joy. The results overwhelmingly indicated that there was an increase in this self-defined joy. Mean scores increased relating to workplace joy, worship joy, and most importantly sharing the gospel in a joyful way. Question 21 asked the congregation their level of agreement with the statement *The ministry of RLC is joyful* (see table 24).

Table 23. Paired t-test Results for Question 21

Q21. The ministry of RLC is joyful		Mean	N	t	df	P
Baseline		3.5957	47	-2.92	46	.005
End-line		4.2340				

The mean results increased for this question in a way that indicates a statistically significant change from the intervention. The mean score increased from 3.6 to 4.2 during the course of the intervention. Redeemer's oldest member, Dorris, regularly sits directly behind me on Sunday mornings in the second row of the sanctuary (research journal). More often than not she forgets her hearing aid. Darrin, a new attender and single man in his twenties, often sits with her. Throughout the worship service they often carry on quite the conversation. This conversation is usually loud enough that almost anyone in the congregation could participate if they wanted. Over the course of many Sundays they have developed an interesting relationship. Oftentimes Dorris can be heard asking, "Where is that nice young man?" Darrin helps her find the pages in the hymnal and laughs and jokes with her throughout. The joy of this odd couple is visible to all those watching. This is yet another example of the joy shared in this congregation.

Jesus Calling the Fishermen Disciples

This project was informed by the narrative of Jesus calling the first disciples in the Gospel of Luke. They were fishermen when the story starts. If they were anything like the fishermen I know, fishing was a huge part of who they were. They talked about fishing, they prepared for fishing, and much of the time they probably smelled like fish.

When Jesus called them from their fishing life, he called them to be fishers of people. They were retooled for a new kind of catch. Perhaps the fishermen's skill of storytelling, when retooled, would help them in proclaiming the gospel. The skills they had learned in facing various storms on the water might well prepare them for the stormy times in their lives as Christ followers. It might have brought fresh eyes to the world around them, giving them perspective for the organization of the early church. The disciples used the skills they had learned as fishermen to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Table 25 presents the data from the baseline and end-line results for the paired t-test of question 24. The level of agreement with the statement *There are times in my work when I am filled with great joy* was asked of the congregation. The baseline mean of 3.9, from a possible 5, indicates that respondents were finding great joy even as the research intervention began. That is already an exciting statistic. This congregation enjoys what they do. The results indicate that. The interventions of this project encouraged the participants to explore how the things they loved might also be used in ministry, deepening their understanding of the priesthood of all believers and of baptismal vocation. They were not invited to completely change who they were so they could fit

into a particular role—as many stated they had done in their previous professional lives—but instead were invited to use their passions to retool their ministries.

Table 24. Baseline and End-Line Paired t-test Results

Q24. There are times in my work when I am filled with great joy		Mean	N	t	df	P
Baseline		3.8936	47	1.697	46	.096
End-line		4.1489				

Ethan, the gun enthusiast, was not asked to become a member of the quilt guild but instead to understand his own, unique gifts and talents as part of the mission of God. He was able to coordinate a fellowship and evangelism opportunity in a way that very few others could, sharing his love for firearms and preparedness. Had he been forced to change his methods, as Wingren writes, “that would be like living under that tragic misapprehension that one would have to be a shoemaker to be saved, and then fall into the delusion that it is by being a tailor that he can gain heaven. The work of Christ is victory over that law in any form: good works lead to salvation neither through one route nor the other.”¹³

Early in chapter 3, I talked about Juan and his ministry to fathers and sons, using his bass boat as a tool (research journal). Following his illness, he saw an opportunity to share the good news. He went back to fishing with a new understanding. The Gospel of John reminds us that the disciples returned to fishing after their time of learning from Jesus. They were changed, but in many ways also stayed the same.

¹³ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 11.

Ethan, the church musicians, participants in the Brunch of Tunes events, and those now staying after worship for fellowship are still the same people, only now they are more ready to see Christ active in their daily activities. The biblical theme of joy and the disciples in our Gospel accounts might ask of this research project: Would this PAR project respect and appreciate our unique giftedness in our vocations?

