

Lancaster Theological Seminary

**How Christian Practices are Used by Laypeople
to Attract Others to the Christian Faith.**

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in Candidacy for the Degree of
of Ministry

by

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How Christian Practices are Used by Laypeople to Attract Others to the Christian Faith.
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ABSTRACT

The values and views of Christianity have constantly evolved during the Christendom and the Post-Christendom eras. These values and views have affected the way pastors, church leaders, and laypeople attempt to effectively attract millennials to the Christian faith. Lancaster, Pennsylvania is such a community that has been affected by the constant evolving of values and views on how to attract millennials to the Christian faith.

This research project attempts to bring an understanding of the religious landscape in Lancaster, Pennsylvania regarding millennials. The project seeks to examine how Christian practices are used by millennial (ages 18-35) laypeople to attract their peers to the Christian faith in the twenty-first century in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Upon attempting to answer this question, it is hoped that recognized effective strategies are found in “concrete practices that ordinary people identify within their everyday lives as contributing to their human thriving....”¹ Humans thrive when they have an intrinsic relationship that produces a shared love of neighbor. Attractive practices used by Christian millennial laypeople can produce a shared love of neighbor, making an intrinsic relationship special, special in the sense that attractive practices distinguish themselves from ordinary deep friendships based on being Godly holistic.

¹ Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (Oxford University Press, 2016), (kindle edition), 247.

Dedicated to

My wife, friend and love of my life,

Barbara Lynn (Brooks) Brown

Thank you for the years of continued support

in all my endeavors to learn, mature and to

serve God in various manners to

live out the instructions of Jesus Christ

to carry out “The Great Commission.”

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² Cornel West, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud, A Memoir* (New York: SmileyBooks, 2010), 236.

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CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction	1
Chapter II: Literature review	27
Chapter III: Analysis	84
Chapter IV: Conclusions	104
Chapter V: Observations	110
Appendices	117
Bibliography.....	12

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the centuries many Christians have used various types of theologies and practices to attract others to the Christian faith. In *Biblical Theology*, Robert Yarbrough categorized four types of theology. The first, *biblical*, is Bible study which seeks to discover what the biblical writers, under divine guidance, believed, described, and taught in the context of their times. The second, *practical*, focuses on the pastoral application of biblical truths in modern life. The third, *systematic*, articulates the biblical outlook in a current doctrinal or philosophical system. And the fourth, *historical*, investigates the development of Christian thought in its growth through the centuries since biblical times.³

While these theological beliefs may vary, one consistent theme remains constant — Christians continue to practice daily rituals and traditions that represent the lived experience of being Christian. The tradition of Bible study, catechizing, celebrating the sacraments, evangelism, fasting, prayer, and worship are more than just exercises. These traditions represent God's active presence in the world. In *Practicing our Faith*, Dorothy C. Bass described these traditions in the collective sense: "Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world in Christ Jesus"⁴ Although each type of theology and Christian practice serves a different purpose, both

³ Robert W Yarbrough, "Biblical Theology - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology Online," *Bible Study Tools*, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.Biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/biblical-theology.html>.

⁴ Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2 edition (Jossey-Bass, 2009), 544, Kindle.

the theology and Christian practice combine in theory to form a theological approach that attempts to attract others to the Christian faith.

Admittedly, each type of theology and each Christian practice can attract someone to the Christian faith. For me, I was attracted by the Christian practices to the faith. I was drawn by the collective acts of worship, fellowship, and prayer, as well the community acts of discipleship, evangelism, and outreach. Laypeople were the first to introduce me to the faith and model both collective and community Christian practices. My mother was one such layperson who carried out many types of community services. She was a woman who lived Christian practices outside of the church. Her modeling of such practices made the Christian faith attractive to individuals in the community. Her practices were more than just an evangelism to explain the Gospel. She exemplified the lived Christian experience with her humanity. She provided food to the hungry, visited the sick and shut-in, and communicated kindness to those in need. Thus, she performed “attractive” actions or practices that held the ability to attract others to the Christian faith. This study uses the phrase “attractive practices” to describe laypeople’s observable actions and behaviors that attract others to the faith.

My mother’s understanding of how to use attractive practices was evident in her attempt to provide for the fundamental needs of individuals, especially in an urban community where the values of individuals contrasted with that of the church. Even though my mother understood the values of the church, at times she acted in contrast with the church’s values on judgment. For example, when it came to her dealings with gang members in the community — individuals who were committing crimes — she did not cast judgment. She made it a habit of greeting each gang member with a smile and then held a conversation with the gang member from her residential steps. Her actions contradicted most residents who viewed the gang members with contempt. In

doing so, she modeled the Christian practice of demonstrating love. Over time and repetition, her demonstration of kindness was an attractive practice to the gang members. They developed an appreciation for being acknowledged as an individual, and soon saw my mother as a person who listened to their concerns. She exemplified Christianity by withholding judgment, smiling, and offering conversation. In doing so, she attracted gang members to the Christian faith. The effectiveness of my mother's practices was seen several years after her death when I encountered a former gang member who my mother once saw from her front steps. He spoke of my mother, remembering her actions of being a Christian and how she had touched his life based on her smile and their conversations. My mother's attractive practices were well-observed by this gang member who was influenced to leave the gang and accept Christianity.

My mother's modeling of Christian kindness demonstrated the importance of attractive practices in directing people to the Christian faith. As church membership faces a decline, this dissertation seeks to understand how attractive practices can connect with demographics who are disconnecting from religion — the millennials and the “nones.” Pew Research defines the millennial generation as Americans born between 1981-1996,⁵ and “nones” as “...those who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is nothing in particular and that religion is not important in their lives.”⁶ Studies conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 indicate 37%⁷ of Americans decline to go to a church because they

⁵ Richard Fry, Ruth Igielnik, and Eileen Patten. “How Millennials Today Compare with their Grandparents 50 Years Ago.” Pew Research Center, March 16, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/16/how-millennials-compare-with-their-grandparents/>

⁶ Michael Lipka, “A Closer Look at America's Rapidly Growing Religious ‘nones,’” *Pew Research Center*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/>.

⁷ “The Religious Typology,” *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, August 29, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/29/the-religious-typology>.

believe in practicing their faith in other ways and 29%⁸ of Nones believe religion is harmful and has no value.

In considering the millennials in my area, I have observed a decline in attendance within the traditional Christian congregation, use of Christian practices by laypeople outside of the church that met the fundamental needs of others, and a development of attractive practices that attracted the unchurched to the Christian faith. From these observations, I witnessed millennials gravitate to the Christian faith through attractive practices witnessed outside of the church. These practices made the Christian faith attractive, especially those practices that had aims that tended to be broader than the usual evangelism practices used outside of the Christian faith. These observations have led me to believe that Christians between the ages of 18 and 35 are most often successful in attracting others to the Christian faith when they invite them to participate in community service that meets humanitarian needs and when they offer spiritual support during times of crisis. Incorporated within these attractive practices was the use of Christian practices. Such observations prompted further inquiry to examine how Christian laypeople in Lancaster, Pennsylvania between 18 and 35 attract their peers to the Christian faith.

Understanding the persuasion behind attractive practices is crucial for trying to gauge the religious landscape in Lancaster in a Post-Christendom context. As a pastor of a church plant located in the western portion of Lancaster City, it became essential to focus on serving the needs of the millennials who live in the surrounding Community.

Rev. Dr. Louis A. Butcher, Jr., in his Doctor of Ministry dissertation titled, *The Decline In Church Attendance In Lancaster County Pennsylvania and What can be Done to Reverse the*

⁸ “Why Americans go To Religious and Church Services,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, August 1, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-and-church-services>.

Trend, concluded that “local churches have not been particularly successful in attracting or retaining the [Millennials] demographic.”⁹ Butcher stresses the importance millennials play in revitalizing churches in this postmodern world and suggests further research on the millennial generation.

Christian scholars such as Butcher have identified how local churches must address the decline of millennials in the traditional Christian congregations and reflect on which activities outside of church are attracting millennials. Such an understanding is essential because millennials have specific reasons as to why they stay away from traditional Christian congregations. Research data collected points to several reasons why millennials are attracted to activities outside of the traditional church environment.

- Millennials place a high value on personal relationships.
- Relationships are being forged outside of the Church.
- Millennials value coherence between beliefs and practice; faith in action in the world is attractive to many.
- Traditional churches are often alienating to millennials.
- Successful alternative modes of Christian community among millennials offer strong interpersonal relationships and community service.

From these reasons, several assumptions are expressed regarding this project as to why some traditional Christian congregations in Lancaster are not connecting with millennials. The first assumption is current Christian practices need new approaches when it comes to reaching a

⁹ Louis A. Butcher, Jr., “The Decline in Church Attendance in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and What Can Be Done to Reverse the Trend” (doctoral dissertation, Lancaster Theological Seminary, 2015), 161.

new generation. Laypeople are reaching individuals with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the method is different in the twenty-first century. Evangelism, a form of Christian practice to proclaim the good news of the Gospel, failed when it did not recognize it as good news in a given context. James Emery White in his book, *Rethinking the Church*, states that “the New Testament model for evangelism is the communication of the Christian faith through contextualization, which simply means that the message of the Christian faith is to be presented in a way that makes sense to the person hearing it.”¹⁰

Church practices such as prayer, Bible study, and community service must occur in a way that makes sense to a new generation. Laypeople are often more aware of the cultural climate than pastors and are likely to be better contextualizers. In the context of their personal and social relationships, laypeople can share their Christian knowledge and experience in attractive ways.

Secondly, the Gospel is good news. Attractive Christian practices promote the Gospel in a way that shows many things such as the act of caring, the beauty of all God's creation, and the truth found in God's Word. Laypeople's ability to use Christian practices attractively are essential to building Christian communities. Providing a listening ear, comfort during times of struggle, or a needed meal are essential Christian practices that produce optimal growth in a community. Lancaster City is a community that is built on such traditional Christian practices.

Lancaster is a city with a great many traditional churches that are built on traditional practices. While this may be a strength, it may also contribute to the assumption by millennials that Christianity is about the number of churches that are in a community. The Gospel is more than just buildings in a community. I assume that the Gospel is such good news that it cannot be

¹⁰ James Emery White and Leighton Ford, *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of Transition*, Revised, Expanded ed. edition (Baker Books, 2003), 39.

contained within any one form of Christian expression. Thus, one of the goals of Christians eager to share the Gospel is to bring its expression into the cultural idioms of millennials living in Lancaster.

The third assumption about Christian practices is that millennials find the performance of these practices boring and choose to perform the practices in non-traditional means. Some millennials see the performance of church practices of their grandparents and parents as being tedious. Their family members have been performing the same practices the same way for many years. As a result, millennials "are put off by boring liturgies, irrelevant preaching, and stuffy pipe organ music."¹¹ Because of such boredom, many millennials seek non-traditional means of performing Christian practices, which are form of attractive practices. Attractive practices of worshiping include meeting in different buildings other than a church building, collecting tithes and offerings utilizing mobile device applications, or engaging in the sermon by texting questions to the pastor live for answers during the sermon. Most millennials favor Christian practices that allow for a Christian expression that is not limited in form, but that allows experimentation, interaction, and promotion of multi-sensitivity. By using such non-traditional means that are attractive, millennials provide some new forms that create different concepts about Christian practices.

The fourth assumption is that Christian practices have taken on new forms through the emergence of new churches. Many of the new forms of Christian practice allow individuals to express an unconventional way of interacting with others. These new churches use attractive

¹¹ Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 13.

practices in new forms that are appealing to individuals outside of the church, thus possibly contributing to the decline of people within traditional Christian churches.

Such assumptions lead me to believe that traditional church congregations in a twenty-first century context find themselves in a paradigm shift as the Christendom era of the church transitions into a Post-Christendom era. How are the values of the church to be viewed in a Post Christendom context? The answer to such a question is debatable. However, a possible reason is that the religious views of millennials are influenced by cultural change, a cultural change due to a difference in societal values of a new generational context. Stuart Murray and Soong-Chan Rah both give us a look into this context by providing definitions of Post-Christendom/Modern. From a United Kingdom view, Stuart Murray has defined Post-Christendom/Modern as "... the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence."¹² Soong-Chan Rah in his book *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Culture* gives an American view of Post Christendom/Modern by defining it as, "an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set."¹³

Both Murray and Rah point to a cultural change that is challenging to preexisting values. For the traditional church congregations, this is a challenge to its beliefs and practices by a new generation. What does this mean for the traditional Christian congregation? Possibly that

¹² Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 19.

¹³ Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009), 112.

traditional Christian congregations will need to reconsider how to minister to a new generation of millennials in ways that are relevant and relational. In other words, recognize that the Gospel is good news that cannot be presented in one form of Christian expression. Millennials are interested in attractive practices that bring coherence to their beliefs and practices. To many millennials, faith in action in the world is attractive as it continually evolves around Christian practices that meet the fundamental needs within a community.

Traditional Christian congregations may struggle with the types of Christian practices that are attractive to such a faith belief and its viewpoints. These evolving communities comprised of millennials are “searching for space where they can nurture their connection with God and community without having to hide their progressive viewpoints.”¹⁴

Many Christian practices currently used by traditional congregations in millennial communities may be boring in concept and may not reflect the millennial’s beliefs and practices. Beliefs and practices are essential in the makeup of a millennial community. Research conducted by Siebert Foundation shows that “millennials believe and practice in large numbers, [and] they also are not doing so within a traditional church context.”¹⁵

In her book *Bothered and Bewildered*, Ann Morisy speaks to the beliefs of people, and the effects those beliefs can cause. According to Morisy, “What people believe can uplift their lives and make them strong, or it can steal life, clouding it with guilt and all kinds of distortions. It can divide communities, one from another and religion,”¹⁶

¹⁴ Carol Howard Merritt, *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 3.

¹⁵ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry: National Research Study of Effective Ministry Models,” Siebert Lutheran Foundation, 2015, www.siebertfoundation.org/EngagingMillennialsinMinistryResearchReport2.

¹⁶ Ann Morisy, *Bothered and Bewildered: Enacting Hope in Troubled Times*, 1st edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 48.

Seth Nelson, in his book *The Church Unknown: Reflections of a Millennial Pastor*, speaks to how the tradition Christian church “will fail to minister to the world as it is ... [because the world] has been inundated with a variety of options so that we no longer rely on one way of doing things.”¹⁷ Millennials are looking for churches that are spiritual uplifting as they are drawn to attractive ministries that incorporate their beliefs and practices. What Nelson is saying is that it essential that pastors and traditional Christian congregations strive to ensure that the beliefs and practices of millennial communities are uplifting. Uplifting in the sense that pastors and the traditional congregations strive to produce hope and purpose for millennials. Christian practices that use attractive practices can uplift millennial communities because they embrace beliefs within the community. Michael Eastman and Steve Latham in their book, *Urban Church: A Practitioner Resource Book*, state, “The Church-as-community can contribute to the welfare of the community-as-neighborhood... [if it seeks to include the views of millennials].”¹⁸

Producing such an outcome as mentioned by Eastman and Latham in an urban community setting such as Lancaster City will require a change in a Post-Christendom context. By understanding those things valued by millennials in a Post-Christian context regarding attractive practices, traditional Christian congregations can gain an understanding of the religious landscape of the Lancaster City millennial communities.

Millennials are not the only declining demographic in the church and that needs to be attracted to the Christian faith. There are such groups as senior citizens, women, and men who fall into these categories as well. “Demographically, more than half of those who do not attend

¹⁷ Seth Nelson, *The Church Unknown: Reflections of a Millennial Pastor* (Ronan, MT: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 42-45.

¹⁸ Michael Eastman, and Steve Latham, *Urban Church: A Practitioner Resource Book* (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 14.

church or another house of worship for reasons other than nonbelief are women, and they tend to be older, less highly educated and less Democratic compared with those who do not go because of a lack of faith. Meanwhile, those who refrain from attending religious services because they are nonbelievers are more highly educated and largely male, young and Democratic.”¹⁹

However, millennials are a demographic that is important to God and should be to the church. Millennials are important to both God and the church not only because they are one of the next generations to carry on the evangelistic mission of the church, but also because “the church needs the millennial hunger for authenticity, innovation, and social change.”²⁰ Some question even if an effort should be made to cater to this group. In a posted blog by Millennial/Evangelical titled *Millennials Must Not Be the Future of Your Church*, a comment expresses that church efforts should “not focus on reaching Millennials and catering to their every whim.”²¹ However, the literature has demonstrated that traditional Christian churches have not properly attempted to adjust to the paradigm shift in the religious landscape occurring in the twenty-first century, religious landscape that has produced what James White points to as being a wider cultural dynamic paradigm shift between Gen Xers and Baby boomers.²² Because of this wider cultural dynamic, a religious affiliation between the two generations is missing. This lack of a religious affiliation between the two generations has led to a lack of an understanding within the traditional church of how to reach a demographic group of church and unchurch individuals

¹⁹ “Why Americans go To Religious and Church Services,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, August 1, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-and-church-services>.

²⁰ “Why The Church Needs Millennials, But Millennials Don’t Need Church,” The Salt Collective, <http://www.thesaltcollective.org/why-the-church-needs-millennials-but-millennials-don-t-need-church>.

²¹ “Millennials Must Not Be the Future of Your Church,” *Millennial Evangelical*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.millennialevangelical.com/millennials-must-not-be-the-future-of-your-church/>.

²² White, 44.

who can be attracted to the Christian faith outside of the church. This group of individuals who are declining in the traditional Christian congregation is not always attracted to the Christian faith or Christian practices of their grandparents and parents.

This project intends to gauge the religious landscape regarding millennials in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and analyzing this micro level view for any possible linkage to the macro, national level. Although there may not be any significant differences between the religious landscape studies in America and that of Lancaster, Pennsylvania regarding millennials, there is a concern in why traditional Christian congregations are not able to attract and retain millennials within the Lancaster churches. This concern has been noted in Butcher, Jr., and this study hopes to contribute to the scholarship rendering new insights regarding laypeople and their particular use of Christian practices. It also may provide answers to Butcher's question regarding attraction and retaining millennials.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania has experienced an increase in the emergence of new churches. Many of these new churches are non-denominal and have either reinvented themselves or emerged as church plants. They are churches that are using attractive practices to meet the spiritual needs of millennials and others. Conversations conducted with local pastors in various ministerial groups such as Intracity Progressive Pastor Association, Northwest Ecumenical Cluster and Lancaster Mennonite Conference and with local millennials seem to suggest that there is the establishment of new churches due to the traditional Christian churches failing to meet the needs of this demographic group of millennials for various reasons. These millennials are a group of individuals which many have had bad experiences with the traditional Christian congregation. Thus, these new emerging churches that are experimental and interactive in

creating the worship experience have been forming over the years and are drawing the attention of this specific group possibly because of those bad experiences.

Many of these new emerging churches are meeting the spiritual needs of millennials both church and unchurched. My observations and interactions with millennials have led me to believe that Christian millennial laypeople are reaching their peers outside of the church. These Christian millennial laypeople are doing this by inviting their peers to church activities that encompass areas of interest based on life difficulties their peers are facing and just being present with their peers during moments of spiritual needs.

In attempting to answer this question, this study strives to recognize effective, attractive strategies by looking for "concrete practices that ordinary people identify within their everyday lives as contributing to their human thriving...."²³ A human thriving is defined by Drescher as being an enhancement of life and a felt experience of connection with others. This human thriving can be thought of as a felt experience of connection with others that leads to having an intrinsic relationship that produces a shared love of neighbor, through attractive practices. Christian millennial laypeople can exhibit such a human thriving through attractive practices. Attractive practices used by Christian millennial laypeople can produce a shared love of neighbor, making an intrinsic relationship special, special in the sense that attractive practices distinguish themselves from ordinary deep friendships based on being Godly holistic. Godly holistic is being defined by this author as a relationship that is formed between people through the influence of the Spirit of God. In other words, Godly holisticness is a relationship formed through the use of Christian principles established by God. Christian millennial laypeople are

²³ Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 247.

such people who can live out this wholeness. Through living out such wholeness, millennial laypeople will be establishing a foundation of evangelism and mission work through Great Commission mandate, carrying out such a mandate that will remain in effect until the end of the world regardless of anyone, including millennials. Whether churched or unchurched millennials never come to church or are drawn to new forms of church through attractive practices is irrelevant because these individuals' actions will not affect the Great Commission mandate because God's work will be done.

Attractive practices when used by Christian laypeople should be done flexibly during implementation and should not be bound by their location of being in a church or other type of facility. However, attractive practices wherever implemented should have an intent to carry out some form of worship that is based on the Great Commission, a mandate for everyone that should include in its implementation an attractive practice of worship in some form that is for the general community that doesn't have to be exclusively counted as a Christian community. Forms of attractive practices that take place in a general community should be of interest to all because these practices represent a faith in action. In reviewing such things, this study hopes to identify attractive practices that embrace the Christian practices which show how Christianity is comprised of more than just telling the story of Jesus Christ.

A study would be helpful that looks at how Christian laypeople between 18-35 can attract their peers to the Christian faith with attractive practices that incorporate Christian practices outside of the church. It is hoped that this study of the topic would be of use to pastors and laypeople who:

- 1) have a Christian congregation that has a decline in millennial attendance
- 2) wish to learn about effective, attractive strategies used to minister to millennials outside the church
- 3) who could support such efforts of Christian laypeople who are millennials.

SCRIPTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

Great Commission

I believe that attractive practices and efforts to support such practices are part of the ministry of Jesus Christ mandated by the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). The Great Commission is a scriptural basis for Christian communities to serve others by using Christian practices grounded on the foundation set by Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:11, we are told that "for no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."²⁴ A description of the foundation laid by Jesus Christ is in his statement given to the disciples in what has been termed the "Great Commission." As Jesus Christ spoke the words according to the Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"²⁵ To the disciples, he provided for them a theological approach that would lead to spiritual growth through the exploration of Christian practices. Such a theological approach was one to serve God, for Jesus Christ said, "...for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me."²⁶

²⁴ National Council of the Churches of Christ, *New Revised Standard Version Bible Anglicized edition* (UK, Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 179.

²⁵ NCCC, 36.

²⁶ NCCC, 105.

Jesus Christ's words spoken regarding the "Great Commission" we're not mere words but words of action given with an expectation to go forth and to serve all communities of God. He states, "for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."²⁷ Various scriptures (Luke 22:39-46, Mark 2:13-17, Matthew 17:14-21, John 6:1-15, Matthew 5:1-12) explain that during Jesus Christ's approximate thirty-three years on earth, Jesus demonstrated a theological approach and used Christian practices within communities providing a means for worship, fellowship, discipleship, outreach and evangelism that attracted individuals to the Christian faith. This offers the theological presumption that Christian practices are important in leading people to the Christian faith. Jesus frequently met people in various settings, for example, in their homes and along roadways. During these encounters, he used attractive practices when using Christian practices. His methods of using attractive practices that incorporated Christian practices included such things as:

- 1) preaching in places outside of the synagogues,
- 2) praying with others in a garden,
- 3) evangelizing from a boat located on a lake.

By doing such acts, Jesus broke the tradition of established religious practices. What he did could be considered experimental and interactive in creating a worship experience with the use of Christian practices that were attractive practices to the poor and despised. Such actions demonstrated by Jesus showed that Christian practices could be used in a variety of ways that were attractive.

Worship was very important to Jesus Christ. Scripture provides illustrations of how Jesus went to where people were and used the Christian practices of preaching and praying to

²⁷ NCCC, 115.

efficiently interact with various communities. One illustration is found in Luke 4:42-44. This scripture spoke of how Jesus preached in various communities proclaiming the message of God in the synagogues of Judea. Another illustration found in Matthew 26:36-47 showed the importance of how Jesus valued the practice of prayer. Both actions demonstrated the use of Christian practices and the importance of worshiping God in a community.

Other illustrations show how Jesus reached people by using the Christian practice of fellowship to proclaim the message of God. One event found in the Gospel of John 4:7-26, Jesus Christ did the unthinkable by fellowshiping with a Samaritan woman at a well. He spoke with her, “Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans,”²⁸ and began to fellowship by holding a conversation. Through the conversation Jesus Christ proclaimed the message of God to a person of a different community with the Christian practice of living out one of the greatest commands found in the Gospel of Mark 12:31, “you should love your neighbor as yourself.”²⁹ As a result of this fellowship with Jesus, the Samaritan woman and others became believers of the Word proclaimed by Jesus through the Christian practice of fellowship.

Jesus Christ used the Christian practice of discipleship to disciple those who choose to follow him. In “The Great Commission,” Jesus Christ introduced the practice of teaching as an important concept because it involved instruction on obedience. During Jesus Christ’s time, individuals in the Jewish community understood the concept of being disciplined, as it was the custom to study under an individual for instructional learning. The individual giving instruction was to be considered a teacher and one of authority. Rabban Gamliel ha-zaken was such a person, he “was president of the Great Council and his people's spiritual leader during the last decades

²⁸ NCCC, 101.

²⁹ NCCC, 52.

before the destruction of the Temple around 25-50 B.C.”³⁰ Acts 5: 34-40 told of Rabban Gamaliel ha-zaken as a teacher of the law who was respected by the people. Paul himself stated in Acts 22:1-3, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law....”³¹ Paul’s statement referenced Rabban Gamaliel ha-zaken, for there were other Rabbis name Gamaliel.³²

Rabbis in their discipleship used the Christian practice of storytelling to proclaim the message of God to the people. Jesus Christ used a similar approach as the rabbis to proclaim the message of God to disciple people. His use of parables to teach encompassed the Christian practice of storytelling. Two examples of storytelling are in the form of parables —the Parable of the Great Dinner (Luke 14:15-24) and the Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:114).

The use of the Christian practice of storytelling by Jesus Christ helped teach others that “spiritual leaders [who disciple] seek God’s will, ...and they marshal their [followers] to pursue God’s plan.”³³

Jesus used the Christian practice of outreach to meet the humanitarian and spiritual needs of others. Jesus would have heard the prayer request of the people, seen their faith in action, and would have responded based on the words he spoke in Mark 11:24, “...whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”³⁴

Looking at the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19, Jesus Christ was seen using the Christian practice of not neglecting to do good and sharing what he had (the power to heal) which

³⁰ Risto Santala, *Paul: The Man and the Teacher in the Light of Jewish Sources*, trans. Michael G. Cox (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 2003), 29.

³¹ NCCC, 152.

³² Santala, 29.

³³ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (B&H Books: Nashville, 2001), 23.

³⁴ NCCC, 51.

was pleasing to God.³⁵ His Christian practice of proclaiming the message regarding the importance of having faith to the Samaritan leper who returned to give thanks for the blessing of healing.

Evangelism is a Christian practice that Jesus Christ used to bring an awareness of the Gospel. It is a Christian practice that incorporates a charge to carry out “The Great Commission” mandated by Jesus Christ in a verbal context that explains the Gospel. Throughout the Bible, events took place where Jesus Christ evangelized to the people in Judea. On one occasion, Jesus described a form of evangelizing from a boat to individuals in Luke 1-3, at another time he was seen evangelizing to a wealthy man in Mark 10:17-28 about what it took to inherit eternal life.

One of the most celebrated acts of evangelism performed by Jesus occurred in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter five. This act of evangelism was termed “The Sermon on the Mount” for it included the sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ as he proclaimed the message of God to the people of God from a mountain.

Jesus Christ’s Christian practice of evangelism was not limited in scope as he would meet individuals in various locations and environments. His Christian practice of evangelism led him to encounters with individuals from "Galilee, The Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan."³⁶

Although Jesus Christ’s ministry centered around the Jewish communities, his disciples followed his command to go to all nations, reaching both Jews and gentiles. They adopted a lifestyle that incorporated mandates from Jesus Christ in his instructions to live out “The Great Commission” spoken to them. As a result, the disciples attracted others to the faith by using Christian practices that included worship, fellowship, discipleship, outreach and evangelism.

³⁵ NCCC, 243.

³⁶ NCCC, 4.

This Christian faith caused individual lives and communities to flourish throughout the world based on the mandate to live out "The Great Commission.

Central Terms

The terms defined here are used throughout the project and intend to provide a helpful reference for the reader.

- **Attractive Practices:** Any practice that makes the Christian faith attractive, especially to one outside the faith. This aims to be a broader term than “evangelism,” which tends to connect verbal explanation of the Gospel. While attractive practices may include evangelism, they may also include such varied practices as serving in a clothing bank, offering musical concerts, or offering micro-financing to small businesses.
- **Christian Community:** Any community such as a group, organization, or institute that comes together by its commitment to Christ as savior and example for life.
- **Christian Practices:** Practices that Christians traditionally do because they are Christian. This would include things like worship, Bible study, prayer, evangelism, fasting, meeting human needs, celebrating the sacraments, or catechizing. In addition, “Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God’s active presence for the life of the world in Christ Jesus.”³⁷
- **Community Services:** An act of volunteer service done by an individual or group of individuals that benefits a community or institution. This term, however, for this project will be used to describe an act of Christian service done by an individual or group of individuals within a community or institution. Christian service is distinct from other acts

³⁷ Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2nd edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 544, Kindle.

of service as it involves “the central purposes and convictions of the Christian faith and to the corporate forms of the church’s life.”³⁸

- Emerging Church: A church that is willing to be “experimental and interactive with creating the worship experience.”³⁹ It is a church that has attractive practices such as evangelism. They may also include varied practices such as serving in a clothing bank, offering musical concerts, or offering micro-financing to small businesses that appeal to some younger adults. In this project, the term I used to describe a movement community that uses attractive practices to address the spiritual needs of young adults.
- Fundamental Needs: The material and spiritual needs of individuals in a community.
- Millennials: Individuals born between 1981-1996.⁴⁰ Throughout the project it will be used to represent a declining group of individuals in the church who are churched and unchurched. Thirty percent of millennials claim to be spiritual but not religious.⁴¹
- Nones: According to Lipka, nones “... self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is nothing in particular and that religion is not important in their lives.”⁴² This is a general term that will be used in the project to identify a subgroup of millennials who are unaffiliated with any religious institution.
- Post Christendom: According to Stuart Murray, Post Christendom is “the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express

³⁸ Stone, 24.

³⁹ Dan Kimball et al., *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 111.

⁴⁰ Fry, Igielnik, and Eileen, 2018.

⁴¹ L. Street et al., “Religious Landscape Study,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, May 11, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/> Accessed.

⁴² Michael Lipka, “A Closer Look at America’s Rapidly Growing Religious ‘nones,” *Pew Research Center*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/>.

Christian convictions decline in influence.”⁴³ In this project the term will be used to identify with a millennial view of the relevance of traditional Christian practices in the twenty-first century.

- Unaffiliated: According to the Pew Research Center, the unaffiliated are three distinct subgroups who describe their religion as either atheist, agnostic, or as “nothing in particular.”⁴⁴ This term will be used to help identify statistical information as it relates to millennials and their identified subcategories.

Methodology

This major project combined a literature review with qualitative methods of research. The project utilized material that is written about Christian practices, millennials, current forms of outreach, church decline in the twenty-first century and emerging churches. The research examined how Christian laypeople between ages eighteen and thirty-five used Christian practices to attract their peers to the Christian Faith in the twenty-first century outside of the church in Lancaster.

The specific research strategies focused on formulating a process comprised of four aspects:

- 1) review of current literature,
- 2) field study of millennial Christian churches, para ministry organizations and one secular business,
- 3) selection process,

⁴³ Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes, MK1: Paternoster, 2004) ,19.

⁴⁴ “Religion and the Unaffiliated,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise-religion/>.

4) data collection process.

The first aspect was the review and summation of literature from 2000 to 2017 on scholarly studies of Christian practices, millennials, current forms of outreach, church decline and emerging churches. An interview guide was prepared from the review and summation of the literature that focused on Christian practices and on attractive practices that attracted both church and unchurched millennials to the Christian faith. The interview guide was used to gather data to compare responses and practices of participants in three areas of Christian faith: personal practices, shared community practices, and attractive Christian Practices. The interview guide received approval from both the study's advisor as well as IRB (see Appendix A).

In the second aspect, a field study was conducted by visiting six millennial Christian churches, two para ministry organizations and one secular business. Millennial Christian churches had a consistency attendance of ten or more millennials who participated in weekly structured activities. Para ministry organizations and secular business had a consistency of one or more millennials that participated in weekly structured activities. A two-fold approach was taken in the visitation. First, an unscheduled informal visit of observation of all three groups. Second, a scheduled formal structured visit of observation of programs offered for millennials by each group.

The first approach was to observe the general operational functions of each selected group publicly. A total of six emerging churches, two parachurches (organizations that use Christian practices within their organizations), and one business in the Lancaster County area were visited. Each of these churches varied in Christian beliefs, size, building structures, denomination, ethnicity and social-economical composition. The denominations visited included Mennonite, Baptist, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ, and non-denominational.

The two parachurches and one business were led by a millennial Christian layperson and varied in size, ethnicity, building structures and social-economic composition.

All three groups were observed regarding areas of category II (Sharing Community Practices) and category III (Attractive Christian Practices) listed in Appendix A. Data was then collected regarding these two categories for shared community practices and attractive practices that were both common and distinct within each group.

In the second approach, leaders of each group were contacted and asked to assist with this project by providing information on specific millennial activities and facilitating an introduction to millennial leaders within their groups. Data was then collected from millennial leaders on specific attractive practices that incorporated various Christian practices.

After gathering information from leaders of each group, a selection process was formulated to select lay participants for this study. A total of twenty individuals were selected and broken into two groups of ten each. One group termed providers and the other group termed recipients. Group one consisted of individuals who were laypeople leaders who actively shared their Christian faith in the Lancaster area, and group two consisted of individuals who were considered recipient laypeople who are associated with group one or an organization that actively shared their Christian faith in the Lancaster area. Participants were recommended by local pastors, millennial leaders upon receipt of Appendix B and based on my observation of others that I believed could contribute to this project.

Selection of participants was based on criteria of individuals being residents of Lancaster County, being a part of a Christian group, organization or business, and being between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five. The age breakdown of participants was categorized into three distinct

groups: 1) 18-23, 2) 24-29 and 3) 30-35 with the percentage of each group being 35, 35 and 30 respectively.

The composition of participants was comprised of 45 percent Caucasian, 25 percent African American, 20 percent Latino, and 10 percent of other. In addition, the selection process attempted to be inclusive of both genders, various church affiliations, and various social-economic backgrounds to obtain data reflecting proper representation of millennials in the Lancaster area.

Data collection

Data was collected from participants using a semi-structured interview questionnaire using questions from the three categories within the interview guide. The purpose of interviewing participants was to collect qualitative responses, which would be used to recognize effective, attractive strategies that embraced Christian practices that attracted people to the Christian faith.

Interview

An introductory letter (Appendix C) was sent to selected participants outlining the purpose of the study, followed by a phone call to further explain the project and to answer any related questions (Appendix A). A scheduled approximate hour interview time was appointed, (with an option to be extended), and a semi-structured interview took place in an environment that was suitable for the participant to put them at ease. The participants were provided with an assurance that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The means for assuring confidentiality was done through an agreement with participants by allowing them to choose the interview environment and a promise to use code names for the participants. The Ethics of Consent Form (Appendix D) was signed by both the interviewee and the participant before any

questions being asked from the interview guide. These interviews were used to gather data on attractive practices that attract people to the Christian faith.

Data

Data was collected during the interview process via a mobile device using a voice recording application. As each participant was interviewed individually, their interview information was audio-recorded. In addition to the audio-recording information, notes were taken during the interview to use for clarification in the review of questions. Audio-recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim, so data is available for future studies or to validate information in case of any challenge.

Each participant's information was evaluated based on responses given to questions listed in Appendix A. The results of the evaluation of data collected were used to formulate an assessment of attractive practices that embrace Christian practices and to analyze the effects of attractive practices that attract millennials to the Christian faith. Information was then collected from the transcribed interviews and used to help formulate an analysis of data and a two-fold comparison between the provider group and the recipient group.

Document Coding

Document coding for this project was done in two phases in order to distinguish between field study observation groups and participant interviews. The first phase coding of the project involved a field study of three groups that were categorized as churches, parachurches or a business, while the second phase coding of the project was used to distinguish participants.

Field Study Observations

Field study observation groups were distinguished by an assigned code name for analysis and were identified by a letter C, PC or SB. The letter (s) C, PC or SB denoted whether an

organization was a church (C), parachurch (PC) or secular business (SB) organization. In addition to the letter(s) to denote organizations; a designated number such as 1, 2 or 3 was assigned to each organization using the prefix of C, PC or SB to indicate which group they represented. Each organization, for confidentiality purposes, was referred to by their code name. Information gathered for the assessment of each group was based on observations regarding areas of category II (Sharing Community Practices) and category III (Attractive Christian Practices) listed in Appendix A.

Participant Interviews

The two participant groups studied were each distinguished by an assigned code name for analysis and identified the letter(s), P or R. The letter P indicated providers laypeople leaders who actively shared their Christian faith in the Lancaster area, and R represented recipient individuals who were considered recipient laypeople associated with group one or an organization that actively shared their Christian faith in the Lancaster area. In addition to the letter(s) P and R to denote participants and recipients, a designated number of 1, 2 or 3, etc., was assigned to each participant using the prefix of P, or R to indicate which group they represent. P1 or R1 identified individuals interviewed. This code name and the designated number was used for identification and analysis purposes. Each participant, for confidentiality purposes, was referred to by their code name. Information gathered for the assessment of each participant was based on their responses to questions within the four categories contained in Appendix A.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Approaches and Practices

Theological Approaches

Many pastors and laypersons search to find theological approaches that will encompass the Will of God and duties to serve both God and humanity in communities through a manner that is spiritually based. These efforts hopefully provide theological approaches that can bring an understanding that the Will of God "... desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"⁴⁵ and demonstrate our duty is to serve God and humanity by "...loving... God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and [loving] your neighbor as yourself."⁴⁶

The Bible is a key source to assisting pastors and laypersons in their development of a theological approach. The Bible explains the Will of God and our duties to God and humanity. By using such a source, insight into the theological approaches and Christian practices of God bring forth a revelation to pastors and laypersons. In his book, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, Herbert Lockyer reminds individuals that "the Bible is not primarily a record of man's thoughts of God, but a record of What God has done and revealed of Himself to man."⁴⁷

Revelations received by pastors and laypersons from God help form theological approaches and Christian practices that can change the landscape of a communal environment. "No matter what denomination or undenominational denomination we may favor, we must come

⁴⁵ *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Anglicized*, (London: Collins, 2007), 223.

⁴⁶ *Holy Bible*, 26.

⁴⁷ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of The Bible: A Study and Analysis of Major Bible Doctrines*, 2nd edition. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1983), 4.

to the Word with open minds, teachable spirits and a willingness to follow the Holy Spirit as He unfolds truth from the divine standpoint.”⁴⁸

Looking at the Reformation Period, individuals such as Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and Menno Simons all used various theological approaches and Christian practices to change the landscape of their public environment. Changes in Luther’s public environment were brought about through his “radical break with the standard scholastic theology and a reorientation of theology to the Christian text.”⁴⁹ Zwingli found a way of changing his public environment through the use of a Christian theology approach that was “led by the Word and Spirit of God... [and based on learning] the doctrine of God direct from [God’s] own Word.”⁵⁰ Calvin’s means of changing his public environment was based on the use of a systematic theological approach of the Christian Doctrine to illustrate “[Christ’s]redemptive role as Mediator”⁵¹ However, Simons developed a practical theology approach based on whatever the current public environment situation allowed as “it [emerged from] in the context of his active involvement in the life of the church.”⁵²

In our present context, theological approaches and Christian practices still vary as they did during the Reformation Period of the sixteenth century. Amos Yong’s, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* quotes Stephen Sykes saying, “there has never been one, single, universally agreed [approach or practice] for solving the inherent conflicts of Christianity, and we have every reason to suppose that there never will be...”⁵³ A concurrence can be made with Yong’s quote of Sykes. Such a variance can be seen in

⁴⁸ Lockyer, 229.

⁴⁹ Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (B&H Academic, 1999), 56.

⁵⁰ George, 113.

⁵¹ George, 216.

⁵² George, 263.

⁵³ Amos Yong, *Spirit, Word, Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2006), 1.

the various theological approaches and Christian practices employed by a pastor or a layperson in serving individuals in a millennial community. These millennial communities can be transient as they often move due to an “ever-changing cultural landscape not bound by geography, demographics or socio-economic status.”⁵⁴ A transiency movement that may be based on neighborhood gentrification, political influences, specific community concerns and a shift in religious or spiritual perspectives in a Post-Christendom context.

Pastors and laypersons who deal with such external and internal variables must commit to a theological approach and Christian practice that is suitable for their specific needs. Regardless of whatever theological approach and Christian practice used, the commitment should be one where pastors and laypersons “...yield to the nerve center of [their] consent to a purpose or cause, a movement or an ideal, which may be more important to [them] than whether he [or she] lives or dies.”⁵⁵ Howard Thurman in defining such a commitment is referring to a discipline of the Spirit that is self-conscious in that it affirms what an individual is committed to doing, this is a type of commitment pastors or laypersons need to apply to their theological approach and Christian practice when serving a community.

Although such a commitment is needed, pastors and laypersons should consider two questions when thinking about the use of a theological approach or Christian practice in serving their community. The first question is, "What is the proper theological approach or Christian practices to be used by the pastor or layperson when the make-up of each community they serve varies? The second question asks, "How does a pastor or a layperson integrate the various

⁵⁴ Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Reach Them* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Books, 2009), 149, Kindle.

⁵⁵ Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit* (Richmond, Ind: Friends United Press, 1963), 17.

theological approaches and Christian practices that are based on scholarly research in Biblical, practical, systematic and historical theories in a post-Christendom context?"