The answer again would be yes! Lifting up the priesthood of all believers appreciates and respects our differing giftedness. This deepening understanding of our baptismal vocation, within the framework of a missional congregation, not only champions individual giftedness, it expands on them. The PAR process requires of participants times of multiperspectival observation, reflection, planning, and action. The project would be impossible without the participation of a widely diverse group of members. The disciple-fishermen would affirm the call to disciple gun enthusiasts, coffee-cake bakers, talent show participants, and the many others active in the life of faith at Redeemer Lutheran. The biblical witness is affirming in meaningful ways to this project of retooling and reimagining.

Additionally, the combined narrative of Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilding the physical and spiritual homeland along with the remnant in Israel became meaningful to me as pastor-researcher during the course of this research project (research journal). I heard in the narrative the message of joy and the difficulties of leadership in times of change. I felt the work of my theological and theoretical lenses supported my research and trusted that the Holy Spirit was at work at Redeemer Lutheran. Early in the research phase my research journal documents a change in the title of this project to the closing phrase of Nehemiah 8:10, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Without a doubt, I

found this verse to be true not only in my own work and growth, but also in the growth I was witnessing in the lives of congregation members and the faith community as a whole.

What Are the Limits for Generalizing These Findings?

This PAR research project was conducted as a case study focusing only on a quantitative census and a qualitative sample of the actively attending members of Redeemer Lutheran church in Lake City, MO. The baseline and end-line questionnaires were given on two weekends, one in July and another in October. The interviews used a purposive sample of four members of the congregation. Therefore, the results can only confidently speak of one particular congregation at one particular time. The case study's generalizability is, therefore, rather low.

There may be pieces of the study that could be generalized to other contexts, however. There are many small congregations that struggle with finances and staff time. One important aspect of this study is that while the research and analysis took time, the interventions themselves provided more ministry without adding more staff time. This might not be true in all situations, but the PAR process for creating and implementing interventions can be used in many different settings. I serve this congregation as a bivocational pastor, and I only have about twenty work hours a week with them. Getting more ministry within the same time frame could be a boon for other congregations with bivocational leadership.

The PAR process at Redeemer Lutheran birthed some fantastic interventions, which may be reproducible in other contexts in some form, but certainly are not generalizable to all congregations. This limiting factor is also part of the joy in the project. Who knows what innovative and contextual project might arise from a different

context's exploration with PAR? The next step for Redeemer Lutheran will be to expand this PAR process of growing in innovative ways with small group ministries and discipleship groups.

What Are the Questions for Future Research That Grow Out of This Study?

I serve Redeemer as a bivocational pastor. It would be interesting in the future to see if a congregation with a full-time pastor would have similar results with a PAR process such as this one. It would also be interesting to study whether a congregation with many lifelong members, or even lifelong generations of family members, would have a different response to this PAR project. The data reported that there was not one participant who had been a lifelong member of this congregation. It might also be interesting if the focus on joy was instead on another fruit of the Spirit as expressed in scripture (Gal 5:22-23). The size of the congregation made the project very manageable; it would be interesting in the future to conduct this kind of PAR process in a very large congregation using a Cochran equation to establish a sample.¹⁴ Perhaps a longitudinal study of this same congregation could be conducted over a longer time period, perhaps even with changes in leadership.

Summary

This chapter began by sharing what was learned from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the surveys and interviews. The next section discussed the impact of these findings on the researcher, the congregation being studied, and even the greater church. This study was limited to one congregation within the ELCA, narrowed

¹⁴ Graham Kalton, "Introduction to Survey Sampling and Analysis Procedures," <http://www.okstate.edu/sas/v8/saspdf/stat/chap11.pdf> (accessed January 23, 2016).

even more by population and average worship attendance, and by the fact that Redeemer is served by a bivocational pastor. I have related how this thesis could not be generalizable to the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns of a synod, a type of congregation, or an entire denomination. There may be pieces of this study that can be informative to various contexts.

The following sections examined the findings through the lenses of social science and theology. The social science lenses included the areas of vocational theory, American pragmatism, and chaos / chaordic leadership theory. The theological lenses consisted of vocation, joy, and the biblical narrative of calling the fishermen as disciples. These lenses together provide a composite of the data.

The research question was:

How would a participatory action research (PAR) intervention utilizing praxis events encourage congregational members to recognize and exercise their own gifts and passions as avenues of joyous participation in God's mission in the world?