Each of the four theoretical areas focus on designed approach as outlined in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Theology* and can help with possible solutions to the posed questions. Steven M. Studebaker, an Associate Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at McMaster Divinity College, makes a strong case for his comments in a summation regarding Theology and Post-Christendom Studies for the Center for Post-Christendom Studies. Studebaker emphasizes that "the history of Christian thought yields diverse ways for understanding the church's relationship to its cultural context. Popular historical and contemporary approaches have enduring contributions to make, but certainly new and innovative ways can be developed."⁵⁶

Thus, as pastors and laypersons contemplate various theological approaches and Christian practices, they can take heart in knowing that Christian history has a precedence of innovation. In a Post-Christendom context, scholars and practitioners call for innovation in the use of theological approaches and Christian practices. One such approach is the redefining of the traditional theories regarding theological approaches to encompass a new definition. Such a definition seeks to speak to an audience of millennials and others who have concerns with traditional Christian practices while attempting to retain the goal of remaining true to the objectives of God for God's creation. One could define this theological approach as a method of seeking to discover God by teaching Christian truths and promoting spiritual growth that forms doctrine through the exploration of application, which fits into a present context of modern life.

⁵⁶ "Theology and Post-Christendom Studies" (Center for Post-Christendom Studies), accessed November 28, 2016, <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/pcs/blog/theology-and-post-christendom-studies>.

This concept is not new in its objective, but it is effective in rethinking traditional theories and Christian practices. Pastors and laypersons could attempt to live out this concept of faith in action by using effective attractive strategies that embrace Christian practices to reach those who reside in a Post-Christendom context in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Christian Practices

Effective attractive strategies that embrace Christian practices represent a faith in action. It is a faith in action that allows Christians to worship, evangelize, conduct Bible studies, fast, and pray. However, faith in action is more than just activity, it involves God's active presence in the world. Bass described faith in action as "things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world in Christ Jesus."⁵⁷ She suggests that Christian practices are not just a routine action done by a group of people. These are practices carried out by a Christian community of people that have been bound together by its commitment to Christ as Savior and example for life.

Christian communities who enact such a commitment set forth a foundation for the Christian faith using Christian practices. These communities set in motion Christian practices based on the teachings of Jesus Christ that allow people to find guidance. The guidance provides for the "confession of our failures, receive assurance of God's grace, hear stories and speak words that relate our practices to God's own creative and redemptive work, and go out strengthened to live more faithfully." ⁵⁸ Pastors and Christian laypersons play a vital role in leading others in finding guidance because they attempt to be "saints who have taken up the way of the cross and in whose lives the Gospel is visible, palpable, and true."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Bass, 544.

⁵⁸ Bass, 619.

⁵⁹ Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Brazos Press, 2007), 12.

Living in a Post-Christendom context makes such a role for pastors and Christian laypersons difficult due to the emergence of a new culture. This emerging new culture is difficult because it involves aims that are broader than traditional evangelizing Christian practices. It is a new culture that requires some form of action that is varied in practice and is purposeful in meeting humanitarian needs and providing spiritual support. Bass claims that Christian practices must address fundamental needs and conditions and have a practical purpose to heal, shape communities and provide discernment.⁶⁰ The essence of Bass' claim is that Christian practices are interrelated and hard to separate when attempting to address fundamental needs and practical purposes.

These two aspects mentioned by Bass also take into consideration social practices such as providing food, clothing, financial support and shelter. These social practices are a form of a practical theology of living out the Great Commission using Christian practices. Don C. Richter's, *Religious Practices in Practical Theology*, mentions that practical theology is about an action of practice that needs to be approached broadly, thus incorporating what he terms as an act of employing action-reflection strategies. These action-reflection strategies "require adaptation and improvisation in response to changing circumstances."⁶¹ Richter argues that an understanding of practice helps lead to an understanding of our practical theology approach in living out the Great Commission in changing circumstances. Efforts to implement Christian practices in changing circumstances should consider the social practices taking place in the current context. Richter uses Alasdair MacIntyre's definition of social practices which would seem to be appropriate for a Post-Christendom context: "...any coherent and complex form of

⁶⁰ Bass, 567.

⁶¹ Mercer et al., 207.

socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.”⁶²

MacIntyre’s definition fits that of a mindset of millennials regarding a social practice. Millennials value a coherence between their beliefs and practices, and many are attracted to a faith that is in the form of action in the world. These “... millennials come to faith with a deep desire for relationship and to get involved in social [practices].”⁶³ Pastors and laypersons should understand that in this Post-Christendom context “...the life of Christian faith, [will have an] engagement in certain practices [that] fosters encounters with new realities and existence possibilities that would be beyond our ken apart from these practices...[this is because] social practices are concerned with cooperative human activities, [whereas] faith practices are first and foremost God’s practices....”⁶⁴

Looking ahead into the twenty-first century, pastors and laypersons must face the reality that Christian practices of worship, fellowship, discipleship, missional outreach, and evangelism, will look different.

Worship

Worship is a divine embrace of having a passionate spiritual life with God demonstrated in the form of a ritual practice which honors God the Creator. Alan and Eleanor Kreider’s, *Worship and Mission after Christendom*, claim worship services conducted both daily and

⁶² Mercer et al., 204-205.

⁶³ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry: National Research Study of Effective Ministry Models,” Siebert Foundation, Last revised 2015, <http://www.siebertfoundation.org/EngagingMillennialsinMinistryResearchReport2>, 16.

⁶⁴ Mercer et al., 205.

weekly are essential “dedicated times in which we verbally and ritually ascribe worth to God....”⁶⁵ Worship is a focused practice encompassing cooperative human activities based on a theological approach to living out the Great Commission. “It is very difficult to describe what worship really is...and much easier to describe what worship does.”⁶⁶ Such difficulty is met in trying to describe worship because worship is individually unique to the person or ethnic group that worships or to the place where the practice of worshipping occurs. Sundee Frazier’s, *Worship Team Handbook*, mentions that “in each place [worship] means something different because [worship] is being defined and done by people with different values, needs, views of God and ways of expressing themselves.”⁶⁷ Terry Law’s, *The Power of Praise and Worship*, offers a similar view by indicating worship as very intimate and therefore challenging for a person to describe.⁶⁸ Both views’ validation comes through the Pew Research Center’s study on “Religion and Public Life.” This study provides data on the religious landscape in America and its practices by various demographic groups. In short, the findings point to what Frazier and Law have stated regarding the way worship has varied over time.

Traditional worship of the Pre-Christendom and Christendom periods took on many forms over the centuries. As the church evolved and new forms of worship emerged, these practices dictated how the church worshiped God. Although the forms of worship may have differed, there were certain items common to worship. Items common to worship in both the Pre-Christendom and Christendom eras included: 1) meeting for Worship, 2) reading the Bible, 3) the Lord’s Supper, Baptism and 4) Prayer.

⁶⁵ Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission After Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2011), 10.

⁶⁶ Terry Law and Jim Gilbert, *The Power of Praise and Worship* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2011), 139.

⁶⁷ Matt Frazier, Andy Crouch, and Sundee Frazier, *Worship Team Handbook*, ed. Alison Siewert (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 1999), 20.

⁶⁸ Law and Gilbert, 139.

Granted, there are commonalities within worship during these periods, and issues remain regarding new forms of worship practices. Dan Kimball's, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, asserts "the only way to stay relevant is to anchor your ministry in unchanging truths and eternal purposes while being willing to adapt how you communicate those truths and purposes continually."⁶⁹ These adaptations communicate truths and purposes, which are expressed in preaching without words, use of multisensory worship, teaching, and being storytellers that provide a vital innovative understanding of a pastor's and layperson's approach to serving millennials. However worship is communicated to millennials, its basis reflects a response to a wanted relationship with God. Millennials in a Post-Christendom context are looking for such a wanted relationship with God through Christian practices that demonstrate living a life which is faithful. According to a Barna Group article, "Millennials and The Bible: 3 Surprising Insights," 96% of practicing Christian Millennials "describe their religious faith as very important to their life...[and] ... contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life."⁷⁰

Teresa of Avila, a sixteen-century Spanish contemplative Roman Catholic Saint born in 1515, developed a theological approach to worshipping using prayer. Mirabai Starr and Tessa Bielecki's, *Teresa of Avila: The Book of My Life*, claimed that Teresa of Avila looked at contemplative prayer as comprised of three levels. First, as a recollection where the faculties of memory, will and imagination are gathered. Second, as prayer of union where the soul experiences irrevocable changes. And third as the divine where joy and peace rein.⁷¹ This

⁶⁹ Dan Kimball et al., *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 7.

⁷⁰ "Millennials and the Bible: 3 Surprising Insights," *Barna Millennials & Generations*, October 21, 2014, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-and-the-bible-3-surprising-insights>.

⁷¹ Mirabai Starr and Tessa Bielecki, *Teresa of Avila: The Book of My Life* (Boston, MA: New Seeds, 2008), xxvii-xxix.

theological approach of using contemplative prayer contrasts with the more conventional type of verbal prayer used in the Christendom context and shows a break in traditional norms. This mental form of prayer called *contemplative prayer* is considered to be passive and became an attractive practice to many: “The practitioner of this prayer sits in prolonged silence and waits on the presence of God.”⁷²

Contemplative prayer is being shown by Teresa of Avila to be an attractive way of worshiping God and is an alternative to the traditional verbal prayer form of worship. It serves as a Christian practice with a contemporary theological approach to establishing a responsive relationship with God. Neither contemplative nor verbal worship prayer should be considered wrong, rather it should be looked upon as an attractive practice of worship expression. Millennials are longing for attractive practices⁷³ to express themselves, and contemplative prayer is an option for those who do not wish to use a verbal form of prayer worship.

While it is unknown what the Post-Christendom model of worship will entail, it is more than likely to incorporate those common items of the Pre-Christendom and Christendom periods. The incorporation of common items from both periods will involve some form of experimentation that will provide “...a sustainable pattern [that] is often a blend of old and new....”⁷⁴ Worship centered churches in a Post-Christendom context will need to find a balance that will work for both the church and unchurched. Murray points to some emerging church perspectives that could be considered important in trying to bring balance to both the church and unchurched regarding worship after Christendom. Such emerging church perspectives are:

- Embrace Diversity and Unity

⁷² Starr and Bielecki, xxvii.

⁷³ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 18-19.

⁷⁴ Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Pub, 2005), 207.

- Be Centered and De-centered
- Be Culturally attuned and Counter-Cultural
- Be both Creative and Sustainable.⁷⁵

Whatever the type of worship that will emerge in the Post-Christendom context, it will bring change “... from the edges [and] from the bottom up.”⁷⁶

Fellowship

Fellowship is a means by which individuals can come together to share ideas and practices that they have in common. However, for a Christian, fellowship is more than just a gathering. It is a Christian practice that embraces the sharing of a relationship of God and exhibits God’s Holy character.⁷⁷ When fellowship is present, it should foster a sense of oneness with God and others that are present. This sense of oneness can be thought of as a completeness within the relationship brought about by a devotedness to interact based on fellowship as described in the book of Acts 2:42. The scripture speaks of the importance of devoting ourselves to fellowship. Fellowship in a Christian sense is more than just a social event in which people gather. It is an action with a specific purpose in mind. J. Hampton Keathley, III, in his article “Christian Fellowship” states that “...true fellowship involves getting together for spiritual purposes: for sharing needs, for prayer, for discussing and sharing the Word to encourage, comfort, and edify one another.”⁷⁸

Keathley makes a good point here of giving the basis for the ultimate goal of Christian fellowship. It is a goal to develop more than a deep friendship because it is a fellowship based on

⁷⁵ Murray, 197-199.

⁷⁶ Kreider and Kreider, 206.

⁷⁷ Herbert Lockyer, ed., *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1986), 382.

⁷⁸ J. Hampton Keathley III, “Christian Fellowship,” *Bible* last modified June 15, 2004), <https://Bible.org/article/christian-fellowship>.

an attractive practice that embraces a Christian practice. This attractive practice of fellowship focuses on building an intrinsic relationship that uses “concrete practices that ordinary people identify within their everyday lives as contributing to their own human thriving...”⁷⁹ to produce a shared love of neighbor, thus, making an intrinsic relationship special, special in the sense that attractive practices distinguish themselves from ordinary deep friendships due to them being Godly holistic.

Pastors and laypersons can use this Christian practice of fellowship via attractive practices to reach millennials in a Post-Christendom context by embracing attractive practices that engage others in an action that builds community relationships. Millennials seem to love seeing a faith in action within a community that promotes fellowship.⁸⁰ Such an example that promotes fellowship and engages others would be a desire to have clean streets in a community, where trash is removed from a community together on a specific designated day. This example speaks to how God’s love extends not only within the church but also extends outside of the church.

Kofi Manful’s *Urban Church*, speaks to building a community that extends God’s love within a church. Manful indicates that key components within a church community should include building and maintaining healthy relations, trust, love, and understanding which should integrate being approachable, cultivated unselfishness, making an effort to express affection, and being friendly.⁸¹ It can be further argued these key components could also extend to the

⁷⁹ Drescher, 247.

⁸⁰ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 15.

⁸¹ Michael Eastman, ed., *Urban Church, The - A Practitioner’s Resource Book* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 17.

community outside of the church. Many of these fellowship practices can be applied to both church and secular contexts.

Those concrete practices mentioned by Keathley and Manful regarding what fellowship should resemble also appear in Courtney Bender's, *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*. Bender investigates the presence of religion and how it takes place within a nonreligious non-profit organization. Her findings show the Christian practice of fellowship was taking place within a Post-Christendom context among the church and the unchurched as they worked together as a community to serve others by providing meals. Bender describes the actions of individuals as the Christian practice of fellowship. These actions occur between administrators, food preparers, and recipients that incorporated elements described by Keathley in his definition of Christian fellowship. In stories shared by volunteers, Bender tells of a commonality of how individuals fellowshiped through understanding the needs of others which brought comfort. One story speaks to how a volunteer heard the need of an individual for food and upon visiting developed a fellowship that lasted until the person died. Acts like this demonstrate that the Christian practice of fellowship can occur with others intentionally and unintentionally.

Even though there was no intent to establish a religious theological approach by the volunteers of the meal program regarding Christian fellowship, the aspects of Christian fellowship were present in the actions of the volunteers. Pastors and laypersons who may use a similar approach will be serving the mandate of the Great Commission by promoting it through an act of fellowship. The Christian practice of fellowship could bond a community "...to be unified around a concrete task despite [its] 'diversity' [and provide] room for [the community] to

talk together about things they might not have broached had they assumed they shared them.”⁸²

Christian fellowship as a practice allows itself to provide room for that which both Keathley and Manful speak of regarding the practice of fellowship.

Pastors and laypersons can interject the aspects of Christian fellowship mentioned by Keathley and Manful into millennial environments with a theological approach that is non-threatening in a Post-Christendom context. By incorporating the practice of fellowship in a non-threatening theological approach, pastors and laypersons can create an intrinsic community relationship of a shared love of neighbor.

Discipleship

The Christian practice of discipleship seeks to lead an individual or group of individuals to the Christian faith. To be a disciple is to be an individual “who accepts and assists in spreading the [teaching] of another.”⁸³ For those of the Christian faith, it is the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In a Post-Christendom context, the Christian practice of discipleship can be viewed secularly as mentoring or partnering. Through establishing a discipling relationship with millennials, a trust can be built between individuals and a sense of openness to broach topics that can lead to an exposure to the Gospel. By developing both trust and an openness to broach topics, barriers can be broken down that may inhibit an introduction to the Christian faith. Such barriers may include: hate, envy, frustration, loneliness and a rejection of the Christian faith. By breaking down these barriers, an “interconnection [is formed] to be part of people’s daily

⁸² Courtney Bender, *Heaven’s Kitchen: Living Religion at God’s Love We Deliver* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 48.

⁸³ “Definition of DISCIPLESHP,” accessed September 17, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipleship>.

routines.”⁸⁴ This interconnection allows the Christian practice of discipleship to bring maturity in thought and changes within an individual’s life and community.

Pastors and laypersons can bring about changes through a discipleship that connects with millennials. “Millennials seek a community in which they see themselves as well as a diverse array of older, established adults who can serve as personal [disciplers] to them. This [discipling] connection can be viewed as central to millennials’ perceived value proposition of church, as they search for more modern updates on the Gospel as it relates to their lives.”⁸⁵

The Christian practice of discipleship can be used in a theological approach to reach out to millennials and provide such modern updates on the Gospel. These modern updates on the Gospel come through attractive practices which embrace the Christian practices that meet millennials in different contexts such as bars, cafes, streets, or prisons. Through discipling, millennials can be attracted to the Christian faith that allows them to observe how the practice of discipling helps a person as it relates to “the pressures and trials of this present life.”⁸⁶ The practice of discipling shows millennials how someone like Jesus walks alongside them during times of crisis.

Heidi B. Neumark’s, *Breathing Space*, speaks to the importance of the Christian practice of Christian discipleship. Neumark shares a story of discipling an individual who was a drug and alcohol addict, a single mother, and a person with self-control issues. After a period of discipling this individual by Neumark and others, the individual changed her lifestyle and became one of

⁸⁴ David Stark, *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 1885, Kindle.

⁸⁵ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 17.

⁸⁶ “What Is Christian Discipleship?” accessed January 6, 2017, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-discipleship.html>.

the pillars of the church and community. When such efforts are put forth, it demonstrates a Christian practice of what the Christian faith is all about — caring.

Millennials can be attracted to such a practice as described by Neumark because there is a human thriving of love for neighbor that serves the fundamental needs of a person and community.

Missional Outreach

Missional outreach is a form of worship that extends beyond the walls of the church building. It is a form of worship that honors God and the teachings of Jesus by being a Christian practice that goes outside of a building traveling from “Jerusalem... Judea... Samaria and [extending] to the ends of the world.”⁸⁷ This form of Christian practice that travels outside of a building and extends to the ends of the world is a missional action that goes forth and presents the Good News to others.

How missional outreach is presented and implemented can take various forms and be adapted per the ministry element of focus. Missional Outreach is defined as a Christian practice to serve a community based on practical actions that show the love of God in a chosen church ministry through caring, providing and teaching. It can be adaptable in ways that serve a community of both church and unchurched. Clayton J. Schmit’s *Sent and Gathered*, indicates that missional work (outreach) “propels the church toward its missional work...the ‘work of the people’ in their communities.”⁸⁸

Schmit’s point is church congregations should have people who are willing to engage in their communities. This engagement means working with the people of God for the people of

⁸⁷ Collins, *Bible* 126.

⁸⁸ Clayton J. Schmit, *Sent and Gathered (Engaging Worship): A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 51.

God in a manner that is visible to the community. A way of doing this in a Post-Christendom context would be to have “a real presence in the community through family sports days, fun days, barn dances, bonfire nights, praise marches, and in local park events.”⁸⁹ Outreach practices of this manner break down barriers between Christians and individuals like millennials.

Mission Outreach practices have occurred throughout the centuries. An illustration of missional outreach practice is seen in the work of James Hudson Taylor. Taylor used a theological approach of actively being present with individuals to live out the Christian practice of missional outreach to reach various communities in China. He was a missionary outreach worker who demonstrated his beliefs through service to various Chinese communities by the practice of preaching, distributing of Christian material, and providing medical equipment. Taylor, who was the founder of the China Inland Mission, speaks in his book, *A Retrospect*, about the results of his missionary outreach by stating “before leaving a town we had good reason to believe that much “truth” had been grasped; we placed many Scriptures and books in the hands of those interested.”⁹⁰ In other words, the “truth” Taylor speaks of being grasped is an attractiveness to the Christian faith by both individuals and the community. Taylor’s theological approach and missional practices in the nineteenth century is still viable in a Post-Christendom context. The only difference in the two contexts, however, is the implementation of the theological approach and the use of attractive practices.

Stuart and Sian Murray Williams’ *Multi-Voiced Church*, asserts there will be a challenge to the Christian practice of missional outreach for churches in a Post-Christendom context. Churches will be challenged as to “how to incarnate the Gospel in a changing culture”⁹¹ that

⁸⁹ Eastman and Latham, 125.

⁹⁰ James Hudson Taylor, *A Retrospect*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 60.

⁹¹ Stuart Murray and Sian Murray, *Multi-Voiced Church* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 132.

views the church at the margins of society. This challenge mentioned by the Williamses does force pastors and laypersons to alter their theological approach as they try to adapt to an ever-changing culture and its views regarding church.

A key component of adapting to an ever-changing culture is to find attractive practices that embody Christian practices. The basis for the attractive practices is an adaptability in using Christian practices that start with an engagement body of work of people for their community as a follower of Jesus Christ. Hence, the attractive practices used show a visible form of caring, providing, and teaching that is boundless and challenging. If missional outreach is to work in a Post-Christendom context targeted at millennials, its theological approach and Christian practices should be ones that reach out to meet the fundamental needs of its community and has a truth that hopefully attracts individuals to the Christian faith via evangelism.

Evangelism

Evangelism is a Christian practice that proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and hopefully attracts individuals to the Christian faith. Admittedly, this is the goal of evangelism, yet it can be considered a practice more than a concept. Bryan Stone's, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness*, claims that evangelism might "...be a practice that calls forth the highest in the creative energies, intellect, and imagination of Christians...."⁹² According to this view, the practice of evangelism has become more than an action of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is certainly true when looking at the use of an evangelism practice that is used to attract millennials to the Christian faith.

When looking at an evangelistic practice to attract millennials to the Christian faith, he or she must recognize that they are looking at a practice that attempts to bring about a

⁹² Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 10.

transformation of a person. Walter Brueggemann's, *Christian Perspectives on Evangelism*, describes this evangelism transformation as "... [a practice] of transformed consciousness that results in an altered perception of world, neighbor, and self, and an authorization to live differently in that world."⁹³ Millennials may not welcome such a practice by a pastor or layperson in a Post-Christendom context for its attempts to alter what is considered socially acceptable. This practice to transfer a consciousness-based telling of a narrative may have little or no value to millennials. Evangelism is a Christian practice that some millennials consider to be old and irrelevant to their Post-Christendom context. Nick Pollard's, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult: How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested*, gives a perspective of what some university and college students think about being evangelized. Pollard describes this demographic as "... quite happy with their own views."⁹⁴ He summarizes their typical attitude toward belief as: "If you want to believe all this stuff about Jesus, that's OK for you, but leave me alone."⁹⁵

How can the Christian practice of evangelism become relevant again in a Post-Christendom context? Brueggemann helps bring an understanding to the practice of evangelism by arguing that evangelism should be based on the "drama and dynamic transaction of the Bible text itself" and not based just on morality, doctrine, or historical record. He proposes that the Christian text should look at imaginative models of reality that reflect community practices that interface in a present tense and contemporary mode of evangelism.⁹⁶ Brueggemann's imaginative models could be looked at as attractive practices. These attractive practices can reflect life

⁹³ Walter Brueggemann, *Christian Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 129.

⁹⁴ Pollard, Nick, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult: How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 43.

⁹⁵ Pollard, 14.

⁹⁶ Brueggemann, 8.

situations and can help with evangelizing those in a community. Although all attractive practices may not be applicable in Brueggemann's proposal, some of the attractive practices can apply to evangelizing millennials.

This dissertation holds that Brueggemann is correct in stating that living in the moment and being contemporary are key factors in the practice of evangelism. It is understood that millennials live in the moment and look for a contemporary and a personal application. With this understanding regarding millennials, pastors and laypersons can look for opportunities to formulate attractive practices that lead to reimagining evangelism. One such attractive practice of reimagining evangelism can be seen in looking at how practicing evangelism occurs in a local community gathering place. The story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well is an example of how reimagining evangelism can occur at a community gathering place (John 4:1-26). At this local gathering place, Jesus used the attractive practice of greeting a person to talk about the Christian faith. Another example of this type of attractive practice was witnessed by a pastor who worked in a United Kingdom millennial community. His attractive practice was to go to the local pub and have a drink with the locals, evangelizing in a way that was non-threatening. Stone would consider this pastor as someone who used a creative intellect and Christian imagination to evangelize the locals. Not only did this pastor use a creative intellect and Christ imagination to evangelize the locals, he also demonstrated a practice that Brueggemann would say shows relevancy of the "drama and dynamic transaction of the Bible text itself"⁹⁷ within a community.

Attractive practices, such as those used by Jesus or the United Kingdom pastor, provide a refreshing way of contemporary evangelizing. Rick Richardson's *Reimagining Evangelism*,

⁹⁷ Brueggemann, 8.

indicates the traditional way churches and individuals attempt to evangelize is not working. He argues “...the time has come to examine, and perhaps jettison, our old paradigms and pictures of evangelism. The time has come to reimagine how we picture and practice sharing the good news about Jesus.”⁹⁸ Reimagining evangelism is about creativity and daring to do something different.

An argumentative suggestion is there are no problems with the old paradigms, but individuals only need to demonstrate more effort. A counterpoint argues that societal views have changed, and new practices are needed to address the paradigm shift and reimagining of evangelism especially when it comes to millennials. “One of the recurring claims in the popular literature on evangelism is that in order to practice a Post-Christendom evangelism, the church must discard its ‘stained glass culture’ so that it can better reach unchurched secular people in a pluralistic world.”⁹⁹

Brueggemann’s and Richardson’s views complement each other as they take a contemporary approach to dealing with a paradigm shift in the practice of evangelism. It is a fresh approach to thinking theologically in meeting individuals through attractive practices in a Post-Christendom context by reimagining evangelism. Brueggemann stresses the need to replicate Christian text in participation with individuals in a present tense and contemporary way, whereas Richardson uses a similar approach of being a salesperson or travel guide who interacts with individuals by bringing the relevance of Jesus Christ to the present.

Richardson provides a theological approach to connecting with and evangelizing individuals in a Post-Christendom context. This theological approach to connecting and evangelizing could be a means of possibly reaching millennials in a Post-Christendom context.

⁹⁸ Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey*, annotated edition (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2006), 15.

⁹⁹ Stone, 13.

His approach is to look at evangelism through connections and communications. Provided below is a list of various approaches that summarize Richardson's thoughts:

- Collaboration vs. Activism – build friendships first instead of actively always seeking to evangelize. Look at the process of evangelizing as a journey.
- Community vs. Individual – focus on building witnessing communities by getting individuals to feel they belong to the group as opposed to an individual.
- Friendship vs. Agenda – delight in relationships that lead to spiritual conversations and not on closing a task.
- Story vs. Dogma – Tell the story and its facts in a manner that is more concerned about an experiential reality of God and not focus immediately on dogma and beliefs.
- The outside-the-box Jesus vs. The Cliché Jesus – Speak of Jesus in a natural sense and do discuss Jesus and his benefits whenever possible. Provide a very different picture of Jesus than what is expected.
- Good News about God's Kingdom vs. Good News about the afterlife – Talk about life being lived as a way of changing the world and not looking for a free pass to the next life.
- Journey vs. Event – no distinction as an event on one side or another but as a journey that is moving towards a goal of following Jesus.¹⁰⁰

In a Post-Christendom context, millennials want to know, "How is the narrative relevant to me as an individual?" Pastors and laypersons should look at ways of evangelizing using attractive practices to attempt to effectively reach millennials. The key to pastors and laypersons

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, 26-29.

reaching millennials through attractive practices is remembering that “evangelism is indeed to do again and again what Jews and Christians have always done, to tell ‘the old, old story,’ but to do so in ways that impact every aspect of our contemporary life, public and personal.”¹⁰¹

Millennials Practices

Churched and unchurched millennials are being introduced to the Christian faith through various forms of practices, especially those that occur outside of the Christian faith. Such attractive practices may include varied practices like serving in a clothing bank, offering musical concerts, or offering micro-financing to small businesses. Surprisingly, this introduction to the Christian faith is being done not only by clergy but by Christian laypersons who are millennials. Christian laypersons, who are millennials, are using “concrete practices that ordinary people identify within their everyday lives....”¹⁰² to help develop an intrinsic relationship that produces a shared love of neighbor. It is an intrinsic relationship of shared love of neighbor that is special, special in the sense its usage of attractive practices distinguishes themselves from ordinary deep friendships because the attractive practices are Godly holistic.

Christian lay millennials attempt to live out this devoutness through attractive practices based on the Great Commission mandate, which will remain in effect until the end of the world. These attractive practices are a part of a mandate for all people, including millennials. Whether the attractive practices ever bring millennials to the church or draw them to new forms of the church is irrelevant because the attractive practice will not affect the mandate of God for the Will of God persists.

¹⁰¹ Brueggemann, *11*.

¹⁰² Drescher, 247.

Christian lay millennials demonstrate the Will of God through attractive practices that embrace Christian practices. When used by Christian lay millennials, attractive practices are carried out in a flexible manner during implementation and are not bound by their location of being in a church or other type of facility. Regardless of the location or type of facility where the attractive practices take place, there is an intent to carry out some form of worship that is based on the Great Commission that is for the general community. These general communities that are being interacted with are not exclusively counted as Christian communities.

Attractive practices take place in various communities and are of interest because these practices represent a faith in action. It is a faith in action that gives millennials an interpretation that recognizes attractive practices as demonstrating the lived Christian experience and representing how Christianity is more than just telling the story of Jesus Christ. Christian lay millennials understand such a concept and are finding ways to attract their peers to the Christian faith through various types of attractive practices.

The claim for saying this is based on a personal belief that Christians between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five are most often successful in attracting their peers to the Christian faith. Such actions conducted by Christian lay millennials can be viewed as a successful attraction because the Christian faith practices invite millennials to participate in community service that meets humanitarian needs and offers spiritual support during times of crisis. Who are these millennials? They are individuals who are viewed and thought of as a declining demographic within the church.

Christians lay millennials who successfully attract their millennial peers to the Christian faith are doing so because they understand the high valued placed on personal relationships. Barna and Pew research studies reveal that such relationships are important to millennials as

these relationships form connections that can be seen in one-on-one, group and large community encounters. Such research shows that these relationships by millennials are based on social networking and constant communication through mobile devices. “The term *ambient awareness* has been used to describe the way in which millennials are aware of what is happening with their friends and family via social networking.”¹⁰³ Christian lay millennials use their knowledge of ambient awareness to communicate with their peers about social activities that address humanitarian needs and the need of spiritual support. Responses to this form of attractive practice allow for a greater faith in action through Christian practices and can make the Christian faith attractive.

This type of faith in action covers ambient awareness and the fundamental needs of millennials and is key to establishing a sense of friendship that is communally based because it seeks to “value family, friends, helping others, and making an impact on the world around them.”¹⁰⁴

Millennials seem to rally around community activities that bring them together for a greater cause that may be for a local, national or international issue. “Eighty percent of [millennials] say that attending live events makes them feel more connected to other people, the community, and the world.”¹⁰⁵ In Lancaster, racism has been a unifying cause among some millennials. The community activity against racism draws other demographic groups as well, but many participants are millennials. Awareness events provide opportunities for millennials “to

¹⁰³ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 6.

¹⁰⁴ David Stark, *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Rachel Grate, “New Data On Millennials Reveals What Draws Them to Events”, *Eventbrite*, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/millennials-event-trends-ds00/>.

contribute to the community in meaningful ways.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, such an activity fosters personal relationships based on a community value that is attractive to millennials outside of the church.

Millennials love attractive practices that forge a relationship that is inclusive and take place outside of the church.¹⁰⁷ Although ‘Nones’ are not affiliated with any particular religious institution, they do forge relationships that employ spiritual practices outside of the church that “they find spiritual enriching or otherwise meaningful.”¹⁰⁸ These spiritual practices resemble Christian practices and involve worship, prayer, and studying scripture. Although these spiritual practices are not outside of the church, they are however spiritual enriching or meaningful in many settings. Drescher claimed that “outside institutional religious settings, many Nones are much more easily able to translate their unaffiliated spiritualities into different social contexts.”¹⁰⁹

Many None relationships are forged in these social contexts where they find affirmation, enrichment, and support outside the traditional Christian congregation. Drescher brought validation regarding the formation of personal relationships outside of the church by sharing the express view of one None who spoke to the Christian practices of acceptance and confession: “I’ve told things to these guys I couldn’t to a pastor, and they’re there for me through thick and thin. When we say we’re “soul mates,” it’s because it goes that deep. These are the people who are always going to be there for me. It doesn’t matter that our religious views are different here and there. That’s about the last thing that counts at all.”¹¹⁰

When such relationships are not found inside a church, research data indicates that millennials will search elsewhere to fulfill their needs. Christian lay millennials are attempting

¹⁰⁶ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry: National Research Study of Effective Ministry Models,” Siebert Lutheran Foundation, updated September 2015,

<http://www.siebertfoundation.org/EngagingMillennialsinMinistryResearchReport2>, 17.

¹⁰⁷ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Drescher, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Drescher, 41.

¹¹⁰ Drescher, 116.

to fulfill such needs in order to forge relationships outside of the church through attractive practices that do not define particular beliefs. They are doing what Drescher ascertained from a survey that looked at spiritual meaningful practices that are occurring outside of the church. These meaningful practices that were being conducted used attractive practices that include “enjoying time with family, enjoying time with pets or other animals, enjoying time with friends and preparing or sharing food.”¹¹¹ Activities like the aforementioned practices show that relationships are being forged to attract people to the Christian faith because a coherence between beliefs and practice show faith in action.

The Siebert Foundations study on *Engaging Millennials in Ministry* provides statistics that reveal how millennials value coherent beliefs and Christian practices. Sixty-two percent of millennials say they talk to God, 33 percent attend church, and 45 percent pray.¹¹² According to Carol Howard Merritt, “collectively, [millennials] have found connection with God through [their] spiritual practices, with each other through intergenerational bonds, and with the world through social justice outreach.”¹¹³

Many millennials are fulfilling such needs with their peers through attractive activities based on being a member of a Christian community that is bound by a commitment to Christ as a savior and as an example of life. These attractive activities use the Christian practices of discipleship, fellowship, and missions to address areas of mentoring, group activities and providing for the fundamental needs of others. Millennials may find various reasons why these

¹¹¹ Drescher, 43.

¹¹² “Engaging Millennials in Ministry, 8.

¹¹³ Carol Howard Merritt, *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 4, Kindle.

activities and locations are attractive. The activities may be led by peers and have a coherence between beliefs and practices interpreted as a faith in action in the world.

Church traditions are often interpreted by some millennials as alienating. The response is to avoid such churches if they do not feel welcome or comfortable. Seth Nelson, *The Church Unknown: Reflections of a Millennial Pastor*, claims that millennials don't see themselves reflected in church. In other words, the traditional Christian congregation does not incorporate millennials into the church environment activities. Dan Kimball in his book, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations*, speaks to the alienation expressed by some millennials. He says, "In my conversations with those in their twenties who have left the church, I often hear that they felt church leaders or people in the church had judgmental attitudes and critical spirits."¹¹⁴

The Barna Research Group's article, "What Millennials Want When They Visit A Church," further defines what millennials find alienating about the church experience. The research indicates that "... substantial majorities of millennials who don't go to church say they see Christians as judgmental (87 percent), hypocritical (85 percent), anti-homosexual (91 percent) and insensitive to others (70 percent)."¹¹⁵

If pastors and laypersons want to eliminate such claims of millennials, scholarship suggests they need to be aware of the practices emerging churches use to incorporate millennials. The incorporation of millennials can be seen observed in other churches, as well as through Christian practices used outside of the church to meet the needs of millennials. Nelson mentions

¹¹⁴ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 2007), 1543, Kindle.

¹¹⁵ "What Millennials Want When They Visit Church," *Barna Group*, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/>.

“the world is made up of varied and unique individuals, and my generation of Millennials want to see the diversity of interests, personalities, opinions beliefs, doubts, and practices reflected in our institutions and in our churches”.¹¹⁶ David Stark in his book, *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging A Younger Generation*, speaks to what Nelson says about the interest and personalities of a younger generation. He says that the younger generations tend to be learners who can be reached on multiple levels and want to participate, share and amend information. Stark further states that, “when you are talking about any learning environment in the church, it is critical that we think participatory, experiential, sharable and adventurous when possible, as well as fun, multimedia, and interactional.”¹¹⁷

Although most churches attempt to use Christian practices to attract, most efforts have not been successful. A study conducted by the Siebert Foundation indicates that the younger generation finds the traditional models of church are not attractive.¹¹⁸ Models that point to a certain way of dressing, praying, worshiping and of interacting are offensive to millennials who don’t want to be preached at but want relevancy and authenticity. Some churches do not seem to understand how millennials want to express a Gospel that is not contained to one form of Christian expression. This generation of young people are looking for a means of having a Christian expression that is relational through various activities. Many of the relational needs of millennials in the aforementioned areas are being met outside of the church. Those activities that are attracting millennials to the Christian faith are being done by peers of the Christian faith. Such peers are incorporating Christian practices that attract millennials in “young urban

¹¹⁶ Rev Seth Nelson, *The Church Unknown: Reflections of a Millennial Pastor* (CreateSpace, 2016), 32.

¹¹⁷ David Stark, *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 1483, Kindle.

¹¹⁸ “Engaging Millennials,” 11.

churches, dedicated youth ministries, and camps that have broken the mold and ventured into new territory ...with programs led by young people that happen outside of a church setting – in the community, at all hours, any day of the week.”¹¹⁹

Millennials in the twenty-first century are looking outside of the traditional Christian congregation for attractive forms of worship. They are finding these forms of worship in communities in multiple ways that allow them to attend more than one type of worshipping community. The National Research Study on Effective Ministry Models identified that “millennials may episodically attend worship in one community, and at the same time be a part of a small discipleship group in another community.”¹²⁰

The episodic practice of millennials simultaneously attending worship in two communities is a successful model because it provides alternative modes of Christian community among millennials due to offering strong interpersonal relationships and community service. These successful alternative modes of Christian community among millennials offer strong interpersonal relationships and community service, which can be equated to the Peace Movement of the 1960’s. The movement opposed the US government’s involvement in the Vietnam war that formed interpersonal relationships and conducted community acts. Similarly, millennials are opposing a form of established church government like those individuals of the 1960’s by creating their own type of movements. In their movements, they are pushing for practices that allow an expression of spiritual beliefs of the Christian faith.

One movement that seems to be attracting millennials to the Christian faith through Christian practices is that of the emergent church. An *emerging church* is willing to be

¹¹⁹ “Engaging Millennials,” 10.

¹²⁰ “Engaging Millennials,” 13

“experimental and interactive with creating the worship experience.”¹²¹ These emergent churches fulfill the needs of a younger generation who desire different worship styles that are different from the previous generation. Murray argues that “emerging churches are incarnating the Gospel into parts of society that traditional church planting did not touch.”¹²² Emerging churches create a space in which millennials are drawn to activities that are “spiritually authentic, culturally attuned and [use] attractive expressions of church.”¹²³ These central practices of emerging churches contribute to the forming of a worshipping community that is desirable for millennials.

Dan Kimball points to the emerging church as relational and fair when using the Celtic Model for church planting. The Celtic model is a form of evangelism that looks first at establishing community with people, then develops a fellowship through Christian practices, and then offers an invitation to commit to a belief after a discovering of the Gospel by the individual.¹²⁴ It is a model that allows millennials to belong to a church without a commitment but allows them to practice a shared belief in the Christian faith. With the emergence of such churches, Christian practices in some traditional Christian congregations are not meeting the needs of the younger generation. Due to traditional Christian congregations not meeting the needs of a younger generation, a new resurgence has come through a millennial view of Christian spirituality.

Murray emphasizes that Christian spirituality will have the opportunity to be presented in a new resurgence based on insights and resources that are neither secular or Christian.¹²⁵ Such

¹²¹ Kimball et al., 111.

¹²² Stuart Murray, 70.

¹²³ Stuart Murray, 252.

¹²⁴ Kimball et al., 284.

¹²⁵ Murray, 11.

insights and resources will allow Christian lay millennials opportunities to connect their peers to the Christian faith based on this new resurgence of Christian spirituality.

The twenty-first century has brought a new resurgence that provides attractive types of worship through Christian practices not seen in some traditional church services by millennials. Because of such occurrences, most millennials may seek a setting where they can share Christian practices outside of the traditional church settings. Merritt points out that individuals are looking for shared ideas and means of connecting with like individuals. As a result, alternative church worship is evolving into various forms through the internet, podcast, art, pastor/business and neo-monastic communities' models.¹²⁶

These models of church worship appeal to millennials who prefer new practices over the traditional church worship. In an article written by Ed Stetzer, titled, "Some Quick Thoughts on House Churches," he indicates that house churches use attractive Christian practices to draw church and unchurched individuals. According to the article, house churches are appealing because they:

- 1) go where led,
- 2) are not restricted by money or funding,
- 3) are based on high relationships,
- 4) are simple in their approach,
- 5) are naturally ingrained into the rhythms of the community,
- 6) are a church birthed from intentional discipleship.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ "Ten Church Models for a New Generation," *The Christian Century*, accessed June 2, 2017, <https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2011-11/ten-church-models-new-generation>.

¹²⁷ Ed Stetzer, "Some Quick Thoughts on House Churches: The Good, the Bad, and Why You Should Be Open to Them," accessed November 7, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/may/house-churches-good-or-bad.html>.