The change effect in this research project was exciting. God is calling men and women with many and various joyful passions to, *at the same time*, be the priesthood of all believers. Baptismal vocations are used within this missional congregation to reach out, share, include, and invite both longtime members and new converts to participate in the work of the church. Luther's understanding of the priesthood of all believers melds well with the theoretical understanding of trait-based vocational matching. Within this PAR research project, it has been shown that these interventions helped develop a deepened understanding of joy and vocation. This project also had successful outputs in evangelism, church attendance and membership, and an increase in meaningful ministry opportunities. Combined together with many workers, tooled in various ways, Redeemer

Lutheran is being and making disciples, doing church in many ways, but always, in the name of Jesus, for the sake of the neighbor.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE

This journey through the past several years in my Doctorate of Ministry program has been filled with many twists and turns. These have included four pastorates in three states, significant joy and loss events in my own personal life, and long periods of intensive prayer and discernment. Choosing a joyful vocation over the prestige of a more traditional pastoral path was not a decision taken lightly. To say that I have been searching for answers regarding the intersection of my own ministry and joy is an understatement. The joy I was experiencing in my *on the water* vocation was just not matching the *baptismal* joy I was proclaiming at the font.

The Bible certainly describes the believer's life as one of both joy and suffering. We are at times called to face persecutions, strife, and denial, but the Christians I was encountering were all too often focused on the latter and completely missing the former. The common notion was that discipleship is *only* struggle, or a denial of joy. This inaccurate understanding of the *priesthood of all believers* as a denial of life-bringing pursuits was not only hurting the church, it was pushing many faithful people out of communities of faith. This was more than I could abide. Following Jesus is certainly law *and* gospel, discipleship *and* promise; following Jesus also includes joy. It took a bivocational congregational call, a change in geography, and some fresh air on the water to clear my vision.

I began this research project in a new eagerness to experience greater joy. I found that the interventions led to many more times of laughter, joy, and happiness at the successes of ministry than arguments, suffering, and sadness at the loss of traditions past. Something was happening. I fished 275 days that first year. I preached more than sixty sermons, drove more than 40,000 miles towing a boat, and fished tournaments in thirteen states. I buried too many congregation members, but I baptized even more. The congregation was thriving with a joy-filled pastor, and the congregation members were learning to use their own joy-filled gifts and talents to minister to one another. It seemed to be then—and continues to be—a win-win.

One of the most helpful things I have learned in this program has been a deeper understanding of my own vocational calling. I am called into many vocations, as Luther reminds us. I am father, son, husband, neighbor, fisherman, and pastor. After three years of traveling the country fishing, I am learning, even today, that I am a better pastoral leader than I am professional fisherman. In the parish, I am leading differently now than I would have before. I am preaching differently, and the language of joy and mission come much more freely. The adult Sunday school class is getting a rich theological education, steeped in quantum physics and missional leadership language, as I continue to share what I am reading and how I see it being lived into being here.

A second learning I gained through this project and my work as a bivocational pastor is trust. In former congregations, it was often just easier to do the work myself. In the time it would take to contact, train, and supervise a volunteer, I could much more easily do whatever it was that needed to be done. As a bivocational pastor with only 20 or so hours per week to do the work of the church, it would be impossible to do all of it

myself. In my nonchurch time, I needed to be pre-fishing, traveling, or spending precious moments with my family. I learned in this project to trust the congregation to do work they were many times more qualified to do than I was. Budgets, staffing, landscaping, and other key tasks were shared by competent and eager volunteers, who were able, with great joy, to accomplish the tasks they loved. They were being the priesthood of all believers. The PAR process itself taught this lesson again and again. Never would I have created a cantata or a shooting program or an interpretive dance.

Two ways in which my particular ministry setting has benefited from my involvement in this program have been in planning and in what I call *joyful flexibility*. Members and groups of members now feel encouraged to start new programs, to experiment with new ideas. We are currently exploring ways to partner with Doctors Without Borders, thanks to a group of nurses in the congregation who have been moved by this medical mission work. Planning and meeting times are taking on a different tone as more involvement from the congregation demands that planning become more streamlined.

The joyful flexibility is somewhat hard to quantify. Experimentation might be another way to say it. We as a congregation do stuff, and when the stuff doesn't work we aren't left feeling guilty, but there is a sense of giggly humor as we pick up the pieces and imagine a new way. This happens in events, in the church kitchen, and sometimes even during the worship service when we experiment with a new hymn. If it just doesn't work, we acknowledge that, laugh or smile, and move on to the next thing.