Some millennials are drawn to house churches by such appeals because they offer strength of the small community and the opportunity to belong to a group. For example, Merritt speaks of how millennials are successful in creating attractive community events that develop both strong interpersonal relationships and provide a community service. These community events of service form groups referred to as a *tribe*. The word tribe “has become a term for a subculture, a network of relationships, or a group of people who care for each other in the most basic ways.”¹²⁸

The term tribe becomes broader in scope when it includes alternative modes of Christian practices. Merritt coins the term *tribal church* to describe the alternative mode that includes such practices. She describes the tribal church as: “A tribal church has certain characteristics. It understands and reaches out to the nomadic culture of young adults. This church responds to the gifts and needs of adults under forty by considering their physical, social, and spiritual circumstances. The term ‘tribal’ reflects (1) a gathering around a common cause, (2) a ministry shifts to basic care, (3) the practice of spiritual traditions, and (4) a network of intergenerational encouragement.”¹²⁹

Because of the formation of tribal churches, millennials were introduced to the Christian faith through attractive practices that addressed humanitarian needs and spiritual support in times of crisis. Such shared Christian practices go to the heart of what attracts millennials in the twenty-first century. Abbie Huff in the book, *The Church Has Left the Building: Faith, Parish, and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century*, talks about how hosting social gatherings for the chamber of commerce and a local magazine have turned into a form of tribal church. She states the interaction between people has provided her with opportunities to meet people and have

¹²⁸ Merritt, 7.

¹²⁹ Merritt, 8.

conversations that have led to listening to others about their faith journey. She says this is not the typical regular worship service, but the encounters allow for regular faith conversations over lunch or dinner and the building of simple relationships.¹³⁰

Huff, Merritt and Murray all speak of a new way of being church in the twenty-first century. These tribal churches in the twenty-first century are a new way of being church and seem to be successful when providing a worshipping community for millennials through attractive practices.

Church in the Twenty-First Century

Community

Traditional communities, which have been defined by various ethnic, social, religious and economic factors, have become blurred in their makeup in a Post-Christendom context. Millennials helped redefine what a traditional community resembles by integrating twenty-first century technology via social media. These various virtual communities have been born with millennials' use of technological application advancements. Nothing has been seen like this since the invention of the printing press where the "movable type printing press gave...writing a widespread audience."¹³¹ Formation of such communities have altered the way pastors and lay leaders work at attempting to serve communities through theological approaches and use of Christian practices. Some pastors and lay leaders have felt compelled to incorporate the use of technology applications to reach the millennial community by the creation of web pages, use of social media devices, and other trends to relay theological information and Christian practices.

¹³⁰ Michael Plekon, *The Church Has Left the Building: Faith, Parish, and Ministry in the 21st Century*, eds. Michael Plekon, Maria Gwyn McDowell, and Elizabeth Schroeder (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 1339, Kindle.

¹³¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), 15.

This dilemma of how to serve a community has pastors, and lay leaders thinking differently than before “as well-intentioned pastors and lay leaders [are trying to avoid] ... diminished expectations, and many times diminishing budgets and attendance.”¹³² Those values that were once embraced by those who have grown up in the church have become blurred due to differences brought about by Post-Christendom and postmodernity context, thus causing established values to clash with Post-Christendom and postmodernity values in various communities that deal with a limited knowledge of Christianity and suspiciousness of institutions and belief practices.¹³³

These clashes of values begin with a perspective in communities of how to belong, believe, and behave in an ever-changing community that must face the mindset of a Post-Christendom and postmodernity context. Currently, the Mennonite churches have experienced a split within each conference as each tries to identify how it belongs, believes, and behaves in its efforts to serve communities of church and unchurched who think and act differently regarding various values such as same-sex marriages.

Millennials are such a group of individuals, both church and unchurched, who think and act differently in various communities regarding beliefs and belonging. These millennials are challenging the church and articulating problems the church may not be prepared to handle. Drescher argued: “[...nones] are telling us all something important about the very nature of religion in America.”¹³⁴ One area of change is how church membership is viewed; an older generation community will argue belief before belonging whereas millennials might favor belonging before belief. How do two different generations deal with the two opposing views? In

¹³² Stark, 1236, Kindle.

¹³³ Murray, 12.

¹³⁴ Drescher, 16.

his book *Counting People In*, Richard Thomas offers a key concept about how the mindset of churches needs to change. He claims that belief takes priority over belonging. He argues that the church recognize that “finding ways of speaking to the spirituality of a generation who do not come to church is not a matter of bringing them in, but of changing our understanding of the nature of Church itself.”¹³⁵ It can be debated that Thomas’s overriding assumption is the church should make believing a priority over belonging. By focusing just on the nature of the church, Thomas overlooks the deeper problem of a millennial community’s mindset. Phyllis Tickle in her book, *The Great Emergence*, gives a perspective on belonging by pointing out that some churches look at just letting an individual belong by having a “shared humanity and an affinity with individuals in whatever the group as a whole is doing ... [and letting] Christianity or Christian experience [take the individual wherever the] believer wants to go.”¹³⁶ Her perspective on belonging is supported by research showing that millennial communities tend to prefer to belonging to something first versus just believing first. “Millennials seek a sense of belonging first, then conform behaviors to the norms of the group before finally changing their belief systems. This contrasts sharply with older generations who join worship communities based on shared belief.”¹³⁷ Thomas and Tickle both present persuading arguments. Neither concept can be considered wrong but just viewed as alternative ways of approaching a goal of reaching those within a community. The concept of what the nature of the church is for a community is of the utmost importance in getting people to belong as well, for both serve the community by attempting to bring about a spiritual relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

¹³⁵ Richard Thomas, *Counting People In* (London: Pilgrim Press, 2003), vii.

¹³⁶ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 1824.

¹³⁷ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry,” 5.

Churches

Although traditional communities continue to change, the basic roles of the Pastor and those who are Christian have remained relatively consistent. Pastors and other Christians' roles are to attempt to walk with others in the Christian faith as they struggle to deal with spiritual and societal issues. This role has been the same as Christians over the centuries have dealt with issues and changes within communities, for example: Paul with polytheism versus monotheism customs, Martin Luther with his posting of his ninety-five theses, and the Catholic Church with the implementation of Vatican II. The good news is that "churches can deal with changing communities and Pastors [and laypersons] can [use theological approaches] and [Christian practices] which allow their churches to minister effectively to a changing community."¹³⁸ Such Good News can be based on the hope that Paul, Martin Luther, and others found in dealing with changing communities. Paul hoped his community would recognize the fulfillment of the Davidic Promise (Acts 1:32-39), Martin Luther sought change in the church community by the posting of the ninety-five theses, and others found hope in scripture.

Churches need to reestablish hope within church and unchurched communities in a Post-Christendom context as most communities have lost hope in

- 1) their beliefs in religion or their spiritual understanding,
- 2) sense to belong to something,
- 3) in individuals,
- 4) in the government that is to represent them.

Ann Morisy in her book, *Bothered & Bewildered*, poses the question of "Is there Hope for the future?" Her perspective is based on how societal problems in the world may be viewed. She

¹³⁸ George A. Haskins, "The Church's Response to Changing Community" (Doctoral dissertation, Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1990), 61.

has chosen the term *dystopia* to describe a state by which the world is not moving to a place of utopia but moving nowhere, meaning to a place of no hope due to societal problems. Although societal problems have stagnated some churches, others strive to reestablish hope to communities, thus moving them from a dystopia state to a place that embraces the Christian faith.

In discussions with millennials about what they think of the Christian faith and the church today, a controversial issue is often heard that ‘church is too defining and out of step with what I need for development.’ In making this comment, millennials urge the church to look at the way traditional churches are viewed, a view that needs to show relevance to their life today and a presentation that there is hope through the Christian faith.

Post-Christendom views offered by millennials have forced churches to look at how they define themselves by asking, “What should church look like?” This is not the first time the church has had to deal with new paradigms. Churches constantly struggle between traditional and contemporary approaches due to external factors of social change regarding race, justice, poverty and sexual orientation. Tickle speaks to such social changes by pointing out that churches are changing shape based not only on traditional practices but on what is important regarding Christian practices at that moment by the denomination.¹³⁹ If churches are unable to define themselves by changing shape, how are millennials in a community to identify with the beliefs and practices of the church? Millennials are looking for a church they can identify with, especially churches that are authentic and relevant. One way that churches can make themselves identifiable is by understanding the nature of these emerging adults called millennials.

¹³⁹ Tickle, 1444-1460.

Millennials

Millennials hold varying values regarding religion, which is causing the religious landscape of American churches to change. Because of varying values about religion, the values regarding Christianity are decreasing as well. Such decreases can be attributed to a generational mindset different from that of the previous generation. Millennials “.... neither care to practice religion nor to oppose it...they are simply not invested in religion either way.”¹⁴⁰ This can be seen in lower Sunday church service attendance as well as a declining demographic that identifies as religious.

When it comes to the views of the church and religion, most millennials have a mindset that views church and religion as “just not that important.” Kendra Creasy Dean in her book, *Almost Christian*, speaks to a generational change among teenagers on their perspective towards religion. It is a perspective that “consistently [demonstrates] an openness to religion, but few... are deeply committed to one.”¹⁴¹ In other words, Dean believes that teenagers have nothing against religion; they just don’t see it attractive enough to embrace it. Although Dean focuses this statement towards teenagers, the same can be applied to both the millennials and nones. Rachel Fraaney, in her article, “Millennials Prefer Spirituality,” corroborates Dean’s point through conversations with millennials on why they don’t see religion as something attractive enough to embrace it. Fraaney provides several comments from millennials regarding their reasons of why they do not find religion attractive. One comment by an individual says, “I think there are many reasons as to why religious belief has declined among millennials, I think a main reason has been the rise of the, ‘you do you’ or ‘whatever floats your boat’ mentality, which is

¹⁴⁰ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 145.

¹⁴¹ Kendra Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

the predominant thought nowadays. I would say this thought either leads people away from faith because it imposes guidelines, which people don't believe in, or causes people to keep bouncing from faith to faith to find whatever fits what they want to believe in, which often leads to no practicing religion at all."¹⁴²

Comments like the one made by this millennial show that the values of religion are changing and are not as important as it may have been to previous generations. If American churches wish to restore the importance of Christian values through serving communities that include millennials and nones, it will have to do so by using theological approaches and Christian practices that formulate an understanding of such a mindset of both groups. The formulation of such an understanding should begin with an open mind that realizes that both groups will bring with them a different perspective. James Emery White's book, *The Rise of the Nones*, informs people that reaching out to nones brings with it a *new storm*. This is a term he describes in dealing with individuals being "...overly entangled with law and politics, filled with hateful aggression, and consumed with greed."¹⁴³ Though I concede that White might be correct in his assumption, I insist that this assumption is not limited to Nones but must also include other millennials as well.

White's defining of a new storm is key to the church understanding the challenge set before it. It is a challenge that has been met before by earlier Christians who dealt with similar storms and found an approach that resulted in the mindset of individuals seeing the importance of Christian faith values. If the church is going to serve its communities by living out the Great

¹⁴² Rachel Frainey, "Millennials Prefer Spirituality", accessed October 15, 2018, https://northernstar.info/opinion/millennials-prefer-spirituality/article_fad5537a-bd15-11e7-a934-bfc0fab1363d.html.

¹⁴³ James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 36.

Commission, it will need to understand how millennials are defining themselves in both beliefs and practices.

Defining

Who are these millennials and nones? They are our children, grandchildren and possibly great-grandchildren who are not present in traditional Christian congregations. They are also individuals who claim that they are Spiritual-But-Not-Religious (SBNR), individuals whom White describes as being the “young and unchurched becoming the older and unchurched.”¹⁴⁴ Who can argue with such a statement made by White regarding Millennials? America is experiencing a decline in traditional Christian congregations in all denominations that affects rural, suburban and urban communities. Due to a lack of millennial involvement in some churches, there has been unfair labeling of millennials. For example, individuals have assigned labels to millennials describing them as lackluster, individualistic, uncommitted, consumerist, and superficial. The “mainstream media has drawn a picture of millennials as lazy, narcissistic and entitled selfie-lovers.”¹⁴⁵

Such a fear of Christian beliefs becoming extinct should not exist because millennials are considered the next replacement generation, and they are different in the way they talk, walk, and value those things that were of importance to the Christendom generation. Data bearing evidence that speaks to the religious mindset of millennials and nones is captured in surveys which help define these groups.

¹⁴⁴ White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated*, 14.

¹⁴⁵ “The List of Millennial Characteristics,” *Lucky Attitude*, accessed September 28, 2017, <http://luckyattitude.co.uk/millennial-characteristics/>.

Statistical Information

Various generational studies on religious views in America are continually being researched by the Pew Research Center and Barna Group, in addition to two other major religious surveys that have gathered data on millennials and youth: 1) American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) and 2) National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Such studies and surveys have shown and supported the changing values of generational views of religion in America.

A 2014 study on the Religious Landscape in America captured information on millennials and the nones. Information from this study is helpful as it gives Post-Christendom trends regarding the Religious Landscape of America. It is important to note that two distinct groups of millennials have been identified by the study and have been categorized as either Older or Younger. Categorization has been based according to a year of birth with Older Millennials being born between 1981-1989 and Younger Millennials being born between 1990-1996.¹⁴⁶ Awareness of such a distinction between the two groups is important because of differences that exist. Examples of differences can be seen in work habits, purchasing patterns, use of gathering information through technical means, different values based on being reared, and living arrangements (living with parents vs. living independently).¹⁴⁷

Based on the data, a theological approach to the use of Christian principles may vary according to which group is being targeted in a specific area or concerned value. Data in tables 1

¹⁴⁶ “*Millennials*,” Pew Research Center, March 1, 2018, accessed October 15, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/millennials/>.

¹⁴⁷ “*A Tale of Three Millennials*,” International News Media Association, accessed February 6, 2017, <http://www.inma.org/blogs/value-content/post.cfm/a-tale-of-three-millennials>.

and 2 are formulated from data provided by the Religious Landscape Study on millennials. The data suggest a notable distinction between marriage and parenting.

Table 1. Information on Older Millennial Group

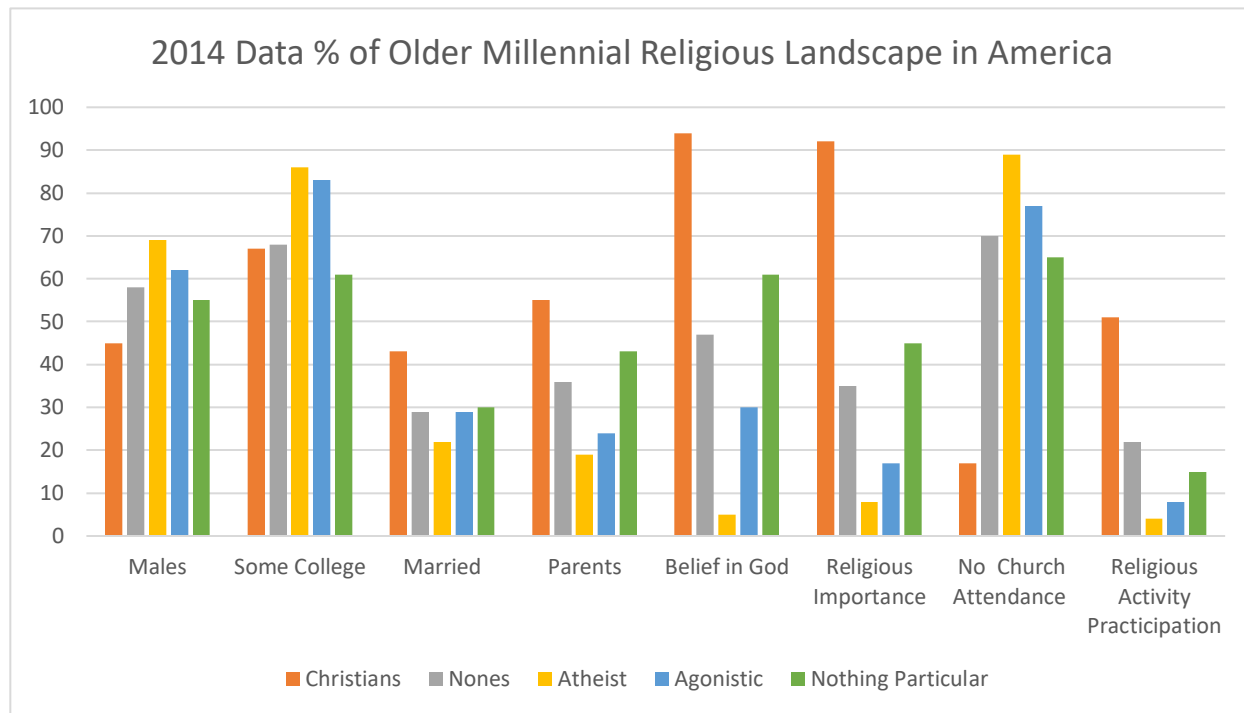
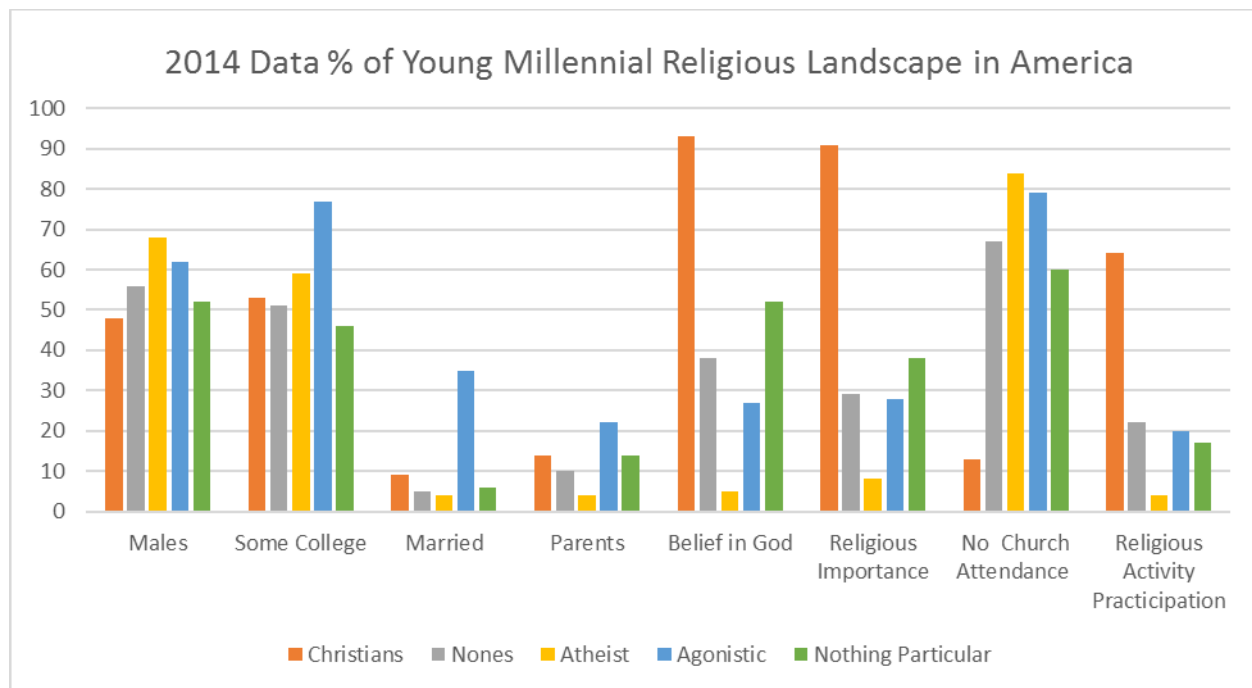


Table 2. Information on Younger Millennial Group



The older millennials tend to be married with children. The younger millennials, except for the agnostic group, are delaying marriage and children.

Beliefs

Beliefs among millennials vary due to what can be termed a *religious indifference* in, an indifference that fosters what Dean calls a “diner theology” and what White identifies as “secularization.” Dean is defining the diner theology as “a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity or sacrifice.”¹⁴⁸ She asserts in her assessment that this type of theology presents a view that a claim is made to be Christian, but the importance and practice of faith fails to be seen in the lives of the individuals. Although Dean is focused on data about teenagers, the theory presented regarding the Diner Theology extends to both groups of millennials as well.

White’s use of the term “secularization” encompasses Dean’s assessment by expounding on what may be contributing to the beliefs of millennials. He uses Berger’s definition of secularization to illustrate what seems to be happening as to the outlook of millennials and the nones regarding religion. His point is that secularization is a “process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religion institutions and symbols.”¹⁴⁹ In other words, White sees religious beliefs of individuals such as millennials diminishing and being replaced by a more dominant view of secular beliefs. This supposed new dominant view of secularism devalues the importance of how religion is viewed and experienced. The Pew study on Religion & Public life showed that when it came to beliefs, a need to attend church services and participation in Christian practices decreased. The Barna Research Group’s data offer two explanations as to why church values were not important. First,

¹⁴⁸ Dean, 9.

¹⁴⁹ White, 45.

millennials felt they could find God elsewhere. And second, they felt church was not personally relevant to them.¹⁵⁰ Theological approaches and the implementation of Christian practices used by pastors and laypersons will have to deal with the diner and secularization theories if they are going to contend with millennials in a Post-Christendom context.

Practices

If millennials are not attending church services in a Post-Christendom context, then what are they doing? What is capturing their attention and having them not consider religion as being important? The answers to such questions may be found in a 2013 survey, *Generation Y: Shopping and Entertainment in the Digital Age*, by the Urban Land Institute and the Urban Land Foundation. The survey provides data on millennials outlining some of their favorite practices. An analysis shows that millennials love watching television, hanging with friends, listening to music, playing games and spending time online as an everyday practice.¹⁵¹ Life for the millennial seems to be one of entertainment that leads to self-gratification. Self-gratification can be thought of as a feeling to the soul that is pleasurable to the individual's ego. The self-gratification of the individual is fulfilled due to participation in an attractive practice that meets their fundamental needs.

These attractive practices meet the fundamental needs of individuals and incorporate aspects of Christian practices. Many of these Christian practices are concrete practices that ordinary people incorporate into the very essence of their daily lives. These daily life practices incorporate such aspects as worship, fellowship, discipleship, missional outreach, and

¹⁵⁰ "What Millennials Want When They Visit Church," *Barna Group*, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/>.

¹⁵¹ M. Leanne Lachman and Deborah L. Brett, *Generation Y: Shopping and Entertainment in the Digital Age*, 2013, accessed February 9, 2017., <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Generation-Y-Shopping-and-Entertainment-in-the-Digital-Age.pdf>, 24.

evangelism. Such types of practices have worship taking place in the form of prayer vigils, fellowship occurring in the form of shared meals and shopping together, discipleship in the form of mentoring, missional outreach in the form of serving in community events, and evangelizing in the form of discussing the existence of a life force or higher power. These practices take place outside religious institutions are embracing Christian practices.

When it comes to the implementation of Christian practices among millennials, we see they appear in line with older generations. However, they look different in practice. Drescher emphasized that prayer among nones occurs "... more or less regularly [but] ... in ways that would hardly seem foreign or exotic to some."¹⁵² Drescher's point was that Christian practices are taking place just in various forms that look different but are not foreign or exotic in its practice.

The fact that such Christian practices are taking place in a Post-Christendom is exciting because it demonstrates a common ground between millennials, pastors, and the church. This common ground can be thought of as a doorway made available to both the church and the unchurched to walk through. Some millennials in the twenty-first century are opening that doorway for their peers and the church by using attractive Christian practice activities outside of the church to introduce the Christian faith to their peers.

¹⁵² Drescher, 172.

Such Christian millennial peers are introducing the Christian faith to their peers through attractive practices that address:

- 1) millennials and church attendance,
- 2) what millennials want when they visit the church,
- 3) renewing the church, and
- 4) why the church has left the building.

Millennials and Church Attendance

The religious landscape in America has shifted and is reflected in personal views on religion and a decline in American church attendance among millennials. Christian lay millennials understand these trends and mindset of their peers and as a result are reaching out to their peers through attractive practices that embrace Christian practices preferred by both the church and unchurched. Through these attractive practices, church attendance within some congregations can be affected.

In the article *7 Startling Facts*, Kelly Shattuck provides a glimpse into millennial church attendance as it pertains to various denominations and church size. Shattuck points out that attendance stops declining and indeed begins to grow when church members and leaders “redefine the congregation and meet the needs of the community.”¹⁵³ This redefining is indeed what is happening with Christian laypersons who are millennials — they are redefining congregations and meeting the fundamental needs of their communities in the implementation of attractive practices. In making his comment, Shattuck stresses the importance of the role that Christian laity plays in attracting individuals to the Christian faith.

¹⁵³ Kelly Shattuck, “7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Church Attendance In America,” accessed June 1, 2017, <http://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html>.

Traditional Christian congregations must acknowledge the need for clergy and laity to be creative in attracting younger people to the Christian faith. Such acknowledgement is in reflection to the changes of the twenty-first century, as well as an understanding that new tactics must be used in appealing to a newer generation such as millennials. Although some might think this tactic of being creative is a tactic just to draw millennials to the church, it is in fact about building the church and not through numbers. Millennials will come to the church if there is something for them. Christian laypersons are getting millennials to come to the church by being creative. This creativeness of getting millennials to the church stems from reaching out in a meaningful way. Shattuck argues that such creativity must be meaningful and should focus on personal connection.

When thinking about the declining attendance in traditional Christian churches and what can be done to reverse the trend, there is conversation in the literature on how to become more relevant to millennials. It cannot be denied by some traditional Christian congregations that relevancy is missing, and they are failing to connect to millennials. “Christianity in the United States hasn’t done a good job of engaging serious Christian reflection with young people, in ways that would be relevant to their lives.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, the attendance of this demographic group is declining or not present in traditional Christian congregations. The problem is not only a national one but also a local one as well in the Lancaster area. Butcher finds that “local churches have not been particularly successful in attracting or retaining the [millennials] demographic.”¹⁵⁵ He claims that millennials play an important role in the revitalization of churches in this postmodern world.

¹⁵⁴ Daniel Burke, “Millennials Leaving Church in Droves, Study Says,” *CNN*, accessed October 3, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/12/living/pew-religion-study/index.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Butcher, 2015.

There are churches that are growing with large numbers of millennials attending church on each Sunday morning. “The growth of non-denominational and independent churches is a continuing trend in United States – they make up the second largest Protestant group in America.”¹⁵⁶ Many of these growing churches are led by millennial pastors or laypeople who understand the needs of millennials. Why are some churches getting it while others are not? Some scholars suggest that tradition is problematic for some churches. “In a word, tradition. Or, to be precise, the lack thereof. Non-denominational churches are far less likely to cling to traditions for their own sake but, instead, move and flex with the culture.”¹⁵⁷ Christian lay millennials are helping with this growth by moving and being flexible with the culture of the Post-Christendom context. Such individuals have identified what millennials want when they visit the church. Thus, they can introduce their peers to the Christian faith.

What Millennials Want When They Visit Church

If Christian lay millennials seem to be able to provide what is relevant in attracting millennials to the church, then why isn’t it being done by most churches? In a resource article titled *What Millennials Want When They Visit Church*, the Barna Group indicates that millennials are interested in a spiritual relationship with God.¹⁵⁸ They want to experience this spiritual relationship in a church that promotes relevancy to their needs of being closer to God, learning about God and finding out what the Bible says about God. Not only are millennials looking for relevancy in a spiritual relationship in a place but also in a place where Christian

¹⁵⁶ “5 Things I Learned from the 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America,” *AM Digital Agency*, accessed December 13, 2016, <http://am.digital/5-things-learned-100-fastest-growing-churches-america/>.

¹⁵⁷ “5 Things I learned.”

¹⁵⁸ “What Millennials Want When They Visit Church,” *Barna Group*, updated May 3, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/>.

practices take place in the form of actions. From this perspective of millennials, it can be seen that they are attracted to Christian practices that are relational and interactive.

The survey also finds the themes of fellowship and honesty are two attractive Christian practices that millennials favor. Millennials are attracted to the fellowship that promotes the tolerance of those who are different and service within a community that addresses human needs. They also seek for honesty through acts that display authenticity within the church regarding morality, policy, and procedures.

Christian lay millennials are speaking to what millennials want the most — a ministry that engages millennials. Such engagements are not always found in traditional Christian congregations. When visiting a church on Sunday morning, some commonly held preconceptions that are antithetical to millennial attitudes are displayed, including judgment, control, and moral control.¹⁵⁹ When addressing the issues of being visitor friendly and engaging the millennial mindset, congregations will have to consider millennial inclusiveness if they are going to address the decline of millennial attendance within the congregation.

Many traditional Christian congregations overlook the inclusion of millennials due to assuming millennials will show up and just engage in church activities. While yet many congregations do not say so directly, their ways of engaging millennials are not appealing to millennials. According to *Engaging Millennials in Ministry*, they are missing a willingness to seek out ways of engaging millennials through the attractive Christian practices of contemporary worship, discipleship, and community involvement. Thus, it would behoove traditional Christian congregations to inform themselves of what is relative in a Post-Christendom context regarding

¹⁵⁹ “Engaging Millennials in Ministry,” 10.

attractive practices that embrace Christian practices. Millennials seem to value contributing to the community in meaningful ways, hearing the Gospel in relevant ways, and having authentic relationships that encourage their growth in faith. There must be a model of an attractive practice that is inclusive of embracing Christian practices in the form of sharing of the Gospel.

For congregations to provide opportunities to attract millennials, the congregations will need to understand millennials living in a Post-Christendom context in the twenty-first century. Christian lay millennials are reaching out and listening to their peer communities for they recognize what community means for a millennial — a value of togetherness and belief that togetherness satisfies a longing to belong. Thus, what is formed is a sense of community, a community that “is about intimately journeying through life with those around you.”¹⁶⁰ What does this mean for a traditional Christian congregation when trying to meet the needs of millennials who visit a church? It means the congregation will be forced to deal with a paradigm shift of thought for the Christian community from behave/believe/belong to a belong/believe/become structure. Because of such an effort, the paradigm shift will allow millennials who consider themselves nones an opportunity to feel a part of the Christian community. If traditional Christian congregations sincerely embrace the concept that all are welcome, then there should be no problem accepting others into the Christian community. The importance of a Christian community is its bound commitment to Jesus Christ as savior and example of life. Jesus Christ was accommodating in his efforts to promote a community that was opened to all who would come: sick, poor, or despised. If Jesus Christ did this, then it must be asked why traditional Christian congregations can’t do likewise when millennials visit the

¹⁶⁰ Stetzer, 76.

church understanding that “...community is a central value for young adults, whether secular or sacred.”¹⁶¹

Christian lay millennials realize that the Christian community extends beyond the sacred and into the secular world. These individuals “interact regularly around a common belief, practice or affinity”¹⁶² that includes an attractive practice of teaching and sharing a meal in various community settings that are professional or virtual. The authors of the book, *Lost and Found* claim that such actions are good for the church as its central mission is centered around community. According to them, “it is fair to say, especially in today’s [Post-Christendom] context, that spiritual growth doesn’t take place outside of community.”¹⁶³ Many people love to belong to communities and participate in activities that occur within a community that produces spiritual growth. Participation in these community groups allow Christian lay millennials to use Christian practices that produce spiritual growth to attract millennials to the Christian faith. A Christian faith can influence how millennials think and behave in the future of American religion.

The Christian faith is most often successful in influencing others thinking and behavior when it is practice in context. Robert Wuthnow in his book, *After the Baby Boomers*, claims that faith is influenced by the context in which people live and the circumstances affect “religious beliefs and practices [articulated].”¹⁶⁴ His claim of influence is extremely useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of understanding millennial thought patterns. Christian lay millennials are using their influence to articulate their religious beliefs and practices upon their

¹⁶¹ Stetzer, 69.

¹⁶² Stetzer, 75-76.

¹⁶³ Stetzer 76.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), xiii-xiv.

peers by understanding the social environment and taking advantage of “opportunities to do it, [based on] what they believed is shaped by their life situation.”¹⁶⁵ Such examples would include delaying marriage, not having children, feeling uncertain about work and money, loosening ties, and an overload of information in the internet age. Most traditional Christian congregations have not had to consider such life situations during the twentieth century when attempting to introduce individuals of their period to the Christian faith. We live in a changing world that produces trends that affect our Christian faith and the practices that embrace a Christian community. Christian lay millennials are adapting to a changing world and are using Christian practices that are attractive to a younger generation that is more spiritual than religious. According to a Pew Research Center study on religion in America, thirty percent of millennials say they are spiritual and do not consider themselves religious.¹⁶⁶ Contrary to how millennials view spirituality and religion, it can be argued there is little distinction between the terms. However, it is viewed it will always foster a debate among individuals within a congregation. Traditional Christian congregations have to attempt to see spirituality as “[...manifesting] itself in what people do, especially [in] those activities through which they attempt to relate to God or follow God.”¹⁶⁷ At first glance, an individual might say one’s spirituality affects only that person, but on a closer inspection, that which is manifested in a person might influence others through a Christian practice of living out their spirituality. This is what Christian lay millennials are doing with their peers when attempting to attract them to the Christian faith. They are helping their peers to manifest their spirituality through attractive practices that can be experienced. Such types of attractive practices require the practice of living out a spirituality that

¹⁶⁵ Wuthnow, 20.

¹⁶⁶ “Religious Landscape Study,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, May 11, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

¹⁶⁷ Wuthnow, 112.

“...has always been customary to [emphasizing] certain devotional practices as ways of deepening one’s faith.”¹⁶⁸ While yet these devotional practices lead to a deepening of one’s faith, many millennials “are either disengaged from congregations and traditional devotional practices or finding new ways to practice their spirituality.”¹⁶⁹ Christian lay millennials are providing new ways for their peers to live out one’s spirituality through a renewing of the way Christian practices are conducted.

Renewing the Church

The twenty-first century brings millennials a renewing of church practices that will use attractive practices that are spiritual. This will be done through a use of attractive practices that will incorporate ways of leading to practicing the Christian faith within communities of individuals who are searching for a way to increase their faith, and a means to practice it. Although these attractive practices will vary, the purpose for using the practice will not change. Christian lay millennials have stayed true to this purpose by adapting previous methods to attract individuals to the Christian faith through attractive practices which are renewing the church in the twenty-first century. However, their use of attractive practices is based on what Christians traditionally do because they are Christians, that is to use the Christian practices of worship, evangelism, or Bible study.

Thus, Christian lay millennials will be imitating what other Christians have been doing in the use of Christian practices. Such actions are dictated by scripture (1 Cor 3:11) which indicates no one can build on the foundation which has been built by Jesus Christ. Therefore, these Christians lay millennials are using Christian practices built on what others have established but

¹⁶⁸ Wuthnow, 127.

¹⁶⁹ Wuthnow, 132.

done with modification. Because of these modifications, some millennials will be drawn to Christian practices that appear to meet the needs of local church communities. Bass and Miles both speak to how Christian practices of faith can refresh the church in local communities for everyone. Traditional Christian congregations have focused on what worked for them in a previous context and failed to adapt. What works for one group of individuals no longer is working for a newer generation. The traditional Christian congregation can continue to use Christian practices but needs to refresh the way they implement these practices in local communities to include millennials. Millennials can be attracted to Christian practices that are used by traditional Christian congregations because they foster a sense of purpose. This sense of purpose becomes a common ground between traditional Christian congregations and millennials; as the purpose is to address humanitarian needs and provide spiritual support during times of crisis.

Bass gives a sense of purpose regarding Christian practices. She comments that “Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God’s active presence for the life of the world in Christ Jesus.”¹⁷⁰ Christian lay millennials have embraced this concept and look to renewing the church in a Post-Christendom by reaching out to their peers inside and outside of the church. Such actions can be considered as a renewing of Christian practices that promote a way of thinking about life that addresses the fundamental needs to serve a practical purpose of shaping communities. Therefore, these individuals are promoting Christian practices that are essential for contemporary life in the twenty-first century for developing the Christian faith; a Christian faith that is for everyone, including millennials.

¹⁷⁰ Bass, 544.

Renewing of the church in the twenty-first century is more than a concept for Christian lay millennials and their peers, it is the living out of a concept. Sara Miles' book, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*, speaks to how general laypersons use Christian practices to attract people to the Christian faith and are bringing about a renewing of the church in the twenty-first century. Although Miles is addressing all laypersons, she also considers millennials. She calls for a renewing of the church because individuals see the Christian faith in action. Miles exemplifies what millennials believe and practice using the Christian practice of serving as a means of living out the Christian faith. Through her serving in a church food bank, Miles' efforts were enough to get both churched and unchurched people to participate in a community service that met a humanitarian need. She argues the purpose of Christians is to carry out such practices of service to lead people to "living out the central Christian imperative to share food with strangers."¹⁷¹ In other words, Miles and millennials believe people will carry out Christian practices if the act serves a purpose that is attractive. Millennials are attracted to such humanitarian needs to serve others, especially in:

- 1) times of crisis in the community when food is needed by residents,
- 2) when an anointing is needed at a food bank warehouse,
- 3) when a presence is needed when death is about to occur.

Because of such efforts by millennials, the Christian faith is introduced through a Christian practice through a desire to meet human needs.

The renewing of the church in the twenty-first century is coming through God's use of Christian lay millennials in the form of attractive practices that reach the very fiber of a newer

¹⁷¹ Sara Miles, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* (Ballantine Books, 2008), 143.

generation that is multi-sensitive to its community needs. Therefore, traditional Christian congregations must embrace a newer generation and employ attractive practices that may not appeal to them but serve the same purpose of attracting individuals to the Christian faith. Also, these congregations must recognize that millennials are a newer generation that no longer sees the church only in a mere structure but as a life experience.

The Church Has Left the Building

This leaving of the church building is seen by some writers as not focusing on the revitalization of the church as such, but as taking Christian ministry outside the church to reach the unchurched. Christian lay millennials have taken on this challenge in a different manner than their predecessors. Many are leaving the traditional Christian church building and using attractive practices. They learned to implement attractive practices that embrace Christian practices within their communities that are highly regarded by both Christians and secular individuals.

Millennials who are church and unchurched are finding such Christian ministries outside of the church attractive because these Christian ministries take place in the form of various theme nights and lectures such as a “Theology and Beer Night” to attract individuals into conversations. This Christian ministry is just one of many attractive practice ministries occurring inside of local restaurants, bookstores, and even in-house churches. If the traditional Christian church is going to reach millennials and others, it will need to do what Robert Morris claims in his essay, *Church by the Walls*. Morris writes the church must go beyond its walls through the use of spiritual practices to see “the spiritual depths of every aspect of life instead of staying limited to explanations of doctrinal concepts.”¹⁷² It is arguable that Christians must go beyond

¹⁷² “*The Church Has Left the Building: Faith, Parish, and Ministry in the 21st Century*”, 2018, Kindle.

the walls of the church and the limits by doctrinal concepts in order to reach the millennials who seek attractive Christian practices that reach new spiritual depths. If such spiritual depths are to be found, they will have to come from leaving the building and reinvention in a Post-Christendom context.

It cannot be stressed enough that the traditional Christian congregations must leave the building. Murray writes how the ethos of the church is changing and being reshaped. He points out that the church needs to recalibrate or reinvent itself with a recovery of perspectives and practices that are vital to the sustaining of a healthy church after Christendom.¹⁷³ Murray speaks from a European perspective, but his assumption can be applied to North America as well.

The church must recalibrate itself to speak to the perspectives of those no longer nurtured in Christian convictions. Thus, traditional Christian congregations should not rely only on traditional cultural perspectives only. The congregations must be open to a perspective that is experimental and interactive in a Post-Christendom context. This perspective can be recalibrated by understanding Post-Christendom as a “...culture that [has emerged] as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.”¹⁷⁴ Traditional Christian congregations can take solace in knowing that the U.S. has a more residual Christian culture than Europe, which can shape the experience of American millennials.

By having this more residual Christian culture in North America, traditional Christian congregations can somewhat forge a perspective in the shaping of the church in the twenty-first

¹⁷³ Murray, *Church After Christendom*, 7.

¹⁷⁴ Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 19.

century. However, in forging the shaping of the church, traditional Christian congregations will have to change their perspective on what it means to belong to a church and how the church is conducted. Once again, these congregations will need to emulate Christian lay millennials and their attractive practices of emphasizing belonging versus believing. What will this ethos of the church be in a Post-Christendom context? Its ethos will be one that considers “new ways of being church” ... and not simply on new ways of doing church.”¹⁷⁵ Christian lay millennials will bring about “new ways of being church” in the twenty-first century by using attractive practices in an emerging culture through adaptation to meet the needs of their peers.

¹⁷⁵ Murray, *Church After Christendom*, 125.

Chapter 3: Analysis

Field Visits

Field visits were made to churches, parachurches and a secular business. During the visits, an analysis was conducted based on categories II (shared community practices) and III (attractive Christian practices) listed on Appendix A. Common and distinct practices performed were noted for all three groups.

Shared Community Practices

An analysis of the shared community practices among the groups revealed that there was an underlining theme to exhibit a shared community practice of activities that focused on providing for fundamental needs of others through voluntary community service. Such activities included holding community fundraisers for natural disaster relief, volunteering to go on mission trips, providing food and shelter and various types of activities that produced some form of Christian fellowship. The following descriptions provide examples of the types of activities:

- C1: An African-American Baptist church, provided a Saturday Night community program for millennials that addressed spiritual needs. The program allowed community sharing of beliefs and attempted to address spiritual formation among community millennials.
- C2: An urban Mennonite Church, provided a shared community environment that addressed church services for the mentally challenged and those addicted to various substance abuses.
- C3: A large county non-denominational church, provided specific weekly programs that addressed the particular needs of younger and older millennials. Separate programs were designated for college-aged, married, and single millennials to discuss life issues after weekly church service.

- C4: A local millennial non-denominational church of approximately 300, provided a set community goal for meeting the fundamental needs of others by sponsoring a community Bar-BBQ to raise money to send congregational members to South America to build houses.
- C5: A large county non-denominational church, provided a specific weekly service for millennials of the surrounding community. Time was designated for millennials to fellowship and testify regarding a spiritual awareness before the commencement of the worship services.
- C6: An urban, an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse non-denominational church, provided for the fundamental needs of the community by having a midweek service in the church's parking lot that supplied a meal. Other programs included marriage counseling and financial planning.
- PC1: A nonprofit organization, provided millennials an internship in communal living, spiritual formation, and in providing or community service. Interns worked together for a year with the intention of maturing in all three areas while serving the fundamental needs of others.
- PC2: A nonprofit organization, provided food service for the community by preparing and delivering meals. This organization addressed a needed fundamental need within the Lancaster community.
- SB1: A barbershop business, provided a place of fellowship where millennial men gathered during the week and discuss life issues. The manager attempted to address the spiritual needs of others during crisis by speaking about Godly experiences to those millennials present.