This is the congregation today, a gathering of about seventy-five on a Sunday, with the average age growing younger. This is a joy-filled gathering of sinners and saints

called to do good in the world for the sake of the neighbor, in the name of Jesus, living out our many vocations in differing and powerful ways.

APPENDIX A

QUANTITATIVE BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Background Information

Please fill in one circle per question. Please shade circles completely, for example •

- Q1. Are you:
☐ Female ☐ Male
- Q2. Current Marital Status:
☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced
☐ Separated ☐ Never Married ☐ Other
- Q3. Did you complete confirmation in a Lutheran congregation?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Q4. How often do you attend worship services in this congregation?
☐ Usually every week ☐ Several times a month
☐ About once a month ☐ Several times per year
☐ Once a year or less ☐ Other _____
- Q5. Which one of the following statements describes your church experience prior to becoming a member of this congregation?
☐ I have always been a member of this congregation
☐ I was a member of another Lutheran congregation before joining here
☐ I was a member of a church in another Christian denomination
Please identify the denomination _____
☐ I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one
☐ Other _____
- Q6. In what year were you born? Please complete the year. 19_____
- Q7. How far do you live from your church?
☐ Less than 5 miles ☐ From 16 to 20 miles
☐ From 6 to 10 miles ☐ From 21 to 25 miles
☐ From 11 to 15 miles ☐ 26 miles or more

Q8. Have you held any positions of leadership in this congregation?

Council, Welca, Event planning, etc.

o Yes

o No

If yes, then:

Which?

When?

**Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices.
Please circle your response.**

Q9. Engage in Bible Study

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q10. Attend Worship

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q11. Thinking about how God wants us to live our lives

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q12. Thinking about God's plan for my daily life

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q13. Making your home a welcome place for visitors

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q14. Making your church a welcome place for visitors

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q15. Sharing God's gifts with others

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q16. Taking time to engage in an activity that brings you great joy

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q17. Sharing God's love with people different than you

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q18. Telling your friends and neighbors about your joyful times

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q19. Volunteering in a community service organization

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

Q20. Directly helping your neighbors and other community members

Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always

Don't Know

APPENDIX B

QUANTITATIVE END-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Background Information

Please fill in one circle per question. Please shade circles completely, for example •

QE1. Did you complete a questionnaire like this in the Fall of 2014?

☐ Yes ☐ No

QE2. Did you participate in the Redeemer Lutheran Shooting Club events?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, was this a joyful event for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you continue to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you invite others to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your connection to this congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your own life of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments about this event:

QE3. Did you participate in OR attend the Christmas Cantata?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, was this a joyful event for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you continue to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you invite others to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your connection to this congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your own life of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments about this event:

QE4. Did you participate in fellowship time either before the Saturday night service or following the Sunday morning service?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, was this a joyful event for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you continue to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you invite others to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your connection to this congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your own life of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments about this event:

QE5. Did you participate in any of the 5th Sunday events organized by WELCA, including, Brunch of Tunes, Advent by Candlelight, Sole Party and others?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, was this a joyful event for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you continue to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you invite others to participate in this event?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your connection to this congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this event deepen your own life of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments about this event:

QE6: Are you in favor of continuing to use our bulletins as a folder, containing many inserts?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or Why not?

Comments:

Q1. Are you:

☐ Female ☐ Male

Q2. Current Marital Status:

☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced
☐ Separated ☐ Never Married ☐ Other

Q3. Did you complete confirmation in a Lutheran congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- Q4. How often do you attend worship services in this congregation?
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Usually every week | <input type="radio"/> Several times a month |
| <input type="radio"/> About once a month | <input type="radio"/> Several times per year |
| <input type="radio"/> Once a year or less | <input type="radio"/> Other _____ |
- Q5. Which one of the following statements describes your church experience prior to becoming a member of this congregation?
- | |
|--|
| <input type="radio"/> I have always been a member of this congregation |
| <input type="radio"/> I was a member of another Lutheran congregation before joining here |
| <input type="radio"/> I was a member of a church in another Christian denomination
Please identify the denomination _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one |
| <input type="radio"/> Other _____ |
- Q6. In what year were you born? Please complete the year. 19_____
- Q7. How far do you live from your church?
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 5 miles | <input type="radio"/> From 16 to 20 miles |
| <input type="radio"/> From 6 to 10 miles | <input type="radio"/> From 21 to 25 miles |
| <input type="radio"/> From 11 to 15 miles | <input type="radio"/> 26 miles or more |
- Q8. Have you held any positions of leadership in this congregation?
Such as council, WELCA, Event planning, etc.
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
- If yes, then:
Which?

When?

**Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices.
Please circle your response.**

- | | | |
|--|--|-------------------|
| Q9. Engage in Bible Study | Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always | Don't Know |
| Q10. Attend Worship | Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always | Don't Know |
| Q11. Thinking about how God wants us to live our lives | Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always | Don't Know |
| Q12. Thinking about God's plan for my daily life | Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always | Don't Know |

- Q13. Making your home a welcome place for visitors
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q14. Making your church a welcome place for visitors
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q15. Sharing God's gifts with others
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q16. Taking time to engage in an activity that brings you great joy
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q17. Sharing God's love with people different than you
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q18. Telling your friends and neighbors about your joyful times
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q19. Volunteering in a community service organization
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know
- Q20. Directly helping your neighbors and other community members
Never Seldom Sometimes Regularly Always Don't Know

Please circle the number that best describes the strength of your agreement to the following statements.

Strength of Agreement

- Q21. The ministry of RLC is joyful
Very Low **Very High** **Don't Know**
 1 2 3 4 5 8
- Q22. I am excited to go to church for events other than worship
Very Low **Very High** **Don't Know**
 1 2 3 4 5 8
- Q23. I would like to connect more personally with members of our congregation
Very Low **Very High** **Don't Know**
 1 2 3 4 5 8
- Q24. There are times in my work when I am filled with great joy
Very Low **Very High** **Don't Know**
 1 2 3 4 5 8
- Q25. I think being joyful in one's work is a way to serve God
Very Low **Very High** **Don't Know**
 1 2 3 4 5 8

Q26. The activities that bring me joy outside of the church are easily transferred to church life.

Very Low

1

2

3

4

Very High

5

Don't Know

8

Q27. How would you define the world, JOY?

Thank you for your participation!

Pastor Jay Grave

APPENDIX C

QUALITATIVE BASELINE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you been a member of this congregation?
 - a. Tell me about your experiences in previous faith communities.
 - b. What can you tell me about your baptism?
 - c. What can you tell me about your confirmation experience?
 - i. What is your understanding of the concept of baptismal vocation/calling?
2. What is a favorite memory from your experience in this congregation?
3. Thinking about your life to date, what are some things that have brought you the greatest joy?
 - a. What would be an example or two of your passions?
 - b. Considering your work life, what brings you your greatest joys?
4. In what ways have you shared your joy giving passions with the members of the congregation?
5. In your opinion, what current ministry program is the most meaningful to you?
6. How does our congregation live God's Kingdom into being?
 - a. What are the things we do to make our community more like what you imagine God has in mind for God's creation?
7. What would you suggest as ways we could better use our joys and passions for ministries?
 - a. In our congregation?
 - b. As our congregation reaches out into the world?
8. What have we not talked about that you think it is important for me to know?

APPENDIX D

QUALITATIVE END-LINE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you been a member of this congregation?
2. What is your understanding of the concept of baptismal vocation/calling?
3. What is a favorite memory from your experience in this congregation?
4. Thinking about your life to date, what are some things that have brought you the greatest joy?
 - a. What would be an example or two of your passions?
 - b. Considering your work life, what brings you your greatest joys?
5. Did you participate in (Intervention)?
 - a. Name some positives and negatives for the congregation and community from (this Intervention).
 - b. Brunch of Tunes, Reimagined Fellowship Time, Gunning for Jesus, Christmas Cantata, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*
6. How are we doing church well?
7. In what ways has the D.Min. program at Luther Seminary effected the life of this congregation?
8. What have we not talked about that you think it is important for me to know?

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength:
Living Your Passion into God's Mission in the World

You are invited to be in a research study of faithful Christians living out their lives and working joyfully in God's mission. You were selected as a possible participant because you regularly worship with Redeemer Lutheran, Lake City, MO. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me as part of my Doctorate in Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand faithful Christians living out their lives working joyfully in God's mission.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to be interviewed two times in the upcoming year.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks involved in this research project other than the loss of time during the interview process.