Although this underlying theme is prevalent, each church group uses different methodologies and philosophies in the use of shared community practices when attempting to attract millennials to the Christian faith. These differences were seen in the social-economic and cultural context. The availability of finances played a factor in the type of programs that were offered. The church groups with greater financial means were able to provide paid staff, better equipment, and enough space to hold activities for specific millennial activities. When it came to cultural context, diversity was welcome and embraced, but it was obvious each group focused on a specific cultural audience. This was possibly due to organizational restrictions and social-economic values. Some of the organizational restrictions seemed to be based on the types of programs to be conducted, focused audience and location of the geographical area of service. Social-economics issues were prevalent in the education level as some leaders held only a high school degree while others held various graduate degrees and affluent churches members seemed financially able to give more based on weekly offering information provided.

Each church group had cultivated a culture of its own and those who attended any of these church groups had a cultural awareness of the cultural environment presented by that particular church group. A philosophical difference of the church groups seemed to stem from this cultural awareness and denominational beliefs. Although C4 was a rural location and C6 being in an urban location, both held similar types of activities. C4's members were individuals who lived in either a rural or suburban environment in which most everyone had access to a vehicle to attend an activity scheduled in a rural area. Most of C6's members were individuals who either had access to public transportation or were within walking distance to their scheduled activity held at the church or in the church parking lot.

Cultural awareness of millennial needs and differences were seen in denominational beliefs genres of music and song selection. C1's music was centered around the organ or piano player, whereas C5's music was centered around the guitar player. Denominational beliefs of a cultural awareness seemed to be the driving force behind the type of music emphasized.

The parachurches and secular business were more of a specific resource for community shared practices that met fundamental needs. These groups provided not only a service but also a place where millennials gathered with a sense of purpose. SB1 and PC1 were places of gathering for discussing of community issues, whereas both PC1 and PC2 were places of gathering for carrying out a specific task of volunteerism.

Socioeconomics and denominational beliefs did not seem to be an issue within these types of groups as each group focused on just caring and loving their neighbor, as they provided a service to anyone who was in need. SB1, a local business in the community, had clients of all social-economic backgrounds and beliefs who came to the barbershop for the expertise of each barber. PC1 and PC2 provided a service to businesses and individuals of all social-economic backgrounds and beliefs as well. While yet there is an awareness of the cultural and denominational beliefs of the community by these three non-church groups, these non-church groups did not limit themselves as the church groups did. Each of the non-church group's interaction crossed boundaries that were not crossed by the church groups such as a limited geographic area of service. The philosophy of these non-church groups was simple, as interviews conducted with participants in these groups presented a theme which said, just meet the needs of the people and assist them in the best possible way.

Many of the methodologies and philosophies presented by scholars in the literature review were observed being used by the groups visited. The usage of these methodologies and

philosophies by those groups observed validated the national data gathered by research studies and what authors are currently speaking about regarding millennials' beliefs. Examples of methodologies include leaving the building to reach those outside of the church, forging a relationship with non-Christians, and taking non-judgmental attitudes with others when it comes to different views of thought. The basic philosophical premise is meeting the needs of people.

Such methodologies and philosophies, although different at times, did encompass an openness that allowed millennials to be themselves. The groups methodologies and philosophies embraced what Robert Morris claims the church must do, and that is to go beyond its walls through the use of spiritual practices to see “the spiritual depths of every aspect of life instead of staying limited to explanations of doctrinal concepts.”¹⁷⁶

Attractive Christian Practices

An analysis of each group visited focused on the actions of the group to see if they met the definition of attractive Christian practices as defined by this project. This term, attractive Christian practices for this project was used to describe any practices that make the Christian faith attractive, especially to one outside the faith. The aim of Christian practices is a broader term than “evangelism,” which tends to connect to the verbal explanation of the Gospel. While attractive practices may have included evangelism, they may have also included such varied practices as serving in a clothing bank, offering musical concerts, or offering micro-financing to small businesses.

Observations and analysis of each of these groups showed that the groups on a whole use various types of attractive Christian practices either in the form of common everyday practices or

¹⁷⁶ “*The Church Has Left the Building: Faith, Parish, and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century*”, 2018, Kindle.

modified common practices. Many of the common everyday attractive practices observed included such things as:

- 1) Open to millennial leadership,
- 2) Shared values,
- 3) Family values,
- 4) Community involvement,
- 5) Friendly atmosphere.

The overall goal of these groups was to provide successful alternative modes of Christian community among millennials which would offer strong interpersonal relationships and community service. The groups were fulfilling the needs of a younger generation who desired different worship styles that are different from the previous generation and met the current context of the twenty-first century.

C4, an emerging church, was visited once during a Sunday morning service. A duration of two hours was spent in worship with approximately 300 people in attendance. The congregation of C4 consisted of millennials and young children that were formed from a diverse group of people from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. C4 was a unique group in that there were very few members over the age of 40, and their environment encompassed all aspects of common attractive Christian practices. The worship service and programs in C4 were led by millennials and embraced an emphasis on being welcoming, caring, loving and the promoting of shared values. Announcements for C4 emphasized shared values with an underlying presence to include community involvement. When it came to the non-church groups, shared values and community involvement was at the forefront of common practices. Modified common attractive practices between all groups observed included such things as:

- 1) Specific programs for millennials,
- 2) Specific cultural context,
- 3) Attractive practices,
- 4) Music listening,
- 5) Varied location focus.

These various practices were observed to use basic traditional Christian practices with a twenty-first century twist to the practice which was appealing to millennials. Such twist was applied to the practices of worshiping, evangelizing, giving, music, etc. All church groups activities seemed to be popular with their targeted audience of millennials. Worship services included millennial pastors preaching from mobile devices and being dressed in casual clothing with music in the form of a live band performing in a rock concert atmosphere. The music was extremely loud but enjoyed by the millennial group. When it came to the reading of Biblical Scriptures, electronic mobile devices were also used as most church groups did not have Bibles in book format available. Evangelism was presented in two formats. One form of evangelism offered was observed at C3 during a one-time two-hour visit during the Sunday morning service. The Sunday morning service was comprised of approximately 250 people that appeared to be an intergenerational congregation. C3 has an evangelism welcoming team that greets all first-time visitors at the church's welcoming center where gifts and printed material are given to the first-time visitors in the forms of cups, posters, coffee mugs, and drinks. The second form of evangelism was observed at C5 in a café atmosphere where millennials held conversations while multimedia presentations were displayed on flat-panel televisions. C5 was visited on a Tuesday in the evening when the Millennial church service and Café hour was scheduled to take place. The visit to C5 was conducted once and lasted for a duration of two hours with 150 individuals

being present. C5 used an attractive practice of using a cargo box with a microphone to allow people to come forth and stand on the cargo box to share an experience with others during the café experience. The attractive practice of evangelism was called “Soapbox Time.” Only one person came forward to share their experience with others. Those in attendance sat quietly as the millennial stood up on the cargo box and shared how his life had changed since coming to know Jesus Christ. He stated, “when I was in my twenties, I struggled with being alone and depression. Now that I am in my thirties and know Jesus Christ, I am not lonely any more. Now when I get lonely or depressed, I know I have you my family I can text. I know that you my family will text me back because you are my family in Jesus Christ.” At offering time, most of the church groups used some form of electronic giving through a mobile application such as PayPal or an electronic church system. Many of the millennial services did not use the traditional method of collecting an offering because most use mobile technology to make various types of payments. “Most millennials set these charges to go out regularly with autopay, so they don’t have to remember to make the payment.”¹⁷⁷

The evidence from my observations and analysis of the church groups indicated support for Kimball and Merritt’s separate assessments of evangelism. Kimball’s assessment suggests that evangelism first look at establishing community with people, then proceed by developing a fellowship through Christian practices and then offered an invitation to commit to a belief after the individual discovers the Gospel.¹⁷⁸ Merritt’s assessment suggests that individuals looking to evangelize should seek to connect with others through who shared ideas and through various means that connect with similar individuals. Because of sharing and connecting, alternative

¹⁷⁷ Ahmad Moore, “5 Ways Millennials Give Differently Than Baby Boomers”, accessed October 15, 2018, <https://blog.givelify.com/church-giving-millennials-boomers/>.

¹⁷⁸ Kimball et al., 284.

church worship was done in various forms through the internet, podcast, art, pastor/business and neo-monastic communities' models.¹⁷⁹

When it came to the non-church groups, it was evident from designed programs and planned activities that the groups were focused on community issues and how to provide solutions in the form of an action for the issues at hand. PC1 was visited on two occasions at two different locations, one visit to the community living residence during an evening and the other visit during a weekly Friday seminar session. Each visit had a duration of two hours and observations were made of the six interns and the director. The purpose of PC1 was centered around building intentional community relationships amongst interns and the broader community. PC1 helped millennials use their skills to assist the community through providing internships for community organizations. The attractive practice of volunteerism in an area of interest was used to introduce the Christian practices of giving and fellowship to millennials who participated in the internship. PC2 was visited once during the week in the morning for a duration of an hour. Thirty persons were observed working in various capacities to provide meals for individuals in the Lancaster area. The director of PC2 was able to use the attractive practice of computer programming to attract a millennial intern whose task was to develop a software program that would serve as a delivery database for community service. The millennial was exposed to the Christian practice of outreach to meet the fundamental needs of others. As a result of being exposed to such a Christian practice, the millennial believed she was making a huge impact on the community by what she was doing. Her developing of the software was seen as incredibly positive, especially as it helped PC2 in its outreach to senior citizens. SB1 was visited

¹⁷⁹ "Ten Church Models for a New Generation," *The Christian Century*, accessed June 2, 2017, <https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2011-11/ten-church-models-new-generation>.

six times during business hours during various days of the week for approximate thirty minutes each time. During each visit various millennials were observed visiting for the purpose of getting a haircut or for various topical discussions. Examples of such discussions would include such things as: 1) sports, 2) relationships, 3) jobs or 4) spiritual crisis. SB1 is a gathering place for discussing community issues, and a place where the attractive practice of communication was used to introduce the Christian faith to millennials. SB1's manager and an assistant listened to the problems of millennials during times of spiritual crisis and provided Christian advice. The manager or assistant would speak of similar life experiences after hearing about the crisis and then provided a Christian point of view of how God/Jesus was a possible answer. They often spoke about the Christian faith being a means of getting one through their situational crisis.

Examples mentioned above were evidence that millennials value a coherence between beliefs and practices; faith in action in the world is attractive to many. Many of the millennial leaders of these non-church groups were fulfilling needs of their peers through attractive activities that used Christian practices based on being a Christian community that was bound by a commitment to Christ as a savior and an example of life. These attractive activities used the Christian practices of discipleship, fellowship, and missions to address areas of mentoring, group activities and providing for the fundamental needs of others. Many of the attractive activities that used Christian practices took place in various venues such as houses, cafés, bars, parking lots, salons, and community events.

These non-church groups not only seemed to address the coherence between beliefs and practices that were valued, they also forged relationships outside of the church. Drescher claimed that "outside institutional religious settings, many [individuals] are much more easily able to

translate their unaffiliated spiritualities into different social contexts."¹⁸⁰ Many individual relationships were being forged in these social contexts where they find affirmation, enrichment, and support outside the traditional Christian congregation.

Interviews

An analysis of the data collected from participants was based on responses to the questions listed in the four categories listed on Appendix A. These questions focused on exploring the personal Christian beliefs and practices of the participants, as well as their engagement outside of the church in a community. The interview also looked for specific attractive practices that embraced Christian practices in meeting the fundamental needs of individuals within a community.

Laypersons

When analyzing the participant's data on their Christian beliefs, it was obvious from the data gathered that both groups of participants were raised in Christian environments which influenced their Christian faith. However, various descriptions were used by both participant groups to describe what their faith looked like. Participants described their faith as a belief that could not be tangibly touched or seen, an ongoing journey of discovery, a faith in action, and a connection with God and nature, and constantly growing and changing.

Varying descriptions were also given regarding what influenced the participants to be a Christian, such as family, religious household, and church activities. Although the participants used differing terminology, the terms could be grouped into two categories. The two categories of common factors of Christian influence involved family and friends and experiences outside of the house.

¹⁸⁰ Drescher, 41.

Various terms emerged upon analyzing how the participants felt when telling others about their relationship with Jesus Christ. The listed terms describe how participants felt during periods of sharing with others about Jesus Christ.

- Acceptable
- Senses of relationship
- Passionate
- Excited
- Real, authentic, genuine, truthful
- Scary good
- Feeling alive and vulnerable
- Empowered
- Apologetic

Overall, participants felt they were living out their faith in an action that represented their Christian experience. The participants seemed to be hoping that their actions of sharing and believing would be acceptable to others for its authenticity in conversations.

An unexpected underlining continual theme of “Respect of Person” seemed to resonate within each interview as participants indicated that they did not want to offend others when speaking about their faith. The participants consistently expressed they only wanted to speak about their faith after recognizing the conversation was permissible. Most participants allowed the conversation to dictate when they spoke about their relationship with God.

Comments by P-4 and P-10 reflected how the other participants described their process of speaking to others about their faith. In her response to speaking of her faith, P-4 stated:

I grew up going to church and knowing about God through my parents. All I have seen is them going to church and serving God; I have never seen them not serve God. It was because of them that I grew spiritually. I feel that my faith has been like a roller coaster ride; God called me to leave my church and go to another church. God was telling me that I had I needed to be in a bigger fish tank (meaning being in a larger church) because the fish tank I was in was small (meaning a smaller church). I feel excited sometimes and get emotional and cry when I tell someone about my relationship with Jesus.

P-10 spoke to how she was grateful her entire life was spent in the Christian faith. Both her grandmother and mother influenced her faith, and the experience of watching the Holy Spirit at work appealed to her. She expressed that she felt empowered when she spoke to another person about her relationship with Jesus. However, she felt she did not use her sense of empowerment to confront another person about faith or aggressively pursue an unwanted conversation. She believed she was empowered knowing that God could use her to encourage others to have faith and come to Jesus. She stated that, “I know that everybody will not be open or receptive to what I say but am grateful for the opportunity to share.”

Sharing in Community Needs

Engagement outside of the church

No distinction was identified between participants when analyzing category II regarding the sharing of community practices outside of the church. All expressed they formed their most important relationships around relatives, co-workers, and community members. While all the participants said they shared their Godly relationships with others, the sharing was limited to direct conversations. Many of the participants spoke about their Godly relationship in the presence of their Christian friends but avoided religious topics around non-Christians. In

conversations with non-Christians, the participants generally stated they did not broach religious topics but engaged in such conversation when raised by the other person. Participants expressed a motivation to not offend the other person but to also not waste their own time speaking to an uninterested individual. The most important function of the participants was to be present with people who were most important to them. The participants consistently articulated that friendship was cherished above philosophical differences. However, when the participants were able to express their Godly relationship with others, it was done through conversations about life-based on the below listed creative ways such as:

- Praying, fellowship, Bible study
- Logically-based facts
- Acts of love, kindness, listening
- Being present
- Secular and Godly life experiences
- Various audio and visual methods

Participants seemed mostly active in the Lancaster County community through service events of volunteerism in both secular and non-secular organizations. These service events included coaching youth activities, helping at church programs, serving and delivering of meals, community seminars, after-school programs, taking photographs, meeting at cafes and teaching yoga at a women's shelter and girls detention center. R-1 and P-7 comments gave a general view of how millennials in the community were sharing and interacting with others outside of the church.

R-1 stated that his most important relationships were with his family and friends. He described as speaking frequently with his friends and family, gathering frequently, and

occasionally encountering disagreements. He spoke to how he shared his relationship with God with others but only if it came up in conversation. He said, "I don't force what I believe on other people because sometimes people believe in something else. This can cause tension, so I only talk about it when it comes up or if I am asked personally. I express my relationship with God by giving my point of view and my experiences with it. I am open to everybody, and I don't look down on somebody because they think differently about religion." R-1 owned a barber shop, which he saw as an opportunity to build relationships, friendships, and connections with people. He equated this to a service of involvement within the Lancaster community that provided therapy to others: "You are kind of like a therapist who talks to someone who comes in with an issue to get off of their chest. You give them some information, and you get to make them feel good about themselves plus they get a nice haircut."

P-7 described his most important relationships as being those of his immediate family, his wife's family, close friends, and co-workers. He believes that he had a significant opportunity to influence his co-workers in Christ because he expressed his belief "logically" as he shared his Godly relationship with others. He defined "logically" as the presentation of facts that brought a "whoa factor" based on the facts of the Christian faith. For him, this was described as the life to live. "What I describe will be based on who I am talking with." If it is his friends, the life to live will connect to how can we become better at working in the Christian faith and if it is with non-believers or co-workers, it is more of what I believe, why I believe and how it has changed my life. He indicates that his involvement in the Lancaster community is done every week as a volunteer at an organization which is a youth community center. "He further stated that when he goes to the center, he plays sports and socializes with kids who do not know Christ and participates in the devotions held on Wednesday nights at the youth center. Also, P-7 and his

wife have built relationships with others by visiting various downtown Lancaster coffee shops and being involved with his church.

Attractive Christian Practices

An analysis of Christian practices revealed that participants were not reinventing the use of Christian practices but were incorporating these Christian practices in a manner that fit the context of the current trends attractive to individuals. The incorporating of Christian practices into the current trend's context was through invitations to be active in a personal relationship. Responses provided by participants indicated that invitations extended to their non-Christian friends were not likely to be invitations that directly referred to the Christian faith overtly. However, Christian practices were incorporated covertly in invitations that were authentic. The official invitations of the participants can be considered an attractive practice which embraced both Christian practices and what millennials valued. What seemed to be valued about authentic invitations were:

- Acts of hospitality
- Assistance in time of crisis
- Relational friendships
- Seminars on world events
- Social events
- Social networking

Both groups of participants in their authentic invitations to their non-Christian friends embraced Christian practices valued by millennials. Although most of the participants did not intentionally mention embracing Christian practices when extending an invitation, it seems that Christian practices were being embraced by the participants in thoughts and deeds. The

participant's responses to the question, "What invitations from you are your non-Christian friends mostly to accept" validated that authentic invitations presented to non-Christians are acceptable if extended in an overtly non-threatening loving manner. Invitations extended by the participants can be considered similar to the authentic invitations that Jesus extended overtly to individuals who would have been considered non-Christians during his era.

Just as Jesus contributed to making an impact in his neighborhood, so did the study participants. Participants used the attractive practice of service to achieve their impact goals within communities by performing living acts that reflected the "Fruits of the Spirit" described in the book of Galatians 5:22. These acts described by Galatians were love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Many of the participants were making these impacts by meeting the fundamental needs of others and being present during times of crisis. They helped with the fundamental needs of others by picking up trash in neighborhoods, providing meals, volunteering, being present and intentional, and establishing community gardens. When it came to being present with people, the participants made an impact in their neighborhood by encouraging, praying, comforting, listening, smiling at people seen, mentoring and being courteous and kind to people. Participants were able to validate their impact of being present with people by the person's verbal acknowledgements or change in their behaviors. Such acts demonstrated the use of Christian practices which were attractive practices to those in the surrounding communities. While most of the participants were active in their communities, several of the participants indicated that they could do more to make an impact or did not have interaction within their neighborhood because they did not see or interact with their neighbors.

Most of the interactions that impacted the participant's neighborhood or surrounding communities stemmed from their involvement in a church or some outside organization. A total of sixteen of the participants were actively involved in a church, two participants attended church sometimes, and the remaining two participants did not attend a church. Many of the participants indicated what they like about their church:

- The pastor and congregation provided non-judgmental guidance and authenticity
- The presentation format was relational and relevant
- There was a sense of community from small groups
- The congregation was diverse
- The church offered outside missional opportunities
- The church delivered a suitable worship format

However, these participants indicated that there were aspects of the church that they did not like. Some reasons why they did not like the church were:

- They considered it boring
- Pastor failed to articulate Biblical terms clearly
- Church did not have activities for young single adults
- The congregation or pastor seemed too judgmental
- They did not connect with theologically-grounded sermons
- They did not reciprocate in service
- The church did not present as a leader within the community
- The congregation lacked diversity
- The services were too businesslike or commercialized structured.

Although these were issues that most participants did not like about the church they attended, they still attended because of the missional work.

P-2 and P-8 were very creative in using attractive Christian practices in a manner that fit the context of the current trends when extending an authentic invitation to others. P-2 indicated that he and his wife extended invitations to his non-Christian friends by inviting them to hang out at his house on Thursday evenings. He allowed these friends to bring other friends and they would all socialize by reading monologues, drawing images and playing instruments. One of his favorite activities was called the "Dopler Project," Dopler being a Pennsylvania Dutch word for clumsy. P-2 stated the Dopler Project was a way "I wanted people to take a risk to do things and not be worried about being clumsy." This form of an invitation to socialize was viewed by P-2 as being a "Vibe Church." The invitational activity called the "Vibe Church" continued for three years. Through these various intentional attractive practices of interactions within the "Vibe Church," various questions were formulated such as: "Why are you doing this for us and Why would you care about how I develop?" In addition to the formulation of such questions, a blog was developed to share questions. The in-person interactions along with the blog interactions allowed P-2 to address questions and concerns in a manner that was attractive to millennials because the interactions did not preach at, demoralize, or follow set rules. Because of the activities conducted by P-2 and his wife, they were able to intentionally center their Christian practice around Matthew 18:20 with activities that incorporated their Christian faith. P-2 stated, "I care about what the Kingdom looks like, and I care about the skills and the Spiritual Gifts of everyone. For my wife and me, this is how we saw church being for millennial-aged individuals."

P-8 used a similar format of authentic invitation that incorporated attractive practices with a limited focus on the broader community and more with neighbors living on his street. He stated that he and his wife tried to structure their lives in ways that didn't adhere to cultural norms by using creative ways of getting to know his neighbors. This practice was done with invitations to sit out on his porch with him, going outside when others were outside to say hello, eating meals at various neighbors' houses during the week and having theme house parties. The emphasis he said was to socialize and get to know the neighbors. His invitations served two purposes: It allowed his wife and him to share the Gospel with others and then have an impact not only in his neighborhood but also in the broader Lancaster Community. He said, "I am more interested in getting to know individuals than trying to convince them of my faith. I find it healthier and more effective in doing what I do out of a sense of relationship with the person." P-8 stated that he can help individuals with their calling and be a good citizen of the community as his actions can impact the community in a positive way.

Additional Comments

In analyzing the data in Category IV only fourteen of the twenty participants responded to the question posed. Surprisingly there were only two questions posed, one by P-1, "What could be done to help the non-believer with trying to find some spirituality?" and the other by P-2, "What is the future of the church?" Both believed these questions should have been asked as they would respond what the church of the future should encompass in the twenty-first century. P-1 recognized that the church had to be different as it tried to meet the needs of those seeking spirituality. His question stemmed from his experiences with his spiritual formation. His spiritual needs were met through his church service being forty-five minutes in length, traditional worship, and repetitiveness. However, he believed his church functioned in a way that works for

him but may not for others. He knew there were newer churches for the younger generations that are doing different activities to draw their attention in different ways. He would have liked to have information captured because these different ways could reach non-believers. P-2 wanted to address the issue of how the church needed to have a higher level of faith that went beyond the norm to take the risk of being different. He spoke to the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) issue and the need of the church to move from an obsession to get to Heaven and focus on living out faith and doing works through God and Christ that led to the Kingdom of God.

Giving the participants an opportunity to express their comments brought forth various responses that were both positive and negative. The responses of the participants were informative as they candidly spoke about their issues and workings of the church of the twenty-first century in Lancaster.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to examine how Christian laypeople in Lancaster, Pennsylvania between the ages of 18-35 attracted their peers to the Christian faith and sought to ascertain effective, attractive strategies that could be used by pastors to interact with Millennials. This study sought to provide an understanding of how specific practices could be used to attract church and unchurched young people to the faith.

Findings

Peers

This study anticipated that millennials would be most effective in attracting others in their age group to the Christian faith. It was assumed that millennial laypeople had the ability to relate to others by inviting Nones to participate in community service or offer emotional support. The data, however, indicated that each of the participants did not directly invite peers or use other attractive practices to attract their peers to the Christian faith. Rather, participants articulated a desire to avoid discussing their faith with uninterested individuals. The participants also stressed they felt it was more important to have a presence with others through common attractive practices. Any initial intention to evangelize was viewed as confrontational unless the other person first broached the subject of Christian faith. Although the participants all relied on attractive practices, they articulated a clear goal to not directly influence the other person. Instead, they wanted to allow the other person to witness a personal belief in action.

The analysis identified an overall theme of being a "Practical Jesus" and not a "Divine Jesus." P-2 explained that many Christians focused on the divine part of Jesus and ignored the human element. Participants favored the practicality and said they strove to live out their beliefs in the presence of others.

However, the interviews did suggest that millennial laypeople saw themselves as wanting to successfully implement attractive practices. But they saw these practices as taking place outside of church. Thus:

- 1) millennials do place a high value on personal relationships,
- 2) relationships are occurring outside of the church,
- 3) millennials value coherence with a coherence of beliefs and practices; faith in action in the world is attractive to many,
- 4) traditional churches are often alienating to millennials,
- 5) successful alternative modes of Christian community among millennials offer strong interpersonal relationships and community service.

High values on personal relationships were important to millennials as each of the participants engaged in one-on-one relationships, group activities and rallied around events that serve the fundamental needs of the community. R-6 described how she attended neighborhood theme parties to build relationships with others she may not know. She said she liked to have an impact in her neighborhood by walking and stopping to speak with others. Such actions by R-6 were representative of the other participants who also sought to establish personal relationships. Many of the participants forged these personal relationships outside of the church as well as inside of the church.

A basic understanding of this desire to forge personal relationships outside and inside of the church was directly attributed to the participants' value of coherency between beliefs and practices that are incorporate in their Christian faith. R-7 stated: "My Christian faith calls me to action to walk the Christian way. At the end of the day, I can be happy with the person I am today based on my Christian values."

Many of the participants articulated an awareness of a disconnection between beliefs and practices within the traditional church. R-4 admitted she found church boring and judgmental. She was unmotivated during services and the boredom prompted her to focus on another attendee's attire. She criticized her church as espousing to live a faith that was exciting and non-judgmental but acted contrary to such beliefs. Similarly, R-6 stated that the traditional church she attended had members who were judgmental and openly against people who were different. For example, she felt older members of her church sought to separate themselves from the homeless by designating them to areas that would not interfere with regular church attendees. P-3 also described herself as not affiliated with her traditional church because she felt the church presented an emotional tradition she did not find sustaining. Thus, some of the participants felt alienated by their traditional church due to a lack of coherence between the church's beliefs and practices. Consequently, participants sought to find alternative modes of Christian community among millennials who offered strong interpersonal relationships and community service that were attractive to their beliefs and practices.

These successful alternative modes of the Christian community produced strong interpersonal relationships. P-7 stated that because his friends were very set in their ways, he focused instead on their friendship. He anticipated that his friends were going to be more interested in him than his faith: "The relationship is built first, and then I can work on building a relationship that includes my faith. My wife and I live in downtown Lancaster, and we have sort of built relationships with others by visiting various coffee shops." Similarly, R-8 used his knowledge of computers and photography to build strong interpersonal relationships in sharing his Godly relationship with others. Through this alternative mode of the Christian community, he built relationships with others through hobbies. He equated the uses of these two hobbies as

being a bridge that allowed him an alternative mode to presenting the Christian faith; a bridge that connected his belief with non-believers.

Other successful alternative modes of the Christian community occurred in the various community service practices in which participants demonstrated a desire for a practical Jesus. P-9 engaged in his community playing basketball with his son and other young people. He also provided haircuts, toys, and clothing to those in need. He believed in sharing the Gospel in the community in various alternative modes through engaging in conversations. He described his approach as simple: "It is important for me to see the culture and why people may have done what they have done...preaching speaks to the application but lacks speaking about the culture of the times. We need to be a friend and form relationships that are a presence with each other." R-4 also used an alternative mode of sharing her Christian faith through being an aerobics instructor. She assists people through conversations and through promoting a healthy lifestyle of exercise and diet. She states, "I think that just sharing experiences is the best way through testimony; it is the best teacher." Throughout the study the participants were consciously aware how they used attractive practices that modeled the lived Christian experience. However, these Christian practices always included various strategies to participate in a type of community service that met human needs or provided spiritual support.

Strategies

The second aspect of this project sought to ascertain effective, attractive strategies that could be used by pastors to interact with millennials. As participants provided their input on shared community practices and attractive Christian practices of how they lived out what they put forth as being the practical Jesus, they also provided insights into various strategies used during the

implementation of being a practical Jesus. Strategies used by the participants included commonalities that were always relevant, relatable, relational and authentic.

Strategies used by participants were based on an understanding of the trends taking place in the context of each of the participants. Each participant's strategy was implemented in a similar but different manner due to cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic contexts. For example, P-6 employed a group strategy of reaching individuals on a college campus by providing them with free hot dogs on Thursday Nights, which he deemed as "Jesus Dogs." He described the event as being "cool" as the Jesus dogs are given out in a little box that contained scripture from the book of Proverbs. Similarly, P-10 embraced a strategy that used social media in her efforts to evangelize to others. R-1 works and lives in a community prone to violence. His strategy is to speak to the righteousness that positively guided people. He gave an example of a client who was looking to retaliate after an altercation. He stated to the client that "retaliation is not always the best way to get revenge, it is best to let God handle it. You don't have to get involved with negativity."

Suggested strategies gathered from participants which are believed to be helpful in reaching millennials were simplistic. These basic practices were modified by various participants but offered the same premise. Examples included having a general conversation with people, visiting people in their environment and aiding in meeting the fundamental needs of others. P-6, P-10, and R-1 demonstrated basic practices that were modified to meet their community. Whichever strategy was implemented, the participants all strove to find relevant, relatable, relational, and authentic approaches. Participants in this study incorporated these four aspects of their strategies to reach their peers.

Based on the analysis of the data, this study concluded that people must first have a willingness to meet others where they are at that moment. People must embrace the diversity through an adaptability that is relevant and authentic. The Christian faith is at its best when it is seen via actions that are lived out through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These aspects commonly referred to by Christians as the "Fruits of the Spirit," whether used directly or used indirectly, can prompt an attraction for others to possibly seek more about the Christian faith.

Weaknesses of study

The findings of this study can be challenged because of its limitation in the sample size of participants and sample size of churches, parachurches, and secular businesses. A greater, randomized sample could have provided other data which could have contributed to other practices and strategies used which were not included in the findings.

Chapter 5: Observations

Participants and millennial churches observed during this study exhibited practices at a micro level similar to practices seen in studies about millennials at the macro level. Although there is a similarity in the practices on the micro and macro levels regarding millennials, a direct data linkage cannot be confirmed to the religious landscape of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to that of the national religious landscape regarding millennials due to non-random sampling. Insights gained from the observing of Christian laypeople who are millennials and their use of Christian practices showed minute differences in their usage of attracting practices. Such minute differences were seen in each participant or organization in its adaptation to the context in which they existed. In each of the three age group categories, 18-23, 24-29 and 30-35, differences stemmed from a setting based on ethnic groups, social-economic means, and Christian denomination principles. Rarely did these participants and their churches interact outside of their ethnicity. Although participants and their churches said they were open to others who were different, there was a tendency to stay within the same ethnicity. Socioeconomics also played a significant role in the way attractive practices were presented. This was due to the education and financial aspects of each participant, and was evident in funding, social media awareness, and staffing. Church denomination principles varied in each group and were driven by the church's mission statement and its implementation. Some church denominations preferred to operate within a church building and others in an informal manner outside the church in a less formal setting.

Those participants in the age range of 28-35 chose to participate in community activities that were family oriented due to having small children, whereas the participants ages 18-27 were not limited in choice when participating in community activities. An important aspect here for

pastors and leaders to understand is that older millennials preferred activities within their church and community that were inclusive of children. Having children did seem to be a determining factor for older millennials as they tended to want to include their children in the community activities. This was not a determining factor for those who did not have children.

When looking at measuring the effectiveness of group P participants and organizations that used attractive practices that embraced Christian practices, it was evident that the actions of the P participants and organizations did have a positive effect on the group R participants. Group R participants were affected in a manner that embraced both attractive practices and Christian practices that indirectly or directly focused on the Christian faith. The embracing produced actions by group R participants that mirrored those of the group P participants and organizations in both words and deeds by being a practical Jesus Christ and providing spiritual support during times of crisis. It is likely that the cause of such mirroring of group R participants was due to the establishment of an intrinsic personal relationship which developed based on an interaction between individuals of both group P and R participants and those within the organizations. Group R participants of the study embraced many of the group P participants' and organizations' practices because they found the practices to be authentic, relatable, relevant and relational.

This information is essential because it offers a glimpse into how emerging churches were adapting to their surrounding context to attract millennials in the Lancaster area. Pastors and leaders of traditional churches can use such information as they focus their efforts to attract and retain millennials in their churches.

Emerging Churches and Traditional Church

Whether emerging church or traditional church, churches in the twenty-first century are no different from the early churches because their purpose to live out the mandate of the Great

Commission remains the same. Through living out the mandate of the Great Commission, an opportunity is afforded to lead individuals to the Christian faith as the incarnated Jesus Christ.

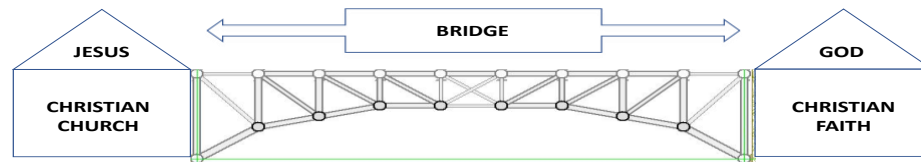


Figure 1. Visual process of being an incarnated Jesus Christ

The church serves as the incarnated Jesus Christ that leads to God and an embracing of the Christian faith. Over the years, churches have attempted to serve as a bridge by utilizing various theological approaches that embrace different Christian practices of faith. The implementation of embraced Christian practices has caused a stir within the church. Some individuals have use approaches that incorporate traditional ways of being a bridge, while others use approaches that include new ways of being a bridge. Neither way should be considered wrong in its approach.

The key to solving the implementation of Christian practices between the emerging and the traditional church lies in understanding that Jesus Christ did not limit himself to traditional religious practices. Jesus conducted Christian practices that were considered experimental and interactive. In doing so, Jesus created a versatile worship experience with attractive practices aimed at the poor and despised. A view of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century could be thought of as being a pastor of an emerging church. A pastor who might introduce himself to others by saying, "I am a man, I am a nation, lock into my frequency, tune into my station, sit up in a chair, grab a drink from the fridge, we need to have a conversation, come meet me on the

bridge.”¹⁸¹ This bridge can be viewed as a connection place where individuals meet to discuss topics that are relevant, relatable and relational — a place of connection at the table. Figure 2 depicts a means of connection at the table where discussions regarding biases seen under the table could be discussed by both the church and unchurched. Millennials see such biases under the table as a problem with the traditional Christian church and seek contexts that can be free of such perceived biases.

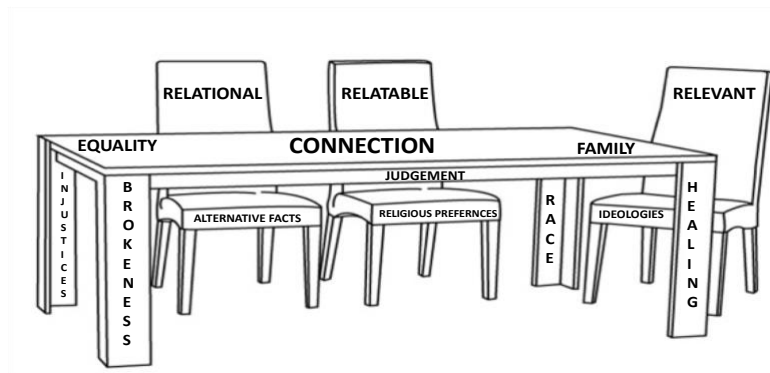


Figure 2. Table of Connection

Just as Jesus Christ had to deal with the biases in his time, so will the emerging and traditional churches in a Post-Christendom twenty-first century. If both the emerging church and the traditional church can work together in addressing the biases under the table by meeting at the table, they can find attractive practices of meeting the needs of church and unchurched millennials.

¹⁸¹ Oprah Winfrey Network, “*The Bridge*”- Pastor John Gray Super Soul Session, YouTube Video, 23.32, May 10, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Rk5WFj5rEQ>

Finding attractive practices that embrace Christian practices that reach church and unchurched millennials will be difficult because individuals are complex. The findings of such attractive practices will be difficult because of the complexity of individuals, thus there will not always be a solution that will meet the needs of everyone. Jesus Christ laid a foundation for the Christian church to follow that provides an opportunity to meet the needs of everyone. It is the opportunity for the church and unchurched to meet in the middle of a bridge in a variety of ways that are experimental and creative. The experimentation and creativity to formulate attractive practices that embraced the Christian faith and its practices should be a means of connecting at the middle of the bridge with millennials.

The Church of the Future

The church of the future must embrace the differences it faces in a manner that is relational, relatable and relevant in a Post-Christendom context regarding millennials if it is to be a bridge to the Christian faith. Those traditional churches that fail to do so in a Post-Christendom context will eventually die out and be replaced by emerging Christian churches. What will these emerging churches resemble? The hope is they will continue to adapt to their context just as churches have done before them, an adaptation that is based on the foundation that is set forth by Jesus Christ's mandate.

Emerging churches based on this foundation should remain experimental, creative and interactive in their efforts to attract individuals to the Christian faith. If they are not able to do so, they will become like the traditional churches before them. They would become places that need new approaches to a new generation, places that fail to present the Gospel through attractive Christian practices, places of Christian practice that are boring in concept, and places that will be replaced by other emerging churches. Just as millennials have found issues with traditional

Christian churches, the next generation will also find issues with current emerging Christian churches. How will Millennials use attractive practices that embrace Christian practices to attract the next generation to the Christian faith in a Post-Christendom twenty-first-century context?

SUGGESTIVE ATTRACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PASTORAL INTERACTION WITH MILLENNIALS.

- People are important regardless of their status in life; reach out to them.
- Places of fellowship are considered important but should not be restrictive when it comes to being with people.
- Programs planned must be diversified to meet the needs of new culturally acceptable trends with people.
- Processes of living out the Christian faith is constantly changing, adapt if you what to be considered relevant to others.

Appendices
Appendix A
Project Interview Guide

Category I –Personal

- Tell me about your faith.
- What influenced you to be a Christian?
- How do you feel when you tell another person about your relationship with Jesus?

Category II – Sharing Community Practices

- What are your most important relationships?
- Do you share your Godly relationship with others? If so, how is it expressed?
- How are you involved in the Lancaster community?

Category III – Attractive Christian Practices

- What invitations from you are your non-Christian friends most likely to accept? Can you describe a way of sharing the Gospel with someone?
- How do you contribute to making an impact in your neighborhood?
- Are you involved in a church? What do you like about it? What do you wish was different?

Category IV – Additional Comments

- Are there any questions you feel I did not ask or are there any comments that you would like to make?

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Doctor of Ministry- Major Project
Lancaster Theological Seminary

Hello, I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry Program. I am conducting interviews for my dissertation project. My project examines how Christian lay people between the ages of 18-35 are attracting their unchurched peers to the Christian faith in the 21st century in Lancaster, PA.

Your participation is voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Should you choose to take part in this project, you are encouraged to respond freely and openly. There is no “right” answers except those you offer I will compile this information for use only in my doctoral project and will not share this data with a third party.

I will be taking notes on our conversation and recording it with an audio recording device. In any case, what you say will be kept confidential. Your real name will not be shared in my reporting on this project and actual voice recordings will not be used in class.

There are no direct benefits for those who participate in this project. And there are not foreseeable risks or discomforts that will result from your participation.

Should you have questions, comments, or concerns of any kind, you can contact me personally at 717-538-0709 or you may contact my project advisor at Rev. Dr. Stephens G. Lytch at sglytch@gmail.com, or the Chair of the Doctor of Ministry Committee, Dr. Anne Thayer (athayer@lancasterseminary.edu) or 717-290-8721.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Franklin & Marshall Institutional Review Board. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may also be addressed to Marcus Thomsen Ph.d., Office of the Provost, 102C, Old Main, mthomsen@fandm.edu, 717- 358-3982.

Thank you for being part of my project.

Signatures:

Interviewer: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Interviewee: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Appendix C

Letter of Introduction to Participants
Doctor of Ministry – Major Project
Lancaster Theological Seminary

Dear

My name is Tracy E. Brown, and I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Lancaster Theological Seminary. As a part of the curriculum, each student is required to conduct a Major Project. I have chosen as my project to examine how Christian lay people between the ages of 18-35 are attracting their unchurched peers to the Christian faith in the 21st century in Lancaster, PA.

As a pastor of a church plant, I feel that church of the future will look differently as its message will be conducted in new contexts. I believe the Christian faith will be shared in other contexts by laypersons through Christian practices that are attractive to both the church and unchurched.

You have been recommended to me as a person who is known to be a Christian and could possibly assist with my research project. Therefore, I am inquiring to see if you would consider being a participant in this study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Trabrown4609@comcast.net or at 717-538-0709.

Yours Truly

Tracy E. Brown
Doctor of Ministry Student

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