There are no direct benefits of this study to you other than the opportunity to participate in a project that may increase the faith life of Redeemer Lutheran and the added opportunity that the complete research project may also benefit congregations similar to this one.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in the church office; only my advisor, and I will have access to the data and any audio recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

Raw data will be destroyed by May 31, 2019.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary and/ or with other cooperating institutions, or Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lake City, MO. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Jay Grave. You may ask questions at any time. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Jay Grave, P.O Box 100, Lake City, MO, (555) 555-1212

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to be audio recorded:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F

IMPLIED CONSENT FORM

Questionnaire Consent Form

The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength: Living Your Passion into God's Mission in the World

November 11, 2014

You are invited to participate in a study of faithful Christians living out their lives working joyfully in God's mission.

If you decide to participate, please complete the attached survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to set the groundwork for research as well as measure how we as a congregation understand our connections to each other, our work in the world and how we shared God's love to our neighbors. It will take about five minutes. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to make changes in our church program and the results may be used to help other congregations make decisions about their ministries. 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 identify you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Redeemer Lutheran 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 Jay Grave, (555) 555-1212, or email rev@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jay R. Grave

APPENDIX G

EXAMPLE OF BASELINE FOCUSED CODES

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Lake | 28. Humility | 56. Chaplain |
| 2. Baby | 29. Cantata | 57. Class |
| 3. Friends | 30. Cheerleader | 58. Son |
| 4. Brothers | 31. Plants | 59. Husband |
| 5. Girls | 32. Young | 60. Baby |
| 6. Boys | 33. Youth | 61. Miracle |
| 7. Pastor | 34. Help | 62. Life |
| 8. Kids | 35. CADV* | 63. Prayer |
| 9. Memory | 36. Homeless | 64. Each other |
| 10. Best | 37. Minority | 65. Adopt |
| 11. Congregation | 38. NA* | 66. Come |
| 12. Church | 39. Cancer | 67. Share |
| 13. Family | 40. Friends | 68. Inquire |
| 14. Daughters | 41. Support | 69. Practice |
| 15. Christmas | 42. Daddy | 70. Reach out |
| Pageant | 43. Buddy | 71. Volunteer |
| 16. Program | 44. Parents | 72. Outside world |
| 17. Families | 45. Loss | 73. Homeless |
| 18. Our | 46. People | 74. Biblical |
| 19. Fun | 47. Happy | 75. Job –The book |
| 20. Joy | 48. Music | of the Bible |
| 21. Married | 49. Choir | 76. Community |
| 22. Grandkids | 50. Preaching | 77. Communal |
| 23. Grow | 51. Moved | 78. Patience |
| 24. Sports | 52. Germany | 79. Spiritual ed |
| 25. Sing | 53. Lutheran | 80. Park |
| 26. Radio | 54. Identity | 81. Pool |
| 27. Care | 55. Confirmation | 82. Beach |

*CADV, Community Against Domestic Violence, and Narcotics Anonymous , are two ongoing ministry connections of this congregation.

APPENDIX H

LIST OF END-LINE FOCUSED CODES

1. Group	43. Feed	82. Strip
2. Serving /Food	44. Advice	83. Forgive
3. Meet	45. Loss	84. Love
4. Change	47. Joyful	85. Push
5. Extended-families	48. Memory	86. System
7. Cantata	49. Congregation	87. Church
8. Others	50. Preaching	88. Time
9. Music	51. Pastor	89. Steady
10. Lake	52. Excepting	90. Always
11. Choir	53. Change	
12. New	54. Confirmation	
13. Together	55. Identity	
14. Talents	56. Patience	
15. Moved	57. Help	
16. Excelling	58. Outside Church	
17. Program	59. Home	
18. Their	60. Friendships	
19. Lake	61. Miracle	
20. Joy	63. Life	
22. Accepting	64. Prayer	
23. Sing	65. Adopt	
24. Give	66. Join	
25. Outside	67. Share	
26. Need	68. Question	
27. Grow	69. Practice	
28. Humility	70. Simple	
29. Cantata	71. Volunteer	
30. Care	72. Reach Out	
31. Preach	73. Homeless	
33. Youth	74. Biblical	
34. Help	75. Blessed	
35. Mission	77. Communal	
39. Sickness	78. Understanding	
41. Support	80. Park	
42. Different	81. Pool	

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